



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

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.¹

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

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.⁴

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".⁵ He recommended that the province reorganize and amalgamate some school divisions to modernise the system and more fully use schools.⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.*⁹

¹ Northwest Territories, Department of Education, *Annual Report, 1901*, p. 31.

² 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.

³ *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.

⁴ 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).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ Owen, "Towards a New Day," op cit., p. 34.

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

⁹ *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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

The first major reforms to educational governance in Saskatchewan came in 1944 and were supported by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.¹² 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.¹³ When this model was implemented, local schools that had their own boards lost much of their administrative powers.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

Recent History

National and provincial fiscal crises during the 1980s and 1990s contributed to further studies and proposals for educational governance in Saskatchewan.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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?"¹⁹

¹⁰ *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.

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

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

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

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

¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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.²¹

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.”²²

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.²³

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.²⁴

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.²⁵

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

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

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

²⁵ 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.”²⁶ 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”.²⁷

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 2006.²⁸ Changes to education property taxation followed the 2009 report entitled *A Decision for Our Future: Options for Long-Term Education Property Tax Relief*.²⁹ 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*.³⁰

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.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷ Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, “Teachers' Federation Sees Positives in Government Response to Boughen Commission,” Press Release, May 13, 2004.

²⁸ Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, p. 10.

²⁹ Regina, Government of Saskatchewan, 2009.

³⁰ Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, pp. 12-17.

Professional Teachers of Saskatchewan: Vision and Principles

Vision

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.³¹ 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

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.

"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

³¹ 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.³² 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.³³

Principle Two: Roles and Responsibilities in the Education Sector

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.

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

³³ 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

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.

"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

Principle Four: Putting Students First by Enhancing Holistic Service Delivery

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^{PLUS} final report³⁴ that envisioned "the school of the future within a larger human service network."³⁵

According to Dr. M. Tymchak, the author of the School^{PLUS} 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^{PLUS}."³⁶

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

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

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁷ Boughen, *Finding the Balance*, p. 103.

³⁸ Tymchak, *School^{PLUS}*, p. 64.

In the spirit of School^{PLUS}, 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.³⁹

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.⁴⁰

"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

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.⁴¹ 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, 2016.⁴²

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.⁴³ 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.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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).

⁴¹ Perrins, *Educational Governance Review Report*, pp. 19 and 21, for example.

⁴² *British Columbia Teachers' Federation v. British Columbia*, 2016 SCC 49.

⁴³ *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.⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁴ 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

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^{PLUS} 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.”⁴⁵

Once fully realized, the School^{PLUS} 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.”⁴⁶

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.

⁴⁵ Tymchak, *School^{PLUS}*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

⁴⁶ *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

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.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ 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

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

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

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

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 to 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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