



HSS SCHOOL COUNCIL

Engaging Parents
Connecting Classrooms
Enhancing School Culture

What Is Our School Council Supposed to Do? Our Journey of a Collaborative Path Forward

ASCA Conference April 27, 2027

Presenters

Providing various perspectives on our journey and why it matters



Margie Steingart

School Council
Chair



Pam Barker

School Council
Vice Chair



Jennifer Massop

HSSEF Chair (school
society fundraising)
and invested parent



Melissa Copley

School Board
Trustee



Dean Nielsen

Principal

Goals of this presentation

- Initial understanding of what a school council is and what it can become
- How to use ASCA tools
- How to shape school council conversations
- How you can use our tools and journey to grow your school council

How we started:

The change
towards a more
effective school
council

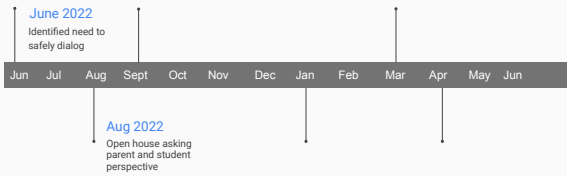
we became united

we learned together

we planned together

The Hard Work

Consistent effort to define a purpose and create a place to grow from



Melissa's perspective:

- The open house hosted by administration was a critical turning point in the school
- It allowed parents, teachers, students and community participants to speak in generalities about school culture

The Hard Work

Consistent effort to define a purpose and create a place to grow from

June 2022

Identified need to safely dialog

September 2022

New school council board elected and sets out to understand what to do

Aug 2022

Open house asking parent and student perspective

Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun

Pam's thoughts:

The 'why' you are gathering is key.

As important as a good mission statement or goals are, they won't be enough to gather people or keep them engaged.

The 'why' will change as the effectiveness of your school council changes

- What is the need at your school strong enough to motivate you to create an effective school council?
- What motivates the parents to gather?
- Creating spaces for dialog is key

How we learned together:

- Ask good questions of any ally you find
- Create a purposed dialog with administration
- ASCA members only section with PDF tools and documents for learning.
<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/members-only>
 - a. School Council Resource Guide
 - b. Tips for school council chairs
 - c. Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Find an example
- Define/redefine a mission statement reflecting where you are currently
- Connecting with parents one by one and word of mouth
- Understand that trust is built in these processes

October & November 2022 meetings:

1. Develop a healthy communication culture
2. Develop a healthy parent culture learning how to become a united voice within the school

Focused on teaching the group gathered what we as a board had learned.

- Assume that if it is new information to us, it's likely new information to many

Focused on creating a place of safe dialog between parents and administration

- Invited parents to a dedicated 15 minute round table where there could raise any concern about our school community in the presence of administration
- These raised concerns were always followed up in our in between meetings

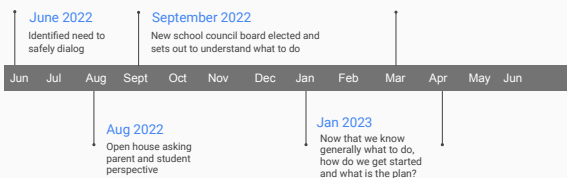
Review our HSS School Council website for tools talked about so far

<https://www.hughesutherlandschool.ca/about/council>

- Mission statement - restructured it at our first meeting to define a short term goal of learning. Create a common goal with what you have.
- Agenda - make it meaningful with a structured timeline. Add info so parents know they have a space at the table. Give them a 'why' they should come.
- Our 'teaching sessions' were recorded and posted under minutes. Perhaps this can be useful tool for your group or give you an idea of how to create your own. Remember I am just a passionate but unpolished parent volunteer...graces please.

The Hard Work

Consistent effort to define a purpose and create a place to grow from



ASCA learning: 'Creating School Council Plans to Engage School Community'

Consisted of 3 facilitated modules:

- School Council Purpose
- Effective engagement in your school community
- Creating a plan

- Facilitated conversation by Brenda was key to our moving forward together

The Hard Work

Consistent effort to define a purpose and create a place to grow from

June 2022

Identified need to safely dialog

September 2022

New school council board elected and sets out to understand what to do

March 2023

Complete ASCA modules and created a plan

Aug 2022

Open house asking parent and student perspective

Jan 2023

Now that we know generally what to do, how do we get started and what is the plan?

JunJulAugSeptOctNovDecJanFebMarAprMayJun

What we planned together:

By asking what the ideal parent, students, teachers, administration, building and community look like, we set something to reach for.

Our goals and purpose came naturally out of these conversations

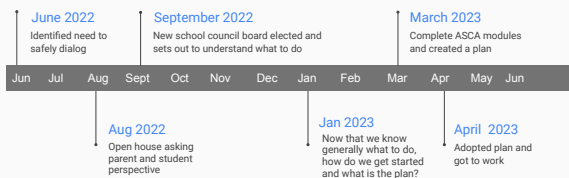
- Defined our purpose and created goals
- Coined easily understandable phrasing
- Solidify that our current mission statement is still accurate for the stage of growth we are in
- Identify actions and strategies that will meet our goals
- Identify ways to monitor if our strategies were successful

How did we condense all of our conversations into a single document?

- We had a single person taking notes through all 3 modules. After each module we reviewed and took out the most important items for our journey.
- The final note document was 5 or 6 pages long full of all kinds of goals, strategies and monitoring parameters for success.
- We extrapolated all the key items and fit them into the same single page format our school division and school use for their plans.
- If we can get our school community to understand ours, there is a greater chance they understand how to read the school plan and the school division plan.

[illegible]

The Hard Work



Melissa's perspective on this process

- There is importance in collaborative perspectives and to not skip this process
- Trust is developed and it builds a strong foundation for future growth

How are we communicating this information to parents and our school community?

- Present all material on our portion of the school website
[School Council | Hugh Sutherland School](#)
- Begin gathering parent emails so that we can give monthly updates
 - PIPA School Council FAQ is very helpful
 - Created a 1 page meeting highlight summary that goes out with this email
- Use the same communication platforms that the school uses

How our journey has progressed since defining who we are and what we do

- We have an entirely new administrative staff from the team that engaged in the initial hard conversations. They helped pave a way forward for future growth.
- Implementing our 2023/24 school council plan has stayed on track but as expected, highlighted future areas of focus. Our 2024/25 plan will reflect this growth.
- We have begun to understand navigating school council on a new level. Good communication and considering stakeholder perspectives is an ongoing journey that will continually change as positive school culture growth occurs

Dean's perspective on this process

- Coming to a school where this path had been started has made my job easier
- A defined purpose and facilitated conversation has allowed administration to become more action orientated.
- Meeting between the meetings is one of the most imperative processes implemented
- It is an ever evolving process of humility and growth - seek to understand and build a stronger school community in the process

Jen's perspective as an invested HSS parent :

- Jen is newer to our Carstairs community and arrived on the scene after there was a defined plan with goals
