



ANNUAL BOARD ADVOCACY PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Background:

In the spring of 2014, the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board ratified a renewed policy framework for the school division. As part of the policy renewal process, the Board committed to developing an annual advocacy plan.

Purpose:

The Board and individual trustees represent and promote the best interests of students through their interactions with families, the public, the media, community partners, provincial organizations and with government. It is the responsibility of the Board of Education to act as an advocate for students, to continually enhance their experiences, opportunities and well-being within the context and mandate of *The Education Act, 1995*. Ultimately, the purpose of advocacy is to influence education policy and to seek to secure sufficient resources in order to meet local student needs identified by the Board of Education. Effective advocacy depends on consistency and persistence, as well as engaging others.

The underlying assumptions of the Advocacy Plan Development process are that the Board Advocacy Plan should not duplicate or diverge from the existing strategic direction of the Board. Rather, it should outline specific actions that the Board can take to actualize the stated goals that have already been committed to in the Board's strategic planning and guiding documents.

Process:

During the September 8, 2014 strategic planning meeting, trustees were invited to contribute input and ideas that form the basis for the 2014-2015 Board Advocacy Plan. The feedback offered by trustees during this meeting forms the basis of the 2014-2015 Advocacy Plan. The Board will revisit the Advocacy Plan in November of 2014 and again in March of 2015, as indicated on the Board Annual Work Plan. The 2014-2015 Board Advocacy Plan focuses on four Board-identified priorities for advocacy work this year. Other local needs or special issues are also presented.

2014-2015 BOARD ADVOCACY PLAN

The Board identified four priorities areas on which to focus our advocacy efforts for the 2014-2015 school year:

1. **Academic Enrichment Programs**
2. **Charitable Foundation and Scholarship Fund**
3. **Public Relations and Communications**
4. **The 2013 Facilities Review & Report**

NOTE: There are two Strategic Planning Sessions remaining in the 2014-2015 school year (February 9th, 2015 and May 11th, 2015). A portion of these strategic planning sessions should be used to focus on these 4 key priorities.

1. **Academic Enrichment:**

The Board identified the importance of recognizing, enhancing and promoting academic enrichment opportunities in the school division as a top priority for the 2014-2015 school year.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board of Education promote the school division's current and future plans to offer dual credit course offerings, industry-specific training opportunities and and/or an academic enrichment program.
- That the Board of Education dedicate meeting time in the 2014-2015 school year to learn more about dual-credit course programs in Saskatchewan, Sun West School Division's dual credit/distance learning program, and the International Baccalaureate (or other) enrichment programs.
- That the Board actively advocate (locally and provincially) for resources that will support this strategic direction.

2. **Charitable Foundation:**

Recognizing that an important function of the Board of Education is to seek to secure sufficient resources in order to meet local student needs in an overall context of fiscal restraint, the Board of Education identified the promotion of the School Division Foundation and Charitable Scholarship Fund as a key focus for advocacy work this year.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board make use of future Strategic Planning meetings to learn about charitable Foundation work.
- That a committee of trustees work jointly with the Director to host the official grand-opening of the CPAC Fitness Centre. (*underway*)
- That a committee of trustees work jointly with the Director and/or designates to plan next steps for reinvigorating the Foundation and Charitable Scholarship Fund; that the committee prepare a report that provides a job description and salary

information for a Foundation Administrator and/or Communications Officer; and that the committee consider appointing external community members that may help to actualize the renewal of the Division`s Charitable Foundation.

- The Board of Education recognize that relationship-building is essential to the success of charitable foundation work and that the Board will need to actively promote the Division`s Charitable Foundation in the community, at linkage meetings and at provincial meetings.

3. **2013 Facilities Review**

The Board of Education affirmed the need to act on the findings of the 2013 Facilities Review Report. There are a number of ways that the Board may go about acting on this Report. One immediate and proactive step that the Board can take is to request a Ministerial Review of Section 95.8 of the Education Regulations, 1986.

The capacity of boards of education to access capital funding and renew infrastructure in rural schools and schools with declining student enrolment is significantly limited by the terms and conditions laid out in the Education Regulations, 1986, which state:

95.8(2) A board of education may only carry out a review of a school pursuant to section 87.2 if the Act if:

- (b) projected enrolment for the school under review for the following school year is less than:*
 - (i) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 4 only, 25 pupils;*
 - (ii) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 5 only, 30 pupils;*
 - (iii) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 6 only, 37 pupils;*
 - (iv) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 7 only, 44 pupils;*
 - (v) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 8 only, 51 pupils;*
 - (vi) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 9 only, 58 pupils;*
 - (vii) for a school offering kindergarten to Grade 12, 88 pupils.*

Boards of Education, especially those facing declining enrolment, are committed to creating sustainable, robust schools that are adequately resourced and offer the variety of programs that best meet the needs of students. In some cases, this may mean that schools with low enrolments must be maintained. In other instances, it may be in the best interests of the students that schools be consolidated. In many cases school divisions are maintaining high-cost programing for multiple schools with declining enrolments.

Regardless, Section 95.8 of the Education Regulations prevents boards of education from proactively seeking program and school consolidation and making decisions that are cost-efficient and in the best interests of the students they serve.

Proposed Action:

- That the Board of Education draft, approve and present a resolution at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) Fall Assembly asking that the

SSBA request, on behalf of boards of Education in the province, a Ministerial review of Section 95.8 of the Education Regulations, 1986 as they relate to school review, enrolment thresholds, and the proximity of other schools in school divisions, and that the SSBA work jointly with the Ministry of Education to renew Section 95.8 of the Regulations.

4. Public Relations and Communications:

The Board affirmed the importance of improving public relations and stressed the need to enhance positive public relations. Positive public relations and the promotion of the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division's culture of excellence is seen by the Board as an integral part of advocating for students. Effective advocacy is contingent on the Board's capacity for strategic communications and developing a robust and positive public relations presence. A successful Advocacy Plan is inter-related with positive public relations and a successful and strategic communications plan and vice versa.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board of Education dedicate future strategic planning meeting time to learn more about public relations (i.e, Living Sky School Division publication, Saskatoon Public Public Relations personnel).
- That the Board of Education work jointly with administration to plan and host a media gathering with local media in March, as per the Board Annual Calendar, 2014-2015.
- That the Board of Education maintain a strong radio presence and look for other opportunities to publicly promote student achievements with a strong emphasis on academics and students achieving at high levels.
- That the Board of Education support school-based staff professional development opportunities that seek to enhance the welcoming culture of Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division schools.
- That the Board of Education publicly recognize and highlight the achievements of all Governor General Award winners in the graduating class of 2015.
- That the Board of Education request that the Director prepare a report that provides a job description and salary information for a Foundation Administrator and/or Communications Officer.

Additionally, Trustees identified other local needs or special issues that would benefit from advocacy work:

- 5. School Year**
- 6. GLBTQ Students**
- 7. Student Voice**
- 8. Funding Sufficiency**
- 9. Ministry Relations**

NOTE: These initiatives can be addressed on an ad hoc basis, by special committee or by individual Trustees or be brought forward for consideration in future years.

5. **School Year**

Section 163(5&6) of *The Education Act, 1995* pertains to the school year states:

(5) The earliest day that a board of education or the conseil scolaire may set as the first instructional day in a school year is the first day following Labour Day.

(6) The latest day that a board of education or the conseil scolaire may set as the last instructional day in a school year is June 30.

The Board recently affirmed the impacts of Sections 163(5) and 163(6) of *The Education Act, 1995* on school division operations. Sections 163(5) and 163(6) are not derived of or aligned with the educational values and principles that boards of education uphold in their day-to-day work. Boards of education use educational values as a compass in all decision making, holding the best interests of students in the highest regard and at the centre of all that we do. Not only are sections 163 (5) and 165(6) of *The Education Act, 1995* peripheral to educational values, sections 163(5) and 163(6) contravene the powers duly given to boards of education and the autonomy of boards to use and apply those powers in order to best meet the unique, local needs of students. The Board affirmed its commitment to advocate for a repeal, revision or review of Sections 163(5) and 163(6) of *The Education Act, 1995*.

Proposed Action:

- That the Board draft, approve and submit a resolution for the SSBA Fall Assembly requesting that the Ministry of education repeal, revise or review Sections 163(5) and 163(6) of *The Education Act, 1995*.

6. **GLBTQ Students**

The experiences of GLBTQ students in school systems have been a topic of interest to some trustees at National events over the last two years. The Board may wish to consider available supports and resources available from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, Chandra McIvor/Rainbow Youth, the Prince Albert Q Network.

Proposed Action:

- That the Board of Education strike a committee to research education policy and available supports and resources for sexual minority students and to bring back a research report with recommendations, to the Board.

7. **Student Voice**

The Board has committed to engaging a national student representative of student voice to meet with the Board, Director, and students participating in the student voice group this year.

Proposed Action:

- Share development of the student voice group locally, involve media where possible and share insights with SSBA and other trustees from around the province.
(*underway*)

8. Funding Sufficiency:

Funding sufficiency continues to be a primary concern of the Board. The Board affirmed the need to continue to advocate for adequate resources for students.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board of Education continue to share vulnerable student information at planned linkage meetings.
- That the Board of Education continue to advocate for sufficient funding for vulnerable students at the provincial level, raising awareness with SSBA executive and consider requesting the support of the Aboriginal Council of the SSBA.
- That the Board consider releasing a public reaction/statement to the provincial budget as soon as possible following the budget announcement.

9. Ministry Relations:

The Board noted that there are fewer opportunities to engage with Ministry of Education on educational matters.

Proposed Action:

- That the Board of Education seek out formal and informal opportunities to work jointly with Ministry of Education officials (i.e. potential Hoshin Kanri event in the fall of 2014).