

ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENT LEADERS ACROSS CANADA

Vol. 4 No. 1

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY ADVISORS

Fall 2000

In the Lead: Student Leaders for Tomorrow

CIRA and CASAA are teaming up to present a dynamic advisor conference promoting Student Leadership Development and Intramurals. This conference will be held at the University of Calgary, October 13-15, 2000. Cost for CASAA or CIRA members is \$125. This includes workshop sessions and meals.

Contact:

Corinne Paul
University of Calgary
2500 University Dr. NW
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4
fax: 403.284.5867

Establish a Library

Every leadership or activity group should have a resource library. If you don't have one, just make it a goal to buy three good books this year. This will leave next year's group with something to start with. Their job is to add three more books to the resource library. Two books for outdoor leadership or adventure games are "Quicksilver" and "Silver Bullets". They are classics and are now available through CASAA. The author is Karl Rohnke. The Internet is great, but sometimes a browse through a great resource book is needed.

Education is More than Classroom Work

In its attempt to control spending in the school system, the Ontario government has decided that the only valuable education occurs within the classroom, hence their boast that the classroom will not be touched by their spending cuts. Does education start and end with the opening and closing of a classroom door?

Education is about relationships, experiences and life-long learning, as well as the facts within the academic curriculum. Students, teachers and parents know the value of co-curricular programs and that is why they gladly volunteer to make sure these programs run.

The Conference Board of Canada recognizes such programs in saying that, "employers are expecting students to graduate with employability skills. These skills are developed in the academic classroom and through life experiences outside of the classroom. A diverse student activity program that is well-organized can address these employability skills and provide opportunities for students to practice and acquire the tools necessary for employment."

Experiences enjoyed while participating in science fairs stimulate further research in the classroom. Relationships built while coaching are carried over to an increased co-operation during regular lessons. Student government and charity drives develop leadership and citizenship, while teamwork learned on the playing field is a valuable lesson for life.

Teachers have always recognized this and have chosen to support the diverse co-curricular endeavours of schools. Not all schools focus on the successes of their football teams or string orchestras or debating societies; but we do offer and support programs students want with teacher volunteers willing to sponsor them and lend their expertise. These other educational activities are the life of a well-run school.

One of the most important ingredients of a secondary education does not happen in a classroom setting. The activities outside the classroom constitute the "third curriculum," an essential ingredient in a complete education. Co-curricular activities must be valued and supported for their role as an essential part of every student's life at school.

John Thompson

CASAA

Don't do it again

We have a very successful Hug Day at our school each November. Student Council makes over 1100 yarn pom poms on neck strings and 98% of the school wears one on Hug Day by choice. (The pom poms are made by wrapping yarn around a CD case, remove the CD case and tie the middle of the loop created securely. The neck string is then put through this centre tie. Now cut both ends of the loop to form the pom pom.)

The hugs are given as follows: a person pulls a string from the pom pom around his or her neck, ties it to the neck string of a reciprocating individual, and then they hug. It is a great day that spreads good feelings and smiles around the whole school. Our student council feels great because they have had a part in a very successful event. It is also a great bonding activity for our council as each person must make their quota of hug strings for the activity.

When it is over, the student council members will often say, "That was fantastic! Let's do it again next semester!" I say, "No. We'll do it again *next year*."

The reason: some events are so good that they should only be done *once* a year. Consider the Olympics. If they occurred each year, would they be as fascinating? Many events that you run will lose their lustre if you "do it again next term!" Save the good ones for that once-a-year treatment.

Dave Conlon

The Home Court Advantage

School spirit is not a one-person-job. It requires the positive efforts of many individuals in leadership positions, building good feelings over a period of time. One leadership skill that can help to build these positive feelings within your leadership group is encouragement. To encourage is to let someone else know that you honestly believe in his/her ability to do something. Once you start to pass on your belief that a person's abilities are worthy of your notice, people will start to work harder and be positive about what they are doing. The other great aspect of encouragement is that it is infectious. Those people who have been encouraged by you will start to encourage others.

Athletes know how much easier it is to play a game on the home court. This advantage that everyone talks about comes from the supportive people in the stands and in the hallways before the game. It has a way of lowering the net or widening the opponent's goal. When you encourage the people who work with you, you are establishing the home court advantage within your group.

Often we can encourage people in non-verbal ways as well as verbal ones. By gestures, smiles, positive words, or just by attending the activities, we become leaders while encouraging and supporting others to become leaders too. Think of parents who have been told to spend *quality* time with their children, and they attempt to spend time along with money. It is the amount of attention that is paid to the child that creates the *quality*, and not the amount of money that is spent on an activity. True encouragement costs you your time and your attention to the efforts of others.

Activity

Pick four simple items (e.g. paper clip, elastic, pencil, paper cup). Have the students brainstorm how they might encourage students within their leadership group or school using one of these items. The only stipulation is that the encouragement method must not cost more than the cost of the item.

Brainstorm within your leadership group how you might encourage not only your athletes, but other groups within your school.

- How might you run an academic pep rally?
- What about putting up banners that list the people in your school who have quit smoking?
- Do you have a visible list of scholarship winners?
- Have you built a Hall of Fame for graduates that have gone on to better things?
- Do you recognize the MVP's (the most valuable pupils) within your school?

Positive Change as an Epidemic

Malcolm Gladwell, in his book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, looks at major changes that occur in our society, and he compares these changes to outbreaks of an infectious disease. Gladwell outlines the medical background and shows that epidemics result when a few changes occur for a disease, thereby causing it to expand or infect people outside of the normal boundaries of that disease.

Epidemics result as a function of three very important variables:

- ▲ the people who transmit the disease
- ▲ the infectious agent itself
- ▲ the environment in which the infectious agent is operating

With the example of AIDS, people who are sexually active with many partners will transmit this type of disease to a great percentage of a population. Since the disease does not have a cure, all who come in contact with HIV will remain infected. An environment of promiscuity and unprotected intercourse allows the disease to spread outside of any community boundaries that initially held it out of the general population.

What does this mean for creating change within a school?

- ▲ You need the right people transmitting the message of change.
- ▲ The change itself must have an infectious factor.
- ▲ The setting or school environment must be able to host the change.

Who are the right people?

Schools with great choirs or excellent yearbooks do not have better artists or singers than other schools in the same area. They have great programs in the arts or on the basketball court because the *right* people are running the programs in these schools. The right people are communicators and salespersons for their programs. Positive change occurs because students or teachers who can sell the programs to others have been put in place.

What is an infectious message?

Compare the PA announcement that the football team won last night to the word in the cafeteria that there's a fight after school in the parking lot. Infectious messages have a punch that interest students and get passed on through word of mouth. A canned food drive is a great opportunity to teach community involvement and help the local foodbank, but the charity drive must have a marketing virus that infects all of the possible participants of your school to make it successful.

How can one produce the environment for change?

It is easier to be a better student in a clean and bright school than it is in a school littered with trash and graffiti. Real positive change can only occur in the right educational environment. The physical and administrative environment must be conducive to positive change. This means that principals must know what is going on, and be willing to assist in the changes planned for a school.

Change does not occur by chance. It happens as a response to conditions and pressures that exist within a school or within society. This response can be a planned effort or a reactionary movement. Positive change is an intelligent response to the needs of a school and community which must understand the functions that drive successful change.

Change can be mandated, but positive change must be accepted and passed on from one participant to another for the positive change to last. The flu season occurs during the winter because people are spending more time indoors in contact with other infected individuals. Consider your school year to be a season for contacting the people in your building about positive change. Plan your changes with infectious care and your school will be healthier for it.

Getting Along

It has been estimated that, of all the people asked to leave their jobs each year, only 10 per cent of them are fired because of their inability to handle the work assigned to them. This means that 90 per cent are let go because of their inability to work with other employees or customers. Many of these people who are terminated are efficient workers; they are just not effective team members.

The most efficient team member is not an asset if he can't get along with the other members of the team. In many cases, the most efficient person will gravitate to the leadership position of groups, because they seem to be the one who "knows how to get things done." However, if the most efficient person does not understand the art of getting along with others, it will soon become a dysfunctional group or a group of one. No individual can be as efficient as a co-operative group that works effectively.

If asked, many student leaders will admit readily that they hate working in groups for classroom assignments. This frustration with group work occurs because these efficient people focus entirely on getting the job done right, rather than learning how to work effectively with others in the group. Because many student council activities rely on working in groups, one of the most important skills for student leaders to learn is the art of working with others. It will improve the groups that they lead, and it will be an effective skill that they can use later in life.

Survival Kit for a Happy Year of Activities

Student leaders and advisors for clubs and activities need to be reminded that they are important and valued members of your school. Giving them a boost at the beginning of the year can give your activity program the impetus it requires to get things off with the right amount of energy and attitude. It also doesn't require a lot of money to show these people that you value their contributions.

The following kits can be put together by your leadership group. They can be put into a plastic bag, but a clear ball used as a Christmas decoration is a much more effective container.

Items Needed:

- Toothpick
- Rubber Band
- Band Aid
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Chewing Gum
- Mint
- Candy Kiss
- Tea Bag
- Quote

Explanation for items:

Toothpick - to remind you to pick out the good qualities in others

Rubber Band - to remind you to be flexible, things might not always go the way you want but it will work out.

Bandaid - to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's.

Pencil - to remind you to list your blessings everyday.

Eraser - to remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's OK.

Chewing Gum - to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything.

Mint - to remind you that you are worth a mint

Candy Kiss - to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday.

Tea Bag - to remind you to relax daily and reflect on all the positive things in your life. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one.

Quote - Friends are a very rare jewel, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, share a word of praise and they always open their hearts to us.

Can anyone be a leader?

Before modern times, this was a question that was not even considered. Society accepted that leaders came from the aristocracy or that they were appointed by the reigning monarch. The monarchs themselves were born into their leadership roles rather than selected for their talent and ability to lead. Furthermore, the power given to a monarch was absolute in the highest sense through the idea of divine right. The divine right of kings was a political belief that stated that a king governed his people under unlimited authority given directly by God, to whom he alone was responsible.

The belief that leaders come from an aristocracy has not disappeared. The modern aristocracy in your school are the popular people with good looks and the right social connections. They will continue to get selected either by other people in leadership roles or by an electorate who are impressed by their looks and pedigree.

If you don't know any members from the existing leadership aristocracy and you don't have the right blood line, what are you going to do? The first thing you must do is realize that the growth of democracy turned the power pyramid of the divine right upside down. Democratic leaders differ from kings because the people of a democracy are led by a person who is ruled by a vote of the people. The true democratic leader is a part of the group rather than apart from the group. Democracy is a wonderful thing, but it doesn't always select good leaders in schools because of the quixotic nature of the electorate.

How do you attract or develop good student leaders?

The best way is to build a leadership group that is composed of three types of positions. The first group of positions are elected, the second group are applied for, and the third group are selected. With this three-tiered system, anyone can become a leader.

Always be on the lookout for students to participate and invite them to be a part of your activities. Once the elections are over and the events start to run, many students lose interest in the positions they ran for. When you scout for talent in your building, potential leaders can be anyone in your school.

The more experience one has in different leadership positions, the more skilled one becomes in different roles. Establish a defined progression of leadership that starts with the class rep and ends with the final position of premier of the school. With a defined path of leadership in place, any student who is interested in pursuing leadership will have a path to follow to gain experience and leaders to emulate.

Many good students do not want to run in elections because they prefer to avoid that type of spotlight.

Develop an application and interview process for these types of positions. Invite students to apply for these positions either by stopping them in the hall, or by a letter sent to their homeroom on school letterhead.

Ask other staff members for the names of students with potential for leadership. Your present student leaders should have some input on who has the potential and the interest for the job of leadership within your school as well.

Advisors must have the program in place that will set their students in a position where successful leadership can take place. The more varied the opportunities for leadership, the more success your students can have. In this way, anyone can be a leader.

The new CASAA resource, the *Making it Work Workbook*, has an excellent description of an election/selection process created by Tim Tonner. This process will take time to adapt and implement, but the positive ramifications for your school will be very beneficial for all students. You will have a solid election process and a suitable selection process that allows all students to consider themselves possible candidates for the leadership pool within your school.

Goal Getting

It is imperative that you set goals for yourself, but you also must have *ganas*. *Ganas* is the Spanish word for desire. It is the desire to work hard, carry on, do whatever it takes to ensure survival, and go beyond survival to security.

Jamie Escalante in the movie, “Stand and Deliver”, tells his students that they must have *ganas*. They are from the barrio in Los Angeles and they need *ganas* to get them beyond the life predetermined by their race and social status. It is not enough to have high goals set for you by teachers or yourself, you have to have the desire within your heart to start on the road to achieving these goals.

No matter what goals you set, you need *ganas* to achieve them fully.

Who-What-When List

An activity office can be a busy place and a common question is, “Who’s in charge of this activity?” This question can be asked by people entering your office for the first time or by people who work there all the time. Post in a prominent place in the office, a list that has all of your events categorized under Who—What—When. This will identify each activity to a person-in-charge and a completion date. Each person running the activity can then have their own Who—What—When list. This is a great refinement of the To Do list, because it identifies the person in charge and the date an item is to be accomplished.

*John Francis
Sights and Sounds*

Each Snowflake is Different

A running argument among CASAA provincial reps is assigning the right name to the structure by a lake that people will go to on weekends during the summer. The proper name has ranged from cottage, to cabin, to camp, to summer house. What the friendly argument does is demonstrate that even within our own country, different regions use different words to describe the same thing.

This situation can be exacerbated in a system of communication that does not allow the listeners to question or respond to the information being presented. Student leaders must learn some of the drawbacks of the types of communication that they use everyday. The PA system is one of the most popular ways to communicate within a school, but as a method of one-way communication it has definite drawbacks.

Communication Exercise

Concept: One common observation amongst student leaders is: Nobody listens to announcements at our school. Yet, all across Canada schools have daily announcements which *nobody* listens to. Students must learn that the words that they say on these announcements often can mean different things to different listeners.

Time needed: five minutes and discussion time.

Materials needed: one piece of letter-sized paper for each participant.

Activity: The participants sit in a circle with their backs to the centre. They are handed a sheet of paper and asked to refrain from looking at what the person on either side of them is doing with their paper. Standing in the centre, the leader gives directions to fold the paper twice and make specific rips and tears in the paper to design a snowflake. The participants are not allowed to question the directions and for each question asked, the leader simply repeats the direction that was given previously word for word. The leader designs a snowflake according to the directions that they are giving without letting the participants see the progress. When the leader’s snowflake is complete, the group compares the results.

Discussion:

1. Why are all the snowflakes not the same as the leader’s?
2. What has caused the differences?
3. How could everyone get the same message?
4. Where do we experience the same problems in our communications?

A complimentary exercise would be to list words that have different meanings in different regions or countries that speak the same language. (e.g. Why won’t the Canadian Olympic Team be prominently displaying the ROOTS logo in Australia?)

Institutional Memory

At information sharing sessions and on the CASAA listserv, I have heard comments lamenting the level of ‘school spirit’ that is not evident in individual schools. These statements are then followed by great ideas regarding specific events that will help boost the spirit in the school. I wish it was as simple as running a free barbecue, but this has not been my experience. A series of successful events that are systematically aimed at every member of the school community will include events like a ‘free’ barbecue.

The key word here is ‘systematic’, because it has appeared to me that many student councils (STUCO) and many intramural councils do not have a system and do not maintain an *institutional* memory. So, as students and teachers come and go, those left behind or who are new to the school are faced with the daunting task of starting *new* activities. These are situations where local success is predicated on the dedication of a few students and/or a teacher. When the students leave or the teacher leaves or takes on different duties, it’s back to the drawing board. Certainly this is not the case everywhere, but certainly it is the case in many schools.

A homeroom system is something that makes a difference. The very best system that I have seen in action was in a school in Saskatoon (Nutana Collegiate). It combined homerooms with schools (houses). Students arrived in the school in grade 9 staying with the same group of students in the same homeroom for 4 years. In addition, they were combined with a number of other groups to form a school (house). This system had many advantages the most important of which was the quality of the relationships that all students were able to develop with some other students which were really quite permanent relationships. Also, the homeroom teacher stayed with them for 4 years: they may not have taught the students every year but they stayed with them as homeroom teacher. This school ran this system for about 50 years. It worked, as the school was truly a learning community that clearly valued every member of the school. I had the good fortune to grow up near this school and had siblings attend it, although I went to another high school. Interestingly, the high school I went to was brand new and attempted to establish the same system, but for the most part failed to achieve the same kind of results, so it is important to remember the system needs people to drive it—in short, leadership.

What I have seen to be the best system, given the constraints on a large high school or a medium junior high school, is as follows:

Students are permanent members of a homeroom or instructional group or a teacher advisor group. These groups are combined permanently into sections/houses. The student leadership/council (STUCO) is designed to

facilitate activities using the above system. Also, activities need to be planned, so the plans are kept on disc or in a binder. (Use binders because they are harder to lose.) In this way some activities, as they are repeated, evolve into traditions that bind the school community closer together. The scope of activities we have adopted began with the use of CIRA resources and then we found ways to let the program evolve to fit this school. You must understand that every school will be a little different.

We have spent the last year and a half working with students and teachers to get this program on the road, so it doesn’t take forever. This method is very effective, and, as with anything worth doing, takes dedication, work and patience. Most importantly it takes a supportive principal and administration.

As to school spirit, when a series of events are offered using a system that really does include everyone and the events are soundly planned and run: school spirit finds a platform for display and so becomes evident. School spirit (sense of community) is always there, be it uninspired and drab or active and proud. With committed long-term leadership, a sound organization and the right resources you can make it ‘better’.

Dave Garvie

*John G. Diefenbaker High School
garvied@cadvision.com*

Quotes

Good ideas are common. What's uncommon are people who'll work hard enough to bring them about.

Ashleigh Brilliant

If you're ridin' ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

Will Rogers

A group becomes a team when each member is sure enough of himself and his contribution to praise the skills of the others.

Norman Shidle

All of us get 1,440 minutes in a day. If you don't like how your time is being spent, saved, interrupted, organized or enjoyed, guess who's in charge of that?

Cathy Kachur

No one is apathetic except those in pursuit of someone else's agenda.

Henry Ford

Two things are bad for the heart: running up hills and running down people.

Anonymous

It is from numberless acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.

Robert F. Kennedy

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.

Seneca

Profits by the slice

Many groups try to make money by running a huge one-shot fundraiser rather than slowly accumulating their profit over time. The slice method of fundraising is simply putting the pieces together over a length of time to make a whole lot of moolah!!

Clubs and teams have members who can work a regular shift at lunch or a specific day after school. What they must realize is that small fundraisers that make \$20 a lunch can make \$100 in a week. A popcorn machine can do this during a lunch hour for a group of dedicated volunteers. The cafeteria doesn't take a drop in profits, because they don't sell popcorn through the line. Your pop machines will sell more because you add extra salt to the popcorn! (just kidding!)

Our Key Club knew that the lunch hour was taken by other groups, so they wondered what they could do after school. They contacted a local pizza place and had 10 large pepperoni pizzas delivered. Tables were set up by the heavy-traffic exit doors of the school, and the pizzas were sold by the slice. A price of \$1.50 gets you a pop and a slice. This did not conflict with the cafeteria sales because they were doing it after school.

The Key Club has been slicing up the profits and now makes around \$40 each time they do it after school. They have discovered that students want to grab and gulp right as they're leaving, so the pizza delivery must be there before the last bell rings. Everyone knows that popcorn is sold best by the smell, and students entering a hallway filled with the pizza pheromone can't resist.

The Key Club members hunt down staff with the couple of slices that are left over after the exit rush is done. They also have discovered that this fundraiser works best only two or three days a week with Monday being the poorest day and Thursday and Friday being the best.

Since the club has been doing it on a regular basis, students now know that there is a slice for the ride or walk home. Our Key Club is adding a most important ingredient to their personal club pizza — a mushrooming profit maker.

Dave Conlon

Newsletter Published by:

Dave Conlon
Publication Director for CASAA
268 West Acres Drive
Guelph, ON N1H 7P1
fax: 519.821.0035
email: info@casaa-resources.net

This newsletter has been printed with the generous support of **Premier School Agendas**. Contact Premier Agendas on the internet at www.agendas.com for the office near you.