

ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENT LEADERS ACROSS CANADA

Vol. 8 No. 3

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY ADVISORS

Spring 2005

Leadership on the Web

The Internet allows us to defeat our Canadian geography and make connections with other advisors involved in leadership. Catch up on conferences, view resources or share ideas at the many sites for leadership and activities here in Canada.

Our new CASAA website is now available on the Internet. Visit www.casaaleadership.ca

The BC Association of Student Activity advisors is found at: www.bcasaa.bc.ca

Alberta activities information can be found at: www.aasca.org

Find Saskatchewan advisors at: www.geocities.com/sasca_sk

Nova Scotia leaders look to: www.nsssa.ca

Charity information and resources for schools can be found at: www.gcthree.ca

The 2005 Canadian Student Leadership Conference site can be found at: www.cslc2005.org
Conference information and updates are available here as well.

Your CASAA Membership: Making Connections Last

Over the past number of years, I have had the good fortune of being able to present to teacher advisors all across this country and help them with their activity and leadership programs. The one thing that I have known for a while is the fact that quite a few student leadership advisors stay in this position for about three years and then leave. This is not just a Canadian problem, as our counterparts south of the border face the same turnover as well. I have always wondered why this turnover happens and wondered how to stem the exodus from such an important position in the school. Michael Fullan's book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, provides some insight into this reality.

Fullan states that "schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other." This reality is where an organization like CASAA can help teachers. CASAA is a not-for-profit group comprised of volunteer teachers wanting to help other teachers learn about student leadership and activities. We provide resources; but most importantly, a CASAA membership will connect you to a network of teachers in the classroom who will share their experiences and failures. You can learn from some of the best practitioners in education with your membership and avoid making the same mistakes yourself.

Student activities are important to a school climate and Fullan agrees when he writes that "when schools focus on the academic curriculum, and forget their true nature is that of a community of humans, they will fail to prepare students for life beyond school." This does not mean that you as an advisor must be the super-leader saving all society from danger, but you must be in the business of "causing more good things to happen and fewer bad things to happen." The monthly CASAA e-letter provides ideas and activities that help students learn skills and practice community building within their schools.

Your \$75 CASAA membership is a good investment in your career and your activity program. It will provide resources and connections that will help you bridge the three-year cycle and remain in the position of helping your school become a better place for kids to learn.

Dave Conlon

CASAA

Multicultural Day

One way to build understanding amongst the many different cultures in your school is to host a Multicultural Day. In a large space such as a gym, set up stations for each of the cultural groups within your community. Food can be made by the groups in the community or it can be prepared by local ethnic restaurants. Many restaurants will donate samples of their food to promote their ethnic menus in your community.

Paul Kane High School runs a "Taste of Kane". Each group within the school runs their own table with cultural artifacts such as flags and food. The center of the gym has an area for the cultural dancers to perform. Students buy food tickets for 25¢ each and can purchase samples of food that is brought in to taste. Some food is worth two tickets while other samples may be more. It is a wonderful way to educate your senses and palate about the many cultural groups in the school.

Dodgeball

It's hard to believe, but Dodgeball is so cool that it's hot! With the recent movie by the same name providing the hype for you, this event will be a run-away success! Run a dodgeball tournament as an intramural activity at lunch and you can be guaranteed to have lots of people participating who rarely get involved in school activities. Sign up a teacher team and you can count on fans in the stands looking for every dodge, dip, dive and duck!

Advisor Survival Tips

The following are not necessarily the ten commandments of advising students, but they make a strong set of guidelines that will help any advisor understand how to make any activity program better.

1. You are the advisor. You advise; the students do the work. This ensures that you get to keep your sanity and your students learn more.
2. Have a plan. Students should have a part in determining what the plan is, and it should encompass the whole year. Plans can change, but you will be more in control if you know what is coming next.
3. Network with other advisors. This means going to a conference or linking up with advisors from your school district or province. Learn from the mistakes of others and avoid reinventing your program.
4. Adapt not adopt. Your school is different from other schools. You know your students, your administration, your community and your own risk tolerance level. Take good ideas from other successful programs and adapt them and make them your own.
5. Each event or project should be started and completed with paper. This means that at the completion of an event, the students will hand in their planning notes and evaluation. This will build a invaluable library of plans and contacts for students to use next time.
6. Learn to say "no!" Practice right now. "No." You don't have to be a pushover every time. Students have to know that you have limits too.
7. Let students have the stage. They are the ones who should be speaking at assemblies, meetings and in front of the community. This is the way that they will believe that they have a real voice in what is going on in the school.
8. Remember that your leadership students learn in a public forum. Their test is the event that they are running. If they fail a quiz in class, only the teacher knows. If their event is a failure, everybody knows. You will have to support their learning in the face of some criticism from people who don't understand this.
9. Leaders eat last. Nothing is more damaging to your leadership students' credibility than having them and their friends be the first in line for food at an event that they are running for the school.
10. Be what you want to see. If you want to see your students as organized individuals that make meetings on time, look in the mirror.

Dave Conlon

Ideas IGNITE!

The following lesson is from the book *10 Minute Lessons* by Ron Jones. It is a great source of ideas to start and enhance leadership lessons. This book is now available from CASAA resources.

Focus

How ideas must be put into action to become most useful.
Ideas are fleeting and must be applied in order to make them useable.

Supplies

Matches, a taper candle, an oil lamp, and a small log.

Instructions

Light a match and then discuss how a match is like an idea.

Students have made the following observations:

- They must be ignited to be useful.
- They begin with a flash.
- They are temporary, lasting only a short period of time on their own.
- They provide a light that can lead the way, but it is short in duration.
- They must be used/applied in order to be functional.

Next light the candle and oil lamp and discuss.

- What is the difference between the candle and the lamp? Which will last longer? Why?
- When would we light the candle instead of the lamp?
- When would we light the lamp instead of the candle?
- Can ideas similarly be utilized for different effects? Explain.
- How do resources, time, and help affect the success of ideas?

Finally, light a match and hold it under the log. Discuss why it would not light the log.

- Why didn't the match light the log?
- What could the match light which in turn would ignite the log?
- How does this apply to ideas we have in this group?

Processing

You may choose to ask questions like:

What did you learn about ideas?

What did you learn about putting ideas into action?

How can this information help you and your group?

I Spy

Do you know what your teachers look like? Do you really pay attention when they're looking at you? I Spy is an activity where colour pictures are taken of various teachers in your school. However, only a picture of their eyes is taken. You can do this by taking a close-up mug shot and cutting nose and hair out of the picture, or by manipulating the picture digitally to just include the eyes.

The nameless photos are then posted on a bulletin board or in a display case. Students who wish to guess who the various unmasked individuals are can fill in a sheet for a loonie. The winner receives a book from the *I Spy* series of children's books.

This can also work as a home room challenge, with a single colour photocopy or printed sheet containing all the partial mug shots being sent to all participating home rooms. Classes fill in the missing names and compete for the "best-looking class."

Colouring Contest

One unique way to make your posters stand out is to have students provide the artwork for them. Run a colouring contest for a major upcoming event. Eg. a semi-formal theme of Mardi Gras had Mardi Gras themed colouring contest sheets. The entries are then made part of the poster campaign for your event. You have captured your audience twice. They have coloured your poster materials and will then look at the posters to compare efforts!

Activity Walk-Throughs

One of the logistical difficulties in organizing and even running an activity occurs when most of the planning takes place on paper away from the actual scene of the event. Students know their building, but it becomes a very different place when you use your cafeteria or gym for an event or activity. Several days before an event, have your event organizer stand in the facility and do a mental walk-through of the whole event from start to finish. Ask questions about where tables or chairs or microphones are going to be placed. Have the organizer tell about the event as if they are telling you a story. This will allow them to see any holes or glitches in their planning before the event happens. Many people are much better at planning when they are aware of all the physical elements that will be part of the actual activity.

Rubber Face Contest

Have four or five participants take a large rubber band (available from office supply stores) and place it over their head so that it fits at the level just under their noses. (Make sure those with long hair have the rubber band tucked under their hair against their heads at the back.) The challenge is to move the rubber band down to their neck without using their hands. The crazy facial contortions are truly amazing as they try to move the rubber band down their faces. Make sure to get this activity on video and you can put this live on a large screen during a pep rally.

Student Leadership Scavenger Hunt

Student leaders need to know the way things work in a school. Many students don't know the basic procedures in your school, and yet they try to run events that demand co-operation and co-ordination from many different groups in your school. This simple activity forces the student leaders to find who is who and what they do at the school.

Directions: You and your partner have one week in which to complete this task. The object is to discover the various administration, support staff and resource people in the school who are very important to student leaders. You will also introduce yourselves to them. This is your opportunity to become knowledgeable about the staff and procedures in the building.

1. Who is the principal's secretary? Introduce each other to the secretary. Then, ask her for an appointment with the principal. This appointment should be for 5 minutes.
2. Who is the principal? Once again, introduce each other to the principal. This time you must shake her hand. Start out your appointment by telling your grade level, your leadership position and one thing you enjoy the most about being involved in student leadership. Ask two questions of your choice that you have thought of before your interview. When you leave the office, write down the answers on the back of this paper. Be sure to send a thank you.
3. Who are the vice-principals? What are the responsibilities of each vice-principal? Introduce yourselves and tell them your duties as a student leader.
4. Who is the head custodian during the day? Leave him a note stating your names, your job as a student leader and that you look forward to working with him and his crew. Discover where to leave notes for the custodial staff.
5. Where is the custodial headquarters?
6. Who is the head custodian at night? Write him a note stating your names, your leadership position and that you look forward to working with him and his crew. Leave the note in the appropriate place.
7. Who is the athletic director and where is his or her office? What are the responsibilities of the athletic director?
8. Who is the president of the school board?
9. What is the approximate enrollment of this school?

10. Who is in charge of audiovisual services? When you find her, introduce yourselves and ask her to show you the equipment she has available. Also, find out the correct procedure to request the use of the equipment. Make a list on the back of this sheet of the services she provides.
11. Who is the counseling office secretary? At the top of the first page, a grade level has been assigned to you. After you introduce yourself to the secretary, tell her you need the class list for your grade level.
12. Who prints the daily announcements? Write an announcement for a fall sport. Find out the procedure for announcements and turn in yours.
13. Who is the head cook and how do you get into the kitchen? Make a list of all the kitchen staff. What are their hours? How do you contact them about using their skills for your events or activities?
14. Make a list of all fall sport coaches.
15. Make a list of all winter sport coaches.
16. Make a list of all spring sport coaches.
17. Name as many famous or well-known graduates as you can. Check around. Ask partners and other students.
18. Who is the advisor for the yearbook and the newspaper? Introduce yourselves and get a copy of the publication deadline for the newspaper. Find out how much an ad costs. Who will the editors be for each publication?
19. What is the purpose of the student card? Who must buy a student card? What benefits does a student receive when they buy a student card? Find out what the money is used for. Who would be someone to ask to find this information?
20. What fees would an activity involved student be asked to pay at this school? List them and total them up.

You can add or subtract any of the above items for this scavenger hunt that suit your particular school. Your student leaders will be much more effective when they know where to get help and who to contact for equipment and assistance. The fact that they know the names of the people in power (the custodians especially) means that they will do a better job running activities and events at your school.

Mixers and Icebreakers

Peak-a-Who

Divide a group in two teams. One team positions itself on one side of a blanket held up by two people (one from each team), while the other team stays on the other side. Both teams should be positioned so that they cannot see each other. One member from each team stands with his or her nose pressed up against the blanket. Once both people are positioned with their noses pressed together, the blanket is dropped. The object is to say the other person's name before yours is said. Whoever says the correct name first claims the other person for their team. This continues until everyone has had a chance to play the game.

M&M Surprise

Fill a bag with M&Ms assigning a different topic to each colour. Eg.
 Red – describe your favourite food
 Orange – describe what you like most about school
 Brown – describe your favourite celebrity and why you like them
 Green – tell a funny story about yourself
 Ask people to take some M&Ms from the bag and then talk about themselves according to the colours they've picked.

Magazine Mixer

Take the covers from magazines and cut them into four or five irregularly shaped pieces. Mix them up in an envelope and then hand them out at random to the group. Ask the group to reassemble into the magazine cover groups. Have them introduce themselves and then talk about their favourite magazine and how it is different from the one that they have just assembled.

The Giving Tree Gifts

This event provides closure to a retreat or even a busy school year. Each of your student activity members are asked to bring a small gift (no more than \$10.00) to share with another member of the group. The gift should in some way capture something unique about the giver's interests, talents, experiences, etc. People may bring something they have made or perhaps a significant possession they would like to give away (favourite sweatshirt, athletic trophy, childhood toy)

Before you begin, have each person place their name in a hat.

Gather your group together and start off the session by reading Shel Silversteins's book, *The Giving Tree*. Then each person presents their gift and explains its significance. After an individual has presented their gift, they then draw someone else's name out of the hat. That person receives your gift and then they present theirs. It is a simple activity, but it shares the gifts of the group that has worked together.

Thank You's to Support Staff

One of the cheapest and longest lasting ways of getting support is by saying "thank you" to people who help in not so obvious ways. As a special event, take your cafeteria ladies out to lunch. Provide your custodians with pizza, and have student council clean the caf and mop the halls in their absence. These people help any school a lot, and it's just another nice way of saying thanks.

Telephone Tips

Students will use the telephone almost every day of their lives, but good manners are paramount when they represent their school on the telephone. Following some basic telephone etiquette can make their phone manners more professional, and they will be certainly more successful if they are phoning for donations or support from individuals outside of the school.

1. When calling to speak with a specific individual, always introduce yourself, the school you attend and state the reason for your call. This lets the person know who you are and the goal for your call. (e.g. You are calling a company to find out whether they received your request for a donation for the school's silent auction. You should say "I am Jeff Smith from Maple Secondary, may I speak to Mr. Jones? I am following up on the request I sent to him.")
2. Always have a pen and paper at the telephone when you are making a call. If you are calling to request information, it doesn't make sense for you to not have a pen and paper there when you are given the information.
3. Have your complete address available by the phone with postal code and contact numbers, including your fax number. This makes you appear professional when they want to contact you.
4. Refrain from the following activities while talking with a caller: eating, chewing gum, or drinking.
5. Remember, the mouthpiece on the telephone is a microphone (it amplifies). Also, leaning the telephone on your shoulder places the microphone by your neck making it difficult for the caller to hear you. Talk with your mouth, not your neck.
6. Plan your telephone calls beforehand. Before you call, jot down the main goal of the call and the key points you want to cover. This will help you stick to the point when you call and ensure that you cover everything you want to cover, saving time during the call and avoiding having to call again because of something you forgot.
7. If you reach someone's answering machine or voice mail, leave a complete message that gives your telephone number twice and states the reason you're calling. Say your number **slowly**. Stating your telephone number twice gives the recipient of the message a much better chance of getting it right and getting it written down without replaying the message.

Lost for Words Activity

It is important to learn that non-verbal communication is an important part of communication. We only recognize the non-verbal part when words are taken away from us.

Activity

Ask the class members to think carefully and choose only a dozen words they would keep if they had to give up the use of *all* other words in their language. Impress upon them the importance of keeping only 12 words that they think would be important in communication. There is sometimes a tendency for members of the group to want to share their ideas, but have them do this part silently. Give them about five minutes to write down the 12 words on a piece of paper.

After the initial five minutes, tell the class that now they must now reduce the list to only six words. (There is usually a lot of grumbling at this point.) Again, make sure they do this selection silently without input from others in the group.

After giving them a few minutes to narrow their choices to the final six, ask them to choose a partner and hold a conversation with them, using *only* their six words, but to convey as much as possible. Their partner must only use the words they have chosen and not borrow or echo words. (You may choose specific topics for them to discuss if you wish.)

Have them change partners a few times.

After three or four conversations, have them sit back down and discuss as a group what they were able to communicate and how they managed it.

Processing

How did you choose your words?

After the exercise, were your words valid or not? Why?

What words would have worked better?

What non-verbal communication skills did you use?

What non-verbal communication did you see from others?

Why are all of these skills important for a leader?

Variation

Videotape the groups as they are trying to communicate and play it back for the class. Now what do they notice? Did they see other communication techniques being employed? Besides being fun to watch themselves, the class is usually surprised at how much body language they really use.

Karen Dawson

This activity is from the book, *Leadership Lessons*. It can be ordered from CASAA.

Generosity

One church launched a study to determine what causes some members to be more generous than others. Much to the researchers surprise, it was neither the cleverness of the church's appeals nor the power of the preaching. Instead, the most significant factor was whether the person had been taught generosity as a child. The impact of the parents in teaching their children to give was the key that opened the world of giving.

Rules of Generosity

1. Generosity is not offered on the basis of results. Offering help is more about doing it than planning it.
2. Generosity is sometime a risky business. It takes you places you don't want to go.
3. Even when it fails, generosity feels good. Helping another human being is good.
4. Human nature is set in its ways, so don't think you can necessarily see change quickly or any change at all.
5. Generosity is as much about the giver as it is about the receiver.

A way to cultivate generosity:

Place four or five coins in your right pocket at the beginning of each day and then move one coin to the left pocket each time you compliment, praise or encourage during the day. Don't leave school until all the coins are in your left pocket. (You can write quick thank you notes, if you're stuck late with nobody in the building.) As you incorporate this approach into your life, you can increase the coins in your pocket.

From the book, *The Power of Generosity*, by Dave Toyce

Quotes

Too often we enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

John F. Kennedy

It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell.

William Tecumseh Sherman

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.

Bertrand Russell

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Mohandas Gandhi

Rewards and punishments are the lowest form of education.

Chuang-Tzu

In the presence of trouble, some people grow wings and others buy crutches.

Harold W. Ruoff

You will never “find” time for anything. If you want time, you must make it.

Charles Buxton

Live as if you were living a second time, and as though you had acted wrongly the first time.

Viktor Frankl

How to Say No

If you are an activity advisor or involved in student leadership, one of your fatal flaws is the inability to say, “No.” In fact, it’s probably why you are presently involved in activities: you were unable to say “no” to the principal or retiring advisor or student who asked you if you would take on the role as advisor in the first place. You are the type of person who wants to see positive things happen in your school, and you do your best to make sure that students succeed in creating a spirited atmosphere in your school. However, you must still learn to say “no.” It’s important for your personal sanity and the future health of your activity program.

One way to say “no” is to ask the students to follow three simple test filters for every event. Each event must be: well planned; well organized; and not hurtful or harmful. If the students can pass their idea through all three of these filters, the event can be successful for you and for them. Again, you are the person who decides what level of planning and organization is necessary for the event to proceed.

Students have lots of energy and good intentions, but there still will be times when you want to say “no”, but you don’t want to kill their initiative. You are the advisor and you must be responsible to the administration and community of your school, while the students only see themselves as responsible to the other students in the building. One way to deal with a proposed activity that is based more on enthusiasm than good planning is to say, “No, I’m not comfortable with that.” This puts the onus on the student to find ways to make you, the advisor, “comfortable” with the idea or plan. Once you’re comfortable, the event can proceed with more planning.

Your inability to say “no” is a good thing because it allows for creativity and change to happen. However, there are good ideas and there are ideas that will damage the credibility of your position and your program. Use both of the above methods to protect your students and yourself from someone higher up saying “no” to all of your positive efforts.

Dave Conlon

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