



2024-2028 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).

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 various levels of 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 secure sufficient resources in order to meet local student needs identified by the Board of Education. Effective advocacy depends on consistency and persistence with a focused approach, as well as effective engagement.

Process:

In June or August each year, the Board reviews the 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 determined by the Board through its Annual Work Plan.

Areas of Focus:

1. Vulnerable Students and Supports for Learning:

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 is not recognized through provincial funding distribution. The Board affirms the need to continue to advocate for adequate resources for students with vulnerabilities to meet provincial and locally determined targets around student learning.

Proposed Actions:

- 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.
- That the Board continue to promote the success of programs that are having a positive impact on the learning and futures of vulnerable students.
- 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.
- That the Board continue to advocate for sufficient funding for vulnerable students at the provincial level.
- Continue to respond to the calls to action in the Truth & Reconciliation Report and to be leaders in reconciliation.

2. Facilities Renewal

The school division has a number of schools that are in significant need of renovation or replacement. The Board's Facilities Master Plan provides a comprehensive set of actions for renewing infrastructure in the school division. To actualize this plan requires advocacy. The capacity of Boards of Education to access capital funding and renew infrastructure in schools is limited by space utilization.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board continue to publicly recognize the strong stewardship of the school division's facilities and maintenance record and advocate for preventative maintenance funding.
- That the Board continue to advocate locally and provincially for a provincial capital infrastructure renewal plan that recognizes the unique context of rural schools.
- That the Board continue to act on the recommendations of the 2023 Facilities Master Plan.

3. School Community Councils (SCCs) Relations and Communications:

The Board of Education affirmed the importance of improving SCC relations and stressed the need to enhance positive SCC relations. Positive SCC 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 positive SCC relations presence.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board maintain a strong social media presence in order to publicly promote student achievements with a strong emphasis on academics and students achieving at high levels.
- Engage with SCCs and parents to ensure they are informed and encouraged to advocate for public education.
- Annually trustees will attend a SCC meeting for all schools within their school cluster.

4. Ministry and Elected Officials Relations:

The Board of Education places high value on maintaining strong relationships with the Ministry of Education and seeking out opportunities to engage directly with the Minister or Ministry of Education on educational matters. The Board also places value in having strong relationships with other elected officials, including but not limited to the Premier, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Members of Parliament (MPs), mayors and reeves.

Proposed Actions:

- That the Board seek out formal and informal opportunities to work jointly with the Minister of Education and/or Ministry of Education officials.
- Annually invite the Premier, MLAs and MPs to a meeting with the Board.
- Once every two years invite the elected members of PAATA to a meeting with the Board.
- Once every two years invite rural municipalities elected officials to a meeting with the Board.

5. Strategic Plan and Provincial Education Plan (PEP)

The Board identified areas for advocacy and accountability efforts align with the focus areas of the Strategic Plan. Advocacy and accountability in these areas will be completed in the following ways:

- Annual Report to the Ministry submitted each fall that outlines SRPSD accomplishments connected to our Strategic Plan and the Provincial Education Plan (PEP).
- Report out on our successes and challenges of the Strategic Plan to the public and at our annual SCC gathering.

Ongoing Advocacy, items that are now regular processes for Board business:

- The Board to meet with Elders Council four times per year, following the seasonal pipe ceremonies.
- Include a Communication or Key Messages component after each Elders Council.
- That the Board continue to support and promote the welcoming culture of Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division schools.
- Participate in the SRPSD annual SCC gathering.
- Communicate key messages following Board meetings to enhance the perception of locally-elected trustees and autonomous Boards of education in the province.
- City and School Boards Liaison Committee to meet with Prince Albert elected officials to make recommendations to City Council and/or the respective schools boards on relevant matters to all parties.
- Continue to support the activities and effective operation of the Saskatchewan Rivers Students for Change (SRSC) group.
- Promote Public Schools of Saskatchewan (Public Section) which promote the value of public education.
- Summary (2 pager) of the Annual Report accomplishments and challenges to be shared with the public to engage our stakeholders.

Board approved: January 13, 2025