



2023 Alberta School Council Conference – CONVERSATION EXCHANGE

This year's ASCA Conference theme is all about CONNECTION. The focus of the conversation exchange is on **“Creating a hopeful vision for education;”** How are school councils already contributing to this in their school communities, and what more would they like to see and do? Through this, together we will learn: “What can school councils do to promote positive engagement, meaningful connections, and create hopeful visions for education in the community to benefit student success?”

Hearing the stories, experiences, and perspectives will help ASCA's Board to better understand not only what is already happening in schools across Alberta, but also what parents would like to see happen in your schools.

Conversation 1

Thinking about your advisory role, identify an activity, action, or initiative your school council has undertaken to **influence practices or policies** supporting student success in your school:

- Mentorship program to amalgamate grade 8 & 9's.
- Applied for grants to engage student community in creating mental health videos.
- K-9 Junior High mentorship/buddy program.
- Purchased supplies for mental health boxes (fidgets, etc.).
- Blind date with a book OR “Book-nic” to support literacy.
- Purchased communication kits for our div. 1 English language learners.
- Discussed finding a new home for our high school.
- Gave feedback into 3-year board plan and school calendars.
- Road safety:
 - o Addition of signs, education, etc.
- Involved in the input of principal's replacement.
- Suggested parent surveys be completed on tablets set up during parent/teacher interviews.
- Dress code policy.
- Use ASCA workshops to bring parents in for feedback and info about school policies.
- Safe Walk:
 - o Helping kids get around inner city safety.
- Power school timelines.
- Kudos programs for teachers.
- School/District calendar input.
- A total of 21 school councils pooled their engagement funds together to host one major event.
- Dress code:
 - o Discussed with school administrators.
 - o Researched other boards' policies.

- Included students in the process.
- Worked out a way to keep it simple and handle any issues that arose.
- Created a Council of School Councils to ensure common messaging and information.
- Math night with games.
 - Online during COVID.
- The “caring fund” so the school can provide grocery gift cards & extra lunch items that any children/families can access.
- Donating hot lunches.
- Renewing the school library.
- Bringing in speakers about food, nutrition, and body image.
- Influencing a transition plan for grade 8’s going from various feeder schools to high schools:
 - Aligning various feeder schools with doing consistent book studies so the grade 9 teacher can pick one that none of the students have already done.
- School improvement plan conversations.
- Action Policy/Practice:
 - Grants for workshops.
 - Clubs support for students.
 - Assurance plans.
 - Outdoor classrooms.
 - Technology purchase (IPads).
 - Inclusive materials.
 - News & media.
 - Parent engagement
 - Meeting agenda.
- Revamp classroom representative responsibilities.
- Being present in conversations with parent reps & involved parties.
- Culture Night to include School and Community.
- Include teachers with a passion and expertise sharing with parents.
- Nutrition & hot lunch programs.
- Encouraging learning about leadership at a younger age to prepare students for later grades.
- Bigger emphasis on teaching important life skills to students.
- Understand Pillars of Education.

Conversation 2

As the bridge connecting the school and community, identify an activity, action, or initiative your school council has undertaken to **promote parent engagement and connection** in your school?

- Parent & student night for transitioning from middle school to high school.
- Prompt Fundraising:
 - Support student activities.
 - Open houses (engagement).
 - Mentorship.
 - Community engagement.

- Literacy, culture, health nights.
- Active schools, student success.
- School dances, movie nights.
- Book/reading buddies.
- Parking, speed, and transportation.
- Earth Day, bottle drive.
- Purchased math tools and host indoor/outdoor activities to promote family time and learning with families.
 - o Working on SEL (Social Emotional Learning).
- Book Club on resiliency in school (“Drop the Worry Ball” by Dr. Alex Russel):
 - o Collab between school council and school.
 - o 30 mins. prior to school council meetings online during COVID (with trustees as well as principal).
 - o Purchased books for families that wanted to join.
- Met with all stakeholders.
- Encourage engagement = Creating community.
- Community Wellness night.
- Student/Parent night.
- Monthly Cultural night.
- Facebook group:
 - o Including Facebook Lives.
- Hybrid meetings (online AND in-person)
- Surveys.
- Include/Increase subcommittees:
 - o Parents, Indigenous, etc.
- Social media & Pamphlet blitz:
 - o Info on what parents had fundraised for, and where the money went.
- Had first meeting on the same night as “Meet the Teachers.”
- Enticing People with Food.
- Include bylaw that parents of previous students can help fundraise.
- Sticking with the same schedule for meetings.
 - o Next meeting scheduled at the end of current meeting.
 - o Utilize online meetings.
 - o Had trustees in to presents to school council.
- Expansion for Agriculture group/program:
 - o Barn, Beekeeping, Chickens, etc.
- Reading opportunities with community members.
- Hosted school council AGM at the same time as the school’s open house in September.
- Used the ASCE grant to host a parents’ night to engage people with a variety of speakers (i.e. internet safety, RAP program, etc.)
- Increase parent involvement to prevent volunteer burnout from core group.
- Having parents come in to give talks to students about trades/jobs/specialties/etc. to expose students to subjects they might not hear about from teachers.
- Parent Information night:
 - o Better turnout if done in conjunction with parent/teacher interviews.
 - o Be aware of community events for scheduling.
 - o Parent draws for gift cards (for attending sessions).

- Have treats & babysitting available.
- Literacy with music.
- Social media speakers.
- Open house the day before school started.
- Move AGM to end of school year (March/April/May) so you aren't bombarding people in September.
- Include Zoom option for meetings.
- A council of school councils:
 - District wide, multiple meetings per school year.
- ASCE grant is used to pay for ASCA workshops.
- Meetings are held once a month from 12:00PM to 1:00PM to catch working parents on lunch break.
- Purchased gift cards for in-person parent conference nights.
- Refreshments and childcare available during meetings.
- Fun events also held alongside business portion of meetings.
- Council minutes are translated.
- Planned events:
 - Board game night, student market, school BBQ, cake auction, etc.
- Council reminder emails.
- Alternating times & days for meetings.
- Open House table.
- "Bring a friend = Win a prize."
- Emphasized core values:
 - Track volunteer hours to recognize for prizes.
- Have a topic of controversy that will encourage parents to come to meetings.
- Parent engagement night = Offered taught classes and refreshments.
- Participation events:
 - Pancake breakfasts, dances, family nights, literacy nights, salsa classes, speakers, etc.
- Parent Expo:
 - Mini expo (div. 1 & div. 2 gearing).
 - Included multiple displays and sessions.
- Community registration night brought into the school.
- Keeping both virtual and in-person meeting options available.
- Meeting reminder texts (including link for virtual).
- Use of both in-person **and** digital communications.
- Emphasis of education regarding school councils during elementary school years to carry along as students age.

Conversation 3

Looking forward 2 -3 years, identify an activity, action, or initiative your school council would like to undertake, or influence, to create positive, hopeful change supporting student success in your school:

- Translating council documents.

- Engaging parents through speaker nights.
- Try to have a parent rep. for each grade (K-12 school).
- Gender inclusive bathrooms.
- All stakeholders working together.
- Playground -> Grant application & building.
- Upgrading & investing in technology.
- Develop better lines of communication:
 - Helpful communications officer between K-9.
 - Social media account just for parents.
 - Transfer learning to junior high students.
 - Teaching appropriate steps for discussing issues.
 - Lego club, chess club, and asking student body what they'd love (makerspace, outdoor classes, sewing club, etc.).
- Fight negative perceptions around fundraising.
- Use of social media to influence collaborations.
- Impact student experiences.
- Parent Expo:
 - Booths/rooms covering topics such as core learning, safety, online safety, etc.
- Advocate on behalf of parents.
- Advocate on behalf of Grade 9 students entering high school.
- Advocate for another bus route.
- Agriculture Program.
- Math challenges/Attendance:
 - Name into a draw for gift cards.
- More outdoor classroom activities.
- "School Council" can be misconstrued as "Student Council."
- Offer childcare at meetings.
- Email address for the school council:
 - Space where questions can be asked.
- A potential contest to engage people around the school logo & colours.
- Council Newsletter (either once or twice a month).
- Meetings where parents can go to the physical classroom and learn what their students are learning.
- Anti-bullying initiatives:
 - Year round focus, not just pink/orange shirt days.
 - Focus on both physical and cyber bullying.
- Joe's Social Media:
 - Teach kids how to listen to rules from parents.
 - Teach parents to understand social media platforms.
- Translate documents to more languages.
- Influence "kiss & go" drop-off zone to flow better in the mornings.
- AMA safety patrol.
- Use Google Forms to get input from parents through school's Facebook account.
 - Organized by communication officer/Parent volunteer.
- Have wellness committee counselors and psychology team in school to help students.
- Weekly emails:
 - News, reminders, etc.
- Teacher appreciation events/gifts.

- Plant fruit trees & offer a workshop to teach students on planting and maintenance.
- Yearbook committee.
- More collaboration with school administration for better work relationship.
- Expanding language programs.
- Integrate more outdoor learning spaces & opportunities.
- City wide councils & district wide committees.
- Clearer divide between school council, school, and school board's respective roles.
- Create & encourage more education opportunities to help parents learn.
- Plan ahead for initiatives (supporting/creating initiatives).
- Encourage exposure to new experiences (i.e. Indigenous/First Nations blanket exercise).
- Offering communication in languages spoken in communities:
 - Newsletters = Include QR codes to translate & read aloud.
- Increased communication about budget:
 - Where money is going, making sure money is being spent to support student learning, etc.