In June 2016, the Government of Saskatchewan announced a transformational change agenda for the education sector focused on administrative and governance efficiencies, reducing administrative costs and improving frontline service delivery amidst continuing economic challenges. At that time, the Minister of Education, as part of his budget announcement, referred to “a comprehensive review where everything is on the table.”

Further details about consultation processes and other considerations are yet to be announced, but we do know that change is not a new phenomenon for teachers in Saskatchewan. Based on our collective history, anyone would be hard pressed to identify a group of professionals that experiences change more frequently, more significantly or more broadly than teachers.

This includes numerous reviews and reports recommending the restructuring of school divisions that go back to the earliest days of the province. More recently, since the turn of the century, education in Saskatchewan underwent a series of changes that included the SchoolPLUS concept, school division restructuring, and the move to a centralized funding model of education and removal of school board access to the local tax base.

Fewer and typically larger school divisions and the funding model shift resulted in several impacts, some of them tangible and some less so, some of them anticipated and some not. Teachers experienced a change in culture, relationships with their employer and their professional organization, and in local structures and bargaining.

Beyond changes, teachers have experienced curriculum and pedagogical developments as well as accountability initiatives and growing expectations to meet the diverse needs of individual students. Through it all, teachers have adapted and remained focused on what matters most to them as professionals – their relationships with students and the teaching and learning experiences they share with them.

The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and its over 13,000 members are advocates for change that will enhance those relationships and experiences. Teachers are valued and trusted professionals who possess the knowledge, experience and commitment to students to help them reach their fullest potential. The collective voice of teachers will be present in transformational change discussions as we seek a greater role as leaders and decision makers at the strategic, school and classroom levels.

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**Teachers: Putting Students First in Today’s Classrooms**

_ Teachers are the heart of the classroom and are leaders in putting the student first._

- Students and parents or caregivers speak favourably about teachers’ commitment to learning. They value the relationships that teachers nurture, their professionalism and expertise, and their willingness to serve the student, and often the community, well beyond the school day.

- Teachers want to teach, but there are barriers they face that take their energy away from their core teaching responsibility, such as administrative tasks, disruptions in the classroom and the diversity of needs in their classrooms that are beyond what they can meet using current resources and supports.

- Students want to be challenged and to maximize their learning opportunities and teachers want that as well. The tension lies between seeing the needs and being able to effectively respond to the needs in a timely and sustainable manner.

- Teachers say they would appreciate the education sector having a better understanding of today’s classrooms and the demands it places on teachers in meeting the learning needs of all their students. As the needs continue to increase, the sector must make a real commitment to shared responsibility for the children and youth of this province.

Excerpts from the Student First Engagement Discussion Guide, September 2014
What Teachers Believe About Change

• The teaching profession supports change that enhances the teaching and learning experience at the school and classroom levels. Teachers are agents of change in many ways every day within the PreK-12 education system. There will be opportunities for teachers to provide leadership and inspiration as we navigate the future. We recognize the opportunities that are on the horizon and are actively engaged in efforts to raise the status of the teaching profession.

• Change can be positive if it is made for the right reasons and managed in a respectful manner. Change cannot simply be about balancing the books or finding efficiencies at the expense of teaching and learning. Investments in PreK-12 education are for the good of children and youth and the greater public good. Publicly funded public education provides a shared benefit for all of society. It should not be commercialized or privatized as this creates inequities in opportunities for students and teachers.

• Teachers are respected and valued, and will be the anchor for students and communities in the face of change. It is the good work of teachers done day in and day out that will sustain the education system through whatever changes lie ahead. The public will continue to trust teachers to act in the interests of students. Above all, the public knows that the students of Saskatchewan are in good hands, and that teachers are committed professionals dedicated to improving the lives of their young people.

• Schools will continue to serve as the hubs of their communities and as safe, caring places for students. Parents will continue to send their children to school and teachers will continue to meet them as they get off the bus. Communities will continue to congregate around their school and schools will continue to meet the needs of those they serve.

What Sustains Us in Times of Uncertainty?

• Children will continue to come to school.
• Teachers will continue to be respected and trusted professionals.
• Together, we will continue to teach and learn.