

2021-2022 Board Advocacy Plan

Background:

As part of the policy renewal process, the Board committed to developing an annual advocacy plan which is to be reviewed periodically and renewed on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of the Vice-Chair to lead the process of drafting and presenting the Board advocacy plan for the coming year and updating the Board regularly on progress (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 effective engagement.

The Board Advocacy Plan complements the existing Strategic Plan of the Board. It outlines general and specific actions that the Board can take to actualize the stated goals from the Board's strategic planning and guiding documents.

Process:

In June or August each year, the Board reviews the recent Advocacy Plan and has the opportunity to provide input into its renewal. Trustees' feedback forms the basis of the current plan, and there are opportunities throughout the year to provide further input into advocacy. The plan is revisited in November and again in March of each year, or as otherwise indicated on the Board Annual Work Plan.

Long Term Goal Areas:

The Board identified areas for advocacy efforts align with the focus areas of the Strategic Plan. Advocacy in these areas (see details in Appendix A) occur as a matter of course in interactions with others and when opportunities present. The short-term goals and actions are outlined on the next pages.

- 1. Learning and Innovation**
- 2. Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness**
- 3. Mental Health and Wellbeing**
- 4. Citizenship and Relationships**
- 5. Governance and Leadership**

Advocacy Priorities for 2021-22:

The Board recognizes the effectiveness of identifying a few priorities for focused work in the current year. These priorities will be monitored over the remaining school year, then revised as needed at the end of this school year to identify priorities for the next year. Efforts to build coalitions with local agencies, industry and other levels of government will be paramount.

1. Learning and Innovation Targets for 2021-2022

1.1. Secure sustainable funding or in-kind support for SRPSD indigenous language programs

Actions/Activities:

- a) Meet with Minister of Education to promote and celebrate our current language programs and promote plan for future.
- b) Explore partnerships First Nations and Métis and post-secondary organizations.
- c) Identify and communicate with potential corporate sponsors.
- d) Locate and access federal or international funding programs that support Indigenous language programs.

1.2. Lobby for the elimination of provincial examinations (departmentals) for grade 12 students

Actions/Activities

- a) Acquire data (fiscal, academic, or other) that supports the goal of elimination.
- b) Develop support from other school division trustees and boards.
- c) Seek support of parents and School Community Councils (SCCs) by providing rationale/data that supports the elimination and ensure an opportunity to have parent questions addressed.
- d) Consider discussions or other communication with local and provincial STF.
- e) Meet with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Minister of Education to provide rational and encouragement
- f) Record advocacy rational and request in writing to the Minister and others as appropriate.

2. Mental Health and Well-being Targets for 2021-2022

2.1. Secure additional funds for the next three years to support students recovering from the unfinished learning caused by the COVID disruptions.

Actions/Activities

- a) Request a report from Administrative Council outlining the scope and nature of the issue.
- b) Meet with local human service agencies to build awareness and collaboration.
- c) Meet with MLAs and Minister of Education to share concerns and request supports.

2.2. Establish schools as sites for more appropriate and accessible local mental health supports for students and families

Actions/Activities

- a) Meet with local MLAs and the Ministers of Health and Education or government/secretariat/mental health action plan.
- b) Communicate about and promote the existing school infrastructure that is in place to meet mental health needs and advocate for integrated service delivery of mental health supports in schools.
- c) Meet with local Health Region officials to strengthen mental health supports offered in schools, with particular attention to lobbying for additional child and youth psychologists.

Appendix A: Long Term Advocacy Goals: Broad Strategies

1. Learning & Innovation

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

Broad Strategies:

- a) Advocate for additional Prekindergarten programs in the school division.
- b) Advocate for universal full day, every day Kindergarten in SRPSD schools.
- c) Promote the school division's current offerings: dual credit courses, e-learning, industry-specific training opportunities, program enhancement initiatives and strong academics.
- d) 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) Advocate provincially for renewal of graduation requirements that reflect the current and future needs of students.
- f) Include parent engagement and student engagement in its advocacy efforts.

2. Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness

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.

Broad Strategies:

- a) Share information relating to vulnerable student demographics and associated impacts on student learning and the school division budget at planned linkage meetings and with government throughout the year.
- b) Promote staff capacity-building programs that are having a positive impact on the learning and futures of vulnerable students.
- c) continue to respond to the calls to action in the Truth & Reconciliation Report and to be seen as champions of reconciliation.
- d) Advocate for fully resourced inclusive education at the provincial level and raise awareness with SSBA Executive and membership at provincial events.
- e) Advocate for a review of funding distribution weightings and factors that impact the division's capacity to actualize provincial and local plans to support vulnerable students.

- f) Share strategic goals and diverse stories of student success and anti-oppressive, anti-racist practices in student-first, plain language.
- g) Create a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to consider joint-advocacy efforts and initiatives (i.e. Action on TRC Calls, September 30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, June 21 National Aboriginal Day, and other opportunities).
- h) Establish advisory mechanisms to ensure the voice of LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with disabilities and other visible and invisible minorities is present in Board deliberations.

3. Mental Health & Well-Being

The Board of Education envisions and works towards communities where students, staff and families are supported to sustain and strengthen their resiliency and mental wellness. Proactive measures to preserve and support mental wellness

- a) Advocate for wholistic interventions, supports and partnerships that address the root causes of academic disengagement: poverty, transience, marginalization, mental health and addictions.
- b) Meet annually with MLAs, MPs and Saskatchewan Health leadership to advocate for sustainable, predictable and sufficient funding for mental health programs in schools.
- c) Recognize that schools are easily accessed sites for students to access mental health services and meet annually with MLAs and MPs to advocate for integrated service delivery of mental health supports in schools.
- d) Advocate to the ministries of health, education, social services and justice to raise awareness of local service capacity concerns.

4. Citizenship & Relationships

The Board of Education affirms the importance of public engagement and enhancing positive relationships with students, staff, parents and the public. Positive public relationships 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. It is also clear that effective relationships within schools and between schools and families are essential elements for student success. Advocacy will be helpful in strengthening the reciprocal connection between effective relationships and positive citizenship in students, staff and the public.

Broad Strategies:

- a) Continue to support diversity and the welcoming culture of Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division schools.
- b) Publicly recognize and highlight the achievements of all Governor General Award winners in each graduating class.
- c) Prioritize SCC engagement and capacity building.
- d) Ensure the Board's Communications Committee considers Advocacy Plan goals in its actions.

- e) Continue to support the activities and effective operation of the Saskatchewan Rivers Students for Change (SRSC) group and promote implementation of student voice/student leadership structures in other divisions and levels of government.
- f) Include a Communications or Key Messages component on each Board agenda.
- g) Promote the sharing of and response to the data gathered annually from the OurSCHOOL parent survey and the results of the staff satisfaction survey conducted every three years.
- h) Meet annually with local post-secondary partners as part of its linkage meetings.
- i) Promote its connection to and the messages of the Public Schools of Saskatchewan (Public Section) that promote the value of public education.

5. Governance and Leadership

The Board of Education believes in the importance of strong local voice and takes seriously its role to provide open and accountable leadership. 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. The foundational statements of the Board outlined in Policy 1 articulate the Board's beliefs in local government.

Broad Strategies:

- a) Advocate for sufficient funding in order to meet student needs and actualize local/provincial goals.
- b) 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.
- c) Publicly recognize the strong stewardship of the school division's facilities and maintenance record and advocate for continued provincial support for preventative maintenance funding.
- d) Lobby locally and provincially for a provincial capital infrastructure renewal plan that recognizes the unique context of rural schools.
- e) Advocate for local voice in education by developing local campaigns that contribute to SSBA advocacy initiatives such as Local Voices, Local Choices and Local Government Week (in November annually)
- f) Lobby for flexible and sufficient governance funding to provide effective local voice.
- g) That the Board seek out formal and informal opportunities to work jointly with the Minister of Education and/or Ministry of Education officials.
- h) That the Board clearly communicate key messages around the strength, stewardship and importance of locally-elected trustees and autonomous boards of education in the province.
- i) Lobby for strategic and targeted funding to address accessibility issues in schools and monitor/respond to the development of provincial accessibility legislation