

Issues Pertaining to the SCHS Athletic Program

At the first School Council General Meeting of the 2009/2010 school year, held on September 16th, Vice Principal Ed Polhill addressed the meeting, and explained the situation that was currently facing the Athletic Program at SCHS.

In brief, the administration was having difficulty finding teachers who were willing to volunteer as coaches and sponsors for the various sports teams. RVS Trustee Helen Clease reported that this is becoming an issue across the Division.

Reasons for this include:

The time commitment required for each team is significant. There are a total of 11 sports with potential for 33 teams to be organized and coached (schedule included below).

It was pointed out that having teacher coaches is the ideal situation for ease of communication and access during school hours. Although parents or community members may serve as coaches when teachers are not available, each team is still required to have a teacher sponsor.

Within Rocky View, SCHS is a large, competitive school and coaching of many of the teams requires significant knowledge of the sport and coaching experience.

Another reason given was the fact that SCHS parents have been known to become inappropriately vocal during athletic events, directing their comments to both coaches and officials. This can add an unacceptable level of stress to the job of the coach.

Ed requested input from Council as to how to deal with this situation. Some suggestions were:

- Parents, or even students earning volunteer credits, could assist teachers by acting as team managers.
- Some pre-planning could be done in June for the beginning of the subsequent school year athletic start-up.

- Parents and students should be encouraged to make sure their gratitude to the teachers who take the time to help out with the athletics program gets expressed.
- An article could be published in the next newsletter warning parents of potential team cancellations due to a lack of coaching staff.
- A message could be sent out via a school-wide email, containing strict guidelines for parents of players.
- Volunteer opportunities to support sports could be listed on the parent volunteer form that is sent out at the beginning of each year.

Sue volunteered to work closely with Ed and Dan Eveleigh, the Athletic Director for SCHS, to find ways parents could support the administration's efforts to address this issue, and increase the profile of the sports programs. They will examine publishing a sports page in the school newsletter, and posting current information on bulletin boards and the school web site. Volunteer roles for interested parents together with job descriptions will be formulated and published both in the Coaches Handbook and SCHS website, to encourage more consistent use of volunteers to support teams and clarify exactly what the available roles are for each team.

To enhance communications, Ed has created a sports brochure for parents with children involved in athletics at SCHS. He has also updated the comprehensive Coach's Handbook. Administration will show appreciation for teachers involved as coaches with school shirts, thank you letters, and a staff sports social/recognition event.

At Council's request, Sue drafted the letter below to the SCHS staff which was approved at the October 21st Council meeting. It was sent to all staff members and published in the November school newsletter.

Dear Springbank Community High School Staff,

It has come to the attention of your Springbank Community High School Council that our extracurricular sports program is faced with some significant challenges. The good news is that because the issue is apparent throughout Alberta, a task force has already provided input for debate and change. The immediate challenge in our building is to set in place a plan to address the issues with the full support of the school community.

Council now understands the following circumstances exist:

- At SCHS there is potential for 10 sports and approximately 33 girls/boys/jv/varsity teams to be either coached or supervised by staff
- Those teams each require either a staff coach or sponsor to be assigned
- We further understand this is a volunteer commitment of significant personal time
- We appreciate the fact that coaching a AAA Division team requires some level of coaching expertise as well as a solid understanding of the sport itself

The issues are:

- In recent years to present, Springbank has not identified enough staff coaches with personal time and/or expertise to provide to our teams
- Staff sponsors have also been in short supply
- Teams are now at risk of cancellation

We are very concerned to learn:

- At Springbank High there have been incidents in the recent past of unacceptable behavior from parents of athletes
- In some cases, students who have tried out and joined teams have not fulfilled their commitments to attend and participate, also unacceptable

School Council does not believe that the short supply of staff coaches and sponsors reflects any lack of commitment to this school and our students. We are proud of the achievements of our students and top academic ranking of this school. Thank you for everything you have professionally and personally contributed to these outcomes.

We do believe that the extracurricular athletic programs provide valuable opportunities for students to maximize their high school experience on many levels. Subsequently, at the September 16, 2009 meeting Council conveyed their full support of the efforts of administrative staff to prioritize this issue and set in place strategies to rebuild extracurricular sports at SCHS.

School Council is ready and willing to:

- support you individually as coaches and sponsors with volunteer resources as appropriate and desired
- work divisionally and/or provincially on this issue
- address any and all unacceptable parent or student behavior
- recognize and thank those who dedicate themselves to this important program

Extracurricular sports will not be 'fixed' in an instant but working together as team we will be able to make positive changes for the benefit of this school and our students.

Regards,

Wendy Juergens
Council Chairperson

Sue Mackey
Council Athletic Representative

SCHS 2010 Sports Schedule

2010 Sports	# of Teams	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Girls' Soccer	1	X	X								
Golf	4	X									
Cross Country	4	X	X								
Volleyball	4	X	X	X							
Football	2	X	X	X	X						
Basketball	4			X	X	X	X	X			
Curling	4		Oct 15					Mar 6			
Badminton	4							X	X	X	
Track & Field	4							X	X	X	X
Boys' Soccer	1									X	X
Girls Rugby	1									X	X
11 Sports	31	5	5	3	2	2	1	4	2	4	3