

# ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENT LEADERS ACROSS CANADA

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CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY ADVISORS

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## CASAA Membership

CASAA has been providing leadership and resources in the student activity area in Canada for over 15 years. This membership drive is your chance to show that you believe in the power of student leadership and affirm its positive contribution to the atmosphere of your school community. Your \$75.00 membership fee will provide CASAA with the money to create more resources and provide a central service for the advisors and students across this country.

A school membership will provide three issues of this *Above and Beyond* newsletter, a 10% discount on the purchase of all CASAA resources and a copy of the monthly CASAA e-letter available by e-mail. Schools attending the Saskatoon CSLC will have already paid this membership fee and will continue to receive these benefits.

The CASAA e-letter is the newest resource available for advisors. It contains pertinent information and valuable resources for the activities and leadership. You can access this unique resource only through your CASAA membership. A school membership form has been mailed with this newsletter, but it is also available on the CASAA website to be downloaded.

## Motivation: Move me one more time?

The story is told of a coach who was having a tough time motivating one of his players who seemed to be losing the initial enthusiasm that he had displayed when he first joined the team. In his frustration the coach asked the young man, "Is it ignorance or apathy that's causing your attitude?" The player's response was, "Coach, I don't know and I don't care."

Motivation is something that you know is important, but when it's the alarm clock ringing for that early morning run, you tend to let gravity take over and the run takes place in your dream world between the sheets rather than in the vertical world of cold morning light. This is an example of apathy taking over even though you *know* how important the maintenance of a training routine is. You have lost the motivation that led to your goal of physical fitness by allowing old habits to return.

The question then is: How does one stay motivated? The answer is simple: Just like brushing your teeth. Everyone knows that good dental hygiene is achieved through regular brushing and flossing. (You can brush your teeth once a month, but other than making your mouth feel minty fresh, the overall results are truly negligible.) The same routine applies for motivating yourself. I don't subscribe to daily sessions of personal affirmation in front of the mirror, but I do believe that you need to find a regular way of motivating yourself that works for you. You can do this through restating your goals, reading about models of success or watching motivational movies. Some people find that a subscription to a running magazine or regular church attendance gives them a regular reminder of what they are committed to.

One of the keys to ongoing motivation is to not only keep your goals in mind, but to vary the ways that you motivate yourself or your group to achieve those goals. Once you know how to deal with the lack of motivation, you will feel less apathetic about the process of motivating yourself or your team or your committee members.

Dave Conlon

CASAA

## **Looking or Seeing?**

Many studies have shown the difficulties of getting the very same testimony from a number of eyewitnesses to an accident or crime. Even though all witnesses may have been looking at the event, they will have different things that they have seen. One way to demonstrate this is to try the following:

Participants are asked to pick a partner and look at the person for a few moments. Then have them turn away from each other and answer the following: What colour eyes does your partner have? What kind of collar is on your partner's shirt? What type of jewelry or watch are they wearing? Are they wearing a belt? What colour are their shoes?

Discuss with the group how often we talk with others and not notice the little details about them. What would happen in your leadership group if people started to pay attention to more than the surface details with the people they interact with? How would others feel if you paid attention to their moods or when they appeared very busy? Paying attention pays dividends in any group.

## **Popcorn Sculptures**

In honour of National Popcorn Day on January 30, organize a popcorn sculpture contest between homeroom classes or teams of students at lunch. Provide each group with a bag of popcorn and flour-paste glue or caramel, then let them create. After judging and displaying the creations, put them outside for the birds to eat.

## **Good Poster Design**

The first function of a poster is to attract the attention of a passer-by. Then, the poster must launch a message at the observer that produces a reaction. This message must be clear and intense. A bad poster can have a great message, but this message is obscured by the poor design or production of the bad poster. For example, a black marker will write a catchy message on a blue piece of paper, but nobody will take the time to read it because it is very difficult to see.

Seven basic rules of good poster design are:

1. A poster should communicate quickly and directly. It must be simple and to the point.
2. Creativity and originality are important because these qualities catch the viewer's eye. If the dance poster looks the same as all the other posters that you have used before in your school promotions, your intended audience will ignore it.
3. The prime purpose of a poster is to attract immediate attention and to transmit a simple message at a glance. (A person will spend less than EIGHT seconds reading your poster.)
4. The line, shape and colour used as part of the overall design should not be confusing.
5. Designs should be kept to a minimum of shapes, using strong flat areas of colour. Limit your lettering to a single style or font on any one poster.
6. All elements of composition should relate to each other in their arrangement and proportion to give the finished poster a unified and complete image.
7. Your message must be readable from a distance. People should not have to treat your message like a magazine ad. They should be able to read it from across a hallway.

Remember that the three essential qualities of a good poster are: simplicity, unity and surprise.

The use and basic characteristics of a poster may vary; but if the poster is read for any length of time, the complete effect should be instantaneous. You want your message to have the best chance of being seen, so think of locations in your school that have the highest traffic flow. The facing walls at the bottom of stairwells and T-junctions of hallways are most effective.

## Catching Their Eye

Students have the ability to tune out the blizzard of information that pours at them from television, magazines and billboards. They see your posters in the school hallways, but because you have not made them unique, the posters are part of the endless advertising static that students wade through every day. If you make your method of delivery different, you can at least catch their eye long enough to deliver the message. The following are some different ways to be seen:

### Soleful Ads

Write messages on masking tape on the bottom of your shoe. When you sit at a desk with your feet back and your toes pointed down people behind you can see the message. People are interested in things that are out of the ordinary and your soles will get a second look.

### Bubble Wrap Temptation

Bubble wrap has the advantage that people are attracted to it and it makes a noise when the bubbles are popped. When was the last time that your poster made noise that attracted people's attention? Mount your paper message on a sheet of bubble wrap and see how many people are attracted by the sound first and find the message second.

### Screen Saver

Many computer networks allow you to customize your screen saver. Post your activity details on a school-wide screen saver.

### Vegas Special

Put chaser lights around your prominent poster. Make sure that it is in a high traffic area. Buy Christmas lights on Boxing Day sales to lighten up your advertising campaigns.

### Bus Ads

If a large percentage of your students are bused, ask for permission to post signs in your school buses similar to those found in public transportation.

### Sandwich Boards

Two pieces of bristol board attached together loosely with yarn allow you to create walking billboards that can canvass the lunch room or your high traffic hang-outs. A unique approach on this theme involved a pet dog dressed up in a costume with a sign board across its back.

Remember that a unique ad works once. After that they've already seen your helium-filled message balloons and you have to come up with a new approach. Also, it's always better to have two or three really good signs than a bunch of sloppy uninspired posters. You can catch their eye, but you have to use a different glove each time!

The above ideas are from Lyn Fiscus and appeared in the December 2001 issue of *leadership for student activities* a NASSP publication.

## Chunking Information

When you realize how little time a passer-by gives to a poster, radio ad, or magazine advertisement; you then realize that you have to chunk your messages into recognizable patterns. Our daily observational lives are run like a TV channel remote control, and we surf the hundreds of messages that appear before us very quickly. If the messages are "chunked" into a pattern, then they will be quickly understood and the chance of the message making an impact is greater.

The following is an exercise in demonstrating the benefits of chunking and putting your message into a recognizable pattern:

Place the following letters on three separate overheads. Put each overhead up *very* briefly and then ask the audience to write down as much as they can of what they saw.

1. ACKELBSPZWOTQN
2. FILL QUIET KNIGHT  
SIMPLE
3. MANY DOGS HAVE LARGE  
FLEAS TODAY

### Questions:

- Why can you not recall all the first set of letters?
- What does the second set do? (chunking)
- Why is the third set easiest to remember? (chunking and pattern)

When you chunk and pattern your messages, you will be understood.

## Fall Activities

### Club Fair

Help students learn about the opportunities for involvement in activities at your school. Invite all student organizations to participate in a mini-mall at lunch. Provide each group with a table and ask them to create displays to solicit new members.

### Turkey Teacher

During the week before Thanksgiving, the student council posts pictures of a turkey outside of each teacher's classroom and sells "feathers" to be added to the turkey for 10¢. For 25¢ a person can take a feather off of the turkey. Student council must keep track of the feathers sold and removed legally and glue the feathers on daily. On the Friday before Thanksgiving, the teacher with the most feathers is announced and they receive a prize as being the best dressed turkey.

### Legs R Us

Take pictures of teachers' legs and then post them as the possible legs for a large turkey picture posted on a bulletin board. Students vote for the best legs with spare change and the winning legs are announced and rewarded.

### Rake and Run

Organize the ALBA — the Anti-Leaf-Blower-Association. Arm your members with rakes and go through the community in teams to randomly rake people's yards to the curb or neatly in piles. You can do some advance planning and find out where senior citizens live who might need assistance. Leave a note saying the person's yard was raked courtesy of your group.

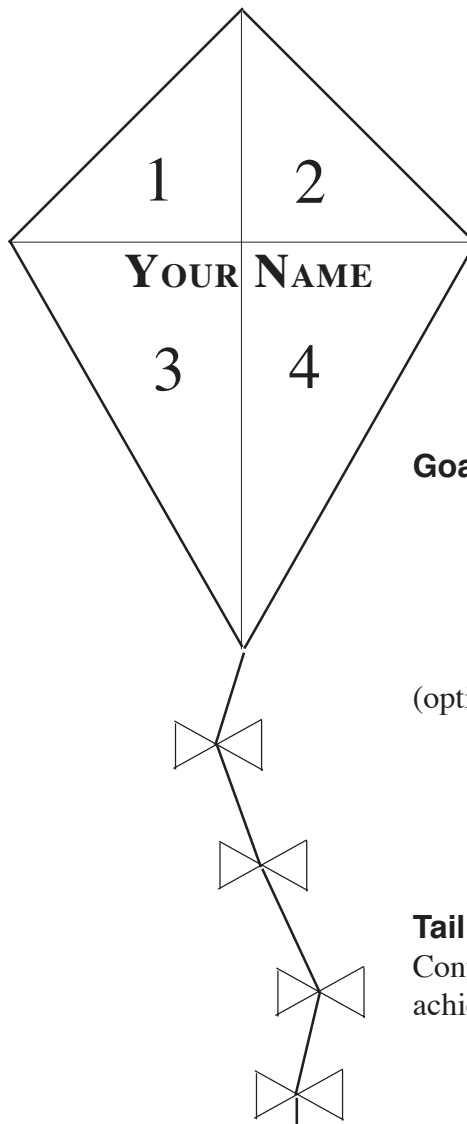
## Colourful Goal Kites

Many leadership exercises require students to express themselves through words. This exercise allows creative expression through the making of colourful goal kites. It is good to allow the participants who are not as verbally gifted but perhaps more artistic to express themselves.

Many students have not made their own kites before, and it is important to point out the necessity of the tail on this kind of kite. The tail provides stability in the wind, much the same way that the steps or contacts to achievement of the goals provide a stable method of achievement.

**Objective:** To identify and create personal goals

**Supplies:** Construction paper, yarn, glue scissors, markers



### Goals for each section:

1. School
2. Student Council
3. Future
4. Social

(option)

1. Things I like
2. I'm most proud of
3. Short term goals
4. Long term goals

### Tail bows:

Contain the steps or contacts needed to achieve your goals.

*Tom Heethuis*

## Maniacal Lego Activity

Communication is necessary in any group enterprise and building a simple lego object with a group is a great way to discover the intricacies of good communication. Lego is an excellent communication teaching tool because each box contains paper instructions that are clear, visual and concise. Students will enjoy this activity because it allows them to “play with lego” but also they will start to understand the skills needed to communicate efficiently during a project.

**Time required:** 40 minutes

**Materials needed:** Four different lego boxes. These should be the simple police, emergency vehicles or planes that cost between \$4 - \$8 per box.

**Activity:** Prior to this activity, the boxes containing the lego should be set up in four separate stations in the room and set up as follows:

station A — all the pieces of lego from one box placed in a plain box

station B — all the pieces of lego from one box placed in the original box with no instructions included

station C — all the pieces of lego from one box with the instructions but not the original box

station D — all the pieces of lego from one box with the instructions and the original box

The following instructions apply at each station:

station A — construct the object

station B — construct the object with one person touching the pieces

station C — construct the object but only one person is allowed to see the instructions. The person with the instructions cannot touch the pieces.

station D — construct the object with everyone contributing.

Divide the class into four groups. Each group will try each lego set up. Announce that the goal of this activity is to complete all four objects in the next 20 minutes. After about five minutes rotate the groups. Make sure that groups do not see completed objects from other stations.

### Discussion:

1. Ask which object was the hardest to complete.
2. How did the setups assist or detract from completing the objects?
3. Which object was more difficult: station B or C?
4. Which object was the easiest to complete?
5. How important is it to have clear sets of instructions?
6. How important is it that people know what the instructions are?
7. What types of communication were tested and demonstrated during the activity?

*Dave Conlon*

## Loonie Madness

This is similar to a 50–50 draw. During a basketball game, you collect loonies from people who want a chance to pick up some extra cash. Each person is given a ticket for their loonie and a matching ticket is put into the draw jar. A toonie would give you two tickets for the draw. Make sure you have some extra change for people who have bills. At the half-time break, half of the money that has been collected is put on the center court floor. The winning ticket is drawn from the jar and that person is given 30 seconds to pick up as many loonies as possible. The money that is not collected is additional profit for the school.

## Garbage-a-thon

Oscar the Grouch will be smiling when your students pre-solicit pledges on a per-bag basis for the litter that they collect in a specific area of your community on a specific day. Select a visible eyesore and with a small group, you can make a significant difference. This is a great way to help the community look better and fundraise at the same time.

## Senior Surfing

Use your school’s computer lab on a Saturday morning or a night after school and offer computer training for senior citizens. Have your student leaders act as tutors. The class can be promoted by placing ads in senior centres, nursing homes and churches. Charge the seniors for a two hour session where they can learn the basics of going on-line from experienced teen web-surfers. Many seniors want to start surfing, but they haven’t been given the opportunity.

## Movie Night Money

Movie nights are a good way to make some money. The difficulty is finding a picture that a lot of students haven't already seen. Our group of schools in Waterloo has a contract with Criterion Pictures that allows us to show movies that have just been on the big screen but haven't shown up in the video store yet. This is how it works:

We have paid a fee to Criterion Pictures ([www.criterionpic.com](http://www.criterionpic.com)) to show movies. There is a time period between a movie leaving the movie theatres and when it shows up on video or DVD release. There is a schedule of new releases for this period that Criterion sends to us, and we choose the movies that we want to show. The movie in VHS format is sent by courier to us about two days before we show it, and then we must send it back after the showing at our cost. We can charge whatever we want at the door and show as many movies as we want for the length of the contract. Our school paid for the contract with our first movie night gate receipts and that didn't count the money we made on popcorn and drinks.

It is also easy to get chaperones as students are in a different "frame of mind" for a movie night.

Your contract fee with Criterion can be reduced by block booking with schools in your area. Also, be aware that some movies are not appropriate for your movie nights even though the ratings may say they are. (I learned my lesson with "Me, Myself and Irene")

*Dave Conlon*

## Healthy Student Council Checklist

The following is a healthy way of checking up on what is happening with your leadership group. These questions should be answered privately on paper by all members including the advisor, because it is often the *unheard* message that indicates that something is missing or not working with your group.

1. Do we hold regular meetings?
2. Do we have a written agenda for our meetings?
3. Are minutes recorded and read at our meetings?
4. Do we allow adequate time for our meetings?
5. Do we make assignments during meetings?
6. Do we follow through with our assignments?
7. Do all participants at our meetings have an equal opportunity to speak and be heard?
8. Do we encourage new members of our group to participate?
9. Do we teach and demonstrate correct leadership principles?
10. Do we assume our full responsibility?
11. Do we conduct progress reviews to check our accomplishments on a regular basis?
12. Do we accept the responsibility for our failures?
13. Do we make a sincere effort to understand students' needs?
14. Do we recognize and compliment others for their efforts?
15. Do we do adequate advanced planning?
16. Do we delegate responsibility and authority?
17. Do we set worthwhile goals?
18. Do we actively seek general student opinion?
19. Do we communicate our goals and activities to the students?
20. Do we enjoy our assignments?
21. Do we try new things to improve our school atmosphere?
22. Do we have a sense of respect for the traditions that exist?

This checklist is from the *CASAA Student Activity Sourcebook*. It is an excellent source of ideas and resources about your basic student activity/ leadership program. You can order this book through CASAA.

## Talent Showcase

Your school has many individuals with talents that don't always get shown in the regular school day or during your activity programs. A Talent Showcase is a great way to let many groups or individuals demonstrate their talents to their friends and the school community. A showcase attracts a greater amount of participation than a contest because all types of talent are allowed to participate and they aren't competing against each other. This type of activity can be done during the school day, or you may wish to include the parents in an evening event. Either way, you can use this as an opportunity to make some students feel connected to their life at school and have their peers see them in a brand new way.

### Hints:

- Auditions are very important as you want to make sure that the participant or group can at least do their talent in front of you. If they can handle auditioning in front of you, your advisor, and/or the other people, they can most likely handle performing in front of a bigger crowd. A lot of people feel that it's harder to perform in front of a smaller, more "important" group.
- Let the participants know that auditions are for final acts and not "works in progress." What they present at the audition is what they will be doing on your stage. You do not want to be surprised by an act or routine that you have never auditioned.
- Hold a number of auditions at different times so everyone has an equal opportunity to audition.
- All acts must submit a full description of what they will require if they are accepted after the audition. This includes their copy of cued music and lighting and tech cues.
- A dress rehearsal will allow your tech group to place the acts on stage and time setup between acts. This will allow you to juggle your line-up and make for a smoother progression between acts.
- The MC is not the show, but it is important to have a positive skilled person at the microphone who won't get flustered when an act is not ready to go.
- Make sure the participants understand that this is a school event. Their material must be acceptable for your school environment. Some schools ask that groups pay a deposit that is returned after the showcase has been completed. (This is a good idea on band nights.)

A Talent Showcase is a great way for the students to view some of their peers in a different aspect. Someone who is able to sing can gain new status amongst classmates who see their classmate's artistic abilities in a brand new light.

## Actively Participating

A recent federal election had one candidate's election material stressing the fact that he "lived in the constituency" that he was running in and by notification indicated that the person running against him did not live in the area that he was attempting to represent. Waterloo County is not a really big area and the fact that you live a few miles outside of your electoral constituency shouldn't matter; but some people felt it *did* matter. For whatever reason, the "resident" did win the seat.

There seems to be a common understanding that people who live in a community know and care about that community more than people who are from outside of the community. This provides the basis for my argument that teachers should run the school teams, clubs and activities that emanate from the school community. In many provinces, we have parents running fundraisers and chaperoning school dances because of the present teacher situation and it's changing the atmosphere in our schools. I'm not putting down the efforts of dedicated parents; I'm just identifying that students and staff are missing something in the community that they live and learn in.

This also is part of my argument against teachers being paid to run activities and sports after school hours. There *is* a tangible difference between the efforts of someone who is being paid for their time and someone who is voluntarily giving their time and effort to run a co-curricular activity.

*Dave Conlon*

## Quotes

You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

He who has no mission in life is the poorest of all.

*Albert Schweitzer*

Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.

*Booker T. Washington*

The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

*Steve Biko*

There must be more to life than having everything.

*Maurice Sendak*

Don't underestimate the power of a vision. McDonald's founder, Ray Kroc, pictured his empire long before it existed, and he saw how to get there. He invented the company motto 'Quality, service, cleanliness and value' and kept repeating it to employees for the rest of his life.

*Kenneth Labich*

Effective teamwork is all about making a good, well-balanced salad — not whipping individuals into a single batch of V8.

*Sandra Richardson*

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

*Kahlil Gibran*

## When Comprehension Precedes Competence

When you work with students in the area of activities and leadership, you come to understand that they often know *how* to do something before they are actually skilled at the activity. This means simply that the *comprehension* of how to run the activity precedes the *competence* at actually running an activity because they haven't developed the proper skill set for running the activity.

In my leadership class, students are required to run a lunch-time BBQ as one of the first leadership lessons at the beginning of the year. This is an event that all of the students think that they know how to run. The elements of food, fire and finance all make sense to them even though they may have never actually run this activity before. The reality is that their lack of competence in running the event becomes readily apparent when the event is run. Their competence improves greatly the second time they run the same event, especially after an evaluation session occurs and jobs are delineated more clearly.

The advisor's job in teaching leadership through activities is to allow the competence to occur in a manner that gives the students the opportunity to learn while doing. I use the analogy of trying to teach a youngster how to ride a bike. In most cases, you will find that the child's knowledge of riding a bike is initially affected by their competence. You then proceed through three simple stages to help the child learn to ride safely and competently in your neighbourhood:

1. Hands on
2. Watch
3. Set limits

The same steps can be applied to promoting competent student leaders. You are the advisor and your hands-on role should be very brief. The second and third stages depend on the nature of the event and the age or maturity level of the students. Your competence as an advisor will be enhanced when you understand how your students learn.

*Dave Conlon*

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