

Effective School Council Bylaws

Presented to RVS School Councils
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About the Presenter

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 - President, AB Assn. of Parliamentarians
 - Rocky View Schools Trustee
 - Small Business Owner

What is a Parliamentarian?

- ▶ Trained in parliamentary procedure including Robert's Rules of Order
- ▶ Provide support to organizations:
 - Professional presiding officer
 - Meeting parliamentarian (advisor to chair)
 - Bylaw development
 - Training and consultation
 - Writing opinions
 - Meeting preparation and improvement

What are the goals for today?

- ▶ **Goals for today – That each participant will:**
 - **Understand** what bylaws are and what could/should be included in them
 - **Encouragement** that bylaws should be simple and helpful for school councils
 - **Discuss** other ways to create rules and policies outside of bylaws.

Format

- ▶ First half is presentation only
- ▶ Second half will be your opportunity to ask questions and troubleshoot

What are Bylaws?

- ▶ Bylaws are a governing document outlining the most important operating rules of an organization.
- ▶ Bylaws are meant to include rules that should be more difficult to change

Hierarchy of Authority

- ▶ Education Act (highest)
- ▶ School Councils Regulation
- ▶ Rocky View Schools Policy or Procedures
 - including AP 110
- ▶ School Council Bylaws
- ▶ Council Adopted Rules of Order
- ▶ Common Parliamentary Procedure
- ▶ Custom (lowest)

The purpose of bylaws

- ▶ You likely won't think about your bylaws too often (that's good), but they are vitally important...
- ▶ Provides School Council with:
 - Governance oversight
 - Structure
 - Big picture direction
 - Clarity of rules
 - Protection of member's rights
 - Majority (right to decide through vote)
 - Minority (right to debate and influence decision)
 - Absentees (quorum, notice)

Bylaws should fit your context

- ▶ There is no perfect template for organizations to use for their bylaws
- ▶ There are many rights and a few wrongs
- ▶ Bylaws should change over time... not too often, not too infrequently

Bylaws or Operating Procedures?

- ▶ A School Council has the legal right (not obligation) to establish bylaws.
 - School Councils Regulation – Section 17
 - ASCA notes you may call your bylaws operating procedures if you wish:
 - Calling bylaws operating procedures does not make them less complex; the level of complexity is up to your council.
 - They are still bylaws and must still follow the law

Bylaws vs. Other Rules

- ▶ **Bylaws**
 - Items that are unlikely to change for years
 - High level structure and protection
- ▶ **Policies / Rules / Procedures / Custom**
 - Items that are flexible
 - Not as critical for protection
 - Better place for things like
 - Detailed job descriptions
 - Code of conduct
 - Cannot conflict with higher authorities

Bylaws could include:

- ▶ Regulations suggest...
 - Calling of regular, special or annual meetings
 - Election of members of council and executive
 - Role of the chair and other executive
 - Number of times council **MUST** meet
 - Location of meetings
 - **Quorum**
 - Conflict resolution process
- ▶ Regulations do not require any of the above nor limit any other items

Bylaws could include:

- ▶ ASCA adds:
 - Membership of the council
 - Committees
 - Description of meetings
 - Decision making style
 - **When AGM held and who attends**
 - Annual report details
 - **Method to amend bylaws**
 - Which officers have signing authority

ASCA Template

- ▶ ASCA provides helpful resource for Councils
- ▶ In their main resource guide are links to
 - Operating procedures (bylaws) template
 - Operating procedures (bylaws) checklist
- ▶ These resources are very helpful but remember:
 - A template is only a guide... use what works best for your context

Important Tips

- ▶ Be wary of duplicating wording in higher authorities
- ▶ Use clear language
- ▶ “Will/Must” is different than “May/Should”
- ▶ Ask “Who should have the right to change this?”
- ▶ Include your principal in the process
- ▶ Review them briefly each year
- ▶ KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Amending your Bylaws

- ▶ Your bylaws are in force from year to year
- ▶ The Regulation requires that to approve original bylaws or to amend bylaws that:
 - it must be done at a special meeting called for that purpose
 - approved by majority vote of parents who attend that meeting and vote

How often should we amend/revise our bylaws?

- ▶ 3–6 years is likely sufficient
- ▶ Do not change/amend for the sake of change
- ▶ Reasons to amend include:
 - Changes from a higher authority (regs, RVS procedure)
 - Problems or issues that have emerged
 - Lack of clarity
 - New opportunities or circumstances

Council Adopted Rules of Order

- ▶ ASCA recommends use of a rules of order
- ▶ Powerful tool to solve meeting problems
- ▶ Likely better to approve outside of the bylaws
- ▶ Note: ASCA sample does not say how these get approved or revised
 - Could be by majority vote at any meeting
- ▶ Could include
 - Voting procedures
 - Election procedures
 - Meeting guidelines (how long on each item, conduct, how a motion can be made)

Communicate

- ▶ The following items should be easily accessible on your school website
 - Bylaws
 - Rules of Order
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Minutes

References

- ▶ School Councils Regulation
 - https://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2019_094.pdf
- ▶ ASCA School Council Resource Guide
 - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/files/181387>
- ▶ RVS School Council Orientation Slides
 - <https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/families/schoolcouncilswebportal/assets/school-council-orientation-october-15-2020>

Questions, Answers & Troubleshooting