



ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY ADVISORS

VOL 12 NO 2

Be the Advisor: Let Your Leaders Lead

CSLC 2009: LEAD THE STAMPEDE

The 25th Canadian Student Leadership Conference will take place from September 27 until October 3rd, 2009 in Olds, Alberta. The host schools are Bow Valley High School in Cochrane and Olds Jr. Sr. High School in Olds, Alberta.

Bow Valley High will host the pre-conference tour from Cochrane, Alberta. Trips to the Royal Tyrrell Dinosaur Museum and Banff National Park will be some of the highlights of the pre-conference tour. Students will be billeted for the pre-conference to keep costs down.

Olds Jr. Sr. High School will be the conference site. Keynote presentations will be made by Tyler Durman, Brian Keating, Ian Tyson and Phil Boyte. Students will be billeted with families in Olds for the duration of the conference while advisors will stay in hotels in the area. Registration will begin online in spring of 2009.

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Conference website:

www.cslc2009.ca

There's no need to start circlin' the wagons yet, but just be on the lookout for more information about this conference on the CASAA website. As the song goes . . . "It's good to be Alberta bound!" ■



I present at leadership conferences to many advisors across Canada, and one simple thing that I have them repeat three times is, "I am the advisor!" It sounds redundant, but the point that I try to make is that too many student leadership advisors wear themselves out because they lose sight of what their job really is. They are not in charge of running everything: that's the students' job.

Many advisors see themselves as a manager and this approach is wrong and detrimental to the leadership program. A manager is about control. They want everything to go smoothly and work precisely in the manner that they planned. A manager doesn't want to ruffle feathers or make others aware of the things that are happening until they're successfully completed. Very little real learning can occur on the part of student leaders under an advisor who is a full-time manager. All of the events and activities run under this type of organization are successful because the advisor made sure that this happened.

Good advisors willingly give power to their student leaders. Advisors empower their students, recognizing that this empowerment can be messy and not as controlled as they would prefer. However, good advisors are prudent in how much power they hand out, as giving all the power in a major event to a rookie leader is like giving a six-year-old a Harley Davidson to ride. The advisor gives the rookie a bicycle and takes the training wheels off it when the leader has demonstrated the skills to get from start to finish without hurting themselves or anyone else. This means that the successful event happened because the student leader was truly in charge.

Experienced advisors know that because of the relative inexperience of some student leaders, there are times that the advisor must step in and become a manager. The test of when to step in is: Whenever the consequences of an activity have the potential to hurt someone, waste money, or damage the school or its reputation, the advisor must step in.

Allow your student leaders to have real power and make real changes in your school. This will make you a real advisor and help your students learn to be real leaders. ■

Dave Conlon

“Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.”

Will Rogers

ADVISOR AS A MODEL

The leadership advisor is not the head leadership person in the school. However, he or she should be a model of leadership. True advisor/leaders show and then tell—only if necessary. There are many aspects of leadership that you model for students because you teach leadership effectively through influence rather than information.

- Your energy level is a way to model enthusiasm and attitude. You don't have to have a klieg-like intensity at every moment, but your brightness and daily approach to life and its tribulations is a sure positive start.

- There has been a relaxation in what is considered “work” attire, but your attire is something that displays your approach to events. Students notice when you change from pre-event clothing to “teacher” attire ready for the assembly presentation.

- Curiosity can be modeled by asking about why things work or how to do things better. It is very healthy to start questions with, “I've always wondered why . . .”

- Work habits are the hardest to be objectively aware of as an advisor. You know how busy you are, but you teach them something when you're always there before an event starts and you're the last person to leave.

- Proficiency in communication is another area that models leadership. You model clarity and efficiency through your oral and written skills.

Finally, the advisor must understand that many of these leadership skills develop rather than appear immediately in their student leaders. Often, it is the returning student who tells of what he or she learned by watching many years ago in student leadership.

Group Discussions

Activity-based learning is a fun way to engage your students in their learning. The “Activities that Teach” series of books from Tom Jackson, stress that the activity causes the learning to start, but it is the discussion that ensures that the learning is actually acquired.

Discussion is the important third step of the active learning process. You must discuss an activity for the learning to be permanent. Activities are fun games, but discussion will turn these games into real learning experiences.

Good Questions

- Having a great discussion means that the leader is asking good questions.

- Both open-ended and closed-ended questions may be used during a full classroom discussion.

- Good questions are those which are clear, concise, relevant and appropriate to the age of the participants.

- Bad questions are complicated, ask for too much personal disclosure, or have an obvious answer.

- Writing your questions down before the discussion can help you remember key points you want to cover.

- Follow-up questions can be used to keep the discussion moving and to engage non-participating students.

Teacher's Role in a Discussion

- The teacher sets the structure and the tone of a discussion.

- Listening skills, movement, allowing for silence, neutral responses and clarifying questions are all useful tools for the good discussion leader.

- Maintain control and keep the discussion on track.

- Allow students to explore off-topic issues, within reason.

- Teachers should not try to turn the discussion into a lecture.

- While you want open and honest discussion, monitor how much students disclose about their personal lives.

“Conducting Group Discussions with Kids” written by Tom Jackson is an excellent addition to your leadership library. It is a valuable reference for the new advisor and a great reminder for the experienced in running activity based leadership lessons. This book is available from CASAA.



The Pebble Story

Many years ago in a small village, a farmer had the misfortune of owing a large sum of money to the village money-lender. The money-lender fancied the farmer's beautiful daughter. So he proposed a bargain. He said he would forgo the farmer's debt if he could marry his daughter. Both the farmer and his daughter were horrified by the proposal. So the cunning money-lender suggested that they let providence decide the matter.

He told them that he would put a black pebble and a white pebble into an empty money bag. Then the girl would have to pick one pebble from the bag. If she picked the black pebble, she would become his wife and her father's debt would be forgiven. If she picked the white pebble she need not marry him and her father's debt would still be forgiven. But if she refused to pick a pebble, her father would be thrown into jail.

They were standing on a pebble strewn path in the farmer's field. As they talked, the money-lender bent over to pick up two pebbles. As he picked them up, the sharp-eyed girl noticed that he had picked up two black pebbles and put them into the bag. He then asked the girl to pick a pebble from the bag.

Now, imagine you were standing in the field. What would you have done if you were the girl? If you had to advise her, what would you have told her?

Solutions:

Careful analysis produces 3 possibilities:

1. The girl should refuse to take a pebble.
2. The girl should show that there were two black pebbles in the bag and expose the money-lender as a cheat.

3. The girl should pick a black pebble and sacrifice herself in order to save her father from his debt and imprisonment.

Take a moment to ponder over the story. The above story is used with the hope that it will make us appreciate the difference between lateral and logical thinking. The girl's dilemma cannot be solved with traditional logical thinking. Think of the consequences if she chooses the above logical answers.

What would you recommend to the girl to do?

What the girl did:

The girl put her hand into the moneybag and drew out a pebble. Without looking at it, she fumbled and let it fall onto the pebble-strewn path where it immediately became lost among all the other pebbles.

"Oh, how clumsy of me," she said. "But never mind, if you look into the bag for the one that is left, you will be able to tell which pebble I picked."

Since the remaining pebble is black, it must be assumed that she had picked the white one. And since the money-lender dared not admit his dishonesty, the girl changed what seemed an impossible situation into an extremely advantageous one.

MORAL OF THE STORY:

Most complex problems do have a solution. It is only that we don't attempt to think in that direction.

"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty."

Mohandas K. Ghandi

STAFF APPRECIATION IDEAS

This is an important event and role for your leadership students. Identify a *Pamper Day* and have a nail technician come into the staff room. This provides a great lift for some staff and the nail technician might get some future clients. You may do the same with a massage therapist. Some schools can have senior students cover the 30 minutes of class that a staff member is being "pampered" in the staff room.

Create your own *Walk of Fame* for your teachers. Get a piece of donated red carpet or put red butcher paper down in the entry hall. Make gold stars with a teacher's name on each, and have the student leaders of the school meet the teachers as they arrive one morning.



Getting them off the fence

The world of middle schoolers is a difficult place. Fueled by raging hormones, the physical and emotional changes that occur during middle school years are the greatest this population will experience in their lifetimes. These changes, along with pressure to realize academic success while balancing a fledgling social life and maintaining a healthy balance with siblings and parents, can easily place middle school students at the peak of their collective stress levels.

The majority of middle schoolers seem to handle it all. There are exceptions who encounter difficulties and may need support from the school, home, and community—and these students often sort out the concerns that have unexpectedly entered their lives and return to mainstream middle school life. They rejoin their friends in athletic or academic competitions, musical organizations, cocurricular programs, and service organizations and become active members of the school community, and they fall into a comfortable routine.

In most middle schools there is a subpopulation of students who are well behaved, realize academic success, and get along well with their families. These

students participate in classroom discussions, enjoy lunch with their friends in the cafeteria, and have age-appropriate social skills. What makes members of this population special is that they don't engage in organized school functions or join school-sponsored organizations. They have chosen to remain at the outer edge or fringe of school life.

In a utopian environment, a cocurricular net could be cast over all the students within a middle school, and as the net was pulled in students could be slotted for activities based on their interests. There would be an instant compatibility match between cocurricular offerings and student interests, and no students would be on the fringe. Reality tells us that schools are not like that—and therefore school personnel, teachers, counselors, student government advisers, and administrators need to stretch even further to try to bring students who have been content sitting on the fence of school life into the mainstream. How to realize this goal is a challenge for members of the school community.

Teacher Adviser Program

For middle schools that have a well-defined and successful teacher adviser pro-

gram as a core component of the school's overall philosophy, there will be a natural fit between student and adviser. By design, an advisory program enables an adviser to forge positive relationships with a group of students. As the adviser and students grow to know each other, the adviser will be able to assist fringe students who are interested in becoming involved in school activities to do so. Conversely, the adviser will know the advisees well enough to not push those fringe students who are content as they are.

There are ample benefits associated with a viable advisory program. Involving all students in adviser/advisee activities will allow even the most reluctant student to venture into low-risk activities within an established safe environment that is carefully regulated by a caring adult. Ongoing participation in nonthreatening activities may well bring fringe students toward greater participation in school-sponsored activities.

Direct Contact

For middle schools without advisory programs, school personnel can usually identify students who are not involved in the school's leadership opportunities that fall beneath the umbrella of student government. As a goal of the school, teachers, counselors, the school nurse, and the principal may work together to get students who demonstrate leadership potential but have not moved toward the school's epicenter involved in school activities, including student government. This may be accomplished by pairing interested staff with fringe students. Using a variety of strategies, this personalized one-on-one interaction may encourage students to become involved with school activities.

Ongoing mentoring should accompany this outreach initiative. The staff member should offer emotional support as the fringe student transitions to the world of



Some find it comfortable to sit on the sidelines and watch, but it's lonely there.

activities. Offering a support group for students with leadership potential, facilitated by a trained staff member, will assist in making this transition comfortable while allowing students to receive support and to support each other.

Club Period

Schools that offer a club period during school time will have a head start in involving all students, including those on the fringe, in cocurricular programs. The nature of a club program, where areas of interests are transformed into clubs supervised by knowledgeable advisers, allows students of similar interests to gather and enjoy their common interests. To strengthen a club period, the offering of a supervised study hall or music study session should be minimized. While study programs have value, they tend to marginalize the value of a school's club period and allow the students who sit on the fringe of school activities another opportunity to remain there. A club period with enthusiastic advisers will be a viable source of enjoyment and personal growth for students.

Having representatives elected from club activities rather than homerooms could give some students an opportunity to get involved in student leadership who might not otherwise. Students feel more comfortable with others having the same interests and are more likely to participate in the election—or even run for office. They might also have a common interest that would drive their involvement.

The time designated for student council to meet will determine which strategy can be used to move fringe students closer to the center of school activities. Ideally, the student council should not meet during the school's club period, since student council representatives will not be able to participate in other club activities. If the student council convenes before or after school, representatives may enjoy club activities while remaining active members of student government.



It takes some effort, but if you can get one person in a group involved, all will join.

Off-Campus Leadership Academy

Other groups within the school may have daytime retreats or academies for the purpose of team building, a similar experience can be designed for those students who remain on the fringe of school activities but possess or have demonstrated the potential for participation in student government, school activities, or school leadership. Determining how to approach students to become involved in such an activity will require some sensitivity.

Offering an activity that is sponsored by the student government, parent organization, or school administration and is open to all students who exhibit leadership traits will enable any interested student to participate. The field of candidates can be widened by letting students self-nominate for the retreat or be nominated by a classmate or by a staff member.

Using ice-breaking and trust-building activities, a leadership academy can assist students in realizing their potential and move them into positions that require active involvement in school-based initiatives related to student government and the myriad activities that take place within a middle school. At the conclusion of the leadership academy, follow-up activities to sustain interest and motivation should be integrated into the school's calendar.

Moving Toward the Center

Students who have chosen to remain on the fringe of school activities have done so for a variety of personal reasons. Striking a balance between students who have chosen to remain on the outer limits of a school's environment and opportunities to involve these students in developing and maximizing their leadership skills requires patience, persistence, and extraordinary sensitivity. The potential for personal growth at the middle school and beyond is limitless. Elaborate plans designed to integrate hesitant students into the mainstream of the school will be successful only if student interest is present. If it is, school personnel can rest easy knowing they have reached out to these students and hope that in time fringe students will recognize and self-activate their leadership potential. ■

Robert Ruder

This article first appeared in an issue of **Leadership Magazine**. Check out www.nasc.us for more great info and leadership articles.

*“What you leave behind
is not what is engraved in
stone monuments, but what
is woven into the lives of
others.”*

Pericles

W.H.S. Commando Biffies

It seems we consistently take time to recognize those students in our school who experience success both academically and athletically. When you look at an entire school population, these two groups tend to represent a small percentage of our entire student body.

In an attempt to recognize some of our ‘Invisible Students’ (and in some cases, staff); Wainwright High School ran their inaugural “W.H.S. Commando Biffies” last June. Because our school mascot is named ‘Biff’ — we thought this to be an appropriate name for our annual awards.

We went to the student body who came up with the first list of categories and then took it to the staff for their input. The staff were given the ‘Power of Veto’ but did not exercise the same as they felt all categories were within our guidelines of respect.

Once the categories were finalized, publicity began through announcements, posters and most effectively through word of mouth and invitation to participate as a nominee. The response was phenomenal — it turns out that our invisible kids truly want to be visible and simply needed an avenue to do so. Nominated students were approached individually and were given the opportunity to either accept or decline the nomination. Their acceptance of their nomination included their permission to take their picture which was to be included in the PowerPoint presentation.

We received many nominations in most categories. Once nominations were ceased, we took the top three of each category based on the total number of votes or in some cases hilarious comments written on the nomination ballot. With the tallying complete, it was now time for the Premier Event. All students and staff were invited to the gymnasium for the last 40 minutes of the day for the presentation of the ‘Biffy’ awards in conjunction with our intramural celebration.



Mary Frank, one of our School Climate Advisors, put together a PowerPoint of all nominees and then the winners of each category. This presentation was the focal point of the assembly as we worked our way through the various categories, the nominees for the same and then the winner.

There was lots of good-natured laughing and cajoling going on as well as thunderous applause as each category winner was announced. Many of the student body vocally shared whom they thought would be the recipient of these ‘highly coveted awards’.

This single event has given us a real ‘in’ with a sector of the student population that previously appeared to be ‘unreachable’!

Categories for the W.H.S. Commando Biffies included:

- Funkiest Gym Change
- Person Most Likely to Talk Their Way Out of a Ticket
- Student With the Dirtiest Locker
- Person Most Likely to Borrow a Pen/Pencil
- Teacher Easiest to Convince YOU are Right
- Student Most Likely to be Found Doodling in . . .
- Teacher Easiest to Get Off Topic
- Most Likely to Have Something Stuck in Their Front Teeth
- Most Often Can Be Found Working Behind the Scenes
- Most Likely to Have Their Homework Done
- Most Likely to Overconsume ‘Energy Drinks’

This list of categories will change from year to year as we seek more student/staff input and attempt to expand our accessibility to those ‘Invisible Kids’. ■

Brent C. Allen

Envision EMI's Canadian Debut

This fall Envision EMI introduced its unique student leadership and development programs to Canada.

The EMI stands for Educate, Motivate and Inspire and that has been Envision's mandate for 23 years. Over 60,000 students from over 50 countries will participate in Envision programs this year. Programs are tuition-based and participating students are nominated by their teachers, advisors and administrators.

Envision will be offering Canadian students a variety of programs this year:

■ GYLC – the Global Young Leaders Conference

This program includes 6 days in Washington working with leaders in industry, business and education-developing leadership, decision-making, problem-resolving and other skills. Students are then transported to New York where they work on projects, with students from around the world. The students then make their final presentations on the floor of the United Nations.

■ NYLC – the National Young Leaders Conference

This opportunity will be coming to Toronto this summer. The four-day program is designed to help high-achieving students develop their full leadership potential. The theme of the Conference is *Courageous Leadership*. Students build strategies to help them strengthen the skills they need to succeed in high school while developing personal leadership plans that will guide their development once they return to their home school.

■ ISLP – the International Scholar Laureate Program

This advanced academy offers pre-professional educational opportunities for outstanding university students. ISLP delegations are offered in the career areas of Anthropology & Archaeology, Business, Diplomacy & International Relations, Engineering, Medicine and Nursing.

For more information on Envision EMI and how you can nominate students for these outstanding programs simply e-mail your school address to tomwilson@sympatico.ca Envision will forward you a complete nomination kit, with no obligation.

“Roads endure longer than pyramids.”

Karol Bunsch

LOOKING FOR HEROES?

Your students need positive young heroes to look up to and emulate. *Notes from Canada's Young Activists: A Generation Stands up for Change* is a great book that contains inspirational and true stories.

The book is compiled by Severn Cullis-Suzuki and others and it is published by Greystone Books. There are short 3-4 page submissions where twenty five different young Canadians describe their passions for change. They describe their paths to change and are great contacts for your students interested in making a positive difference in this world, not just their school. It is amazing to read how many young Canadians there are doing incredible things in this country and the world.

More heroes?

A great website about everyday heroes to check out is The Giraffe Project. The Giraffe Heroes are people who stick their necks out for the common good. You can find out more information and stories about these heroes at the website: www.giraffe.org



"I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

Ralph Nader

Above and Beyond

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To learn more about membership, go to www.casaaleadership.ca/join.html

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Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisors

Resources

Be sure to visit the CASAA website for more lesson plans, activity ideas and a complete list of resources.
casaaleadership.ca



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www.friesens.com/yearbook

The Support of the Group

This is a fun activity that allows small groups to support an individual member with a few balloons and a lot of co-operation.

Props: one balloon for each participant, fat tipped permanent marker

Group size: 1-10

Time: 15-30 minutes

Intent: To identify supporting factors that help balance people.

Action: Group balances a member on a bed of supportive balloons.

Highlights:

Make sure the ground being used is not likely to burst balloons, or use a tarp or blanket between balloons and its surface.

Preparation:

Distribute one balloon to each person. Ask them to inflate it and tie off the neck. Have a few extras ready to replace the couple that burst. Give each person a fat tipped permanent marker (NOT pointed pen), and ask them to write their name on the balloon. You may use balloon colors to divide a large group into small ones.

Script:

Along with your name on the balloon, write something you do to support people in your group as they try new things and take risks (people do this). Now, I'd like to get one volunteer who is willing to try something new and take the risk of lying down on the supporting balloons of the group. Any takers? (get a volunteer).

The challenge is to float or balance this risk taker, who may metaphorically represent the team or your school, on a bed of support without touching anyone or anything other than balloons and without anyone holding balloons in place. You can help your group member into position, but support must be by balloons only. Any questions? (give the group ten minutes to strategize, then five minutes to actually "float" the person, and decide if you will allow other groups to share balloons and spread the support around).

Variations:

Extend the challenge by very carefully withdrawing one balloon at a time and experimenting with the fewest number to float a person.

Float several people, side by side, at the same time.

Change the topic on the balloons from support to commitments or contributions.



from: "99 of the best Experiential Corporate Games we know!" by Faith Evans

