SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION

BULLETIN

FALL 2026 | VOLUME 93, NO.1



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1,597 km of purpose

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Celebrating Saskatchewan's remarkable teachers

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An interview with the minister of education

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1,483

The number every parent should know

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Editor-in-Chief
Courtney Forseth

Managing Editor
Lynn Redl

Art Direction & Design
Erin Cumming
Rebecca Harbin

Photography
Jordan Trask
(Unless otherwise noted)

Production Manager
Trevor Boytinck

Copy Editors
Kaeley Morgan
Marla Mullie

www.stf.sk.ca
@SaskTeachersFed

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SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION

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RECONCILIATION IN ACTION



CELEBRATING INCLUSION



BRITTANY BELLAMY

President's Update


BRITTANY BELLAMY

As another school year begins, I want to extend a warm welcome back to teachers across Saskatchewan. September brings renewed energy, but also a heightened sense of urgency as we continue the critical work of supporting students and strengthening public education, particularly as we head into a new round of provincial collective bargaining.

The pressures in our classrooms remain significant. Class sizes are growing, classroom complexity is increasing, and incidents of violence continue to affect the safety and well-being of students and teachers. Recruitment and retention challenges persist across the province, particularly as workload intensifies and supports fail to keep pace. Teachers are again being asked to do more with less, and that is not sustainable.

There are many initiatives, events and projects underway to help support teachers. Over the summer, we brought together nearly 50 teachers for our second annual Labour School. It was an opportunity to help members navigate the complex world of labour relations, including provincial collective bargaining, which begins later this month. This fall, SSL-ebration events in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert will give school staff liaisons a chance to connect, network and receive support from Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation staff.

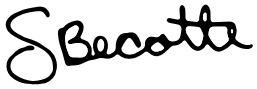
The Federation will continue to keep members informed and engaged through regular *Bargaining Updates*, with detailed highlights of the asking package shared once proposals are formally presented at the table. This approach supports good-faith bargaining and creates space for productive discussions while ensuring members remain informed as negotiations move forward. Throughout the bargaining process, our strength comes from the collective support and involvement of teachers across the province.

As always, we are approaching this round collegially and in good faith, with a focus on meaningful solutions. At the same time, we are clear in our resolve. We are prepared for all outcomes, and that requires a strong, informed and engaged membership.

The minister of education and I continue to meet regularly. These discussions have helped build a stronger shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing public education. They have also created opportunities for collaboration and for honest conversations about where our priorities align and where they differ. In the spring, STF was awarded a contract from the Ministry of Education to pilot literacy training for kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers. Due to the overwhelming success of the pilot, the contract has been renewed to continue delivery of the training this fall. The STF also continues to voice its opposition to Bill 137 both directly to government and through the Canadian Teachers' Federation, of which STF is a member, and has secured intervenor status for the court challenge.

I encourage you to stay connected. Visit tellthemtuesday.com and watch for ways you can get involved and support our fall advertising campaign. Share your experiences and help build understanding in your communities.

Your voice matters. Together, we are prepared, united and strong. ▲



Samantha Becotte
Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation President

Marc Spooner Receives Public Education Advocacy Award

BY: **ALLIE HEARNDEN,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

Marc Spooner, who has a doctorate in education, received the Canadian Teachers' Federation Public Education Advocacy Award at the CTF/FCE Annual General Meeting in July. Nominated by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Spooner was recognized for his long-standing commitment to public education and his advocacy on issues affecting students, teachers and schools.

A professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, Spooner's work has explored homelessness and poverty, audit culture, the effects of neoliberalism and corporatization on higher education, social justice, activism and participatory democracy.

His commitment to public education extends beyond his research. Spooner has been an outspoken advocate against standardized testing, and his advocacy helped influence the Saskatchewan government's decision to step back from implementing a comprehensive standardized testing regime in 2013.

The Public Education Advocacy Award recognizes individuals whose sustained service and leadership have made a significant contribution to public education, qualities reflected throughout Spooner's career. ▲



JULIE NYENKAMP, CTF/FCE

SAVE THE DATE

LEADERSHIP
Symposium

Date: April 8-9, 2027

Location: Delta Bessborough, Saskatoon

Target Audience: Principals, vice-principals, women in leadership, Indigenous leaders, governance leaders and members aspiring to these and other leadership roles.

Fee: $150

Registration opens January 2027

STF members-only event.

SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION

STF-001389 / 20260818

Canada's Largest Literacy Project Triples Reading Progress for Struggling Students

BY: **LYNN REDL,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

A major Canadian literacy project has found that targeted reading support can help struggling students make significant progress in a short time.

The study, Turning the Aspiration of Universal Literacy Into a Reality in Canadian Schools, involved over 600 Grade 2 students in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec who were identified as needing extra help with reading. Over 16 weeks, students took part in small-group intervention sessions for 30 minutes four times a week, focusing on phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition and reading practice.

Researchers reported that participating students gained about 1.5 years of word-reading growth in just five months. About half of the students improved enough that they would no longer need reading intervention the following school year.

The project, led by researchers at the University of Alberta and York University, is one of the largest literacy studies of its kind in Canada. Researchers say the findings show that evidence-based reading instruction delivered through short, regular sessions can make a meaningful difference for students who need additional support. ▲

CORRECTION NOTICE

In the print version of the Summer 2026 *Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Bulletin*, the article entitled Working for You – Teachers Set Priorities for Upcoming Provincial Bargaining incorrectly stated that approval of the proposals was unanimous.

Empowering Teachers: STF Hosts Second Annual Labour School

BY: **MITCHELL HAPP,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

This August, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation brought teachers together in Saskatoon for its second annual Labour School, a three-day immersive event focused on learning, conversation and collaboration.

Due to limited space, attendees were chosen through a competitive application process held last spring. From a pool of 100 applicants, 60 members were selected, representing a diverse set of teachers from across the province at a wide variety of career stages.

The initiative was designed to help members confidently navigate labour relations. Participants tackled a packed agenda of informative sessions and workshops, including navigating financial priorities and learning effective strategies for influencing decision-makers. Attendees also had the opportunity to explore foundational topics like teachers' rights, labour law, education sector governance, economics, funding and bargaining.

"Labour School is about more than sharing resources – it helps teachers build the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to be effective advocates for their profession," says STF President Samantha Becotte. "By learning how to monitor and implement local and provincial agreements, participants strengthen their local associations and contribute to the collective strength that advances the interests of teachers across Saskatchewan."

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2027

Registration details for the 2027 Labour School will be announced this spring. The program will offer a two-tiered approach: previous participants will be invited to apply for advanced learning opportunities, while new participants will be invited to apply for Labour School 101. ▲

As Provincial Bargaining Approaches, Minister of Education Everett Hindley Responds to Teachers' Priorities



BY **ALLIE HEARNDEN,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

As Saskatchewan teachers prepare for another round of provincial bargaining, concerns about recruitment and retention, classroom complexity, safety in schools and working conditions continue to dominate conversations across the province.

Those concerns are reflected in the STF's bargaining priorities, which focus on stability in the public education system, fair compensation, safe and supportive learning and working conditions, and a continued commitment to public education.

In a conversation with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Minister of Education Everett Hindley discussed many of the same issues, reflecting on the state of Saskatchewan's public education system, lessons learned from the last round of bargaining and what teachers can expect as negotiations begin this fall.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION REMAIN FRONT AND CENTRE

Recruitment and retention is at the heart of the STF's bargaining priorities. Saskatchewan schools continue to face pressures related to shortages of substitute, contract and permanent teachers, alongside increasing workload demands and rising classroom complexity.

Hindley agrees that recruitment and retention has become a growing challenge. While staffing pressures have historically been associated with some northern school divisions, he says the issue is now being felt more broadly across the province.

"We've got some work to do there," he says.

At the same time, Hindley acknowledges there is no simple solution to the problem.

"Nobody quite has the perfect solution."

When asked whether teacher working conditions are part of the recruitment and retention challenge, Hindley says the government wants to hear directly from teachers about the barriers they face and would welcome feedback on whether working conditions are among them.

"If working conditions are one of the barriers, that's something we as the provincial government would want to know about," he says.

For many teachers, however, working conditions are not a new concern. Workload, classroom complexity, access to supports and time to meet student needs have been recurring themes in member feedback for years. Many teachers continue to look for concrete actions that address those challenges and make the profession more sustainable over the long term.

CLASS COMPLEXITY: POSITIVE FEEDBACK, BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN

Classroom complexity remains a significant concern for teachers and was a major focus of the last round of bargaining. One of the most notable outcomes of the agreement was the introduction of class complexity teachers, a role intended to provide additional support for increasingly complex classrooms. Hindley says the feedback he has received during the first year of implementation has been largely encouraging.

"I've heard some very positive things about classroom complexity teachers and the benefits that they have brought to the classroom," he says.

Yet Hindley says there is still room to improve the model.

"I have heard from some of those who are actually in the role that there perhaps needs to be some refinements and tweaking."

While Hindley says the government is open to hearing feedback about how the role can be strengthened, he did not outline what those refinements might look like.

Questions about how classroom complexity supports will continue to evolve are unlikely to disappear. STF President Samantha Becotte has described class complexity teachers as an important first step, while emphasizing that implementation is still unfolding and further improvements may be identified as schools gain more experience with the role.

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

Concerns about violence and aggression in schools remain a priority for many teachers and are part of the broader conversation about learning and working conditions.

Hindley says the issue is one the government takes seriously.

"We would expect that anyone going to work, regardless of where they work, would be safe. That would include our schools."

While the minister acknowledges the seriousness of the issue, he says education partners are collaborating on a broader strategy to address violence and aggression in schools. Although he does not outline any specific new supports, staffing measures or policy changes, Hindley says the government expects to have more to say about that work in the months ahead.

He also emphasizes the complexity of the issue.

"I don't think there's going to be a simple solution to it. I think it's going to be a work in progress."

LOOKING AHEAD TO BARGAINING

Perhaps the biggest question heading into the school year is whether this round of bargaining will unfold differently than the last. The previous round resulted in unprecedented job action, widespread public attention and, ultimately, binding arbitration.

Hindley acknowledges that lessons were learned throughout the process.

"I think both sides would say that there were lessons to be learned and things that would have been done differently."

As negotiations begin this fall, Hindley says he hopes government and teachers can take a more collaborative approach.

"I would hope that it is a much more collaborative and positive round of bargaining going forward."

When asked how he is working to rebuild trust, Hindley pointed to regular conversations with the STF, local teacher associations and individual teachers. While acknowledging there will continue to be disagreements, he says respectful dialogue remains essential.

"We're not going to agree on everything," he says. "But I think that's where we can have an open conversation about things."

Hindley also notes that governments face competing priorities and finite resources, realities that will continue to shape decision-making at the bargaining table.

Whether the next round of negotiations results in a different experience for teachers remains to be seen; however, Hindley's message heading into bargaining is that collaboration, communication and relationship building will be important to the process.

A SHARED FOCUS ON STUDENTS

Throughout the conversation, Hindley returns repeatedly to one theme: keeping students at the centre of decision-making.

"Everybody is in [education] for a particular reason. It's because they feel that's where they can have the biggest impact as an individual," he says.

As bargaining begins this fall, teachers will be watching closely to see how discussions about recruitment and retention, classroom complexity, safety and working conditions translate into action at the bargaining table. For Hindley, keeping students at the centre of those conversations remains the guiding principle.

"If we can all remember those young people that are sitting at a desk in a classroom, that's who this is about at the end of the day." ▲

EVERY STEP IS GOOD:

1,597 Kilometres of Purpose

Inspired by her late mother, teacher Megan Wotherspoon takes on the run of a lifetime.



BY: **JANA LEN,** BULLETIN CONTRIBUTOR

There's something powerful about choosing to do something difficult on purpose. For Megan Wotherspoon, that choice was running 1,500 kilometres across Saskatchewan to honour her late mother. She set out on this journey to meet people, build connections and move through the land her mother once loved.

This year Wotherspoon turned 38, the same age her mother was when she died of leukemia. That number has been sitting with her. It's a reminder of the life her mother lived, the joy she carried no matter what she was going through, and the love she had for nature and the land that raised her family.

In February 2025, Wotherspoon reread a poem that her mother left behind for their family. One line that stayed with her was, "go into nature; that's where you'll find me." That line was a sign that this run would be a way to reconnect and honour her mom. As she made her way throughout the province, she raised money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Canada. Since her mother's passing, a cure has been found for her type of leukemia, and Wotherspoon hopes the support from this run will help other families and continue to support research.

Running has always been a part of Wotherspoon's life. She has trained for many races at varying distances, but nothing quite like this. Balancing the preparation for this long journey with her busy teaching career at St. Michael Community School in Saskatoon was challenging, but she found ways to weave training into her day. The run from home to work was about three kilometres. She would run to school in the mornings, and on the way home, she would add extra kilometres to build endurance for the long runs ahead.



Her school community was very supportive. Her principal supported her from the moment she mentioned the idea, and her colleagues and students followed along with excitement. Wotherspoon's intent wasn't to create an inspirational story; her goal was simply to honour her mother. "I didn't do the run to be inspiring to others, but I chose to do it in a public way. I am happy my students could follow along. I hope they got excited about the places I have been and the pictures I had to share."

As she moved through different areas of the province, she took time to acknowledge the treaty territories she passed through. "Moving through the treaty areas was very meaningful to me," she says. Many of her students have ties to the north and to some of the First Nations communities



ONE DAY AT A TIME

DAY	DATE	DISTANCE
1	May 25	45 km
2	May 26	60 km
3	May 27	60 km
4	May 28	53 km
5	May 29	62 km
6	May 30	50 km
7	May 31	60 km
8	June 1	52 km
9	June 2	0.9 km
10	June 3	0 km
11	June 4	0 km
12	June 5	54 km
13	June 6	53 km
14	June 7	54 km
15	June 8	68 km
16	Jun 9	55 km
17	June 10	64 km
18	June 11	64.1km
19	June 12	54.5 km
20	June 13	54.5 km
21	June 14	55 km
22	June 15	59 km
23	June 16	61 km
24	June 17	10 km
25	June 18	55 km
26	June 19	59 km
27	June 20	59 km
28	June 21	52.5 km
29	June 22	63 km
30	June 23	58 km
31	June 24	65 km
32	June 25	36.5 km



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"People leave marks on each other in ways they may never know."

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▲ Teacher Megan Wotherspoon hiking with her aunt Carol in Grasslands National Park.

◀ Day 32, Megan at the monument marking the border between Saskatchewan, Canada and Montana, United States.

she travelled through. She had the kids in mind as she ran through places such as Montreal Lake, where one of her students is from. "Being able to make these connections to my students through this journey has been very meaningful and strengthens me as an educator."

When asked what she hoped her students would take from her journey, she says, "I do hope that they grow up to find meaningful physical activity. It is a huge asset when dealing with everyday life challenges." She wants them to see movement as something that can help clear their head, steady them on hard days and stay with them through every stage of life. She often jokes with her students that "they will beat me in a race any day because I am not very fast. I can just run a long way."

Wotherspoon highlights the importance of doing things for yourself, outside of your regular routine. This commitment to do something just for her has affected her work in the classroom. "It is a good opportunity for a reset, to do something for myself before I can do more for others. This will allow me to show up stronger for my students."

She enjoyed travelling the province in a slower way and creating opportunities to connect with places where people have lived and built their roots. The run reminded her that relationships last longer than we think. She met people who knew her mother, and all these years later still feel the impact she made. "People leave marks on each other in ways they may never know," she adds.

Her approach to running and life is simple: every step is good. Every step moves you forward, even on the days that feel heavy and hard. It is a lesson she carries into her classroom and her everyday life. Looking back on the experience, she says that "every step will take you in a direction you need to go. We're all doing our best every day, and that deserves to be celebrated." ▲



The 2026-27 *Professional Learning Opportunities* catalogue is now available!

Start planning your professional learning with workshops, events and opportunities for STF members.

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STF–001221 / 20260818



Second Meeting Between the TBC and GTBC Set for Later This Month

BY: **COURTNEY FORSETH,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

As the school year begins, provincial collective bargaining will also ramp up. In May, the Teachers' Bargaining Committee and Government-Trustee Bargaining Committee held their first meeting to begin negotiations. The initial meeting focused on introductions, establishing meeting norms and confirming upcoming meeting dates. At the second meeting, scheduled for September 28, proposal presentations are expected to begin.

The TBC's proposals were approved by Council at April's Annual Meeting of Council. "The STF is committed to good-faith bargaining," says STF Executive Director and TBC Chairperson Angela Banda. "To fulfil that commitment, we will share all of the proposals with members once they have been officially presented at the negotiation table."

Teachers' proposals focus on recruitment and retention, including compensation, Truth and Reconciliation, and teaching and learning conditions. Recruitment and retention is a national issue, and Saskatchewan is not immune. In fact, recruitment and retention challenges here may grow even more as neighbouring Alberta has committed to hiring up to 3,000 more teachers over the next three years.

The TBC is hopeful this round of bargaining will progress more positively than the last. The drawn-out and contentious previous round resulted in the longest teacher job action in Saskatchewan history. Ultimately, the new agreement was resolved through legally binding arbitration, which led to a brand-new article on class complexity being added to the *2023-2026 Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement*.

"The last round of bargaining showed what is possible when teachers and communities stand together," says STF President Samantha Becotte. "Collective action resulted in real gains for students, teachers and the future of public education."

Becotte says the STF's goal is always to reach a negotiated deal, and teachers are ready for whatever this round brings.

WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO DO

- **Stay informed:** Members receive bargaining information through *Bargaining Updates* and are notified by email whenever a new *Bargaining Update* is posted in the members-only section of the STF website.
- **Be ready to act:** No two rounds of bargaining are alike. Be prepared to act when asked. It could be anything from completing a survey, wearing a sticker, sharing an experience on social media or attending a virtual meeting.
- **Share:** Share information with colleagues and help them find accurate information. Share your professional experiences and the realities of classrooms with people in your community. Remember to always be mindful of privacy and confidentiality.

"Good relationships don't come at the expense of teacher workload, compensation or working conditions. Respect must be demonstrated through action; we can be collaborative and firm at the same time, and we can bargain in good faith while still drawing clear lines. Whatever this round brings, I know teachers are prepared to face it together."

Additional meetings have also been set through December. ▲



TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION:

Employment Trends and Local Progress

IN Saskatchewan, the challenge of teacher recruitment and retention is trending with nationwide statistics. Generally speaking, fewer people are entering the profession and more people are leaving it. With fewer education graduates, rising retirements and departures, and increased professional challenges, school divisions are starting to see the trend impact classrooms. Divisions have been and will need to continue re-evaluating recruitment and retention strategies to support the profession. The focus needs to be on finding practices that encourage teachers to come to the profession and implement strategies to keep them once they are there.

BY: **JANA LEN,** BULLETIN CONTRIBUTOR

Behind the data are the people doing the work. Teaching has always been a profession that builds a community and holds it together. Teachers' impact goes far beyond the classroom. It keeps communities, economies and futures moving forward. It is rewarding work, but it also comes with challenges that grow more complex every year. Teachers are carrying more than ever. They are supporting students academically, emotionally and socially, often far beyond what their typical scope of work implies. Teachers continue to give everything they can, but strain in the profession is showing. There is burnout and earlier exit from a career that once kept people for decades. The system needs to implement strategies and policies that help teachers maintain stability and support in the profession.

According to the University of Saskatchewan's Student Outcomes and the University of Regina's Facts and Statistics, university enrolment in education programs in the province has grown only slightly over the past five years. In the 2019-20 school year, there were 4,189 students enrolled, and in 2024-25 there were 4,273 students. This is only a two per cent increase. More recent numbers show a downward shift, with only a 1.4 per cent increase between 2023-24 and 2024-25. Graduation trends are following a similar pattern. While graduates increased from 944 in 2020 to 1,208 in 2024, the number dropped to 983 in 2025, an almost 19 per cent decrease that erased much of the earlier growth.

At the same time, teacher departures continue to rise. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Retirement Plan remittance data shows exits increasing from 568 in 2010 to 992 in 2023, a 75 per cent increase. At one point, retirement was a main reason for teacher departures, but most recently more than 63 per cent of exits were for reasons other than retirement.

A contributing factor to teacher exits could possibly be attributed to job satisfaction. Statistics Canada reports a decline from 88 per cent job satisfaction in 2015 to 81 per cent in 2020. Locally, Saskatchewan is showing a similar drop. According to STF member surveys, there is a downward trend in job satisfaction. In 2021, 70 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their job. In 2023, that dropped to 54 per cent, and most recently, in 2025, job satisfaction was at 50 per cent.

Across Canada, the CTF/FCE Parachute Pan-Canadian Educator Survey Series: Fall 2024 Edition found that nearly 80 per cent of teachers report difficulty managing unpredictable and increasing workloads, 70 per cent identified poor working conditions as a major factor and 95 per cent said staff shortages were affecting students. These pressures are showing not just in our province, but across the country.

ACROSS CANADA, THE 2024 CTF/FCE PARACHUTE SURVEY FOUND THAT NEARLY

80%

of teachers report difficulty managing unpredicatble and increasing workloads.

70%

identified poor working conditions as a major factor.

95%

said staff shortages were affecting students.

Source: https://www.ctf-fce.ca/news-parachute-survey-finds-canadian-education/

Despite these challenging times for many, some school divisions across the province have shifted their focus and are working to improve and revise their current recruitment and retention strategies. One school division focusing on this work is South East Cornerstone Public School Division. Its dedicated work has shown how local strategies, partnerships and strong relationships can support both of these areas.

Nathan Johnson, superintendent of human resources at SECPSD, has made recruitment and retention a focus of the division for several years. He has noticed a shift in the number of teacher applicants. "It has been a struggle to find enough applicants to fill the vacancies that we have," he says. The division added 24 teachers last year with the introduction of class complexity teachers, which

created additional pressure. “We were fortunate to have a supportive group of retired teachers who were willing to help and fill many of the vacancies,” he explains. But that solution came with a trade-off. “The additional challenge that was created was a depleted substitute teacher list while our retirees filled in during semester one of this school year.”

While this particular division is not immune to the recruitment and retention struggles being felt across the province and the country, it is putting a strong focus on relationship building to help support the system. Recruitment strategies in SECPSD focus heavily on early connections with teacher candidates. The division attends annual career events at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina and Brandon University, and invites applications. One of the most effective strategies has been hiring interns. “We accept interns from U of R, U of S and Brandon [University], and are pleased to say that many of the interns choose to stay and accept contracts with us when they have completed their degrees,” Johnson says.

In recent years, the division has increased its focus on interns, recognizing that they are its strongest recruitment pathway. “In reviewing data, we know that is the largest draw to the division for employment,” Johnson says.

The division’s biggest barrier remains attracting candidates who are not already connected to SECPSD. “We have our greatest success recruiting and retaining people that are familiar with the area,” Johnson explains. “The biggest barrier is that we don’t see a lot of applicants that aren’t already connected with SECPSD in some way.”

Retention is based in relationships. “Retention at SECPSD has to do with the people that work here and the relationships that are formed on staff; we have strong staff members in our 35 schools and once people arrive, they rarely move on,” Johnson says. This particular division sees very few teachers leaving the profession. When resignations do occur, they are typically tied to family circumstances or relocation.

When asked about what has been working in their retention focus and strategy, it is clear that intentional collaboration is at the core of this work. Teachers work together to solve problems, share expertise and support one another. “There is strength in knowing they can rely on the experience and expertise of staff and support each other to increase collective teacher efficacy,” Johnson explains.

Johnson also highlights the importance of the relationship between SECPSD leadership and the South East Cornerstone Teachers’ Association. “Under Whitney Paul-Joseph’s leadership as SECTA president, there is a great working relationship,” he says. Regular communication



“WE HAVE OUR GREATEST SUCCESS RECRUITING AND RETAINING PEOPLE THAT ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE AREA.”

with the local association helps address concerns early, and open and honest discussions ensure teacher voice is heard in many division decisions.

There is also a strong focus on providing the right supports for teacher wellness and workload. They focus on utilizing collaboration as a way to reduce isolation for teachers across the division. New teachers have access to administrators, superintendents and curriculum coaches. They also have formal and informal mentorship opportunities available within schools. Learning support teachers, response to intervention teachers, class complexity teachers and counselling staff all contribute to a network of support that helps teachers manage the demands of the job.

The data clearly shows the trend, but it also shows where meaningful change and investment can make an impact in the classroom and beyond. Although the struggles for recruitment and retention are similar across the province and Canada, with fewer people entering the profession and more people leaving it, some divisions are working to build support. There is work happening behind the scenes to address the concerns, with more work needing to be done. Strong relationships, community-based recruitment and supportive workplaces can support the profession and become effective tools for keeping teachers in classrooms.

The work being done by divisions across the province matters, but it can’t stand on its own. Teacher recruitment and retention need to be long-term priorities for our government if we want stability in the profession. With the right investments and support, teachers will have what they need to choose and stay in the profession and in the classrooms where they make the biggest difference. ▲



1,483: Bringing the Cost of Education Underfunding Home

BY: **LYNN REDL,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

This fall, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation will launch 1,483, a public awareness and advocacy campaign focused on the impact of education underfunding on Saskatchewan students, classrooms and communities. Named for the dollar amount of funding lost per student over the past decade when adjusted for inflation, the campaign highlights a stark reality: every Saskatchewan student is receiving $1,483 less than they would if education funding had kept pace with inflation.

Through television, digital and social media advertising, the campaign will connect provincial funding decisions to their effects in classrooms across Saskatchewan. The campaign focuses on what students lose when resources fail to keep pace with rising costs, growing enrolment and increasing classroom complexity.

A key feature of the campaign is a new public website where parents, community members and public education supporters can see how their local school division has been affected by funding reductions. Visitors will be able to explore division-specific data and better understand the cumulative impact of underfunding on students and schools in their communities.

"The numbers tell an important story, but this campaign is really about students," says STF President Samantha Becotte. "When education funding fails to keep pace with the realities facing schools, students lose opportunities and teachers have fewer resources to support learning."

The campaign also comes at an important time for Saskatchewan teachers. With provincial collective bargaining underway, 1,483 reinforces the importance of teachers, parents and community members working together to advocate for the supports students need.

"Advocacy is always important, but it is especially critical as we negotiate a new collective agreement," says Becotte. "Teachers see every day how funding decisions affect students and classrooms. When funding fails to keep pace with growing enrolment and increasingly complex student needs, services and supports are stretched thin, leaving students without the resources they need to succeed. A reduction of $1,483 per student represents a significant loss of investment in public education and will have real consequences for students, families and schools across Saskatchewan."

"A reduction of $1,483 per student represents a significant loss of investment in public education and will have real consequences for students, families and schools across Saskatchewan."

Advocacy will be centred on the STF's Tell Them Tuesday initiative. Teachers and members of the public will be encouraged to visit the campaign website to access advocacy tools, share campaign materials on social media, contact elected officials and learn more about how funding changes have affected their local schools.

"Advocacy is most effective when people understand how an issue affects their own community," says STF Vice-President, Communications and Public Affairs Courtney Forseth. "Tell Them Tuesday gives people a simple way to get involved and help make public education a priority."

Throughout the fall, members will be encouraged to participate in campaign activities and share the message that students deserve a well-funded public education system that meets their needs today and into the future. ▲

Beyond the Back-to-School Buzz

BY: **TRICIA ERLENDSON,**
PRINCIPAL, DESHAYE CATHOLIC SCHOOL, REGINA



ISTOCK

The anxious anticipation of a new school year isn't reserved for students. For teachers and school leaders, September represents a unique mix of fresh optimism and steeling ourselves for familiar challenges. Increasing workload demands, greater classroom complexity and the emotional demands of daily classroom life can quickly dampen that first-day-of-school enthusiasm. As school leaders, we cannot solve every systemic challenge, but we can significantly influence teachers' daily experiences. Small leadership actions can strengthen trust and build engagement long after the back-to-school sales end.

INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS FIRST

Teachers are more engaged when they feel valued, supported and trusted by their leaders (Klusmann et al., 2022). Presence can have a big impact in cultivating trust. Make it a priority to visit classrooms regularly, not to evaluate, but to connect. Be visible during arrival, recess and dismissal, and take time to chat with staff throughout the day. These interactions demonstrate your interest in understanding teachers' daily experiences, celebrating successes and offering support when challenges arise. Professional trust is built through consistent and authentic interactions, rather than occasional gestures. When teachers know that their leaders are approachable, present and invested in their work, they are more likely to feel connected to their school community and engaged throughout the year.

PROTECT TEACHERS' TIME

We've all sat through the meeting that could have been an email. In today's schools, preparation and instructional time are valuable commodities, making it especially frustrating when unnecessary meetings or inefficient processes compete for precious time. One of the strongest messages a leader can send is this: teachers' time matters! Could information be shared in a memo or email instead of calling a staff meeting? Could repetitive paperwork be replaced with a fillable template or shared digital form? While not every demand placed on teachers can be eliminated, leaders can regularly review processes to identify and reduce inefficiencies. Reducing unnecessary demands can improve teacher engagement just as effectively as introducing additional supports (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). By protecting teachers' time, leaders communicate respect for their professionalism and create more opportunities for teaching and learning.

SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

School leadership is both rewarding and demanding. Every day brings opportunities to celebrate student success, support staff and make a meaningful difference, but it also comes with competing priorities, difficult decisions and constant pressure to respond to the unexpected. The good news is that you don't have to carry that responsibility alone! Effective leaders recognize the expertise within their staff and intentionally seek teacher input when developing goals and implementing initiatives. Create teacher working groups, use staff surveys to make decisions or gather feedback, and provide opportunities for grade-level teams to determine how best to achieve shared goals. Teachers are more likely to be engaged when they have professional autonomy and opportunities to influence school direction and decision-making (Maheshwari, 2022). When leaders combine clear expectations with professional trust, they create a culture of ownership, collaboration and shared responsibility for student success.

RECOGNIZE EFFORT EARLY AND OFTEN

At any given moment in a Saskatchewan school, there are teachers who are doing remarkable work and going above and beyond in ways that might go unnoticed. We all want to know that our efforts matter, and we all deserve to have our work acknowledged. Recognition doesn't have to be elaborate to be meaningful. Take a few minutes for staff shout-outs during staff meetings, include a "Celebrations and Thank-Yous" section in your weekly memo, or place five blank thank-you cards on your desk each Monday with the goal of giving them away by Friday. Chances are you'll find yourself reaching for a sixth and seventh card because, once you start intentionally looking for moments to celebrate, you'll discover far more than you expected. And this isn't just about making people feel good. Research suggests that explicit recognition of teacher effort has been associated with lower teacher anxiety and higher levels of teacher engagement and enthusiasm (Van Der Vyver, 2020). A few sincere words of appreciation can have a lasting impact on morale, motivation and school culture.

As another school year begins, I hope you resist the temptation to focus solely on programs, plans and initiatives. Instead, focus first on the people who will bring those plans to life. By investing in relationships, protecting teachers' time, trusting their professional judgment and celebrating their contributions, school leaders can foster a culture of authentic engagement. Teacher engagement is not built through one grand gesture, but through consistent, everyday actions that communicate, "I see you, I support you and we're in this together." Those are the kinds of schools where teachers flourish, school communities grow stronger and students experience the very best of what education has to offer.



Tricia Erlendson is a doctoral candidate whose research explores leadership practices that foster teacher engagement. She is the principal of Deshaye Catholic School in Regina and is passionate about supporting both student and staff success through collaborative, relationship-centred leadership. Outside of school, Tricia is the proud mom of three kids who still don't quite understand or appreciate her enthusiasm for fresh notebooks and the promise of brand-new school supplies. ▲

35 YEARS OF

Big Ideas

Born in Saskatchewan Classrooms

BY: **MITCHELL HAPP,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

For 35 years, the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching has funded research led by the people who know students best: Teachers.

Established by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in 1991, the McDowell Foundation empowers teachers to drive meaningful change in Saskatchewan's publicly funded PreK-12 education system. Named after visionary education leader Stirling McDowell, the Foundation is a registered charitable organization with a mission to put research capacity directly into the hands of teachers.

As the Foundation marks its 35th anniversary, the milestone signifies much more than three and a half decades of funding teacher-led research. It is a celebration of thousands of enriched student experiences made possible because the Foundation provided teachers who were already seeking solutions with the tools and support they needed to do the work.

That impact continues to be felt across Saskatchewan classrooms, according to STF President Samantha Becotte, who notes that the Foundation's strength has always been its commitment to research grounded in real teaching experiences.

"Innovations in teaching start in the classroom. The funding that the McDowell Foundation provides allows teachers to conduct research in their own schools to help ensure this work remains thoughtful, practical and rooted in the reality of public education in Saskatchewan. I strongly encourage all teachers to engage with the Foundation to explore this incredible opportunity to contribute to their own professional practice and profoundly enrich their students' learning."

This approach helps teachers meet immediate student needs across all subjects, from early learning to physical health. As communities evolve, the research evolves with them. By funding relevant projects – such as exploring refugee educational experiences or amplifying student voices to foster belonging – the Foundation supports work that addresses today's complex realities. Empowering teachers to lead this research generates targeted insights that strengthen Saskatchewan's education system from the ground up.

While the numbers reflect the Foundation's reach, its true impact is found in stories of professional discovery. When teachers lead research, the results are practical, thoughtful and grounded in the realities of schools, giving them strong potential to drive meaningful change in Saskatchewan classrooms.

RESEARCH IN ACTION: *MUSKRATS AND FIRE*

Among the most high-profile studies undertaken with the support of McDowell is the Muskrat/Wuchusk Project, which began in the 2014-15 school year at Charlebois Community School in Cumberland House.

The research was entirely student-driven, sparked when young learners asked two questions about their local environment: "Why is the water so brown?" and "Where have all the muskrats gone?" With funding and support from the McDowell Foundation, teacher Renée Carrière and her students were able to look beyond the walls of their school to find answers.

Guided by local trappers, students conducted controlled spring burns on portions of four local lakes. To measure the impact of these traditional fire practices, students collected plant samples and harvested muskrats. Their findings were striking: the burned areas supported eight different types of healthy plants essential for building muskrat homes, while the unburned areas yielded only four dry plant types. The students also found that muskrats in the rejuvenated, burned habitats were consistently heavier, longer and healthier overall.

This hands-on fieldwork allowed students to explore Indigenous ways of knowing by bringing together the traditional wisdom of local Elders and ecological Knowledge Keepers with the methods of Western toxicologists and environmental scientists.



Rather than taking the form of a traditional academic paper, the final report for the project became a children's book entitled *Muskrats and Fire*. Authored by Renée Carrière, with primary illustrations by Michela Carrière, the book tells the story of traditional Indigenous fire management practices through the perspectives of young community members.

Reflecting on the journey and the support of McDowell, Carrière says, "I wish to deeply thank the McDowell Foundation and its board for their continued critical commitment and support of Saskatchewan teachers from all areas of our province who pledge to engage the children of Saskatchewan that we serve through exciting research."

Muskrats and Fire illustrates how teacher-led inquiry can reach beyond a single subject. The resource combines both historical and current community teachings, Western science and the Saskatchewan K-12 curriculum. Most importantly, it champions land-based learning and the Cree concept of mino-pimatisiwin, or the good life, proving that when teachers and students are trusted to lead research, they can create lasting, transformative change in their communities.

WHAT'S NEXT

The McDowell Foundation sees its 35th anniversary not as a finish line, but as the start of a new chapter for the teachers who will shape the future of public education. As classrooms change, so do the questions teachers are exploring and the ways they learn from one another.

To support that work, the Foundation continues to invest in teacher-led research on issues that matter most today. The 2025-26 projects include Saskatchewan teachers exploring collaborative approaches to Treaty Essential Learnings, teacher wellness and play-based learning in the early years. By giving teachers opportunity to test new ideas and share what they learn, the Foundation helps ensure public education is strengthened by practical solutions, professional collaboration and a shared commitment to student success.

GET INVOLVED!

The McDowell Foundation relies on contributions from organizations, teachers and the public, as well as the dedication of staff, volunteers and partners who believe in the power of teacher-led change. Visit www.mcdowellfoundation.ca to learn more, apply for a project grant, explore current research or make a tax-deductible donation. ▲

Beyond the Numbers

Over the past 35 years, the McDowell Foundation has funded projects that are practical, student-centred and highly relevant to today's classrooms. The Foundation has

provided more than **$2M** **in funding**

and supported more than **1,000** **teachers**

through more than **350** **research projects.**

More Than a Classroom:

Celebrating Saskatchewan's 2026 Teachers of the Year

BY: **ALLIE HEARNDEN AND SARAH MACDONALD**, STF COMMUNICATIONS

Ask someone what they remember most about school, and it's rarely a specific lesson.

It's a feeling. It's the teacher who made them laugh on a hard day, who noticed when something was off, who encouraged them when they were ready to give up. It's the classroom where they felt like they belonged.

Rawlco Radio's Teacher of the Year and Golden West's Golden Apple Awards capture those moments through the words of students, families and colleagues. The nominations don't just highlight good teaching; they tell stories of care, connection and impact that stretch far beyond the classroom.

This year, hundreds of submissions came in from across Saskatchewan, each one offering a glimpse into the relationships that shape students' lives in meaningful ways. From those nominations, four teachers were recognized for the difference they make each day:

- **Brenda Knisley,** Erindale Cooperative Preschool (C95 Teacher of the Year – Saskatoon)
- **Rachel Paterson**, Jack MacKenzie School (Z99 Teacher of the Year – Regina)
- **Laura Skrumeda Sawby**, Golden Prairie Hutterian School (Magic 97.1 Golden Apple Award – Swift Current)
- **Jessica Ivanochko**, Our Lady of Hope Catholic School (Country 100 Golden Apple Award – Moose Jaw)

While their classrooms and career paths are different, their stories share a common thread: students thrive when they feel seen, supported and valued.

Brenda Knisley

C95 TEACHER OF THE YEAR, SASKATOON

Ask the families who nominated Brenda Knisley why she was chosen as Saskatoon's C95 Teacher of the Year and you'll hear the same themes again and again: connection, compassion and a genuine love for children.

One parent described her as "the kind of teacher every child hopes to have and every parent is grateful for."

For more than three decades, Knisley has been helping children feel valued during some of their earliest experiences at school.

Knisley teaches at Erindale Cooperative Preschool and continues to substitute for Saskatoon Public Schools whenever she can. For her, every classroom is an opportunity to connect with students and help them feel at home.

That focus on connection has been part of her story from the very beginning. Inspired by a caring kindergarten teacher and a childhood spent playing school, she found her way into a profession that still feels like the right fit decades later.



BRITTANY BELLAMY

▲ Brenda Knisley accepts C95 Teacher of the Year Award.

"I just genuinely love kids," she says. "I want them all to be the best they can be."

In her classroom, that belief shows up in small but meaningful ways. She creates an environment where students feel safe to be themselves, whether they need support, encouragement or simply someone who understands. Her goal is not only to help children learn, but also to help them develop confidence and a sense of belonging.

It's an approach that goes both ways. Over the years, her students have shaped her perspective just as much as she's shaped theirs.

"They teach me to live in the moment," she says. "A lot of us are thinking of other things, but it's important to ground yourself in the moment that you're in right now."

When Knisley was surprised with the Teacher of the Year award, her first reaction was disbelief.

"Why me?" she remembers thinking. "There are so many amazing teachers."

As the celebration unfolded, the significance of the moment became clear. Among those gathered were parents of her current students, including some she had taught years earlier when they were children themselves.

For Knisley, relationships don't end when students leave her classroom. Over the years, she has remained connected to many of the families she has taught, often remembering students' names and stories long after they've moved on. Those connections were reflected in the nominations she received.

One parent wrote that Knisley "nurtures every child with kindness, patience and genuine care."

Another summed it up simply: "I really can't think of anybody who deserves this more."

The comments speak to the lasting impact of a teacher who makes students feel known and families feel supported. For many children, preschool is their first experience of school, and for decades Knisley has helped make that experience a positive one.

For Knisley, the recognition is meaningful, but it doesn't change what matters most.

"I always say to my [students'] parents, 'Your kids are my greatest gift,'" she says.

Rachel Paterson

Z99 TEACHER OF THE YEAR, REGINA

Some of the most powerful lessons students learn in school have nothing to do with curriculum. They're the lessons that teach them that they matter, that their voice has value and that they are capable of more than they think.

Those are the lessons Rachel Paterson's students talk about most.

"She is kind, loving, helpful and patient," one student wrote. "She makes me feel safe, makes funny jokes and makes school fun."

For Paterson, who teaches at Jack MacKenzie School in Regina, creating that kind of classroom has been a goal since the beginning of her career.

"I have known I wanted to be a teacher since kindergarten," she says. "Back when I would set up a makeshift classroom at home to teach my stuffed animals."



SUPPLIED

▲ Rachel Paterson accepts Z99 Teacher of the Year Award.

"She is kind, loving, helpful and patient. She makes me feel safe, makes funny jokes and makes school fun."

As she grew older, the teachers in her own life helped turn that childhood dream into a profession.

"My teachers made me feel valued and capable, and I want to pay that feeling forward," she says. "My goal is to make a lasting impact on my students."

For teachers, the impact of those everyday interactions is often difficult to measure. A lesson may be forgotten over time, but the encouragement to keep trying, the patience shown during a difficult moment or the confidence built through a caring relationship can stay with a student for years.

Paterson experienced that firsthand when a former student recently came back to visit.

"At the end of our conversation, she looked at me and said, 'You changed my life,'" Paterson recalls. "It was so meaningful and made me realize how important teachers are."

When she learned she had been selected as Z99's Teacher of the Year, Paterson was surprised by the recognition.

"I felt overwhelmed with gratitude when I learned that past and present students, along with family and friends, had nominated me," she says. "Being selected was both surprising and humbling."

The nominations reflected the impact she's had on so many students. One student wrote, "She makes me believe in myself. She is the best teacher I've ever had."

Like many teachers, Paterson hopes her students leave her classroom with more than academic knowledge.

"I hope they always remember that they are cared for, valued and will always be my students," she says. "I hope they hold onto a sense of wonder and magic in the world and continue to hope, dream and try new things, and no matter where life takes them, I will always be cheering them on."

Laura Skrumeda Sawby

MAGIC 97.1 GOLDEN APPLE AWARD, SWIFT CURRENT

As the daughter of two teachers, Laura Skrumeda Sawby had strong role models growing up. She also had wonderful teachers as a child in Brandon, Manitoba. They inspired her to pursue education, a calling she has enjoyed since 2002.

Skrumeda Sawby has spent her entire career in southwestern Saskatchewan. She began at Sidney Street School in Maple Creek, which is her hometown. She served as the principal of Golden Prairie School before it closed in 2006. She was also the principal at Richmound School and Fox Valley School.

Last year Skrumeda Sawby embarked on a new teaching path when she accepted a position teaching at a Hutterite colony, first at Haven Hutterian School, and then when a new school opened at Golden Prairie Hutterite Colony, she moved there. She teaches 15 students from kindergarten to Grade 8, and the only other teacher is the German teacher, since the Hutterites' first language is German.

"It takes a lot of work for a teacher in a Hutterian school to teach all those grades. We talk about collaboration, cooperation, kindness and working together, and you appreciate the support you get from the other children because that peer learning helps," she says of her new role.

As a new teacher in the community, she worked hard to build relationships with each of the students,

acknowledging and appreciating where they were at with their learning. She understands the importance of individualizing her teaching to get the best results from each student. She is also learning German to better understand them.

She says her efforts have paid off, and on the last day of school the German teacher even told her he was impressed with her ability to build trust with all the children in just six months.

"It felt nice to be seen and acknowledged," she admits.

The compliments from the German teacher speak to the comments from the people who nominated Skrumeda Sawby for the Golden Apple Award. As one wrote, "She is passionate about making relationships, ensuring others are supported and teaching students to ensure they have the tools they need for the future. She always puts others before herself and her selfless attitude inspires others. She is caring, compassionate, empathetic and giving."

"She is passionate about making relationships, ensuring others are supported and teaching students to ensure they have the tools they need for the future."

▼ Laura Skrumeda Sawby.



WEST OF THE HEART PHOTOGRAPHY

Skrumeda Sawby says she was shocked when she heard she had won and admitted it brought tears to her eyes. She even wondered if she deserved it, since she doesn't teach for the accolades, but to make a difference in her students' lives

"I just hope that whoever I've touched, I've left with a positive footprint. I hope they remember that I was authentic and did my best to support them and brought a little joy somehow to their lives," she says.

Jessica Ivanochko

COUNTRY 100 GOLDEN APPLE AWARD, MOOSE JAW

If there's laughter echoing in the halls or coming from a classroom at Our Lady of Hope Catholic School in Moose Jaw, there's a good chance it's the students in Jessica Ivanochko's Grade 2 class.

"Honestly, we have a lot of fun in my classroom. We are continually moving. We do a lot of play, like learn to play. You can always hear us in the hallway because we are laughing or giggling," says Ivanochko, winner of the Country 100 FM Teacher of the Year.

Ivanochko, who grew up in Melville and Gravelbourg, struggled in school but had a few teachers who went out of their way to help her, staying late after the last bell had rung, or even letting her take homework to them on weekends.

"They really inspired me to be able to do that for kids," Ivanochko says.

She received a bachelor's degree in French education from the University of Regina. She has been teaching in Moose Jaw since graduating in 2010, first at École St. Margaret and then at Our Lady of Hope Catholic School, which opened in 2025.

In all her years teaching, she has had the same goal: to ensure the students have fun while learning and to have her students become like a classroom family. She is very warm and caring and constantly tells her students that she loves them.

Her efforts pay off, as she has had students tell her they hope their siblings will be in her class, too, and she develops warm relationships with her students' parents. One of the parents who nominated Ivanochko had high praise for her, writing that "She creates a warm, caring classroom where every student feels valued and supported.



▲ Jessica Ivanochko in her classroom.

“I hope the students remember that we had fun. I hope they remember that it was a safe and caring place where they felt loved and that it was a joyful class.”

Her creativity and enthusiasm make learning fun and engaging, and she has a special way of bringing lessons to life. She goes above and beyond for her students each day, inspiring them to learn, grow and believe in themselves.”

Being awarded the Golden Apple Award was a surprise for Ivanochko.

“I was truly in awe and in shock. I feel like I have a really great relationship with my [students’] parents. This recognition just goes to show that you can love their kids as much as they do and the parents can see that,” she explains.

While Ivanochko teaches her students many things, she also learns from them.

“They teach me all the time how to be resilient and how to work through stuff when it’s difficult. They teach me to laugh at myself. They teach me to be a better version of myself,” she says.

Just as Ivanochko remembers some of her teachers with a lot of fondness and gratitude, she hopes her students will remember her class too.

“I hope the students remember that we had fun. I hope they remember that it was a safe and caring place where they felt loved and that it was a joyful class,” she says.

The Lasting Impact

Students may not remember every assignment, test or lesson, but they remember the teachers who helped them believe in themselves.

That’s the connection shared by this year’s recipients. In different schools and communities across Saskatchewan, they are building relationships, creating belonging and helping students see what they are capable of becoming.

These awards recognize more than great teaching. They recognize the lasting impact teachers have on the lives of their students. ▲

Leading Reconciliation in Rural Schools:

Lessons Learned From Listening

BY: **JANA LEN,** BULLETIN CONTRIBUTOR

As calls grow across Canada to strengthen relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, Saskatchewan teachers are recognizing the role education plays in reconciliation. Schools were once sites of profound harm for many Indian Residential School Survivors. Today, schools are increasingly seen as places for healing through learning, reflection and action.

To better understand that work, a six-person research team – Angela Sparks, Brie Phillips, Donna Locke, Jade Ballek, Kimberly Fick and Stacy Becker – examined reconciliation leadership in schools. Supported by funding from the McDowell Foundation, the team explored how administrators in Sun West School Division are leading reconciliation efforts and what more can be done to advance this work. Their goal was to address a gap in research and gather honest insights into reconciliation practices taking place across the division.

The project was designed to reflect the realities of reconciliation work in schools, examining the daily decisions, challenges and learning that shape this work in rural communities. Because the team included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, it adopted a decolonizing approach. Non-Indigenous team members examined their roles as white settler researchers and remained mindful of the ongoing impacts of colonialism. That perspective informed how interviews were conducted, stories were interpreted and data was analyzed.

THE TEAM STARTED WITH FOUR GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. What strategies and actions are rural K-12 principals undertaking to advance reconciliation in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action?
2. In what ways have these activities increased understanding of Indigenous worldviews and the history and legacy of residential schools?
3. How have these practices strengthened relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within the school division?
4. What challenges and opportunities do rural leaders face when advancing reconciliation?

Together, these questions informed the design of the study and provided the analytical frame for interpreting participants' stories and experiences.

THE FIVE EMERGING THEMES:

1 Importance of Reconciliation in K-12

A consistent finding across the research was that administrators view reconciliation as foundational to education, not as an add-on. The research team noted that Indigenous students graduate at significantly lower rates than non-Indigenous students, approximately 45 to 48 per cent, compared with 88 per cent. Participants emphasized that when reconciliation is embedded in school culture and practice, it supports Indigenous students' success, belonging and well-being.

2 Leadership as a Driver of Change

Administrators said they have a responsibility to create safe and inclusive learning environments. They recognized the influence of their role and stressed that reconciliation must be demonstrated through everyday leadership, not simply understood in theory. By embedding reconciliation in policies, classroom practices and relationships, leaders make it part of their daily work and the culture of their schools.

3 Personal Growth and Understanding

This theme generated some of the project's most candid reflections. Many administrators shared that they did not learn the full history of residential schools until adulthood. As a result, they recognized the importance of personal responsibility in reconciliation leadership. Participants described leaders as co-learners who must actively pursue their own learning rather than relying primarily on Indigenous partners or school division personnel to lead that work.

4 Relationship Building

Relationship building emerged repeatedly throughout the project. Administrators emphasized that reconciliation is rooted in authentic relationships with Indigenous communities, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and families. Meaningful partnerships require humility, reflection and a willingness to learn. Participants also noted the challenges of building and maintaining connections across Saskatchewan's vast geography. Strong relationships take time, intention and trust.

5 Engaging Community

Administrators described community engagement as one of the most complex aspects of reconciliation work. They spoke about working in communities where attitudes toward reconciliation vary. One participant shared that reconciliation is regularly highlighted through newsletters, social media and school community council meetings to help build awareness and understanding. The research found that small, consistent actions can help shift perspectives and strengthen support for reconciliation over time.

Throughout the project, the goal was to listen carefully and accurately reflect participants' experiences.

Analysis of focus groups, surveys and interviews revealed five interconnected themes. While each theme was distinct, researchers found none existed in isolation. To illustrate this relationship, they developed the metaphor of a strawberry plant, with each theme connected and contributing to the whole rather than operating independently or in a hierarchy.

In Indigenous worldviews, the strawberry symbolizes growth, renewal and interconnectedness. Every part of the strawberry plant, from its roots to blossoms to the fruit, contributes to the health and vitality of the whole system. Every part of the plant matters. Strawberry plants grow outward, not upward. They create new growth connected to the original plant. Similarly, the five themes all contribute to the larger journey of reconciliation in Saskatchewan schools. Reconciliation work spreads in much the same way. It is not a top-down process; rather, it grows and spreads through relationships and shared learning.



Illustration courtesy: Brie Phillips

Throughout the project, researchers identified several findings that resonated. They noted teachers' strong commitment to connecting curriculum outcomes with Indigenous perspectives and cultures. Schools incorporated activities such as teepee teachings, storytelling, beading and Bannock making, often inviting community members to participate. Researchers found that visible and meaningful engagement deepens understanding and strengthens commitment to reconciliation.

The research also highlighted the challenges of placing reconciliation work on a single individual. Participants noted that relying on one Indigenous perspectives consultant or champion can lead to burnout. Researchers found that reconciliation is most effective when responsibility is shared and people learn alongside one another.

The findings closely aligned with the project's original goals. Researchers concluded that reconciliation work is interconnected and cannot succeed in isolation. Administrators frequently spoke about the role of community in advancing reconciliation efforts. Participants identified potential benefits, including stronger relationships, more inclusive school environments, greater cultural understanding and improved outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Some findings were unexpected. While discussion often focused on relationship building and learning, several school leaders expressed interest in broadening reconciliation efforts to include anti-racist and cross-cultural education. Researchers also found that the division's rural context shaped both opportunities and challenges.

The division includes 42 schools, 19 of them Hutterian. While no First Nations communities are located within division boundaries, three neighbouring First Nations present opportunities for partnership and collaboration. The local economy, driven by agriculture and the oil and gas sector, also influences community life and perceptions of the land. One participant shared a vision for the future, saying, "I just want everybody to realize we are all treaty people … for it to just be in our nature … just there. All doing it together and getting rid of all the racism, covert, overt, all of it."

Researchers also identified a need for accessible learning opportunities focused on reconciliation, Indigenous perspectives, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices, as well as dedicated personnel to support schools in this work. ▲

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Celebrating Inclusion:

Meet Saskatchewan's 2026 Inclusive Education Award Winners

BY: **MITCHELL HAPP,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

On June 6, 2026, Inclusion Saskatchewan celebrated the winners of the 2026 Inclusive Education Awards at its annual Inclusive Education Gala. In partnership with Inclusion Canada, these awards recognize people, schools and groups that are helping create classrooms and communities where students with intellectual disabilities feel welcome, valued and included.

2026 INCLUSIVE TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Dean Armstrong, Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre

In partnership with Inclusion Canada, Inclusion Saskatchewan has named Dean Armstrong of the Saskatchewan Distance Learning Centre the 2026 Inclusive Teacher of the Year.



Dean Armstrong (left) receiving the 2026 Inclusive Teacher of the Year Award from STF Vice-President Nathan Bromm (right).

INCLUSION SASK

For Armstrong, inclusion is personal. As a student, he experienced barriers and discrimination while trying to access the support he needed. Those experiences continue to shape his work as a teacher today.

Armstrong describes his classroom as "a place to be brave." With a background in theatre, he uses drama, puppetry and creativity to build connections with students. His goal is to create a learning environment where students feel safe, respected and valued.

Throughout his career, Armstrong has worked to remove barriers and ensure students have a voice in their learning. Drawing on his experience in curriculum development with the Ministry of Education, he helps students find learning pathways that meet their individual needs.

Rather than expecting students to fit the system, Armstrong adapts instruction to fit the student. He encourages learners to demonstrate their knowledge in ways that work best for them, helping them learn with confidence and dignity.

One parent praised Armstrong's approach, noting that he understands the challenges many neurodivergent students face and works to make learning more accessible and meaningful.



Nathan Brooks (centre right) joins representatives of the Mayfield Campus of Montessori School of Regina receiving the Dr. John Dolan Spirit of Inclusion Award.

INCLUSION SASK

2026 INCLUSIVE SCHOOL OF THE YEAR

École Palliser Heights, Prairie South School Division

Inclusion Saskatchewan and Inclusion Canada named École Palliser Heights School the 2026 Inclusive School of the Year.

At École Palliser Heights, inclusion is not a program – it is part of everything the school does. The school promotes a culture of belonging, teamwork and high expectations for every student.

All students learn together, and staff work to meet a wide range of learning needs within the classroom. The school has no segregated or special programs, ensuring that all students learn alongside one another. Students also have access to communication supports, including augmentative and alternative communication devices, to help them participate fully in school life.

School leaders are committed to removing barriers and creating a place where every student feels valued. As one parent shared, they have never heard staff say, “we can't do that.” Instead, the team works together to find solutions and support student success.



Representatives of École Palliser Heights School are presented with the Inclusive School of the Year Award.

INCLUSION SASK

2026 DR. JOHN DOLAN SPIRIT OF INCLUSION AWARD

Nathan Brooks and the Mayfield Campus Montessori School of Regina

Inclusion Saskatchewan has presented the 2026 Dr. John Dolan Spirit of Inclusion Award to Nathan Brooks and the Mayfield Campus of Montessori School of Regina. The award recognizes a school community that sees possibilities where others see barriers. The nomination came from the family of a child who had been turned away from several early learning programs because of his disability.

Rather than focusing on what the child could not do, Brooks and the Mayfield Campus team focused on how they could help him succeed. They worked closely with the family to secure additional funding and ensure he had the support he needed to take part in the prekindergarten program.

The school also took care to find a support worker who was not only qualified, but also a good fit for the student. Staff used personalized programming, classroom adaptations and creative teaching strategies to meet his needs and help him feel safe, understood and included.

For the student’s family, the impact has been life-changing. His parent says he now sees himself as a kind, capable and intelligent boy who knows he belongs in the classroom. He believes his ideas matter, his voice is heard and he is worthy of friendship, respect and inclusion.

ABOUT INCLUSION SASKATCHEWAN

Inclusion Saskatchewan is a provincial charity supporting the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and neurodivergence. Through self-advocacy, skill-building programs, individual and systemic advocacy, employment and transition support, and a family network program, Inclusion Saskatchewan works toward its vision of a society where all people are valued, supported and included in every aspect of life. ▲

SHSAA Merit Award recipients Greg Knot and Darin Faubert spent decades helping Saskatchewan students grow through sport.

Beyond the Scoreboard

BY: **MITCHELL HAPP,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

ISTOCK

For Greg Knot and Darin Faubert, the true value of high school sports has never been found on a scoreboard. Instead, the two teachers have spent their careers using athletics as a powerful tool to share their love of sport, mentor students and build stronger communities. That lifelong commitment was recognized at this year's Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association annual general meeting, where both men received the organization's highest honour.

The SHSAA Merit Award is given to those who display outstanding leadership and service to the SHSAA and to the promotion of high school athletics in Saskatchewan. Through their leadership in student athletics, Knot and Faubert have created powerful legacies and have had a tremendous impact on Saskatchewan's sporting community.

Greg Knot: *Education Through Sport*

Greg Knot's commitment to school athletics spans nearly three decades as a teacher and administrator at Medstead Central School. Over 29 years, Knot has coached an extensive range of sports, including junior and senior volleyball, badminton, soccer, basketball, golf, and track and field. Under his guidance, the Medstead Mustangs have achieved remarkable success, securing six provincial volleyball medals, a badminton bronze and two SaskMilk Sportsmanship Awards.

Knot's approach to school sport is rooted in the belief that all students should have the opportunity to participate in physical activity, not just for competition, but for confidence building and enjoyment. Knot worked to bring this philosophy to his school community. His leadership and community fundraising directly resulted in the construction of a new beach volleyball court, a playground and a track equipped with long jump, discus and shot-put facilities in Medstead.

When it comes to motivating volunteers to help with these projects, Knot often relies on his trademark humour. "Never be afraid to bother the people," Knot has been known to say. "It is nothing an ice cream cake at the next staff meeting will not fix."

▼ Greg Knot receives the SHSAA Merit Award.



SHSAA

At the district and provincial levels, Knot's resumé is equally impressive. He currently serves as the president of the Battle West High School Athletic Association and sits on the SHSAA Board of Directors. Among his many administrative achievements, Knot introduced digital track timing at district meets and coordinated Aboriginal Coaching Module workshops that resulted in more than 100 local coaches achieving certification.

With an anticipated retirement in June 2027, Knot's impact on the province is undeniable. As his colleague Kelly Schneider notes, "Greg has always been dedicated to providing great experiences for kids whether at the school, district or provincial level. He walks the walk, providing education through sport."

Darin Faubert: *Fees Over Fines*

For Darin Faubert, a lifelong love of sport translates into a simple philosophy: "Paying fees is better than paying fines." He believes that when students are involved in athletics, they are far more likely to remain focused, choose positive role models and build meaningful relationships.

Faubert began his teaching career in Ponteix before moving to Wadena Composite School, where he spent decades as a teacher and administrator. He has coached volleyball, golf and badminton programs for over 30 years and spent 15 years with track and field, plus a decade coaching softball. He also facilitated 61 outdoor education trips, creating memories for generations of students.

"Our students and staff have been beyond fortunate to have had Darin's mentorship and leadership over the years. He truly loves helping our students become better athletes."

His rapport with youth in his community is a defining characteristic of his career. He is frequently asked to be a guest speaker at graduation ceremonies, and as one student-athlete plainly stated, the only reason he played volleyball was because "Mr. Faubert asked me to, and I like him!"



SHSAA

▲ Darin Faubert receives the SHSAA Merit Award.

Faubert's administrative contributions have fundamentally shaped the region. A former SHSAA North East District president and a volleyball official of 34 years, Faubert was instrumental in transitioning teams from a district advancement model to a conference/regional model, ensuring that strong athletic programs from neighbouring communities had a fairer chance to advance to provincials.

Though Faubert officially retired last spring, his dedication to Wadena Composite has not stopped. He continues to work as a substitute teacher, recently helping the school host the 2A Girls Provincial Volleyball Championships. He even took the time to create a snowshoeing path on the local golf course for physical education students.

"Our students and staff have been beyond fortunate to have had Darin's mentorship and leadership over the years," says Wadena Composite colleague Michelle Fidelack. "He truly loves helping our students become better athletes."

A Lasting Impact

Through years of coaching, mentoring and volunteering, Greg Knot and Darin Faubert have made a lasting difference in the lives of students across Saskatchewan. Their impact goes far beyond wins, banners or facilities. They have helped young people build confidence, learn teamwork and develop the resilience needed to succeed both on and off the field. Their SHSAA Merit Awards recognize not only their dedication to school sports, but also their commitment to helping Saskatchewan students grow as athletes, students and community members. ▲

Meet Your Executive

BY: **SANJIDA RAHMAN,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Executive is elected from the ranks of councillors to manage and regulate the activities of the Federation. Executive members must ensure the organization acts in accordance with its legislated mandate and fiduciary commitments. Executive responsibilities include the establishment and appointment of members to the benefits plan boards and various committees.

Samantha Becotte



Residence: Northeast of Lloydminster, SK

Current Position: STF president

Years as a Teacher: 17 years, starting year 18

Years as STF Executive Member: 11 years, starting year 12

Go-to Morning Drink: Sugar-free iced coffee with milk

Favourite Book: I'm not a big reader, but I've been listening to audiobooks while I drive. Two from the last year that stuck with me were: *Seven Fallen Feathers* by Tanya Talaga and *This Is How It Always Is* by Laurie Frankel.

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Create boundaries to protect your personal time. Disconnect as much as possible. Access benefits from the Members' Health Plan and Member and Family Assistance Plan.

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?

While teaching high school, early in the school year I was handing back assignments and calling out the names on each paper as I was still learning what students preferred to be called — whether their legal name or something else. When I reached one student's paper and said the name aloud, they looked at me with a surprised expression. At first, I thought I had made a mistake, but they told me no one had ever called them by that name before. I confirmed that it was the name they wanted me to use and continued to refer to them that way. From that point on, there was a noticeable shift in their mood and demeanor in class. It was the first time I truly understood the impact that simply recognizing and respecting someone's identity can have.

ALL PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Nathan Bromm



Residence: Moosomin, SK

Current Position: Teaching principal, Rocanville School

Years as a Teacher: 21

Years as STF Executive Member: 11

Go-to Morning Drink: Black coffee

Favourite Book: Any historical fiction or true story related to war history – *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* by Heather Morris, *Obasan* by Joy Kogawa, *The Women* by Kristin Hannah.

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Taking time to sit and socialize with staff at lunch. This gives you time to decompress.

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?

When I took Grade 9 students on a four-day canoeing trip on the Churchill river system – what a life learning experience for my students.

What's something you're learning in this role?

The work of the Federation is ever-changing and never done. The core of our work remains the same, but how we support members and champion public education is always changing.



Daniel Dion

Residence: Regina, SK

Current Position: Math and science teacher consultant at the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises

Years as a Teacher: 19

Years as STF Executive Member: One

Favourite Book: *The Martian* by Andy Weir

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: Zenon Park, SK (my hometown)

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

At times, education can be taxing and stressful. Don't be afraid to share how you feel with those around you. It's common to feel alone and isolated when things are difficult, but rest assured you're not the only one. The simple act of sharing your perspective can be uplifting and can sometimes lead to a better mindset that could lead to a better situation. To quote the infamous Red Green Show: "I'm pulling for you; we're all in this together."

One STF resource you'd recommend to members:

The Emma Stewart Resources Centre is amazing! I encourage all teachers to explore the library's services.

What's something you're learning in this role?

Continuous self-reflection is critical when working in a role representing 14,000+ active teachers from all corners of the province. The many diverse perspectives and the collective wisdom of all teachers in our province are sources of strength for our membership and, as leaders in education, we must be aware of our own biases when making decisions. This is sometimes a difficult and uncomfortable process, but one that I cherish.

Chris Kampman

Residence: Regina, SK

Current Position: Vice-principal and student services support teacher at St. Timothy School

Years as a Teacher: 12

Years as STF Executive Member: Two

Go-to Morning Drink: Flat white

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: Tie between Waskesiu and Kenosee

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Recognizing that it is okay to have boundaries.

One STF resource you'd recommend to members:

Practically speaking, the website hosts a wealth of information that members may be looking for. That said, the Federation staff are hands down the best resource available to members.

What's something you're learning in this role?

While the day-to-day experiences of Saskatchewan's 14,000 teachers may vary significantly, we have far more in common than we do in our differences. We all want public education to be properly funded, and with the appropriate supports for all our students.



Amy Korver

Residence: Saskatoon, SK

Current Position: President of the Prairie Spirit Teachers' Association

Years as a Teacher: 19

Years as STF Executive Member: Six

Go-to Morning Drink: Coffee

Favourite Book: *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: Meewasin Trail

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Gratitude – try to think of three things every day you are grateful for.

What's something you're learning in this role?

I know wayyy more about pensions and benefits than I ever knew as a teacher!



Amy Orth



Residence: Saskatoon, SK

Current Position: Principal of Aberdeen School and LINC chairperson for Prairie Spirit Teachers' Association

Years as a Teacher: 22

Years as STF Executive Member: Two

Go-to Morning Drink: Coffee

Favourite Book: *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: La Ronge

One STF resource you'd recommend to members:

Call Lynda at the ESRC – she will find what you need and mail it to you. And she's VERY understanding when your books are overdue!

What does being part of STF mean to you?

We are all part of something much larger than our individual jobs or positions. There is such power in the collective!

Whitney Paul-Joseph

Residence: Sinclair, MB

Current Position: High school teacher at Redvers School and South East Cornerstone Teachers' Association president

Years as a Teacher: 18

Years as STF Executive Member: Five

Favourite Book: *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?
Our coworkers are more than just our colleagues, but our friends, and we spend so much time together. It is nice when you have each other as support. Lean into that.

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?
I am a high school visual arts teacher. The moments that stick with me are seeing students that I once taught enter their adult life doing some sort of creative work. I absolutely love to see their passion for art and creativity blossom into some really interesting careers.

One STF resource you'd recommend to members:
Emma Stewart Resources Centre – there is so much there to access!

What does being part of STF mean to you?
It means everything to me. As teachers, STF represents, supports and advocates for all facets of our profession.





Crystal Schindel

Residence: North Battleford, SK

Current Position: Principal

Years as a Teacher: 14

Years as STF Executive Member: Four

Go-to Morning Drink: Steeped tea with two cream

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?
For every book you read for your profession, read one that is strictly for pleasure.

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?
Every year when I get to induct new teachers into the STF at our local association convention, I always tear up.

What's something you're learning in this role?
Teachers are facing the same core issues across this entire country, and we need to work together to ensure public education is a topic that everyone discusses.

What does being part of STF mean to you?
Strength, unity and kinship.

Peggy Welter



Residence: Regina, SK

Current Position: High school ELA and history teacher, Cupar School

Years as a Teacher: 17

Years as STF Executive Member: Three

Go-to Morning Drink: VERY strong coffee with all the extras added

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: U of S campus in the summer

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?

Working in a K–12 school, graduation is always special. A few years ago, I watched a group that I had taught for nine consecutive years graduate. My first class with them was Grade 4 social studies, and I watched them grow into a lovely group of young adults and achieve a major life goal.

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Don't try to be something you are not. It is ok to make mistakes and ask for help. By being authentic to who you are as a person, you will always know that you have done your best and not doubt your choices.

What does being part of STF mean to you?

It means being part of something bigger. The power and voice of the collective bring us all together for a common purpose. It means we share successes, goals and challenges, and are not alone in our work.

Karielle Willner

Residence: Davidson, SK

Current Position: Classroom teacher for middle years and high school (grades 8-12)

Years as a Teacher: 24

Years as STF Executive Member: 0 – this will be my first year

Favourite Book: This is a tie for me: *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett or *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah (I love historical fiction).

Favourite Saskatchewan Spot: Any northern lake (put me near some trees and I'm happy).

What's one teacher wellness tip you swear by?

Go for a walk.

What's a moment from your teaching career that still sticks with you?

All my teaching career I have also coached. Coaching has brought me many opportunities to build great relationships with students and their parents, and there have been many memorable moments as a coach over the years.



One STF resource you'd recommend to members:

Any of the senior administrative staff! As our school staff liaison, I have always relied on their expertise, knowledge, wisdom and professionalism. The senior administrative staff members I have worked with have been amazing and so incredibly supportive.



A Sustainable WORLD

An Interactive Learning Platform

A Sustainable World is a digital experience that helps students ages 12–18 explore global challenges and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through interactive maps, real-world data, and powerful stories. With integrated lesson plans on climate change, education, health, gender equality, and more, students discover how local and global issues are deeply connected — and how communities around the world are responding with creativity and resilience.

Explore *A Sustainable World* and inspire your students to shape a more sustainable, inclusive future at **sustainableworld.akfc.ca**.

EXPLORE

A Sustainable World and inspire your students to shape a more sustainable and inclusive future.

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION CANADA

CANADIAN Geographic

In partnership with Canada

Want to explore a topic in your classroom? Now's your chance!

McDowell FOUNDATION

The McDowell Foundation invites PreK-12 teachers and other educators to submit a letter of intent for the 2027-28 granting year.

Prior research experience is not necessary as the application process is designed to assist prospective researchers in developing meaningful and achievable research projects that support the enhancement of teaching and learning in Saskatchewan.

Notice of Intent Requirements

- Applicant(s) name and contact information.
- Applicant(s) employer (e.g., school division, university, etc.).
- Project description (100-200 words).
- Research experience (e.g., new, novice, or skilled).

Grant Application Process

Notice of Intent Deadline	**November 30, 2026**
Grant Writing Workshop	**January 2027**
First Draft Deadline	**February 8, 2027**
Final Application Deadline	**April 19, 2027**

How to Apply

Email your notice of intent to **stf@stf.sk.ca** by the November deadline. If you would like to submit orally, please contact the Foundation directly.

More details can be found at:
mcdowellfoundation.ca/grants

Contact us at:
2317 Arlington Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7J 2H8
Phone: 306-373-1660 or 1-800-667-7762
Email: stf@stf.sk.ca

STF-001207 / 20260716



CREIGHTON SCHOOL DIVISION

Snug as a bug – a student uses a body sock in the calming corner to provide sensory support, comfort and help with self-regulation. ▶

Class Complexity

in Rural Saskatchewan

BY: **COURTNEY FORSETH,** STF COMMUNICATIONS



SUPPLIED

▲ Kira Glas.

Kira Glas is on a mission to ensure her children receive the same quality of education as students in other parts of the province. Glas and her husband farm in southern Saskatchewan, and their two children attend grades 3 and 4 at Val Marie School. With just 24 students from kindergarten to Grade 12, the school has only two classrooms.

"Both my kids are actually in the same class because we have kindergarten to Grade 4 together," says Glas. "When I was growing up, we'd maybe have two grades to a classroom. Now we're in a situation where there are five grades per classroom."

This multi-grade approach adds another layer of class complexity on top of students' diverse learning needs.

"We still have learning disabilities; we still have behavioural challenges; we still have students learning English. We still have all of those things the larger schools have," adds Glas.

Mark Benesh, director of education for Chinook School Division, shares his perspective on class complexity as he prepared for retirement at the end of the 2025-26 school year. The division includes both large urban schools with enrolments exceeding 1,000 students and much smaller schools, including 32 Hutterian schools and Val Marie School.



▼ A student at Creighton School uses a lego wall.



"We still have a variety of students at a variety of levels within any class, then you multiply that by the number of grades they're supporting. So, complexity is just as difficult to work through in small rural schools as it would be in a large urban setting," explains Benesh. "Multiple grades aren't a bad thing, but when you throw everything else into the equation, it magnifies some of the elements that might not be as easily worked through."

Glas accepts some of the sacrifices that come with living in a rural community, including a 90-minute drive each way to Swift Current for gymnastics and flag football. However, she argues that a lesser educational experience should not be one of those sacrifices. She worries that having this many grades in one classroom creates too many obstacles and affects students' learning, particularly as they move into high school.

"I think five is too many. I'd like to see some sort of cap. There's just no way for a teacher to get through instruction and lessons for five different grades. How do teachers create that many lesson plans? It's just too much."

"There are definitely families that have not stuck around and families that would love to move back to the family farm but just can't imagine their kids having that type of school experience."

Glas believes additional support, such as educational assistants, could help alleviate some of the pressure and give the school's teachers and principal more time to support students.

"I know with a school this small we will have multi-grade classrooms. But I think five is too many. I'd like to see some sort of cap. There's just no way for a teacher to get through instruction and lessons for five different grades. How do teachers create that many lesson plans? It's just too much."

Benesh agrees that additional resources would help schools better meet students' needs.

"If we had extra dollars, we [would] put them into all our schools. But we're on a tight budget that has run a deficit, using reserves to subsidize the work we're doing. The board is doing all it can to support all our students in the most equitable, positive way it can."

Benesh also points to provincial education funding reductions in 2017 as a turning point. That year's provincial budget cut overall education funding by $145.8 million,



or 7.6 per cent. Between 2015-16 and 2025-26, inflation-adjusted per-student funding declined by $1,483.

"Replacing and getting back those supports has been difficult. Maybe that's why the lens has become sharper."

Challenges related to class complexity exist throughout Saskatchewan. In the province's northeast corner, Creighton School Division faces many of the same challenges seen elsewhere, along with unique local circumstances.

Steve Lytwyn, director of education for Creighton School Division, echoes the concerns raised by Glas and Benesh. A smaller student population, he says, does not lessen the challenges associated with class complexity. While he describes the division's student-teacher ratio as healthy, other factors continue to increase demands on teachers and schools.

"There's a lot of diversity. And the intensity of student needs requires significant planning," explains Lytwyn. "Seventeen per cent of our student population is on individualized intervention plans, and just over half of those students require intensive supports beyond classroom-based interventions."

The division's remote location has also created recruitment challenges.



CREIGHTON SCHOOL DIVISION

"Our greatest challenge is ensuring we have the specialized resources to meet the needs of our students and staff. Recruitment and retention of those resources, as well as teachers, have been an area of focus."

Lytwyn says the division has focused on relationship building to help address those challenges.

"We've been really lucky. We've found people who are willing to make the 570-kilometre drive from Saskatoon."

In a memorandum of understanding between the school division and the Creighton Teachers' Association, the division has also committed to offering new hires a recruitment incentive payment.

Lytwyn also credits the *2023-2026 Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement* with providing much-needed additional resources. Through legally binding arbitration, teachers secured a new class complexity provision that includes one full-time equivalent class complexity teacher for schools with enrolment of 150 students or more, a half-time FTE class complexity teacher for schools with enrolment of 75 to 149 students and a new $20-million-per-year Class Complexity Fund distributed among school divisions using the provincial funding formula.

"For us, it's been a big positive. We took a collaborative approach with staff and decided to really target math interventions in the middle years."

The school division has also adapted programs and supports to meet changing community needs.

"Our greatest challenge is ensuring we have the specialized resources to meet the needs of our students and staff."

"There's definitely a need for increased mental health supports, coordinated supports and interventions. The 2025 wildfires also had a profound impact on our community. A lot of people were displaced and also suffered loss. That led to additional layers of disruption and trauma."

To address these challenges, the division hired a mental health worker through Red Cross funding, secured a Ministry of Education grant focused on mental health capacity building, implemented a new literacy program, created calming corners for students and provided staff training focused on trauma-informed practice,

◀ **Sensory supports help create learning environments where students can focus, participate and thrive, reflecting the wide range of needs teachers address in today's classrooms.**

Survey Highlights

↑44.3%

report teaching a **multi-grade class**, up slightly from 42.5 per cent in 2023.

↑84.2%

report **classroom complexity has increased** over the past two years.

73%

report **not having enough time** to complete necessary activities, including lesson planning, assessment and contacting parents.

87%

believe it is important or very important to have speech-language pathologists, educational psychologists and other specialized professionals readily available when needed, yet **only 16 per cent agree those specialists are readily available**.

96%

agree or strongly agree that class complexity has **increased demands and expectations** related to student needs and contributed to **emotional, physical or mental fatigue**.

Source: 2025 Member Survey: Professional Experience

including STF Professional Learning's Trauma-Informed Practices program.

Lytwyn credits the close-knit community for many of the division's successes.

"We pride ourselves on that community. That's a key word, not just in the name of the school but in the essence of the school."

The STF's most recent member survey, conducted in fall 2025, found that class complexity remains a significant concern for teachers across Saskatchewan.

Back in Chinook School Division, Glas says the community's success is rooted in a culture of resilience.

"We're really good at just making things work because that's the nature of where we live. It's how we're raised. But it feels like public education shouldn't be one of those areas where we need to do that."

She adds that the same can-do attitude extends to the teachers in the school.

"Our teachers care immensely. They want to give our students as much of a school experience as they can. So they volunteer above and beyond what would be expected in a school with a larger teacher complement. That's where my frustration comes from. Why do they have to just make it work?"

Both Glas and Benesh would like to see funding specifically targeted to rural schools. According to Benesh, Chinook School Division received approximately $600,000 annually through the Class Complexity Fund established under Article 17 of the *2023-2026 Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement*. The arbitration decision directed the Teachers' Bargaining Committee and Government-Trustee Bargaining Committee to develop language that would consider the Saskatchewan context, including access to funding for schools with enrolment below 75 students.

The Government-Trustee Bargaining Committee's position was that the $20 million should be distributed among all school divisions to allow them to address local priorities. Ultimately, the TBC and GTBC agreed on that approach. Each school division then determined how best to use its share of the fund, whether in schools with fewer than 75 students or to address other local challenges.

While Benesh says the funding has been beneficial, he believes additional resources remain necessary.

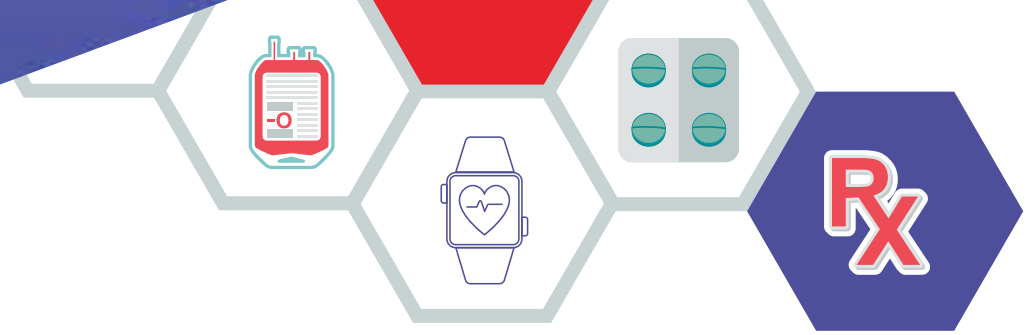
"When we have an opportunity, we need all the partners to value rural education in the same way we sometimes value the higher-enrolment circumstances."

Although the last round of bargaining resulted in gains with the new class complexity clause, STF President Samantha Becotte has consistently stated that more work needs to be done.

"Securing this new article was a significant and important step forward. We know it's not perfect and are focused on building on the progress we achieved in the last round."

Glas plans to continue advocating for additional resources through both the school division and provincial government. While she recognizes resources are limited, she believes relatively small investments could make a significant difference for students at Val Marie School.

"My hope is that these small-town schools don't get forgotten. I know we don't have as much power as larger centres, but I want to elevate that. These rural schools matter. They still have students who have dreams." ▲



ISTOCK

Disability Case Managers Here to Help You Navigate the LTD Process

BY: **SARAH MACDONALD,** STF COMMUNICATIONS

The Teachers' Long-Term Disability Plan has adopted a new case management approach. For teachers, this means that if you need to apply for disability benefits when your sick leave runs out, you will receive personalized, comprehensive support throughout your claim application process, recovery and return-to-work journey.

Every member who applies for LTD benefits will have a dedicated disability case manager. Your disability case manager will review your claim application and supporting information to determine whether the Plan's definition of disability has been met. The information you share as part of your claim will be handled respectfully and used to support the assessment of your application, recovery planning and return-to-work coordination.

Once your application has been reviewed, the support you receive will depend on the outcome of the claim decision.

If your claim is approved, your disability case manager will support you throughout your recovery journey. They will help coordinate the supports and services you need, including referrals for rehabilitation, therapy and other health-care services. This may include diagnostic testing, specialist consultations, surgical care, assessments and treatment plans provided by specialized health professionals. Your disability case manager can also help you understand medical reports, treatment recommendations and vocational assessments, ensuring you have clear information to make informed decisions about your recovery and future plans.

Throughout your leave, your disability case manager will maintain regular contact to monitor your progress and ensure you continue to receive the support you need. If your circumstances change or adjustments to your claim are needed, they will guide you through the process and communicate decisions in a timely manner.

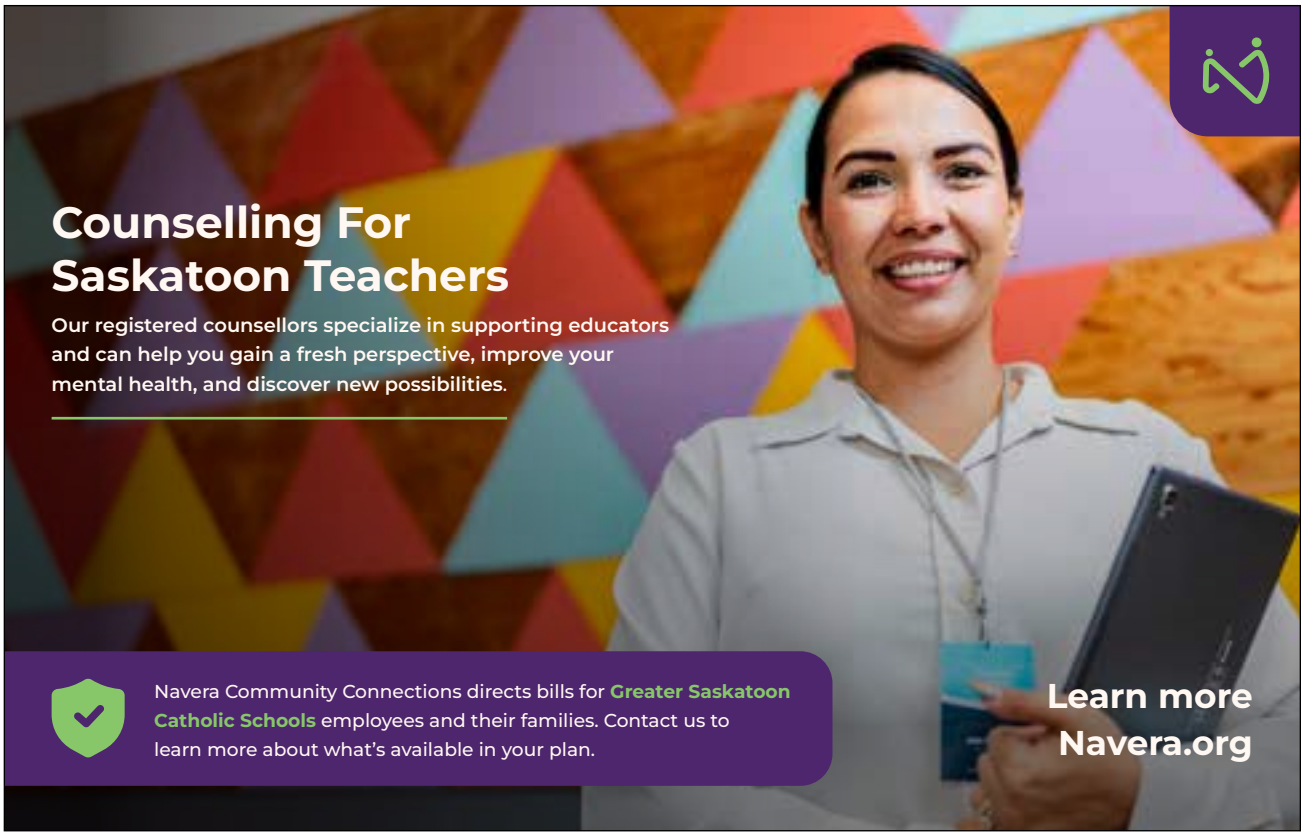
When you are ready to return to work, your disability case manager, together with the vocational rehabilitation consultant, will collaborate with you, your health-care providers, STF senior administrative staff and your employer to develop a personalized return-to-work plan. Whether your return involves part-time hours, full-time duties, workplace accommodations or a gradual reintegration, you will receive support to help identify the best approach for your recovery and long-term success.

The STF's case management team brings expertise from a variety of professional backgrounds, including nursing, physiotherapy, mental health and medicine.

The STF's case management team brings expertise from a variety of professional backgrounds, including nursing, physiotherapy, mental health and medicine. This multidisciplinary approach allows disability case managers to draw on specialized knowledge and collaborate with colleagues to ensure members receive the most appropriate and effective support.

No one plans to go on long-term disability. If the need arises, the Teachers' LTD Plan case management team is there to guide you through each step of the process with professional support, compassionate care and a clear path forward. ▲


Take the Lead!® workshops are free to host
INSPIRE
youth leaders today!
Learn how at spra.sk.ca/takethelead
Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association
TAKE THE LEAD!
SASK LOTTERIES


Counselling For Saskatoon Teachers
Our registered counsellors specialize in supporting educators and can help you gain a fresh perspective, improve your mental health, and discover new possibilities.
Navera Community Connections directs bills for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools employees and their families. Contact us to learn more about what's available in your plan.
Learn more
Navera.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER VARIOUS DATES

PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT SEMINARS

September 22, October 1, 20
Online, 6:30 - 8 p.m.

Are you thinking of retiring? Join one of these virtual retirement seminars to get support and information about the retirement process, including the process of applying for your pension, tools to help you make retirement decisions, health insurance options and other important considerations.

OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER 4-DAY SERIES

CREATING NEUROAFFIRMING SCHOOLS: PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP FOR COMPLEX NEEDS

October 8, 22, November 3, 16
Online, 4 - 5 p.m.

Neuroaffirming schools don't happen by chance; they happen by design. In this learning cohort, school leaders will explore how to intentionally create systems rooted in safety, connection, regulation and belonging, and leave with a practical framework and tangible strategies for leading staff toward responsive, affirming practice for all learners.

OCTOBER/ NOVEMBER VARIOUS DATES

SSL-EBRATION

October 17 – Saskatoon
November 7 – Prince Albert
November 7 – Regina

School staff liaisons are invited to join the STF to celebrate and learn about the important work of SSLs. Attend this event to improve your understanding of SSL responsibilities, learn the skills you need to thrive in the year ahead, network with other SSLs and connect with Federation staff. Visit the SSL page on the Federation website to register.

NOVEMBER 12-13

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: CREATING POSITIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE

STF Arbos Centre for Learning
Saskatoon
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

This two-day workshop focuses on the actions teachers can take to create a positive classroom environment that supports student engagement and success.

NOVEMBER 23

FACILITATOR SERIES 2: DIFFERENTIATION AND RESPONSIVENESS – NOT JUST FOR STUDENTS

STF Arbos Centre for Learning
Saskatoon
9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Just as in classrooms, embedding formative assessment and differentiation within professional learning is key to understanding and responding to learners. Come experience choice and voice in responsive facilitation.

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, AT YOUR PACE!

ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING: STFPL ONLINE WORKSHOPS

Online

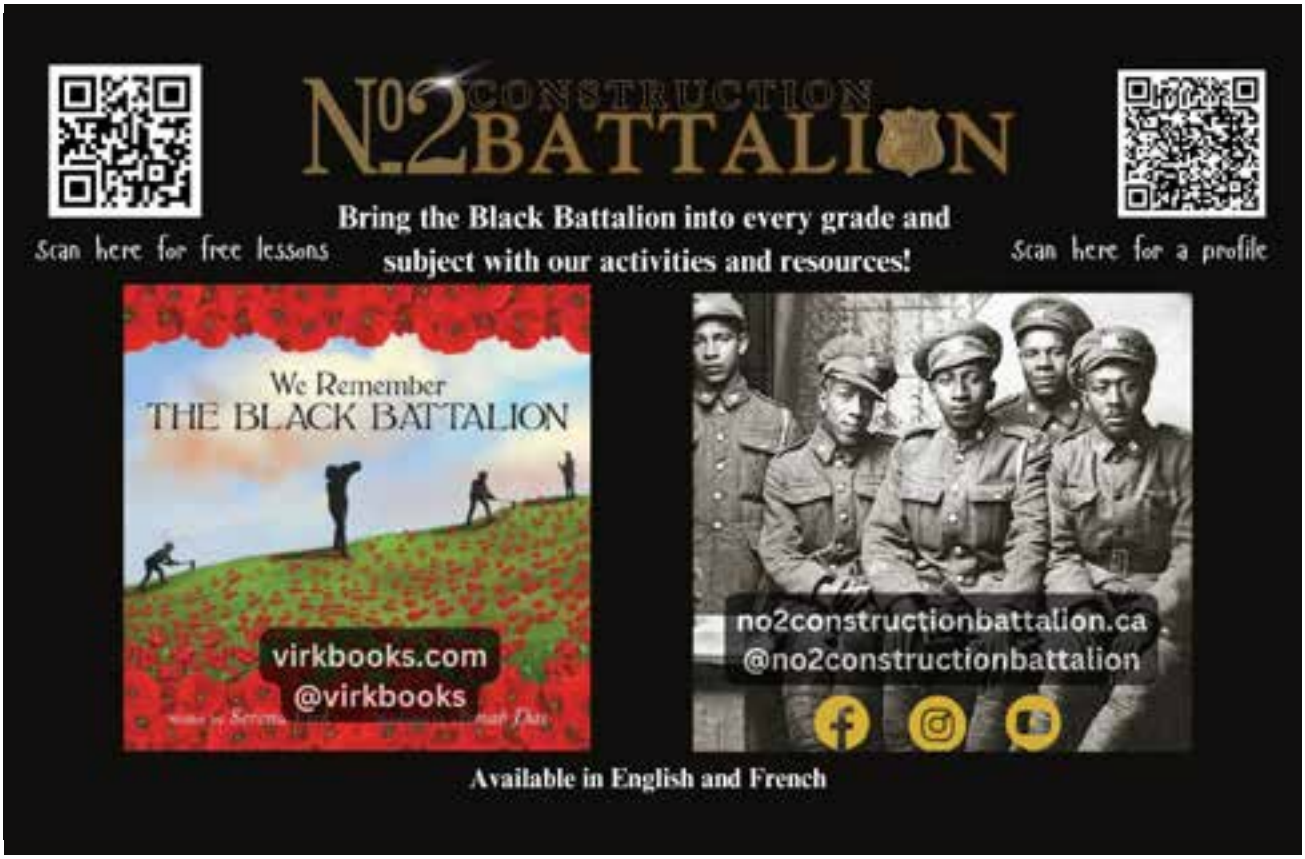
You can now take advantage of STF Professional Learning courses virtually, at your own pace. Delivered through Canvas, STFPL offers a variety of asynchronous learning opportunities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional event listings and registration information, visit the Events Calendar.



ISTOCK



Rick Hansen Foundation School Program

Book a Rick Hansen Foundation Ambassador Presentation today!

Ambassadors are individuals with disabilities who share their stories and unique perspective on inclusion.

Presentations are age-appropriate for elementary and secondary students, available in French or English, and free of charge.

To learn more or to book a presentation, visit RickHansen.com/Ambassadors or scan the QR code



Starting a New School Year

BY: **JOAN ELLIOTT,** ESRC LIBRARIAN AND MANAGER

Did you know that the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has a library that serves members? The Emma Stewart Resources Centre has a diverse array of resources to inspire and support your teaching. Materials can be sent directly to your school or home with all postage paid by us. Contact us at stf@stf.sk.ca or request materials directly through the Online Catalogue on the STF website.



Forward, Together: Moving Schools From Conflict to Community in Contentious Times
In this insightful guide for leading in challenging times, Canadian educator George Couros presents practical suggestions for building relationships, moving ahead with purpose, learning from missteps, and building understanding and shared ownership.



The New Teacher Handbook: 110 Strategies to Problem-Solve the Hard Parts of Teaching
Explore how to set clear goals, classroom management strategies, lesson planning and time-saving tips that are detailed in this valuable resource by Berit Gordon that is geared toward K-12 beginning teachers.

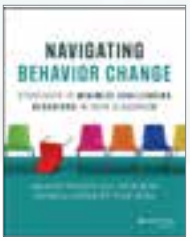


Learning on Your Feet: Incorporating Physical Activity Into the K-8 Classroom, 2nd ed.
Authors Brad Johnson and Melody Jones state that students often learn better through movement than in their seats. Strategies for improving fitness, reducing stress, helping students focus, promoting teamwork and engaging through music are included, in addition to activities for integrating movement with language arts, math, science and social studies.



Short Texts, Big Impact: 35 Strategies for Strengthening Reading and Writing Skills
Learn about an innovative approach to using short texts to maximize instructional time and free up time for feedback, practice and assessment in this user-friendly guide for K-12 teachers written by Kim Carlton. Ideas for selecting short texts and numerous reading and writing strategies for short texts are explained.

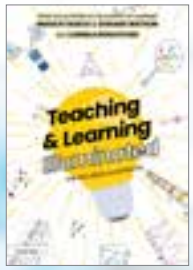
ISTOCK



Navigating Behavior Change: Strategies to Minimize Challenging Behaviors in Your Classroom
School psychologist Amanda Wilson and special educator Danielle Lindquist offer a comprehensive framework for creating a positive learning environment where students are motivated and regulated. Strategies for classroom organization, instructional preparation, reinforcing desirable behaviours and responding to challenging behaviours are clearly described.



Students in the Driver's Seat: Bringing Voice, Choice, and Joy to Classroom Learning in Grades 4 to 9
Discover how Canadian educators Erin Quinn and Tara Vandertoorn foster student engagement by providing students with opportunities to choose style, content and approaches for learning that will inspire them. Several classroom-ready tools, protocols and routines are included to assist students in taking charge of and finding purpose in their learning.



Teaching & Learning Illuminated: The Big Ideas, Illustrated
Through stunning graphics, authors Bradley Busch, Edward Watson and Ludmila Bogatchek make complex concepts from the science of learning easy to understand and apply in teaching. Evidence-based research on cognitive load theory, feedback, metacognition and resilience is some of the content presented in visual form.



101 Playground Games: A Collection of Active and Engaging Playtime Games for Children, 2nd ed.
A wonderful selection of playground tag, chasing and catching, circle, parachute, singing and dancing, cooperative and quiet games is featured in this volume by Thérèse Hoyle. Instructions, equipment required and adaptations are outlined.





CUT PER STUDENT

See what the Sask. Government cut from your local schools.

SaskSchoolCuts.ca

STF

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RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION
2317 Arlington Avenue
Saskatoon SK S7J 2H8
Tel: 306-373-1660/1-800-667-7762
Fax: 306-374-1122

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