

Curriculum Renewal

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS | MARCH 2017



During recent consultation processes on curriculum and educational governance, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation indicated its support of Ministry of Education efforts to reinvigorate and reinvest in curriculum renewal in the province.

The Federation has expressed teachers' deep professional desire for those efforts to be successful, and that, for teachers, a curriculum is not simply an informational document. Rather, curriculum comes into existence through the many unique educational experiences that students have over time and that teachers create.



TOGETHER WE TEACH AND LEARN

How You Can Help

- Share your perspective on teacher involvement in each stage of the curriculum development process with colleagues, parents and community members.
- Become familiar with the *Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspective on Curriculum Renewal*. Invite dialogue on the 13 Principles for Successful Curriculum Renewal.
- Advocate for curricula that must reflect and be responsive to the unique and ever-changing realities of Saskatchewan's classrooms.
- Advocate about the vital role of the teaching and learning relationship and its interdependence with curriculum development and delivery.

Background

- In October 2016, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, along with other partners in education and community-based organizations, participated in three Ministry of Education consultation meetings on curriculum.
- The Federation's submission, *Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspective on Curriculum Renewal* (2016) articulated a set of 13 principles upon which a successful system of curriculum renewal can be based.
- The principles are situated within the legislated mandate and the bylaws and policies of the Federation.
- A conceptual framework for a cross-sector body to support a professionally led curriculum renewal process was prepared and presented as part of the Federation's submission to the Educational Governance Review Advisory Panel in January 2017.
- The proposed process would be co-ordinated and facilitated by the Federation, resourced through a multi-year partnership and funding agreement with the Ministry, and include the participation of Indigenous, community and education sector stakeholders.

STF Advocacy and Key Messages

- The Federation envisions a central role for teachers and their professional organization at all stages of curriculum work.
- Saskatchewan teachers believe that each community, each school, every classroom and every student is unique, and that the teaching and learning relationship should inform and drive professionally led curriculum development.
- Curriculum renewal is a constant, ongoing, professional responsibility of teachers that should reflect the rapidly changing context and needs of students.
- Curricular foundations require careful consideration of the province's current contexts, realities, needs and commitments to Indigenous peoples.
- Saskatchewan teachers have a history of leadership at all stages of the curriculum development process, are deeply committed to curriculum renewal, and look forward to a program that is supportive and responsive and that builds on the strengths of the respective partners in education.

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)



A Model of Professionally Led Curriculum Renewal

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:

1. Rich, high-quality, context-sensitive curricula to support student learning and achievement.
2. Curricula developed, understood and implemented by the profession.

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.

STF Advocacy and Key Messages

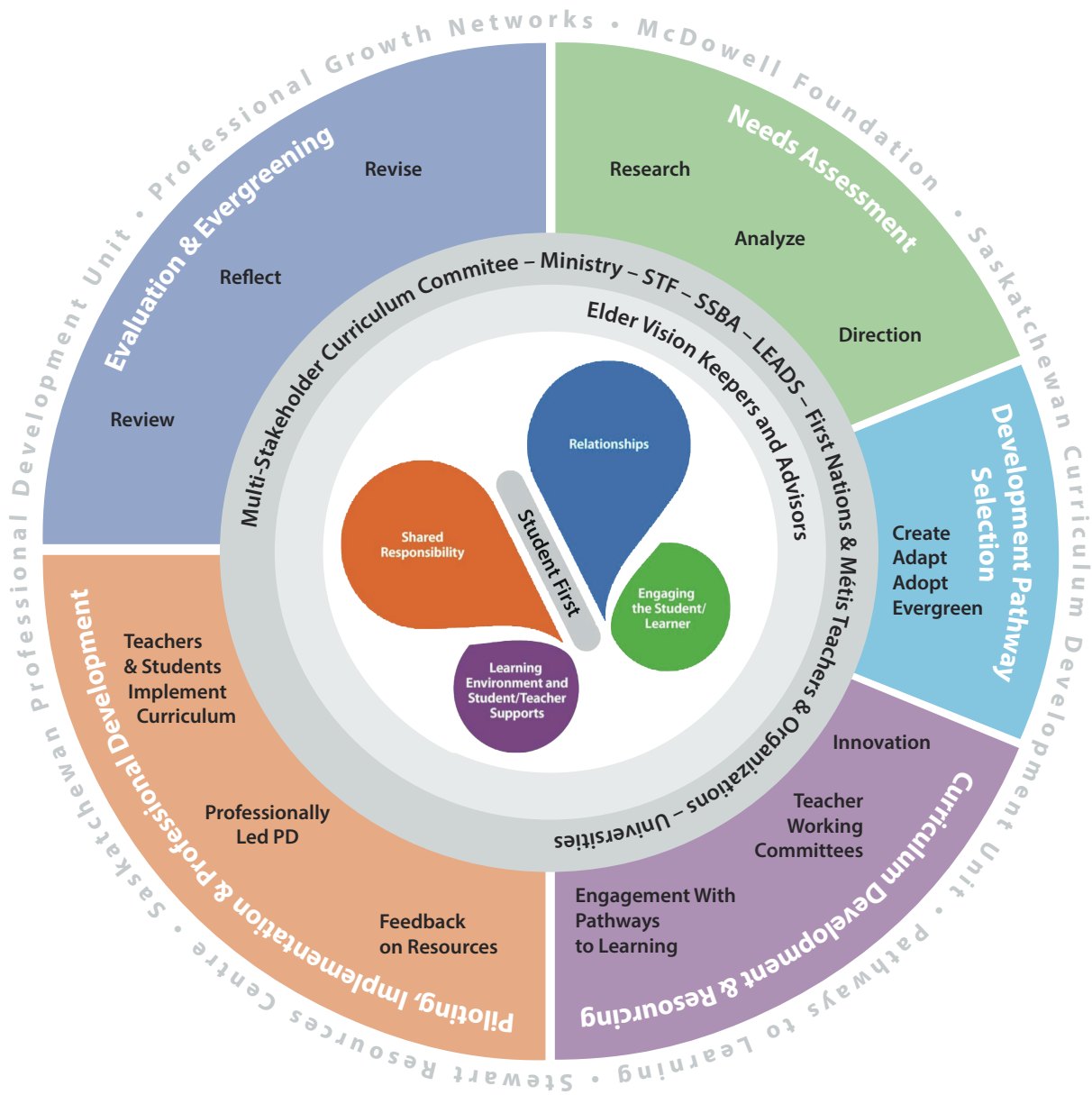
- The learning and achievement of students is central to the proposed model.
- The contributions of Elder Vision Keepers and Advisors will provide guidance, advice and assistance in all phases of the model.

- A multi-stakeholder curriculum committee will ensure that Saskatchewan curricula continue to support the vision citizens of Saskatchewan hold for their children.
- The proposed model will be co-ordinated and facilitated by the Federation and supported through a partnership and funding agreement with the Ministry.
- Classroom and subject teachers will be seconded to lead the curriculum development and renewal model:
 - Needs Assessment.
 - Development Pathway Selection.
 - Curriculum Development and Resourcing.
 - Piloting, Implementation and Professional Development.
 - Evaluation and Evergreening.
- Existing professionally led structures and processes will support the many functions of the five phases of this model:
 - Exploring the Many Pathways to Learning.
 - Stewart Resources Centre.
 - Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit.
 - Professional Growth Networks.
 - McDowell Foundation.
- A multi-year partnership and funding agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Federation will ensure that sufficient time and resources are dedicated to delivering a model of professionally led curriculum renewal and to supporting teaching and learning in Saskatchewan schools.

Four Beliefs From STF Policy 2.10 (Teaching and Learning)

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 professions, 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.

13 Principles for Successful Curriculum Renewal¹

1. A collaborative system of curriculum renewal should reflect our successful professionally led practices of the past. Saskatchewan teachers have had a significant leadership role in curriculum development, implementation and actualization since 1944.
2. Saskatchewan teachers should have a leadership role at all levels of curricular decision making and in all phases of curriculum development, including the creation, renewal, implementation, actualization and evaluation.
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. Teachers' knowledge of their students, schools, communities and beyond informs their professional practice and provides context for their students in support of learning.
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. Teachers believe that the 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.
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.
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. Teachers must have a chance to learn about the renewed curriculum and explore possible new learning resources.
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 educational system as a whole in Saskatchewan. As professionals, teachers' work goes well beyond what may be directly observable within a classroom; Saskatchewan's teachers' professional contributions benefit the education system as a whole and the public more generally.
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. Curriculum renewal will be successful if it establishes a structure to explore and articulate "the what" (i.e., curricular foundations) as well as "the how" (i.e., clearly defined and sequential curriculum renewal 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. Saskatchewan teachers are deeply committed to curriculum renewal and look forward to both strengthened partnerships and collaboration as we continue to strive for improvements to public education in Saskatchewan.

Questions about the Federation's perspective on curriculum renewal?

Contact STF Member Support by email at administrative.staff@stf.sk.ca.

¹ *Saskatchewan Teachers' Perspectives on Curriculum Renewal* (2016)

