

# One Small Thing

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## History

During the fall of 2020, schools opened to students again, but parents continued to face restricted access to school buildings, which meant restricted access to staff. Recognizing the challenging circumstances staff were facing, parents expressed a desire to acknowledge their deep appreciation of staff. Traditionally appreciation was expressed through food, which was no longer an option. Parents needed to be creative, while operating within the everchanging provincial and division pandemic restrictions.

Salisbury Composite School Council decided to launch a pilot staff recognition program. Working together with our principal, we developed a framework that was accessible to everyone, which would allow our school community to submit recognition, acknowledgement and thanks to the school staff. It was important to be inclusive of all staff in our school community (teachers, administrators, custodians, coaches, volunteers, support staff).

We wanted to create an equitable opportunity for everyone in our community to participate. As a school council, we do not fundraise and wanted a program which was not reliant on parent donations of any kind (money, food, gift cards, donations).

In the fall of 2021, this initiative was presented at our Committee of School Councils meeting and several schools have since adopted and implemented it.

Throughout the program, we have received incredibly positive feedback from staff and parents.

## The Framework

Parents and the school community can submit a staff recognition through a simple online form. The School Council chooses a representative to manage the online form. The representative regularly checks the form and then shares each submission with the appropriate staff member via email.

- A linkable online form: both Google Forms and Microsoft Forms work well. (APPENDIX A)
- An email template: verbatim copy and paste the recognition submission to send to the staff member. You don't need to recreate a new email every time. (APPENDIX B)

- Communication plan: discuss with school principal how this initiative will be communicated to staff and the greater school community. (APPENDIX C)

*ACTION: Which online form would be the friendliest for your school council?*

## **Connections**

### ***The Education Act***

Section 55 School council.

- (4) A school council, at its discretion,
- (a) advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school

### ***School Council Regulations***

Section 12 Responsibilities of board

- (1) A board must provide the school council with an opportunity to provide advise on the development of the school's
- (c) annual education and annual results report required by the Minister to be reported under section 67 of the Act

Section 14 (Duty to report to the board)

- (1) The chair of a school council must prepare and provide to the board by September 30 of each year a report
- (a) Summarizing the activities of the school council in the previous school year

*\*\*\* Note: Don't forget to include your work on this in your annual school council report*

### ***The Assurance Framework***

Assurance and accountability are linked. Alberta's Assurance Framework is about building public trust and confidence that the education system is meeting the needs of students and enabling their success.

<https://www.alberta.ca/accountability-education-system.aspx>

The shift from the Accountability Model to the Assurance Model requires demonstrable examples. This initiative is a demonstrable example of how the school council supported the School Education Plan.

- Implementation of the Assurance Framework is underway in every School Division and school in Alberta.
- This is an opportunity for parents to voice their opinions and provide feedback and advice at the school and Division level.
- School Councils exist for this very purpose.
- The Accountability Pillar model of the School Divisions being accountable solely to the Province **is replaced** with a model that includes **parent participation to ensure their satisfaction**.
- As the **legislated forum for parent participation**, School Councils are expected to be at the forefront of this process as this is what you do!
- ASCA believes that the Assurance Framework is an excellent opportunity for School Councils **not to just be informed ... but to** create a **culture of engagement** throughout the **whole** school community.

### ***School Education Plan***

Under the Education Act, school councils are to provide input into the School Education Plan. An effective school council should support their School Education Plan goals through their school council work. This can be a recurring conversation around your school council table. This initiative can be easily tied to one of your School Education Goals.

### ***Leadership Quality Standard***

A full **22 of the indicators in the Leadership Quality Standard** relate specifically to School Councils and the school community, so you can see how very important it is for School Councils to understand it. ASCA strongly encourages you to review this document and discuss it with your Principal at a School Council meeting.

*ACTION: Pull up your school education plan. Which goal do you feel this program would help meet?*

## **School Council Role & Support**

Parents through school councils play an essential role in the education system.

ASCA is recognized as a leader and authority on everything related to empowering and assisting in building strong school councils. ASCA is a trusted resource and voice for parents and school councils that has earned its credibility through more than 90 years of consecutive support for parents and school councils. ASCA builds upon, strengthens, and maintains an excellent relationship with its stakeholders because of its history and expertise.

ASCA is uniquely positioned with a solid reputation, skill set, and proven track record working with school councils.

Through Learning Opportunities provided by ASCA, ASCA will empower the members of school councils (parents, principals, teachers, secondary students, and community representatives) to work together towards the common goal of supporting and enhancing student learning.

ASCA is your greatest resource. There are links to these documents, regulations and information on the ASCA website. Do you want to learn more about School Council Purpose or the Assurance Model Framework? Contact ASCA to do a presentation at your school council (or district school council). (APPENDIX D)

## **Let's Get Started**

1. Look at your School Education Plan and choose a goal that aligns with this initiative.
2. Discuss with your principal
3. Discuss with your school council
4. Create a working group to develop your framework (this is a one time thing and this work should roll forward. The initial work can be done outside of a school council meeting).
  - a. Identify a representative to administer the program for school council who:
    - i. will be responsible for responsible for checking the form regularly
    - ii. will send the recognition email based on the template
    - iii. will update school council intermittently
  - b. Set up a school council email (if you don't have one)
  - c. Create the form
    - i. Determine the platform (eg. Google Forms or Microsoft Forms)

- ii. Determine the questions (see APPENDIX A)
  - d. Write the email template (see APPENDIX B)
  - e. Create a communication plan (see APPENDIX C)
  - f. Share with your principal and ask for feedback
  - g. Work with your principal to get a staff email contact list
  - h. Determine who will receive copies of the email (administrators, school council executive)
5. Share form, template, and communication plan with the school council.
  6. Communicate the initiative with the greater school community (newsletter, Facebook group, school website, social media)
  7. Receive input and send emails
  8. Update at school council meetings. Reflect and review effectiveness periodically.
  9. Report in annual school council report to board.

*ACTION: Do you have access to the Members Only section of the ASCA website? (If not, visit this [webpage](#) or see APPENDIX D)*

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1) What if we get negative input on the form?
  - Since only the representative sees the submission, negative input can be discarded immediately. Our experience has not included any negative input.
- 2) What if my principal doesn't support this initiative?
  - You can use the Leadership Quality Standards, and the Assurance Framework to reinforce how this initiative fits within the legislated role of school council.
- 3) Will it be a popularity contest?
  - Each platform has its own analytics which you can monitor. You can always bring it back to school council and troubleshoot. Our experience has been that a wide variety of staff members have been recognized.
- 4) Who should I copy on the emails?
  - We typically copy the principal (or the superintendent in the case of positive feedback on the principal) as well as various school council executive (depending on who is sending the email). Some schools have asked that we copy the entire admin team.
- 5) What if our school council doesn't talk about the School Education Plan?
  - This is an approachable way to start and to generate this conversation year after year.
- 6) How long should we run this initiative?
  - The length can be decided by the school council. You can choose a set time, or run it throughout the school year.
- 7) Can submissions be anonymous?
  - We have allowed this, however, this decision is at the discretion of your school council.
- 8) How do parents know where to find the form?
  - A link can be shared in newsletters, Facebook groups, via social media and on the school website. Some schools have bought a domain and forwarded it to the form (eg. [www.RecognizeSal.ca](http://www.RecognizeSal.ca))

## **APPENDIX A: Form Question Examples**

### **Example 1**

On behalf of the Salisbury Composite School Council, thank you for helping us recognize our amazing staff for the wonderful work they do. What is the name of the staff member you would like to recognize?

- 1) What recognition would you like to give?
- 2) What is your name?
- 3) Can we share your name with the staff member?
  - Absolutely
  - I prefer to remain anonymous

### **Example 2**

On behalf of the Bev Facey School Council, thank you for helping us recognize our amazing staff for the wonderful work they do.

- 1) What recognition would you like to give? (Share something positive that a staff member has done to shape our community and make your experience or your child's experience at Bev Facey great.)
- 2) What is your name?
- 3) Can we share your name with the staff member?
  - Absolutely
  - I prefer to remain anonymous

## **APPENDIX B: Email Templates**

### **Example 1:**

<Staff Name>,

This year, the Sal Comp School Council undertook a program to collect recognitions for the amazing staff of Salisbury. The first goal of the School Education Plan is “students demonstrate accountability, compassion, integrity, and respect, and have a strong sense of belonging at Salisbury.” You have been recognized for contributing to a student’s sense of belonging!

<Submitter> wrote:  
“<Recognition>”

On behalf of School Council, I’d like to thank you for your commitment to not only this student, but to all the students at Salisbury. School Council recognizes the difficult circumstances that teachers and staff have faced over the past year and a half and we want to acknowledge your efforts to give our students an outstanding education and experience, regardless of those circumstances.

Thank you again!

Jacquie Surgenor  
Chair, Sal Comp School Council

cc. Sunny Sandhu, Principal: Salisbury Composite  
Gabe Chemello - Vice Chair, Sal Comp School Council



## Example 2

<Staff Name>

This year, the Sherwood Heights School Council undertook a program to collect recognitions for the amazing staff of Sherwood Heights. The second goal of the School Education Plan is “enhance High-Quality Learning and Working Environments.” School Council wanted to contribute to a safe, caring, welcoming and respectful working environment through this program.

<Submitter> wanted to recognize you and wrote:  
“<Recognition>”

On behalf of School Council, I'd like to thank you for your commitment to not only this student, but to all the students at Sherwood Heights. School Council recognizes the difficult circumstances that teachers and staff have faced over the past year and a half and we want to acknowledge your efforts to give our students an outstanding education and experience, regardless of those circumstances.

Thank you again!

Jacquie Surgenor  
Chair, Sherwood Heights School Council

cc.

Amit Mali, Principal: Sherwood Heights  
Tandy Atchison, Assistant Principal: Sherwood Heights  
Jess Miskew, Assistant Principal: Sherwood Heights  
Lesley Bowman, Vice-Chair: Sherwood Heights School Council

### Example 3

<Staff Name>,  
School Council is collecting recognitions for the amazing staff of Fultonvale by inviting our community to acknowledge the good work of our staff in reaching our School Education Plan Goal #1 “The school community is actively engaged in working collaboratively to achieve excellence for students and staff.”

You have been recognized for your efforts in achieving excellence!

<Submitter> submitted:

“<Recognition>”

Thanks for everything you do!

Fultonvale School Council

cc. Principal

Assistant Principal

School Council Chair

### Example 4

<Staff Name>,

You are appreciated!

School Council has received some amazing feedback about you and we wanted to share it with you.

<Submitter> submitted,

“<Recognition>”

Thank you for demonstrating the virtues of The Facey Way: Commitment, Dedication, Enthusiasm, Loyalty, and Respect.

Have a great day!

Bev Facey School Council

cc. Principal

School Council Chair

## APPENDIX C: Communication Plan

### Example 1:

Staff Email preamble:

- this is sent to the staff member being recognized along with the verbatim recognition
- Principal will be cc'd for any staff recognition
- Superintendent and associate superintendent will be cc'd for principal and assistant principal recognition

*You are appreciated!*

*School Council has received some amazing feedback about you and we wanted to share it with you.*

*Thank you for demonstrating the virtues of The Facey Way: Commitment, Dedication, Enthusiasm, Loyalty, and Respect.*

Parent communication:

- this is an introduction for the roll out of the link
- platforms for the roll out will be the weekly newsletter and FB

*School Council invites you to share your thoughts and feedback on the amazing Bev Facey staff. Encouragement and appreciation are an important way to support these incredibly important and influential individuals as we continue to navigate an ever-changing school experience.*

*Goal #3 in Bev Facey's School Education Plan is "Students are empowered to become active citizens who exemplify the virtues of the Facey Way."*

*The Facey Way includes the virtues of:*

*COMMITMENT: Make a commitment to do your best work at all times.*

*DEDICATION: Be serious about your education. Give yourself every opportunity to succeed. Live a balanced life that will help you reach your goals.*

*ENTHUSIASM: Take advantage of what school has to offer. Get involved in the many school activities. Make your learning fun.*

*LOYALTY: Represent Bev Facey as a positive ambassador and support our Falcons in a sportsmanlike manner.*

*RESPECT: Treat yourself and others with dignity and humility.*

*Please take a moment and click the link to share something positive that a staff member has done to shape our community and make your experience or your child's experience at Bev Facey great. The email will be shared with the staff member and principal.*

*Thank you for helping us build a strong community!*

Distribution:

- The link will live in the weekly newsletter, on the school website and will be featured on FB and then pinned to top of FB page. FB messaging *"Bev Facey has some amazing staff and we want to celebrate it. Tell us how someone at Bev Facey has made your experience positive and has demonstrated The Facey Way through examples of commitment, dedication, enthusiasm, loyalty or respect. We want to hear from you!"* Link to the form and the newsletter.
- Newsletter will run the full communication for 2-3 weeks along with the link to the form and then transition to shorter messaging: *"Give kudos to staff, click here"* Link to the form and full messaging.

## Example 2

Staff Email preamble:

- this is sent to the staff member being recognized along with the verbatim recognition
- Principal and assistant principal will be cc'd for any staff recognition
- Superintendent and associate superintendent will be cc'd for principal and assistant principal recognition
- *School Council is collecting recognitions for the amazing staff of Fultonvale by inviting our community to acknowledge the good work of our staff in reaching our School Education Plan Goal #1 "The school community is actively engaged in working collaboratively to achieve excellence for students and staff." You have been recognized for your efforts in achieving excellence!*

Parent communication:

- this is an introduction for the roll out of the link
- platforms for the roll out will be the weekly newsletter and the parent fb page
- *Goal #1 in Fultonvale's School Education Plan is "The school community is actively engaged in working collaboratively to achieve excellence for students and staff." School Council is inviting you to acknowledge the good work of our amazing staff as we collaborate to support this goal! Encouragement and appreciation are an important way to support our staff as we continue to navigate an ever-changing school experience. Please take a moment and click the link to share something positive that a staff member has done to shape our community and make your experience or your child's experience at Fultonvale great. The email will be shared with the staff member, principal and assistant principal. Thank you for helping us build a strong community!*

Distribution:

- The link will live in the weekly newsletter and be pinned to the top of the fb page
- FB
- Newsletter "to give kudos to staff, click here"
- Website button "staff kudos"

## **APPENDIX D: Useful Resources**

- **ASCA Website** - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/>
- **Education Act** - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/education-in-alberta/the-education-act>
- **School Council Regulations** - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/education-in-alberta/the-education-act/school-councils-regulation>
- **Assurance Framework** - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/education-in-alberta/assurance-framework>
- **ASCA Members-Only Page** - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/about/membership/members-only-section>

## **Contact Information**

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