

Summary Notes from Breakout Room Discussions

Joint Board School Council Meeting

March 25, 2021

Breakout Room #1 - RVS Online

- 2 kids online planned to go back in February but doing so well, stayed home (getting speech and extra help)
 - Got more 1:1 this year
 - Both boys
- 3 online (gr 2, 7, 8) wanted consistency
 - Feels same as above
 - Girls in 7 and 8 don't want to go back
 - Banded Peak
 - They do well, so don't get as much attention at school
 - Attention from teacher & parents
 - "Favourite teacher"
 - Internet was a challenge, but got upgrade
 - Have advanced and weak but few in the middle
 - What happens when they go back?
- Not online but have to quarantine 4x times this year. Supplement with Kumon. With all the interruptions how do we ensure they measure up, meeting curricular expectations?
- What about hybrid in the future (2 days online, 2 days F2F for example)?
- Learning 'extra' stuff being online. They might be ahead when they go back F2F
- 2 online (gr 5, 7) Fantastic! Teacher and resources are phenomenal. Talking to scientists all over North America. A new set of skills. Mom dislikes Moodle.
- Offered next year?
- Have a classroom community – so important. Friends across the division, connection to homeschool is tricky. Would like option classes
- Kids not online because wanted to keep connection to school and social aspect. Gather 1x/month for a couple of days?
- Online great for grade 7, 3 and 3. Online kids & F2F kids were not on the same schedule, so was hard to transition back. Can that be more coordinated?
- Sense of loss and separation from peers who went online
 - Join sports teams etc. would be a good option
- Decision timeline? Murray B. clarified - June for sure
- Options for Middle and High School? Offering now based on interest and practicality
- Programs of choice online? Offering FI and faith-based for gr 1-9
- Current challenge for admin is the number of online teachers they are trying to connect with
- Son with ADHD (gr 7) went online, doing well, able to focus more
- Cochrane High has online learning assistant to support online kids. Also offered guidance counsellor. Parents appreciate this

Breakout Room #2 - Increasing Parent and School Community Involvement at School Council

Feedback from parents indicated that most councils have had about the same number of attendees at meetings – a few reported lower and a few reported higher numbers of parents attending meetings. Overall RVS councils have a range of lower, higher and about the same attendance during COVID year 2020/21. It was noted by many that while numbers are similar, it's a different crowd attending virtual meetings.

On the question of intentions to continue the use online meeting platforms, most participants indicated a desire to offer for each meeting a choice of in person and online next year so parents can choose to go to the school and attend in person, or stay home and participate through Zoom. Further to this, parents indicated strong response to posting video of the meetings so parents who were not able to attend can watch the meetings later. Parents also indicated that an official social media presence through which to advertise meetings and post videos or Facebook live sessions would be valued. Those already using these tools say it's been a great tool and good experience.

Ideas that were generated by the groups to help draw attendance at school council meetings:

- Guest speakers – Teachers, students, ASCA reps, Community supports
- Advertising meetings on social media
- Allowing attendance online or in person
- Clear communication about what council is (eg – opportunity to be on first name basis with school admin) and what it is not (eg- fundraising, heavy commitment)
- Alternating evening and daytime meetings
- Volunteer sign up process through school council
- Engaging school-based topics on the agenda each month
- Get into practice of building into agendas opportunities to provide input and advise admin and trustee BEFORE school decisions are made, verses just a report of what was already decided by staff and the Board
- Survey parents about what they would like to see at council meetings

QUESTIONS FROM ATTENDEES:

Can council meetings be in person this year? What about next year?

Under Scenario #1 – face to face school council meetings are permitted. Masking and physical distancing would be mandatory throughout the meeting.

Can School Councils have an official Council Facebook and other social media accounts?

We are aware of various current practices around the division, some of which is dependent on the level of comfort on the part of school council and admin. As a result of the question and conversation, further discussion will happen within the division in order to provide clear divisional direction for next year. Stay tuned!

LINKS TO SHARED RESOURCES

ASCA EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCIL RESOURCE GUIDE

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/documents/40732>

EDUCATION ACT INFO ON SCHOOL COUNCIL

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/files/98229>

RVS RESOURCE GUIDE

https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/families/assets_parents/school-councils/school-council-resource-guide-2020-21/view

RVS SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/families/assets_parents/school-councils/schoolcouncilbestpracticeguide/view

Breakout Room #3 - Schools, Learning and Teaching in the age of COVID-19

What has gone well at your school about teaching, learning and school operations this school year?

Group 1

- Kids are doing well, adjusted to the new protocols well, little disruptions so far
- Students rolled well with all the expectations, parents risen to challenges with increased expectations, staff risen to occasion even though they miss certain components, feeling close to normal given all the uncertainty

Group 2

- Admin finding creative ideas to keep kids busy outside
- Staff getting comfortable teaching online on very short notice
- STEAM challenges in library to provide creative learning opportunities outside their classroom
- Council still financially supporting school for virtual fieldtrips / workshops / presentations

Group 3

- Flexibility provided and trust given to school by families
- Lots of connections/communication (both face to face and through electronic means) between home and classroom
- Interactive communications all throughout the school community (staff to parents, staff to students)
- Increased empathy for both students and staff – higher level of connection
- Students' mood, mental health improved when students are able to be in the school
- School has exceeded my expectations related to feeling safe, lots of people outside welcoming students
- Lots of communications from my school

What has been tricky at your school about teaching, learning and school operations this school year?

Group 1

- Ensuring necessary foundational skills are there, motivation low
- Found out that online university is not for their child
- What to do when you have a spare and no place to go in the school

- Students missing activities and opportunities resulting in poor choices/decisions creating more work on school admin
- When isolating, could take on more work

Group 2

- Volunteers/Parents not allowed to be in the building (missing those additional hands in the school, opportunities to contribute to school life)
- Stress on students when needed to isolate
- School staff feeling isolated from parents/families because people cannot be in the building
- Connecting and building relationships amongst students
- Feeding students, families to build relationships
- Lack of community spirit

Group 3

- Lack of routine
- Make sure teacher reaches out to provide work when student has to isolate

What do you want us to know about teaching, learning and school operations as we plan for 21/22?

Group 1

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Group 2

- Continue virtual fieldtrips / presentations

Group 3

- Maintain regular teacher <--> parent interactions and information

Breakout Room #4 – Alberta School Councils Association Resolutions

Great discussion was had by the groups regarding the upcoming virtual ASCA Conference and AGM taking place April 23-25, 2021. Wendy Keiver, Executive Director of ASCA, was in attendance and shared with the group's valuable details about the conference, things to know if attending the AGM, and information on some of the resolutions coming to the floor this year. For full details on the conference and AGM, visit

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/about/annual-conference>

Breakout Room #5 – Advocacy

What kinds of things might a School Councils want to advocate for? Comments, Thoughts, Questions?

- Class sizes (ASCA); ASCA Funding Cuts has diminished voice?
- School Site Funding.
 - Particularly high school sites

- Who to Advocate to? Start at a local level. Talk to your trustee. Unpack one piece at a time.
- Alignment and Communication. More focused approach equals a greater impact. Access to information and shared understanding is important.
- Some more transparency and clarification about mental health and wellness supports that can be accessed by teachers to equip them. What is utilized?
- Advocacy burnout can occur. It is important to see results. Don't see any success so what is the point? We definitely have to be patient and realize that change does not occur overnight.
- It can be difficult to achieve consensus and develop collective focus and voice.
- Approach council chairs to coordinate divisionally. I know that the Board does a lot of advocacy work and my suggestion was for us, as Chairs, to help support your work further by way of "letters of support." I think for issues that affect us directly or indirectly, the Board could potentially seek letters of support from each of the Chairs to help further advocate for those issues and public education in general. I for one would be happy to help other schools in the division to get the resources/funding/etc they need by writing a letter of support.
- Not all advocacy needs to be at a provincial level. There are municipal and local issues where school council voice can be useful.
- Aligning with like-minded organizations? Busy working parents don't have time to advocate using tools that are not as effective. What, for example, did Langdon do, and what might be replicated? Is it possible to pool resources?
- A School Council Advocacy 101 might be helpful. We want to make sure that we understand our options.