

BUILDING YOUR *School Community*

By Scott Sancton

So, you're probably asking, what is an article about Student Leadership and School Spirit doing in SPOA? It's a good question, and an easy answer. There is a strong tie between a good school community, and those using it respecting their surrounding and environment.

By ensuring a strong school community within your educational institution, you're going to cut down on the disrespect that may be shown to the property. If a person is proud to be a member of the community, there is a significant smaller chance that they are going to do something to harm that community.

Next question, what is this School community he's talking about? Well, the school community is often reflected in school spirit, involvement with sports teams, as well as extra-curricular activities. High levels of Participation in these show that participants who are involved in the school "community", are proud to be. By establishing a difference between a school being just a building, and its' being a living community, a fun and enjoyable place to go, causes a new level of respect to be instilled within members of that community.

My personal experience comes from my involvement with Sights and Sounds Productions, Canada's largest in-school Entertainment Company. We provide entertainment in the form of over 600 dances coast to coast every year, at 300+ schools nation wide.



One of Sights and Sounds great events

Sights and Sounds has always been very involved with Student Leadership, and I have personally run workshops at student leadership conferences in every province. One of the issues I stress when speaking to student leaders, is the concept of building a strong community within the school, and incorporating all those involved.

For example, in order to put on an after-school event, many people are involved. Administration must approve the event, Staff must be willing to come in after hours and act as chaperones, Janitorial Staff may have to stay later than usual, as the event may not end until late at night, and of course the student body must want to participate, so that it is cost effective for the school to have the event.

From experience I have learned that schools that hold a lot of such events, not only limited to Dances, but also pep

Sight & Sound
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rallies, winter Carnivals, lots of Grad Events, and other special presentations, also have the best maintained buildings, and respectful student body. More times than not, if a school does not have a strong community, they are faced with issues such as alcohol problems within the student body, and stemming from that a disrespect for the building, leading to vandalism, theft and other issues.

If this sounds like your school, maybe it is worth investigating what measures are in place to try and build a strong community. Does your school have a student government? Are they supported and encouraged by administration and staff members? If not, maybe this is a good way to start dealing with some of the larger issues.

This is not to say, of course, that by having a strong student government in place, all issues will be resolved overnight. It will take time, possibly even a year or two, for the pride in the school to catch on. But as much as peer pressure can be a negative situation, it can also be a positive one. While there will always be a few bad apples, and there is really no avoiding that, if the

masses are enjoying their school experience, then individuals will as well.

One of the most common comments I hear, is “Our school is very small, not that many students”. That doesn’t mean that you still can’t have a solid school community; in fact, if developed properly, it will end up being even stronger due to the fact that it’s a smaller group. There are many options of ways to still work with a smaller school.

If this article has gotten you thinking about your schools situation, but you don’t know how to start, the best way is to get involved! Look into the different organizations around that you can be a member of, and get resources from your peers. The British Columbia Association of Student Activity Advisors (www.bcasaa.bc.ca) is a great place to start.



A great school community

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