



Accountability Report

Communications

2020 06 22

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SOURCE DOCUMENTS:

1. Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division (SRPSD) Board Policy 1 speaks to Community Engagement and Responsible Governance generally and specifically identifies “relationship with community partners” as important along with an expectation to “communicate regular” with stakeholders.
Policy 1 also includes information about the school division logo that informs the branding and communication process:
The purpose of the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division logo is to visually represent our brand and effectively communicate who we are as a division. The two rivers represent the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, which meet within the boundaries of the school division. The trees also refer to our location in the parklands area of the province. The word public is significant as it speaks to our commitment to serve all children in our area.
2. Board Policy 2.2 states the following in its Role of the Board Accountability:
 - Establish processes and provide opportunities for information sharing with the community and for community input.
3. Board Policy 8.8.4 states the following:
 - As part of its ongoing effort to keep staff and the public fully informed concerning its affairs and actions, the Board expects the Director to institute and maintain effective and appropriate procedures for the prompt dissemination of information about decisions made at all Board meetings.
4. Board Advocacy Plan indicates Priority Area #4:

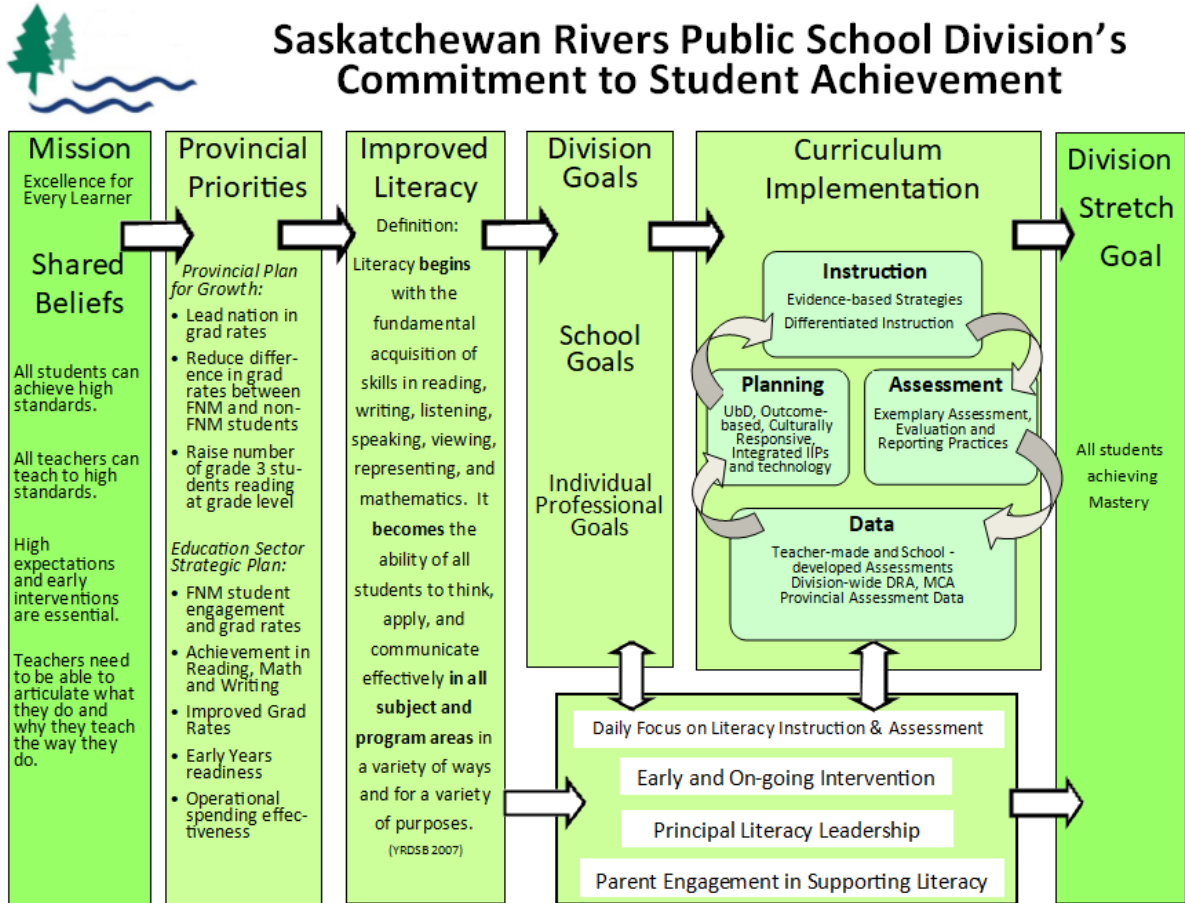
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Board of Education affirms the importance of public engagement and enhancing 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.

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EVIDENCE:

1. An internal communications document, which is sometimes used as part of external communications, is commonly referred to as “**the one pager**”. This document summarizes how various aspects of operations align with the mission of the Board.



2. The Board’s **Strategic Plan**, despite being past due for renewal, is still a helpful tool that not only guides the direction and work of the staff in the division, but also is used to communicate the division’s focus on student achievement, our goals, targets and strategies. The introduction and summary page especially serves this communication function both to internal audiences and to external audiences including partners and the Ministry.
3. The division **website** is a valued tool for staff as a repository for many documents, forms, information summaries and other resources that communicate important information to across the division. Anecdotal reports indicate the website is seen as informative and easy to access but access to the website by the public is primarily parents seeking information about schools, bus reports and some other information. Media, the public and staff also access the website to find information about the Board meeting schedule, agendas and minutes from previous meetings that are normally posted the day after they are approved.

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4. The **Splash Page** is one specific part of the website that is a tool for branding and setting the celebratory tone for highlighting student success. Schools or individual staff submit items and published items are selected for their alignment with the brand of excellence for every learner and their demonstration of a focus on literacy, citizenship/character, or outstanding achievement.
5. Social media platforms, including **Remind101** (80% of schools), **Facebook** (80% of schools) and **Twitter** (70% of schools), are used by individual schools, staff members and Trustees to share with the public both celebratory and informational items with the community and the wider public. Some samples are below:



Social Media has had a growing impact on the Divisions communications in the last three months of the school year. With some discretionary funds, Precision Marketing has been contracted to provide guidance and action on social media efforts. This has included:

- a) **Social Media Training Workshops** for school social media account managers
- b) Establishment of a **Division Facebook Page** along with regular posts. The Board was previously informed of the significant reach of some posts related to the start-up of Cree Language program at John Diefenbaker Public School.

The suspension of classes significantly restricted the kinds of posts that are popular on Facebook (student activities, school events, special celebrations), but there were some engaging posts about connections between staff and students. The division's Facebook page continues to grow in its reach on a weekly basis.

- c) Creation of a Google Ad-words campaign has increased the reach and directed traffic to School Registration information on our website.

Despite the challenges, the initiative has been successful and a summary Marketing Report is attached as an appendix to this report.

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6. **Radio communications** is a mechanism to reach a large audience with consistent branding and informational messages. Although budget restrictions have reduced our radio presence, the division runs ads at peak times during the year such as prior to school start-up, PreK/K recruitment and high school Open House season. Sample ads used this year are below:

#1

FV: *At Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division, our board is focused on a mission to achieve excellence in education. To consistently improve and provide the best programs possible for over nine thousand pre kindergarten to grade 12 students in 32 school communities.*

BH: *This is Board Chair Barry Hollick; consider the advantages of an SRPSD education for your child. Fully rounded learning... individual growth and achievement; find out more at "SRPSD 119 dot CA". Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division, excellence for every learner.*

#2

Student: *Today, education is more than just preparing students for their future. It's also supporting us as we face the challenges of today.*

Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division provides extensive mental health support and has counselors OR Social Workers in every school. The schools support my well being so I can focus on learning.

RB: *This is Robert Bratvold Director of Education; consider the advantages of having SRPSD support the education for your child. We do things differently to enhance your children's learning. Learn more at "SRSD 119 dot CA". Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, excellence for every learner.*

7. Relationships with local media reporters and organizations helps to ensure that **coverage in the local media** continues to be overwhelmingly positive. Occasional auditing of media during select weeks of the school year indicate a strong positive representation in the media towards SRPSD in PA Herald (print and online), paNOW, and the Shellbrook Chronicle.

The hiring of additional reporters at the Herald, one of whom is assigned Education, has resulted in a significant increase in media requests for information and comment and a corresponding increase in coverage in the Herald for Education and for SRPSD specifically.

8. Commercial website advertising through **paNOW** is also helpful in communicating and branding. Our year round SRPSD message campaign featuring online website messages and a special message campaign during K registration, Grade 8 open houses, Congratulations Grads, Welcome Back. We are not able to track hits on our ads specifically, but paNOW has over 2,000,000 site views per year and our business card size ads on the site are regularly present all year and the banner ads run at feature times.

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9. Print media is less dominant than it once was but we participate in several special issues of the various print media including the **PA Shopper's** Community Directory and **Prince Albert Daily Herald** Grad tabloid including a message from Board.
10. In order to enhance our capacity to communicate to all schools, parents and staff uniformly or by selected audiences, administration continued the implementation of **School Messenger** and **Safe Arrival**. Although the initial implementation was difficult as a result of some vendor technical problems and some internal resistance, many schools now report a strong reliance on this software suite. School messenger was indispensable in reaching parents and families with COVID-19 information in a timely and consistent way.

There are concerns the new provincial student software system, MySchoolSask, may cause complications with school messenger and safe arrival. Administration is preparing for integration in the best way possible.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

1. Continue to provide a robust communications strategy informing our staff and the public about the excellence that SRPSD offers. In addition to our strong commitment to student achievement and our focus on literacy, we teach morals, characters, and citizenship.
2. Strive to infuse consistent branding messages in most or all communication to internal and external audiences and encourage staff to do the same.
3. Seek further efficiencies and strategies to maximize the communication impact with a significantly reduced budget.

GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS:

1. The Board is encouraged to maintain current direction for ensuring communication about the Division is consistently provided to the public.
2. Trustees are encouraged to continue seeking opportunities to communicate with staff, parents, students, and the community through presence at events (virtually if required), personal interaction, through social media communication. Messages should focus on the motto/brand (excellence for every learner), strong academics with a focus on literacy, and the inclusion athletics, morals and character education in our schools.