



# Educational Governance Review Report Kindergarten to Grade 12

Submission to the  
Educational Governance Review Advisory Panel

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# Introduction

Saskatchewan teachers are pleased to respond to the *Educational Governance Review Report* released in December 2016 and welcome the opportunity to express the voice of the profession during this important era in the education sector.

This document is the formal submission to the Educational Governance Review Advisory Panel on behalf of approximately 13,000 professional teachers in Saskatchewan. It elaborates on the key messages that Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation staff and members have provided to the Ministry of Education, education sector partners and the public during discussions on educational governance.

The purpose of this submission is to offer the history, vision and principles of educational governance in Saskatchewan as understood by the teaching profession. These principles are situated within the Federation's history, legislated mandate, relationships with education sector partners and the public, as well as within the Federation's bylaws and policies adopted by teachers.

The Federation and its members have a vision of high-quality, publicly funded public education as a universal right of all children and youth. At the centre of this vision is excellence in classroom teaching and learning that places the needs of students first by nurturing students' well-being and potential.

Saskatchewan teachers recognize that as society changes, educational structures and institutions may also need to undergo change in order to fit needs and different contexts. This governance review is an opportunity to consider what changes are necessary to ensure that the governance and funding structures for education in this province are both effective and viable. Important questions have been raised about them and this is an opportunity to work together in order to find solutions to sector-wide challenges.

Educational governance is not simply a question of power, structures, elections or dollars and cents. It is the way in which the public, government, teachers and other education sector partners work towards a better future for all children and youth. Reviews of governance are part of a perpetual drive to do things better, to achieve greater equity, to reach all students and to ensure that this province has a bright future.

The public and all partners in education have an obligation to fully consider all perspectives, options and views from a multitude of stakeholders before undertaking fundamental changes or enacting modifications to educational governance. This submission is part of that ongoing dialogue, one that the Federation and teachers have participated in for over eight decades of professional service.

# Teachers and the History of Educational Governance Changes in Saskatchewan

## Early History

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The questions of governance, amalgamation and school division structure have been fundamental to education in Saskatchewan for over 100 years. Even before the province was founded in 1905, the Northwest Territories Department of Education, which later became the province's educational civil service, undertook preliminary studies on how the system could run efficiently.<sup>1</sup>

Successive Saskatchewan provincial governments have viewed governance changes as a way to bring about positive, constructive changes to educational service delivery.<sup>2</sup> Legislation in 1913, for example, provided for school division consolidation on a voluntary basis.<sup>3</sup>

Five years later, in 1918, the province commissioned American educational scholar Dr. Harold W. Foght to study educational governance in Saskatchewan. Foght's efforts culminated in a document entitled *A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan*, which was the first comprehensive study of how education is governed in Saskatchewan.<sup>4</sup>

Foght noted in his analysis that education must be able to respond to societal change. The people of Saskatchewan, Foght wrote, seemed determined to "take action before their educational institutions become afflicted with inertness, resulting in failure to respond to the changing life of their democratic civilisation".<sup>5</sup> He recommended that the province reorganize and amalgamate some school divisions to modernise the system and more fully use schools.<sup>6</sup>

The Foght report and its recommendations were never implemented by government. However, they reflect a fundamental undercurrent in Saskatchewan education that has arisen again and again throughout the province's history.

Teachers in Saskatchewan were active participants in these early conversations on educational governance.<sup>7</sup> When the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation issued its first public message to teachers in 1934, it noted the structure of educational governance as one of its foremost concerns.<sup>8</sup> The Federation envisioned stability and consistency for the entire system so that teachers could deliver the best possible service:

*Granted that the basis of our educational system is unselfish service on the part of the teacher given to the children of this province and the parents of these children.... When the teacher is given economic security for standard service rendered year in and year out, then, and only then can our altruistic aims for education be realized.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Northwest Territories, Department of Education, *Annual Report*, 1901, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael Owen, "Towards a New Day: The Larger School Unit in Saskatchewan, 1935-1950," in Brian Noonan, Dianne Hallman, and Murray Scharf (eds.), *A History of Education in Saskatchewan* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2006) pp. 33-49.

<sup>3</sup> *Act to Amend the School Act, Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1912-1913*, c. 35, 1913, p. 166-172. See also Murray P. Scharf, "An Historical Overview of the Organization of Education in Saskatchewan," in Brian Noonan, Dianne Hallman, and Murray Scharf (eds.), *A History of Education in Saskatchewan* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2006), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Harold W. Foght, *A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada*. Report to the Government of the Province of Saskatchewan (Regina, King's Printer, 1918).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Owen, "Towards a New Day," op cit., p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, "A Message to Our Educators", *Saskatchewan Bulletin* Vol. I, No. 1 (1934).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

As part of its early advocacy efforts during its first two decades of existence, the Federation proposed that government enact changes to educational governance, particularly amalgamation, in order to improve teaching and learning conditions across Saskatchewan.<sup>10</sup>

In 1938, the Saskatchewan provincial government struck a commission of inquiry to examine the existing governance structure. This commission, led by former Saskatchewan Premier William Martin, recommended putting the question of amalgamating school divisions to local ratepayers, who subsequently voted against larger school divisions.<sup>11</sup>

The first major reforms to educational governance in Saskatchewan came in 1944 and were supported by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.<sup>12</sup> The newly elected provincial government adopted *The Larger School Units Act*, which established larger school units. Each larger school unit was empowered to administer and manage the local schools within its respective units.<sup>13</sup> When this model was implemented, local schools that had their own boards lost much of their administrative powers.<sup>14</sup>

To this day, the fundamental structure created by *The Larger School Units Act* remains in place as school divisions continue to oversee local schools across the province.<sup>15</sup> As the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has noted elsewhere, the 1944 changes increased teachers' involvement in curriculum renewal and other areas of decision making in the education sector.<sup>16</sup>

## Recent History

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National and provincial fiscal crises during the 1980s and 1990s contributed to further studies and proposals for educational governance in Saskatchewan.<sup>17</sup> In 1990, the Government of Saskatchewan commissioned the *School Finance and Governance Review*, a major study on provincial education funding, education property tax, school capital and facilities funding, and school division governance. The Review's final report was released in 1991.

As the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* points out, the 1990 Review recommended reducing the number of school divisions in the province to reflect changing economic and social realities.<sup>18</sup>

More specifically, the Review found that the major issue facing education in Saskatchewan was the balance of two major funding sources – education property taxes and provincial government grants.

In its submission to the 1990 Review, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation asked the fundamental question: "What financial and administrative structures would best support teachers in the instruction of our students?"<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, see also John E. Lyons, "Ten Forgotten Years: The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Legacy of the Depression," in Nancy Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones (eds.), *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History* (Calgary, Detselig Enterprises, 1986), pp. 113-129.

<sup>11</sup> Scharf, "An Historical Overview of the Organization of Education in Saskatchewan," p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> See Owen, "Towards a New Day: The Larger School Unit in Saskatchewan, 1935-1950".

<sup>13</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, *Larger School Units in Saskatchewan: An Explanation of the Larger Unit of Rural School Administration* (Regina, Department of Education, 1947).

<sup>14</sup> Scharf, "An Historical Overview of the Organization of Education in Saskatchewan," p. 12

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, *Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspective on Curriculum Renewal* (Saskatoon, STF, 2015), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Scharf, "An Historical Overview of the Organization of Education in Saskatchewan," p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Dan Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report: Kindergarten to Grade 12* (Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, 2016), p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, *Submission to the School Finance and Governance Review*, December 3-4, 1990, p. 3.

The Federation also wrote that:

*The other primary question that needs to be asked is what value our province places on public education.... Many of us become teachers in large part because we believe firmly in the benefit to students and society provided by a good system of public education.... Public education can flourish only where social and political agreement has been reached on two major assumptions: 1) that all citizens benefit from public education, and 2) that all citizens are responsible for it.<sup>20</sup>*

Similar to its 1934 vision, in 1990 the Federation expressed its belief that discussions around educational governance must centre on teaching and learning:

*... decisions about education are best made as close as possible to the providers and consumers of educational services. In fact, school-based decision-making is arguably the most effective way to establish broadly based understanding and support for public schools. The school level is the easiest level in which to involve parents in decisions affecting the education of their children and teachers in the development of coherent, educationally sound programs and practices.<sup>21</sup>*

In any restructuring of the existing education system, the Federation concluded, the first consideration “must be the effect of changes on teachers and students. The instructional process at the heart of the educational system must be enhanced and supported.”<sup>22</sup>

It is noteworthy that the principle of teaching and learning, held at the forefront of the Federation’s approach to governance in 1934 and 1990, did not change fundamentally. This demonstrates a consistent and principled approach that Saskatchewan teachers have always taken towards the teaching and learning relationship.

In 2003, the Minister of Finance announced another independent commission to review education finance in Saskatchewan. The mandate of the *Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education*, led by Ray Boughen, was to “examine wide-ranging and complex issues affecting the funding of K-12 education,” including the balance of provincial grants and education taxation, the question of fairness and equity among classes of taxpayers, variations in school division taxation and spending patterns, and equity for all students in the province.<sup>23</sup>

Similar to the 1990 Review, the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education concluded in its final report that relying on the current educational governance structure, and its financing structure, was unsustainable.<sup>24</sup>

The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, in its submission to the Commission, reaffirmed its policy on Goals of Publicly Funded Education (2001). Publicly funded public education, the Federation explained, should meet the educational needs of all children in society and should ensure the capacity to achieve provincial goals.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Government of Saskatchewan, “Commission on Financing K-12 Education,” Press Release, May 2, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Ray Boughen, *Finding the Balance: Final Report of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education* (Regina, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, *Brief to the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education*, September 2003, pp. 4 and 11.

More specifically, the Federation noted, “If the expectation is that schools will become the centre of services for children, then the funding must be made available to make this happen.”<sup>26</sup> The Federation called for greater accountability in funding arrangements and decision making, better inter-organizational and government relationships, and full public support of publicly funded public education.

Following the results of the 2003 Commission, the teaching profession in Saskatchewan declared publicly that it “... has always supported changes that will put more resources in the classroom ... we are hopeful that the results will include more classroom resources and a more equitable distribution of those resources among all the students in the province”.<sup>27</sup>

The work of the 1991 Review and 2003 Commission, in addition to voluntary amalgamations in various areas of the province throughout the 1990s, provided the impetus for major restructuring that occurred in 2006.<sup>28</sup> Changes to education property taxation followed the 2009 report entitled *A Decision for Our Future: Options for Long-Term Education Property Tax Relief*.<sup>29</sup> The modifications to taxation and funding of the sector have led to some challenges which are explained in greater detail by Perrins in the *Educational Governance Review Report*.<sup>30</sup>

As teachers in Saskatchewan have shown, they are not averse to change. By nature, the teaching profession is one of constant change. Over time, as various provincial governments contemplated adjustments or wholesale reforms to educational governance, teachers have provided an enduring and principled vision of how change should improve teaching and learning.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, “Teachers’ Federation Sees Positives in Government Response to Boughen Commission,” Press Release, May 13, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, pp. 12-17.

# Professional Teachers of Saskatchewan: Vision and Principles

## Vision

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Throughout its history, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has demonstrated a commitment to teaching and learning that has guided teachers in working with others to achieve significant educational and societal change for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens. Teachers in Saskatchewan are proud of their history of working together with other partners in education and believe that a successful education sector is renewed and revitalized by respectful dialogue and common understandings.

For teachers in Saskatchewan, the fundamental principle regarding educational governance remains as true today as it has throughout the province's history. Changes to educational governance must improve the most important element of education: the teaching and learning relationship in the classroom.

The STF 2015-20 Strategic Plan affirms teachers' commitment to publicly funded public education as a common good and universal right of all children and youth.<sup>31</sup> The Federation believes that it is the responsibility of everyone to create a culture in education that places the needs of students first.

Similarly, education must be equitable and sustainable. Despite whatever differences in opinion or philosophy that various groups and adults in society may have, education must remain focused on students, who are the most important part of the sector.

## Principle One: Universality and Equity

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Publicly funded public education is a universal right of all children and youth.

This principle of universality means that although Saskatchewan is a province with many different local contexts, economies and populations, all efforts must be made to ensure that the level of services offered to students are as equitable as possible no matter where the student resides.

The principles of universality and equity are based on the reality that publicly funded public education is intended to meet the educational needs of all children in a society. Education must be universal and equitable because it is a common good that provides benefits to all of society, not just to the students currently in the education system.

The 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* explains that one of the challenges with the current educational governance structure is the measurement of student achievement outcomes. This is directly related to equity in education for all students in the province. The diffuse nature of the current governance structure makes it difficult to assess whether or not education is truly equitable for all students in the province.

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*"We need now, more than ever before, to make education at every level and in every place, from north to south and each small corner and bustling city, a priority so that we can do our part to prepare our greatest resource - our kids - for all that they are destined to be"*

*- Saskatchewan Teacher*

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<sup>31</sup> Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, *Together We Teach and Learn: Strategic Plan 2015-2020* (Saskatoon, STF, 2015), p. 2.

No matter which governance model is implemented or preserved, educational opportunities should be equitable for all students and not be limited by a student's place of residence, learning potential or ability to pay or a school division's characteristics or ability to pay.

During the 2006 amalgamations, the principle of equity was the main impetus for changes to educational governance.<sup>32</sup> If further changes are made to educational governance in the province of Saskatchewan, the principles of universality and equity must be respected.

Equity also means deliberately addressing inequities related to First Nations and Métis education in governance structures. This means respecting treaty rights as well as using a variety of means to engage the various Indigenous groups directly in creating strategic vision, sharing information and decision-making processes.<sup>33</sup>

## Principle Two: Roles and Responsibilities in the Education Sector

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The heart of the education system is the teaching and learning relationship. Everything in the system exists to support this relationship and the instructional process.

All education sector partners – the public, employers, government and teachers – are responsible for ensuring that teaching and learning and the well-being of students remain at the forefront of the sector's efforts. This responsibility stems from the reality that publicly funded public education is society's best hope for creating a more equitable future for all citizens. Therefore, the health and vitality of education is a shared responsibility among the school, communities and government.

At the same time, Saskatchewan teachers also recognize that each education sector partner has different roles and responsibilities in carrying out the overall work of the sector. The Government of Saskatchewan is responsible for the establishment and oversight of governance and administrative structures and supports for the delivery of PreK-12 public education throughout the province.

The responsibility of the provincial government, as it pertains to governance and restructuring, is to ensure that any reorganization of school divisions results in the equitable rationalization of educational services. The provincial government also has the responsibility to meet the public's expectations by setting common goals and standards and by fully funding an education system that supports the achievement of those goals and standards.

It is the role of teachers to interpret the curriculum and design instruction that allows students of varying needs, backgrounds and abilities to meet the educational goals and standards set by government and expressed in curriculum. Given the appropriate resources and classroom supports, teachers have the professional knowledge, skills and judgment to fully carry out this role and its concomitant responsibilities.

While not directly responsible for determining the nature and structure of educational governance, the teaching profession expects to be directly involved in any changes that will have an impact on the teaching and learning relationship.

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Boughen, *Finding the Balance*, pp. 2, 4-7.

<sup>33</sup> Centre for First Nations Governance, *The People, The Land, Laws & Jurisdiction, Institutions, and Resources: The Five Pillars of Effective Governance* (no date), pp. 4-5.

## **Principle Three: Changes to Governance and Administration Must Support and Improve the Teaching and Learning Relationship**

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Successful teaching and learning is central to a successful education sector. Improvements to the teaching and learning relationship must be the main justification for enacting any major governance or administrative changes to the sector.

There are many factors that influence successful teaching and learning. These include provincial- and school-level policies and practices that support teacher success. Sound policies and practices are developed with the direct involvement of teachers, schools and communities.

In contemplating changes to educational governance, it must be asked: Will the proposed changes exert a positive influence on these factors? If the answer to this question is in the negative, the changes are not acceptable to Saskatchewan teachers.

In the event of any school division reorganization, teachers expect that existing teaching and learning conditions be enhanced via reallocation or reinvestment of resources and supports. Resources saved by governance changes should be reinvested into the teaching and learning relationship.

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*"I believe, one of the unintended outcomes of the first amalgamations was the depersonalization of education...because education at its roots is an inherently personal process."*

- Saskatchewan Teacher

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## **Principle Four: Putting Students First by Enhancing Holistic Service Delivery**

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The well-being of all children and youth requires that each individual is respected, secure and safe, has access to basic needs, and grows up in an environment where the individual's spiritual, physical and emotional needs are met.

Teachers in Saskatchewan believe that the best way to ensure this well-being is to make decisions about education as close as possible to the teaching and learning environment. This principle draws from the recommendations of the 2001 School<sup>PLUS</sup> final report<sup>34</sup> that envisioned "the school of the future within a larger human service network."<sup>35</sup>

According to Dr. M. Tymchak, the author of the School<sup>PLUS</sup> final report, "The location of the school within the nexus of a wide variety of governmental, third-party and community-based human service organizations is the essence of School<sup>PLUS</sup>."<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, as Ray Bougheen mentioned in *Finding the Balance* (the final report of the 2003 commission on education financing), School<sup>PLUS</sup> was a promising idea that did not receive the support and resources it should have.<sup>37</sup> Instead, as School<sup>PLUS</sup> warned may happen, an increasing number of human services moved into schools without the requisite supports.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> M. Tymchak, *School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth. Toward a New School, Community and Human Service Partnership in Saskatchewan* (Regina, Ministry of Education, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> Bougheen, *Finding the Balance*, p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> Tymchak, *School<sup>PLUS</sup>*, p. 64.

In the spirit of School<sup>PLUS</sup>, the education sector should commit to fostering inter- and intra-organizational relationships that best meet the needs of each individual student. With proper resourcing and supports from education sector partners, this will lead to enhancements in teaching and learning. This is especially important to consider in light of the education of Indigenous children and youth in Saskatchewan and the challenge to demonstrate real societal change through education, as articulated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.<sup>39</sup>

More recently, the HUB and CORE model has been implemented in a number of schools across the province. However, it has not been universally implemented and there have been limited resources to support teachers and principals in carrying out this intersectoral program.

Teachers in Saskatchewan believe that their professional status should be enhanced to reflect their working context and their responsibilities in the teaching and learning relationship. A growing body of research demonstrates that by offering a rich program of studies, focusing on the whole child and engaging the leadership of professional teachers, educational outcomes can be vastly improved.<sup>40</sup>

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*"While I absolutely agree that our educational governance can be leaner and more efficient, this is only a productive endeavour if it contributes to student outcomes and facilitates public, democratic voice in education."*

- Saskatchewan Teacher

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## Principle Five: Respect for Collective Bargaining Rights and Conventions

The 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* raises some discussion around teacher collective bargaining and local collective agreements.<sup>41</sup> The Federation notes that teachers take collective bargaining seriously and that it is a legally protected right under Section 2(d) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

This right to fair and good faith collective bargaining has been upheld by the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision in *British Columbia Teachers' Federation v. British Columbia*, on November 10, 2016.<sup>42</sup>

The BCTF decision stressed the importance of meaningful consultation between employers and teacher organizations with regard to changes to collective bargaining structures and existing collective agreements.<sup>43</sup> The current educational governance review process does not address the collective bargaining process in a sufficient manner to have passed this legal test as it is defined by the Supreme Court.

Therefore, if changes to provincial or local collective bargaining structures or processes will be undertaken, they must be addressed through a separate process that is distinct from this current governance review.

In the meantime, teachers in Saskatchewan expect that all local agreements will be respected and honoured. They also expect that meaningful consultation will occur prior to the contemplation of any changes to the collective bargaining legislation, structures or processes. Furthermore, any alternatives or changes to local collective agreements should occur only after respectful and meaningful consultation processes and through direct negotiations.

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<sup>39</sup> Murray Sinclair, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Kim Farris-Berg and Edward J. Dirkswager, "Teacher-Powered Schools: Rising Above Education's Blame Culture", in Jelmer Evers and Rene Kneyber (eds.), *Flip the System: Changing Education From the Ground Up* (London, Routledge, 2016), pp. 178-190; Michael Fullan, *Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform* (Victoria, Australia, Centre for Strategic Education, 2011), p. 8; Canadian Education Association, *Teaching the Way We Aspire to Teach: Now and in the Future* (Toronto, CEA, 2012), pp. 6-7 and 18; Nathan Bond (ed.), *The Power of Teacher Leaders: Their Roles, Influence, and Impact* (London, Routledge, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, pp. 19 and 21, for example.

<sup>42</sup> *British Columbia Teachers' Federation v. British Columbia*, 2016 SCC 49.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

# Educational Governance in Saskatchewan: Key Opportunities

The 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* identifies four potential models for the sector. Each one, as the report is careful to note, brings with it various challenges and opportunities.

No matter which model is chosen, however, the need for an education that will prepare the children and youth of Saskatchewan for the future remains. Key investments must be made in the elements of the system that are enduring – curriculum, instruction, assessment, experience, professional learning, strong partnerships and alignment.

Given the principles that teachers in Saskatchewan hold with regard to education, if a new governance model is implemented, it must:

- Reinforce the principles of universality and equity.
- Reflect the province's commitment to strengthening the public education system as a means to support children, families and communities.
- Create opportunities to facilitate an intersectoral, community-based approach to meeting the needs of children and families.
- Ensure that the unit of change – the classroom – is properly resourced and led by professional teachers who will ensure that Saskatchewan's education system is poised to meet the challenges of the future.
- Protect the public interest and strengthen the sector as a whole.
- Provide for clarity of roles, a broader sharing of responsibility, heightened engagement, meaningful accountability, maximization of resources and enhanced efficiency.
- Contemplate a realignment of some of the key function areas and responsibilities of educational stakeholders.

These principles align with the Principles of Good Governance for Assessing Options that are listed on pages 18 and 19 of the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report*.

This report suggests a number of key challenges for the sector in terms of accountability, resource allocation, efficiencies, costs and structure of board governance, board capacity and board relationships with school community councils.<sup>44</sup> The Federation respectfully observes that some of the key challenges could be resolved by legislative or regulatory changes that would have minimal impacts on the classroom.

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<sup>44</sup> Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, p. 12-17.

# Successful Education Through Community-Based Teaching and Learning

Given the beliefs of teachers regarding the history, vision, principles and opportunities in the Saskatchewan education sector, the teachers of Saskatchewan would like to propose the following elements that will lead the sector towards success:

- The School as Centre of the Community
- The Role of the Principal
- Professionally Led Curriculum Development
- Professionally Led Professional Development
- Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities in the Sector
- Guidelines for a Provincial Leadership Quality Council

## The School as Centre of the Community

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Saskatchewan teachers believe that each community, each school, every classroom and every student is unique. Every situation presents different opportunities, different challenges and presents different needs. Local voice, democratic decision making and accountability are important elements in determining the needs of each community and responding to them.

Saskatchewan is a diverse and complex province. Different schools have different challenges, and any review of educational governance models must recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach will not be flexible enough to respond to the complex and changing local needs across the province. As the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* mentions, it is particularly challenging to apply provincewide or even division-wide solutions to diverse and unique challenges found in various schools and classrooms.

The 2001 *School<sup>PLUS</sup>* final report also underlined these challenges and elaborated a new philosophy for the role of the school in Saskatchewan education. In particular, the report promoted “a school that views itself as an integral part of the community ... in which the culture of the children and the culture of their community is strongly reflected in the school.”<sup>45</sup>

Once fully realized, the *School<sup>PLUS</sup>* model should be “a matrix organization that will draw all of its resources from existing governmental and non-governmental agencies, but it will coordinate and integrate those resources in relation to the needs of children and youth.”<sup>46</sup>

In the same vein, teachers in Saskatchewan envision successful education that recognizes schools as the central hub of community activity and support to students, families and communities. Each school and community requires flexibility and some degree of latitude in terms of how they will respond to the realities of their community, as well as in how they will create inter- and intra-organizational service relationships. Principals and teachers will need flexibility in planning and implementing how their schools and classrooms will provide the best education for the students.

Recognizing the fundamental role of the school as centre of the community is an effective way to address the learning needs of students across the province and ensure continued public confidence in publicly funded public education.

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<sup>45</sup> Tymchak, *School<sup>PLUS</sup>*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

By recognizing the school as centre of the community, educational planning, decision making and accountability could improve teaching and learning where it will have the most impact – at the school and community levels.

Local voice is also fundamentally important in determining the character of education in each community. Education must remain democratic and accountable to the people who are served directly by it. This is especially important in the context of First Nations and Métis students communities, who are often excluded from governance and decision-making processes.

As the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* observes, the way in which local, democratic decision making can be carried out may vary in a number of ways. In this vein, the Federation recommends reviewing the role of School Community Councils.

A renewed School Community Council model could increase community involvement in schools, thereby improving educational accountability to the public. Students, school staff, parents and community members can direct and evaluate student growth and how it corresponds to the community's overall vision for education. This could also enhance teacher professionalism, allowing schools and teachers to work in tandem with their communities to meet the needs of students in their particular social context.

Renewed school community councils should also take into account the student voice in education. What is often lost in complex debates and reviews of governance is that the educational endeavour exists to serve the needs of students. Moving forward, if governance changes are made to the education sector in Saskatchewan, the voice of students must play an important role. As previously mentioned, this is especially important for First Nations and Métis students and their communities.

## The Role of the Principal

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A principal is a teacher with broad responsibilities associated with being the formal educational leader at the level closest to the community that the school serves. Principals play a vital role in establishing the mission, vision and culture of the school through collaboration with students, staff and community.

The principal works alongside their teacher colleagues in order to lead positive change at the school level for students and the community. Principals provide instructional leadership in schools, facilitating teaching and learning excellence while also attending to a number of management responsibilities.

The role of the principal is complex and the context of a school influences the nature of a principalship. The Federation would particularly like to note that in many schools in Saskatchewan, the principal continues to have classroom teaching responsibilities and divides their time between teaching and administering the overall work of the school.

If changes to the existing educational governance framework occur, they must recognize and enhance the central leadership role that principals provide to support the teaching and learning environment. Principals must be granted sufficient professional autonomy to pursue success according to a school's specific context and student needs.

The instructional leadership and administrative roles of the principal are intertwined and should not be understood as separate responsibilities. In assigning duties to teaching staff and overseeing the general scholastic and administrative work of the school, the principal defines and prescribes the school's standards and assists in defining the school's identity. Empowered principals provide effective leadership that fosters scholastic, professional and administrative excellence at all levels of the school.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> P. Renihan, *In-School Leadership for Saskatchewan Schools: Issues and Strategies* (SSTA, January 1999.)

School principals allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve. They also engage in critical processes of planning, implementing, advocating, supporting, communicating and monitoring curriculum, instruction and improvement planning. They create supportive environments that include professional development and time and space for collaboration.

As such, principals should continue to be teachers, have extensive experience in teaching and remain in scope as instructional leaders. Professional development should provide principals with the appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully lead and develop the school team, build community and foster the best possible educational opportunities for students.

## Professionally Led Curriculum Development

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Presently, it is the legislated responsibility of the Minister of Education to provide curriculum guides pertaining to courses of study that are authorized by the Minister. Saskatchewan teachers support the government in establishing provincial-level curriculum renewal structures and processes that will allow teachers to meet both their legislated mandate and their professional aspirations.

As the Federation has mentioned in its recent submission to the Minister regarding curriculum renewal, Saskatchewan teachers want to lead in creating well-thought-out, well-constructed and well-resourced provincial curricula.

If changes are brought to educational governance in Saskatchewan, teachers expect that they have a leadership role at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum development, implementation and actualization.

The current governance review may be the time to establish an enduring, cross-sector body with appropriate representation and leadership for reviewing and reaffirming the province's curricular foundations and for determining signposts, criteria and strategies that will ensure ongoing curriculum development and renewal efforts are successful.

The teaching and learning relationship should inform and drive professionally led curriculum development, particularly in the context of reconciliation and commitments to First Nations and Métis peoples. Curricular foundations require careful consideration of the province's current contexts, realities, needs and commitments to Indigenous peoples.

## Professionally Led Professional Development

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Attending to professional culture and provision of supports for teacher-defined professional growth is a shared responsibility among teachers and the communities in which they work. Enabling teachers to lead in professional growth based on experience and unique contexts is the best way to meet rapidly changing student needs and societal expectations.

Any changes to governance should foster a professional culture that provides appropriate resources and time for teachers to experiment, reflect, collaborate and engage in professional dialogue embedded within their duties and schedules. Saskatchewan teachers welcome the responsibility to exercise their professional judgment in the determination of their professional growth and look forward to a renewed collaboration in the development of systemically well-resourced opportunities for professionally led professional growth.

The design and provision of professional growth opportunities needs to be diverse, flexible and informed by teachers themselves. Teachers expect to be engaged in sustained conversations over time and encourage an iterative process of learning, practice, reflection and dialogue that will standardize and improve professionally led professional development.

## Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities in the Sector

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One of the challenges that the education sector faces is the definition of roles and responsibilities of the various partners in education. These should be clarified so as to create efficiencies and common understandings within the sector.

In meeting this challenge it is important to observe the distinction between governance and management or administration. Governance provides a framework for the carrying out of education, emphasizing vision and values. Management or administration refers to the implementation of the vision and values articulated by and enshrined in governance structures.

The provincial government is primarily responsible for the governance structure of education, although all education sector partners should be consulted when major changes are contemplated. The government, through the Ministry, provides direction and oversight of the education sector through its legislative, funding and policy processes. As the sole funder of education, government has a responsibility to provide adequate resources to support the provision of education within a fiscal accountability framework.

Other education sector partners participate in governance by contributing to the determination of strategic vision and definitions of educational equity, quality, accountability and universality. The Federation believes that the voice of teachers must play a role in the way in which the sector is governed.

Boards have the legislated authority to establish the necessary policies and budgetary measures in order to deliver the program of services determined by the Units of Administration and informed by Ministry policy and strategic plan priorities.

The role of the public is very important in informing the administration of education and should continue to inform the delivery of educational services at the community level. There are a number of manners in which this may occur, via school boards, school community councils and a provincial leadership quality council as discussed in the following section of this brief. By clarifying the roles and responsibilities that the different partners in education have with regard to governance and administration, service delivery may be improved.

The Federation, as the collective voice of the teaching profession, has a legislated responsibility to advocate on behalf of teachers and publicly funded public education, and raise the status of the profession. This can be advanced through the development and administration of professionally led curriculum development, resourcing, maintenance and implementation as well as professionally led professional development.

If the education sector is committed to providing students with the best possible educational opportunities, then it is incumbent on the various education sector partners to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities with respect to governance and administration. The education sector must also agree to provide adequate resources at the school level to support students. This implies that the best possible use of existing resources must be undertaken, and some streamlining of administrative services where possible and practical should occur.

Further, the teaching and learning relationship is critical to student success and the quality of the classroom experience determines that success. No matter the governance structure or administrative processes, teachers need to be empowered to make decisions at the school and classroom levels that will benefit students. Recognizing this reality would necessitate the creation of contextual, non-comparative accountability mechanisms for the purposes of strengthening teaching and learning as well as monitoring and reporting.

## Guidelines for a Provincial Leadership Quality Council

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The 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* recommends the creation of an education quality council that will report to the Deputy Minister of Education and focus on measurement of education system performance, including student outcomes, in order to monitor progress of the Education Sector Strategic Plan toward the Plan for Growth 2020 targets.

Saskatchewan teachers support quality assurance goals that result in real improvements in the learning experience of all students in the education sector. However, if an education quality council is created, it should be in the form of a provincial leadership quality council and focus on setting policy, educational standards and goal setting as opposed to enforcement or accountability.

Saskatchewan teachers believe that students and the continual improvement of their individual learning experiences should be at the heart, and consequently, the primary purpose of the creation of the provincial leadership quality council. The proposed focus of the education quality council as outlined in the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* falls short of this vision. An emphasis on measurement will not provide a robust and accurate picture of the state of the system, as the tendency will be to focus on indicators that are relatively easy to quantify over other equally important factors that affect learning and performance. In addition, a focus on measurable outcomes does little to address systemic issues Indigenous students face or guide the improvement of holistic educational opportunities that support the growth of all students.

An ideal provincial leadership quality council would have a mandate to define quality education and create an environment conducive to quality education in the province as opposed to enforcement and control. Its emphasis should be on sound public policy development and strategic planning. It should integrate a variety of education sector partner and public voices into its work, setting the vision and strategic plan for the sector.

Prior to the establishment of the provincial leadership quality council, there is a need for an authentic dialogue between all educational stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of what “quality” means in the education sector and how it should be implemented.

Accordingly, the Federation recommends that the provincial leadership quality council, if created, should include the following:

- A representative of the teaching profession in order to ensure that the voice of teachers plays a key role in defining educational quality.
- Representation of all Saskatchewan communities concerned with education, including First Nations and Métis communities.
- Expertise from various sector partners on key issues affecting the sector.
- Inter- and intra-organizational relationships between various organizations that would enrich the notion of quality education and best support all education sector partners in defining quality education.

If a provincial leadership quality council is to be established, its mandate should include the development of evidence-based systems and processes, in collaboration with sector partners, for defining quality and effectiveness in the sector. It should also develop evidence-based policy recommendations to the Minister of Education related to defining and achieving quality in the education sector. Moreover, it should be staffed and governed by a board with significant experience and distinguished backgrounds, including teachers, student or youth leaders, community leaders and experts in the fields of education and public policy.

# Summary and Conclusion

Saskatchewan teachers have a proven history of leadership, partnership and accomplishment in support of education in the province. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation respectfully offers this submission, which is based on over 80 years of professional experience, practice and research.

The history of education in Saskatchewan demonstrates that change is a constant and that teachers are willing to participate in positive change if it will benefit teaching and learning. If changes do not benefit the teaching and learning relationship, they should not be considered.

In contemplating the 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* and changes to educational governance, Saskatchewan teachers raise the five following principles:

- Universality and equity in access and delivery of education for all children and youth.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for sector partners.
- Teaching and learning as the impetus for any changes.
- Student-centred learning and holistic service delivery.
- Respect for existing collective bargaining rights and collective agreements.

The current educational governance review is an opportunity to reflect on how education may be improved at the level it has the most impact – the school and the community. Whether or not a new education governance structure is implemented, schools, teachers and principals will continue to require flexibility in delivering educational programming that suits the needs of students and the local community. Local communities will continue to require input and a level of control over education that is responsive to specific contexts and beliefs surrounding education.

Teachers respectfully observe that although some elements of educational governance may be subject to change over time, there are many elements of education that are enduring. Publicly funded public education will continue to be a universal right of all children and youth. Successive governments will continue to bear the responsibility of providing adequate resources and supports to the education sector. Teaching and learning will remain at the heart of education.

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# Education Sector Planning

## Submission to the Ministry of Education

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Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation  
January 2017





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# Introduction

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation submits this feedback on the cycle three of the Education Sector Strategic Plan on behalf of its 13,000 members.

Teachers continue to see the need for strategic and long-term sector planning and applaud the Ministry of Education for ongoing leadership in recognizing this need and continuing to develop a plan for the sector. In particular, the strategic intent based on the Student First consultations and the enduring strategies laid out by the plan provide a holistic framework for the sector to focus time, energy and resources through the planning process.

However, the focus on short-term priorities and key areas may be negatively impacting the holistic and inclusive nature of the strategic intent and the enduring strategies. The continuous planning methodology being used encourages both flexibility and adaptation as the sector continues to collectively work through the planning cycles to improve the education system in the province. In this spirit of collaboration and openness, teachers' feedback on cycle three focuses on:

- The value of the strategic intent focusing on the Student First learnings.
- The importance of the enduring strategies as a guide for the essential work of the sector.
- The need for current and appropriate policy to guide planning processes and subsequent work.
- Careful consideration of the knowledge and metrics required to inform the system.
- Effort to ensuring frontline teacher voice is included at all levels of the plan.
- More inclusive and expansive leadership including a conscious and deliberate inclusion of the professional voice and experience of teachers.

# Strategic Intent

Placing the learnings from the Student First consultation process at the centre of the matrix remains of key importance in the strategic planning process. Teachers believe in the need and advocate for students to be at the centre of consideration in all aspects of the education system.

The five statements – I am ready to learn; I am valued; I belong; I am successful; and I am preparing for my future – represent our hope for students in the system but are missing vital insights of the Student First work. Students spoke passionately of the importance of relationships in their education experience and identified the student-teacher relationship as the most important factor. The inseparability of the students' experience from the teachers' experience cannot be overlooked and must be considered in all areas of planning. Students identified this relationship as foundational to learning, key to building trust in the system. In addition they were clear that each relationship was and must be unique to the classroom, community and local context in which it was developed. The strategic intent does capture this essential connection between students and teachers as the most fundamental basis of education. The plan however, seems to have lost this essential connection between students and teachers and the increased standardization or centralization reflected in places may erode the unique relationships based on local context that students identify as important.

In addition, the Student First discussions highlighted what engaged students most. Goals for the future, the application of curriculum to local contexts, notice of attendance or absences, and a variety of learning styles specific to local contexts were all identified as important. Students spoke of the need for one-on-one attention from teachers, for learning assistance in a timely manner. Challenges in school were compounded by challenges at home or in the community that were outside of both the student's and school's control.

Teachers spoke of the need for time, for professionally led professional development that was applicable to each unique context and for wraparound supports that could ensure students were ready to learn and could prepare for their future. Both professionally led professional development and wraparound supports seem to have been reduced in this iteration of the plan.

The strategic intent statements capture these individual statements of hope but must continue to also contain all of the complexities expressed in the Student First discussions to truly place students at the centre of the plan and at the centre of the education system. Teachers in the province share the hope that these statements will reflect the experience of all students in the province and want to work collaboratively within the sector to work towards this vision. The professional training, knowledge, experience and expertise that teachers collectively hold is vital in actualizing this vision for education.

In addition, the Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1984) and the more recent Broad Areas of Learning (2010) provide context to the need for broad-based, holistic and inclusive education in the province. The goals including lifelong learning, relating to self and others, positive lifestyle, spiritual development, career decisions, being engaged citizens and growing with change outline many of the areas referred to in the enduring strategies. A renewal of these goal statements through a collaborative sector-wide process would further support the visioning work of the sector plan.

# Enduring Strategies

The enduring strategies identified in the plan outline a comprehensive and holistic set of strategies for quality education in the province. The first six areas – curriculum, instruction, assessment, experience, professional learning and strong partnerships – are the pillars of the system and the key areas where time, energy, thought and resources need to be invested. The final area – alignment – recognizes the interconnectedness of all of these areas and ensures resources are invested in the most appropriate and efficient manner. Teachers believe that if these seven areas are properly attended to and resourced, the long-term targets outlined on the matrix are achievable.

Within each of the enduring strategies it is important that there are clear foundational beliefs, principles and procedures guiding the work. It is imperative that current, broad-based Ministry policy be developed for each enduring strategy through a collaborative consultation process that includes the professional voice of teachers, parents, First Nations and Métis representatives, and community members. In each of the areas, teachers offer the Federation's policy base as a starting point for this collaborative work.

## Curriculum

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Teachers believe curriculum is not simply a document or list of topics to be taught to students. Rather, curriculum is a holistic yet complicated system of events, actions, interactions and interpretations that, in its entirety, aims to create the abilities, skills, attitudes and beliefs of an engaged citizen in a democratic society.

Teachers live curriculum every day in their classrooms with their students. Collectively, curriculum is the road map of each student's education. The need for curriculum that is broad-based, student-centred and that will help prepare students to become knowledgeable, caring and responsible citizens is outlined in the Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1984) and affirmed in STF Policy 1.4 (Goals of Publicly Funded Education).

As the province embarks on a curriculum renewal process, the importance of ensuring curriculum remains sufficiently flexible to balance provincial as well as local needs and is inclusive enough to support the learning of First Nations and Métis and other culturally diverse students. Comprehensive Ministry policy that is developed in a broad collaborative manner is required to ensure this foundational pillar of education continues to meet the needs of students and teachers in the province.

## Instruction

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As outlined in the Student First consultation, the relationship between students and teachers is the most important element of the education system and is at the centre of instruction. In recently updated policy – STF Policy 2.10 (Teaching and Learning) – teachers describe teaching and learning as grounded in a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance and trust, and recognize that the primary professional goal of teachers is to create learning opportunities that support and encourage students to grow both individually and collectively.

In order to provide the best possible learning opportunities, teachers require time, flexibility, agency and resources to provide high-quality, differentiated instruction. Again, updated Ministry policy developed in collaborative ways could assist in ensuring that foundational understandings of the principles of instruction are shared across the sector.

## Assessment

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Assessment is an important element of education. However, it is vital to ensure that there is a distinct understanding of the importance of assessing student learning, for the sake of measuring a student's progress in relation to curriculum outcomes and assessment intended to measure the effectiveness of the education system. While there can be overlap in these areas, the information and data needed to support individual student learning may not be the data required to evaluate the system as a whole.

STF Policy 2.11 (Student Evaluation) outlines teachers' beliefs that student evaluation is to strengthen teaching and learning and that teachers have the professional responsibility, knowledge, expertise and judgment to best evaluate student learning.

Standardized data that is gathered primarily to evaluate the system must be authentic and as closely tied to the curriculum as possible to ensure it is not detrimental to the teaching and learning relationship. In addition, metrics used to measure system-wide outcomes must be based on professionally based understandings of best practice and used only for system improvement and not as a means to evaluate individual teachers or schools. Finally, data collection must occur in ways that do not place onerous time burdens onto teachers either within their instructional time with students or in data entry responsibilities outside of instructional time.

Teachers remain concerned that the standardized data requirements outlined in the sector plan not be the primary driver of professional practice or be the only measures used to determine student readiness or success. Assessment must be designed to be culturally appropriate, based on sound educational research and meet the needs of the students first prior to measuring the effectiveness of the system.

## Experience

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The inclusion as an enduring strategy of the understanding that First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing are essential to the education system is heartening. An education system that can embrace and build on the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* could significantly impact reconciliation and healing within the province.

STF policies 1.12 (Indigenous Education) and 1.8 (Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity) outline the importance of social justice in the education system and speak specifically for the right of Indigenous children and youth to see their unique social and cultural experience, worldview and cultural norms reflected in the classroom and the education system in positive ways.

As outlined in our feedback to the *Inspiring Success: Building Towards Student Achievement* review, a collaborative process that is developed and led by First Nations and Métis leaders in education is necessary to renew Ministry policy in this area.

In addition, sustained professionally led professional supports in this area are necessary to ensure First Nations and Métis content, perspectives and ways of knowing continue to be prioritized within the system.

## Professional Learning

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Teachers view professional learning or professional development as a lifelong process that happens in both formal and informal ways. Professional learning is most successful when it is professionally led, ongoing and self-directed.

STF policies 2.1 (Teacher Success) and 2.2 (Principalship Success) outline the need for designated time, teaching resources, opportunities for reflection and growth, autonomy and other supports as identified by the teaching profession to enable teachers to create and maintain a learning environment that meets students' diverse educational needs.

Teachers also recognize that professional growth is a shared responsibility within the sector. STF Policy 2.6 (Professional Growth) highlights that teachers, school boards and the provincial government all share the responsibility of creating and sustaining professional growth opportunities. For the sector plan targets to be achieved, professional development in the outcome areas and across the broader curriculum is necessary. As outlined above, this iteration of the sector plan appears to decrease supports for professional development at the provincial level even as assessment tools in these areas continue to increase in number. Teachers, and those who support them, require resources and supports to meet the targets set by the plan.

## Strong Partnerships

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Teachers recognize the need for partnerships across sectors and within communities to ensure the success of students. The wraparound supports outlined as important to students, families and teachers in the Student First consultations are vital to the success of Saskatchewan students.

The importance of parents and other caregivers in the education system cannot be overlooked. Building relationships with families through three-way conferencing and other opportunities within the system can support the process. However, teachers cannot replace the vital role that professionals from other sectors play in the support of students and families.

STF Policy 2.23 (Non-Teaching Personnel in Schools) also highlights the importance of timely access to these professionals is critical to student success. Previous versions of the sector plan included reference to interministerial consultations, planning and events. However, cycle three does not have the same emphasis on intersectoral relations and this is concerning to teachers who cannot address the complex needs of children and youth alone. How does the sector continue to reach out to other ministries and how is this reflected in current and future plans?

## Alignment

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As the plan enters its third cycle and its fourth year, the impact of a shifting provincial economy and call for austerity appears to be both driving the need for increased efficiencies and placing programs, resources and actions even within the key areas identified by the plan at risk. Rather than viewing education as an investment in the province, the education of students is being viewed as an expense.

The alignment of human, physical and fiscal resources is important to ensure that all of these resources are allocated in ways that best meet the needs of students in Saskatchewan. However, strategic planning is a tool to allocate resources and is not intended to be a tool of austerity. In times of economic downturn, investment in education is more important to ensure Saskatchewan students receive the educational supports and training necessary to meet changing demands.

Teachers support alignment of resources to benefit teaching and learning and to ensure the educational system is resourced in the best way possible but not as a way to impose austerity measures that will detrimentally impact student learning. A targeted cost savings of \$40 million over two years that is not necessarily guaranteed to be reinvested in the sector appears to be more about austerity than meeting the needs of Saskatchewan students.

The enduring strategies outlined can provide a guide for the essential work of the sector. Collaborative, sector-wide development of Ministry policy to ground these strategies in clearly developed principles and procedures will only strengthen the sector and future planning processes.

## Methodology

As outlined in the Federation's initial submission to sector planning in 2014, teachers recognize that there is opportunity within the planning model for meaningful engagement, shared responsibility and the invitation to build upon collective knowledge. At its most fundamental level, continuous planning models recognize that each individual is the expert or specialist in their own position, and that by harnessing the collective thinking, power and knowledge of classroom teachers, principals, the community and school division administration, the overall system can be strengthened.

However, three years into the planning process, our observation would be that teachers are still not present in significant and meaningful ways in all levels of the planning process. How does the knowledge, expertise and voice of teachers influence the level 1 and level 2 plans? How could the current planning structure and leadership models shift to include the voice and expertise of teachers in meaningful ways?

Other revisions to the methodology have been necessary to reflect the long-term nature of education. Cycles have moved from one-year to two-year plans. In a system where success can arguably be measured over 12 or 13 years, the expansion of the timeline is understandable.

However, even while timelines for action have been extended, the outcome targets have not. When the plan was initially developed in 2014, the 2020 targets seemed ambitious. With the extension of the planning cycles, the sector will be midway through cycle four in 2020 and it is unlikely many of the targets in graduation rates, math and others will be met. In some outcome areas only one year of data will have been collected. Extending the length of each cycle will likely also result in a need to adjust or extend both short-term and long-range targets.

As the sector progresses through the planning cycles, there are questions around how best to measure success and what should be reported out of the plan. How might the Ministry report on the investments being made to the enduring strategies outlined in the plan as opposed to the outcome areas currently identified? Could something like the Education Indicators reports provide a more holistic and complete picture of the effectiveness of the plan if modified to align with the enduring strategies?

# Feedback

## **2014-2020 Outcome Plan: Graduation Rate**

- We are pleased to see the addition of a five-year graduation rate target. This allows for the recognition of success for students who are unable to complete Grade 12 within three years of beginning Grade 10 due to personal and social circumstances.
- What processes are being used to engage youth of school age who are not attending school?
- Will the plan identify an interministerial response to support the most disengaged youth of school age not attending school?
- In what ways will the Federation and teachers be involved in the task force on graduation requirements?

## **2014-2020 Priority Plan: Following Their Voices**

- Early results have shown improvement in both attendance and engagement of students. It will take some time before improved attendance and engagement impacts graduation rates. We support the reporting of attendance and engagement data as opposed to graduation data for this initiative at this time.
- How might this work be extended to students in grades 6-9 to ensure that they successfully make the transition to high school?
- In what ways will this important work be made sustainable and available to all teachers, including pre-service teachers?
- The creation of a provincial committee is being contemplated in the plan. Will the First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee be reconstituted for this work?
- What intersectoral supports are being contemplated to address systemic issues of poverty, family breakdown, transience and the like which impact student attendance, engagement and ultimately graduation?

## **2014-2020 Priority Plan: Unified Student Information System**

- Who will be involved in evaluating the business case and making the decision to move to a unified system?
- How will First Nations schools be involved and how will this be resourced?
- Does the Ministry have sound policies and procedures in place to ensure access to information and privacy legislation for student data are adhered to at all levels?

## **2014-2020 Outcome Plan: Improving Indigenous Student Engagement and Graduation Rates**

- The resourcing of this work appears to be of significant concern. Will this work proceed without financial and human resources?

## **2014-20 Outcome Plan: At Grade Level in Reading, Writing and Math**

- In what ways will supports and professional development opportunities be made available to support teachers working in these outcome areas? Are teachers aware of the supports available?
- School division coaches and consultants are seeking support in their work with teachers. Will the level 1 plan identify supports and resources for those working at level 2?
- What processes are being used to gather the professional work of teachers so that quality practices can be shared across the province? In what ways is feedback from teachers in these outcome areas influencing the level 1 plan?

- The use of PISA scores as a benchmark for provincial performance is inappropriate. PISA results are designed to provide data that will influence national education policy and are of little utility for provincial comparison. The tested students earliest involved in the sector plan would now be in Grade 6. PISA is administered to 15 year olds. It will be at least four more years before there might be an impact on PISA scores. It would be more appropriate to report how students are performing in relation to the outcomes of the Saskatchewan curriculum.
- Have the assessment tools for reading, writing and math been designed in ways that support the provincial curriculum and can they be integrated into teachers' routine assessment practices?

#### **2014-2020 Outcome Plan: Early Years**

- The interministerial analysis is missing from much of the plan, particularly in the early years. How are services to young families being integrated at the ministerial level?
- For what reasons has foster care data been removed from the root cause analysis?
- If early investment is beneficial both financially and otherwise, why has universal access to early learning through prekindergarten and all-day kindergarten been removed from the plan? What will replace it?

#### **2014-2020 Outcome Plan: Sector-Wide Efficiencies**

- What processes will be used to ensure that legislated provincial and local agreements will be honoured as sector-wide efficiencies are being sought?
- The increase from \$5 million to \$40 million of savings is significant. Where is it anticipated these savings will be found? In what ways will these savings be reinvested to support students and teachers?
- Regarding attendance management programs, what considerations are being given to the ethical obligations of teachers and principals, the impacts on privacy and the access to duly negotiated leaves within the provincial and local collective bargaining agreements? How will the principles of good practices and dispute resolution be reflected in the processes applied within attendance management systems? Could an attendance support system that is developed with the collaboration of teachers provide similar or better results?

# Conclusion

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on behalf of our more than 13,000 members. In times of significant change within the sector, open and collaborative conversations are of increasing importance.

Teachers look forward to the opportunity to continue to engage in collaborative and meaningful ways with partners in education for the betterment of the education system.

As the feedback included in this submission is considered, the Federation invites the Ministry of Education and school division leaders to read more about these beliefs found in Appendix A: Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Related Policies.

# **Appendix A:**

# **Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation**

## **Related Policies**

### **1.4 Goals of Publicly Funded Education**

#### **1.4.1 Definition**

Publicly funded education refers to the provincially funded education system, as defined by *The Education Act, 1995*. Basic principles underlying publicly funded education are that the system is universally accessible and inclusive, funding is a societal responsibility, and the system is governed by elected representatives who are accountable to the public. The goals of publicly funded education provide an important context for teaching and learning, and for the professional growth of teachers.

#### **1.4.2 Beliefs**

##### **(1) General**

- (a) Publicly funded education is intended to meet the educational needs of all children in a society.
- (b) Publicly funded education must recognize and respect diversity among students, staff and communities, and must be committed to promoting equity within schools and society.
- (c) Publicly funded education must shape and enrich the character and life opportunities of each student.
- (d) The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports the curriculum-related Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1984), as established by the provincial Ministry responsible for PreK-12 education through a public consultation process. These goals affirm a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education which will prepare students to become knowledgeable, caring and responsible citizens.

##### **(2) Processes to Define and Revise Goals**

- (a) The goals and curriculum of publicly funded education should have sufficient flexibility to balance provincial as well as local interests and needs.
- (b) The goals and direction of publicly funded education are best defined and revised through processes in which the interests of all stakeholders are heard and considered.
- (c) Teachers must have a central role in the processes used to define and revise the goals and direction of publicly funded education.

##### **(3) Responsibilities and Supports**

- (a) Although publicly funded education has a central role in meeting the educational needs of students, the general well-being of children is a collective responsibility that is shared among the home, school and community.
- (b) Teachers have a responsibility to model decision-making values and practices that are associated with democratic societies.
- (c) Teachers, in carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, should be active supporters of publicly funded education.

(2001)

## **1.8 Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity**

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### **1.8.1 Definitions**

Social justice is a philosophical framework which recognizes the dynamics of oppression in society, is a fluid expression of a society's collectively negotiated ethical and moral beliefs with respect to access to and distribution of resources and power, and where access to resources and power are recognized as grounded in democratic principles and collective social responsibility.

Social inclusion is the recognition that every individual in society has the inherent human right to be fully included in all economic, social, cultural and political institutions.

Equity and equitable treatment involves acknowledging diversity, recognizing and nurturing our differences, and eliminating the barriers that prevent the full participation of all peoples.

Systemic barriers generally refer to institutionalized beliefs expressed through policies and practices that have an exclusionary impact on groups and individuals.

### **1.8.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Social justice is historically and institutionally rooted in socially constructed yet shifting group identities including, among others, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and ability.
- (2) Social inclusion in the classroom, the school, the community and society requires that diversity be recognized and honoured.
- (3) Equitable treatment is a foundational characteristic of a fully inclusive educational system and, more generally, a democratic society. Achieving equity requires a shared commitment to the removal of systemic barriers that prevent students, teachers and others from achieving their full potential in all educational and societal settings.
- (4) Publicly funded education is a basic right of each child and youth, and requires support from every individual, school, community and institution to ensure that each student experiences an education that nurtures their individual, holistic selves.
- (5) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Accept responsibility to be self-reflective about their own attitudes and beliefs around privilege and social justice.
  - (b) Continue to develop a deep understanding of social justice, inclusion and equity to promote safe and inclusive learning environments and reflect commitments to social justice, inclusion and equity through collective work.
  - (c) Engage with and support staff, students, parents, caregivers and communities to identify and enhance the work of social justice that includes mobilizing all to accomplish a fairer and more inclusive and equitable society.
  - (d) Engage in meaningful dialogue within classrooms, schools, communities and society that embraces the diverse personal histories and stories of students, and nurtures acceptance and social inclusion.
  - (e) Advocate with educational partners, including government and other organizations, to provide the resources and professional development required to integrate social justice principles, content and perspectives into all dimensions of teaching and learning.
  - (f) Advocate for and influence policy development processes or initiatives that authentically engage in addressing systemic barriers in the education system and throughout society.

(2015)

## **1.9 Child and Youth Well-Being**

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### **1.9.1 Definitions**

The well-being of a child or youth requires that each individual is respected, secure and safe, has access to basic needs, and grows up in an environment where the individual's spiritual, mental, physical and emotional needs are met.

The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that all children and youth are entitled to universal human rights within our states and societies. While ratified by Canada in 1991, the Convention's comprehensive and widely accepted provisions have yet to be fully entrenched in federal or provincial legislation, policies, programs, services and practices.

Social determinants of health are the primary factors that shape the overall health and well-being of individuals in society. These are the living conditions people experience such as the quality of the communities, housing, work, health and social service agencies, and educational institutions with which they interact.

### **1.9.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Children and youth have profound knowledge about their own lives and have unique gifts, talents and cultural backgrounds that must be respected and nurtured.
- (2) Children and youth are entitled to those inherent human rights defined by the articles of the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which are based on the foundational principles that all children and youth:
  - (a) Have rights that should be respected without discrimination of any kind including that based on gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, special needs or socio-economic status.
  - (b) Have the right to survival, life and development, and that their parents, caregivers, families, communities and governments have a responsibility to protect them from all forms of harm and provide the highest standards of living, health and education to reach their fullest potential.
  - (c) Have their individual identities, cultures, experiences and interests be given utmost consideration in any action or decision affecting them, and participate and be heard before any such action or decision is made.
- (3) Publicly funded education is a basic right of each child and youth, and community-based education centred within schools can nurture the holistic needs (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) of each child and youth through a range of supports and resources.
- (4) Each child and youth's success in education and, more broadly, in life is dependent on many social determinants external to the education system. While teachers share a responsibility in ensuring the needs of children are met, teachers in their educational role cannot and should not be expected to meet all of the complex needs of children and youth without the support and involvement of other social institutions.
- (5) Inequality is a significant barrier to successful education and must be addressed in ways that do not attach stigma or blame to the individual child, youth or families affected.
- (6) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Have a professional obligation to respect and promote the rights, interests and well-being of children and youth.
  - (b) Advocate for public policy, programs and services within and beyond the public education system that will help improve the social determinants of health and well-being of children and youth.
  - (c) Advocate for supports and structures that allow and encourage children and youth to maximize their full potential.

(2015)

## **1.10 Intensive Supports**

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### **1.10.1 Definitions**

Intensive supports include a range of educational and human resource interventions to optimize student learning achievement that may be impacted by cognitive, behavioural, social, emotional or other learning situations.

Children and youth include students from ages three up to their 22nd birthday who continue to receive intensive support services required for inclusive education and are enrolled in a program of publicly funded public education.

The language of gifts and talents is used intentionally to celebrate children and youth and is drawn from beliefs around the value of each child and youth from both traditional Indigenous child-rearing practices and other child- or youth-centred philosophies.

Resources include, but are not limited to, sustainable funding, time and appropriate teaching and non-teaching personnel.

### **1.10.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Every child and youth has the right to supports within the education system to nurture their gifts and abilities.
- (2) Each child or youth brings particular gifts to the community; to be respectful of those gifts, any supports, programming or resources developed must be culturally appropriate and recognize the uniqueness of each child or youth.
- (3) Qualified, professionally trained and caring teachers are the most effective resource to support children and youth in their learning.
- (4) As professionals, teachers are positioned to identify the abilities and learning needs of students and the supports and resources required to best nurture student learning and achievement.
- (5) Successful learning is complex and differential, should be curriculum appropriate, and differentially designed to take into consideration children and youth's individual development, abilities and needs within an inclusive education model.
- (6) Student and teacher safety must be paramount in the development and delivery of supports and programming addressing behavioural needs.
- (7) Supports must be funded in an appropriate, sustainable and equitable manner, and resources are best allocated as close to the student as possible.
- (8) All teachers must be provided with necessary resources, training and professional development opportunities to ensure they are prepared to identify gifts in students and meet diverse learning needs.
- (9) Families, schools, communities and others all have vital roles to play in developing and implementing intensive supports:
  - (a) Parents and other caregivers must be included in meaningful ways as teachers design and implement intensive support plans.
  - (b) External agencies and non-teaching personnel including, but not limited to, educational assistants, counsellors, Elders and cultural liaisons provide necessary supports for students and should be funded in a sustainable manner.
  - (c) Community support is essential to celebrate the gifts of each child and youth.
  - (d) Inter-agency and inter-ministerial supports, particularly from the health sector, are necessary to ensure the complex learning requirements of all children and youth are met within the education system.
  - (e) All children and youth must have timely and appropriate access to mental health services.
- (10) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Recognize the unique gifts that all children bring and strive to create an educational environment that is appropriate, nurturing and respectful.

- (b) Work collaboratively to ensure intensive supports are based on promising practice and ongoing research and support the learning requirements of students.
- (c) Recognize the need to respect traditional Indigenous child-rearing practices when developing curriculum or programs where Indigenous children will be the participants.
- (d) Recognize that increasingly diverse and multicultural classrooms will require a focus on the cultural backgrounds of other students in the development of curriculum and programs for students.
- (e) Advocate for appropriate and sustainable resources to meet the educational requirements of children and youth requiring supports.
- (f) Advocate for the development of modified curriculum in a timely manner in connection to Ministry curriculum development.
- (g) Advocate for clear, meaningful reporting practices for all students appropriate to each student's individualized learning goals and outcomes.
- (h) Advocate for ongoing professional development for all teachers that is professionally led and focuses on promising classroom practices.
- (i) Advocate for safe teaching and learning environments and adequate educational personnel to ensure safe work environments.
- (j) Recognize that peer relationships and community connection are important elements of holistic education and encourage students to learn from and support each other.
- (k) Work to ensure parents and other caregivers are fully included in their child or youth's education plan and that communication is clear, consistent across jurisdictions and engages parents and caregivers in supporting their child or youth.

(2016)

## **1.11 Cultural Diversity and Language**

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### **1.11.1 Definitions**

Culture refers to the knowledge, beliefs, customs, morals, understandings, language and habits that are acquired by a person as a member of a societal group.

Cultural diversity is the existence of a plurality of cultures within the province as recognized in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Indigenous languages are the languages spoken by the First Peoples of this land.

Heritage languages are languages that are connected to the early settlement of the province.

### **1.11.2 Beliefs**

#### **Cultural Diversity**

- (1) Cultural diversity is a recognized fact in Canadian life and acknowledged both by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and other legislation.
- (2) Cultural diversity contributes to the richness of Canadian society.
- (3) People of all cultures are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals, and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination based on their cultural origins or identities.
- (4) Language is a primary medium through which culture is expressed and transmitted since culture is embedded in language.
- (5) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Are self-reflective about their own attitudes and beliefs in modeling respect and affirming of cultural diversity.

- (b) Engage with and support students, families and communities in culturally sensitive and appropriate relationships to identify and work to eliminate racism, colonialism and discrimination in schools, and to enhance teachers' professional practice with better understandings of diverse cultures.
- (c) Engage in meaningful dialogue within classrooms, schools, communities and society that explores the rich diversity of cultural differences and personal histories experienced by students and staff, and encourages transcultural learnings.

### **1.11.3 Language**

- (1) Canada is a bilingual country within a culturally diverse framework as outlined by applicable legislation.
- (2) French education, French immersion and core French programs support the bilingual nature of the country and should be available to all students wanting access.
- (3) Indigenous languages are imperative to nurturing and protecting Indigenous cultures, and both immersion and core Indigenous language programs should be available to all students wanting access.
- (4) Programs, services and supports should be available to students whose primary language is not English or French.
- (5) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Continue to advocate for and support French education, French immersion and core French programs.
  - (b) Recognize the cultural importance of Indigenous languages and advocate for programs to provide Indigenous language instruction to all students wanting access.
  - (c) Advocate for the teaching of heritage and other languages to reduce the loss of fluency in languages other than English and French, and to broaden student exposure to cultural diversity.
  - (d) Advocate to ensure all students who need it have timely access to language programs and supports.

(2015)

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## **1.12 Indigenous Education**

### **1.12.1 Definitions**

Indigenous peoples of Canada are the first inhabitants of the land and their modern descendants, which include Aboriginal peoples of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry.

Indigenous education cultivates holistic understanding of knowledge, the land, communities and all relations while emphasizing that Indigenous ways of knowing are foundational to teaching and learning.

### **1.12.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Indigenous histories, teachings and stories must be included in curricula at all levels to ensure all students develop understandings of complex Indigenous cultures, customs, languages and knowledge.
- (2) Education can be a form of reconciliation through a focus on restorative justice, healing and other holistic healing initiatives.
- (3) Indigenous peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of Canadian society, are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals, and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination particularly that based on their Indigenous origin or identity.

- (4) Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination including the opportunity to control and lead the development of education legislation, systems, policies, research, and teaching and assessment practices that affect, and are reflective of, their diverse communities.
- (5) Education must respect the sovereign and sacred relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown, as represented by the Government of Canada, and the rights and responsibilities established under treaties and other constitutional agreements.
- (6) Indigenous children and youth have the right to equitable access to publicly funded education resources and services that are responsive to their needs.
- (7) Indigenous children and youth have the right to see the unique social and cultural context of their experiences, their world views and cultural norms reflected in the classroom and education system in positive ways.
- (8) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Are self-reflective about their own attitudes and beliefs shaped by colonialist discourses in doing healing work.
  - (b) Embrace holistic Indigenous educational practices as foundational to ongoing curriculum development and promote the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages, history, heritage, perspectives and ways of knowing to all students as a means to preserve the continuity and growth of Indigenous cultures and communities.
  - (c) Respect and recognize the intellectual property and communal rights of Indigenous peoples to their hereditary knowledge by securing the appropriate consent of the Indigenous individual or community that shared any information to be used in teaching and learning materials.
  - (d) Engage with and support Indigenous students, parents, caregivers, Elders and communities in culturally sensitive and appropriate relationships to identify and work to eliminate racism and discrimination in schools, and to enhance teachers' professional practice with better understandings of Indigenous cultures.
  - (e) Engage with and support Indigenous pre-service teachers and teachers, who must be treated equitably in all aspects of education but often experience additional challenges including racism and discrimination.

(2015)

## **2.1 Teacher Success**

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### **2.1.1 Definitions**

Teacher success refers to the degree to which individual teachers attain, within the context of their entire teaching careers, their desired professional goals.

Teacher competence refers to the quality of having an appropriate level of professional knowledge, skill and judgment to carry out specific teaching objectives and other professional responsibilities.

Teacher success is the more encompassing concept in the sense that a successful teacher is necessarily competent, generally speaking. It is also important to understand, however, that an individual may demonstrate an insufficient level of competence in a specific situation (e.g., when faced with a new teaching assignment on short notice), yet continue to be a successful teacher.

### **2.1.2 Preamble**

Teachers recognize the interdependence between their students' success as learners and their own success as professional educators. Although each teacher has a responsibility to offer the best possible learning opportunities for students, no teacher

should be expected to fully achieve their professional goals at all times. Teaching and learning, as processes that involve social, emotional and cognitive dimensions, are far too complex to guarantee competence or success in every circumstance. Teachers must have the flexibility, for example, to try new approaches and learning resources in their work with students. Some of these trial and error methods may be better suited than others to meet students' educational needs.

As with individual students, the extent of each teacher's success depends upon a wide range of interconnected contextual factors. Although some of these variables (e.g., career-related decisions) are largely within the teacher's control, many others are not (e.g., the diversity of students' learning needs, health, family situation and so on). It is essential to take this full range of factors into account when there are questions or concerns about a teacher's success generally, or the individual's competence in a specific situation.

Teachers believe that they should be supported to become as competent as possible as they carry out their professional roles, and to become as successful as possible throughout all stages of their careers. Questions or concerns about a specific competence matter should always be addressed within the broader context of teachers' goals and needs as successful professionals.

### **2.1.3 Beliefs**

#### **(1) Teacher Success**

Throughout their careers, individual teachers experience various degrees of success in meeting a range of professional goals and objectives, including the following:

- (a) To conduct professional relationships in ways that are consistent with the principles of equity, fairness and respect for others.
- (b) To create and maintain a learning environment that encourages and supports each student to reach the highest level of individual achievement possible.
- (c) To demonstrate a professional level of knowledge about the curriculum.
- (d) To demonstrate a repertoire of instructional strategies and methods that are applied in teaching activities.
- (e) To have the professional knowledge, skills and judgment to carry out the teacher's responsibility for student assessment and evaluation.
- (f) To reflect, individually and collectively, upon the goals as well as the experience of professional practice, and adapt one's teaching accordingly.
- (g) To work with colleagues in ways that are mutually supportive, and develop to the fullest extent possible effective professional relationships with students, administrators, parents and other members of the educational community.

#### **(2) Questionable Practices**

- (a) Legitimate questions or concerns about an individual's teaching practice typically involve situations in which, taking the full context of the practice into consideration, a teacher demonstrates an unacceptably low level of professional knowledge, skill, or judgment, or a disregard for the welfare of the student to an extent that renders the teacher unfit to continue teaching.
- (b) Questionable practices include one or more of the following patterns of conduct in which a teacher:
  - (i) Takes no action or makes minimal effort in the face of manifest needs or opportunities to act on behalf of students.
  - (ii) Treats students in an unacceptably unjust or disrespectful manner.
  - (iii) Makes poor decisions and judgments in shaping students' educational experiences.
  - (iv) Persistently fails to implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, or performs at an unacceptably low level in carrying out teaching objectives and other professional responsibilities.

**(3) Supports for Teacher Success**

- (a) Teacher success should be supported through a broad spectrum of structures, processes and resources, many of which are identified in various Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation bylaws and policies. Key supports that are expected by teachers as they carry out their professional responsibilities include the following:
- (i) Provincial, school division and school-level policies and practices that support and enhance teacher success, and are developed with the direct involvement of teachers.
  - (ii) Employment conditions that are consistent with the teaching profession's understanding of an equitable, ethical, respectful, healthy and safe work environment.
  - (iii) Teaching assignments and other related duties or responsibilities that are commensurate with an individual teacher's professional knowledge, skills and experience, taking into consideration the context in which the teacher works.
  - (iv) Designated time, teaching resources, opportunities for professional reflection and growth, and other supports, as identified by the teaching profession, that enable teachers to create and maintain a learning environment that meets students' diverse educational needs.

**(4) Accountability for Teacher Success**

- (a) Accountability for teacher success is a responsibility that is shared among key participants in the education system.
- (i) The individual teacher is primarily responsible for:
    - (A) Setting personal goals and objectives for a successful professional practice.
    - (B) Conducting one's professional practice in ways that are consistent with the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Practice, the Code of Collective Interests, and the Federation's policies on teacher success and professional growth.
    - (C) Engaging in career-long personal and professional reflection, and self-directed professional growth opportunities as necessary.
  - (ii) The teaching profession is primarily responsible for addressing, in ways that are consistent with *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006* and the Federation bylaws and policies, situations where there are questionable practices.
  - (iii) The education community as a whole is primarily responsible for ensuring that the supports for teacher success, as identified by the teaching profession, are available and that these supports are revised or expanded as necessary.

(2003)

## **2.2 Principalship Success**

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### **2.2.1 Definitions**

The principalship is a formal position with administrative and instructional leadership roles, responsibilities and duties in schools.

A principal is a teacher who holds a principalship, which includes the positions of principal, vice-principal and assistant principal.

Principalship success refers to the degree to which a principal attains professional goals throughout the individual's career.

### **2.2.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Principals retain their identity as teachers who are members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.
- (2) Principals are responsible for setting personal goals and objectives for successful professional practice while considering the particular teaching and learning environment, and the needs of students, teachers and the school.
- (3) The cultivation of positive professional relationships with teaching colleagues, administrators, non-teaching personnel, students, parents, caregivers and the community is fundamental to principalship success.
- (4) Principalship success requires the support of teaching colleagues and non-teaching personnel in schools, and school division and provincial-level personnel, policies and resources.
- (5) Principalship success requires the professional autonomy necessary for principals to pursue success within the particular school context.
- (6) Principals should strive to create collegial and collaborative school environments among administrative teams, teaching colleagues and non-teaching personnel that are conducive to teaching and learning as well as principalship success.
- (7) Principals should model professional stewardship and responsibility at all times and work to empower teachers through shared leadership in schools.
- (8) Principals should demonstrate and cultivate personal leadership qualities and skills, including clear communication, building trust among school staff and the community, providing support for teaching colleagues, and showing integrity and accountability with administrative and school staff.
- (9) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Expect that principals and their teacher colleagues are granted sufficient autonomy to pursue success according to a school's specific contexts and student needs, and that the professional advice of principals and teachers will be welcomed and seriously considered by out-of-scope administrators and policy-makers.
  - (b) Encourage school divisions to provide respectful advice, direction, assistance and policies to support both the administrative and instructional leadership roles and responsibilities of principals.
  - (c) Advocate for appropriate teaching and learning resources from school divisions, the provincial government and other partners in education to meet the needs of students and support the success of principals and their teacher colleagues.
  - (d) Advocate for the time, resources and professional growth opportunities for individual principals and the creation of effective administrative and instructional leadership teams in every school.
  - (e) Advocate for a full complement of teaching colleagues and other staff to form an effective school team led by the administrative and instructional leadership team.
  - (f) Cultivate trust amongst administrators, administrative teams, teaching colleagues, students, parents, caregivers and the community.

(2015)

## **2.5 Educational Accountability**

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### **2.5.1 Definition**

Educational accountability refers to the processes through which institutions and individuals demonstrate their responsibility to the public for their respective roles and duties in educational governance, funding, administration or practices. In turn, all sectors of the public share responsibility to support these institutions and individuals in the education of students.

### **2.5.2 Beliefs**

- (1) The focus of educational accountability is to strengthen teaching and learning.
- (2) Teachers' educational accountability is limited to their professional roles and duties.
- (3) The teaching profession must be involved in decisions about educational accountability policies and procedures at all levels of the education system.
- (4) Educational accountability processes must be sustainable and take into consideration the many demands on the time and energy of students and teachers.
- (5) Teachers' self-directed professional development, as well as the supports required to access these learning opportunities and resources, must be foundational to educational accountability processes.
- (6) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should be transparent.
- (7) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should focus on ways to strengthen teaching and learning, and not make comparisons among jurisdictions, school divisions, schools, administrators, teachers or students.
- (8) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should always include references to the various contexts that can affect teaching and learning, as identified by the teaching profession.

(1993; amended 2009)

## **2.6 Professional Growth**

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### **2.6.1 Definition**

Professional growth refers to the change in knowledge, skills, abilities or perspectives resulting from the continuous professional learning that teachers intentionally pursue with the goal to further understand the nature of teaching and learning, enhance professional practice or contribute to the profession.

### **2.6.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Teachers' professional growth benefits teaching and learning and contributes to the betterment of the teaching profession as a whole.
- (2) Professional growth is an inherent part of being a teacher and is an integral part of a teacher's practice.
- (3) Teachers have the ability and responsibility to self-direct their professional growth and expect the autonomy necessary to exercise their professional judgment in related decision-making at both group and individual levels.
- (4) Continuous professional learning should include a broad range of formal, informal and experiential learning opportunities that are planned, meaningful and related to the general duties, responsibilities or aspirations of the teacher.
- (5) Consistent and meaningful access to high-quality professional learning opportunities is fundamental to teachers' continued professional growth.
- (6) The creation of opportunities for teachers' professional growth is a shared responsibility among teachers, school boards and the provincial government that depends critically upon the provision of time, resources and other necessary supports for teachers.
- (7) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Support, encourage and provide opportunities for the professional growth of teachers.
  - (b) Advocate for appropriate provision of time, resources and supports for professional growth.
  - (c) Engage in ongoing reflective practice, self-assessment and professional renewal.
  - (d) Engage in continuous professional learning and contribute, where possible and appropriate, to research into teaching and learning.
  - (e) Encourage and support each other in the pursuit of professional growth, the sharing of professional insights and in other collaborative endeavours to improve teaching and learning.
  - (f) Pursue, develop and deliver a broad range of opportunities for professional growth. In addition to one-time formal learning opportunities, teachers engage in innovative, authentic, sustained, relevant, flexible, collaborative and locally embedded professional growth.
  - (g) Support a variety of organizations, networks and services related to teachers' professional growth.

(2015)

## **2.10 Teaching and Learning**

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### **2.10.1 Definition**

Teaching and learning are complex, dynamic and interdependent processes through which teachers facilitate students' growth along cognitive, social and emotional dimensions.

### **2.10.2 Beliefs**

- (1) Teaching and learning occurs within many different contexts. Teachers share the responsibility with students, parents, communities and partners in education to provide conditions that are necessary and appropriate for teaching and learning to be holistic, equitable and effective.
- (2) Holistic, equitable and effective teaching and learning is grounded in a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance and trust among teachers and students. It is a deeply personal human endeavour that is enhanced by the cultivation of such relationships.
- (3) Teaching and learning should be guided by sound educational research identified by the teaching profession, the Saskatchewan curricula, professional standards and ideals, and professional judgment with respect to students' well-being.
- (4) The primary professional goal of teachers is to create learning opportunities that support and encourage students to grow individually and collectively to the greatest extent possible. To meet this goal, it is understood that:
  - (a) A variety of planned formal instructional strategies and informal interactions are necessary and desirable for encouraging individual and collective growth.
  - (b) Valuable learning opportunities can arise spontaneously, often as a result of informal interactions and the strong relationships forged among teachers and students.
  - (c) The creation and capturing of both planned and spontaneous learning opportunities depends upon teachers having considerable flexibility and freedom in their work with students.
- (5) An essential part of teaching and learning is the provision of timely and appropriate feedback, which includes student evaluation and assessment processes.
- (6) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in curriculum development, implementation and renewal.
  - (b) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in the development of student evaluation, assessment and achievement goals, targets, policies and/or strategies at all levels of the education system.
  - (c) Exercise professional judgment, autonomy and agency with respect to the carrying out of their duties for the benefit and well-being of students.
  - (d) Engage in ongoing professional growth and advocate for it to be both supported and encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

(2015)

## **2.11 Student Evaluation**

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### **2.11.1 Definition**

Student evaluation refers to the teacher's professional judgment of the student's progress in reaching educational goals and curriculum outcomes, as informed by sound assessment practices. This evaluation involves the formal application of multiple performance-based measures of what students know as well as what they can do.

### **2.11.2 Beliefs**

- (1) The focus of student evaluation is to strengthen teaching and learning.
- (2) Teachers have the professional responsibility, knowledge, skills and judgment to evaluate students' learning.
- (3) The teaching profession must be proactively involved in decisions about student evaluation policies at all levels of the education system and advocate for policies that:
  - (a) Are based on sound educational research as identified by the teaching profession.
  - (b) Clearly indicate and align the purposes, principles and procedures of student evaluation.
  - (c) Encourage and support teachers in taking diverse approaches to evaluation.
- (4) The approaches taken to evaluate students' learning must be based on sound educational research as identified by the teaching profession.
- (5) Reporting methods must support the teaching profession's beliefs about student evaluation.
- (6) Reporting methods must focus on students' learning and indicate to both the student and parents the individual's progress in reaching educational goals and curriculum outcomes as well as provide suggestions to further strengthen learning.

(1976; amended 1989, 2011)

## **2.14 Early Learning and Child Care**

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### **2.14.1 Definition**

Early learning and child care refers broadly to the provision of education, care, health, nutrition and safe environments for children up to the completion of Grade 3.

### **2.14.2 Beliefs**

- (1) The experiences of early childhood provide the foundation for lifelong learning and the richness of these experiences are critical to a child's growth, development and future well-being.
- (2) Children, their families and society benefit from the opportunity to take part in early learning and child care programs which are publicly funded, non-profit, of high quality and universally accessible.
- (3) Creating, exploring and inquiring are inextricably linked to a holistic process of learning involving intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects. Play and interaction are essential to this learning process.

- (4) Children are capable, competent learners who individually bring a diverse set of interests, knowledge, culture, beliefs, skills and experiences into the classroom.
- (5) High-quality early learning and child care programs are child-centred and place an emphasis on seamless transitions and minimal disruption for the child.
- (6) Parents and caregivers hold valuable knowledge of the teaching and learning that takes place within families and communities; a child's well-being is enhanced when early learning and child care programs include parent engagement practices which recognize this knowledge.
- (7) Teachers and other staff working in early learning environments should have knowledge and training specific to early childhood development.
- (8) The provision of adequate health care, proper nutrition and safe environments to young children is vital to their healthy growth and development; early learning and child care programs offer important information to children and their families about how to access services to improve the health and well-being of the child and are a primary means of identifying abuse.
- (9) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Advocate for early learning and child care which is publicly funded, non-profit, of high quality and universally accessible.
  - (b) Advocate for family and work-related provisions in policy, contract and legislation which support early learning and allow all parents, including those who are teachers themselves, to be fully engaged in their children's education.
  - (c) Seek a deep understanding of early childhood development and education to inform their professional practice.
  - (d) Advocate for recognized training programs in early learning and childhood development.
  - (e) Advocate for physical resources and environments which reflect a belief in children as competent learners through the provision of appropriately sized furnishings and materials and adequate indoor and outdoor space to facilitate experiential learning activities.

(2015)

## **2.23 Non-Teaching Personnel in Schools**

### **2.23.1 Definitions**

Non-teaching personnel in schools refers to the wide variety of personnel who provide supports for students that are not typically or appropriately provided through the professional roles and responsibilities of a teacher.

Supports for students refers to the services offered by speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, Elders, nurses, social workers, police resource officers, educational assistants or other non-teaching personnel working in a school environment.

### **2.23.2 Beliefs**

- (1) A wide variety of non-teaching personnel are necessary in order to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of students and to ensure equity in the teaching and learning environment.
- (2) The provision of necessary and appropriate supports for students is a shared responsibility among partners in education including government, school divisions, local communities and related service providers.
- (3) Timely access to necessary and appropriate supports for students is critical to students' success and well-being. All students should have timely access to

qualified counsellors and health-care professionals as part of their educational program in addition to other necessary and appropriate supports.

- (4) The effective delivery of supports for students depends upon:
  - (a) The clear and timely sharing of information.
  - (b) Clarity in processes and policies with respect to the supervision of non-teaching personnel and requesting of non-teaching supports for students.
  - (c) The integration of non-teaching personnel into school cultures to the greatest extent possible.
  - (d) Shared understandings about appropriate roles, responsibilities and expectations among all individuals working in schools.
  - (e) The responsiveness of teachers' partners in education to the professional judgments and recommendations teachers make about the necessity and appropriateness of particular supports for students.
  - (f) The availability of time, resources and professional growth opportunities to support teachers in collaborating with non-teaching personnel, adapting or enhancing their teaching practice, and/or implementing new educational programs as appropriate.
- (5) Students' assigned teachers have the primary responsibility for teaching and learning in schools but value and seek out the expertise of non-teaching personnel as necessary or appropriate with respect to educational decision-making.
- (6) The provision and delivery of supports for students are intended to complement or supplement the professional roles and responsibilities of teachers. As such, wherever:
  - (a) A position requires and uses the skills of a professional holding a teacher's certificate, the position must be filled by a person employed as such. For example, the role of a clerical aide or a library technician in a school library should be defined clearly as one of support for a qualified teacher-librarian.
  - (b) It is possible and appropriate, supports for students should be delivered by professionals who are certificated and employed as teachers. For example, qualified teacher-counsellors should be used to the greatest extent possible because they are closest to the school and classroom environment.
- (7) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Advocate for the provision of supports for students that meet the diverse needs of students.
  - (b) Advocate for the provision of sufficient time, resources and supports to allow for effective collaboration between teachers and non-teaching personnel during regular work hours.
  - (c) Work with non-teaching personnel in ways that are consistent with teachers' beliefs about professional relationships in schools and that contribute to the teaching and learning environment.
  - (d) Communicate in ways that are respectful of students' privacy rights, the trust under which confidential information is shared and of any applicable privacy laws, regulations or policies.
  - (e) Are guided by a focus on students' learning and well-being when carrying out their roles, responsibilities and professional relationships with non-teaching personnel.
  - (f) Contribute to the development and improvement of programs, services and research related to the delivery or implementation of supports for students.

(2015)

## **2.26 Health Support Services in School**

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### **2.26.1 Beliefs**

- (1) All school-aged children have a right to an education.
- (2) Only health-care professionals are authorized and trained to provide health and medical services for students.
- (3) Teachers are under no legal, ethical or moral obligation to administer medications or to provide any regular medical or physical health-care services for students.
- (4) Teachers shall neither administer medications nor provide any medical or physical procedures for students in school.
- (5) In instances where it is perceived that a child is in need of emergency medical assistance or medication, a teacher has a duty to assist a student to the best of the teacher's ability, and a duty to behave as would a reasonably prudent parent by seeking and/or obtaining medical help as quickly as possible.
- (6) Teachers shall neither provide nor administer non-prescription drugs for students.
- (7) Teachers shall neither instruct nor advise teacher aides, teacher associates or other non-medical school board employees to administer medications or to provide medical or physical procedures for students.
- (8) School boards shall ensure that trained health-care professionals are available in schools to administer medications or provide medical or physical procedures for students.
- (9) School boards shall ensure that their insurance policies indemnify teachers who administer medical aid or medication in emergency situations for students in school or at school-related activities.
- (10) School boards shall have clear policies regarding the administration of medications and the provision of medical or physical procedures for students by health-care professionals in school. These policies should detail the process for parents to request health-care services.
  - (a) The requirement for parental and physician consent and direction for such services.
  - (b) The procedures for the storage of medications.
  - (c) The process for recording and keeping of medical information on students.
  - (d) The requirement that each request be approved on an individual basis by the school board.

(1990)





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# Professionally Led Curriculum Renewal Processes

The purpose of this document is to describe a provincial curriculum program led by the profession and supported by the Ministry of Education. Integral to the model is the engagement and leadership of professional teachers at all stages of curriculum work.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and its members are supportive of the Ministry reinvigorating and reinvesting in curriculum renewal efforts and hold a deep professional desire for those efforts to be successful. For Saskatchewan teachers, a curriculum is not simply an informational document that guides teaching and learning in the classroom. Rather, curriculum comes into existence – it is enacted – through the myriad of particular and contextualized educational experiences that students have over time and that teachers create. The Federation envisions and advocates for a central role for teachers and their professional organization in curriculum renewal, development and implementation.

**Saskatchewan teachers should have a leadership role at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum development, implementation and actualization.**

There is a long history in Saskatchewan of collaboration and commitment among its partners in education. Teachers have had a significant role as curriculum developers, implementers, innovators and evaluators. The legislative responsibility for curriculum development lies with the Ministry of Education. Stakeholders who share a commitment to curriculum development include the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, members of First Nations and Métis teachers and organizations, the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. Leadership from the Ministry, active participation by teachers in leadership roles at all levels of curricular decision making and leadership provided by an enduring, inclusive cross-sector body with appropriate representation of stakeholders will support processes for successful curriculum renewal efforts.

In *Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspective on Curriculum Renewal* (2016), the Federation articulated a set of 13 principles upon which a successful system of curriculum renewal can be based. These principles are situated within the legislated mandate and the bylaws and policies of the Federation.

# A Provincial Curriculum Program

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation proposes a model of curriculum renewal that is co-ordinated and facilitated by the Federation, resourced through a multi-year partnership and funding agreement with the Ministry of Education and the participation of Indigenous, community and education sector stakeholders. This model promotes the professional leadership, learning and engagement of teachers in five phases of curriculum-related activities: needs assessment; development pathway selection; curriculum development and resourcing; piloting, and professional development; implementation; and, evaluation and evergreening. At its centre, the model is based on the Student First understandings of shared responsibility, relationships, learning environment, student and teacher supports, and engagement of the student/learner.

Curriculum renewal is a constant, ongoing professional responsibility of teachers. Saskatchewan teachers want to create, and in the past have consistently created, well-thought-out, well-constructed and well-resourced provincial curricula, curricular foundations and curricular supports as integral parts of robust, culturally relevant learning environments for students. This proposed model presents opportunities for strengthening curriculum renewal by engaging Saskatchewan teachers who are currently supporting curriculum renewal efforts, and who actively participate in professional development through their professional organization, school divisions and the Ministry.

The design and creation of a curriculum program as part of the processes and structures designed to meet the goals of publicly funded public education honours the traditional roles of the partners in education and shapes the sector to strategically meet the goal of delivering the best possible educational opportunities for all students. It contributes to the development of a program that is supportive and responsive and that builds on the strengths of the respective organizations and stakeholders.

As one of the enduring strategies of the Education Sector Strategic Plan, processes for curriculum development and renewal will engage teachers in all of the other enduring strategies – culturally relevant and engaging curriculum, differentiated and high-quality instruction, culturally appropriate and authentic assessment, and professional learning supported through strong partnerships.

An enduring inclusive cross-sector body with appropriate representation and leadership should be established for reviewing and reaffirming our curricular foundations and for determining signposts, criteria and strategies that will ensure ongoing curriculum renewal efforts are successful.

Saskatchewan Teachers'  
Perspective on Curriculum  
Renewal (2016)

# Professionally Led Curriculum Renewal

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The importance of identifying and efficiently managing the most appropriate resources to develop and deliver responsive, culturally appropriate curricula informed the development of the following proposed model. It provides opportunity for teacher leaders to strengthen the provincial education system – one that places students at the centre of all that we do.

Saskatchewan teachers believe that teaching and learning occurs within many different contexts. Teachers share the responsibility with students, parents, communities and partners in education to provide conditions that are necessary and appropriate for teaching and learning to be holistic, equitable and effective.

The central role of teachers as curriculum planners, implementers and leaders of renewal must be balanced with the legislative responsibility that lies with the Ministry of Education regarding curriculum development. The proposed model builds upon two foundational goals for all curricula in Saskatchewan – rich, high-quality, context-sensitive curricula to support student learning and achievement, and curricula developed, understood and implemented by the profession. The Ministry document entitled *Classroom Curriculum Connections: A Teacher's Handbook for Personal-Professional Growth* (2001) references three curriculum actualization processes that are to be integrated within the ongoing professional work of teachers: curriculum reflection, curriculum inquiry and curriculum networking.

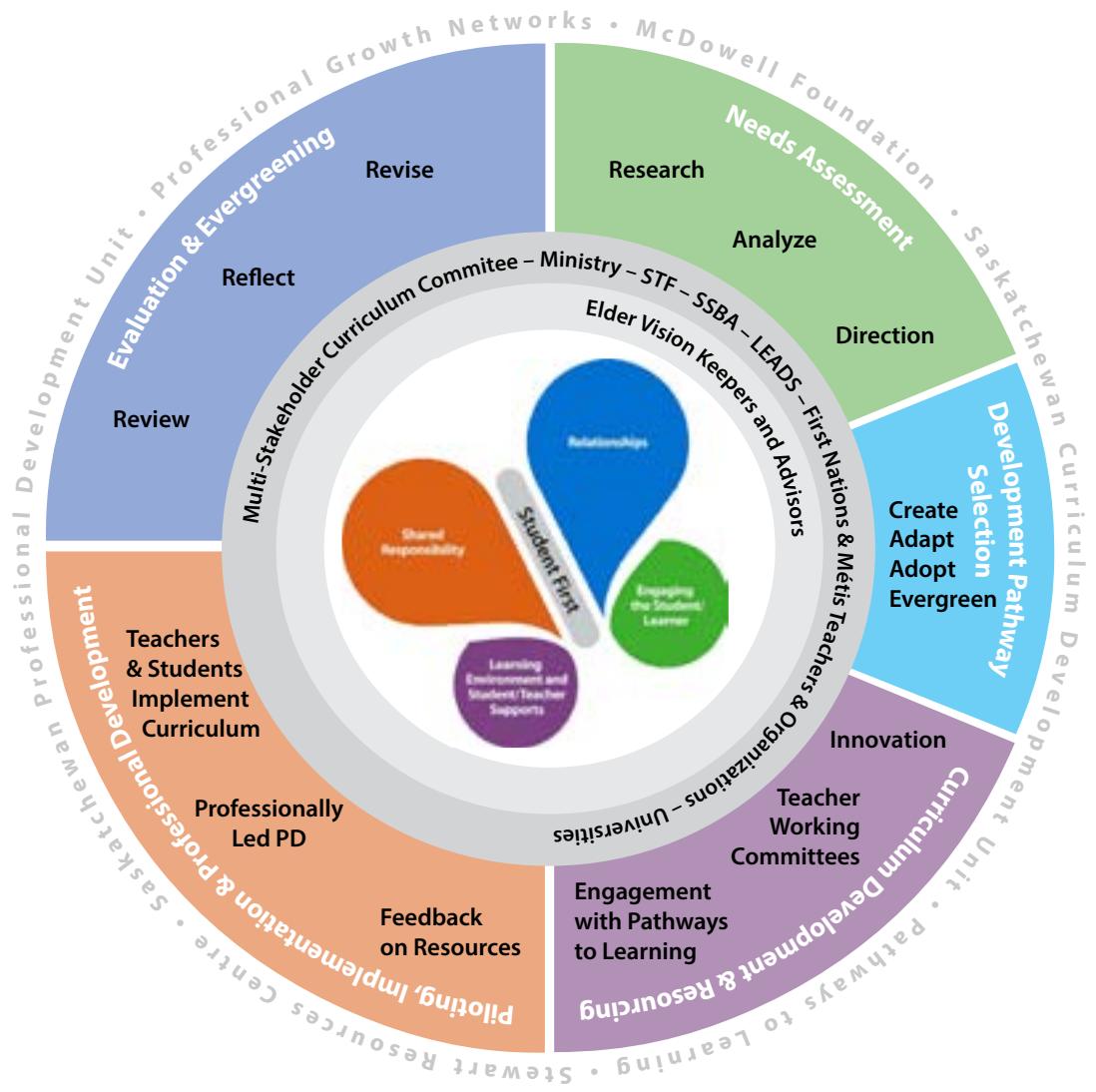
- **Curriculum reflection** is a process that involves individual teachers in thinking about their beliefs, values and abilities and the ways these affect, and are affected by, students, curricula and school/community contexts.
- **Curriculum inquiry** is an active process involving teachers in implementing self-selected aspects of Core Curricula in their classrooms and evaluating the results.
- **Curriculum networking** is made up of groups of teachers who meet regularly to discuss and/or work on areas of mutual interest. Networks involve teachers in a form of professional development that is group directed through democratic processes with each person having equal decision-making authority.

Professional work regarding curriculum must be ongoing and cyclical so that curricula best reflects a rapidly changing context and the needs of students.

Recent curriculum renewal in science engaged teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating of new senior physics, chemistry and biology curricula. During these phases of curriculum renewal, teachers ensured that the content of renewed curricula reflected Indigenous, First Nations and Métis knowledge and worldviews, and contemporary understandings and applications of science. Student voices were integral to the piloting phase as teachers learned alongside their students. All of the teachers engaged in the renewal of senior science courses reported the work as the best professional learning they had experienced and they became teacher-leaders in the process.

Saskatchewan teachers support the government in establishing provincial-level curriculum renewal structures and processes that will allow teachers to meet both their legislated mandate and their professional aspirations.

# A Model of Professionally Led Curriculum Renewal



Central to the proposed model is the learning and achievement of students. Overarching goals regarding curricula that support student learning and achievement are articulated by a multi-stakeholder curriculum committee whose role is to ensure that Saskatchewan curricula continue to support the vision citizens of Saskatchewan hold for their children. Infused through all curriculum renewal processes are the contributions of an Elders Advisory Committee whose role is to be active in all phases of the model.

## ■ Multi-Stakeholder Curriculum Committee

This committee would establish the broad vision for curricula in Saskatchewan by asking the question, “What is an educated citizen in our province?” The committee would be led and funded by the Ministry of Education and comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Education and representatives of the Federation, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, First Nations and Métis teachers and organizations, University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina.

## Elder Vision Keepers and Advisors

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This essential group of First Nations and Métis representatives would provide guidance, advice and assistance to ensure that Indigenous cultures, histories and ways of knowing are fully present in all aspects of Saskatchewan curricula. Their active participation in all phases of the model would be facilitated and supported by the Federation with funding provided by the Ministry through a new partnership and funding agreement.

## Saskatchewan Curriculum Development Program

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The proposed curriculum development program would be led by seconded teachers who design, facilitate and deliver a curriculum development program created in collaboration with active classroom and subject teachers. The program would be facilitated by the Federation and supported through the partnership and funding agreement with the Ministry.

Five phases of curriculum renewal are proposed:

### **Needs Assessment**

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**1** The Federation is able to engage a variety of existing structures and processes to support needs assessment processes that could inform curriculum renewal. These include: professional growth networks (subject-specific teacher networks); the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit Facilitator Community (classroom teachers, coordinators and consultants from across Saskatchewan focused on professionally led professional learning related to specific curricular and instructional areas). Beyond existing structures, the Federation is able to establish teacher working committees ensuring representation from across the province to support curriculum renewal processes. The Federation also houses the McDowell Foundation, which funds and publishes teacher-led classroom-based research in Saskatchewan schools. These research projects contain a wealth of information regarding the needs of both students and teachers.

### **Development Pathway Selection**

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**2** The outcome of needs assessment processes would be the selection of a curriculum development path – create, adapt, adopt or evergreen. Regardless of the development path chosen, curriculum destined for Saskatchewan classrooms would need to advance through the processes of development, resourcing, piloting, implementation and evaluation as teachers work to ensure high-quality curricula are available to students.

### **Curriculum Development and Resourcing**

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**3** Curriculum development and writing processes can be deeply supported through participation of Federation members and existing professional support structures. The Federation has structures in place to form teacher working committees that reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan schools to support the development and writing of curricula. Development and writing committee members would have access to Federation supports as they transitioned their work from development and writing to implementation and professional development. The SPDU Facilitator Community is an existing structure that provides training in the development and delivery of high-quality professional learning. The Facilitator Community currently consists of 85 educators from across Saskatchewan from 18 different school divisions. These professionals range from classroom teachers to administrators to consultants.

An integral part of the development of curricula is to consider the resources needed to support curricula early in the process. The Exploring the Many Pathways to Learning program,

in conjunction with the Stewart Resources Centre, has the ability to source, review and house materials to support renewed Saskatchewan curricula in both English and French. Teachers are engaged in processes of recommending high-quality learning resources to respond to the diversity of Saskatchewan students and their learning needs. The Stewart Resources Centre provides access to current research and practical materials for teachers.

### **Piloting, Implementation and Professional Development**

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Piloting, implementation and professional development are interconnected, iterative processes. Beyond the ability to bring diverse groups of teachers together, the Federation is able to provide structures and supports for teaching professionals to resource, implement and develop professional understandings of renewed curricula. Professional growth networks supported by the Facilitator Community can provide subject specialists the training and professional learning required to develop high-quality implementation and professional development processes in support of renewed curricula. Further professional development opportunities can be encouraged through teacher participation in McDowell Foundation-supported research projects.

### **Evaluation and Evergreening**

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The Federation can support evaluation processes through the creation of teacher working committees, member surveys, professional growth networks and via sponsorship of action research targeted on specific curricular areas. Evergreening processes would involve similar supports and structures identified in development, writing, resourcing, implementation and professional development.

## **Professional Leadership of Curriculum Renewal**

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The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is uniquely positioned to ensure that regardless of the curriculum renewal path – create, adapt, adopt, evergreen – there is sustainable, co-ordinated access to a diverse group of teachers, and robust supports and processes allowing for significant depth of professional engagement to ensure that Saskatchewan curricula are actualized.

A Saskatchewan Curriculum Development Program will be able to engage a variety of existing professionally led structures and processes to fully support the many functions of the five phases of this model. The following structures and programs provide access to a provincial teacher population with more diversity and capacity than what can be achieved through a singular school division or regional approach.

### **Exploring the Many Pathways to Learning**

The Pathways project currently engages over 100 teachers in the evaluation and recommendation of learning resources that best support Saskatchewan's curriculum and its diverse learners. This project is administered collaboratively by the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit and Stewart Resources Centre through a contract with the Ministry of Education.

### **Stewart Resources Centre**

The Stewart Resources Centre is the professional library for teachers in Saskatchewan that is funded and operated by the Federation. Its collection is comprised of over 28,000 books and audio-visual resources, including 125 print journals, e-journals, and newspapers, plus a selection of teacher-prepared lesson units to support the implementation of curricula.

### **Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit**

The Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit creates and provides high-quality professional development resources and opportunities for teachers and the broader educational community. SPDU is led by a director and staffed by four associate directors who are all experts in curriculum and pedagogy and are experienced teachers.

The SPDU Facilitator Community assists in the development and delivery of professional growth opportunities. Following a teachers-leading-teachers model, approximately 85 provincial facilitators receive training and participate in ongoing co-planning, co-facilitating, and mentoring activities with core SPDU team members. At present, 25 have been designated lead facilitators who are able to design and deliver high-quality professional growth sessions.

### **Professional Growth Networks**

The Federation currently supports 28 professional growth networks with approximately 3,600 members established in a variety of subject fields, service areas and inter-disciplinary groups. These groups provide networking, communication, professionally led professional growth opportunities, and the sharing of promising practices and resources.

### **McDowell Foundation**

The Foundation is an independent charitable organization established by the Federation in 1991 to support research, inquiry and the dissemination of information that focuses on teaching and learning within the publicly funded PreK-12 education system. In 2015-16 more than 50 teachers were engaged in research projects through the Foundation as researchers, collaborators or other contributors. Since its inception, the McDowell Foundation has supported more than 250 research projects conducted by over 1,000 teachers.

## **Curriculum Program Commitments**

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Curriculum renewal structures and processes must have a provincial-level focus. At the October 2016 Ministry of Education curriculum consultation meetings, participants identified four requirements as necessary for provincewide curriculum renewal processes to be sound and to have long-term success:

- (1) Renewal of curriculum requires a solid plan for implementation over a period of years or it will falter.
- (2) Facilitation and leadership by teachers is necessary.
- (3) Engagement with students and parents during pilot phases is necessary.
- (4) Funds need to be designated for curriculum development as well as for professional learning and growth.

The proposed multi-year partnership and funding agreement between the Ministry and Federation will ensure that sufficient time and resources are dedicated to supporting teachers in developing and delivering a successful model of professionally led curriculum renewal.



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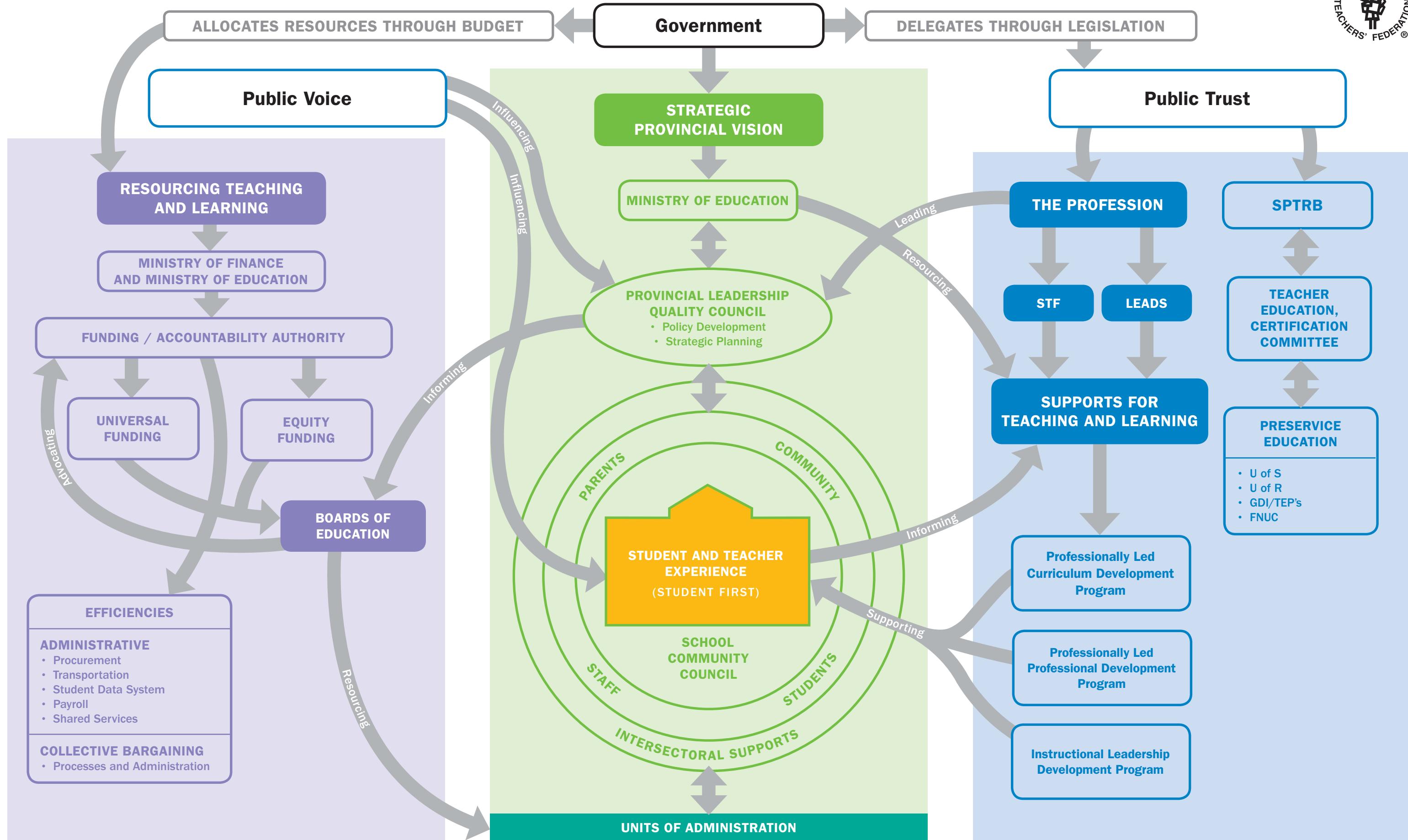
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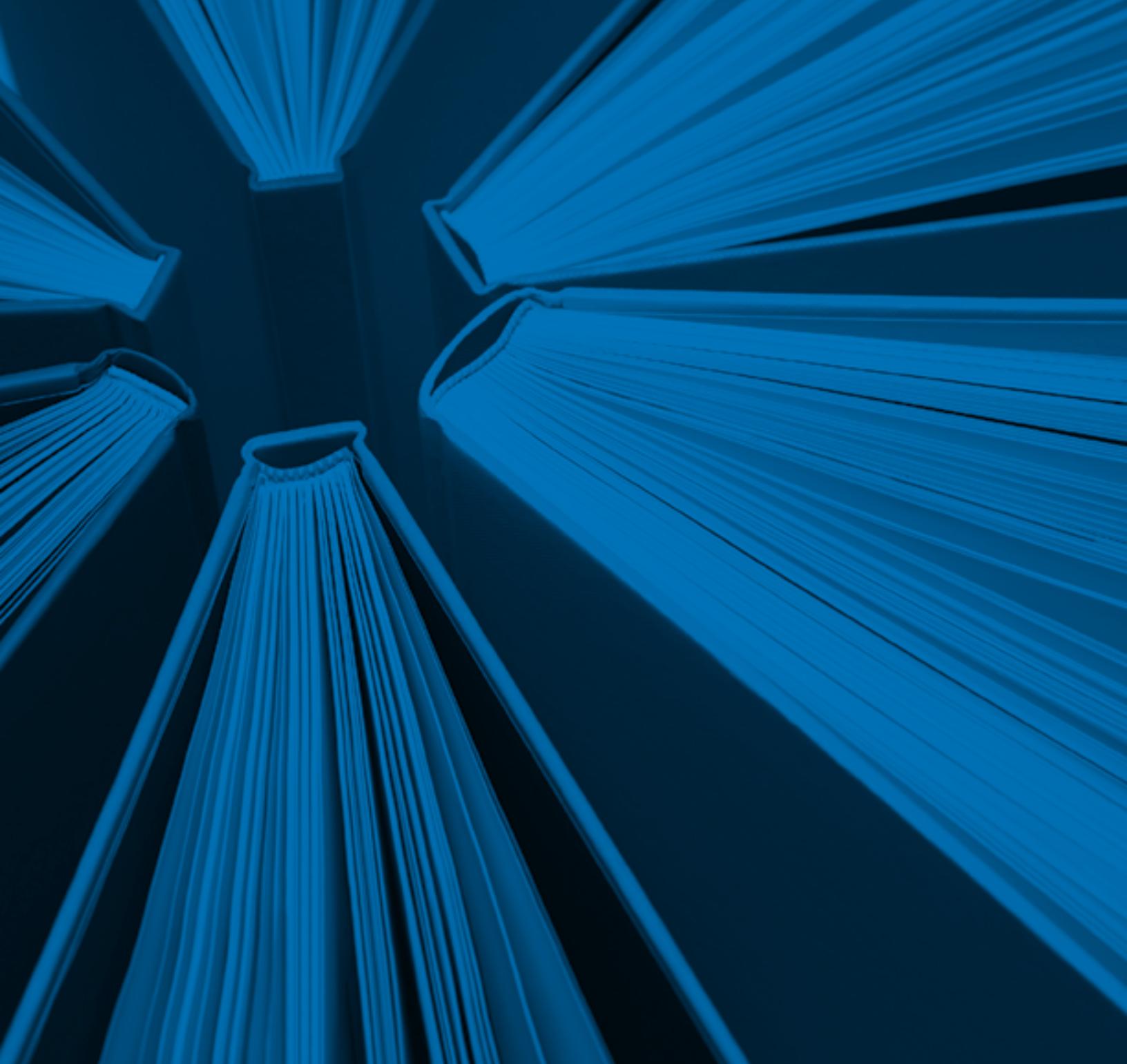
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January 2017

# Professional Vision For Educational Governance in Saskatchewan





Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspective on  
**Curriculum Renewal**





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The quoted statements in blue are from participants at the three Ministry of Education curriculum consultation meetings held in October 2016.

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# Introduction

Saskatchewan teachers appreciate the opportunity that the Ministry of Education's curriculum consultations have provided for their professional voices to be heard and wish to emphasize the crucial importance of their voices continuing to be relied upon in all aspects of curriculum renewal, implementation and actualization.

Following an invitation extended by Legislative Secretary Lisa Lambert, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation staff and members participated in three Ministry curriculum consultation meetings during October 2016, along with other partners in education and community-based organizations. This document is the formal submission to the Ministry of Education by the Federation on behalf of approximately 13,000 professional teachers. It elaborates on the key messages that Federation staff and members provided to the Ministry, other partners in education and community organization members in attendance at these meetings.

The purpose of this submission is to formally offer Saskatchewan teachers' voices through a set of 13 principles upon which a successful system of curriculum renewal can be based. These principles are situated within the legislated mandate of the Federation as well as within the formal bylaws and policies adopted by teachers' elected councillors through a rigorous process of review, research and professional reflection.

The Federation and its members are supportive of the Ministry reinvigorating and reinvesting in curriculum renewal efforts at this point in time and hold a deep professional desire for those efforts to be successful. For Saskatchewan teachers, a curriculum is not simply an informational document that guides teaching and learning in the classroom. Rather, curriculum comes into existence – it is enacted – through the myriad of particular and contextualized educational experiences that students have over time and that teachers create.

It is for this reason that teachers never stop “doing” curriculum renewal. That is, curriculum renewal is a constant, ongoing part of being a professional teacher. Because of this professional obligation, Saskatchewan teachers want to create, and in the past have consistently created, well-thought-out, well-constructed and well-resourced provincial curricula, curricular foundations and curricular supports (such as professional growth opportunities and learning resources) as an integral part of robust learning environments for students.

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*Some of the curricula identified go back a long time. One is 50 years old. If we ask: How can a curricula that is that old still be taught, still be relevant, still get kids into university, still prepare them for university?*

*I like to think that what keeps curricula fresh, relevant, is the teachers' professionalism and judgment.*

*So, how do we keep that notion alive, and harness it?*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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If curriculum renewal is to be successful, it must be sustainable. Sustainability in this context means that curriculum renewal must be ongoing, properly resourced and strategically planned. Sustainability is enhanced through collaborative and responsive processes. A successful system will be inclusive, with broad representation in recognition of the shared responsibility and accountability across the education sector in Saskatchewan. It will be based on renewed or reaffirmed Saskatchewan goals of education and well-understood curricular foundations that honour the excellent work done in the province to date while at the same time being forward-looking and shaped by our current contextual needs.

A successful system will, as both a societal moral imperative and a foundational curricular need, consistently infuse and rely upon Indigenous ways of knowing. It will be student centred, giving confidence that students' voices are consistently heard by ensuring that a robust vetting and piloting of curriculum possibilities occurs in Saskatchewan classrooms.

A successful system will see teachers filling leadership roles at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum renewal.

The success of curriculum reforms largely rests on the shoulders of teachers, since they are the ones who put [curriculum] reform ideas into practice ....

Successful implementation of reforms depends on teachers' ownership of and their knowledge about reform ideas ... [and] involving teachers from the early stages of curriculum design fosters [that] ownership. (Huizinga, Handelzalts, Nieveen, & Voogt, 2014, p. 33)

# History of Collaboration

**Principle #1 – A collaborative system of curriculum renewal should reflect our successful professionally led practices of the past.**

Saskatchewan's education partners have a long history of commitment to providing the best research-based educational programs possible. This commitment, combined with high quality curriculum and instruction, effective assessment practices, a wide range of resources, and supportive families and communities, prepares students to live full and rewarding lives .... (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 1)

Not only is there a long history in the province of collaboration and commitment among its partners in education, Saskatchewan teachers have also had a significant leadership role in curriculum development, implementation and actualization since at least 1944.

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*Our history of education and curriculum development in Saskatchewan is important. We need to remember where we've been.*

*I recommend adding a page to the introductory sections of all subject area curriculum documents summarizing their timeline from the beginning of the 20th century.*

*– Participant (University of Saskatchewan), Saskatoon meeting*

---

## Early History

**Principle #2 – Saskatchewan teachers should have a leadership role at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum development, implementation and actualization.**

Since 1944, Saskatchewan teachers have, through collaboration between the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Ministry of Education, led and been heavily involved in curriculum development at all levels of decision making and renewal. From the laying of curricular philosophical foundations to the examination of the educational system as a whole, to the writing, piloting, evaluating and implementing of subject- or grade-specific renewed curriculum, dedicated teachers have consistently brought valuable wisdom and professional insight to collaborative processes producing curricula that "is highly respected nationally and internationally" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 1).

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*When teachers and administrators are present in curriculum development, I know that the process will be rooted in professionalism ... I'd also like to see pre-service teachers involved.*

*– Participant (University of Saskatchewan), Saskatoon meeting*

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This tradition of collaboration began with Henry Janzen who, as a newly appointed director of curriculum in 1944, immediately established a broad-based general advisory committee and continued to rely on the already-established Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation curriculum committees that "kept him in touch with the sentiment in the field" (Lyons, 2006, p. 54).

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s "Janzen continued the expansion of collaborative approaches to curriculum development" (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016a, p. 5) and this way of renewing curriculum became both well established in Saskatchewan and an exemplary model used by other jurisdictions around the world.

From this early history, and in the continued fulfilment of their legislated mandate to promote the cause of education, Saskatchewan teachers expect their professional voices to be heard and acted upon by those who have legislative authority and responsibility for public education. This professional expectation continues to this day. It was made evident, for example, during the recent joint Ministry of Education and Federation meetings held across the province in early 2014, where teacher voice was one theme that emerged. As one teacher participant said then:

How or where are teachers going to be inserted into the decision-making processes? The things that work, how will they become broader policy? ... The system needs to be getting feedback directly from teachers, the government needs to be acting on it, and then coming back and checking with us again. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2014, p. 2)

## Recent History

**Principle #3 – An enduring inclusive cross-sector body with appropriate representation and leadership should be established for reviewing and reaffirming our curricular foundations and for determining signposts, criteria and strategies that will ensure ongoing curriculum renewal efforts are successful.**

The tradition of collaboration and teacher leadership is not simply a relic of early history. It has continued, with few exceptions, from the early 1940s until now. In the 1980s, *Directions* earned a worldwide reputation as a successful model for curriculum renewal, where its:

... education and curriculum review, oddly enough, survived three changes in government, and Saskatchewan ... emerged as one of the Canadian prototypes for provincial curriculum reform. (Robinson, 2006, p. 209)

*Directions* was a massive review and renewal effort that involved 34 public meetings, the distribution of 160,000 household questionnaires and 156 formal submissions, which culminated in the establishment of a curricular foundation and the *Goals of Education for Saskatchewan* that have served the public, teachers and students well ever since.

---

*Keep doing what we've done historically. Focus on the whole student, we've been doing that for 30 years. I'm hearing around the room that we need to include this or that [topic]. So yes, consult, bring it together. This [Ministry consultation] is a good start, but there's a need to ensure we build a strong foundation.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Saskatoon meeting*

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Although it is not envisioned that the current effort would require consultations of the same scope, it is important that a professionally led, collaborative and co-operative structure be established to support the educational partners in taking sufficient time to reaffirm our curricular foundations and, if needed, refresh or rearticulate them taking into consideration current contexts, realities, needs and language.

The overarching structure that supported *Directions* was the Minister's Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Instruction Review (1984). There were 24 members of the Committee which was chaired by a teacher and co-ordinated by an STF senior staff member. Of the 24 committee members, nine were members or leaders of the Federation. There were also four representatives of the Ministry, three members of the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, three representatives of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, two members from Saskatchewan's universities, two members of the public and a Dene materials developer.

Other examples of collaborative approaches to curriculum-related renewal and review are easy to find. For example, in the 1990s there was the High School Review Advisory Committee with a similar composition, chaired by a teacher. In 1999 the Saskatchewan partners in education jointly prepared *Actualization of Core Curriculum* through the Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Committee, which "[took] stock of where we are in our understanding of how to implement, revise, and renew all aspects of Core Curriculum" (Saskatchewan Education, 1999, p. 1) and reaffirmed the *Goals of Education for Saskatchewan* that emerged from the *Directions* process. This Committee had representation from the francophone community; Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Association of Historical High Schools; Saskatchewan Association of School Councils; Saskatchewan Education; Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology; Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; University of Regina; and University of Saskatchewan.

More recently, in 2010 the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement was convened, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Education. There were four members from each of: the Ministry of Education; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations; the University of Regina; the University of Saskatchewan; the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations; the Gabriel Dumont Institute; the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan; and the First Nations University of Canada. The panel provided a set of comprehensive, practical and sustainable recommendations to best serve Saskatchewan students' educational interests.

As a final example, in 2013 the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for First Nations and Métis People was created. The Joint Task Force was a panel of three people, which included a retired senior staff member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, a senior vice-president of corporate social responsibility at Cameco Corporation and the executive director of the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan.

Through these and other collaborative structures and processes, Saskatchewan teachers have made significant contributions to the creation and renewal of the foundations of provincial curriculum. Through the establishment of these foundations it came to be understood among Saskatchewan partners in education that it was imperative for teachers to have a leadership role in all aspects of curriculum development, including the creation, renewal, implementation, actualization and evaluation of curricula.

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*I'd invite us to discuss what we all mean by curriculum. I'm not sure we all come with the same understandings. So that you're starting in the right place. It takes me back to the question: What is an educated person in Saskatchewan?*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Saskatoon meeting*

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# Saskatchewan's Curricular Foundations

**Principle #4 – Reaffirmed, refreshed and rearticulated curricular foundations are necessary that appropriately consider, and are reflective of, Saskatchewan's current contexts, realities, needs and commitments to First Nations and Métis peoples.**

Saskatchewan's professionally led, collaborative and co-operative curriculum development processes of the past resulted in a strong vision for the future of education, well-articulated goals of education and a foundational curriculum framework most recently built around broad areas of learning and cross-curricular competencies.

The results of these past processes, which still have much relevance today, demonstrate how visionary, necessary and impactful this part of the overall process has been.

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*I thought the Directions process was very valuable. It engaged teachers, parents and students.*

*- Participant (University of Regina), Regina meeting*

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Below are excerpts from these foundational documents provided as both background and a reminder of the strong work that has come before.

## **Directions Vision**

The school that we see is built upon a clearly articulated and understood set of goals. The goals are a guide for educational planning, and truly reflect the uniqueness of the school population. They are foremost in the minds of the trustees, administrators, teachers, parents and community. The students in the school understand what the goals of the school are and know what they are expected to learn. Expectations are high.

The school has built-in mechanisms for continuous evaluation and improvement. A method of dealing with problems as they arise has been determined and is clearly understood by all. Reporting to students, parents, and staff is frequent, and the school employs long-range planning. Teachers in the school are continuously learning new skills and updating their professional knowledge.

Attention is given to the needs of individual learners. The school curriculum is designed to teach basic skills, yet remain flexible enough to accommodate the needs of all students. A well-organized network of counselling and support services is available to students who require such services. A variety of learning activities are coordinated by trained staff in a well equipped resource centre.

The school has an effective principal who guides day-to-day operations. The principal provides leadership in a variety of ways: by initiating dialogue concerning expectations and school-wide goals, by ensuring that decision making takes place at the local level, by establishing efficient planning procedures, by encouraging parental and community involvement and by managing and controlling the facility. Above all else, the principal is seen by both teachers and students as supportive, caring and trustworthy. In addition, both principal and teachers know they have the support and assistance of board and central office administration.

Well-developed curricula are available to guide the teachers in the school. Instructional materials and teaching strategies which are most appropriate are selected. Teachers monitor students' work carefully and frequently provide feedback on their progress. Many opportunities are available for students to assume responsibility and direct their own learning.

Each person in the school is valued as an individual. Children experience success as they learn the skills required to function as productive members of society. The atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening, yet constructive and orderly. The school that we envision is a place where both teachers and students want to be. It achieves a happy medium between right and responsibility, and combines caring and respect with learning.

The school that we see ahead of us is not one that can be established overnight. We recognize that achieving such a degree of excellence takes time and direction. But we also recognize that elements of our vision are already in place, that the foundation has been laid. We present our action plan as a long-term plan, and ask for the commitment of all those involved with education in attaining that school of our vision. (Minister's Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Instruction Review, 1984, pp. 5-6)

### **Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1985)**

Goals of education in Saskatchewan should direct efforts to develop the potential of all students in the province. Education should affirm the worth of each individual and lay the foundation for learning throughout life.

Students benefit from exposure to learning in a variety of situations. Attainment of the goals is a venture the school shares with the student, the home, the church and the community. Although the degree of school responsibility will vary from community to community, the school has some responsibility for each goal.

A body of knowledge and a range of skills and attitudes are necessary to function in a changing world. It is intended, then, that education will enable Saskatchewan students to do the following to the best of their abilities:

- Basic Skills;
- Lifelong Learning;
- Understanding and Relating to Others;
- Self-Concept Development;
- Positive Life Style;
- Spiritual Development;
- Career and Consumer Decisions;
- Membership in Society;
- Growing with Change.

(Reaffirmed in Saskatchewan Education's *Actualization of the Core Curriculum*, 1999.  
Details under each heading listed above were omitted for brevity.)

## **Broad Areas of Learning**

The Broad Areas of Learning ... provide a conceptual foundation for the renewal of curricula, and encompass and build upon the provincial Goals of Education ... The K-12 goals and grade level outcomes for each area of study are designed to ensure that students reach their full potential in each of the following Broad Areas of Learning:

- Lifelong Learners;
- Sense of Self, Community, and Place;
- Engaged Citizens.

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3)

## **Cross-Curricular Competencies**

Saskatchewan curricula are designed to develop four interrelated Cross-curricular Competencies ... that synthesize and build upon the six Common Essential Learnings. The following competencies contain understandings, values, skills and processes considered important for learning in all areas of study:

- Developing Thinking;
- Developing Identity and Interdependence;
- Developing Literacies;
- Developing Social Responsibility.

(Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 4)

## **Student Achievement**

Provincial Panel on Student Achievement Recommendation Number Two:

The Panel concludes that action to improve the well-being and educational outcomes of First Nations and Métis students is urgent – a moral, social and economic imperative. The Panel further concludes that student learning and achievement is improved when all students feel a sense of belonging at school and have hope and goals for the future. The Panel recognizes that the Ministry of Education, under the guidance of the First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee, and through other partnerships, has developed a cohesive and comprehensive body of policy toward these ends. Therefore the Panel recommends:

That the Ministry of Education take action to ensure the First Nations and Métis education policy that already exists is fully implemented in all classrooms, schools and school divisions across Saskatchewan. Recommended actions include:

- i. Creation of a strategy that meaningfully engages the First Nations and Métis communities in educational decision making and that empowers First Nations and Métis people to shape educational decisions
- ii. Expansion of culturally responsive programs
- iii. Increased professional development at all levels
- iv. Strengthening and renewal of relationships between the Ministry of Education and school divisions with First Nations and Métis organizations
- v. Creation of supports for policy implementation at every level of the education system
- vi. Development of indicators of policy implementation.

(Provincial Panel on Student Achievement, 2010, p. 3)

Strong curricular foundations have been laid throughout the early historical and more recent collaborations across Saskatchewan's education sector. These foundations include a set of recommendations provided by the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement convened by the Ministry in 2010. Although the Panel's recommendations were comprehensive, practical and sustainable, many have not yet been fully implemented and remain as goals for the partners in education to work toward.

If or when a formal reinvestment of resources and energy in curriculum renewal happens, time needs to be set aside for review, reaffirmation and re-articulation of Saskatchewan's curricular foundations to take into consideration current contexts and to ensure that we are heading in the right direction.

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*There are some strong foundations. It started with Directions. We don't need to throw everything out. But there is a need for a clear process.*

*In the past, there were teachers involved, they were piloting, etc. The recent science renewal is closer to that history.*

*- Participant (University of Regina), Regina meeting*

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*We support a return to the historical involvement of teachers.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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## Indigenous Ways of Knowing

**Principle #5 – Curricular foundations, frameworks, structures and processes should consistently infuse and rely upon Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous community leadership.**

Building on Principle Number Four and on Recommendation Number Two of the *Provincial Panel on Student Achievement Final Report*, Principle Number Five recognizes that Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing must not be included in curricula simply as information for students to learn. Indigenous ways of knowing should also be infused throughout all aspects of curriculum renewal and the education system as a whole.

We hear much about indigenizing the curriculum; putting Aboriginal history and culture into the curriculum so Aboriginal people are correctly represented ... A prevailing philosophy is that if Aboriginal people see themselves in the texts, they will be able to associate with the concepts ... and this will make learning easier ... I agree to a certain degree, but I believe indigenizing the curriculum has to be done by and with Aboriginal people to get it right .... (Hogue, 2016, p. 164)

Although Saskatchewan's curricular foundations remain relevant, there have been important and necessary changes in our society over the long time period through which these were established.

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*With respect to Aboriginal content, I do see lovely resources available now, however, I don't see a lot of the most current resources included in our curriculum documents.*

*In addition, these resources still feel like "add ons." We need to offer Aboriginal perspectives to curriculum as a whole, as well as individual resources.*

- Participant (University of Saskatchewan), Saskatoon meeting

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The profound imperative of responding to these changes appropriately in curriculum renewal is reflected in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*:

7. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
8. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.
9. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.
10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
  - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
  - ii. Improving educational attainment levels and success rates.
  - iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
  - iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
  - v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
  - vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
  - vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
11. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
12. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, pp. 1-2)

The Federation must emphasize here, in this current submission, that this is not the first time Saskatchewan teachers have advocated for these types of appropriate and necessary changes. In 2009, for example, the Federation submitted to the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement the following:

First of all, it is important to emphasize that the teaching profession remains strongly committed, as demonstrated in the Federation's policies and programs, to a holistic, student-centred education for all children and youth in which First Nations as well as Métis ways of knowing, teaching and learning are foundational. Bringing about this education involves working with, rather than 'for' or 'on behalf of,' First Nations or Métis communities. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2009, p. 3)

Beyond these important recommendations for renewed curriculum foundations and curriculum development processes, the Federation's submission to the Panel also supported the establishment and authentic use of specific structures to ensure Indigenous leadership is sought, valued and responded to appropriately in educational matters.

The STF respectfully suggests that, insofar as the provincial government's authority and responsibilities for PreK-12 education are concerned, an appropriate venue in which to engage in discussions about 'First Nations and Métis education' ... is the newly established First Nations and Métis Education Provincial Advisory Committee (FNMEPAC). We also suggest that the Action Plan (and revisions) prepared by the former Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC) included the kinds of practical steps that educators and others should take to strengthen all students' knowledge and understanding about the respective histories, ways of knowing, and cultures of First Nations as well as Métis peoples. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2009, p. 3)

Again, it is important at this point in time to take an opportunity to reflect together, inclusively, upon both the currently established curricular foundations as well as the design of the necessary structures and processes for curricular renewal to ensure that Indigenous ways of knowing and being are honoured, respected and foundational going forward. The way forward demands more than simply adding Indigenous content to existing curriculum.

# Curriculum and Supporting Curriculum Renewal

## Curriculum

**Principle #6 – Curriculum should continue to be understood as experiential and relational in nature, which is enacted within and dependent upon the teaching and learning environments that teachers create.**

Curriculum is complicated. At first glance, one might think that curriculum is just a set of documents to be taught to students. However, as you delve deeper and consider everything that is taught and learned in a classroom, curriculum becomes much more involved ... Curriculum is ‘a complicated system of interpretation, interactions, transmissions – planned and unplanned’. Curriculum is complicated – particularly when examined within its relationship with teaching. (Bufalino, 2013, p. 10)

Teachers are in relationships with curricula and students. Teachers are meaning makers. The work that teachers do implements, actualizes and interprets curricula. Teachers ensure students have quality experiences in their own relationships with curricula. Teachers bring context to curricula – that is, their knowledge of their students, schools, communities and beyond informs their professional practice and provides context for their students in support of student learning.

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*Teachers have a relationship with curricula and the student. It is important that they feel they have been a part of that process, that they get to create, pilot and field test curricula.*

*– Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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At the recent Ministry of Education consultation on curriculum renewal held in Saskatoon, one teacher participant told a powerful story about his son’s recent educational experience:

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*We need to be careful just how much measurement we do. Measurement has its place and is certainly important, but things that are easy to measure are not always important, and things that are important are not always easy to measure. My own son went to [a reserve] recently, as part of his Native Studies 20 class, where they participated in a sweat lodge ceremony and they had a sweat lodge experience. Before he went, we had a conversation about what is appropriate and not appropriate. We debriefed when he came home, and I asked him about what he learned. I don’t know that he could put into words what he got out of it. He was moved. He did say that he now understands what they have been talking about in his class, though. He will remember that experience for the rest of his life, long after anything he might have done on a final exam. But how do you test that – measure that?*

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This story provides a good example of how important it is that curricula and curricular frameworks are designed to support teachers in their interpretations of curricula that allow for rich student experiences, for meeting students' diverse learning needs and interests, and for reaching toward Saskatchewan's overarching goals of education.

Relatedly, among teachers' beliefs stated in STF Policy 2.10 (Teaching and Learning) Section 2.10.2 are the following:

- (1) Teaching and learning occurs within many different contexts. Teachers share the responsibility with students, parents, communities and partners in education to provide conditions that are necessary and appropriate for teaching and learning to be holistic, equitable and effective.
- (2) Holistic, equitable and effective teaching and learning is grounded in a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance and trust among teachers and students. It is a deeply personal human endeavour that is enhanced by the cultivation of such relationships.
- (3) Teaching and learning should be guided by sound educational research identified by the teaching profession, the Saskatchewan curricula, professional standards and ideals, and professional judgment with respect to students' well-being.
- (4) The primary professional goal of teachers is to create learning opportunities that support and encourage students to grow individually and collectively to the greatest extent possible ....

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, p. 85)

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*I can't emphasize enough the importance of having that professional flexibility built in to curricula, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach, so that teachers can meet their particular students' needs.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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#### **Principle #7 – Curriculum should continue to have a place for specific desired content situated within a coherent educational framework at all levels of curricula (including subjects, subject areas, cross-curricular goals and overarching foundations).**

As Saskatchewan's curricular foundations are renewed, reaffirmed and rearticulated, it is important to develop common understandings of key terms and concepts. For example,

- **Curriculum:** Curriculum is more than a set of subjects and content that is taught to students. Grundy (1987) notes that curriculum is a cultural construction – it is a broad set of experiences that seek to ensure children have the understandings, attitudes and abilities necessary to thrive in society both in the present and the future.
- **Instructional Methods:** Instructional methods are the wide range of techniques and processes that teachers use to engage students in learning. There is a growing research base regarding effective instructional methods. *Saskatchewan Reads* is a good example of a collection of instructional methods. Instructional methods should not be confused with curriculum.

- **Programs:** Programs are discrete sets of information pertaining to a topic or set of topics. They may or may not contain suggestions for instructional methods. Programs can support the actualization of the broad goals of curriculum by providing content that supports the understandings or skills identified within a curriculum. Information sets related to citizenship, financial literacy and other topics are programs that support the delivery or actualization of curriculum. Again, programs should not be confused with curriculum.
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*Sometimes we blur the lines between what is a program and what is a curriculum.*

*A program is a vehicle, one among many, a resource, that can be used in a curriculum. I'm thinking of, for example, the work around financial literacy. It isn't a curriculum itself, but it certainly has a role within various curricula.*

*So, be deliberate in not blurring those lines.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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A recurring theme at the recent Ministry curriculum consultations, brought forward by various community-based interest groups, was that there is a perceived need for certain specific topics or sets of topics to be taught in schools at various grade levels. Some examples given were financial literacy, citizenship perspectives, the Paul Martin Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program and English language literacy. While it is laudable and appreciated that various community groups take an interest in what is taught in schools, there are common misperceptions regarding what is already an integral part of the curriculum and what is actually taught in schools.

Renowned Canadian researchers Connelly and Clandinin (1988) spoke generally to this common problem within public education when they wrote:

Curriculum development and curriculum planning are fundamentally questions of teacher thinking and doing. We believe that it is the teachers' 'personal knowledge' that determines all matters of significance relative to the planned conduct of classrooms. (p. 4)

Saskatchewan teachers welcome the involvement of the public in curriculum renewal efforts and appreciate the public's support of this and of public education more generally. Community interest groups' involvement must, however, be at the right place and time and be done in appropriate ways if renewal efforts are to be successful and for the overall benefit of students. There is certainly room for programs and other learning resources within provincial curricula in which community groups may take a particular special interest. These must, however, fit into the educational frameworks and curricular designs that come first.

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*I'm surprised to see as many stakeholders here as there are. I've worked well with many of them, or the organizations they represent, and appreciated their input when redeveloping curriculum in the past.*

*I'm worried, though, about stakeholders coming in too early. It risks the process being held hostage or too responsive to needs other than teachers' and students'.*

*The education has to come first, then the stakeholders can come in and fit their interests into the curriculum outcomes and indicators that are there.*

*- Teacher participant, Saskatoon meeting*

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# Supporting Curriculum Renewal

**Principle #8 – The Ministry of Education should continue to meet its legislated mandate for providing teachers, students and the public with well-researched and well-thought-out curricula.**

The Ministry has a legislated responsibility to provide the curricula from which teachers create learning environments for their students.

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*When thinking about curriculum renewal, we should start with the statutory obligation of the Minister, who's responsible for providing curriculum. In doing so, asking the good questions, like today: What does the process need to look like?*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Saskatoon meeting*

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According to *The Education Act, 1995*:

- 3(2) The minister shall:
- (c) provide curriculum guides pertaining to courses of study authorized by the minister with respect to kindergarten and grades 1 to 12;
  - (d) make provision for the preparation and publication, as the Minister considers fit, of information with respect to goals, objectives and educational planning with respect to the present and future growth and development of the educational system;
  - (e) provide lists of textbooks, library books, reference books, other learning resources, apparatus, equipment and other materials that the minister may prescribe, approve or recommend pursuant to clause 4(1)(e);
  - (f) make provision for in-service education programs and related activities that pertain to implementation of new programs and courses and for any seminars, conferences and other meetings considered advisable for the purposes of consultation with respect to educational planning ....

Further, according to *The Education Regulations, 2015*:

- 48(2) Subject to subsection (3), if the minister has prescribed textbooks, library books, reference books or other learning resources, a board of education and the conseil scolaire shall ensure their use in schools.
- (4) A board of education or the conseil scolaire may, in accordance with policies established pursuant to clause (1)(a), approve other textbooks, library books, reference books or other learning resources to be provided at the expense of the board of education or the conseil scolaire, as the case may be.
- (5) A board of education and the conseil scolaire shall:
- (a) provide school library services; and
  - (b) establish policies and standards governing school libraries.

Teachers believe that government best carries out these roles and obligations by providing the institutional structures and related human and financial resources that are necessary to support professionally led, collaborative efforts in ongoing curriculum renewal.

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*The leadership the Ministry can provide, it is around the broad framework, and doing it in a holistic way. When we look at what's happened in the past, at the discrete areas, we need to keep the holistic vision, including appropriately infusing Indigenous ways of knowing.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Saskatoon meeting*

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**Principle #9 – The Ministry of Education should continue to support teachers in ensuring a variety of pedagogically appropriate learning resources are made readily available so that renewed curricula can be actualized effectively.**

Teachers need ready access to a variety of high-quality learning resources that can be used to meet the goals of a particular curriculum and that also fit Saskatchewan and students' local contexts. A wide range of resources is necessary to support teachers in taking a variety of pedagogical approaches in order to ensure rich student experiences and to better meet students' diverse learning needs.

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*The focus on prepackaged materials in the English language arts curriculum (i.e., the Collections series of basal readers listed as a Core Resource) doesn't honour the importance of local themes the way the very best selections of children's literature can.*

*If we keep Collections as Core, we should absolutely include updated children's literature suggestions and other digital resources as a second option, so that teachers have a supported choice away from prepackaged materials that are expensive and not necessarily best practice.*

*- Participant (University of Saskatchewan), Saskatoon meeting*

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STF Policy 2.1 (Teacher Success) Section 2.1.2 captures this need:

Teaching and learning [are complex processes] that involve social, emotional and cognitive dimensions ... Teachers must have the flexibility, ... [therefore], to try new approaches and learning resources in their work with students. Some of these ... methods may be better suited than others to meet students' educational needs. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, p. 77)

As we begin to focus attention on, and put into place, the types of structures and processes that are necessary for successful ongoing curriculum renewal, all partners in education must clearly understand the need for, and challenges of, sourcing, creating, testing, evaluating, approving and purchasing learning resources.

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*In the recent science renewal, the government funded learning resources development. We created our own resources for our elementary science programs. These made-in-Saskatchewan resources are priceless. They have been so successful that other provinces are now using them.*

*- Teacher participant, Saskatoon meeting*

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**Principle #10 – The Ministry of Education should continue to support teachers in implementing renewed curricula by ensuring related ongoing professionally led professional growth opportunities are readily available for all teachers.**

Once a particular curriculum, or curricular area, has been renewed at the provincial level – that is, it has been chosen in relation to the province's overall goals, evaluated, written, resourced, vetted, piloted and rewritten – it must be implemented across the province.

Implementation of a renewed provincial curriculum means that individual teachers must have a chance to learn about the renewed curriculum – and there are many things to learn. It is not simply about discovering if there is any new content that is expected to be taught. Teachers must explore whether there are new foundations and pedagogies incorporated, how it may differ from previous curricula, past and possible new learning resources that might or might not fit, and how it relates to or sequences with other curricula. They also need to examine how to plan for the year and the units they will use, revise or create, and whether there is a need to create or adapt resources for their own personal professional practice.

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*We need to understand that curriculum is the total bundle of student experiences, not a document.*

*So, it is what the teacher brings, what the student brings, what the culture of the school is. Professional development is an important part of this.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), Prince Albert meeting*

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Opportunities and time for teachers to do this professional work must, therefore, be available if curriculum renewal efforts are to be successful. These opportunities must bring a provincial-level perspective for consistency in dissemination and for generating shared understandings. They must also be ongoing and not simply a “one-time” opportunity offered immediately upon the adoption of a renewed curriculum.

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*Professional development is needed for teachers to implement curriculum. How do we ensure that?*

*- Participant (school board member), Saskatoon meeting*

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STF Policy 2.1 (Teacher Success) Section 2.1.3 captures this need:

Key supports that are expected by teachers as they carry out their professional responsibilities include ... designated time, teaching resources, opportunities for professional reflection and growth, and other supports, as identified by the teaching profession, that enable teachers to create and maintain a learning environment that meets students' diverse educational needs. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, p. 78)

Additionally, STF Policy 2.6 (Professional Growth) Section 2.6.2 emphasizes that:

- (1) Teachers' professional growth benefits teaching and learning and contributes to the betterment of the teaching profession as a whole.
- (3) Teachers have the ability and responsibility to self-direct their professional growth and expect the autonomy necessary to exercise their professional judgment in related decision-making at both group and individual levels.
- (5) Consistent and meaningful access to high-quality professional learning opportunities is fundamental to teachers' continued professional growth.
- (6) The creation of opportunities for teachers' professional growth is a shared responsibility among teachers, school boards and the provincial government that depends critically upon the provision of time, resources and other necessary supports for teachers.

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, p. 82)

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*Over my career I've seen professional development [for renewed curricula] anywhere from some to none.*

*Professional development is necessary for teachers to actualize the curricula, to make it come alive.*

*Teachers do not want to leave the classroom. It is a lot of [extra] work to leave the classroom. We need to make it worth their while with meaningful professional development. Teachers need time with the new curricula, for preparing teaching materials and strategies prior to the implementation of the curriculum.*

*- Teacher participant, Regina meeting*

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# The Work of Teachers

**Principle #11 – The Ministry of Education should ensure provincially co-ordinated curriculum renewal structures and processes are put in place that serve as an avenue for the further strengthening of both the teaching profession and the education system as a whole in Saskatchewan.**

The work of teachers, as professionals, goes far beyond what may be directly observable within a classroom or school environment. In addition to the planning, preparing, assessing, communicating, co-ordinating, volunteering, administering, directing and other work-related activities teachers routinely carry out for the benefit of their students, Saskatchewan teachers also contribute to maintaining and building their profession for the benefit of the education system as a whole and the public more generally.

These obligations to the profession and to the public not only stem from individual teachers' inherent commitments they make upon assuming the role of professional teacher, they also stem from teachers' collective mandate granted through legislation.

For example, according to *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006*, among the legislated purposes of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation are:

- 5(b) to carry on activities, in a manner consistent with the public interest, that improve:
  - (i) the quality of education; and
  - (ii) the delivery of educational support for and by teachers;
- (d) to promote the cause of education;
- (e) to raise the status of the teaching profession;

Individually, by assuming the role of professional teacher within Saskatchewan's publicly funded public education system, teachers commit to a Code of Ethics. Among these commitments are:

- 6.3.3 To make the teaching profession attractive in ideals and practices so that people will desire to enter it.
- 6.3.10 To develop teaching practices that recognize and accommodate diversity within the classroom, the school and the community.
- 6.3.11 To respect the right of students to form their own judgments based upon knowledge.
- 6.3.13 To seek to meet the needs of students by designing the most appropriate learning experiences for them.
- 6.3.14 To implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, taking into account the context for teaching and learning provided by students, the school and the community.
- 6.3.20 To protect the educational program from exploitation.

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, pp. 41-42)

As a final example, STF Policy 2.10 (Teaching and Learning) states:

2.10.2(6) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:

- (a) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in curriculum development, implementation and renewal.
- (b) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in the development of student evaluation, assessment and achievement goals, targets, policies and/or strategies at all levels of the education system.
- (c) Exercise professional judgment, autonomy and agency with respect to the carrying out of their duties for the benefit and well-being of students.
- (d) Engage in ongoing professional growth and advocate for it to be both supported and encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016b, p. 85)

For these reasons, Saskatchewan teachers support the government in establishing provincial-level curriculum renewal structures and processes that will allow teachers to meet both their legislated mandate and their professional aspirations.

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*Before we talk about subjects we need the province to develop a clear process. The idea that we will begin and end curriculum development is wrong headed. It needs to be an ongoing process. Every few years, a new subject is renewed. Then teachers can include it, no problem.*

*I know from a new government perspective, that it is kind of hard because each government wants to put its own stamp on things. Well, you can still have your stamp, but within an ongoing process.*

*- Teacher participant, Saskatoon meeting*

*Adding to that, a student will go through a cycle, 12 or 13 years ... Can we do this [renewal] on a 12 or 15 year cycle? Take language arts, for example, do the renewal over 12 years, then take a couple years to reflect?*

*That would be brilliant for the government to take on, to establish. Everywhere else they'd be looking to our system. You'd always know exactly where you are in the cycle.*

*- Teacher participant, Saskatoon meeting*

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Finally, the crucial importance of curriculum renewal structures and processes having a provincial-level focus must again be emphasized. At the Regina consultation meeting, four requirements emerged during discussion, and were supported by participants, as necessary for provincewide curriculum renewal processes to be sound and to have long-term success:

- (1) Renewal of curriculum requires a solid plan for implementation over a period of years or it will falter.
- (2) Facilitation and leadership by teachers is necessary.
- (3) Testing by students and parents during pilot phases is necessary.
- (4) Funds need to be designated for curriculum development as well as for professional learning and growth.

Without the latter, school divisions and teachers will not have the time, resources and supports that are necessary to be able to contribute fully to curriculum renewal and actualization.

# A Sustainable Curriculum Renewal Process

**Principle #12 – The Ministry of Education should ensure that grade- or subject-specific curriculum renewal structures and processes “talk to” the newly established curricular foundation renewal structures and processes.**

In this document and in the Ministry of Education’s recent consultation meetings, the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and several of its individual members have expressed the voice of teachers with respect to the principles that are necessary for provincial curriculum renewal efforts to be successful in both the near and longer term.

There are two major components within an entire system of curriculum development that have recently been referred to as “the what” and “the how” of curriculum renewal. Much of this document has so far been referring to “the what” of curriculum renewal. It has been focused on the overarching structures, processes, strategies and principles that are necessary at the provincial and cross-sector level to address high-level concerns, interests and questions.

Consideration must also be given to “the how” of curriculum renewal – the structures and processes that are necessary to address the more specific or detailed concerns, interests and questions related to the renewal of a specific provincial curriculum or set of provincial curricula.

First, and perhaps most importantly, those who are professionally engaged in “the how” processes must be able to communicate back and forth with those who are professionally engaged in “the what” processes. The two structures, and their established respective processes, should not be entirely separate or “siloed.” This is of paramount importance because when provincial curricula or sets of curricula are being renewed, they should not be renewed as “one-off” items or be done in an ad hoc or piecemeal fashion. They must be renewed in relation to the overarching foundations and in a way that supports and resources the long-term plans that are established by “the what” processes. If this does not happen, then much effort will be wasted and, unfortunately, curriculum renewal will not be successful.

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*I'm a non-educator in this room, so I'm speaking from my perspective as a trustee and a parent. Keep using professionals. The writers they are using are professionals and write great curricula. It seems [though] that we are just doing everything piece meal.*

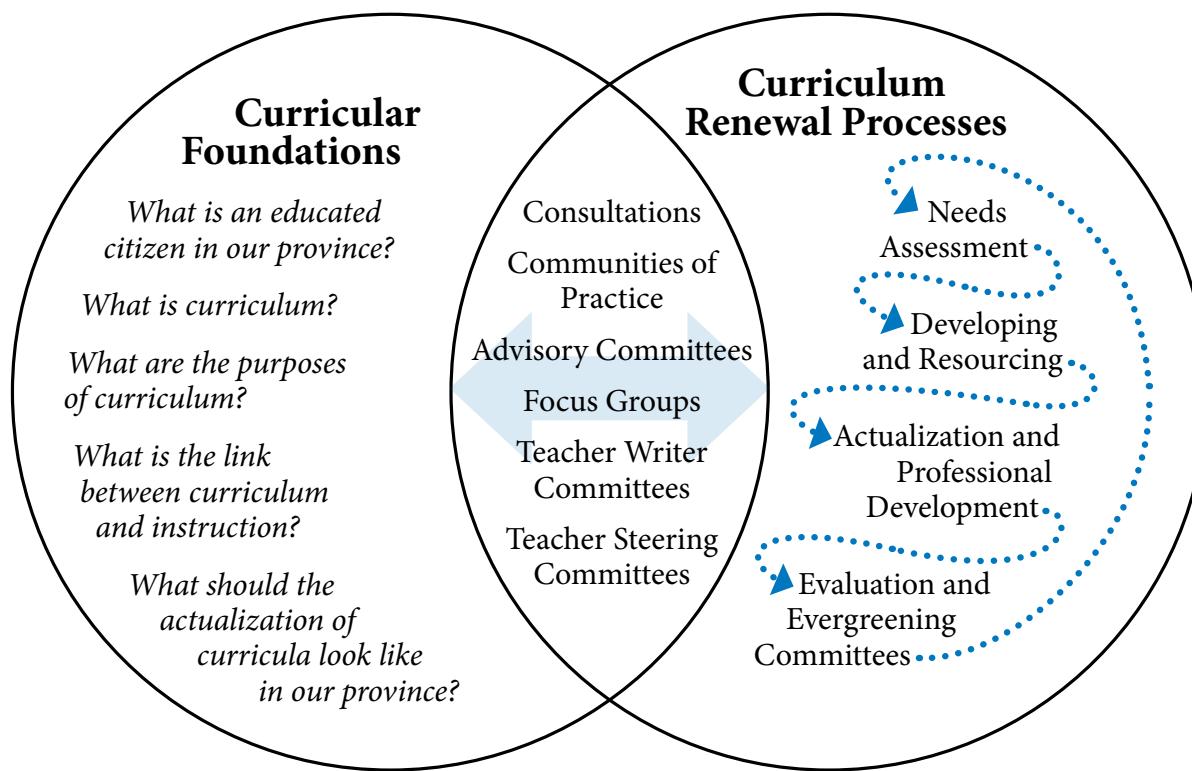
*The Ministry needs to start looking at the future. Not just this year or five years. We need to look down the road, 15 years, 20 years, and put a plan in place.*

*- Participant (Saskatchewan School Boards Association), Regina meeting*

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# Simultaneous Work of Curriculum Renewal

For Saskatchewan teachers, curriculum renewal in the province involves two interconnected bodies of work. One body of work explores and articulates curricular foundations (i.e., “the what”) and the other body of work attends to the development of specific and flexible curriculum renewal processes (i.e., “the how”).



## Foundations Work

As has been articulated already, it is necessary to establish a structure to facilitate curricular foundations work in the province. Exploring and articulating curricular foundations involves representatives from across the sector and members of the public engaging deeply in deliberations on higher-level curricular questions. Some early foundational questions may be:

- What is an educated citizen in our province?
- What is curriculum?
- What are the purposes of curriculum?
- What is the link between curriculum and instruction?
- What should the actualization of curricula look like in our province?

The results of these deliberations provide guidance, advice and direction to those engaged in curriculum renewal work.

## **Curriculum Renewal Processes**

Curriculum renewal processes are responsive to curriculum foundations work. Curriculum renewal work involves practicing teachers and Indigenous leaders at all steps and phases of the curriculum development and implementation process and also involves other educational and community partners throughout.

It is important to emphasize that while the results of renewal efforts will support the Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2014-20, the Plan should not be the sole force driving the direction that curriculum renewal efforts take. The desires and goals expressed in the plan should be considered together with the actual and desired states of Saskatchewan curricula to provide overall direction and guidance for more specific curriculum renewal efforts, planning and staging. In other words, curriculum renewal will support enduring strategies to achieve the short- and long-term outcomes of the plan, including culturally relevant and engaging curriculum, differentiated and high-quality instruction, and culturally appropriate and authentic assessment.

# Moving Forward

**Principle #13 – The Ministry of Education should bring together cross-sector educational leaders for committed dialogue with respect to putting teachers' curriculum renewal principles into provincial-level action in a timely, effective, efficient and sustainable fashion.**

The Federation and its over 13,000 members have a proven history of leadership, partnership, collaboration and accomplishment in support of student learning and teacher success in our province.

The Federation respectfully offers in this submission to the Ministry of Education 13 principles that teachers believe will support a successful system of ongoing provincial curriculum renewal. The perspective, principles and advice that Saskatchewan teachers offer are based upon many years of professional research, experience and practice that inform the Federation's policy base.

Working collaboratively with Saskatchewan's Indigenous and Métis communities, the Ministry and other community and educational partners, Saskatchewan's teachers seek to lead, facilitate and participate in provincial curriculum renewal efforts.

The degree of success of curriculum reform and implementation depends on the depth and genuineness of the involvement of teachers and, indeed, upon the level of leadership teachers can assume. (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2016a, p. 2)

Saskatchewan teachers are deeply committed to curriculum renewal and look forward to both strengthened partnerships and collaboration as all of us continue to strive for improvements to public education in Saskatchewan.

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# **APPENDIX A**

## **Summary of Principles for Curriculum Renewal in Saskatchewan**

1. A collaborative system of curriculum renewal should reflect our successful professionally led practices of the past.
2. Saskatchewan teachers should have a leadership role at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum development, implementation and actualization.
3. An enduring inclusive cross-sector body with appropriate representation and leadership should be established for reviewing and reaffirming our curricular foundations and for determining signposts, criteria and strategies that will ensure ongoing curriculum renewal efforts are successful.
4. Reaffirmed, refreshed and rearticulated curricular foundations are necessary that appropriately consider, and are reflective of, Saskatchewan's current contexts, realities, needs and commitments to First Nations and Métis peoples.
5. Curricular foundations, frameworks, structures and processes should consistently infuse and rely upon Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous community leadership.
6. Curriculum should continue to be understood as experiential and relational in nature, which is enacted within and dependent upon the teaching and learning environments that teachers create.
7. Curriculum should continue to have a place for specific desired content situated within a coherent educational framework at all levels of curricula (including subjects, subject areas, cross-curricular goals and overarching foundations).
8. The Ministry of Education should continue to meet its legislated mandate for providing teachers, students and the public with well-researched and well-thought-out curricula.
9. The Ministry of Education should continue to support teachers in ensuring a variety of pedagogically appropriate learning resources are made readily available so that renewed curricula can be actualized effectively.
10. The Ministry of Education should continue to support teachers in implementing renewed curricula by ensuring related ongoing professionally led professional growth opportunities are readily available for all teachers.
11. The Ministry of Education should ensure provincially co-ordinated curriculum renewal structures and processes are put in place that serve as an avenue for the further strengthening of both the teaching profession and the education system as a whole in Saskatchewan.
12. The Ministry of Education should ensure that grade- or subject-specific curriculum renewal structures and processes “talk to” the newly established curricular foundation renewal structures and processes.
13. The Ministry of Education should bring together cross-sector educational leaders for committed dialogue with respect to putting teachers' curriculum renewal principles into provincial level action in a timely, effective, efficient and sustainable fashion.

# APPENDIX B

## Related Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Policies

### **Goals of Publicly Funded Education**

#### **Definition**

Publicly funded education refers to the provincially funded education system, as defined by *The Education Act, 1995*. Basic principles underlying publicly funded education are that the system is universally accessible and inclusive, funding is a societal responsibility, and the system is governed by elected representatives who are accountable to the public. The goals of publicly funded education provide an important context for teaching and learning, and for the professional growth of teachers.

#### **Beliefs**

##### **(1) General**

- (a) Publicly funded education is intended to meet the educational needs of all children in a society.
- (b) Publicly funded education must recognize and respect diversity among students, staff and communities, and must be committed to promoting equity within schools and society.
- (c) Publicly funded education must shape and enrich the character and life opportunities of each student.
- (d) The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports the curriculum-related Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1984), as established by the provincial Ministry responsible for PreK-12 education through a public consultation process. These goals affirm a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education which will prepare students to become knowledgeable, caring and responsible citizens.

##### **(2) Processes to Define and Revise Goals**

- (a) The goals and curriculum of publicly funded education should have sufficient flexibility to balance provincial as well as local interests and needs.
- (b) The goals and direction of publicly funded education are best defined and revised through processes in which the interests of all stakeholders are heard and considered.
- (c) Teachers must have a central role in the processes used to define and revise the goals and direction of publicly funded education.

##### **(3) Responsibilities and Supports**

- (a) Although publicly funded education has a central role in meeting the educational needs of students, the general well-being of children is a collective responsibility that is shared among the home, school and community.
- (b) Teachers have a responsibility to model decision-making values and practices that are associated with democratic societies.
- (c) Teachers, in carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, should be active supporters of publicly funded education.

(2001)

## **Teaching and Learning**

### **Definition**

Teaching and learning are complex, dynamic and interdependent processes through which teachers facilitate students' growth along cognitive, social and emotional dimensions.

### **Beliefs**

- (1) Teaching and learning occurs within many different contexts. Teachers share the responsibility with students, parents, communities and partners in education to provide conditions that are necessary and appropriate for teaching and learning to be holistic, equitable and effective.
- (2) Holistic, equitable and effective teaching and learning is grounded in a relationship of mutual respect, acceptance and trust among teachers and students. It is a deeply personal human endeavour that is enhanced by the cultivation of such relationships.
- (3) Teaching and learning should be guided by sound educational research identified by the teaching profession, the Saskatchewan curricula, professional standards and ideals, and professional judgment with respect to students' well-being.
- (4) The primary professional goal of teachers is to create learning opportunities that support and encourage students to grow individually and collectively to the greatest extent possible. To meet this goal, it is understood that:
  - (a) A variety of planned formal instructional strategies and informal interactions are necessary and desirable for encouraging individual and collective growth.
  - (b) Valuable learning opportunities can arise spontaneously, often as a result of informal interactions and the strong relationships forged among teachers and students.
  - (c) The creation and capturing of both planned and spontaneous learning opportunities depends upon teachers having considerable flexibility and freedom in their work with students.
- (5) An essential part of teaching and learning is the provision of timely and appropriate feedback, which includes student evaluation and assessment processes.
- (6) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in curriculum development, implementation and renewal.
  - (b) Advocate for a central role for teachers and the profession in the development of student evaluation, assessment and achievement goals, targets, policies and/or strategies at all levels of the education system.
  - (c) Exercise professional judgment, autonomy and agency with respect to the carrying out of their duties for the benefit and well-being of students.
  - (d) Engage in ongoing professional growth and advocate for it to be both supported and encouraged to the greatest extent possible.

(2015)

## **Indigenous Education**

### **Definitions**

Indigenous peoples of Canada are the first inhabitants of the land and their modern descendants, which include Aboriginal peoples of First Nation, Métis and Inuit ancestry.

Indigenous education cultivates holistic understanding of knowledge, the land, communities and all relations while emphasizing that Indigenous ways of knowing are foundational to teaching and learning.

### **Beliefs**

- (1) Indigenous histories, teachings and stories must be included in curricula at all levels to ensure all students develop understandings of complex Indigenous cultures, customs, languages and knowledge.
- (2) Education can be a form of reconciliation through a focus on restorative justice, healing and other holistic healing initiatives.
- (3) Indigenous peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of Canadian society, are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals, and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination particularly that based on their Indigenous origin or identity.
- (4) Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination including the opportunity to control and lead the development of education legislation, systems, policies, research, and teaching and assessment practices that affect, and are reflective of, their diverse communities.
- (5) Education must respect the sovereign and sacred relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown, as represented by the Government of Canada, and the rights and responsibilities established under treaties and other constitutional agreements.
- (6) Indigenous children and youth have the right to equitable access to publicly funded education resources and services that are responsive to their needs.
- (7) Indigenous children and youth have the right to see the unique social and cultural context of their experiences, their world views and cultural norms reflected in the classroom and education system in positive ways.
- (8) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Are self-reflective about their own attitudes and beliefs shaped by colonialist discourses in doing healing work.
  - (b) Embrace holistic Indigenous educational practices as foundational to ongoing curriculum development and promote the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages, history, heritage, perspectives and ways of knowing to all students as a means to preserve the continuity and growth of Indigenous cultures and communities.
  - (c) Respect and recognize the intellectual property and communal rights of Indigenous peoples to their hereditary knowledge by securing the appropriate consent of the Indigenous individual or community that shared any information to be used in teaching and learning materials.
  - (d) Engage with and support Indigenous students, parents, caregivers, Elders and communities in culturally sensitive and appropriate relationships to identify and work to eliminate racism and discrimination in schools, and to enhance teachers' professional practice with better understandings of Indigenous cultures.
  - (e) Engage with and support Indigenous pre-service teachers and teachers, who must be treated equitably in all aspects of education but often experience additional challenges including racism and discrimination.

(2015)

## Cultural Diversity and Language

### Definitions

Culture refers to the knowledge, beliefs, customs, morals, understandings, language and habits that are acquired by a person as a member of a societal group.

Cultural diversity is the existence of a plurality of cultures within the province as recognized in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Indigenous languages are the languages spoken by the First Peoples of this land.

Heritage languages are languages that are connected to the early settlement of the province.

### Beliefs

#### Cultural Diversity

- (1) Cultural diversity is a recognized fact in Canadian life and acknowledged both by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and other legislation.
- (2) Cultural diversity contributes to the richness of Canadian society.
- (3) People of all cultures are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals, and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination based on their cultural origins or identities.
- (4) Language is a primary medium through which culture is expressed and transmitted since culture is embedded in language.
- (5) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Are self-reflective about their own attitudes and beliefs in modeling respect and affirming of cultural diversity.
  - (b) Engage with and support students, families and communities in culturally sensitive and appropriate relationships to identify and work to eliminate racism, colonialism and discrimination in schools, and to enhance teachers' professional practice with better understandings of diverse cultures.
  - (c) Engage in meaningful dialogue within classrooms, schools, communities and society that explores the rich diversity of cultural differences and personal histories experienced by students and staff, and encourages transcultural learnings.

#### Language

- (1) Canada is a bilingual country within a culturally diverse framework as outlined by applicable legislation.
- (2) French education, French immersion and core French programs support the bilingual nature of the country and should be available to all students wanting access.
- (3) Indigenous languages are imperative to nurturing and protecting Indigenous cultures, and both immersion and core Indigenous language programs should be available to all students wanting access.
- (4) Programs, services and supports should be available to students whose primary language is not English or French.
- (5) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Continue to advocate for and support French education, French immersion and core French programs.
  - (b) Recognize the cultural importance of Indigenous languages and advocate for programs to provide Indigenous language instruction to all students wanting access.
  - (c) Advocate for the teaching of heritage and other languages to reduce the loss of fluency in languages other than English and French, and to broaden student exposure to cultural diversity.
  - (d) Advocate to ensure all students who need it have timely access to language programs and supports.

(2015)

## **Professional Growth**

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### **Definition**

Professional growth refers to the change in knowledge, skills, abilities or perspectives resulting from the continuous professional learning that teachers intentionally pursue with the goal to further understand the nature of teaching and learning, enhance professional practice or contribute to the profession.

### **Beliefs**

- (1) Teachers' professional growth benefits teaching and learning and contributes to the betterment of the teaching profession as a whole.
- (2) Professional growth is an inherent part of being a teacher and is an integral part of a teacher's practice.
- (3) Teachers have the ability and responsibility to self-direct their professional growth and expect the autonomy necessary to exercise their professional judgment in related decision-making at both group and individual levels.
- (4) Continuous professional learning should include a broad range of formal, informal and experiential learning opportunities that are planned, meaningful and related to the general duties, responsibilities or aspirations of the teacher.
- (5) Consistent and meaningful access to high-quality professional learning opportunities is fundamental to teachers' continued professional growth.
- (6) The creation of opportunities for teachers' professional growth is a shared responsibility among teachers, school boards and the provincial government that depends critically upon the provision of time, resources and other necessary supports for teachers.
- (7) Therefore, teachers individually and collectively:
  - (a) Support, encourage and provide opportunities for the professional growth of teachers.
  - (b) Advocate for appropriate provision of time, resources and supports for professional growth.
  - (c) Engage in ongoing reflective practice, self-assessment and professional renewal.
  - (d) Engage in continuous professional learning and contribute, where possible and appropriate, to research into teaching and learning.
  - (e) Encourage and support each other in the pursuit of professional growth, the sharing of professional insights and in other collaborative endeavours to improve teaching and learning.
  - (f) Pursue, develop and deliver a broad range of opportunities for professional growth. In addition to one-time formal learning opportunities, teachers engage in innovative, authentic, sustained, relevant, flexible, collaborative and locally embedded professional growth.
  - (g) Support a variety of organizations, networks and services related to teachers' professional growth.

(2015)

## **Teacher Success**

### **Definitions**

Teacher success refers to the degree to which individual teachers attain, within the context of their entire teaching careers, their desired professional goals.

Teacher competence refers to the quality of having an appropriate level of professional knowledge, skill and judgment to carry out specific teaching objectives and other professional responsibilities.

Teacher success is the more encompassing concept in the sense that a successful teacher is necessarily competent, generally speaking. It is also important to understand, however, that an individual may demonstrate an insufficient level of competence in a specific situation (e.g., when faced with a new teaching assignment on short notice), yet continue to be a successful teacher.

### **Preamble**

Teachers recognize the interdependence between their students' success as learners and their own success as professional educators. Although each teacher has a responsibility to offer the best possible learning opportunities for students, no teacher should be expected to fully achieve their professional goals at all times. Teaching and learning, as processes that involve social, emotional and cognitive dimensions, are far too complex to guarantee competence or success in every circumstance. Teachers must have the flexibility, for example, to try new approaches and learning resources in their work with students. Some of these trial and error methods may be better suited than others to meet students' educational needs.

As with individual students, the extent of each teacher's success depends upon a wide range of interconnected contextual factors. Although some of these variables (e.g., career-related decisions) are largely within the teacher's control, many others are not (e.g., the diversity of students' learning needs, health, family situation and so on). It is essential to take this full range of factors into account when there are questions or concerns about a teacher's success generally, or the individual's competence in a specific situation.

Teachers believe that they should be supported to become as competent as possible as they carry out their professional roles, and to become as successful as possible throughout all stages of their careers. Questions or concerns about a specific competence matter should always be addressed within the broader context of teachers' goals and needs as successful professionals.

### **Beliefs**

#### **(1) Teacher Success**

Throughout their careers, individual teachers experience various degrees of success in meeting a range of professional goals and objectives, including the following:

- (a) To conduct professional relationships in ways that are consistent with the principles of equity, fairness and respect for others.
- (b) To create and maintain a learning environment that encourages and supports each student to reach the highest level of individual achievement possible.
- (c) To demonstrate a professional level of knowledge about the curriculum.
- (d) To demonstrate a repertoire of instructional strategies and methods that are applied in teaching activities.
- (e) To have the professional knowledge, skills and judgment to carry out the teacher's responsibility for student assessment and evaluation.
- (f) To reflect, individually and collectively, upon the goals as well as the experience of professional practice, and adapt one's teaching accordingly.

- (g) To work with colleagues in ways that are mutually supportive, and develop to the fullest extent possible effective professional relationships with students, administrators, parents and other members of the educational community.
- (2) **Questionable Practices**
- (a) Legitimate questions or concerns about an individual's teaching practice typically involve situations in which, taking the full context of the practice into consideration, a teacher demonstrates an unacceptably low level of professional knowledge, skill, or judgment, or a disregard for the welfare of the student to an extent that renders the teacher unfit to continue teaching.
- (b) Questionable practices include one or more of the following patterns of conduct in which a teacher:
- (i) Takes no action or makes minimal effort in the face of manifest needs or opportunities to act on behalf of students.
  - (ii) Treats students in an unacceptably unjust or disrespectful manner.
  - (iii) Makes poor decisions and judgments in shaping students' educational experiences.
  - (iv) Persistently fails to implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, or performs at an unacceptably low level in carrying out teaching objectives and other professional responsibilities.
- (3) **Supports for Teacher Success**
- (a) Teacher success should be supported through a broad spectrum of structures, processes and resources, many of which are identified in various Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation bylaws and policies. Key supports that are expected by teachers as they carry out their professional responsibilities include the following:
- (i) Provincial, school division and school-level policies and practices that support and enhance teacher success, and are developed with the direct involvement of teachers.
  - (ii) Employment conditions that are consistent with the teaching profession's understanding of an equitable, ethical, respectful, healthy and safe work environment.
  - (iii) Teaching assignments and other related duties or responsibilities that are commensurate with an individual teacher's professional knowledge, skills and experience, taking into consideration the context in which the teacher works.
  - (iv) Designated time, teaching resources, opportunities for professional reflection and growth, and other supports, as identified by the teaching profession, that enable teachers to create and maintain a learning environment that meets students' diverse educational needs.
- (4) **Accountability for Teacher Success**
- (a) Accountability for teacher success is a responsibility that is shared among key participants in the education system.
- (i) The individual teacher is primarily responsible for:
    - (A) Setting personal goals and objectives for a successful professional practice.
    - (B) Conducting one's professional practice in ways that are consistent with the Code of Ethics, the Standards of Practice, the Code of Collective Interests, and the Federation's policies on teacher success and professional growth.
    - (C) Engaging in career-long personal and professional reflection, and self-directed professional growth opportunities as necessary.
  - (ii) The teaching profession is primarily responsible for addressing, in ways that are consistent with *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006* and the Federation bylaws and policies, situations where there are questionable practices.
  - (iii) The education community as a whole is primarily responsible for ensuring that the supports for teacher success, as identified by the teaching profession, are available and that these supports are revised or expanded as necessary.

(2003)







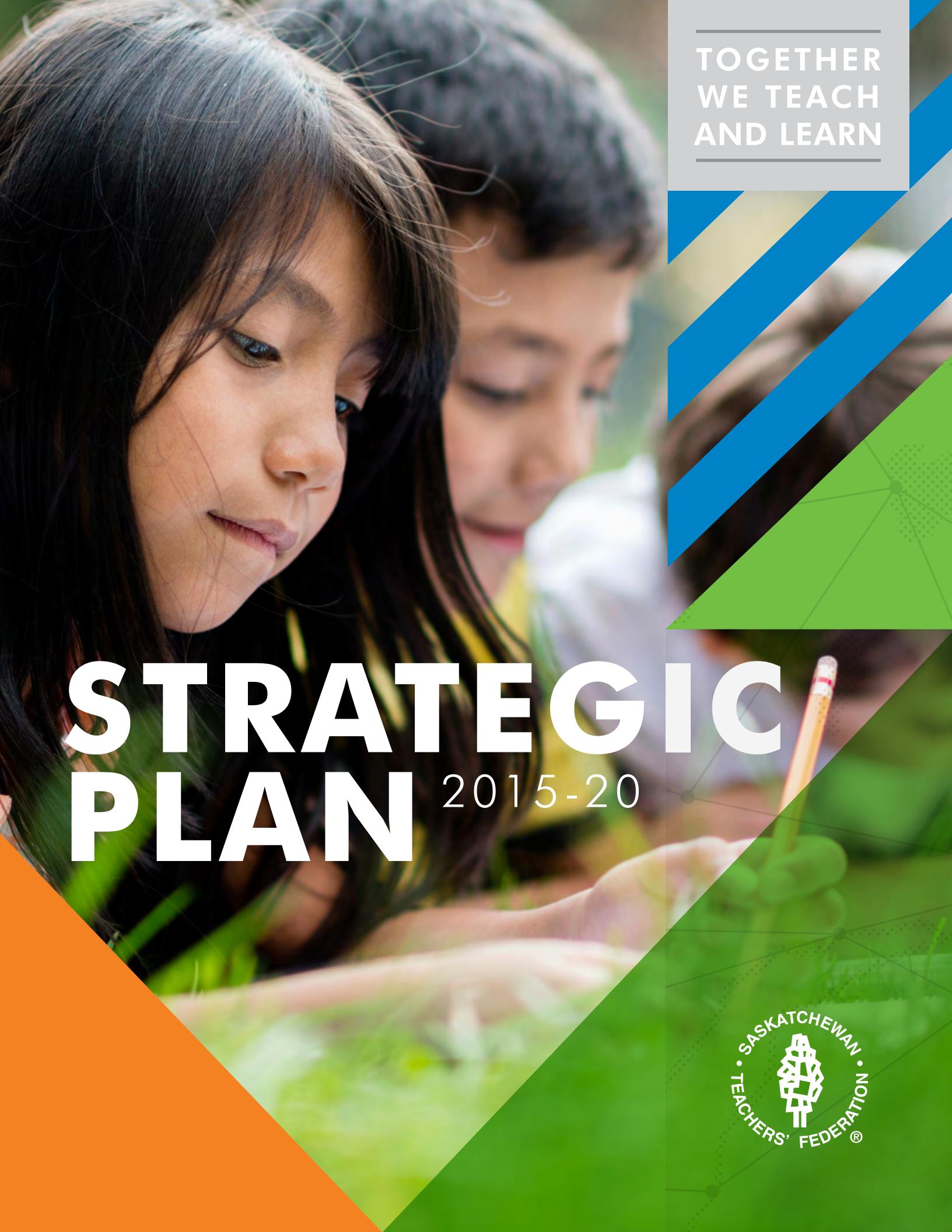
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November 2016



TOGETHER  
WE TEACH  
AND LEARN

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-20





# WHO WE ARE

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has inspired and supported teaching and learning excellence in public education for more than 80 years. We are a professional organization of over 13,000 teachers employed in PreK-12 schools across the province who are trusted and respected leaders and partners in education.

Our professional status brings with it responsibilities, rights and benefits. Working together, we assert a credible voice on behalf of the collective, while attending to individual professional aspirations and needs. Every program, service or resource offered by our Federation reflects the commitment of the

teaching profession and is designed to enhance the well-being and success of teachers as we work diligently to ensure the success of students.

As professionals and leaders in our communities, we strongly believe that publicly funded public education is a common good and a universal right of all children and youth. It is also everyone's responsibility to create a culture in education that places the needs of students first. Because of this, we have a long and storied history of working with others to achieve significant educational and societal change for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.



# WHAT WE DO



The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation receives its mandate through *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006*. We carry on activities, in a manner consistent with the public interest, that improve the quality of education and the delivery of educational support for and by teachers.

**We fulfil our mandate by:**

- Celebrating the accomplishments and championing the rights, interests and well-being of students, teachers, schools and communities.
- Fostering and elevating the highest ideals of teachers and the teaching profession.
- Supporting the lifelong learning of teachers through innovative professional growth.
- Securing conditions that support teachers in providing the best possible professional service.
- Administering pension and benefit plans for the wellness of teachers and their families.
- Governing and administering the affairs of our Federation with integrity.

We embrace and promote a holistic vision of teaching and learning by offering a wide variety of programs, services and resources that support and address teachers' professional learning, economic and personal well-being, and the diverse issues affecting student and teacher success.

# OUR VISION

A strong collective professional voice for Saskatchewan teachers and quality publicly funded public education for the benefit of all students and society.



# OUR MISSION

Inspiring and supporting teaching and learning excellence in public education.

# OUR VALUES



## We are caring.

Nurturing students' well-being and potential and instilling a passion for learning is our calling. We value and practice compassion, acceptance and inclusivity.



## We are learners.

Listening to people share their unique experiences and perspectives informs our service and advocacy. We value and encourage evidence-based decision-making, balance of viewpoint and objectivity.



## We are welcoming.

Connecting with people and building strong and enduring relationships is our pride and purpose. We value and invite participation, collaboration and collegiality.



## We are teachers.

Empowering others to make informed decisions is our duty. Researching and sharing information is one part of the transformational work of teaching. We value and promote knowledge, freedom of thought and creativity.



## We are respectful.

Honouring diversity and creating a sense of safety, openness and belonging is our responsibility. We value and model ethical behaviour, integrity and civility.



## We are professionals.

Fulfilling commitments and putting student needs first is informed by our professional knowledge, judgment and experience, and is the foundation of the public's trust in our profession. We value and lead through fairness, openness and honesty.

# OUR COMMITMENTS



As leaders in classrooms and communities across Saskatchewan, we believe in promoting and demonstrating our commitment to the well-being of students, creating a just society and elevating the status of our profession. As described in the following four themes, these commitments inform everything that our Federation does today. As we focus on the strategic priorities included in this plan, each of these four areas will serve as a lens for operational planning and decision-making to ensure that our programs, services and resources are reflective and supportive of these commitments.

## Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity

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A commitment to provide a public education that:

- Recognizes and respects every child or youth's diversity, enriches their character and prepares them for life's opportunities and challenges.
- Is based on a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education that prepares children and youth to become confident, creative and caring individuals while gaining valuable experience and knowledge to fuel future endeavours.
- Is accessible and equitable for all children and youth, regardless of their circumstances or learning potential.
- Serves a common good that is beneficial to all of society, not just to the students currently enrolled. Schools are a source of community and provincial pride which greatly contribute to the quality of all our lives.



## Respectful Relationships

A commitment to model positive values, practices and relationships that:

- Honour the dignity and roles of all individuals in the educational community and elevate the status of the teaching profession.
- Create a uniquely Saskatchewan experience in public education marked by a co-operative spirit and healthy relationships.
- Strengthen relationships with parents, communities, colleagues, employers and government in order to support student and teacher success.

## Professional Responsibility

A commitment to engage in exemplary practices that:

- Demonstrate high standards of care, conduct and competence to ensure the well-being and growth of all children and youth.
- Create classroom and school cultures, which respect individual diversity, create a sense of belonging, and promote intellectual freedom and sharing by all.
- Exercise professional autonomy and agency focused on authenticated teaching and learning activities with students.
- Adapt and evolve through reflection, lifelong learning and collegiality.

## Professional Stewardship

A commitment to act on shared understandings and agreements that:

- Support student and teacher success by addressing a wide range of issues and needs regarding teacher professionalism and the quality of education.
- Assure public confidence and trust in professionally led systems and standards of teacher conduct and competence.
- Ensure all teachers have working conditions and professional opportunities that will attract, nurture and retain individuals who are committed to providing high-quality public service.

# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES





# Teaching and Learning

Publicly funded public education is a universal right of every child and youth. Education must be equitable, accessible and holistic to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers require the necessary time, resources and supports to provide the best quality education to all students.

## Goals

- Inspire and engage teachers and our partners in education in a sector-wide renewal of the vision for PreK-12 public education in Saskatchewan.
- Expand and enhance opportunities for teacher-led research, professional learning and collegial networks and conversations that support and affirm teachers as pedagogical experts and leaders in education.
- Promote teaching and learning processes and activities that are student-centred, inclusive and appropriately resourced.

## Indicators of Success

- Understanding of and commitment to the common good of public education and the benefits it brings to children, youth and all of society in the education sector and beyond.
- Recognition of and commitment to teachers as experts and leaders in education.
- Teacher influence and leadership in developing their own individual professional learning plans and in the renewal and development of curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and other professional supports.
- Quality and accessible teaching and learning research, resources, supports and communities to empower teachers throughout the many phases of their professional lives.
- Collaborative approaches to teaching and learning among students, teachers, families and communities.
- Culturally responsive teaching practices that foster students' sense of belonging and improve teaching and learning outcomes.
- A shared vision for public education in the province that includes common priorities, processes and initiatives.

# Public, Member and Stakeholder Relations

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Teachers rely upon healthy relationships with students, parents, colleagues, employers and members of the public to achieve their professional aspirations and influence the direction of our Federation and the publicly funded public education system. Open and transparent communications among all of the partners in education builds trust and leads to meaningful and purposeful collaboration and problem solving.

## Goals

- Promote and enhance public trust and respect in teachers, the teaching profession and our Federation.
- Foster and enrich member relations and opportunities for engagement in Federation activities, services and programs.
- Build and strengthen relationships with individuals and organizations in the education community.

## Indicators of Success

- Recognition and celebration of the contributions of teachers, the teaching profession and our Federation to the cultural, social and economic well-being of Saskatchewan and its citizens.
- Understanding of the broad mandate and accomplishments of teachers, the teaching profession and our Federation within the educational community and beyond.
- Federation and member engagement in public relations that build public understanding of and support for publicly funded public education, teachers and the teaching profession.
- Member input and feedback into the planning, development and implementation of Federation activities, programs and services.
- Member awareness of and involvement in Federation activities, services and programs.
- Relationships with individuals and organizations in the education sector and beyond that are respectful and mutually beneficial.



## Teacher Success

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Central to the education of children and youth is the quality of the learning environment and the relationships established among students, parents and teachers. To ensure student success, teachers must be engaged, empowered and supported in their professional practice and places of employment.

### Goals

- Express teachers' collective voice on issues in education through deliberate advocacy and enhanced external relations within and beyond the education sector.
- Advise and represent members on a variety of educational, professional and employment matters to enable teacher advocacy for their students and their own professional needs.
- Advance the needs of teachers and the teaching profession through collective bargaining and partnerships with education stakeholders.

### Indicators of Success

- Influence and impact by teachers, the teaching profession and our Federation on public policy, funding of the PreK-12 education system and other issues related to student and teacher success.
- Awareness and recognition of the issues affecting the teaching and learning environment that contribute to student and teacher success.
- Timely, integrated and effective Federation advocacy priorities and activities that engage and support teachers as advocates as well.
- Professional learning opportunities for teachers to improve our capacity to build mutually beneficial relationships and advocate for personal and professional change.
- Timely and accessible resources, information and supports to assist members on a variety of professional and employment issues.
- Well-researched and strategic collective bargaining processes and strategies.



## Teacher Well-Being

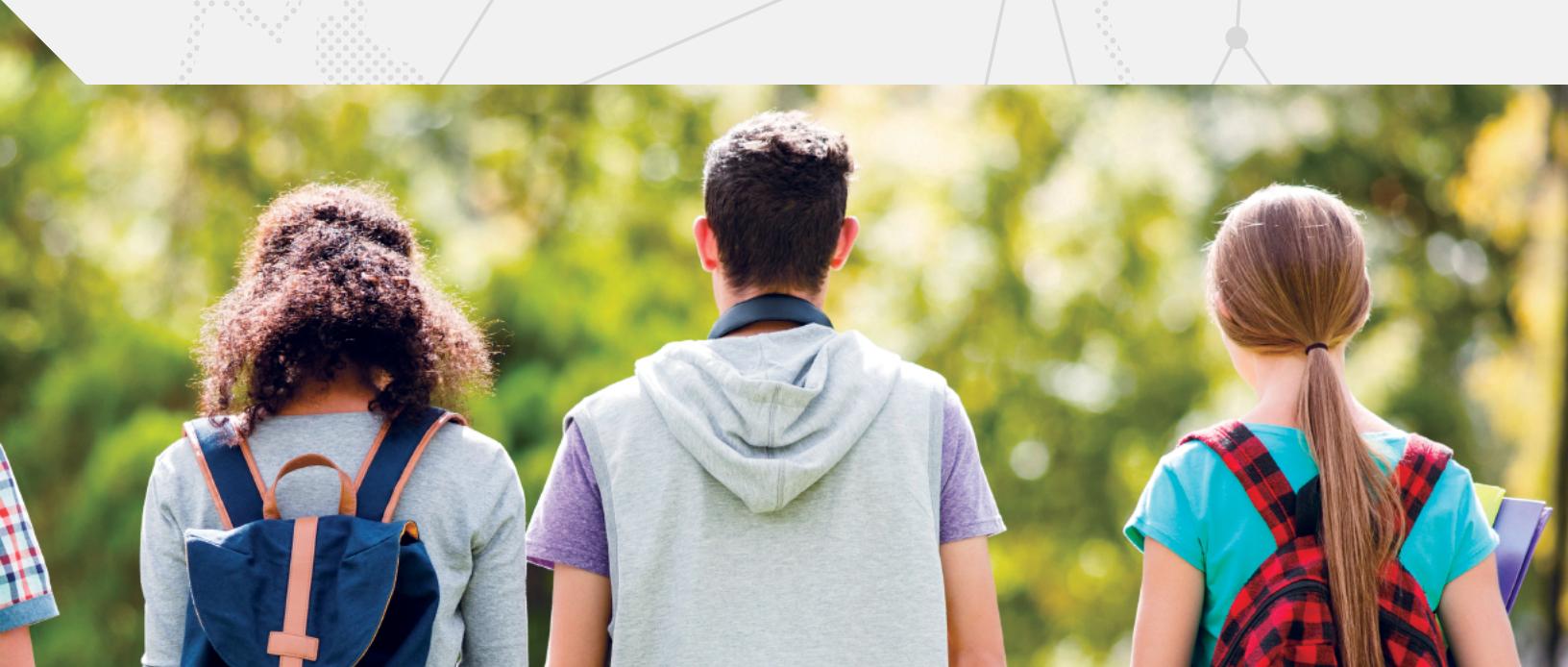
Pension and benefit plans are important means to support the health, wellness and financial security of teachers and their families. The sound and fair administration of these programs ensures the sustainability of these benefits for plan members and participants.

### Goals

- Enhance members' awareness of and experiences in accessing benefit plan services and programs.
- Manage and address risks to the economic sustainability and stability of the benefit plans through sound financial management and oversight of investment services.
- Focus on the continued renewal and, if appropriate, expansion of the pension and benefit plans administered by our Federation.

### Indicators of Success

- Understanding of the total value and benefit of teacher retirement and health, life and disability insurance benefits created and administered by our Federation.
- Accessible and personalized member access to information, claims processes, calculators and other tools for all of the benefit plans.
- Investment administration, monitoring and diversification that results in reduced risks and increased returns for our Federation's investment funds.
- Removal of barriers to access all types of teacher benefits and related information and claims processes for members.



## Governance

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The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is governed by teachers for teachers in a manner that reflects the public's high expectations and trust of the teaching profession. Principles of transparency and integrity are foundational to our Federation's governance policies, processes and structures and are essential to organizational accountability and sustainability.

### Goals

- Enhance and strengthen the interconnectedness of our Federation's governance structure.
- Engage in strategic planning, risk management and collaborative renewal processes to ensure organizational sustainability and fulfil our Federation's fiduciary roles and responsibilities.
- Elevate awareness and understanding of governance roles and responsibilities at all levels through expanded supports, resources and communications strategies.

### Indicators of Success

- Renewed legislative, bylaw and policy framework that positively positions our Federation for the future.
- Understanding of the complex governance structure of our Federation and the foundational aspects that ensure distributed and shared leadership, trusteeship and stewardship for its activities and assets.
- Trust and confidence among all parts of our Federation's governance structure and the members and public whose interests it serves.
- Active participation by members and diversity of membership in all governance structures and engagement opportunities.
- Strategic planning and decision-making processes that consider and include diverse viewpoints and deliberate risk analysis and management.
- Collaborative communication processes among Federation governance and administrative bodies.
- Clarity about the roles and responsibilities of local association leaders, councillors, STF Executive members and administrative staff.
- Sustainable and effective financial and human resources for our Federation through ongoing strategic planning and prioritizing.



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# Supporting the Principalship in Saskatchewan Schools

The release of the *Educational Governance Review Report* in December 2016, presents an opportunity for key stakeholders in the education sector to explore and work collaboratively for improvements to the delivery of education in Saskatchewan. Together, the partners in education can ensure equitable access to high quality publicly funded public education for all children and youth today and in the years to come.

In fulfilling its legislated mandate, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has maintained that prior to the adoption of any educational change decisions, serious and careful thought be given to the extent to which the reform will impact the role of teachers and principals in meeting the needs of the school community. Over the years, the Federation has fostered the development of meaningful and collaborative teacher-principal-community relationships in its services and programs as well as through the organization's policies – most notably STF policies 2.1 (Teacher Success) and 2.2 (Principalship Success).

At the heart of the school community is the principal who establishes an effective learning environment that is unique and responsive to the local context. The 2016 *Educational Governance Review Report* acknowledges the diversity of student needs and refers to the importance of "preserving and strengthening parent and community voice."<sup>1</sup> Research confirms the significant role of the principal in achieving successful outcomes for students and further, that the relationship between the principal and the school community is a critical element of that success.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this submission is to reiterate the Federation's commitment to principalship success and to outline a proposal for professional development for the principal as a key leader for learning in Saskatchewan's schools. The Federation's long standing responsibility to and support for its members, including principals and vice-principals, is endorsed by both legislation and organizational policy. The Federation is seen by key stakeholders in the education sector as a credible and respected advocate for principals as catalysts for effective teaching and learning in schools across the province.

The creation of a renewed professional development program for principals facilitated by the Federation that is informed by, and reflective of, the sector's vision for effective teaching and learning would strengthen the ability of schools to respond to the diverse learning needs of students.

<sup>1</sup> Perrins, D., 2016, p. 22

<sup>2</sup> Leithwood et al., 1999, 2005.

## The Changing Role of the Principal

The principalship is an “increasingly multifaceted and complex” role.<sup>3</sup> Principals require an array of skills to fulfil their multiple responsibilities as leaders for their school and community. The STF policy on principalship success reinforces much of what is found in research on educational leadership and recognizes the principal as a teacher with broad responsibilities associated with being the formal educational leader at a level closest to the communities that they serve.

Principals are responsible for setting personal goals and objectives for successful professional practice while considering the particular teaching and learning environment, and the needs of students, teachers and the school.<sup>4</sup>

The role of principal, including vice principals, involves creating and assuring an environment conducive to student learning, collegial dialogue, high-quality teaching, staff development and that an effective alignment of resources with academic goals exists within the school community.

Research studies at both the national and international level attest to the fact that among school-related influences on student learning, leadership is second only in importance to classroom instruction.<sup>5</sup> Further, studies show that schools, and ultimately the classroom, are the point at which initial change occurs and goals for student success can be effectively facilitated and achieved by ensuring that the unit of change, the classroom, is properly resourced and led by effective professional teachers.<sup>6</sup>

The 2014 Report on the Future of the Principalship in Canada as well as consultations highlighted in the 2014 Student First Engagement Discussion Guide confirmed the diversity of school communities across Canada and Saskatchewan. Regardless of context, the conflation of societal change and role complexity requires principals, as the formal administrative and instructional leader in the school, to understand and manifest a wide array of leadership skills to facilitate and sustain successful teaching and learning across the school community.

In Saskatchewan, as elsewhere, geographical circumstances and contextual variations can significantly influence the nature of a principalship role. As decisions about and responsibilities for meeting the needs of the school context shift more to the local level, principals require the skills to work effectively with school community councils and staff to address the diverse needs of students. Leadership for successful teaching and learning requires principals to exercise professional judgment, influenced by relevant and informed research and a deep understanding of the specific school community.

Building principal leadership capacity, both individually and collectively, requires a broad range of professional growth opportunities so that teachers who take on this role can perform their administrative, instructional and other leadership duties at the required level to effectively serve teaching colleagues, communities, students and Saskatchewan’s public education system. This evolving role necessitates a change in the professional supports currently offered to school leaders.

*Regardless of school size, the principal's actions, decisions and interactions undoubtedly have a profound influence on the teaching and learning in the classroom."*

Macleod, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Association of Principals and the Alberta Teachers Association, 2014. p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Section 2.2.2 (2), STF Policy 2.2 (Principalship Success).

<sup>5</sup> Leithwood et al., 1999, 2005; Robinson, Hohepha, & Lloyd, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Bishop, 2012; Wiliams, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## **The Principalship – A Conceptual Model<sup>8</sup>**

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As an instructional leader, the principal is the key agent to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a shared vision for a school that is responsive to the needs of both the students within the school and the community. The collaborative school-based planning and leadership model below is supported by the four dimensions of instructional leadership.

### **Vision, Mission and Culture**

Principals play a vital role in establishing the mission, vision and culture of the school; one that is focused upon the learning success of each student. Through collaboration students, staff and community can share in the vision of success for each student.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Principals use data, evidence and inquiry to analyze student learning and instructional practice. Principals use a research-based framework to observe teacher practice, engage in cycles of inquiry, and plan for on-going and effective coaching and professional development.

### **Strategic Resource Allocation**

Principals allocate resources strategically so that instructional practice and student learning continue to improve. Working with the community and school staff, decisions can be made to meet the needs of the students.

### **Effective Relationships and Processes**

Principals engage in critical processes of planning, implementing, advocating, supporting, communicating and monitoring curriculum, instruction and improvement planning. Principals create supportive environments that include professional development and time and space for collaboration.

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<sup>8</sup>Adapted from 4 Dimensions of Instructional Leadership (Center for Educational Leadership, 2012).



## A Collaborative Responsibility for Leadership Development

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The recommendation below from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation 2001 *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Principalship* effectively captures the need for a centrally organized and coherent approach to professional leadership development for principals:

Professional development opportunities for principals should be presented in a co-ordinated way so that any gaps may be addressed and principals are not confused by contradictions or apparently competing points of view.

In his 1999 study on in-school leadership, Patrick Renihan highlighted the shared responsibility among the educational partners for ensuring effective school leadership and identified the need for collaboration among stakeholders. Renihan's findings indicated that schools require effective principals who required time, resources and a coordinated collaborative system of professional growth opportunities to enhance their effectiveness.<sup>9</sup>

Today, successful principalship is a shared vision and responsibility of all partners in Saskatchewan's education sector. The notion of a single, coordinated program of professional development that responds to the needs of school leaders, principals, vice-principals as well as to our educational partners can make a positive and profound impact on principals as they support quality teaching for enhanced student achievement.

*"...the most critical issue is not one of succession, but the limited autonomy that principals can exercise on behalf of their school and community."<sup>1</sup>*

Renihan, 2012

In this manner, the Federation envisions that student success can be facilitated by the development and delivery of a well-researched and contextually informed professional growth program for instructional leaders.

### Next Steps

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The work of the principal is vital to successful teaching and learning in schools today. Any changes in educational governance will no doubt have an impact on the work of principals and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation welcomes the opportunity to present a proposal for a comprehensive and on-going leadership development and support program for principals in all contexts and at all stages of their career pathway.

The Federation has the capacity and expertise to provide meaningful professional growth and leadership supports for principals that would be built upon many years of successful initiatives within the organization as well as in collaboration with its sector partners. If supported in principle by the Ministry of Education, the Federation is prepared to work with the partners in education to strengthen school leadership in the education sector.

A coherent program of professional development, which enables principals in all regions of the province to access programs and resources that address the needs of their respective school community, is required to effectively meet the goal of delivering the best possible education for all students. The core elements of this collaboratively designed program will take into consideration the enduring strategies established in educational sector planning as well as the Student First understandings of: shared responsibility; relationships; learning environment; student and teacher support; and, engagement of the student/learner.

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<sup>9</sup> Renihan, P (January 1999). pp. iv-vi.

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