

2017-2018 Annual Board Advocacy Plan

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 which is to be reviewed and renewed on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of the Vice-Chair to draft the Board Advocacy Plan for the consideration of the Board, annually (Policy 6.8).

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 wellbeing 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 Board Advocacy Plan should complement the existing strategic direction of the Board. It outlines specific actions that the Board can take to actualize the stated goals from the Board's strategic planning and guiding documents.

Strategic Advocacy:

In April of 2017, the Board of Education approved a renewed version of the Three Year Strategic Plan (2017-2020), available - [SRPSD Strategic Plan 2017-2020](#).

Through planned collective and individual advocacy efforts and through the actualization of The Board Advocacy Plan (2017-2018), the Board's work will support progress towards stated goals in the Three Year Plan.

Process:

During the September 11th meeting of the Board, trustees reviewed the 2016- 2017 Advocacy Plan and provided input into its renewal. Trustees' collective feedback, as well as the renewed strategic plan, forms the basis of the current plan. The Board will review and approve the current plan in October of 2017 and revisit the Advocacy Plan in November of 2017 and again in March of 2018, as indicated on the Board Annual Work Plan.

Annual Board Advocacy Plan for 2017-2018

The Board identified seven priorities areas on which to focus advocacy efforts for the 2017-2018 school year:

1. **ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES**
2. **VULNERABLE STUDENTS**
3. **FACILITIES RENEWAL**
4. **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS**
5. **STUDENT TRUSTEESHIP**
6. **PARTNERSHIPS**
7. **LOCAL GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

1. **ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

The Board of Education is committed to recognizing, enhancing and promoting academic opportunities in the school division and will continue to advocate for programs and resources that will enrich the academic experience for all students.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board advocate for additional Prekindergarten programs in the school division.
- b) That the Board advocate for universal full day, every day Kindergarten in SRPSD schools.
- c) That the Board promote the school division's current offerings: dual credit courses, e-learning, industry-specific training opportunities, program enhancement initiatives and strong academics.
- d) That the Board engage post-secondary partners and advocate provincially for dual credit programs, locally developed programs and innovative partnerships that have a positive impact on student learning and transitions.
- e) That the Board monitor the development of academic enrichment programs and opportunities in the school division.
- f) That the Board continue to support, promote and monitor the Program Enhancement Grant program.
- g) That the Board advocate provincially for renewal of curriculum and graduation requirements that reflect the current and future needs of students.
- h) That the Board prioritize parental and student engagement in its advocacy efforts.

2. **VULNERABLE STUDENTS**

Funding adequacy continues to be a primary concern of the Board of Education, especially as it relates to supporting vulnerable students. The school division has an inordinate number of students and families that are vulnerable. Striving to meet the complex needs of vulnerable students places extra demands on the school division budget, which are not fully recognized through provincial funding distribution. The Board affirms the need to continue to advocate for adequate resources for students

with vulnerabilities in order to meet bold provincial and locally determined targets around student learning.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board continue to share information relating to vulnerable student demographics and associated impacts on student learning and the school division budget at planned linkage meetings throughout the year.
- b) That the Board continue to promote the success of programs that are having a positive impact on the learning and futures of vulnerable students.
- c) That the Board raise awareness at the provincial level about the impacts of student transiency and advocate for a provincial strategy to address and mitigate the effects of student transiency on learning.
- d) That the Board continue to advocate for sufficient funding for vulnerable students at the provincial level and raise awareness with SSBA Executive and membership at provincial events.
- e) That the Board continue to advocate for a review of funding distribution weightings and factors that impact the division's capacity to actualize provincial and local strategic plans relating to vulnerable students.
- f) That the Board continue to advocate for wholistic interventions, supports and partnerships that address the root causes of academic disengagement: poverty, transience, marginalization, mental health and addictions.

3. FACILITIES RENEWAL

The division has a number of schools that are in significant need of renovation or replacement. Some over-capacity issues have required significant investment in portable classrooms. The Board's 2013 Facilities Report provides a comprehensive set of actions for renewing infrastructure in the school division. To review, renew and actualize this plan requires significant advocacy. 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 School Division Administration Regulations, 2017. Space utilization weightings disadvantage rural school capital infrastructure renewal. A renewed focus on shared facilities, integrated services and accessibility is needed.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board continue to advocate for a Ministerial review of Sections 55 to 58 of the School Division Administration Regulations, 2017 as they relate to school review, enrolment thresholds and the geographical proximity of schools.
- b) That the Board continue to publicly recognize the strong stewardship of the school division's facilities and maintenance record and advocate for continued provincial support for preventative maintenance funding.
- c) That the Board continue to advocate locally and provincially for a provincial capital infrastructure renewal plan that recognizes the unique context of rural schools.

- d) That the Board continue to advocate for funding of the relocatable classrooms acquired during the 2016-2017 school year.
- e) That the Board conduct a Facilities Review in 2018 while prioritizing shared facilities, integrated services, accessibility and development.
- f) That the Board use schools to host future engagement meetings with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the new Minister of Education and/or government officials, and local/municipal governments.
- g) That the Board meet with Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) Executive to share concerns about the provincial infrastructure backlog, the prioritization process for capital projects and the need for a rural schools renewal plan.
- h) That the Board continue to lobby for strategic and targeted funding to address accessibility issues in schools.

4. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Board of Education affirms the importance of public engagement and stresses 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 and providing local voice. Effective advocacy is contingent on the Board's capacity for strategic communications and developing a robust and positive public relations presence. It also requires the right tools. Due to fiscal restraint in the area of governance, there are limited resources for public relations. This requires a shift in approach.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board of Education engage the SSBA Communications team to support the development of a 2017-2018 Communications Plan for the Board of Education.
- b) That the Board continue to support diversity and the welcoming culture of Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division schools.
- c) That the Board publicly recognize and highlight the achievements of all Governor General Award winners in the graduating class of 2018.
- d) That the Board continue to monitor and provide input into the division's communications planning as part of the annual Communications Accountability Report presentation and as part of the Budget development cycle (i.e. staffing).
- e) That trustees continue to prioritize SCC engagement.
- f) Enhance the social media presence of trustees in the division.

5. STUDENT TRUSTEESHIP

The Board of Education champions the involvement of student leaders in education governance. Two student trustees were first elected by the Saskatchewan Rivers Students for Change in 2015. Elections for new student trustees will be held in October of 2017.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board continue to promote and monitor the activities of the Saskatchewan Rivers Students for Change (SRSC) group by way of committee.
- b) That the Board share the successful development of the SRSC group locally, with the SSBA and with other trustees from around the province.
- c) To ensure funding, longevity and sustainability of the initiative, consider the development of student trusteeship as a credit course.
- d) Consider the merits of proposing a resolution at the SSBA that would call for legislative changes and, ultimately, allow for full implementation of a student trustee initiative.

6. PARTNERSHIPS

The Board of Education places high value on cultivating strong partnerships. This includes maintaining strong relationships with the Ministry of Education and seeking out opportunities to engage directly with the Minister and/or Ministry of Education on educational matters. This also includes maintaining and enhancing relationships with local partners in education to the benefit of our students.

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board prioritize engagement with key partners in the school division.
- b) That the Board continue to respond to the calls to action in the Truth & Reconciliation Report.
- c) That the Board seek out formal and informal opportunities to work jointly with the Minister of Education and/or Ministry of Education officials.
- d) That the Board invite the Minister of Education to visit school(s) that have been identified by the Board as being high priority for major renovation or replacement and to discuss matters of shared interest and concern.

7. LOCAL GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Proposed Actions:

- a) That the Board lobby for increased flexibility and sufficient governance funding in order to provide effective local voice.
- b) That the Board clearly communicate key messages around the strength, stewardship and importance of locally-elected trustees in education governance in the province.
- c) That the Board continue to participate in the SSBA's Education Belongs to Community campaign.

Board approved: October 16, 2017