

# ABOVE AND BEYOND

THE NEWSLETTER FOR ADVISORS AND STUDENT LEADERS ACROSS CANADA

Vol. 9 No. 3

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT ACTIVITY ADVISORS

Spring 2006

## **Lack of Participation**

Many leadership and student council groups get frustrated when they find that many in the student body choose not to participate in the activities that are organized specifically for them. One important element of behaviour to understand is the fact that *not every student is ready to participate*. Many students do not participate because they have not developed the skills necessary to become part of a group. These skills include: decision making, communication, and problem solving. Many who do not participate have a lack of confidence in individual worth. Everyone is welcome in the Boredom Club and you don't have to have any visible skills to "hang out" other than breathing.

The key to success is to help these students become able to participate by running activities that interest them and have a low participation risk factor. Remember: apathy is not a choice; it is a situation that many students find themselves in.

Check out the CASAA website for ideas on activities and events that will involve the uninvolved. You will find lots of ideas at: [www.casaaleadership.ca](http://www.casaaleadership.ca) in the Idea Share Shop.

## **The World is Flat—Get Yourself Connected or Get Flattened**

This complete newsletter that you are reading has been created by one individual sitting in front of a computer. It has been sent as a pdf file to Winnipeg to be put directly to paper by *Friesens* using the latest in digital print technology. Compared to the process of 20 years ago, today there are a lot of steps and individuals in the middle of this process that have disappeared or been flattened. This newsletter is now resident on the CASAA internet site as a pdf file, so in a few years the printing to paper step will probably disappear as well. Things are changing with exceptional speed because the world is now flat. The graphic designer in my neighbourhood is now forced to compete for my business with a guy in Victoria and a lady in Utah.

Thomas Friedman has written a book entitled, *The World is Flat*, and in it he shows how our global economy is knocking down all the old barriers so that the low-cost wage earner in Mexico is now being challenged by someone in China; the call centre in New Brunswick is being challenged by companies in India. No one job is safe because you are not competing with your neighbourhood any longer, but competing in the world market instead. Friedman points out that the world got smaller after the dot com bubble burst, and change will only get faster as China gets stronger. His solution to our present reality is not to retreat into protectionism but to move to expand education and the sharing of information.

What does this mean to you as a leadership advisor? It means that if you really want to help your students, you need to find the best tools and resources that will help them compete and live in the new flat world. It means that you must share and discover information that will expand your own skills and abilities as an advisor. The simple solution: a CASAA membership. Sure it sounds like a sales pitch, but CASAA has built a flat world network of sharing and resources that will enhance your leadership programs. The CASAA Discussion Forum is growing as advisors discover the power of sharing the best ideas and programs available. We can no longer afford to work out of the file cabinet in the back of the office; we need to connect with the best in the country and provide tools and lessons that will put our students and our programs on the world map.

Dave Conlon

CASAA

## **Making Grapevines Work**

Most people realize that word-of-mouth can spread a message better than a poster or PA announcement. The social grapevine in any school can be a powerful way to make something known to the whole school population. The proliferation of MSN or text messaging has only made this communication quicker, not more widespread. What must be realized, however, is the existence of the many grapevines for communication within a school. Messages will travel down the staff grapevine, but then they end at the last person in the group. This message will not jump over into the student grapevine unless the infectiousness of the message is great enough. Eg. The regular staff report card information will not jump over to student grapevines, but the possibility of an early dismissal on Friday will make this jump. This applies to the different student grapevines that exist as well. These grapevines are located in the stereotypical groups that exist in any school.

### **Communication idea:**

Create a "Grapevine Card" with room for 12 signatures. Have your student leaders go out and tell 12 different people about an upcoming event. They must find three people from each grade in your school. The student leader must then have each person sign their Grapevine Card after they have been given the information about the upcoming event or activity. You can specify how many of each group are on the card or how many are girls or guys.

## **Do More. Be More**

My wife and I were recently in Brantford, Ontario, to attend my cousin Ed Doucette's funeral. He passed away from a brain tumour while still in his 50's. It was a sad loss for our family; he was respected and loved immensely. With that said, his funeral was an amazing and powerful celebration of a short life LIVED to the FULLEST.

The great thing about celebrating his life is that you get to learn about how everyone else knew him. Listening to people talk about him, one thing was clear, Ed understood a simple truth: "the small things always make the biggest difference."

Three examples of how he lived this truth:

1. 30 years ago a friend started a hotel in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was over an hour drive from where he lived. Yet every weekend he and his wife would drive to his hotel and VOLUNTEER; bartending, serving, cleaning rooms. He did this for over 3 years. His friend's hotel is still running to this day.
2. He would go to his local senior citizen's home and ask for a list of the people who had little to no family visit. With that list, he would send each of them a card on every minor & major holiday with these simple words, "You are loved and I am thinking of you on this special holiday."
3. A ninety-year-old woman named Rose was sick, and they didn't know if she would survive. My cousin Ed sent her 90 roses, and his card said, "I will send you roses every year on your birthday. They will equal your age. So make it to next year and I will send you 91 roses." It was meant to LIFT HER SPIRITS; she lived to be 104.

The funeral was a true celebration of life. I walked out of that room feeling LIFTED, feeling STRONGER, feeling INSPIRED. I left his funeral asking myself this question: WHAT MORE CAN I DO? WHAT MORE CAN I BE?

I know I can do more. I know I can be more, and here is the great thing. It doesn't require me to change my entire life around and make these "HUGE changes".

It asks me to do the LITTLE THINGS, because it is the little things that will ALWAYS MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE.

Do More Today. Be More Today.

### *Philly D*

Phil Doucette is an Inspirational Speaker who travels all over North America speaking to student and adult audiences. He is based in Winnipeg, but you can reach him through his website at:  
[www.phillyd.com](http://www.phillyd.com)

## ***How to Win a High School Election***

If you are interested in seriously running for a position on student council, you will have to do some work. You don't have to be popular to win, but you will have to *make* yourself "known" which is just a simpler version of "popular". Underdogs win all the time!

### **Here are some steps and tips to follow:**

- Look around the school and choose an issue you can propose a solution to. Students will respond to someone who actually appears like they can make a change for the better. Empty promises will not get you votes.
- Don't confuse support with votes. Not everyone who supports you will take the time to vote.
- Develop your "platform" and publicize it with posters. Let fellow students, teachers and school administrators know what you stand for. This is a theme that you use to identify your "brand" or position.
- Your posters should have your name on them. Make your name the largest words on them. You need people to remember your name.
- Talk to everyone you can and ask them to vote—make sure your friends cast their ballots. The junior students in the school are the ones whom you can probably convince the most. The senior students already know you and they have probably already made up their minds whether they will or won't vote for you.
- Humour is a good thing. You have to remember that your voting audience is your peers. You don't have to be a stand-up comedian, but your peers won't support people who take themselves too seriously no matter how hard they work.
- Students will almost always vote for a candidate who is genuinely interested in serving the school, rather than the "popular" candidate who isn't really interested in the job. Again, don't confuse support with actual votes.
- Be visible during the campaign. Your classmates will be voting—talk to them and make people aware that you are running for election. Take the time to talk directly to people that you don't know, and you will make a positive impression that you took the time to be nice.
- Bribery will get you support, but it won't necessarily get you votes. Students will take your candy, but they won't necessarily vote for you.
- Avoid putting down other candidates. They have friends who can influence other voters not to vote for you. You may also be working with these people in the upcoming school year on events and committees.
- Vote for yourself! If you won't vote for yourself, who else will?

## ***Lost and Found Auction***

At the end of the year, the lost and found collection in any school can be quite amazing. You will find an assortment of coats, mitts and school gear that one wonders how the owner ever got home without. Take the time to announce that the Lost and Found will be put up for auction on a certain date and that owners can have their goods back if they can identify them.

After this announcement is made, clean up or wash what remains and hold a fashion show auction for the remaining clothing and goods. People may recognize their stuff at this point, but they have to bid for it like anyone else. You can add old teamwear from the athletic department to increase interest. This event can raise some money for a charity, and the remaining goods can be donated to a used-clothing depot for further sales.

### ***Write it Down!***

Every time you are talking to someone new on the phone, whether it's personal or for school "business", write down that person's/company's number, email and address in an organized place in your day planner. You never know when you will suddenly need to contact them again. You may have a question for them and now you can quickly contact them and ensure you have all of your facts straight. This habit of carrying an organizer and writing down details will take months to get used to, but the effect it will have on your reliability will be dramatic!

*Andy Thibodeau*

## Effective Orientations

The transition into secondary school is a major one. First-year students are often nervous and overwhelmed during their first weeks at a new school. An effective orientation program can help them adjust and find themselves within the social and activity framework of a school. This will assist in their transition and make them better able to partake of the activities that are offered in an active school.

### **Begin before the first day.**

Have the students tour the building on a morning the week before school starts. This gives them a chance to get their bearings without running into the “big people” who know their way around. Also, have your leadership students call the incoming students during the summer and welcome them to their new school.

### **Inform staff.**

Let your staff know about your orientation activities. Staff tend to forget what it’s like to be a newcomer to the building.

### **Avoid overload.**

Don’t give the rookies too much information at once. Most of them are just trying to find their locker and remember where the cafeteria is. Spread out the information dissemination over the first week.

### **Take nothing for granted.**

Many first-year students are too shy to ask. Take the time to visit first-year classes and give out basic information on how and where to get involved. Give them a list of all the activities that a first-year student can get involved in.

## Leadership Thoughts

When I sat down to write about leadership, I thought about those around me everyday whom I consider leaders. Why do these people have my admiration, my respect, and my constant willingness to do what I can to help them, both personally and “in business”? Why do others around me seem so willing to help me with my life’s projects? It comes down to trust. Do people trust your opinion, your insight, your judgement, and most importantly, do they trust your ability to get something done!? Beyond a leader’s speaking ability, organization skills, creativity, and even intelligence, if people don’t trust you, you’ll never reach your full potential as a leader... no matter how many “skills” you have!

Trust doesn’t “come from” somewhere... you earn it, often slowly, over time. It has been my experience that trust is founded on reliability. Can people count on you ?!! How valuable is “your word”? Read on...I guarantee you I’m going to make you think! The keys to reliability are:

1. **The Little Things Are Everything.** 95% of your reliability will be judged on those “little things” that make up everyday life. For example, being on time to pick up a friend, returning a borrowed item, calling back when promised, or remembering to attend a fellow counselor’s event. Only 5% of your reliability will be based on life’s “big things” such as completing a major project or planning an event. Think about it... if I can’t count on you to be on time for work, remember to get a receipt, or return my call to go out one night, why would I think you are “reliable” for anything “bigger”? Please, take the little things seriously, they mean everything to those around you!

2. **Honesty... and then Fix It!** No one is perfect. I make mistakes, I have forgotten something important, I’ve been inconsiderate, and I’ve misused my time and been late. Accept responsibility! Don’t pass off the blame through “little white lies” like “your phone line was busy”. Say, “I’m sorry,” and, “My fault, I forgot.” Call ahead when you’re going to be late or can’t make it at all. If it’s too much work for you, be honest about it and cut back your responsibilities before it hurts your reliability. Basically, fix it before it becomes a problem that hurts other people’s trust in you! Honesty and seeking solutions in the face of your mistakes increases people’s trust in you! When you do this, people won’t judge you on your errors but when you are reliable. Then your mistakes come as more of a surprise and people forgive you quicker.

3. **Care About Others.** Put yourself in the shoes of those around you and get excited about other people’s lives! A huge part of your reliability reputation will be based on your ability to remember to participate in the important events of others. Birthdays, lending a hand to their group for a project, helping them move, or calling them to be part of your weekend plans, are all so important to people. Remember their “big days”; wish

them luck on that interview or assignment, be quiet when they're on stage for a speech, be in the stands for their game, or be there to listen when they've broken up with a boyfriend/girlfriend. Reliability is "being there" for people. The exciting thing is, if you care about what is important to others, they are more likely to care about what is important to you!

4. **Write It Down!** This is the key action to making all of these tips of reliability work! It starts with you owning some sort of daily planner, personal digital organizer, or a calendar that allows you to write a number of "to do's" on each day. Next, you've got to get in the habit of having it with you as much as you can — in class, at meetings, and at home. Now, go beyond using it to note homework or your leadership group's "to do" list and write personal items.

5. **Make Others Look Reliable.** People will often commit to you on a date by which they'll call or contact you with an answer on an item. You'll be amazed how many people appreciate "friendly reminders" and how it improves your reliability by getting your answers quicker. If something goes wrong or gets delayed because someone didn't get back to you, ask yourself this question: "Did I help their reliability by providing friendly reminders?"

6. **Remember Another's Reliability.** When people call you or email you, write it down and call back! Even if it's going to be an "I'm not interested" or "I can't make it", take the time to contact them within 24 hours. Whether it's just a short and happy note or a quick phone call, reward their reliability in contacting you by returning the favour! They'll remember that! Who wants to call/write to someone who doesn't make an effort to contact back?

As you read this article, put yourself through a reliability test. Are you often "reminded" by someone to complete a task or return an item? Are people cracking jokes or sarcasm at your ability to accomplish something? Are people coming to you for your opinion or help? Do you think you can take solid steps to becoming more reliable? Please, study this article and put its insights to work for you! To improve your reliability this will be one of the most rewarding and effective accomplishments you can make in life! I make this far-reaching statement because reliability is the foundation of other people's trust in you. Trust is what builds loving families, fun friendships, spirited student councils, successful businesses, and effective leaders. Can people count on you to improve your reliability?

*Andy Thibodeau*

Andy has been speaking to students and staff in schools across North America since 1992. You will find more information on his website at: [www.andypresentations.com](http://www.andypresentations.com)

## **Obvious Directions**

Small changes to the way that you communicate with people can enhance your interactions and improve your activities. It is obvious when dealing with someone who is giving you conflict that you shouldn't start out a statement with, "You always . . ." or "You never . . ." as this leads to an example when this person did in fact do what you just claimed they "never" have done.

It is also obvious that a student attending a meeting should bring a pen and paper to the meeting. However, many students were showing up at our class rep meetings without either. Now, the students are called down to the meeting over the PA and told at that time to bring a pen and paper with them. Well-meaning students will often just leave the classroom without the right equipment, just because they are only going to a meeting. Staff also now know that the student is going to do business.

It is even more obvious that there is an appropriate behaviour for certain types of assemblies. You can cut down on inappropriate behaviour by making it clear to the students before they come down to an assembly what the expected behaviour is. As an example, the Remembrance Day Assembly expectations would be quite different from a pep rally behaviour. When students are told what is expected, most will willingly comply. This can be done by simply having teachers outline expectations in the class just prior to the assembly.

## **Challenge to Succeed**

Students join leadership or student councils because they want to accomplish good things. Foster this desire by setting goals to which they can aspire.

**State the goals and challenges for the year clearly.** Goals can be achieved when they are simply understood by everyone. A goal is not something that is going to happen whether this student leadership group is in charge or not.

**Identify opportunities.** Every child gets asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Pose the same sort of question to your student leaders. Ask them what type of positive changes they could be part of in the school.

**Encourage creativity.** Pursue ideas and activities that are new and fresh. This will give new challenges to your leaders and allow them the satisfaction of accomplishing something they have initiated.

## **Rating the Experience**

The government education ministries and private groups are now using test scores to judge the success of schools across the country. High scores are said to give an objective view of how well students are doing.

However, consider how people judge a holiday or cottage experience. How would it rate on a test score? Your school is providing more than a numerical rating for your students. Make people aware of the quality of the activity experience at your school. Don't be afraid to advertise and promote strengths.

## **Jan Ken Pon**

This icebreaker is a good activity to get people thinking about the pecking order of leadership and groups in general.

The leader stands in front of the group and declares that she has a special immunity to losing. She then explains that with the following game, those that lose against her will be out of the game, and those who win, just continue until they finally lose.

The game is very similar to Rock Paper Scissors, however, there are slight variations. First, it is important to go in order of activities as they follow a low-risk level of participation to a higher risk sequence.

Initially, the leader stands in front of the group and explains that the three words used in this game are: Jan Ken Pon. These words replace the sequence of “one, two, three.” When the word Pon is spoken everyone must show their chosen weapon (either rock, paper or scissor). All people who lose against the leader sit down, and everyone else continues to play. Once everyone has lost, this section of the game ends.

Next, everyone is asked to grab a partner (recommend looking for a special way to find partners). They must play conventional Rock Paper Scissors to determine a winner and a loser. The winner becomes a rider while the loser the horse. Horse and riders must go around the room finding other pairs with whom they can play the game. This time, horses play against horses, and riders against riders. Whoever loses becomes or remains a horse, and the winners a rider. The length of this section may depend on the enthusiasm of the group.

Finally, the higher personal-risk part of the activity occurs. The leader explains that there are four characters involved in this part of the game. They are in order: mosquitoes, frogs, eagles and humans. Everyone starts out as a mosquito until they become a winner, then they rise to the frog category and then they move on to the eagle category from there. This trend continues as mosquitoes can only play their own kind or eagles playing their own kind, with the ultimate goal being that one might become a human. However, even humans can lose, and they may return to mosquito form if they lose a few rounds. The best part of this whole activity is that each character must act out their part. A mosquito, complete with stinger must buzz around, a frog jumps, eagles soar, and of course humans walk. This part of the game continues until the leader decides to end it.

Debriefing:

Ask the students what they liked /didn't like about the activity. Who came out on top? Why? Who were the leaders? What was most difficult about the activity? Why? What was the easiest part?

Discuss whether real life is like this.

## ***A Simple Time Management Plan***

Effective time management is crucial to accomplishing organization tasks as well as to avoiding wasting valuable organizational assets. The following rules (Butler & Hope 1996) will aid you:

**Get Started:** This is one of the all time classic time wasters. Often, as much time is wasted avoiding a project, as actually accomplishing the project. A survey showed that the main difference between good students and average students was the ability to start their homework quickly.

**Get into a routine:** Mindless routines may curb your creativity, but when used properly, they can release time and energy. Choose a time to get certain tasks accomplished, such as answering email, working on a project, completing paper work; and then sticking to this time every day. Use a day planning calendar. There are a variety of formats on the market. Find one that fits your needs.

**Do not say yes to too many things:** Saying yes can lead to unexpected treasures, but the mistake we often make is to say yes to too many things. This causes us to live to the priorities of others, rather than according to our own. Every time you agree to do something else, something else will not get done. Learn how to say no.

**Divide large tasks:** Large tasks should be broken up into a series of small tasks. By creating small manageable tasks, the entire task will eventually be accomplished. Also, by using a piecemeal approach, you will be able to fit it into your hectic schedule.

**Do not put unneeded effort into a project:** There is a place for perfectionism, but for most activities, there comes a stage when there is not much to be gained from putting extra effort into it. Save perfectionism for the tasks that need it.

**Deal with it for once and for all:** We often start a task, think about it, and then lay it aside. This gets repeated over and over. Either deal with the task right away or decide when to deal with it.

**Set start and stop times:** When arranging start times, also arrange stop times. This will call for some estimating, but your estimates will improve with practice. This will allow you and others to better schedule activities. Also, challenge the theory, "Work expands to fill the allotted time." See if you can shave some time off your deadlines to make it more efficient.

**Plan your activities:** Schedule a regular time to plan activities. If time management is important to you, then allow the time to plan it wisely.

This article is one of many found on Big Dog's Leadership page:

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadtime.html>

## ***More than a Plaque***

A student leader must take concrete action—because action leads to impact. When you do something that people can see, you make a visible statement. You make the leadership position more than a plaque on the wall.

When Kaitlyn Beringer was elected co-president at her school, she fulfilled an election promise by putting clocks in the stairwells and prominent places in the hallways. Students had complained that they were late for classes because they had no place to see what time it was. Her action was symbolic: it didn't change the number of lates that much, but it was a clear demonstration what she could do for the students.

## ***Emphasizing Ads***

A good poster campaign should be started about two weeks from a major event or activity. However, after about a week, your audience is numb to your message and will not read it anymore because they have seen that poster in that same spot every day as they go down the hallway. Here are some ways to emphasize your message:

Try moving your posters around the school to freshen your message. This works especially well if you have posters on different coloured paper.

Buy half or quarter page stickers and slap them on your existing posters to update the message. Your audience will reread the message if a "Time is running out for tickets!" sticker is put on your semi-formal poster.

## Quotes

A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury.

*John Stuart Mill*

We don't know who we are until we see what we can do.

*Martha Grimes*

When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

To gain that worth having, it may be necessary to lose everything else.

*Bernadette Devlin*

Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are.

*Bernice Johnson Reagon*

You grow up the day you have your first real laugh - at yourself.

*Ethel Barrymore*

When eating bamboo sprouts, remember the man who planted them.

*Chinese Proverb*

We aim above the mark to hit the mark.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The most tyrannical of governments are those which make crimes of opinions, for everyone has an inalienable right to his thoughts.

*Baruch Spinoza*

## Successful Student Presidents Choose to Lead

A number of people have asked me how can they get the right people into the head leadership positions. I have learned that a lot of the success in any head leadership position is driven by the motivation and skills of the individual, and it's almost impossible to predict what will happen until they reach the job. I have seen examples of students who are super-involved in many activities, and they still have the time and energy to do an awesome job on council. I have also experienced co-prez's who don't have much on their plates activity-wise and one is mediocre and the other is invisible. When this happens, I just don't give the head leaders the microphone that much and let other kids from the leadership group step to the fore. I like the co-president arrangement, because if one head person is weak, there is someone else to take up the slack. Some years are weak because of the individuals involved, but you can make sure that they don't damage the program. I have seen and heard of situations where the leadership program has been damaged or tainted because of the fight over what the constitution demands a student do. I actively ignore people who are not contributing to our program and encourage the others to step into the breach. There are lots of good kids who would never be elected to the top position who can fill the position.

One issue that is difficult is occurring with the scholarship and resume hunters that appear on student councils at all levels of leadership. This resume padding is getting more competitive than it used to be, so kids will show up on council to do one noteworthy event that sounds good on paper and then disappear. Some will even disappear before the event or activity is done. Senior students are being told that universities and colleges look at what they've done at school besides classroom stuff, but as far as I've seen, the post-secondary programs just look at marks. It's the scholarship game that drives the resume padding, and it seems that Mother Teresa would have a tough time winning some of the big ones. I look at the credentials of some of the winners and see a lot of people who have discovered the magic of the metric day. I suspect that a lot is fluff, but many are deserving individuals, so who knows. My only response to this problem is that I write awesome letters of recommendation for kids who choose to do good things in leadership. The others get a basic form letter indicating that they participated.

Simply put, I see my job as the advisor who provides the opportunity for students to do good things for our school. It is truly up to the individual student to *choose to lead*.

*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@casaaleadership.ca

This newsletter has been printed with the generous support of  
**Friesen Yearbooks**

Visit them at: [friesens.com/Yearbook](http://friesens.com/Yearbook)

**CASAA**  
www.casaaleadership.ca