

**Provincial Directors of Education Responses
to the Perrins Report for the Consultation Panel**

Written Submission to the Panel January 20, 2017

January 20, 2017

Dear Panel Members,

Thank you for the opportunity on January 10th to discuss with Directors their ideas and suggestions related to the Perrins Report on Educational Governance. On the following pages, you will find the ideas Directors outlined in the initial conversation along with some additional comments. Also included is a copy of the letter and enclosure that Directors sent to Minister Morgan on November 30, 2016.

The provincial Directors of Education group is hopeful that the Panel and government will find the suggestions helpful in the decision making process that will follow the consultation. Please ensure that decision makers are aware that Directors would welcome the opportunity for further discussion or clarification of the ideas presented in these pages.

Please feel free to contact either of us should you need further information or clarity.

Yours in Education,



Robert Bratvold
Co-Chair of Directors Group
Director of Education
Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division



Duane Hauk
Co-Chair of Directors Group
Director of Education
Northwest School Division

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1. Introduction

Several contextual items are important to acknowledge:

- a. Governors (i.e. Boards and Trustees) will be significantly impacted by governance changes and must be a primary source of expertise and comment about governance models and implications. There is sensitivity when a group of directors provides responses and perspectives about governance.
- b. This sensitivity is further heightened because the directors group does not speak for LEADS, which represents out of scope educational administrators across the province.
- c. Directors' responses to the Perrins Report are provided in good faith within the context of partnership, collaborative solution-finding and respect for the Boards by whom we are employed, to whom we are accountable and with whom we work to improve the lives of students.
- d. As honest brokers for students, directors believe that the current governance system has many virtues and that the consequences of any changes to this system need to be carefully considered.
- e. The notes and conversation that occurred are an elaboration and enhancement of the letter that Directors sent to Minister Morgan on Nov. 30, 2016 and which outlines a number of operational/management enhancements possible within the current governance structure. Directors believe those suggestions should be considered by the Panel and government.

2. Focus of Director Responses and Value of ESSP

The directors' comments focus on improved student learning through sound management practices and authentic stakeholder engagement. The directors believe that as the Panel summarizes the consultation and as government considers the Panel's summary, attention must not waver from improving student learning.

The ESSP was transformational when it was established and continues to be transformational in the province. The ESSP is a significant part of the sectors' response to the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth and has changed the way school divisions, First Nation and Metis educational authorities and the Ministry of Education work together.

- a. The ESSP has generated benefits for students and systems.
- b. The full range of ESSP benefits will accrue in the coming years; it takes time to realize the impacts of the change
- c. The progress towards the goals of the ESSP will be jeopardized, delayed and possibly halted if substantial change in governance occurs. Time, energy, fiscal and mental resources will necessarily be redirected towards reorganization and away from leading student learning.

The Perrins Report reiterates the unanimous support for the ESSP among boards. The essence of the ESSP has successful student experience at its centre and the ESSP's Enduring Strategies are the first step to ensuring that student success:

- a. Curriculum: culturally relevant and engaging

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- b. Instruction: differentiated and high quality
- c. Assessment: culturally appropriate and authentic
- d. Experience: First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing
- e. Professional Learning: targeted and relevant
- f. Strong Partnerships: family, school and community
- g. Alignment: human, physical and fiscal resources

Directors believe that shifts in governance will threaten or disrupt the effective deployment and implementation of these Enduring Strategies.

3. Potential Implications of change in structure on schools and classrooms (Protecting the ESSP & the Front Line)

The Perrins report acknowledges unanimous support for keeping the momentum of the ESSP. Silos have already been broken down as Boards and Directors demonstrate communication and process of accountability to each other. There is total alignment between school-based goals and ESSP push targets at the provincial level, with school based goals having flexibility to add their own unique rural voice and local context. There is NO time to lose focus or drive on the ESSP direction. Putting effort, energy, and school system's limited resources into a rebuild will not allow the Ministry to achieve push targets of 2020.

All proposed governance options WILL, with certainty, disrupt the front line depending on which school divisions are affected by amalgamations. Here is an example of teacher disruption:

- a. What school division policies and procedures are to be followed?
- b. What is the new system entity's merged approach to:
 - Staffing?
 - Class size?
 - School calendar?
 - Student supervision?
 - Treatment related to LINC agreement?
 - Report cards? "System" student assessment expectations?
 - IT systems?
 - Teacher supervision protocol?
 - Professional development and time given to process understand and retrain?
 - Essential duties as described in the Education Act: which ones will principals and teachers be disrupted in performing?
 - How will parents be involved in the changes?

These areas are compulsory to basic staff functioning and uncertainty leads to angst and decreased performance. In addition, Principals' important function as instructional leaders would be interrupted as system changes drive them back into management. This would shift the focus of schools back to system first, not student first.

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4. Responses About Various Topics in the Perrins Report

a. Purpose (p. 3)

The Perrins Report makes strong reference to the provincial Plan for Growth, which in part “seeks to have smaller, more effective government”.

- Several of the options reference in this report have the potential for more centralization and thus bigger role for the provincial government which seems contrary to the Plan for Growth
- To support Enduring Strategies of Partnerships and Alignment, Directors suggest that the Panel encourage the Minister to continue to advocate for smaller, more effective government in sectors outside of Education.

The Plan for Growth also conveys the government’s desire to ensure that government programs and services are efficient and effective as possible.

- Job creation, social services, poverty reduction, mental health supports, wellness promotion are all government-supported services that have tremendous impact on Education. Educators continue to be committed to collaboration with other service providers, and the panel needs to consider the importance of these sectors in the province and Education.
- Attempting to improve educational outcomes solely by changing governance structures is an exceedingly narrow and simplistic endeavor.
- Children struggling with the family burdens of hopelessness and despair associated with poverty and joblessness can be supported at school but a more distant governance body, and with less local representation, is not likely to provide more support and may in fact impair work on the Enduring Strategy related to Partnerships.

b. Structure (p. 4-5) and Partners p (5-6)

This section of the report outlines essential roles of the Minister, Ministry, Boards, and School Community Councils.

- Should the government review and update the Education Act (and Regulations) there are several changes that might enhance student learning experiences and/or generate cost savings without substantial restructuring. There are over a dozen outlined in the Directors’ Nov. 30, 2016 letter to the Minister and they connect to all seven of the Enduring Strategies.

Although it is not a governance structure *per se*, the significance of the group of senior administration in school divisions needs additional comment. Management guru Peter Drucker and other researchers have indicated that culture consistently beats strategy. The Panel should note that it is the skilled and passionate superintendents, coordinators and consultants who are essential in sustaining healthy culture in school systems.

- Without system level leadership, work, guidance, professional development, pressure, support and monitoring provided by these senior leaders, structure or

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strategy will not matter. These change agents lead the work, and without them we would not be able to deploy the Enduring Strategies of Instruction, Assessment, Experience or Professional Learning, nor would we be able to meet the goals of the ESSP

- If government chooses a new governance structure, the transition to that structure needs to recognize the impact of that change on the system level administrators and needs to manage that change with skill and with compassion for these senior leaders.

c. Selecting Board Members (p.19-20)

Elected Boards bring passion and community voice to the Board table, which supports the Enduring Strategy related to Partnerships. Appointed boards are far less likely to bring that passion, community voice and local accountability.

The notion of appointed boards also seems to run contrary to, or at least pose more challenges for, several of the elements of good governance on p. 18-19 of the report.

- Equity seems most problematic if public trustees are appointed while separate trustees are elected.
- The principles of transparency, accountability and participation seem to be the next most obvious challenges with appointed boards, but other principles may be problematic as well.
- Although many factors in addition to governance affect PISA success, jurisdictions that lead the country (AB, BC, and QC) all have elected boards, which suggests appointed boards are not the answer to improved PISA success.

Elected Boards also provide a training ground for civic, provincial, federal and other forms of elected leaders. Finally, elected boards bring essential value to many aspects of the system and they are an embodiment of the value and function of democracy, an idea that is foundational to our country and that we work to instill in our students.

d. Governance Shifts (p.20-21)

In this portion of the report, and in the Options outlined later, there are several references to an Advisory Committee to the Minister, an Education Quality Council and an entity (like 3S Health) for coordination of sector-wide efficiencies, shared services and continuous improvement. These are very concerning.

- Page 24 of the Report describes these structures as “critical to this option succeeding” but the Report does not provide any information about the function, terms of reference, authority and limits, membership, or cost of these structures.
- Lack of information on these Education-specific structures, along with mixed reviews of their Health-specific counterparts, make it difficult to take an informed position on the governance shifts proposed in conjunction with these proposed structures.

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- These structures have the potential to threaten the autonomy of boards and make school divisions less responsive to emergent needs that arise
- These structures have the potential to add additional layers of bureaucracy to a system seeking efficiency
- These structures also have the potential to demand consistency instead of the flexibility, differentiation, and some variation needed in the implementation of the Enduring Strategies of Instruction, Assessment and Experience.

Perhaps more concerning is the lack of clarity about the concern with the current governance structure: what is broken? There are areas that we can improve within the current structures and Boards and divisions are interested and engaged in making those improvements. The ESSP is a key part of that improvement that is just beginning to gain momentum, but divisions have also increased in their capacity for continuous improvement in several areas. One glaring example is that Directors believe that improvement in supports and programming for the students in the North is essential. Equity is essential for system achievement but if we focus energy on new governance structures, it detracts from the potential to achieve greater equity.

It is also puzzling to consider the turmoil and expense of creating new governance structures to save only a portion of the \$11.3 Million currently spent on education governance in the province. Aside from the human and time costs, the fiscal cost of transition as well as the cost of operation of these proposed entities (quality council, etc.) seem certain to exceed the potential savings in reduction for governance.

In addition, it is problematic to compare the current governance structure with a hypothetical ideal structure.

5. Conclusion

The report, along with an initial study of the challenges and potential benefits outlines some clear options, but the report fails to identify a compelling reason that these options are necessary. The report does include some justification for change:

- When the government claimed the authority to set the Educational mill rate, it became fiscally vulnerable to decisions that are legislatively delegated to locally-elected boards concerning expenditures, deficits and operational choices.
- Legislation provides the Minister with the authority to prepare and publish goals but it does not clearly outline a duty or power to establish standards of performance or to assess the extent to which outcomes are achieved and standards are met.

Direct legislative and regulatory changes can address both of these concerns without the need for governance and/or structural changes outlined in the Options 1, 2, 3a or 3b in the Report.

Review and renewal of legislation is one of the items that the Directors suggested in their Nov. 30th letter to the Minister.

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Perhaps more concerning is the lack of evidence that any one the Options will enable the Sector to more effectively implement the ESSP's Enduring Strategies and improve student learning more than another of the Options. While there is little hard evidence that any of the Options will make things worse, and some of the Options may produce other benefits, unless there is clear benefit to student learning it seems imprudent to proceed with any particular option. The problem is not well defined, the options only address a portion of the Education sector, and Education can only address a portion of the problems.

It seems unnecessarily risky to proceed with un-costed options to solve poorly defined problems that may be solved by far less costly and far less disruptive legislative or regulatory changes. Directors urge the Panel to convey to the Minister that solving the challenges that exist might involve solutions other than those options outlined in the Perrins report.

(continued on next page)

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November 30, 2016

Honorable Don Morgan, Q.C.
Deputy Premier, Province of Saskatchewan
Room 361, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina SK S4S 0B3

Minister Morgan,

As a response to your request for suggestions and potential solutions regarding the many changes being considered within the educational sector, the Directors of Education for the 28 divisions in the province met to discuss how we, as a group, could help support you and the Ministry of Education moving forward. Directors of Education are employed by school boards that have made, and continue to make, significant leadership and governance contributions to the education sector. The role of governance is best left in the hands of these Boards, while Directors contribute their expertise in the operations and administration of school divisions. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is to outline our ideas regarding transformational change, make a commitment to supporting our educational partners in this process and provide viable operational and administrative alternatives to whole-scale structural change in the educational sector.

From an economic standpoint, we agree that transformational change is needed in the educational sector. These changes are necessary to create a system that is more financially sustainable for the province moving forward. We also agree and support the concepts presented in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond* document. From our perspective, the work started in 2013 with the development of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) outlining a *Student First* approach to education was the educational sector's response to the transformational change challenge. As you know, this was the first time in any educational jurisdiction where there was a sector-wide agreement on goals and actions to improve educational outcomes for students. The ESSP is gaining momentum and support within the province. Based on most recent data within each outcome, there has been marked improvement in every outcome identified within the ESSP. We believe that the educational sector, through the development of the ESSP, is well ahead of other sectors within the province with regards to transformational change.

Because of this success, we believe a continued focus and commitment to the ESSP is necessary if we want to achieve the desired outcomes as outlined in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond* document. Through this process, we have learned that we work better together and are committed to the ESSP as developed. In the future, we would like to work towards expanding the parameters of the ESSP to affect even more positive results in student learning and continue to reform our educational sector for the better.

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We believe the desired outcomes of the transformational change mandate can be achieved without making structural changes in the education sector. Since 2013, school divisions have been developing their practices, processes and cultures to align with the ESSP. If the structural changes being implied were to occur, it would certainly redirect our focus away from, not only the positive outcomes and important work required for success of the ESSP, but also away from the *Student First* philosophy adopted by our government. School divisions would have to commit increased amount of time and resources into managing the changes associated with the rebuilding of new organizational structures.

We believe the goals of transformational change in the educational sector can be achieved, not through structural change, but by continuing to work together as a sector through our ESSP. As a result of this commitment towards positive educational reform in our province, in the enclosure to this letter you will find, what we believe to be, a number of suggestions outlining feasible, practical and sustainable alternatives to structural change. We are making these suggestions simply as a starting point to initiate discussion regarding how best our group can support the Ministry in achieving the goals of transformational change within the educational sector. We strongly believe these actions will result in meeting the needs of the province during these trying economic times, and we are ready to do our part to see that these actions are realized.

We would like to thank you in advance for considering our suggestions and for your continued commitment to an open and transparent process as we enter into the uncharted waters of transformational change. We would welcome the opportunity to get together with you and your staff in the near future and begin the process of working through these actions. If you have any further questions regarding our request or suggestions, please contact either of the co-chairs of our group, Robert Bratvold (rbratvold@srsd119.ca or 306-764-1571) or Duane Hauk (duane.hauk@nwsd.ca or 306-236-5614). We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert Bratvold
Co-Chair



Duane Hauk
Co-Chair

C: J. MacRae, Deputy Minister of Education
School Board Chairpersons
P. Benson, Executive Director SASBO
B. Cooke, Executive Director LEADS
D. McKee, Executive Director SSBA

Encl.

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As we revisit the renewal or continuation of curricula development, we recommend that factors taken into consideration include first the needs of our learners in both the present and future, but second a lens of efficiency and cost implications. By employing a LEAN philosophy and studying the concept of rework, it may be possible to identify more efficient practices. There are currently some practices which are repeated in all 28 systems, and furthermore, all 28 submit that work to the Ministry staff to process and approve. By studying processes, it may be possible to reduce the work in each system and for the Ministry staff. There are many practices which could be aligned across systems and within the Ministry. Furthermore, if these became provincial processes, then the resources required to support the course would be common across the province and bulk purchasing would be a possibility.

Actions to Impact Administrative Processes & Practices

1. Alternate Curriculum development and Locally Developed Options - Once approved for a particular school division, could these approved curricula and options be available for use throughout the province by all school divisions?
2. Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) – many systems have worked with Kevin Cameron for years, some are just recently working with him, but all negotiate and arrange separately.
3. HUB process - another example of repetitious work by many school divisions. Each school division working separately with other agencies and working to engage our partners takes an inordinate amount of staffing and time. Provincial initiatives that are common to all, could have a provincial lead and support.
4. Departmental Examinations - Directors of Education have previously requested a review of this process as there is a belief that the current practice is outdated, not in line with best practice of authentic assessment, has little effect on marks, does not create equity and is costly. Do we still require departmental examinations?
5. Teacher Time Issue & Locally Determined Terms and Conditions (LDTC) - The work in terms of Teacher Time Task Force could become inclusive of other pieces. When attempting to address a root cause, there may be other challenges that can be studied. When developing calendars, perhaps there is potential to review the scheduling and delivery of preparation time across the province. This is currently a local autonomy piece that is captured in Locally Determined Benefits. However, as we recognize the extensive cost to prep time and the inequity across the province, there may be opportunity to tie the work of the Task Force with the development of calendars and address preparation time and or Professional Development time in a consistent, more efficient and less costly way.
6. Consideration of Processes for Long Term Benefit - There are potentially some processes which may cost more money initially but which will save significant money in the future. Universal Prekindergarten and/or full day kindergarten implementation will unquestionably come with an increased cost, however, the long term benefits far outweigh the original output of money. The research is clear on the importance of early prevention and intervention for children. Investing in our youngest learners will provide long term dividends. This cost avoidance is the core underpinning of ensuring our children can read at grade level by the end of third grade. Systems are investing heavily in this initiative. It will bring benefits for years to come as will increasing

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graduation rates. As systems invest and focus heavily on these processes, it must be remembered that costs down the road in health and justice are being reduced. Investing in our youth is critical.

Provided for further consideration are a number of practices that may be considered for renewal as we move forward with improving the Educational Pre-K to Grade 12 sector. Some of the actions provided below will cross over to other actions listed.

Actions to Impact Administrative Structures

1. Web Resources – Professional sharing, as evidenced in the research can have a significant impact on the achievement levels of students. The Professional Learning Concept (PLC) could be more widely available through web-based access. An inventory of best practices, assessment tools, and professional exchange could be further explored across the province. This would be effective and efficient.
2. Common PD and Joint Efforts – Professional development can be standardized if technology and priorities are standardized. Various web-based professional development sessions are already utilized but rarely do school divisions share these sessions outside the local division. Some degree of central management may ensure this happens.
3. Central Purchasing – This requires a specialized skill set in order to organize large scale tenders. It will be more efficient to tender provincially for common goods and services. Standardization of furniture, tools and supplies for teaching and learning could result in efficiencies in our classrooms throughout the province which may create greater equity. Central purchasing for various items such as buses and furniture could result in significant savings
4. Shared Service – A centralized unit to do common business practices such as payroll and IT support.
5. Solution for Local Agreements – Develop common agreements so the efficiency can be realized. There will certainly be challenges with this as some unions will not desire common standard agreements. This could reduce the inequity and inefficiency that exists with numerous agreements. Having common agreements will positively position the education sector for the possibility of centralizing payroll in the future.
6. Legislative Adjustments – The current Education Act is very dated on all aspects. Since the Education Act drives the duties of school divisions and Boards, it should be current in its regulations. Several sections of the Education Act do not have any current relevance to the current sector practices connected to the roles and duties of the stakeholders.
7. School Review Process – With seven years of experience with the current regulations, are the viability thresholds appropriate? Are the processes that exist progressive, or are they restrictive to find any solutions and efficiencies?
8. Ministry Efficient Reporting – This process is very inefficient. Repeated and duplicated requests by the Ministry that have little to no impact on division effectiveness is the norm. Numerous requests are rarely followed up, leaving one to believe there is no purpose for the requests in the first place. Why is the Ministry involved in Service Delivery? The Ministry appears to be dipping into Division Service Delivery in some areas but not in others. Examples are Ministry involvement in Following Their Voices and some policy development and no involvement in other areas. The Ministry role is to regulate the legislative framework and some policy that is common to all school divisions. The Ministry is to set accountability standards for both Ministry and school division. Roles need to be defined and adhered to.

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9. Special Services – School divisions have become (by demand) providers of all services to our communities. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, Social Work and Psychology supports are no longer accessed from local health authorities. The question is, should school divisions continue to provide these services or is there a will to consolidate these services or access them from another sector?
10. Semester vs Non-Semester – The semester system has been the primary framework for content delivery for nearly 50 years. Perhaps a review of the two semester concept should occur. Perhaps a semester within a region or perhaps a non-semester structure that allows for extended course study within a content area should be explored. The length of the school day with start and end times should be revisited. Once again these structures are all a result of the dated Education Act.
11. Compulsory School Age – the current compulsory school age of 6 to 16 requires review. There is a direct correlation to the age and dropout rate. The current legislation permits a student to leave school after the age of 16 years.
12. School-Year Calendar – A review of the school year calendar development practices may result in improved learning block time. The calendar provides a mid-February break and an Easter break tied to the Liturgical calendar. This does have implications for learning time.
13. Administrative Structures – These structures vary from school division to school division. We would be willing to look internally at our organizational designs and consider options that would provide for more effective and efficient administrative structures at the central office level.

All Actions provided above are intended to stimulate further discussion around Educational/Sector Reform. The Reform focuses on improved service delivery that is effective and efficient. The items provided (with brief commentary) are not an exhaustive list but one that was generated by the provincial Director's group in the fall of 2016.