



# **Governance Handbook for School Board Members**



**Governance Handbook  
for School Board Members**

**SUMMARY**

# What Board Members Need to Know about Governance and Strategy

## The Education System

As a shared responsibility of both the Provincial and Federal governments, the sector is led in the province by the Ministry of Education. In fulfilling its responsibility for the education of young people, the Province has delegated local monitoring and guidance to School Boards.

There are 27 school divisions in the province. School divisions fall into three categories: public, separate and francophone.

Some Saskatchewan children receive their education outside of the publicly-funded K-12 system. Services outside the publicly-funded system include First Nations Schools, Independent Schools and Home-Schoolers.

Educational organizations that represent various interests within the education system and play important roles in shaping educational policy and practice in Saskatchewan include:

- The **Ministry of Education**: responsible for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 education
- **Saskatchewan School Boards Association**: a voluntary, non-profit organization that serves boards of education as the voice for publicly funded education in Saskatchewan.
- **The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO)**: a professional association of certified school business officials.
- **The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS)**: a professional association of educational administrators who work at the school division level
- **Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF)**: a self-regulating, professional association which provides numerous services to teachers, and a collective bargaining agent which negotiates collective agreement for teachers at the provincial level

## The Conceptual Model

Your primary job as a board trustee is not to manage the School Board, but to “govern” it. Governing means directing and controlling – setting the strategic direction of the School Board (through the plan and budget), and then being confident that the School Board is moving in that direction (by monitoring and evaluating results).

Your legal duties are listed in *The Education Act, 1995* (in short): to administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division, and to exercise general supervision and control over the schools – through bylaws and resolutions.

In practice, the board of trustees governs (supervise and control) and the Director of Education administers and manages (delegated to and monitored by the board of trustees).

Your key roles of the board in setting the strategic direction of the School Board are to:

- review and approve the strategic plan;
- hire the Director of Education, delegate authority and manage this relationship;

### GOVERNANCE DEFINED

Governance is the system by which the School Board is directed and controlled.

- set the risk appetite and approve policies to guide staff; and
- review and approve resourcing largely through the annual budget.

School boards act on behalf of the citizens they represent and have authority over the school system and its resources. They usually do this by developing policies and monitoring outcomes to determine progress toward desired results and gaining assurance that the school board is headed in the direction that was set. Your key roles:

- monitor and report on the performance of the School Board;
- monitor and evaluate the performance of the Director of Education, and of the board itself;
- oversee risk management, including compliance with policies; and
- review and approve the financial reports and audit.

Beyond your core governance (legal) roles of leadership and stewardship, School Board members are expected to engage with key stakeholders, ensuring that the institution has effective connections with all those who have a stake in the effective education and well-being of children and youth.

While the board focuses on these, the Director of Education and their staff perform the actual day-to-day work of providing a quality education to the young people of the region: there is a “bright line” between the responsibilities of each.

Locally elected Boards of Education are an important part of the democratic process that provide a connection between the community and the education system. This connection helps local boards guide the direction of resources in a manner that will best suit the communities they serve. They also provide a valuable outlet for parents to connect with the system in a more meaningful way.

As a trustee you will be required to conduct yourself at all times in a professional manner and to fulfill your fiduciary duty as a board member. That means acting in the best interest of the Board of Education, even when the needs of the board are in conflict with your own needs or desires. This goes beyond simple conflict of interest where financial gain is at stake, but also means you must put the needs of the board ahead of your own political aspirations.

Both the Province and the School Board play roles in setting priorities for the education program and student achievement. The Ministry of Education may define key results and desired student outcomes for the school system. They may also define school system cycles of planning, monitoring and reporting.

## **What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and Risk**

It is said that what gets measured gets done. Creating a strategic plan is just the first stage of achieving results. A plan is merely an intention to act, real action must then take place, and you need to have a way to be confident that these intentions are being realized.

“Risk” deals with the uncertainty of achieving objectives – in the real world, no outcomes are certain! The goal of risk management is to optimize risk, not to minimize risk. For instance, we could eliminate all sports activities at schools to minimize the risk of sports injuries, but that would not serve our students well. Risk taking is the essence of how school boards exist, generate student outcomes and sustain themselves. Without risk taking there would be no innovation, no progress and no advances in student outcomes.

The Director of Education and staff manage risks by identifying, assessing, measuring, mitigating and monitoring them. Beyond this, you, the board, then have three roles in risk—risk direction, oversight and control.

Management reporting provides regular updates for you to assess progress towards objectives, and whether this is within risk tolerances.

The school board is responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning. Because the school board is accountable when things go wrong, it just makes sense that the board will take proactive steps to ensure that schools are safe places to learn and work. School boards need to take a broad perspective. Issues range from air quality and bullying, to establishing a positive work environment, to retaining staff.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association offers numerous services that help school boards create safe and supportive environments in the schools of their division. These services include a comprehensive insurance program, legal services, an employee benefits program, and support for many aspects of employee relations.

Engaging with the community is an important part of the school board’s job. All community members have a need and a right to know what children are learning and how well they are learning it. They also have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent and to participate in discussions about the allocation of education resources in their community.

You (the board) have three main roles when it comes to communications and stakeholder engagement, just as you do with other areas of governance: review and approve the Communications Plan and Policies; monitor effectiveness of the above, to gain reasonable assurance, using periodic and incident reports, dashboard, meetings; and engage when appropriate in public and community consultations.



While public relations are primarily the role of staff, there are times that you will directly engage with members of the public. Should this be necessary, be prepared, honest, clear, calm, alert and proactive.

School Board Members should at all time be aware of the expectations on them to keep confidences—confidences in student information and privacy as well as in board matters. The basic rule of thumb is that all student information is private and must be kept confidential unless you are compelled by law to disclose it. The same is true for board matters. All board information is considered confidential unless there is agreement at the board level to disclose.

## **What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and Resources**

You have a responsibility to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the School Board's financial performance and integrity. The board does this by fulfilling 3 main roles:

1. Budgeting
2. Reviewing and approving financials
3. Using financial reports for performance oversight

The Board may establish and delegate to a committee the due diligence work of these: typically an Audit & Finance Committee, or an Audit, Finance & Risk Committee.

The process used to develop the yearly budget begins with identification of board priorities, and makes provision for ongoing monitoring to ensure the desired educational results are being achieved.

The budget reflects the values and beliefs of the school system. It is one of the most powerful tools that a school board has for governing the school system. The board uses the budget and financial plan as a primary tool to achieve the strategic priorities of the School Division.

The Ministry of Education uses September 30 enrolment figures to calculate the amount of provincial grant each School Division will receive, according to pre-set formulae. This information is provided to School Boards as soon as calculations are complete, usually late fall or early winter. Boards actually receive their provincial grant when the provincial budget comes down, usually in March of each year. Sometimes School Divisions have to adjust their preliminary program and budget once they know exactly how much money they will be getting from the Ministry of Education. You may decide to cut back on programs or you may be able to add program components. Final adjustments to the program and budget usually occur in March or April.

Your second role in financial governance (education finance) is to review and approve the financial statements of the School Board. Your purpose in reviewing financial statements and reports is to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) that these are fair, accurate and reliable (have "integrity".)

The good news is that you do this by reviewing the work of others, especially the auditors, rather than doing the work yourself. Just as with other roles in governance, your role is to oversee, to ask questions, to gain confidence.

Your third role in financial governance (education finance) is using the financial reports for performance oversight. After the financial statements are reviewed and approved, you are the first user of these. Your purpose here is to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the financial performance of the School Board, and of management.

You are also using financial reports to be confident in the faithful stewardship of funds, and as an indicator or evidence of ethical conduct. The school board is legally and ethically responsible for all money it collects/receives and spends. Thus, it is important to have systems that ensure funds are spent as planned, accurate records are kept, and the board receives the financial reports it needs.

## **What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and People**

You have two main human resources responsibilities:

- ✓ The Director of Education is appointed by, and accountable to, the board; because this is a direct employment relationship, it is sometimes called your “parent” role.
- ✓ The other staff, whether teachers or administrative, effectively report through the Director of Education; and so you have an indirect employment relationship – this is your “grandparent” role. You will approach each of these quite differently.

The Board may establish and use a Governance & Human Resources Committee, to assist in oversight of the people side of the School Board. Occasionally these are split into two committees, although to balance workload among board committees, combining them usually makes sense for school boards.

To ensure clarity, the school board should negotiate and put in place an Employment Agreement with the Director of Education to spell out the terms and conditions of employment.

The agreement should provide for an annual written performance appraisal, and specify salary and benefits. It should also provide a process that will allow employment to be terminated by either party in a way that will not reflect negatively on either party.

Drafting an appropriate contract is complicated and has significant implications; you will want to obtain legal advice. Legal Services at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association is available to assist.

Overseeing the Director of Education’s effectiveness is one of your most important and impactful responsibilities on the board, and also one of the most sensitive. You will want to ensure a good Director performance management process is in place. Formal performance reviews should be conducted at least annually, with informal discussions on progress throughout the year, after every board meeting or at least quarterly.

You will get the most out of your relationship with the Director of Education when you:

- ✓ Treat your Director with respect – they work tirelessly and are often underappreciated
- ✓ Expect great things of your Director – acknowledge them when they are achieved and push them when they are not
- ✓ Are open and direct – just like boards, Directors do not like surprises – they want to succeed – their success depends on your oversight role

Your relationship with the Director of Education is a direct employment relationship that calls for the board to manage this. The other staff all report through the Director of Education.

Collective bargaining responsibilities in School Boards are probably different from any other boards that you have served on before. Boards must make decisions ranging from the values that will direct labour relations, to the role that board members will play in bargaining. Different boards take more or less direct involvement in collective bargaining. Certain aspects are negotiated at the provincial level, others at the individual school board level.

Employee benefits are an important part of any employer's compensation package. Benefits help to attract and retain quality employees. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association offers school system employees a full range of survivor, disability and health benefits. In-service and position-specific training are also available. SSBA also offers a disability management program to its member School Boards.

Board and board Committee mandates (charters, terms of reference) are established by the board, and then updated at the beginning of each governance year (November). These outline the board approved responsibilities and scope of each committee each year.

Based on these, annual work plans are drafted, mapping the responsibilities (and any objectives for this year) with agendas for the regularly scheduled meetings during the year. In this way, the Chairs, members and responsible staff can be confident in how and when each committee and the board will complete its responsibilities for the year.

School boards hold three different types of meetings: business meetings, closed meetings and planning meetings. *The Education Act, 1995* requires that school boards carry out their work in public meetings using formal voting and recorded minutes. *The Education Act, 1995* also provides for closed or "in-camera" meetings so boards can deal with topics more appropriately discussed in private. These confidential meetings should be limited to sensitive issues relating to personnel matters, bargaining, or legal action. School boards may meet for planning sessions, sometimes referred to as "committee of the whole board". During planning sessions, the board may suspend the rules of procedure to engage in informal discussion or to meet with other groups. Voting in meetings must follow procedures prescribed by *the Act*.



## Key Questions the Board Should Ask About

### Governance and Strategy

1. Where are we headed and are we all in agreement on that vision?
2. Why do we exist and will our strategic plan accomplish our purpose?
3. Have we expressed our values clearly enough, and how well do the people who need to understand and live them?
4. How well do our goals express the results we want to achieve?
5. How well do our objectives clarify the outcomes we expect to see along with way to achieving our goals?
6. How well is our strategy expressed and understood?
7. To what extent does the business plan being implemented by management agree with and align to the strategic plan?
8. How well does our board-level scorecard reflect and measure what we are trying to accomplish?
9. How effective is the board at playing its role in strategy and allowing management to play theirs?
10. How well does the strategic plan align with the goals and objectives of the Province?

### Governance and Risk

1. What are the most significant risks faced by the School Board and do we have a strategy in place to mitigate these?
2. What is our risk appetite and tolerance levels in each of these areas?
3. Are we taking the right amount of risk?
4. How well is our risk management plan integrated with our strategic plan?
5. How effective are our controls? And, are we “in control”?
6. How well are risks being managed by the Director of Education?
7. How appropriate is the information received by the board relative to our risks? (Is it the right information, at the right level, in the right format?)
8. How confident are we in the information we receive at the board level?
9. How well are we monitoring and evaluating at risks at the board level?
10. What can we learn from our actual results?

### Governance and Resources

1. “Is this budget reasonable?”
2. “Is it plausible that this proposed allocation of resources matches up with and can achieve the strategic plan?”
3. “Would this expenditure of money be consistent with our core beliefs and values?”
4. “Would this expenditure of money be consistent with the outcomes we want to achieve?”
5. Is there resonance between all of the people who touch the financial statements? (CFO, Director of Education, internal auditor, external auditor, Provincial Auditor, other independent professionals, SSBA)
6. What are the most significant risks we face and how are they reflected in financial statements?
7. What are the main assumptions behind statements?
8. What are the main estimates and judgements used, and does the auditor have complete confidence in these?
9. What can be learned from the Cash Flows, other secondary statements, notes?
10. If you had additional fees/scope/time, what would you look at next, and why?

### Governance and People

1. How appropriate is our plan for the Director of Education assessment and evaluation system?
2. How appropriate is our succession plan for the Director of Education at all 3 levels: Emergency, Orderly, Beyond the Next Transition?
3. How clear are we on our role in human resources and collective bargaining?
4. How well do we encourage the Director of Education?
5. How appropriate is our plan for the School Board assessment and evaluation system?
6. How effective is our onboarding and orientation program for School Board Members?
7. How committed are we to continuous education including for the Director of Education and School Board Members?
8. To what extent are our board and committee meetings linked to and aligned with our board and committee charters/terms of reference and work plans: before, during and after the meetings?
9. How healthy is our boardroom culture and how might we strengthen it?
10. To what extent am I fulfilling my responsibilities to the work of the board?



# Governance Handbook for School Board Members

# Foreword

This Governance Handbook is designed to assist new – and seasoned – members of School Boards in Saskatchewan in understanding and fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

The Governance Handbook was developed by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, with the assistance of Brown Governance Inc.

## For More Information

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These materials are intended as general information rather than specific legal advice. Users should consult legal counsel for a definitive statement of the law. The authors and editors expressly disclaim any liability for any errors and omissions.

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# Introduction

## Who Should Read This Handbook

If you are contemplating becoming a School Board member in Saskatchewan (Trustee), this Governance Handbook will help inform your decision. If you are new to the job, this Handbook will be a vital resource that will provide guidance as you begin your governance journey. And if you are an experienced trustee or a Director of Education this handbook will become a valued reference manual at times of need.

## The Purpose and Scope of the Handbook

This Handbook was designed to provide a simple, one stop resource that will provide guidance on the roles, responsibilities and actions that trustees undertake together and individually to provide direction and oversight to the school board. Though this manual has far less detail than the Professional Director Certification Program\* it has been written to support and enhance this valuable training and has been organized along the same lines as the program.

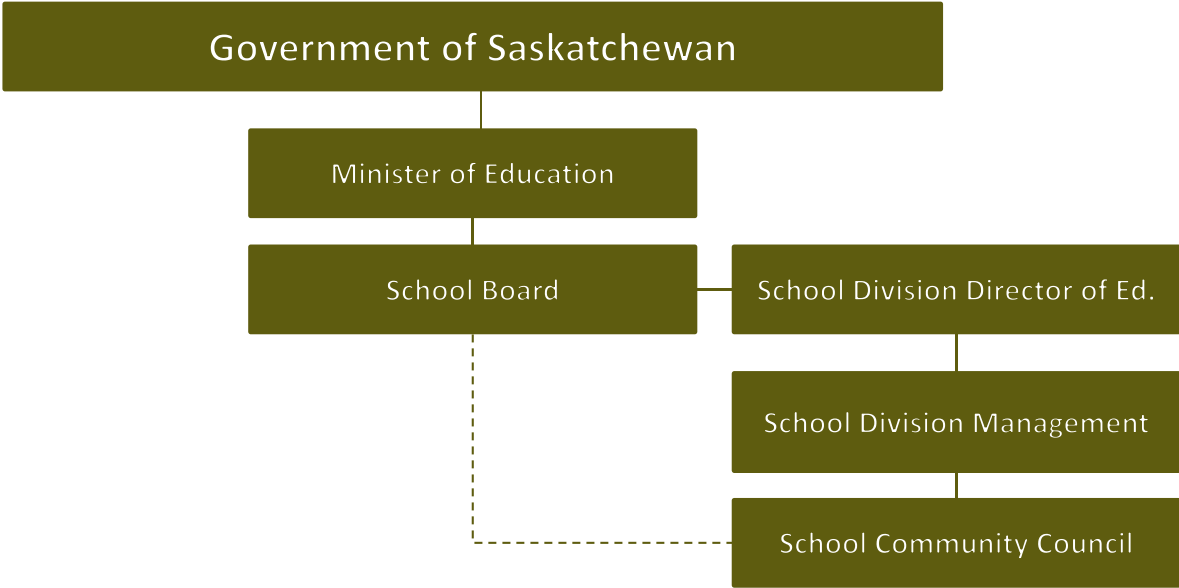
*\*(Note: this program is no longer offered in this original form circa 2016.)*

# Section 1: What Board Members Need to Know about Governance and Strategy

The first section of the Handbook deals with leadership through direction: who are trustees and the Education system, why boards exist, and your first two responsibilities: the governance system and setting the strategic direction of the School Board.

## The Education System

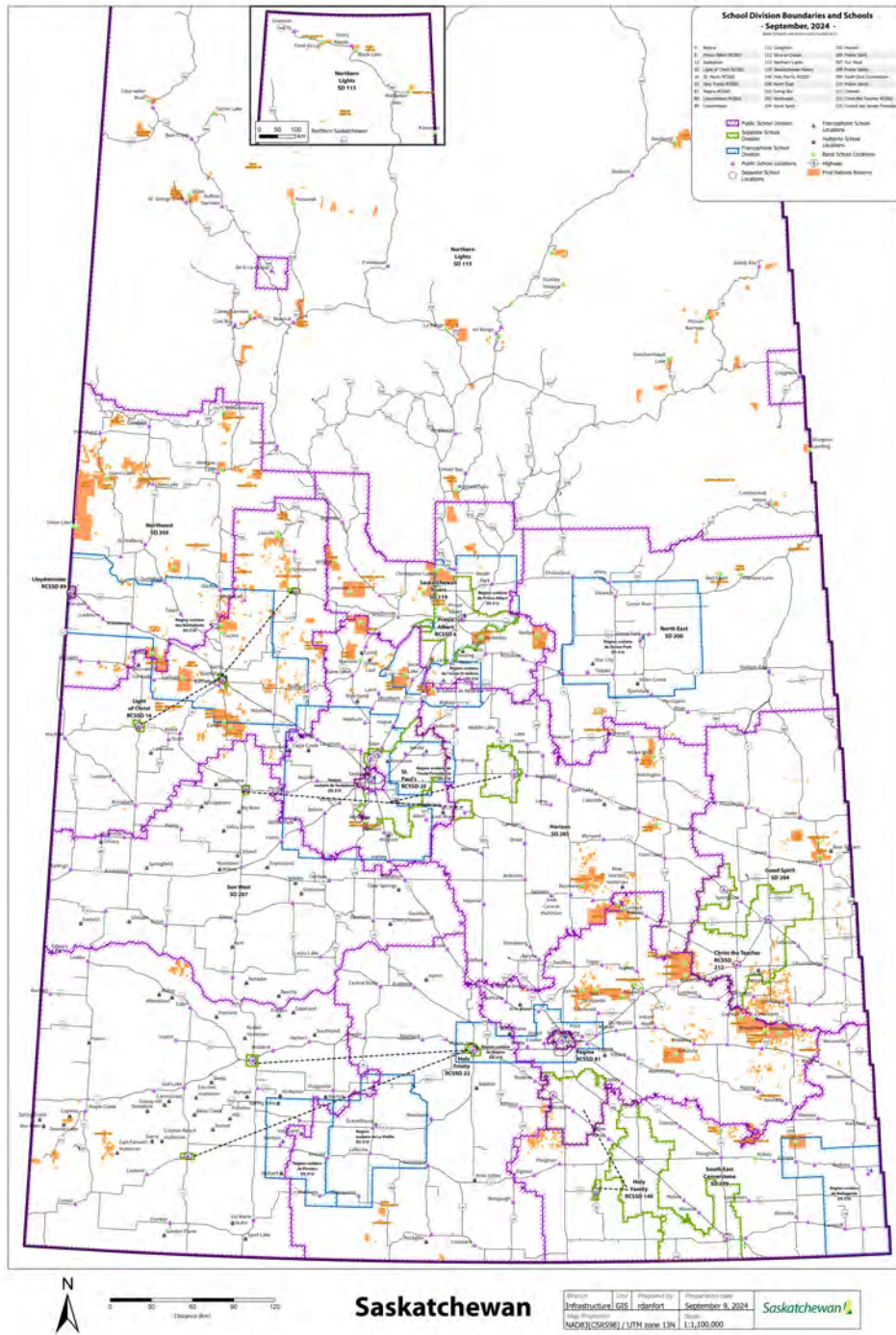
The structure of the Saskatchewan Education system is shown below. As a shared responsibility of both the Federal and Provincial government, the sector is led in the province by the Ministry of Education. In fulfilling its responsibility for the education of young people, the Province has delegated local monitoring and guidance to School Boards.



**School divisions are the foundation of Saskatchewan's publicly-funded education system** – There are 27 school divisions in the province. School divisions fall into three categories: public, separate and francophone.

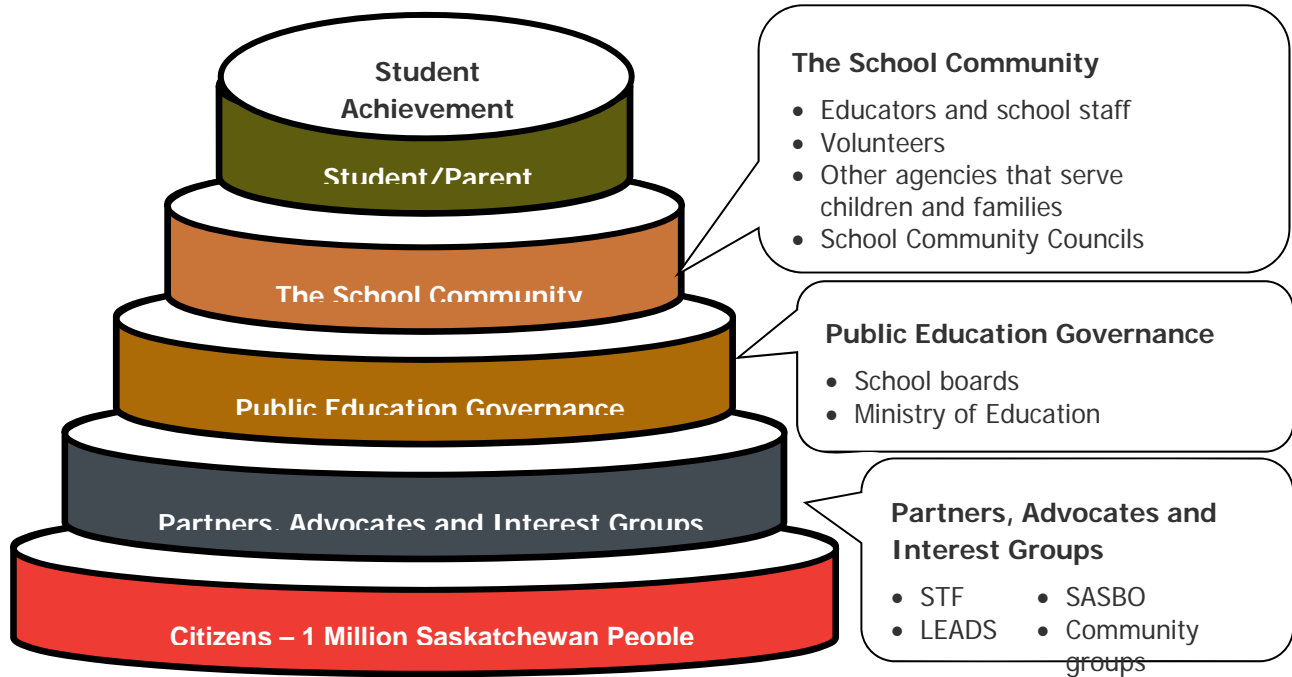
- **Public school divisions** – Unless a taxpayer has designated otherwise, his or her taxes are directed to the public school board.
- **Separate school divisions** – Members of the minority faith who have established a separate school division must pay their taxes to the separate school board. In most areas of Saskatchewan, the Catholic faith is the minority faith. In 2009, there was one Protestant separate school division in Saskatchewan.
- **Francophone school division** – Saskatchewan has one francophone school division for the whole province. It governs Fransaskois schools in Saskatchewan. Only students who have a minority language parent (a parent whose first language is French) are eligible to attend Fransaskois schools.

# Saskatchewan School Divisions



Saskatchewan's education system is illustrated in the graphic below.

## The Saskatchewan Public School System



Source: British Columbia School Trustees Association. Used with permission.



## Who's Who in the Saskatchewan Education System

### Other Schools in Saskatchewan

*Some Saskatchewan children receive their education outside of the publicly-funded K-12 system.*

Services outside the publicly-funded system include:

- **First Nations Schools:** The federal government funds education on First Nations reserves. Educational funding is provided to First Nations who often set up their own schools and establish their own governance bodies to oversee operation of the schools. The provincial government has no jurisdiction over these schools, although many First Nations schools choose to use the Saskatchewan curriculum and voluntarily participate in a range of provincial initiatives.
- **Independent Schools:** There are a few independent (private) schools in Saskatchewan. Independent schools must meet certain educational standards and be registered with the Ministry of Education.
- **Home-Schoolers:** A couple of thousand Saskatchewan children are schooled at home by their families. Home-schoolers must design an education program for their child that reflects the Saskatchewan curriculum and is appropriate to the age and ability of the child. They must register this program with the local school board.

### Educational Organizations

*Educational organizations represent various interests within the education system and play important roles in shaping educational policy and practice in Saskatchewan.*

These organizations include:

- **Ministry of Education:** The Ministry of Education is the provincial government department responsible for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in Saskatchewan. Key activities include:
  - developing curricula for all grade levels
  - providing inservice to support curricula
  - evaluating resource materials for use in the schools
  - developing regulations for independent schools and home-based education
  - providing for teacher education
  - administering legislation relating to education
  - providing provincial grants to school boards
  - maintaining student records
  - the Minister may establish "directives" for school boards to comply with

In addition to these responsibilities that are defined in [The Education Act, 1995](#), the Ministry of Education also provides leadership in several other areas. For example, it regularly conducts province-wide student and program evaluations.

- **Saskatchewan School Boards Association:** The Saskatchewan School Boards Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization that serves boards of education as the voice for publicly funded education in Saskatchewan. The Association represents all school boards in Saskatchewan. Part 4 of this handbook provides more information about the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.
- **The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO):** SASBO is a professional association of certified school business officials. Secretary-treasurers and certain superintendents of administration employed by school divisions are required to be members of SASBO. SASBO provides professional development and networking opportunities for its members.
- **The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS):** LEADS is a professional association of educational administrators who work at the school division level. All teachers who are employed by a school board in a supervisory or administrative capacity and have an out-of-scope designation<sup>1</sup> are required to be members of LEADS. Members include directors of education, superintendents, and assistant superintendents of education. Regional directors of education employed by Saskatchewan Learning are also members of LEADS. LEADS provides professional development and networking opportunities for its members, represents its members' interest in various forums, and administers the disciplinary powers that are an integral part of the legislation that created LEADS.
- **Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF):** The STF is established by legislation, [\*The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006\*](#), that came into effect on July 1, 2006. The functions of the STF fall into two broad categories:
  - a self-regulating, professional association which provides numerous services to teachers such as professional development and a pension plan, and which has disciplinary powers in relation to its members
  - a collective bargaining agent which negotiates collective agreement for teachers at the provincial level, provides support and advice for local-level bargaining, and provides representation regarding teacher grievances.
- **Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board:** The SPTRB serves the public interest by ensuring registered teachers meet professional standards for certification, conduct and competence.

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<sup>1</sup> An out-of-scope designation is an employee who is excluded from a bargaining unit in accordance with The Trade Union Act.

## The Conceptual Model

Your primary job as a board trustee is not to manage the School Board, but to “govern” it.

Governing means directing and controlling – setting the strategic direction of the School Board (through the plan and budget), and then being confident that the School Board is moving in that direction (by monitoring and evaluating results.)

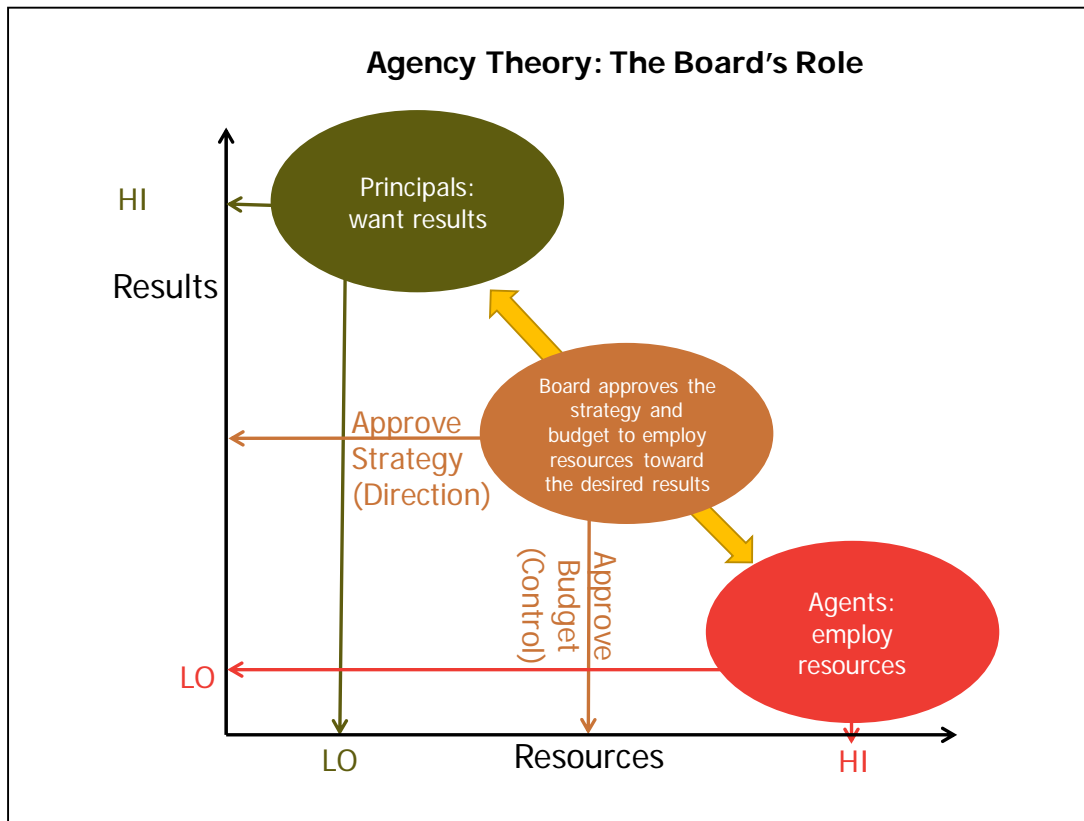
You might find it helpful to think of governance using economic “principal agent theory”.

“Principals” are the people who decide *why* we have a School Board. When we talk about principals in the context of principal agent theory, we are not talking about school principals. The principals in principal agent theory are stakeholders such as the Government and students, as well as our district communities and public. “Agents” are the people who decide *how* we do things. They are the Director of Education, teachers and administrators.

Principals want to get more results (outcomes) for less resources (the money, people and things used by the School Board); agents have many ideas that use up resources (see graphic).

### GOVERNANCE DEFINED

Governance is the system by which the School Board is directed and controlled.



Your job as the board of trustees is to find the right balance among them – to set the right level of resources (by approving the budget) and the right level or range or outcomes (by approving the strategic plan).

As the board our role is to make sure that resources are used in the best way possible by the agents in order to meet the needs of the principals. Sometimes this means feeling like we are stuck in middle of these two groups – a little like a referee. That is the nature of governance and the role of the board: to be an independent voice and decision-maker.

The main benefit to effective governance is, by providing an effective means of strategic oversight, modern school boards are able to coax the most out of limited budgets in order to maximize student outcomes.

These leads us to the main principles of governance:

- ✓ **independence:** in order to be effective, you should be able to think and act independently of the administration, and of any single stakeholder group—even the people who elected you; the governance system is distinct from the day to day operational system;
- ✓ **stewardship:** you should be a faithful steward of resources that belong to other people, and benefit other people;
- ✓ **empowerment:** you should govern the School Board, and empower the Director of Education to manage its day to day affairs;
- ✓ **accountability:** you should expect to hold the Director of Education accountable for the things you delegated them authority for; just as the Province expects to hold you accountable for local governance it has delegated to you;
- ✓ **fairness:** you should consider the interests of all principals and stakeholders, and govern in a fair and equitable way;
- ✓ **transparency:** you should be clear and open about the School Board’s governance arrangements.



Board governance has changed a lot in recent years. There are some important and helpful trends that will serve you and your School Board well now and in the years to come that you will want to consider and practice. They are to be more:

- ✓ **active than passive;** more proactive than reactive: define and delegate rather than react and ratify;
- ✓ **strategic than operational;** oversee don’t do: set and monitor parameters through policy;
- ✓ **open than closed:** open to dissenting voices and different ideas;

- ✓ **objective than subjective:** monitor the Director's performance against clear, agreed upon expectations and criteria;
- ✓ **inquisitive than intrusive:** ask tough questions to better understand, as long as these are constructive and positive: form a linkage with management that is both empowering and safe;
- ✓ **team oriented than individualistic:** the board acts as a collective, not as individuals: you are part of a team that acts together; the Director reports to the board as a whole.

## SCHOOL BOARD DUTIES

Administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division, to exercise general supervision and control over the schools – **through bylaws and resolutions**

## Roles Responsibilities and Relationships

Your legal duties are listed in *The Education Act*: (in short) to administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division, and to exercise general supervision and control over the schools – through bylaws and resolutions.

In practice, the board of trustees governs (supervise and control) and the Director of Education administers and manages (delegated to and monitored by the board of trustees).

Your main roles, and steps you can expect to take to fulfill these, are:

**Leadership in Setting Direction:** School boards lead community, school and school division staff, and students in shaping the future of education in the community by setting the direction. This requires leadership and planning. Planning includes establishing a compelling vision, mission, and statement of values or principles to guide school system policy and operations. Strategic planning is an essential tool for school board leadership. The key roles of the board in setting the strategic direction of the School Board, are to:

- review and approve the strategic plan;
- hire the Director of Education, delegate authority and manage this relationship;
- set the risk appetite and approve policies to guide staff; and
- review and approve resourcing largely through the annual budget.



**Stewardship through Control:** Stewardship is about overseeing the operation of the school system. School boards act on behalf of the citizens they represent and have authority over the school system and its resources. School boards govern by defining the processes they will use

to govern and identifying the desired results for Saskatchewan students. They usually do this by developing policies and monitoring processes to determine progress toward desired results. This means gaining reasonable assurance that the organization is moving in this direction (it's "in control"). The key roles of the board in gaining this assurance are to:

- monitor and report on the performance of the School Board;
- monitor and evaluate the performance of the Director of Education, and of the board itself;
- oversee risk management, including compliance with policies; and
- review and approve the financial reports and audit.

**Relationships through Culture:** Beyond your core governance (legal) roles of leadership and stewardship, School Board members are expected to engage with key stakeholders, ensuring that the institution has effective connections with all those who have a stake in the effective education and well-being of children and youth. You are to:

- empower the Director of Education and build a strong and productive relationship with her/him. Most of the work of school boards is accomplished through relationships with staff including the Director of Education, principals, teachers, and support staff.
- maintain strong relationships with the communities you represent in order to reflect the communities' spirit and values;
- ensure the school board engaged with and has effective relationships with other agencies that serve children and youth. Communication with and listening to all of these groups and individuals is important to the effective operation of the school system.

While the board focuses on these, the Director of Education and their staff perform the actual day-to-day work of providing a quality education to the youth of the region: there is a "bright line" between the responsibilities of each.

The work of the board and the Director of Education is integrative. They are partners collaborating in achieving the School Board's mission, vision, goals and objectives by each doing what they are uniquely equipped to do, and respecting each other's potential to excel.

## Board Committees

In order to provide effective oversight most boards rely on the work of committees to provide diligence on specific areas of organizational concern. There is a spectrum of approaches to the right number and type of committees used so each school board and board needs to find the right balance. Too many committees and the board risks crossing the line into operations and

### THE BRIGHT LINE

The board draws "a bright line" between its responsibilities and those of the Director of Education and management team.

doing the work of staff. Too few committees and the board risks burdening the board of trustees with too much diligence work, or worse missing key oversight responsibilities.

Often, boards use a small number of standing committees that usually focus on oversight: monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school board's performance and Director. The two most common standing committees are the Audit & Finance Committee, and Governance & Human Resources Committee. Their functions are described in the supplemental material for this Board Roles and Responsibilities.

There may also be times when special purpose committees, sometimes called ad hoc committees are desired to provide short term diligence on important board matters. For example, a Transportation Committee might be struck if a long term contract is up for renewal. Care should be taken to ensure the work of any committee is at the right level, and that it does not interfere or duplicate the work of staff.

## **The School Board Chair**

The chairperson plays a key role in the operation of the school board. The chair sets the tone and climate for the meeting through fair, reasonable and impartial treatment of all board members. The chair keeps the meeting moving along and ensures that all important issues are addressed.

The school board chairperson fulfills several roles. These roles include:

- Leader or captain of the board
- Organizer of effective meetings
- Spokesperson for the board
- Leader in policy setting
- Facilitator of problem solving and discussion

## **Selecting the Chair**

*The School Division Administration Regulations* specifies that the board must hold an organizational meeting following elections and annually to select a chairperson and vice-chairperson. However, it does not specify the method that is to be used to select the chair.

Selection of an effective chair is essential for productive meetings and the success of the board. School boards are encouraged to discuss the characteristics of an effective chair and to base their selection on who could best lead the board's work, based on their skills, abilities and experience.

Selection of the chair should be confirmed by an approved motion.

## **Becoming a Better Board Chair**

Most people are not born with the innate ability to chair a meeting. It is a skill that can be learned through study, observation and practice. Some ideas for building the skills needed to be a good board chair include:

- Participate in SSBA and other seminars and courses. Some training focuses on the role of school board chair and provides information and opportunities for discussion and analysis of real-life situations. Seminars and courses teach leadership, listening, conflict resolution,

public speaking, media relations, and organizational skills. School board chairpersons are required to use all of these skills at various times.

- Observe other people who are effective chairpersons. How do they demonstrate leadership? What do they do to keep meetings moving along? How do they deal with differences of opinion or conflicts among board members? How do they deal with the media?
- Read books and articles relating to the role of board chair. Numerous publications on this topic exist. Although not all publications are targeted specifically at school board chairs, many of the skills needed to be a good board chair are fairly generic and apply to virtually any type of board chair.

**Supplemental Information on Roles and Responsibilities:** Please refer to the supplemental tools and examples that will help you with your board role.

## The Legal Framework for School Board Governance

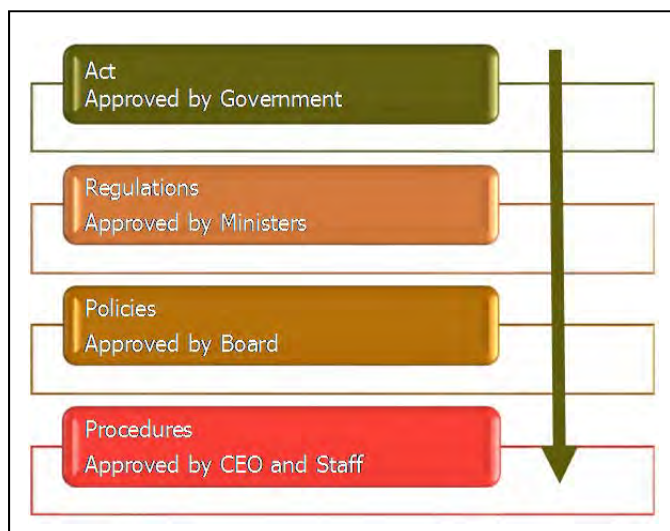
Locally elected Boards of Education are an important part of the democratic process that provide a connection between the community and the education system. This connection helps local boards guide the direction of resources in a manner that will best suit the communities they serve. They also provide a valuable outlet for parents to connect with the system in a more meaningful way.

Every board's – and board member's – powers, duties, accountabilities and liabilities are set out in law. At the top of this legal hierarchy are Acts passed by legislatures, then Regulations approved by Ministers, and then Board-approved Policies.

In Canada, the *Constitution Act of 1867* (formerly called the *British North America Act, 1867*) gives the provinces responsibility for making laws regarding Kindergarten to Grade 12 education.

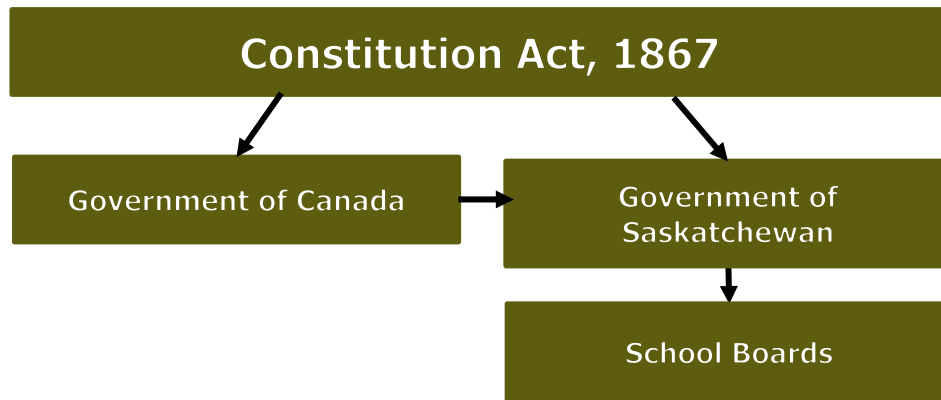
The Province of Saskatchewan, in fulfilling its responsibility for the education of young people, has delegated much of that responsibility to school boards – a form of local government created by the province.

This is how the legal framework applies to K-12 education in Saskatchewan:

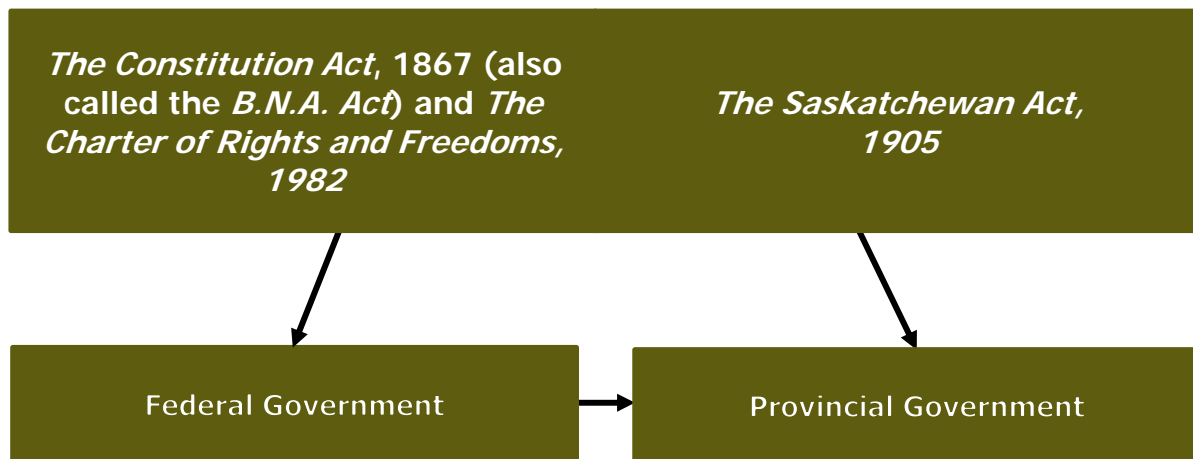




## Constitutional Basis of School Board Authority



## The Legislative Framework for K-12 Education in Saskatchewan



Responsibility for K-12 education of children on federal territory, such as First Nations reserves.

Responsibility for K-12 education of children

*The Occupational Health and Safety Act*

*The Labour Standards Act*

*The Workers' Compensation Act*

*The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of*

*The Education Act, 1995*

## The Education Act

The most important Act governing School Boards is *The Education Act, 1995*. This Act, and regulations, provide a detailed framework for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in Saskatchewan. The Act:

1. describes the authority and obligations of the Minister of Education, school boards, and conseils scolaires;
2. sets out duties of senior administrators, principals, and teachers;
3. describes processes that occur within the education system such as organization and management of schools, school closure, hiring and termination of teachers, school finance, and collective bargaining with teachers;
4. defines the students whom the education system serves: "every person who has attained the age of six years, but has not attained the age of 22 years, has the right to a public education."
5. says that school boards may "co-operate in, participate in or facilitate the co-ordination, administration or provision of educational programs for children who are not yet eligible to be enrolled in Kindergarten ..." Many school boards co-operate with other agencies to offer prekindergarten and similar programs for children younger than six.

***School boards oversee operations of the school division and ensure the school division is successful:*** you have a responsibility to create an environment within the division that facilitates teaching and learning, because such an environment will result in better student outcomes. You have a responsibility to "administer and manage the educational affairs of the school division" in a manner that promotes success for all students and makes schooling a productive and positive experience for all students.

***School boards have both duties and powers.***

**Duties are obligations the board must fulfill.** In *The Education Act, 1995*, duties are identified by the phrase, "**a board of education shall**". Section 85 of the Act describes the duties of school boards and other duties are also implied throughout the Act. Some of the more important duties of the school board are:

- to hire and direct the director of education
- to approve the budget
- to approve the program of studies
- to determine the facility plans
- to appoint qualified teachers

**The Act also confers powers on school boards to enable them to fulfill their duties.** In *The Education Act, 1995*, powers are identified by the phrase, "**a board of education may**". Section 87 of the *Act* describes the powers of school boards. Some of the more important powers are:

- employing ancillary staff
- entering into agreements with other school boards, the conseil scolaire, or First Nations

- providing scholarships and bursaries
- acquiring vehicles for student transportation

## The School Board is a Corporate Body

***The school board is a corporate entity with defined duties and powers:*** We treat corporations as a person under the law for practical reasons. Because the school board is a corporate entity, it can enter into contracts with individuals, businesses and other organizations; it can buy and sell buildings, equipment and supplies; and it can be sued or sue others.

But of course corporations aren't really persons at all. They are treated as if they are persons, but they have no mind of their own.

That's the board's role.

The board is the "directing mind of the body corporate".

***The school board must ensure that the school system operates within statutory requirements:*** Because school boards are corporations created by an Act of the legislature, they have only those powers which the legislature has provided. A school board that attempts to do something which exceeds its authority under *The Education Act, 1995* has created the potential for legal liabilities. If a school board spends money for purposes which exceed the board's legal authority, individual board members can be held liable. If you are unsure about whether a particular course of action is within a school board's legal authority get a legal opinion.

*The Education Act, 1995* also governs other aspects of school board's operations. For example, it defines the school board's responsibility for the education program, outlines meeting procedures, and specifies some financial requirements. Relevant sections of *The Education Act, 1995* are discussed throughout this Handbook.

## Governing in a Changing World

***A changing world has implications for education:*** Major changes are occurring in Saskatchewan and the world. Many of these changes have implications for school boards. Several of the most significant changes are listed below. Each of these changes can represent both an opportunity and a challenge for school boards.

In Saskatchewan:

- Most jobs today require a minimum of Grade 12 graduation and/or specialized skills training. Most unskilled jobs are in the service sector where pay is low and hours irregular.
- School enrolments are declining in rural areas of the province.
- People are moving to the cities – city populations are growing; rural populations are declining.
- Rural demographics are changing. Smaller centres are losing population and businesses and services are becoming concentrated in larger towns and cities.
- There are teacher shortages in specialized areas like math and science.

- Technology is playing an increasingly important role in education and in society as a whole.
- The percentage of Indigenous children is growing. At the same time, the school success rate for Indigenous children is unacceptably low.
- Saskatchewan is already experiencing a skills shortage in the trades and there will be a major skills shortage in many fields in the years ahead as baby boomers retire.

When addressing both the opportunities and the challenges created by current changes and trends, school boards don't work in isolation. School boards are the only group legally mandated to govern K-12 education, but they work in concert with the entire community.

- **Parents have a strong interest in their children's education**, and research has shown that when parents are interested and involved in their children's education, the children do better at school.
- **Other agencies that serve children and their families** have a strong commitment to children's well-being and work collaboratively with the school.
- **Employers depend on the schools** to develop an educated, technologically literate workforce.
- **The community as a whole** knows that schools have an important role in creating productive citizens who can contribute to their families and their communities.
- **Education is a shared responsibility** in Saskatchewan. The education system serves students best when there is meaningful collaboration and engagement in decision-making regarding funding, investment, accountability processes, setting provincial priorities, and resolving issues.
- **Locally elected school boards have a vital role** in serving Saskatchewan's publicly funded education system. The longest lasting and most fundamental responsibility of school boards has been to bring the voice of the public to publicly funded education.

## Ethical Conduct

Unethical behaviour in a school board can ultimately derail work performance and public reputation. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Board to set the ethical framework for their organization and to provide the leadership and mechanisms necessary for compliance. Board oversight of ethical and professional standards is critical to ensure organizational alignment and transparency.

***The school board is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures are established to deal with conflict.***

Occasionally a student and/or a student's parents find themselves in conflict with a school. Most often, these conflicts are related to disciplinary matters, but they can relate to any aspect of school life including the program of studies, instructional or library materials, or extra-curricular activities. *The Education Act, 1995* requires that school boards have procedures in place to deal with conflicts that may arise and that parents have immediate access to these procedures.

Ideally the procedures are designed to promote win-win solutions to problems rather than confrontation, and all procedures must be consistent with both provincial and federal legislation.

In exceptional circumstances, the school board may need to seek legal advice in these matters. Legal Services at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association is available to assist with this task.

## MEDIATION OF CONFLICT

### Mediation of conflict involving pupils

148 ...Where a difference or conflict arises in the relationship of a pupil to the school, the parent or guardian, on behalf of that pupil, is entitled to immediate access to procedures established by the board of education or the conseil scolaire for the purposes of investigation and mediation of any differences or conflicts.

## Board Member Conduct

As a trustee you will be required to conduct yourself at all times in a professional manner and to fulfill your fiduciary duty as a board member. That means acting in the best interest of the Board of Education, even when the needs of the board are in conflict with your own needs or desires.

This goes beyond simple conflict of interest where financial gain is at stake, but also means you must also put the needs of the board ahead of your own political aspirations. This is not always easily done. But if you follow the fundamental legal duties of school board members and treat them as values then ethical and effective conduct is assured.

The first of these duties is called the Duty of Loyalty, or your “fiduciary” duty:

- ✓ To act honestly, in good faith, in the best interests of the organization.

You are a fiduciary, a trustee looking after the business and affairs of a beneficiary who can't look after their own business and affairs, the school board itself, and its beneficiaries, the students.

Once you accept a position as a board member in Canada, you are accepting appointment as guardian of a helpless child, the corporation, in this case, a school board. Not only must you act in this helpless child's best interests, to guard its welfare and sustain it over the long term, but you also must decide what those best interests are. Your primary tool is your own experience and wisdom—your judgment. You are entitled to, in fact must, take into account the interests and views of everyone else in the helpless child's life. However, you must not let any one of their interests prevail over the others. You listen, you weigh, you deliberate as a collective group of guardians. You agree on what is in the child's best interest, then you act on it. Then you watch over the child's welfare, and go through the whole process again, and again. And each time, you may weigh the competing interests slightly differently, to benefit the child over its lifetime.

In order to live the duty of loyalty as a personal value a board member must be direct and straightforward in their dealings and deliberations without breaking confidences. This duty also means that you will bring the voice of your constituents to the board, but still vote in favour of motions that are in the best interest of the board as a whole, even when they are at odds these same constituents.

The second of these duties is the Duty of Care:

### DUTIES

**Duty of Loyalty:** To act honestly, in good faith, in the best interests of the organization.

**Duty of Care:** To exercise the care, diligence and skill of a reasonable prudent person

**Duty to Comply with the Act:** complying to the letter and the spirit of the legislation, regulations and directives of the Government of Saskatchewan

- ✓ To exercise the care, diligence and skill of a reasonable prudent person.

We demonstrate care by attending and being prepared for meetings, following policy and procedures, speaking our mind and bringing our skills to bear on decision making.

The third of these duties is the Duty to comply with the Act.

That means complying to the letter and the spirit of the legislation, regulations and directives of the Government of Saskatchewan.

It is only when we act in a manner consistent with these duties that we can completely fulfill our board duties.

## Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when the interests of a board member have the potential to be at odds with the best interests of the organization.

There are three kinds of “conflict of interest” that you may face:

- Direct: a narrow legal conflict of interest exists when you or an immediate family member stand to gain or lose money personally because of a decision before the board. For example, you or your immediate family member being considered for employment or contract for services;
- Indirect: when the financial gain is one step removed from you, for example, you are an officer or executive of a potential supplier to the school board, or of a charity where the school board is a major donor; or
- Perceived: when someone looking in from the outside perceives that you used your influence to get the board to make a decision that favoured someone or a group you have affinity with or loyalty to. For example, a contract being awarded to a neighbour, someone you went to school with, or your local community.

To differentiate them, the second and third types are sometimes called “conflicts of loyalty”.

A pretty good “gut test” for a conflict of interest is to ask: “How would this look as front page news?” Would readers understand what happened and why? How would the organization’s reputation be affected? What do your colleagues think? Is it a conflict from their perspective? What counsel do they give you?

***As a member of the school board, you must not put yourself in a conflict of interest situation.***

- **You cannot have a direct contract with the school board, such as an employment contract or a contract to supply goods or services.** The only money that you can accept from the school board is your per diem payment and payment for expenses such as traveling expenses.
- *The Education Act, 1995* does not deal with indirect contracts, such as an employment or service contract that your spouse, child, other relative, or very close friend may have with the board. However, for the sake of your personal credibility and reputation in the community, it is important that you avoid any perceived or real conflict of interest. **If the board is discussing an employment or service contract with one of your**

**relatives, leave the room, before and during discussion and decision, and ask that your absence be recorded in the minutes.**

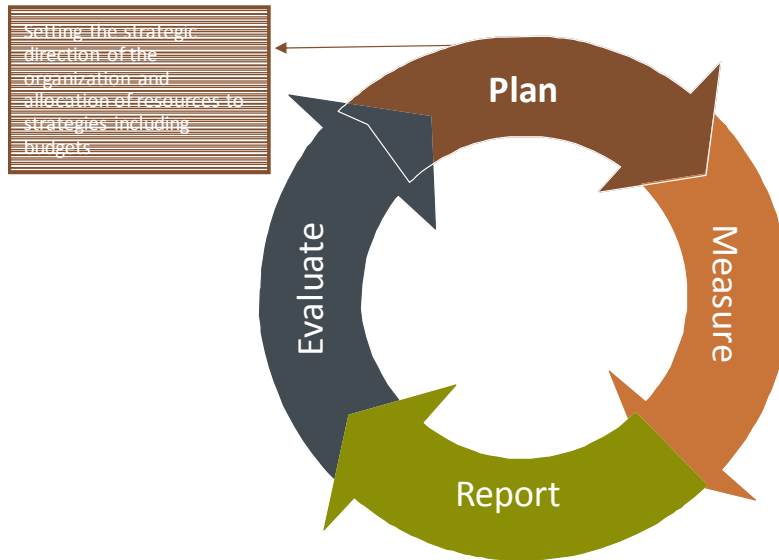
If you are found in conflict of interest, you will lose your seat and you may also be subject to a fine or a prison term.

In addition to the statutory conflict of interest provisions for school contracts, school board members must be careful to ensure they bring an open mind to all the important business of the board. Board members should consider only relevant matters when deciding upon issues, and ensure that their minds are free from improper biases.



## The Board’s Role in Planning and Performance Oversight <sup>2</sup>

One of your most important roles as a School Board member is strategic planning. Strategic planning establishes the direction of the school board – a roadmap for all to follow and track. The Strategic Plan provides the foundation for performance and risk oversight, setting expectations and determining planned outcomes.



You do this:

- ✓ by taking an active role in the establishment of the School Board’s Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives;
- ✓ in close collaboration with management (who usually draft the plans); and,
- ✓ in consultation with key stakeholders.

The following table highlights the roles and responsibilities of the principals, board and agents in the strategic planning process.

	<b>The Principals (Stakeholders)</b>	<b>The Board (The Elected School Board Members)</b>	<b>The Agents (The Director of Education and Staff)</b>
<b>Vision (Where are we going – long term?)</b>	Provides input through public participation and engagements mechanisms	Approve in consultation with the Agents	Provide initial draft for board input and approval
<b>Mission (Why do we)</b>	Provides input through public participation and	Approve in consultation with the	Provide initial draft for board input and

<sup>2</sup> Much of the content of this section is drawn from SSBA’s comprehensive Performance Management Framework to guide School Boards in this area:

<http://saskschoolboards.ca/wp-content/uploads/SSBA-Perf-Mgmt-Framework.pdf>

	<b>The Principals (Stakeholders)</b>	<b>The Board (The Elected School Board Members)</b>	<b>The Agents (The Director of Education and Staff)</b>
exist?)	engagements mechanisms	Agents	approval
<b>Values (What are the non-negotiables?)</b>	Provides input through public participation and engagements mechanisms	Approve in consultation with the Agents	Provide initial draft for board input and approval
<b>Goals (What results do we want to achieve?)</b>	Provides input through public participation and engagements mechanisms	Approve in consultation with the Agents	Provide initial draft for board input and approval
<b>Objectives (Outcomes) (What will be seen along the way?)</b>	Provides input through public participation and engagements mechanisms	Approve in consultation with the Agents	Provide initial draft for board input and approval
<b>Strategies (How will we approach and accomplish our vision, mission, goals and objectives?)</b>	Provides input through public participation and engagements mechanisms	May review some strategies	Design and implement
<b>Actions (What actions will we take to achieve our goals?)</b>	N/A	N/A	Decide on and implement
<b>Measures (How will we know we have succeeded? What are the quantifiable measures of our success?)</b>	Receive reporting on results through various mechanisms such as periodic newsletters, public meetings and annual reports	Approve the high-level metrics in consultation with the Agents (the agents may use a larger suite of metrics to manage by – not all of which need to be seen at the board level.	Design and provide to the board for approval – report on high-level metrics (agreed to with the board) and use lower level metrics to manage the organization

## Environmental Scan and Stakeholder Engagement

The first step in strategic planning is to understand what is going on in your district, what are the changing needs, aspirations, opportunities and risks. This is called different things, often “e-scan” (external environment scan), “i-scan” (internal scan) and “SWOT” (internal strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats). Undertaking this work is typically the role of the Director of Education and his or her staff, who would then report on the outcomes of these efforts to the board.

Strategic plans are usually multi-year, 3 or 5 years, so this scanning step is usually much more in-depth in the years when you are drafting a new multi-year plan. These will involve considerable engagement with the public, communities, Government and other stakeholders. In other years, the scanning may be less intensive, and rely more on internal scans.

You will want to ask key questions during the strategic planning process, such as:

- ✓ What are the strategic, operational, reputational and financial risks inherent in the strategy and are they in accordance with the organization's appetite for risk?
- ✓ How will management track and report the achievement of strategic objectives?
- ✓ How does the strategy compare with what others in the sector are doing?
- ✓ Can we meet the resource requirements of this strategy now and into the future?
- ✓ Will our organizational values and ethics be compromised in any way by execution of this strategy?
- ✓ What is the probability that the strategy will be successful and what alternatives exist if expectations are not met?

It is important that the Board have the capacity to challenge the assumptions that management uses to make decisions. Good strategic plans should stand up to scrutiny over their logic, projected outcomes and investments made to support them. Boards should consider the following in assessing the organization's strategic plan:

- ✓ Goals must be clear, widely communicated and cascade throughout the enterprise
- ✓ Plans must be documented and align with the goals
- ✓ Forecasts must address course corrections required in the Budget and recalibration of the goals
- ✓ Actual/measurements processes must be timely, accurate and transparent

Boards can effectively monitor strategy only when they are informed and knowledgeable about the strategy and its effect on organizational outcomes. Trustees can request further information and research, and engage external consultants and educators to build a platform of knowledge to participate in high level debate.

The Minister of Education and school boards have interdependent roles and responsibilities to each other. Both are involved in meeting expectations in relation to key areas of strategic direction. In creating the strategic direction, the board must align with the Minister's mandate to ensure they are advancing on the strategic priorities of the provincial government.

***The school board ensures the community and staff are engaged to establish a compelling vision and mission for the school division.***

The school board provides leadership in development of the school division's strategic plan with its statement of vision, mission, principles, goals and action plans. You should involve a wide range of individuals and groups in the planning process. Students, school division staff (both professional and non-professional), parents, business groups, Aboriginal groups, community organizations, and the general public all have an interest in the school division's strategic plan.

The School Community Councils in the division can play an important role in development of the school division's strategic plan by coordinating consultations in the communities they serve and by advising the school board.

**Public participation is important because:**

- The school division's strategic plan should reflect the dreams, hopes and aspirations of the people the division serves.
- When you gather ideas from many people, you usually get more ideas and richer information than if only a few people are involved in the plan's development.
- When concerned groups and individuals have a hand in shaping the school division's strategic plan, they are more likely to support the direction.

**Horizon Plan**

The second step in strategic planning is called horizon planning. In this step, you will approve a Vision, Mission, and Values or Principles statements for the School Board. Usually this is done during the year that you are writing a new Strategic Plan, and even then, these may not change for 7 to 10 years.

**A Statement of Vision**

***Has our school board established a compelling vision for the future of the education program in your schools?*** A vision statement answers the question, **"Where are we going, long-term?"**

A vision statement presents a picture of an ideal future state for the school division.

Effective organizations use a process of proactive visioning to create their desired future. The process involves clearly describing a "desired future state", assessing the gap between the present and future state and then creating a realistic action plan to bridge the gap.

- Vision is our sense of who we can be and what we can become.
- Vision concentrates our attention on choosing a future and making it happen.
- Vision, like a good travel poster, creates wants. It paints a future that in every way truly matters.

**Examples of school board vision statements include:**

- An inspired community of learning and achieving.
- Students who become knowledgeable and skilled citizens, contributing to and benefiting from a democratic and prosperous society.

**A Statement of Mission**

***Does our school division have a statement of mission that is well known?*** A mission statement answers the question, **"Why do we exist?"**

A mission statement describes the unique purpose for which the organization exists and the specific function it performs. It should not be lengthy or complicated. It should be short, powerful, compelling, and easy to understand.

## Examples of school board mission statements include:

- *Our mission is to nurture, teach and excel.*
- *Our mission is to ensure the achievement of success in a safe and caring environment.*

## A Statement of Values or Principles

***Are the values and beliefs that guide our school system clearly understood and stated in policy?*** A statement of values or principles answers the question, “**What values / principles guide our actions?**”

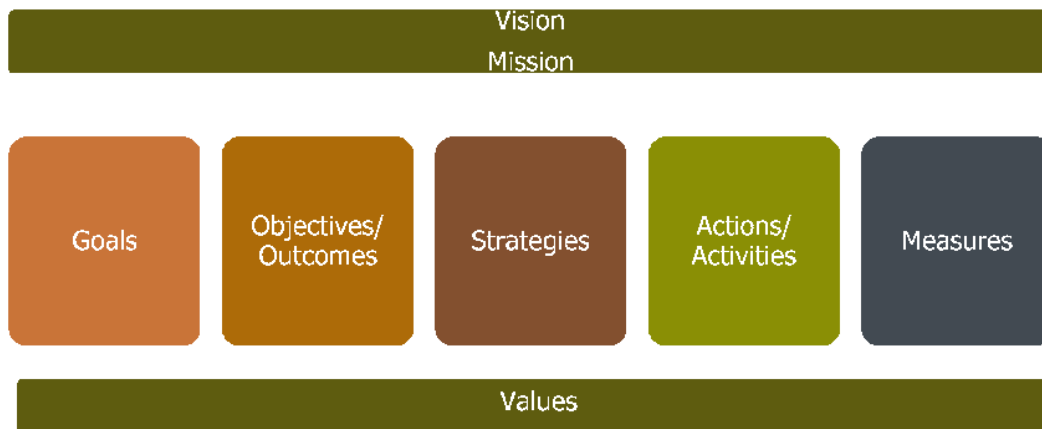
Core values and beliefs are the non-negotiables, which translate into principles serving as signposts to direct actions within the school division. These statements of principle define the character of the school division and provide a basis for making decisions. Foundational principles can also serve as a guide to action planning. *Because we believe \_\_\_\_\_, we will or will/not \_\_\_\_\_.*

Examples of guiding principles that govern actions and interactions in school systems are:

- **Accountability** – *The school division values individual and organizational accountability.*
- **Learning** – *Teaching and learning processes focus on student needs.*

## Strategic Plan

The third step is the Strategic Plan itself – the goals and outcomes (objectives), should line up with the Business Plan that management writes – the strategies and activities planned for achieving the goals and outcomes.



To help you visualize what these parts might look like, here is an example of the main components of a School Board's Strategic Plan and Business Plan:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Example from SSBA's Performance Management Framework.

Vision: *Students who become knowledgeable and skilled citizens, contributing to and benefiting from a democratic and prosperous society.*

Mission: *Our mission is to nurture, teach and excel*

Goal	Objectives/ Outcomes	Strategies	Actions/Activities	Measures
Smooth Transitions: Students will make smooth and successful transitions from Kindergarten through Grade 12 and into post-high school opportunities	1. Pre K and K students show readiness to learn	1.1 Establish an Early Learning Programs	1.1.1 Introduce new Pre-K programs in time for next fall	M1 – 95% of our students read with comprehension by the end of Grade 3
	2. Students transition successfully from Grade 8 to 9	2.1 Create and implement an Orientation and Mentoring Program	2.1.1. Hold joint meetings in September focused on the transition between elementary and high school	M2 - 95% of students successfully transition from grade 8 to 9
	3. Students transition successfully from high school to post-high school opportunities	3.1 Build Career Planning Capacity	3.1.1 Develop work exploration programs	M3 - 85% of students transition from Grade 12 to a post-secondary institution

Values:

**Accountability** – *The school division values individual and organizational accountability.*

**Learning** – *Teaching and learning processes focus on student needs.*

## A Statement of Goals

***Has our school board defined measurable goals / objectives for the improvement of the school system?*** A statement of goals answers the question, **“What results do we want to achieve?”**

Our understanding of the mission for the school system is expressed by goals and/or objectives that set the overarching long-term direction for development in the school division. Goals and objectives should be stated as measurable priorities.

Goals are few in number to ensure the concentration of resources for results. Goals make it absolutely clear where resources will be focused in order to produce results.

An Example of a goal is: Students will make smooth and successful transitions from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Each goal will have one or more objective – these are outcomes that we expect to see along the way to achieving the goal. Objectives should be SMART:

S: specific

M: measurable

A: attainable

R: resourced, and

T: time-bound (a target date)

Measurable goals and objectives are characteristic of a board serious about success.

### **Examples of objectives to improve school systems are:**

- The vast majority of our students will transition from mandatory to non-mandatory education to successfully complete Grade 12
- Our students will read with comprehension by the end of Grade 3

***As the term “strategic plan” implies, strategy plays an important role in the development of the strategic plan.*** Once the board and management agree on the vision, mission, values, goals and objectives (where we are headed, why, and what we want to accomplish) it is then up to the Director of Education and his or her team to determine the optimal strategy for accomplishing these. Strategy answers the questions **“How will we approach and accomplish our vision, mission, goals and objectives?”**

An example of a strategy for “smooth and successful transition” might be: “We will proactively engage with aboriginal populations to determine barriers to Grade 12 completion.”

Determining our strategy—how we will reach our goals—will drive the actions to be taken. When a strategy is aligned from the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the strategic plan, through the actions of the business plan, which are resourced by the approved budget, then activities should produce the expected outcomes. Without a defined strategy the organization

risks investing its precious time and resources on “busy work”—lots of activity but few of the desired results.

### **From Strategy to Action!**

***Has our school board identified the critical actions required to achieve the stated priorities?*** A statement of action planning answers the question, “**What actions will we take to achieve our goals?**”

School board staff then clearly define and establish measurable steps to achieve the Strategic Plan goals and objectives. Planning should define:

1. The steps that need to be taken
2. By whom
3. The target dates for completion
4. The performance indicators that answer the question, “How will we know that we have been successful?”

Development of detailed action plans is an administrative responsibility, however, the goals set by the school board provide a foundation for the action plan.

### **Setting Priorities for the Education Program**

***Both the province and the school board play roles in setting priorities for the education program and student achievement.***

#### **Provincial Initiatives**

The Ministry of Education may define key results and desired student outcomes for the school system. They may also define school system cycles of planning, monitoring and reporting. In order to respond to these provincial initiatives, school systems can ensure that provincial priorities are included in their school division priorities and establish planning and monitoring cycles that are congruent with the provincial cycles.

#### **School Board Action**

The legislation gives school boards significant control over the education program.

***School divisions are required to focus on a core set of learning outcomes, monitor results, report progress and align operations for improved performance.***

Why is it important for you to play an active role in approving and monitoring the education program?

- **Schools boards are responsible for results:** You are responsible for ensuring that all students in the division learn at high levels and have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be productive members of society, to function effectively in the workplace, and to create healthy families.
- **High levels of academic learning are important for success in today’s job market:** Today most jobs require Grade 12 graduation and many require a post-secondary diploma or certificate. This trend is likely to continue in the future, as technology becomes even more



sophisticated than it is today. In the past, people without a lot of formal education could get high-paying jobs today in primary industry. Although some of these types of jobs still exist, most unskilled jobs today are in the service sector, where pay may be low and hours irregular – for example, the hospitality industry. Thus, ensuring that all students complete Grade 12 and achieve academically is a very high priority for school boards.

- **It is desirable that school boards have authority as well as responsibility for the school program:** although the Ministry of Education develops curricula, school boards are responsible for implementing the program of studies. Boards are responsible for teachers, facilities, books, computers and other resources needed to deliver the program. You are also responsible for the overall quality and effectiveness of the education that students receive. Addressing the school program through policy is one way that boards can have authority as well as responsibility for this very important aspect of education.
- **School boards are responsible for approving Locally-Determined Options:** Core Curriculum is the foundation for all instruction in Saskatchewan. It provides a core of basic learnings, but also allows some decisions about the school program to be made locally. At the elementary and middle levels up to 20 percent of class time can be spent on Locally-Determined Options, that is, local or community program priorities.

***A school board establishes a productive relationship with the Director of Education and a culture that empowers people to succeed.*** The Director of Education is the chief executive officer of the school division. The school board relies on the director of education to ensure the goals it has set for student achievement and the other results it has identified are realized. The board can create a foundation for success by clearly stating its goals in policy and setting up a monitoring schedule to assess progress toward the goals. The school board then allows the Director of Education and other senior staff to achieve the goals. This approach enables the director and all other staff to focus their energies on key goals and priorities. It is a positive approach that can energize and motivate staff.

***School boards are responsible for monitoring student achievement and ensuring the effectiveness of the school program.***

Student achievement is the focus of the work of all of the groups that have an interest in education in Saskatchewan. Academic achievement is important, but so are other types of achievement. The *Goals of Education* recognize that becoming a lifelong learner and developing good interpersonal skills are also needed for success in life.

- **Establish goals for student outcomes.** School division goals for student outcomes will be influenced by provincial priorities, but boards are certainly not limited by provincial goals. You may want to refine provincial goals for student outcomes or set additional goals. The provincial and local student outcome goals will be one of the elements that determine what is taught in the schools.
- **Make decisions about those aspects of the education program that are under the board's control.** In some cases, this will involve developing a policy. In other cases, it will involve reviewing and accepting (or not) recommendations put forward by school staff.

- **Establish monitoring systems to assess progress toward achieving goals for student outcomes.** Effective monitoring tells board and staff whether existing programs are supporting progress toward improved student achievement.

## PRINCIPLES FOR PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

- **Students must have the opportunity to be the best they can be.** Given the chance, all people can learn – and learn effectively – at high levels.
- **The entire community must assist student learning.** The greater the community involvement, the more its educational system will meet students' needs in a cost-effective manner.
- **Families must be involved in support of student learning.** The greater the level of family involvement in the student's job of learning, the higher the student's level of achievement.
- **Technology must be used to open the world as a learning resource.** Technology will dramatically increase students' capacity to access and use information.
- **Learning opportunities must include workplace and interpersonal skills** in addition to the traditional educational program. Schools must develop citizenship skills so that students are capable of becoming responsible productive adults.
- **Measurement of learning must be appropriate to the situation.** A variety of assessments – which can be tailored to each student, school and community – must be used for analyzing a student's success as a learner.
- **Education must be valued as a profession.** Respect for education as a worthwhile profession will be reflected in student attitude and improved student achievement.
- **The education system must be flexible** enough to meet individual student and community needs. Every person is unique. Schools must have the capacity to adjust readily to meet students' and society's changing needs.

Source: Iowa Association of School Boards, 1994. Used with permission.

## Key Questions the Board Should Ask About Governance and Strategy

1. Where are we headed and are we all in agreement on that vision?
2. Why do we exist and will our strategic plan accomplish our purpose?
3. Have we expressed our values clearly enough, and how well do the people who need to understand and live them?
4. How well do our goals express the results we want to achieve?
5. How well do our objectives clarify the outcomes we expect to see along with way to achieving our goals?
6. How well is our strategy expressed and understood?
7. To what extent does the business plan being implemented by management agree with and align to the strategic plan?

8. How well does our board-level scorecard reflect and measure what we are trying to accomplish?
9. How effective is the board at playing its role in strategy and allowing management to play theirs?
10. How well does the strategic plan align with the goals and objectives of the Province?

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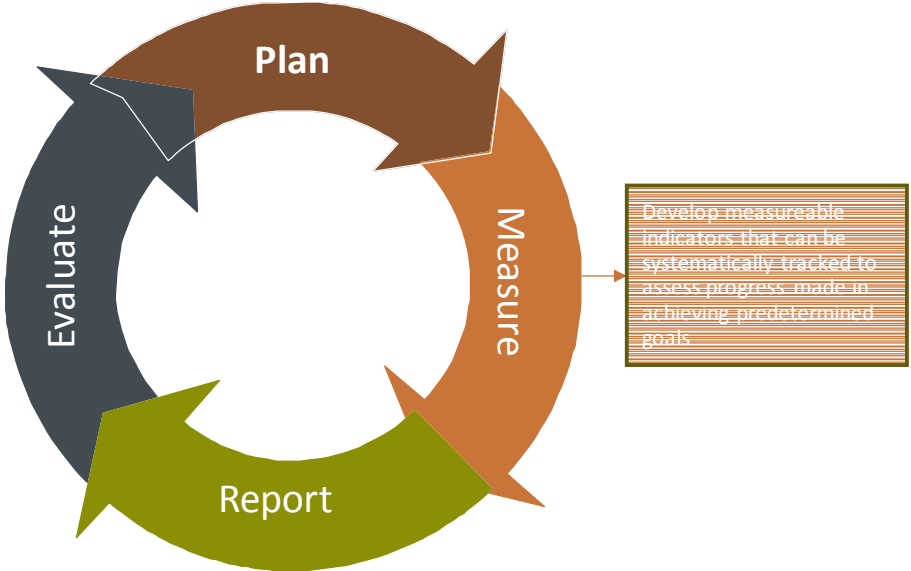
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# Section 2: What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and Risk

The second section of the Handbook deals with stewardship through control: once you've set the direction, your next role is to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the performance of the School Board, including performance monitoring, risk oversight and stakeholder engagement.

## Linking Strategic Planning, Risk and Performance Targets <sup>1</sup>

It is said that what gets measured gets done. Creating a strategic plan is just the first stage of achieving results. A plan is merely an intention to act, real action must then take place, and you need to have a way to be confident that these intentions are being realized.



Measuring results is how we track progress towards our goals and objectives. Once strategies have been determined, measures of their success should be set. Targets should be set, agreed upon and communicated to those responsible for delivery of the strategy to ensure the measure is understood and met.

<sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this section is drawn from SSBA's comprehensive Performance Management Framework to guide School Boards in this area:

<http://saskschoolboards.ca/wp-content/uploads/SSBA-Perf-Mgmt-Framework.pdf>



## Balanced Scorecard <sup>2</sup>

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) is a tool that links strategic objectives to performance measures, targets and initiatives. It is both a planning tool and a monitoring tool.

Using the BSC, you focus on the 10-12 most important performance measures (KPIs) from a strategic perspective – this keeps you, the board, focused on high level strategic outcomes/ results that really matter when you are overseeing the school board's and Director's performance.

You can use the BSC as a tool to assist your School Division to develop effective strategies. Performance goes beyond a single area – like student or financial – to include multiple perspectives across the school board – that's why it's called "balanced".

The BSC typically measures performance in four high-level goal areas:

- ✓ **Students** (Stakeholders, or Customers): this perspective is at the pinnacle of strategy for public sector and not-for-profit organizations like school boards. It answers the question "to achieve our vision, what must we accomplish for our stakeholders (students)?"
- ✓ **Process**: In order to deliver the Student objectives, you need effective processes. It answers the question "to satisfy our customers (students), at which operational processes must we excel?"
- ✓ **People** (Learning and Growth): This acknowledges the importance of the school board's people and their growth, by setting tangible objectives for them. It answers the question "how will we sustain our ability to change and improve?" This considers core competencies, skills, technologies and culture needed to support strategy.
- ✓ **Financial**: this considers the financial strategy of the school board. It answers the question "to financially sustain our mission, what must we focus on?" This encourages the identification of a few relevant high level financial measures.

In a nutshell, then, BSC helps you answer how money (budget/resources) will pay for the people who will use process to meet the needs of our customers (students).

The value of the BSC lies in the School Board's ability to learn from its feedback, to change and develop accordingly, to test new possibilities and to gradually increase your understanding of the linkage among student expectations, business processes, people and financial resources,

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<sup>2</sup> Balanced Scorecard was developed by, and is a trademark of, Kaplan and Norton.

and growth for continued organizational success. Here is a simplified example of what a balanced scorecard might look like.

Vision: <i>Students who become knowledgeable and skilled citizens, contributing to and benefiting from a democratic and prosperous society.</i> Mission: <i>Our mission is to nurture, teach and excel</i>				
Goal	Objectives/ Outcomes	Strategies	Actions/Activities	Measures
Goal 1: Students	1. Goal 1 Objectives	1.1 Goal 1 Strategies	1.1.1 Goal 1 Activities	M1 – Goal 1 Measures, Targets, Tolerances and Actuals
Goal 2: Process	2. Goal 2 Objectives	2.1 Goal 2 Strategies	2.1.1. Goal 2 Activities	M2 – Goal 2 Measures, Targets, Tolerances and Actuals
Goal 3: People	3. Goal 3 Objectives	3.1 Goal 3 Strategies	3.1.1 Goal 3 Activities	M3 – Goal 3 Measures, Targets, Tolerances and Actuals
Goal 4: Financial	4. Goal 4 Objectives	4.1 Goal 4 Strategies	4.1.1. Goal 4 Activities	M4 – Goal 4 Measures, Targets, Tolerances and Actuals
Values: <b>Accountability</b> – <i>The school division values individual and organizational accountability.</i> <b>Learning</b> – <i>Teaching and learning processes focus on student needs.</i>				

## Risk Management and Oversight

“Risk” deals with the uncertainty of achieving objectives – in the real world, no outcomes are certain!

Some objectives will be more challenging to reach, and some will be more important to reach, but all are not equal. For example, on two “people” objectives, you may agree that there should be zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace, but that for the average time taken to fill an administrative vacancy, up to a three-month range may be acceptable.

The big idea here is to attach “risk” to each objective, so that you – and management – can tell if you are “hitting” or “missing” the target, or “tolerance” range. This helps management to move resources around to meet the priorities (zero or low tolerances) that you set together.

The goal of risk management is to optimize risk, not to minimize risk. For instance, we could eliminate all sports activities at schools to minimize the risk of sports injuries, but that would not serve our students well. Risk taking is the essence of how school boards exist, generate student outcomes and sustain themselves. Without risk taking there would be no innovation, no progress and no advances in student outcomes. But, how do we provide oversight in this area?

The Director of Education and staff manage risks by identifying, assessing, measuring, mitigating and monitoring them. (Please refer to Risk Management in Brief in the Supplemental Information for an explanation of Risk Management.)

Beyond staff’s role in risk management, you, the board, then have three roles in risk:

The first is “risk direction”, board and management discussing and agreeing on “tolerances”, or acceptable levels of risk for each objective or outcome area.

The second is “risk oversight”, monitoring the effectiveness of the risk management system.

Risk control, your third role in risk governance, is about having your auditors and internal controls reporting to you (usually the Audit Committee) to make sure that sufficient controls are in place and that these are effective at mitigating risks.

We will now look at these first two roles in a little more depth.



### Risk Tolerances and Policies

Through an informed dialogue between board and management, you will agree on (and the board will approve):

- risk tolerances: these are ranges of acceptable vs unacceptable outcomes for each objective area (e.g. for each KPI from the BSC), and perhaps too
- risk appetites: these are ranges of desired or target outcomes for each objective area.

This often occurs during the “environmental scanning” phase early on in strategic planning, although risk tolerances can be reviewed and reset at any time during the year in response to real events.

The purpose in setting risk tolerances is so that management has a clear understanding of the board’s priorities when it comes to taking, avoiding or managing risks. These are also important when it comes to management’s reporting to the board, and the board using these reports for monitoring (this will be discussed in the next section Governance and Resources).



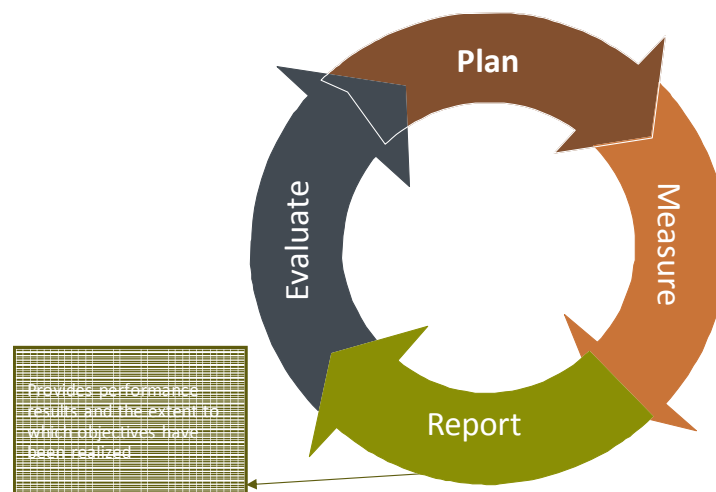
Risk tolerances are recorded and used in several ways:

- strategic plan and performance reports: tolerances (ranges) are shown for each outcome, so that actual performance can be tracked to these;
- budget: priorities and tolerances are reflected in the business and operational plans that management writes, culminating in the annual budget;
- policies: most risk tolerances are written down in plain language in Board-level Policies (see supplemental information from section 1, Governance and Strategy), for example:
  - Code of Conduct or Ethical Code; Conflicts of Interest; Confidentiality; Integrity Assurance (Whistle-blowing); Attendance; Travel & Expense Policies: write down tolerances re: acceptable vs. unacceptable behaviour and activities. These are based on both the Statement of Values and risk tolerances.
  - Delegation of Authority (Executive Limitations); Procurement Policy: write down what decisions the Director of Education may make on her/his own, and how, vs. what decisions must be brought back to the board for approval.
  - Governance Policy/Protocol; Board and Committee Charters (Terms of Reference): write down what the board is responsible for, and how (e.g. meetings, voting).
  - Human Resources Policy; Education Policy: write down the board's parameters for how staff are to be treated, hired, paid, etc.
  - Communications Policy/Protocol: writes down who speaks on behalf of the School Board, when and how.
  - Investment Policy; Insurance and Risk Policies: write down the board-approved tolerance for investment, insurance and other risks.

These are just the most common board-level policies, some boards use others as well, e.g. environmental and social responsibility, archiving and records retention policies.

## Performance Reports and Monitoring

Reporting provides regular updates for you to assess progress towards objectives, and whether this is within risk tolerances. The reporting process should routinely provide consistent information on the measures identified in the planning process.



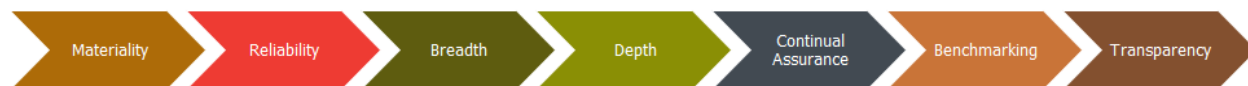
One of the biggest complaints of board members is about the information they receive. Common themes are, “I get too much information”, “I don’t have enough time to review it”, “I don’t get enough information”, or “this isn’t the information that I wanted!” Most board members hold staff responsible for these problems, but it’s the board’s responsibility to give staff a clear sense of your expectations of the information you’d like to see, when and in what format.

To be truly useful to you, information requires analysis, using statistics, ratios and trends, often being presented in visual and “dashboard” formats, all aligned with, and reporting against, the strategic plan. You should seek a balance between accessing reporting for adequate oversight without being overloaded with information.

Consider the following questions in accessing reporting:

1. What do we need to know to provide effective oversight?
2. When do we need to know it?
3. In what form should it be presented?

**By following key principles, you can evaluate the quality and quantity of strategic information you receive, and give useful input and feedback to staff:**



1. **Materiality:** meaning that, at the end of the day, the board needs to focus its scarce time and meetings on what matters, the most significant information in the context of strategy and risk. For example, if the board has determined that improving student retention rates is an important goal, the board will ask staff to collect annual (or semi-annual) data relating to student retention. The board might ask for other kinds of data as well. For example, information from students about factors that make it easier for them to stay in school and factors that contribute to dropout will put statistics into context and provide direction for the development of programs.
2. **Reliability:** the board should continually be assessing its confidence in management, as well as engaging external resources to verify and validate management’s information when called for.
3. **Breadth:** that is to make sure that the strategic information is balanced and reflective of the organization’s business model and key stakeholder groups.
4. **Depth:** seeking results-based outcome and impact performance measures, not just inputs and activities.
5. **Continual assurance or frequency:** meaning that a board needs to receive strategic information at times on an irregular and more frequent basis. For example, incident or event reporting on safety or security incidents. This involves setting levels of materiality and thresholds, criteria or triggers.
6. **Benchmarking or comparisons:** to standards, targets, over time, and most importantly to peer comparators.

7. Transparency: meaning the ability of the board to see clearly into the entity, into the business model and how effectively strategy is being achieved.

By applying these principles, better informed decisions will be made about the content, level, frequency and scope of strategic information for the board.

Reporting must be accurate, timely, relevant, and from a consistent source to facilitate “apples to apples” comparisons. You use this information on an ongoing basis to identify, measure, and actively monitor trends. In some cases, trends can take years to fully understand.

You will see and use different types of reports:



- ✓ Financial reports: these are reviewed in the next section of the Handbook;
- ✓ Performance reports: these are explored next;
- ✓ Compliance or exception reports: these are used for management to confirm that policies are being followed, or to seek exceptions if they are not (e.g. safety, security, incident and event reporting, fraud, theft, fire, insurance).

Most of the time, management prepares these reports for the board.

Financial and performance reports are prepared regularly each period, usually every three months (quarterly). Exception and incident reports are prepared whenever actual events happen, and may be sent to the board right away if they are urgent, or grouped and reported at the next regular meeting if they are less so.

Sometimes, the board will ask an outside professional to review or even prepare a report in an area of higher risk or uncertainty, or if management has less expertise in this area. Financial audits are the most common example, as are air quality and safety assessments.

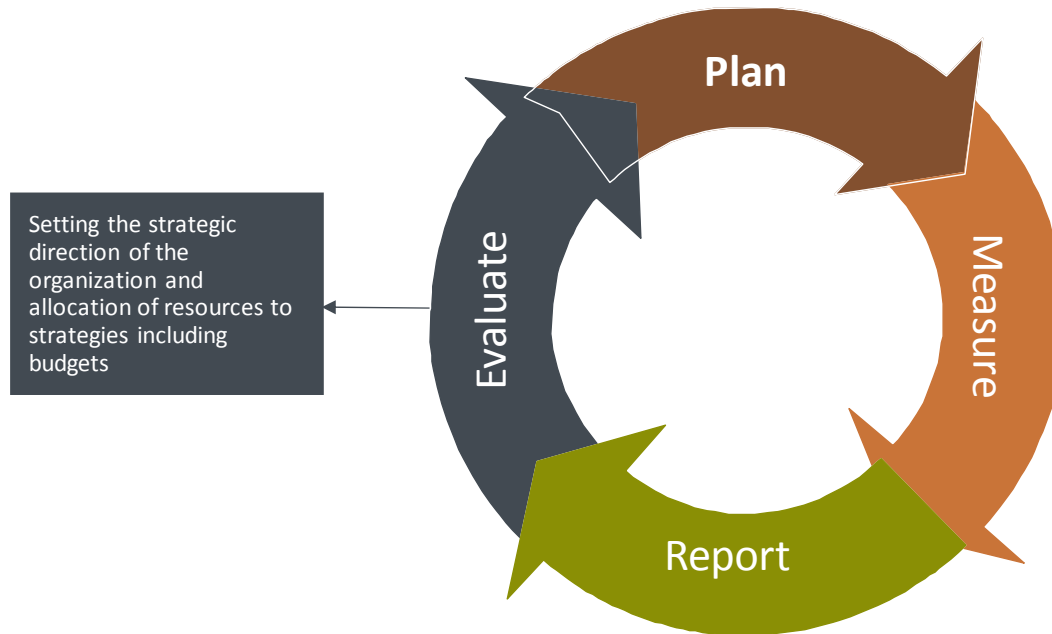
In gathering information, the board should consider that a more accurate picture of performance may be gained by incorporating the views of several groups. For example, the board, senior management, School Community Councils, staff members and the public.

Sometimes, board members will conduct a site visit to confirm or probe reports – this is a sensitive area, since you could unintentionally signal a lack of trust in management, so should be done in collaboration with management.

You will find a tool on *Evaluating the Quality of Monitoring Reports* in the Supplemental section of this Handbook.

## Evaluating Performance

You use these performance monitoring reports during the year to evaluate how well the School Board is achieving its objectives, and to oversee the effectiveness of risk management.



Evaluation should include consideration of:

- ✓ Actual performance compared to planned performance (goals/objectives/KPI's);
- ✓ Actual performance compared to available benchmarks, and;
- ✓ Management discussion and analysis of significant variances.

In addition to performance, financial and exception reports, you may also ask for a summary of results in a performance dashboard, using colour coding and other visual aids:

Objective	Measure	2014/15 Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	Comments and Progress update on strategic initiatives
Improve student achievement	% Graduation rate*	14/15 – 60%	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	15/16 - 65%	16/17 70%	Update on progress on strategic initiatives.  <b>What actions are we taking to meet target? (why we are in the green, red or yellow zone)</b>

On Target ✓ (Performance is at %100 percent of target)

Potential Concern or Actively Monitoring ≈ (Performance is within 75-99% of target)

Confirmed Concern or Action Planned! (Performance is less than 75% of target)

Look for variances between what is actually happening and what was anticipated to happen. And when you see significant gaps, you ask why, using a risk context, i.e.:

1. This is due to a risk that was not anticipated (not in risk inventory),
2. This is due to a risk that was not accurately assessed or measured (its likelihood or impact was probably underestimated), or
3. This is due to a risk that was not optimally mitigated.

The purpose in asking these questions is not to attribute blame, but to enter into a more informed dialogue with management over what can be done better in the future. In particular, the remedy may be to change strategy, to allocate additional (or less) resources to mitigate the risk, or even to adjust the risk tolerance (policy) itself.

The results of performance evaluation are therefore two-fold:

1. As an input into performance oversight to measure achievement, and
2. As an input in to the next planning process to make planning adjustments.

All of which illustrates that the real purpose of risk management and risk governance is not to “get it right”, it is not a compliance and disclosure system. The real purpose is to learn, to “get a little smarter” at every iteration, and to make more informed resource allocation choices in the future versus the past. It is about reasonableness, appropriateness, plausibility and confidence.

## A Safe and Supportive Environment

All school divisions have a large and valuable infrastructure of buildings, vehicles, and equipment that supports the educational program. School boards are responsible for staff

maintaining all those facilities, now and in the future. School boards are also responsible for ensuring the school environment is safe and secure.

***The school board is responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning:*** Because the school board is accountable when things go wrong, it just makes sense that the board will take proactive steps to ensure that schools are safe places to learn and work. School boards need to take a broad perspective. Issues range from air quality and bullying, to establishing a positive work environment, to retaining staff.

For example, you will want to know how your school system minimizes the risk of damage, lawsuits and injury for the following activities or events:

- Group rental of school facilities
- Transportation of preschool children
- School class trips
- Out of country travel
- Physical education activities
- Outbreaks of flu or contagious disease
- Unnecessary absenteeism by students and staff
- Bus transportation to and from school

***Effective school boards create and monitor policies:*** the school board can't and shouldn't be taking care of every detail or overseeing every school activity. Therefore, the school board ensures that appropriate strategies and policies are in place, and then monitors compliance with these.

**The Saskatchewan School Boards Association offers numerous services that help school boards create safe and supportive environments in the schools of their division.** These services include a comprehensive insurance program, legal services, an employee benefits program, and support for many aspects of employee relations.

## **Insurance**

A school division has many risks that they must manage, including property and liability risk. The SSBA offers a comprehensive general insurance program to transfer risk from the school division to the insurance markets. The school division's buildings and their contents are worth many millions of dollars and may not be easily replaceable. If a school becomes damaged in any way, or if the property is not kept up properly causing an injury to a student, staff member or other people, or if a Board makes a decision for which they become liable, the GIP provides the insurance coverage so a school division does not have to remediate any of these issues out of their own funds. To help support the general insurance coverages, the GIP also provides loss prevention training, seminars, and recommendations on an as needed basis. This support is essential for all school boards.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association offers comprehensive insurance program to its member boards. This insurance coverage includes:

- Property insurance – a self-funded loss pool for buildings and contents
- General liability insurance – a self-funded pool
- Sexual abuse and molestation insurance – a self-funded pool
- Air quality insurance – a self-insurance pool to defend boards from air quality lawsuits
- Boiler and machinery insurance
- Trustee accident
- School board errors and omissions
- Student accident
- School bus liability
- Umbrella liability
- Crime
- Construction insurance and
- Miscellaneous event coverage.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association insurance plan provides direct advice and services to the Association and school boards and also serves as a representative for boards in many initiatives. The strength of the program comes from the large number of boards participating. Together we have the market clout that individual boards might lack.

## The Board's Role in Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging with the community is an important part of the school board's job. All community members have a need and a right to know what children are learning and how well they are learning it. They also have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent and to participate in discussions about the allocation of education resources in their community.

You (the board) have three main roles when it comes to communications and stakeholder engagement, just as you do with other areas of governance:

1. Leadership through Direction: Review and approve direction the Communications Plan and Policies, e.g. for public relations and engagement;
2. Stewardship through Control: Monitor effectiveness of the above, to gain reasonable assurance, using periodic and incident reports, dashboard, meetings; and
3. Relationship through Culture: Engage when appropriate in public and community consultations.

The Director of Education has these parallel roles:

- To propose and execute the approved direction – the Communications Strategy/Plan and Policy/Protocol
- To report on effectiveness – of the above, to gain reasonable assurance, using periodic and incident reports, dashboard, meetings
- To be the primary spokesperson in most cases
- To lead public communications and community engagement
- To integrate communications efforts and to support the board

If you have dedicated communications staff in your School Board, their roles are:

- To develop and execute on approved communications strategy, within policies
- To work with and to brief the Province, Ministry, board and Director, to integrate and coordinate efforts
- To be the communications experts – to understand community and stakeholder needs and issues, to propose the best methods, timing, etc., to prepare periodic and incident reports

The Province/Ministry's roles are:

- To be accountable to the public for education outcomes and stewardship of public funds
- To put in place broad public policy priorities, Province-wide and community strategies and plans, and to communicate these
- To engage directly as appropriate in public and community consultations

And the roles of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) are:



- As part of the SSBA's mission and mandate, a range of communications services are made available to, and undertaken on behalf of school boards
- This includes acting as a resource to member boards and school division administration through the delivery of workshops and provision of advice, information and strategic support in the areas of communications, advocacy, media, public relations and crisis management

While public and media relations are primarily the role of staff, there are times that you will directly engage with members of the public. Here are some practical tips for these times:

- **Be prepared:** Have ready your key messages on important issues. Key messages are two or three short, easily-memorized, simple messages that board members can use to articulate the board's position on a given issue. Key messages are those aspects of an issue that the board ultimately wants the audience to remember.
- **Be honest:** Always tell the truth. Use factual and credible points that are not open to misinterpretation.
- **Be clear:** Speak and write in clear, concise language. Your goal is to communicate, not to confuse people with educational (or other) jargon or impress them with your vocabulary.
- **Be calm:** Stay calm during any discussion or interview. Losing your temper will only hurt your message and damage your reputation.
- **Be alert:** Don't say things you don't want other people to hear in any public situation.
- **Be proactive:** *The Education Act, 1995* requires that school boards make their meetings public. Encourage public attendance at board meetings by highlighting the issues that will be under discussion. Let the media and the community know if something particularly important or controversial is coming up.

And, some steps school board members can take to facilitate and enable this:

- develop and monitor policies that foster public engagement
- allocate budget resources to strategies that effectively engage the public
- work collaboratively with other agencies that serve children and youth (e.g. board-to-board)
- engage the public in dialogue in collaboration with the Director of Education
- establish and empower School Community Councils

School Community Councils provide a formal mechanism for public engagement at the school level. Each board determines how it intends to consult with and engage with School Community Councils.

Their responsibilities are directed toward those factors in the home, community and school that are known to have an impact on student learning and well-being, including:

- to facilitate parent and community participation in school planning
- to provide advice to its board of education
- to provide advice to its school's staff

- to provide advice to other agencies involved in the learning and development of pupils
- to comply with the regulations and the policies of its board of education

Please refer to the supplemental information on Public Engagements for more in-depth discussion on this topic.

## **Confidentiality**

School Board Members should at all time be aware of the expectations on them to keep confidences—confidences in student information and privacy as well as in board matters. The basic rule of thumb is that all student information must be considered private and must be kept confidential unless your care is compelled by law to disclose it. The same is true for board matters. All board information is considered confidential unless there is agreement at the board level to disclose. In the supplemental materials you will find a sample confidentiality policy that will provide you with some guidance in this area.

## **Key Questions the Board Should Ask About Governance and Risk**

1. What are the most significant risks faced by the School Board and do we have a strategy in place to mitigate these?
2. What is our risk appetite and tolerance levels in each of these areas?
3. Are we taking the right amount of risk?
4. How well is our risk management plan integrated with our strategic plan?
5. How effective are our controls? And, are we “in control”?
6. How well are risks being managed by the Director of Education?
7. How appropriate is the information received by the board relative to our risks? (Is it the right information, at the right level, in the right format?)
8. How confident are we in the information we receive at the board level?
9. How well are we monitoring and evaluating at risks at the board level?
10. What can we learn from our actual results?

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## Section 3: What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and Resources

The third section of the Handbook deals with a second aspect of stewardship through control: your responsibility to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the School Board's financial performance and integrity.

The board does this by fulfilling 3 main roles:

1. Budgeting
2. Reviewing and approving financials
3. Using financial reports for performance oversight

The Board may establish and delegate to a committee the due diligence work of those three roles to assist in overseeing financial performance and reporting. It is typical to strike an Audit & Finance Committee for this purpose. Sometimes this is called an Audit, Finance & Risk Committee.

### Audit & Finance Committee

The committee typically will:

- review and recommend financial statements and reports for distribution;
- oversee the internal and external audits;
- recommend financial objectives and accounting policies to the board;
- review and recommend annual budget for board approval;
- oversee risk management;
- oversee investment policy and performance; and
- facilitate integrated effective working relationships among all the parties responsible for the financial accountability of the School Board, including the board, this and other board committees, management, the external auditors and the Provincial Auditor.

Each member of the audit committee should be financially literate (able to read and understand financial statements), which can be learned through training and education, and, to the extent possible, there should be at least one financial expert (able to prepare financial statements.)

### Board and Audit & Finance Committee Role #1: Budgeting

When the board has finalized and agreed to the high level Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives, management drafts a business (operational, facilities, staffing, etc.) plan (how will we achieve the strategic plan?) and an annual budget (how will we pay for it?) But your role is not yet complete, the final step of strategic planning is when the board approves the annual budget.

By reviewing and approving the budget, you have the opportunity to be confident that the Director of Education and staff have allocated sufficient resources, in the right places, to achieve the plan. Your review is not intended to be a detailed line-item by line-item check, rather the question you are asking is, "is this budget reasonable?", "is it plausible that this

proposed allocation of resources matches up with and can achieve the strategic plan?” This is a “macro” oversight not a “micro” management exercise.

## Funding Components

You will want to be familiar with how School Boards are funded.

Expense categories are clearly delineated in School Board budgets and financial reports. These are:

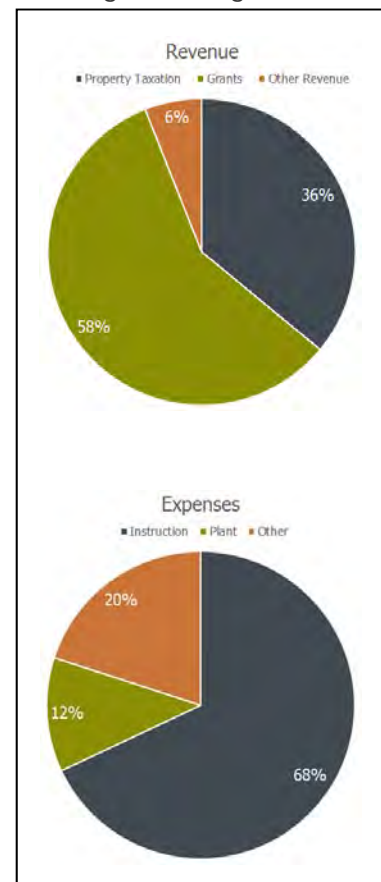
- ✓ **Governance:** costs for boards executing your fiduciary responsibilities and duties, as well as elections, membership fees and dues, negotiating fees, public relations, SSBA research, policy and program decision making.
- ✓ **Administration:** education and business administration, including administrative salaries and non-salary items such as travel costs, computer supplies and software programs.
- ✓ **Instruction:** salaries and benefits of teachers, instructors, support staff, support specialists and school administration, broken down further into Base Instruction, School-Based Support, Supports for Learning, Locally Determined Terms and Conditions, and Instructional Resources: textbooks and library books, supplies and services including technology supports such as computer supplies and software programs, furniture and equipment, communications.
- ✓ **Plant Operation and Maintenance:** building operating costs for centralized instructional facilities and for maintaining school grounds, teacherages, storage facilities, maintenance workshops and warehouses.
- ✓ **Complementary Services -** Prekindergarten (PreK) component allocates funding to boards of education that operate ministry-designated PreK programs
- ✓ **Transportation:** including transportation operations and school bus renewal
- ✓ **Tuition Fee Expense:** to address fees typically charged for Saskatchewan students attending a school Outside the Provincial Public Education System
- ✓ **Associate Schools:** for the operation of associate schools with which you have a contractual agreement
- ✓ **Debt Repayment:** to provide for principal and interest payments associated with eligible ministry-approved borrowing

And there are two main sources of revenue for School Boards, each of which will be budgeted separately:

- ✓ Education Property Tax
- ✓ Grants-in-lieu of Taxes

You may also see (smaller) revenue items including tuition fee revenue, funding adjustments, transition and school consolidation assistance, other user fees and transfers, trust or investment income and fund-raising/donations/sponsorships/partnerships.

Your education operating funding grant is the calculated expense



total minus the calculated revenue total.

The operating grant does not cover major building renovations or construction of new facilities. Boards of education receive a separate grant for building renovations and construction of new facilities.

You will want to be aware of the guiding principles that apply to how the Ministry will distribute funds to Boards of Education and how Boards of Education will allocate funds provided to them. The Ministry and Boards of Education will expect:

- ✓ ***Mutual Responsibility***: be guided by sustainable programs and services that support the broad range of factors required for student achievement.
- ✓ ***Accountability***: maintain a respectful collaborative working relationship, and ensure that the principles are reflected in their actions and decisions and demonstrate their responsibility to stakeholders and the public.
- ✓ ***Transparency***: make decisions that are supported by evidence-based written policies that are consistently applied and easily understood.
- ✓ ***Equity***: make decisions that support all students in reaching their full potential.
- ✓ ***Stability***: make decisions that endeavour to provide the flexibility to deal with periods of economic stability, growth and decline.

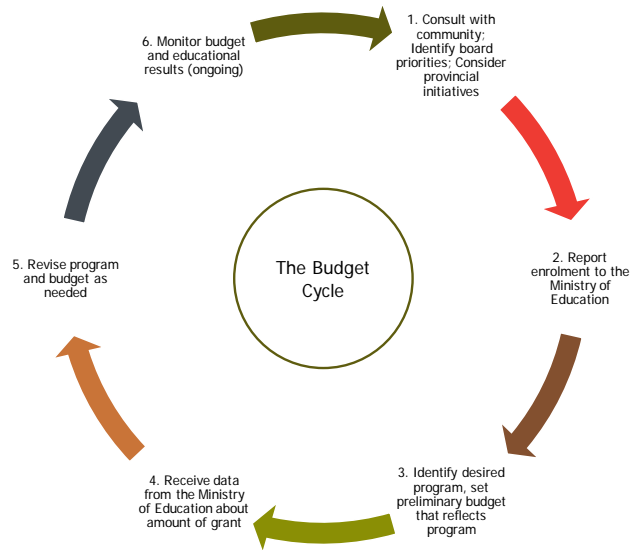
Within this funding framework and consistent with these principles, School Boards have some flexibility in how they allocate resources to schools and initiatives, including local priorities.

For a complete review of funding components, you should access and read the Funding Manual [here](http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Ed-Finance/Distribution-of-Provincial-Funding). <http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/Ed-Finance/Distribution-of-Provincial-Funding>

## The Budget Cycle

The process used to develop the yearly budget varies from one School Board to another. It begins with identification of board priorities, and makes provision for ongoing monitoring to ensure the desired educational results are being achieved. Here is an overview of the budget

cycle used by many School Boards:<sup>1</sup>



## 1. Consult:

- a. **Consult with the public and relevant groups:** at the beginning of the budget cycle, the School Board may consult with the general public, School Division staff, parents, business groups and First Nations groups. This gives people (stakeholders) with differing opinions an opportunity to express their views about the programs and services they consider important. It also gives the board an opportunity to explain the financial implications of various packages of programs and services. For example, if the public asks for a huge expansion of technology-based programs, the board can explain that this might mean a reduction in other programs and services. This is an important component of a School board's communications strategy.
- b. **Identify Board Priorities:** you may hold a formal strategy session each year (recommended) or you may set priorities through informal discussions. The board's priorities are usually influenced by what the public says, changes in community needs or demographics, trends in education, and the board's core values and beliefs.

***The budget reflects the values and beliefs of the school system:*** the budget is one of the most powerful tools that a school board has for governing the school system. For example, school boards often identify core values and beliefs such as:

- ✓ Providing a safe, orderly, school environment
- ✓ Providing equality of opportunity and of outcomes for all students, and
- ✓ Preparing students for the technology-intensive, global economy of the future

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Wagner and Sniderman, 1987

During the budgeting process, you should ask yourself, “would this expenditure of money be consistent with our core beliefs and values?” and “with the outcomes we want to achieve?”

***The board uses the budget and financial plan as a primary tool to achieve the strategic priorities of the School Division:*** you want to focus on results – on the type of student knowledge, skills and attitudes you want to see achieved. Although desired results often relate to retention rates and student achievement, many School Boards address other areas as well, such as students’ subjective experience of schooling, incidents of violence or bullying, and equality of outcomes for students of both genders and all cultural groups.

School boards also set long-term, short-term, and ongoing priorities. For example, building a new school is a long-term priority. Ensuring well-stocked, up-to-date school resource centres is an ongoing priority.

The way the School Board spends money should reflect the results the board wants to achieve and the priorities it sets, so you should:

- ✓ Write policies describing the results you want to achieve and the priorities you have established,
- ✓ Allocate resources to support your goals and priorities
- ✓ Monitor progress to ensure the desired results are being achieved
- ✓ Hold the Director of Education responsible for achieving the desired results

For example, if improving student retention is one of the board’s goals, then money would be allocated for supports that make it easier for students to stay in school. These supports might include anything from tutoring for students who are reading below grade level to daycare for teen moms.

- c. **Consider Provincial Initiatives:** Provincial priorities may include the implementation of new curricula, requirements concerning data collection and reporting, or programs to equalize opportunity for all students.
2. **Report Enrolment to the Ministry of Education:** enrolment figures as of September 30 must be reported to the Ministry of Education. The operating grant received from the Province is based largely on these numbers.
  3. **Identify Desired Program and Set Preliminary Budget:** The School Board plans a package of programs and services and the Director of Education and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) develop a budget that reflects the board’s priorities. If you have a Finance Committee of your board, it will review the draft budget first and provide input to management and the board. During this process, some adjustments to programs, services and budget may be necessary in order to work within the anticipated revenue. Some questions for you to consider:
    - ✓ What are the key risks to the plan?



- ✓ Assess the overall effectiveness and efficiency
- ✓ Perform Sensitivity Analysis (play "what if?")

- 4. Receive Budget Information from the Ministry of Education:** The Ministry of Education uses September 30 enrolment figures to calculate the amount of provincial grant each School Division will receive. This information is provided to School Boards as soon as calculations are complete, usually late fall or early winter. Boards actually receive their provincial grant when the provincial budget comes down, usually in March of each year.
- 5. Revise Program and Budget as Required:** sometimes School Divisions have to adjust their preliminary program, budget and tentative mill rate once they know exactly how much money they will be getting from the Ministry of Education. You may decide to cut back on programs or you may be able to add program components. Final adjustments to the program and budget usually occur in March or April.
- 6. Monitor the Budget and Educational Results:** to ensure money is being spent in accordance with priorities and that desired results are being achieved. Once you're convinced that the annual budget provides the resources necessary to achieve the desired results, management implements the plan, and the cycle of measurement and adjustment begins.

## Board and Audit & Finance Committee Role #2: Reviewing and Approving Financials

Your second role in financial governance (education finance) is to review and approve the financial statements of the School Board.

- ✓ Your year-end financial statements are audited, approved by the board and then provided to the Ministry and public as part of your accountability responsibilities.
- ✓ You should also review interim financial reports, at least quarterly. These are usually not audited, and might not be used outside the School Board itself.

Your purpose in reviewing financial statements and reports is to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) that these are fair, accurate and reliable (have "integrity".)

The good news is that you do this by reviewing the work of others, rather than doing the work yourself. Just as with other roles in governance, your role is to oversee, to ask questions, to gain confidence. And you don't need to be an accountant to do this well!

Here is who is responsible for what in financial reporting:



- Management (the Director of Education and CFO) is responsible for preparing the financial statements and reports, including:
  - Accounting methods, choices, estimates, judgements and assumptions underlying these, and
  - Selecting accounting, financial and other controls and making sure they are effective.
- If you have internal auditors (may be staff and/or outsourced), they are responsible to conduct risk-based testing of controls to report to you (the board and management) on their effectiveness. This begins with internal controls over financial reporting (“ICFR”), and extends to all material controls in the School Board. If you don’t have an internal auditor, you should discuss whether and how the external auditors and staff will cover off the most important parts of this work.
- Other independent professionals: your School Board may use actuaries, compensation advisors, legal counsel, SSBA experts, governance consultants, facilities and environmental assessors and others. Each of these reports to the board and management on areas of their expertise, and most of these will have implications for the financial reports.
- The Audit & Finance Committee: your board probably uses a standing sub-committee that is responsible to review the financial statements and reports before they come to the board, to review these with management, auditors and others, then recommend them to the board.
- The board: at the full board level, you conduct a high level overview of the financial statements and reports.
- Your external auditors (sometimes called the “appointed” auditors, since you appoint them) are responsible to conduct a materiality-based audit (testing) of management’s prepared financial statements, in order to provide an opinion as to whether they are fair, prepared according to accepted accounting principles/standards. It is important to understand that this opinion is granted when the External Auditor has gained “reasonable assurance” not “absolute assurance” that that the financial statements are free from material misstatements and done according to accepted accounting principles/standards. This is a licensed independent professional accountant or firm, who may be locally based, regional, national or global.
- The [Office of the Provincial Auditor](#) is responsible to the Legislature to provide independent assurance and advice on the management, governance, and effective use of public resources. Wherever public funds are used, the Provincial Auditor may conduct audits, or it may review and rely on the work of your appointed auditor.

At a board level, then, your steps here are to:

1. Be confident that management and auditors are competent, diligent and independent (from each other):
  - a. when you first recruit/appoint them,
  - b. at the beginning of each year by reviewing their mandates and workplans, and
  - c. at the end of each year by evaluating their effectiveness.
2. Read their reports diligently: this is the most important part of preparing for board and committee meetings, for fulfilling your legal duty of reasonable care.
3. At meetings, ask them questions about their reports: prepare a few questions ahead of time, then listen and be ready to follow-up another board member’s question if it hasn’t been clearly answered. Some questions for you to consider:

- ✓ Where do you see our most significant fraud risk residing in our operations and how has the audit addressed these issues
  - ✓ Have all the taxes or statutory withholdings been made appropriately?
4. As you read their reports and listen to their answers, are you hearing **resonance** among all of them (CFO, Director, external auditor, internal auditor, Provincial Auditor, SSBA, other independent professionals)? If so, you are entitled to rely on their collective work. But, if you are hearing **dissonance**, substantial differences among their reports and responses, then your job isn't done. You need to ask more questions, and potentially you may need to send them back to work out any outstanding unresolved issues. Or you may need to resolve them yourself at the board level, if you are running out of time.

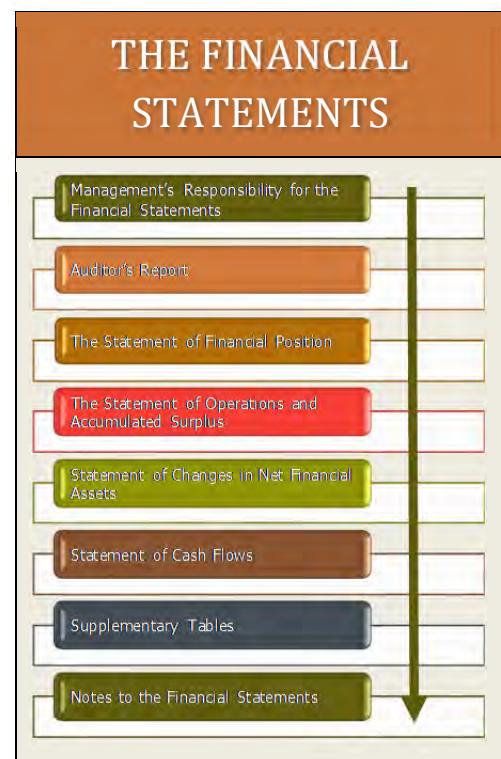
As with other steps in governance, this is an art – you will want to focus on important issues and risks (“material”), and not spend too much time on issues or risks that don't matter to any of the users of the financial statements (the board, the Ministry, lenders and other funders, the community and public).

## Financial Statements

This Handbook is not intended to be a substitute for education financial literacy or training, which you are encouraged to study on a continual basis during your service as a school board member. However, here are some of the things to be looking for and asking about in the School Board's financial statements:

Your year-end audited financial statements begin with two pages:

- ✓ Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements: this outlines the different responsibilities of management, board and auditors, and is signed by the CFO, Director of Education and a Board Member, and
- ✓ Auditor's Report: this outlines the auditor's responsibility and work, and their audit opinion, and is signed and dated by your external auditor. You will want to ask if there were any exceptions or qualifications to the audit opinion, and any outstanding or unresolved issues, whether these are in the auditors' management report or not. There should not be a significant gap between the audit date and your meeting date to approve these.



The primary financial statements are next:

- ✓ The Statement of Financial Position (formerly the “Balance Sheet”): shows
  - Assets: what the School Board owns, you receive future economic value, and

- Liabilities: what the School Board owes, you deliver future economic value, and the difference between these: “Net Assets” or “Accumulated Surplus” (which is equivalent to owner’s equity in the private sector).
- Numbers are shown for this year-end and the previous year-end for comparison purposes.
- Assets and liabilities are shown in order of liquidity, that is, how quickly they will go through cash (in or out).
- Financial assets may be reported separately from non-financial assets.
- This is signed by two officers of the School Board, including at least one board member, to indicate that the financial statements have been approved by the board.
- ✓ The Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus (formerly the “Profit and Loss”) shows
  - Revenues: you earned for delivering economic value this year, and
  - Expenses: you incurred in order to deliver economic value this year, generally following the same line items and order as the budget and funding outlined earlier.
  - Again, these include this year’s and last year’s numbers.
  - Any operating surplus (revenues greater than expenses) is added to the Accumulated Surplus. If you have an operating deficit (expenses greater than revenues), this is subtracted (this is how the balance sheet balances).

Secondary financial statements follow – these are re-presentations or more detailed breakdowns of numbers in the primary financial statements to help you track and ask questions about changes from year to year:

- ✓ Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets
- ✓ Statement of Cash Flows
- ✓ Supplementary tables of Revenues, Expenses, Tangible Capital Assets and Non-Cash items, in more detail than the primary financials.

Notes to the financial statements follow. These are probably the most informative parts of the financial statements, and where you will want to focus your time in preparing and asking questions of management and the auditors:

- ✓ Note 1 always deals with the entity – what is the legal basis and “business” of the organization (School Board)?
- ✓ Note 2 always deals with accounting policies, including the accounting standards used (there are at least 5 different sets of accounting standards in Canada today), accounting methods chosen, changes, implications and estimates. With today’s accounting standards, this is usually the longest note, and while it can get technical at times, you will want to:
  - Exercise professional skepticism (like an auditor) but not cynicism (turning over rocks looking for something wrong).
  - Ask management and the auditors if there are any issues they want to highlight, and any differences in opinion or approach (listening for resonance or dissonance)?
  - Don’t be afraid to ask a “dumb question” – board members are not financial experts, that is why you hire and pay a CFO and auditors who are.

- Hold a brief in camera session with the auditors before they leave, but without management in the room – ask them about the conservatism or aggressiveness of management’s estimates and judgements, and about the audit tone itself. Is there anything else that you haven’t reported or written down? Final advice or tips? Do the same thing with your CFO, internal auditor and Provincial Auditor in turn, without the others in the room. Use this information with tact and professionalism.
- ✓ The next few notes explain line items from the primary financial statements, in the same order as they are presented – the note number is indicated next to each item on the primary financial statements. Follow the same approach as you did with Note 2. Because financial statements are prepared on an accrual basis, not a cash basis, several accounts appear that you will want to understand and may ask about:
  - Prepaid expenses: cash has been paid out, but you haven’t received the economic value or benefit yet (e.g. insurance paid for a full year),
  - Deferred revenues: these are the opposite – you’ve received cash, but haven’t delivered the economic value or benefit yet (e.g. property tax payments received but not used yet),
  - Pension and benefits: these follow economic value accounting, that is, the discounted value of future projected cash flows in (assets) and out (liabilities). These involve more estimates than most other items in the financial statements. One is the “discount rate” which is the time value of money (cash today is worth more than cash a year from now). Another is the estimated life span of people covered in the plans. That is why an independent professional actuary is hired to review and report on these, usually every three years.
- ✓ The final notes deal with anything else that users of the financial statements should know, such as:
  - Restrictions on the use of assets, surplus or reserves. These may be externally imposed restrictions (by the Ministry or a trust, for example), or they may be approved by you, the board (internally restricted). Reserves or restrictions are usually set up to provide for future needs that are several years out, like capital projects. You will want to have a good dialogue on, and understanding of, these. In fund accounting, these are called different “funds”.
  - Related Parties: because School Boards are public sector entities, any Government of Saskatchewan entity is a “related party”. Your main focus here should be on related parties where your officers or employees have closer relationships, and where a transaction might not be at arms-length. Your auditor should be checking these for you.
  - Off balance sheet items such as commitments, contingencies and subsequent events.

## Board and Audit & Finance Committee Role #3: Using Financial Reports for Performance Oversight

Your third role in financial governance (education finance) is using the financial reports for performance oversight. After the financial statements are reviewed and approved, you are the first user of these.

Your purpose here is to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the financial performance of the School Board, and of management.

You are also using financial reports to be confident in the faithful stewardship of funds, and as an indicator or evidence of ethical conduct. The school board is legally and ethically responsible for all money it collects/receives and spends. Thus, it is important to have systems that ensure funds are spent as planned, accurate records are kept, and the board receives the financial reports it needs.

In the real world, much of this is done at the same time as Role #2, reviewing and approving the financial statements, since when you ask questions of management and the auditor, their responses help you with both roles, understanding and actually using the financial reports. But for the sake of keeping roles clear, we show this as a separate role in the Handbook.

Whenever you receive financial reports from management, at least quarterly, the board will use these to monitor financial results and performance. There are a number of tools that you can use as you do this.

These tools are:

1. Variance Analysis
2. Financial Ratios
3. Balanced Scorecard
4. Scorecards and Dashboards

(Please refer to Tools for Performance Oversight in the Supplemental Information for an explanation of these tools.)

## Key Questions the Board Should Ask About Governance and Resources

1. "Is this budget reasonable?"
2. "Is it plausible that this proposed allocation of resources matches up with and can achieve the strategic plan?"
3. "Would this expenditure of money be consistent with our core beliefs and values?"
4. "Would this expenditure of money be consistent with the outcomes we want to achieve?"
5. Is there resonance between all of the people who touch the financial statements? (CFO, Director of Education, internal auditor, external auditor, Provincial Auditor, other independent professionals, SSBA)
6. What are the most significant risks we face and how are they reflected in financial statements?
7. What are the main assumptions behind statements?
8. What are the main estimates and judgements used, and does the auditor have complete confidence in these?
9. What can be learned from the Cash Flows, other secondary statements, notes?
10. If you had additional fees/scope/time, what would you look at next, and why?

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Appendix 1: The Professional Director Certification Program™

Appendix 2: Acronyms and Abbreviations

## Section 4: What Board Members Need to Know About Governance and People

The fourth section of the Handbook deals with relationship through culture: your responsibility to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in the people of the School Board, particularly the Director of Education, and the board itself.

The first half of this section deals with your human resources relationships and responsibilities; in the second half, we turn to effective board functioning and culture.

You have two main human resources responsibilities:

- ✓ The Director of Education is appointed by, and accountable to, the board; because this is a direct employment relationship, it is sometimes called your “parent” role.
- ✓ The other staff, whether teachers or administrative, effectively report through the Director of Education; and so you have an indirect employment relationship – this is your “grandparent” role. You will approach each of these quite differently, and we will deal with them separately.

### Governance & Human Resources Committee

The Board may establish and use a Governance & Human Resources Committee, to assist in oversight of the people side of the School Board. Occasionally these are split into two committees, although to balance workload among board committees, combining them usually makes sense for school boards.

A Governance Committee’s role is to oversee the effectiveness of the board and committees, including:

- formulating and recommending governance principles and policies;
- board and committee member education and training including filling gaps in skills/competency matrix;
- monitoring and safeguarding board independence and effective functioning;
- board and committee evaluation;
- board orientation and onboarding;
- governance documentation;
- conduct and ethics policies.

A Human Resources Committee’s role is to oversee the employment relationship with the Director of Education, and staff strategically, including:

- developing Director of Education performance objectives and measures;
- conducting an annual Director of Education evaluation;
- reviewing and recommending Director of Education compensation;
- overseeing management succession plan;
- strategic human resources and compensation design and policy oversight;
- oversight of labour relations and collective bargaining, including local bargaining.



(Please refer to the Governance and Human Resources Committee Charter and Workplan in the Supplemental Information.)

## The Board - Director of Education Relationship

The relationship between the board and the Director of Education is central and critical to effective School Board governance. Here are some overarching tips to keep in mind with this:

- ✓ The board speaks with one voice through the Chair
- ✓ The Chair should be in regular contact with the Director between meetings
- ✓ The Chair and Director need to have an open and honest relationship: there are both employer-employee and sounding board elements to this
- ✓ Be willing to both share bad news and show appreciation when it is deserved
- ✓ Be clear on governance versus management roles
- ✓ Keep the Director up to date on the pulse of the board

The employment relationship with the Director of Education encompasses these steps, which we will explore in more depth:

- ✓ Succession and Recruiting
- ✓ Selection
- ✓ Agreement and Mandate (Responsibilities: position/job description)
- ✓ Performance Management: objectives/targets
- ✓ Performance Evaluation and Compensation

### Succession and Recruiting



We're going to start with succession, which is a continual process that, done well, prepares you for recruitment.

You will want to include these three distinct levels in your Director succession plan:

1. Emergency Transition: who will you name as Interim Director if your current Director's employment ends suddenly and unexpectedly, e.g. sudden illness or death, firing, quits without notice?
2. Orderly Transition: what process will you follow, and what internal candidates might you consider, if your current Director provides ample notice of departure, e.g. retirement or contract not being renewed?
3. Beyond the Next Transition: your School Board should be preparing high potential individuals years ahead of time, whether they end up being your Director, or move through leadership in other School Boards (which is normal and healthy). This process is often called talent management.

<b>3 LEVELS OF SUCCESSION</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Emergency Transition</li><li>2. Orderly Transition</li><li>3. Beyond the Next Transition</li></ol>

Since the Director is your (the board's) employee, levels 1 and 2 above are your responsibilities. Since the other staff are the Director's, level 3 (management succession and talent management) is the Director's responsibility. But because it has implications for Director succession, you should have the Director report to you at least annually on her/his succession and talent management plan within the School Board.

Your Director of Education and head of Human Resources will do most of the work in this area, and the board reviews their plans, asks questions and reaches confidence that we have reasonable plans for all three levels of succession.

Some other tips to keep in mind:

- ✓ Put Succession planning on the Board's agenda annually.
- ✓ It is a board responsibility to describe and be clear on the skill sets, expertise and character required for the next Director of Education.
- ✓ This begins by taking into consideration today's (and future) company needs, but the preferred candidate of a couple of years ago may no longer be such, given a dramatically different environment.
- ✓ Involve your HR executive/ manager to provide the board with expertise in process and steps.
- ✓ Check that your Director and HR executive are implementing programs that help cultivate the leaders that you want.
- ✓ Groom successors from within the School Board.
- ✓ Have more than one possible successor available at any time – even if you have a leading candidate in mind, don't communicate that too early, or it will de-motivate other senior leaders, even to the point of looking for a job elsewhere, and it may erode the ability of your current Director of Education ("lame duck").

## Selection

***Selecting a Director of Education is perhaps the most important decision a school board makes:*** Research indicates that board members rank CEO (Director) selection as their top, or in the top two or three, decision(s) made during their tenure. Yet most school boards have limited experience recruiting a Director of Education, because this task is done infrequently.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstances under which recruitment occurs varies considerably. If a Director of Education is retiring, you usually have several months' notice and can make provision for continuity between the retiring and the new Director. If the Director resigns, notice may vary

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<sup>1</sup> The staff of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association can advise you regarding the recruitment process if your board is hiring a Director of Education.

from a few weeks to several months. If a Director leaves for medical reasons, there may be no notice and no opportunity for continuity.

After you begin the search process, here are some steps to consider:

- ✓ Creating and using a special Search Committee of the board: often this committee's membership includes past board members and leaders from the community, as well as trusted wise current board members. Remember, the final selection of a new Director of Education will be made by a vote of the entire board so you should be clear about this committee's mandate – is it to recommend a single candidate, or to bring you a short list?
- ✓ Hiring and using an independent Search firm: there are pros and cons to this, as with using any outside professional advisor, but two big benefits are access to expertise in process, and due diligence in casting the net wide (identifying a larger pool of candidates), so being confident you have the best possible candidate. Even if you have a preferred internal candidate, an external search can validate this choice, and incidentally, build confidence among the rest of the staff in the new Director.
- ✓ No one will perfectly fit the profile that you created during the succession planning, instead, you use this profile as a way to narrow the list of candidates down to a workable number to interview. You should have a good discussion about the relative importance of skills, experience, leadership and capabilities sought.
- ✓ Interviews: should be well planned out, even scripted, including who will conduct the interviews (usually a couple of committee members first, then the full committee with those shortlisted, then the full board for the final one to three candidates).

## **Director of Education's Agreement and Mandate**

***A formal Employment Agreement between the School Board and the Director of Education makes terms of employment clear.*** The school board should negotiate and put in place an Employment Agreement with the Director of Education to spell out the terms and conditions of employment.

In addition, the agreement should include a "responsibility mandate" describing role expectations for both the board and Director, and the Director's authority for decision making.

The agreement should provide for an annual written performance appraisal, and specify salary and benefits. It should also provide a process that will allow employment to be terminated by either party in a way that will not reflect negatively on either party.

Drafting an appropriate contract is complicated and has significant implications; you will want to obtain legal advice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Legal Services at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association is available to assist.

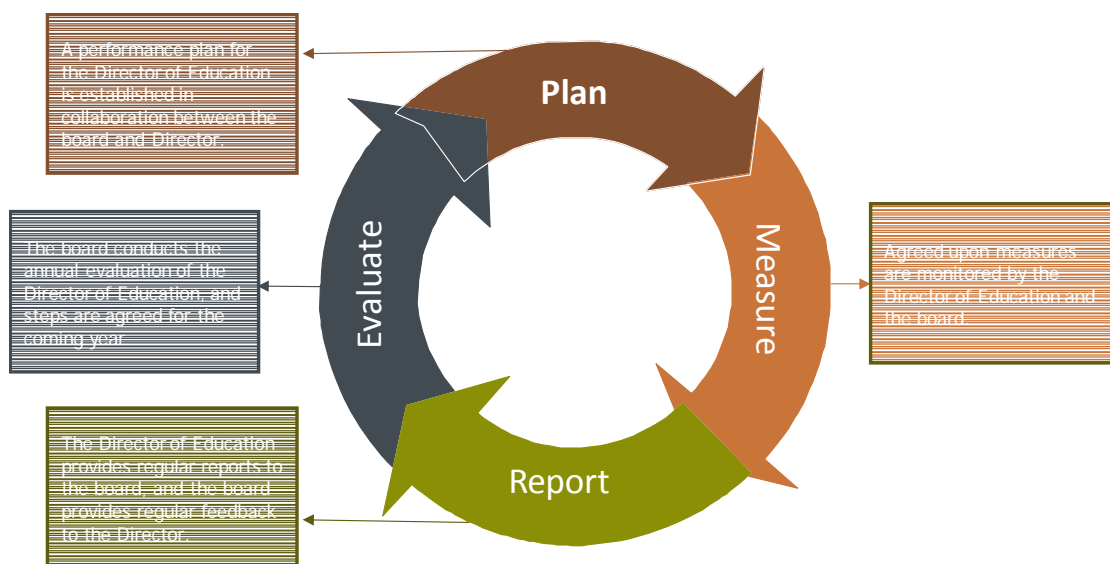
## Director of Education’s Performance Management

Overseeing the Director of Education’s effectiveness is one of your most important and impactful responsibilities on the board, and also one of the most sensitive.

You should be able to see these benefits from a good Director performance management process:

- ✓ Important feedback to the Director about their performance, for both the board and Director to identify opportunities to enhance performance and effectiveness.
- ✓ An increased understanding of the Director’s concerns and views on the achievement of organizational objectives.
- ✓ A forum to build a healthy relationship between the board, especially the Chair, and the Director based on trust and honesty.
- ✓ A framework for the Director to further develop capabilities.
- ✓ A forum to reinforce accountability, transparency and the responsibilities of the Director.
- ✓ An opportunity to identify and address early warning signs of possible difficulties.
- ✓ An opportunity to discuss any future plans the Director may have (e.g. retirement).
- ✓ A forum to encourage and congratulate the Director for a job well done.

A high level overview of the performance management process for measuring Director of Education performance is illustrated below, with further considerations following. Formal performance reviews should be conducted at least annually, with informal discussions on progress throughout the year, after every board meeting or at least quarterly.



**Plan:** You will want to consider:

- ✓ A consistent process to evaluate the Director's performance should be agreed upon and approved by the board at the beginning of each year.
- ✓ The Director and board should establish a shared understanding of performance expectations, also at the beginning of each year.
- ✓ Performance targets should align to the School Board's Strategic Plan.
- ✓ An approved set of targets by both board and Director.
- ✓ Director recognition and compensation should be tied to performance.
- ✓ The Director should have a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished in the upcoming year.
- ✓ Expectations should be consistent, clear and measurable.

Measure: You will want to consider:

- ✓ Both quantitative and qualitative indicators should be included to assess the Director's leadership behaviour and performance goals, which are fundamental to sustained organization performance.
- ✓ Using financial and organizational performance alone are inherently problematic.
- ✓ Instead you will want to use a suite of strategic objectives, performance indicators and leadership or individual goals.
- ✓ There are numerous factors outside the direct control of the Director that can affect organizational performance.

Report: You will want to consider:

- ✓ For the Director of Education performance management process to truly be effective, regular reporting and feedback is necessary.
- ✓ Informal discussions and feedback can take place after every board meeting, or at least quarterly.
- ✓ The board may also seek input from other sources such as direct reports, Principals, School Community Councils, etc. – but this should be done in consultation with the Director, and agreed at the beginning of the year.

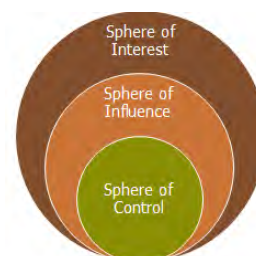
Evaluate: You will want to consider:

- ✓ The board may delegate the actual conducting of the annual evaluation to the HR Committee and/or the board Chair.
- ✓ A year-end (some also use a mid-term) report should be prepared by the Director to the board with an update of progress toward agreed upon objectives.
- ✓ The board should review outcomes related to planned goals. The annual review should be thorough.
- ✓ You should encourage and enable the Director to talk to the board about the past year's performance, and for the board to discuss the Director's performance among themselves.

- ✓ The board should prepare and provide an evaluation along with corresponding feedback to the Director.
- ✓ Following review and analysis of the report provided, make sure that feedback is provided to the Director. This may include a written report, or more commonly a discussion with the Director. The board Chair (sometimes with the HR Committee Chair) typically holds this discussion on the board's behalf.
- ✓ If compensation is tied to performance, the Board should also communicate the corresponding impact on the Director's compensation.
- ✓ Feedback should be delivered professionally, with tact.
- ✓ Once a thorough evaluation is discussed (and revisions made if called for), it should be reviewed and accepted by both the board and the Director.
- ✓ The process and outcomes should be clearly documented and filed.

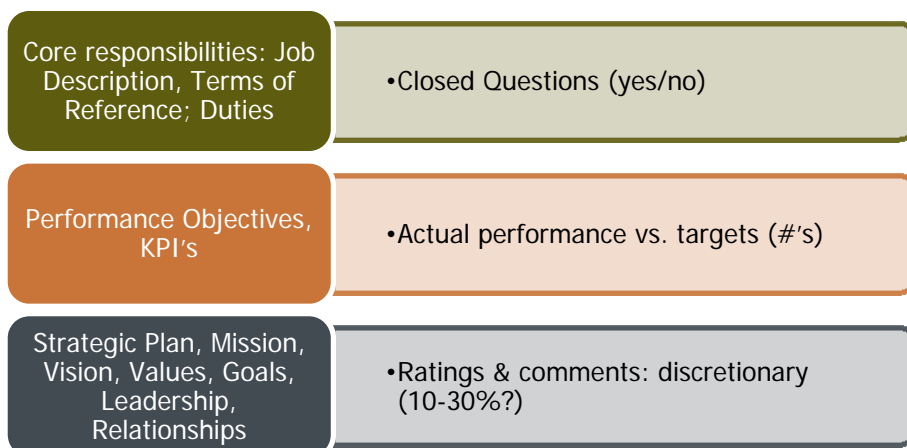
You will want to be on the look-out for – and avoid – common pitfalls that you may run into in the Director of Education performance management process:

- Subjectivity – evaluations based on feelings rather than facts
- Lack of disciplined approach
- A focus on the negative creating discouragement - better to stress the positive and use those results to encourage and empower the Director to greater accomplishment
- Changing the evaluation criteria after the fact!
- Changing circumstances beyond control: be sensitive to what was within the Director's control, influence, or neither:

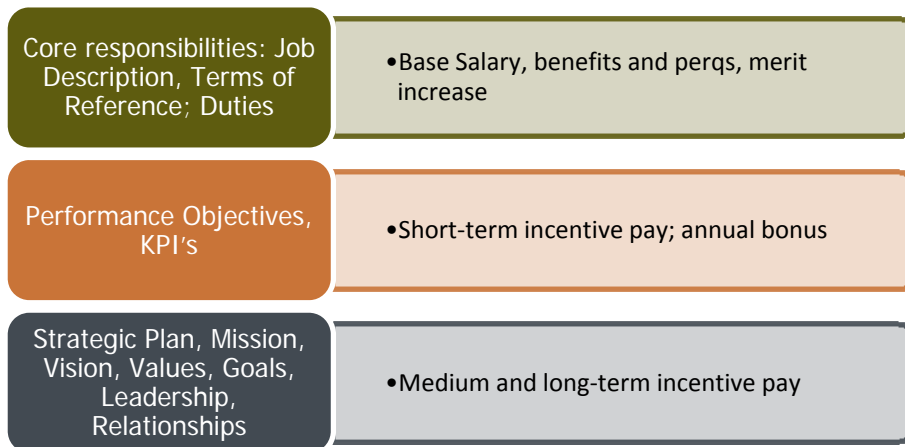


## Tying the Director's Evaluation to Compensation

You may want to organize your Director's annual performance evaluation into three parts:



And then to use these to inform your choices around the Director's compensation for the coming year:



Agreeing on the Director's compensation each year can be a difficult conversation, both inside the boardroom and then with the Director. You will want to keep these practical tips in mind:

Follow the annual performance review and feedback (as illustrated above): agree on any change to base pay and incentive payout, based on the Director's actual performance for the year compared to their responsibility mandate and performance objectives. You (the board) and Director should have agreed to a clear process, performance objectives and incentive metrics and targets (thresholds, caps) at the beginning of the year, so these should largely be straightforward arithmetic calculations.

Understand Director compensation parameters, and stay within these:

- Provincial mandates / ranges / incentive design
- Understand where you have authority – exercise it!!
- Where does your Director fall within the range – and why?

#### Incentive Compensation

- Use what is within your control
- Get metrics and targets right
- Incentive intended to “support organizational change”
- Beware of unintended consequences
- Always stress test the metrics and targets
- Optics and “smell” test

You may want to set a portion of the Director's compensation at the board's discretion, rather than tied to pre-agreed objectives. If so, negotiate and agree on this at the beginning of the year, including the process the board will use to set this portion. Usually the discretionary portion will be about 15%, no more than 25 or 30%, with the majority of compensation changes based on objective criteria.

Here are some closing tips to help you get the most out of your relationship with the Director of Education:

- ✓ Treat your Director with respect – they work tirelessly and are often underappreciated
- ✓ Expect great things of your Director – acknowledge them when they are achieved and push them when they are not
- ✓ Be open and direct – just like boards, Directors do not like surprises – they want to succeed – their success depends on your oversight role

## People Oversight Beyond the Director of Education

Your relationship with the Director of Education is a direct employment relationship that calls for the board to manage this. Since the other staff all report through the Director of Education, your relationship with them is quite different – this is what we call the “grandparent” role. Instead of managing employment arrangements, you are overseeing the Director’s relationships with staff, to gain confidence in the Director’s judgement and dealing with staff. You are not making the employment arrangements decisions, you are monitoring and guiding the Director in that role.

There are a limited number of areas of human resources oversight that are legitimately your (board) responsibilities. Staffing matters outside these are within the Director’s scope.

1. Director succession aspect: since the Director is your employee, the board has a legitimate interest in annually review the Director’s management succession plan (for high potential and high performing staff; talent management and development). This may extend to inviting senior managers to presenting to the board and/or Committees, and responding to questions at meetings, to help you “size up” their leadership abilities, and to observe the Director’s development of staff.
2. Human Resources (People) Policy oversight aspect: the board / HR Committee reviews, approves and monitors compliance with high level (board level) policies affecting human resources, e.g.:
  - Code of Conduct
  - CEO Succession Policy
  - Harassment Policy
  - Emergency Planning Policy
  - Communications Protocol
3. Ethical oversight aspect: the board reviews relevant reports and information, to gain reasonable assurance of integrity throughout the School Board:
  - Overseeing compliance with and enforcement of Code of Conduct
  - Other compliance, litigation and regulatory related reports
  - Whistle-blowing Policy
4. Disclosure aspect: the board reviews or approves public disclosures that include human resources related items:



- Executive Compensation related
  - Governance related
  - Compliance and litigation related
5. Strategic Human Resources (People) oversight aspect: in risk or strategy areas that are significant to the whole School Board entity, the board reviews (but does not approve, this is called a “one-up” check) the Director’s decisions, to gain reasonable confidence (assurance) in:
- Major organizational structure changes and senior management appointments
  - Compensation plans: philosophy, design, incentives, payouts
  - Human resources risks
  - Labour relations, collective bargaining (next topic!)

### **Collective Bargaining<sup>3</sup>**

Collective bargaining responsibilities in School Boards are probably different from any other boards that you have served on before.

Collective bargaining helps define the nature of the relationship between School Divisions and their employees, as well as having major financial consequences. School Boards will be challenged to arrive at agreements that put children first and that both parties can live with.

Boards must make decisions ranging from the values that will direct labour relations, to the role that board members will play in bargaining. Different boards take more or less direct involvement in collective bargaining, so here are some practical tips for you to consider in general:

- ✓ Review, debate and approve a mandate for settlement: it is typically a board role to approve a negotiating mandate:
  - ensure you are clear on “Must Haves” & “Nice to Haves”
  - negotiators can’t work effectively with limited / hidden mandates, so leave some room for movement
- ✓ Provide input (not approval) to process:
  - If you have enlisted SSBA’s professional negotiators, let them do their job
  - Stay out of the process & maintain confidences
- ✓ Be available 24/7 to management in the event a shift in mandate is needed at the last moment-
  - Perhaps delegate authority to Chair or Committee

### **Bargaining with Teachers**

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<sup>3</sup> SSBA provides professional negotiators at no charge as well as pre-bargaining seminars

*The Education Act 1995* provides for bi-level bargaining with teachers:

*Items negotiated at the provincial level are:*

- ✓ Salaries of teachers
- ✓ Allowances of principals and vice-principals
- ✓ Sick leave
- ✓ Superannuation of teachers
- ✓ Duration of the provincial agreement
- ✓ Group life insurance for teachers
- ✓ Criteria for employees being out-of-scope

*Items negotiated at the local level by individual school boards are:*

- ✓ Sabbatical leave for teachers
- ✓ Educational leave for teachers
- ✓ Salaries for substitute teachers
- ✓ Pay periods for teachers
- ✓ Special allowances for teachers
- ✓ Duration of the local agreement

*The Education Act, 1995 prohibits negotiation of the following at both the provincial and local levels:*<sup>4</sup>

- ✓ Selection of teachers
- ✓ Courses of study
- ✓ The program of studies
- ✓ The professional methods and techniques used by a teacher

### **Bargaining with Support Staff<sup>5</sup>**

Most support staff in School Divisions are unionized, and the task of collective bargaining with those unions can be complex. Bargaining for support staff is provided by *The Employment Act* which has much different rules.

There is no provincial bargaining for support staff, so the School Board will have to negotiate agreements that cover the full range of terms and conditions of employment including but not limited to the following:

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<sup>4</sup> In practice class size/student ratios have also been treated as prohibited negotiations

<sup>5</sup> SSBA Strategic Human Resources and Legal Resources can assist with this

- ✓ Wages
- ✓ Hours of work
- ✓ Vacancies, transfers and promotions
- ✓ Layoff
- ✓ Sick leave
- ✓ Vacation and public holidays
- ✓ Other leaves
- ✓ Employee benefits

## **Employee Benefits**

Employee benefits are an important part of any employer's compensation package. Benefits help to attract and retain quality employees.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association offers school system employees a full range of survivor, disability and health benefits. In-service and position-specific training are also available. The products have been customized over the years to fit the special needs of School Boards.

## **Effective Board Functioning and Culture**

In the rest of this section, we will turn to effective board functioning and culture. This begins with a robust agenda management process and effective board meetings, and ends with consideration of boardroom culture norms and behaviour.

Robust agenda management follows a fairly straight-forward chronological process:



## Before the Meeting (Steps 1 – 5)

Board and board Committee mandates (charters, terms of reference) are established by the board, and then updated at the beginning of each governance year (November). These outline the board approved responsibilities and scope of each committee each year.

Based on these, annual work plans are drafted, mapping the responsibilities (and any objectives for this year) with the regularly scheduled meetings during the year. In this way, the Chairs, members and responsible staff can be confident in how and when each committee and the board will complete its responsibilities for the year.

Meeting agendas are then easy to draft, from the work plan and any new business items, which may be identified by staff or members.

Each agenda item should include:

- ✓ Problem statement
- ✓ Identify significance (update, information or decision?)
- ✓ State intended outcome
- ✓ Propose who is accountable on the management team
- ✓ Board/Committee package requirements

About two weeks ahead of the meeting, the board or committee Chair would usually meet with responsible staff (e.g. the Director of Education for the board; the CFO for the Audit Committee), and:

- ✓ Review the draft and finalize the agenda
- ✓ Assign time allotments
- ✓ Focus the presentations
- ✓ Confirm board/committee package expectations
- ✓ Communicate board/committee package and presentation expectations to staff or other individuals
- ✓ Co-ordinate board package distribution (usually one week ahead of the meeting)

All board members should then review and read board packages:

- ✓ Prepare questions that you plan to ask at the meeting, based on your own areas of expertise, skill, interest and affinity – where will you add value to the meeting?
- ✓ If you have fact-finding questions, you may want to ask these of the responsible staff member before the meeting, so that everyone's time at the meeting is not spent on this. Check your communications protocol to see how board members ought to engage with staff between meetings.
- ✓ Check for conflicts of interest, real or perceived, and flag these with the Chair or responsible staff as soon as you can.

## At the Meeting (Step 6)

***School boards hold three different types of meetings:***

1. *Business meetings: The Education Act, 1995* and relevant regulations requires that school boards carry out their work in public meetings using formal voting and recorded minutes.
  - ✓ Members of the public can be excluded from these meetings for improper conduct.
  - ✓ An organizational meeting is required following elections and annually to select a chairperson and vice-chairperson and to confirm procedures.
  - ✓ School boards should establish

and publish regulations for delegations so that those wishing to make presentations to the board are treated consistently.

<b><u>Rate Your Board Meetings</u></b>			
	<i>Always</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
<i>There is a formal agenda for meetings.</i>			
<i>Discussion stays on topic.</i>			
<i>Standard procedures are ruled for voting.</i>			
<i>All board members get equal time to talk.</i>			
<i>Decisions for board action are approved by a formal motion.</i>			
<i>Appropriate resource people are invited to present ideas and information to the board.</i>			
<i>All motions and votes are written down.</i>			
<i>Meetings are less than 2.5 hours long.</i>			

2. *Closed meetings:* *The Education Act, 1995* provides for closed or “in-camera” meetings so boards can deal with topics more appropriately discussed in private. These confidential meetings should be limited to sensitive issues relating to personnel matters, bargaining, or legal action. It is not necessary to take minutes during closed meetings, but if motions are required in relation to matters discussed in closed meetings, the motions must be made and voted on in an open business meeting.
3. *Planning meetings:* School boards may meet for planning sessions, sometimes referred to as “committee of the whole board”. During planning sessions, the board may suspend the rules of procedure to engage in informal discussion or to meet with other groups.

***The School Division Administration Regulations provides rules for the way a school board meeting must be conducted:***

Voting in meetings must follow procedures prescribed:

- ✓ All questions are submitted to the board through a motion by the chairperson or any other board member and no seconder is required.
- ✓ Questions are decided by a majority of votes. The chairperson has a vote, and if there is a tie, the motion is defeated.
- ✓ If the chairperson and vice-chairperson are absent, the board members present may elect one of themselves to be chairperson for the meeting.

In addition to these, school board meetings follow commonly accepted procedures:

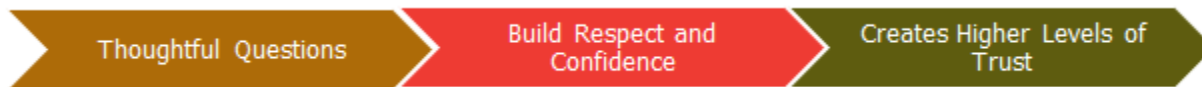
- The chairperson prepares the agenda, keeps the meeting on track, ensures that everyone gets equal time to speak, and ensures that meetings start and end on time.
- Decisions are made in accordance with established meeting rules. Some meeting rules are specified in *The Education Act, 1995*, or relevant regulations. For all other situations, boards can refer to standard rules such as *Roberts’ Rules of Order*.
- A recording secretary records motions and keeps an accurate record of votes.
- Motions are presented in the positive, outlining action the board should take; not in the negative, stating actions the board should not take.

## **Asking Good Questions**

If you want to be effective at meetings, master the art of posing great questions.

Questions are a staple of conversation, yet too often we see board members using far too few of them during meetings. Effective questions enable conversations, establish rapport, and better your understanding of the issues at hand. They help reduce confusion and misunderstandings, find solutions and bring clarity to deliberations.

The more thoughtful the questions, the higher the degree of respect and confidence, the higher degree of respect and confidence, the more trust there is ...



The art of the question lies in knowing which questions to ask when.

Great questions should be direct and open ended so that everyone understands exactly what you want to know and it gives the responder the ability to elaborate on their ideas. Open ended questions usually begin with “why” “how” or “what” statements that lead to further exploration of the topic.

Thoughtful questions will improve engagement and trust with others, show your interest and help build up thoughts and ideas to form better solutions to complex problems.



The best meetings are full of strategically significant questions. Questions that probe the heart of the plan, not the details. They are more about the *why* and *what* than the *how* of things and should open dialogue on the risks and opportunities involved in the proposed solution.

And remember to listen attentively to the answer to gain a full understanding. A follow up question that builds upon the answer is a great way to further the idea and get a better solution. An easy way to build is to simply say “go on” to urge a greater depth of response, listening deeply allows you to make great follow up questions.

Here are examples of specific content questions on agenda items for you:<sup>6</sup>

- ✓ Describe the issue or problem we’re trying to solve?
- ✓ What are you asking us for?
- ✓ What is your recommended solution and why?
- ✓ How does this fit with our strategic plan? With our budget? With our policies?
- ✓ Why are you proposing this vs. alternatives?
- ✓ What alternatives did you reject and why?
- ✓ What are the key risks? How have these been mitigated/addressed?
- ✓ What are your key assumptions? How have you tested these?
- ✓ Who are the key stakeholders?

<sup>6</sup> CPA Canada's *20 Questions* series is a tremendous resource to suggest great questions to ask: <https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/business-and-accounting-resources/strategy-risk-and-governance>

- ✓ What are the implications for: Student learning; Community and public; Financial; Human resources; Legal and legislative; Political environment; Reputational and social policy?

## After the Meeting (Step 7)

There are still a few steps left after the meeting has ended. You will want to:

- ✓ Agree on how to deal with (and what you may or may not say) about sensitive or confidential items dealt with in closed session. Having speaking points prepared for board members is often a helpful suggestion.
- ✓ Check that a system is in place to record and diarize outstanding action items for follow up or inclusion in ongoing agendas for the board or committee. Have these been properly authorized? Resourced? Documented? Monitoring targets or milestones put in place?
- ✓ Carefully review the Minutes of the meeting: these are the formal, legal, public record of both decisions and deliberations of the board.

## Boardroom Culture and Behaviour

Governance effectiveness can be viewed as the interplay among three aspects: governance structure, behaviours, and culture.

Having a good governance structure is important. Aspects like process, board functioning, compliance, oversight, control, the board's approach to strategy, and finely tuned documentation are all significant contributors to good governance structure. An immense amount of time is invested by School Boards in ensuring a well-oiled governance machine is in place.

But governance is about more than just good structure. The competence and character of the individuals on the board, and how directors and management behave in the boardroom are just as important.

And, even deeper, lying at the very foundation of the competence, the behaviours, and the structure, lies governance culture. Understanding that underlying culture – those unwritten, often even unspoken norms upon which all else is built—is critical to governance success.

Governance culture deals with the context of the boardroom and leadership (senior management) power drivers. Every board and leadership team has a set of unspoken and unwritten norms—and this cultural context is king. These norms usually are never articulated but they exist nonetheless.

It is not a bad thing—in fact, it is both inevitable and essential—to have cultural norms: it is only a negative if those norms keep boards from being fully effective in fulfilling their governance responsibilities.

Is your governance culture healthy and adding value, or unhealthy and obstructing effectiveness? Does it need tempering or re-balancing, through dialogue, a change in leadership style from the Chair or CEO, or recruiting more diverse board members?



Cultures can—and need to—be changed: but this is a daunting task that takes perseverance, championing, and time. Understanding culture is one thing. Changing it is quite another. Real cultural change requires change at the heart or very core of the boardroom.

Ultimately a healthy boardroom culture will:

1. ***Practice participative leadership:*** These boards are not “personality” driven. Board members keep their “egos” in check, while the chair draws on all members of the board—not just those he/she knows best or who speak the loudest.
2. ***Share responsibility:*** There is full engagement of all board members.
3. ***Remain aligned with purpose:*** Together, these boards act in the best interests of the School Board and all students—not in representative interests, and not in their own.
4. ***Ensure a high level of communication:*** Communication is open and transparent, with full disclosure, no unmanaged conflicts of interest, with every board member having equal access to the same information.
5. ***Concentrate on the task of the board:*** These boards concentrate their efforts on the work of the board, respecting the line between the board and management. They are able to move beyond their interest in operational tasks to School Board results, to putting students first.
6. ***Focus on the future of the organization:*** These boards are firmly focused on and guided by the vision and mission of the School Board. Their focus is made clear through the lens of fact-based, historical performance, objective and clear present realities, and well-reasoned projections.
7. ***Use the creative talents of the board and management team:*** Boards that have respect for the skills, experience and attributes of one another, the Director of Education and management team, coupled with a desire for innovation bring the best out of one another. This healthy interpersonal performance translates to healthy organizational performance.
8. ***Respond rapidly to the needs of the organization:*** When boards are attentive to policy, risk, best practice and the right performance measures, they are better poised for a rapid response when one is called for.

You may also want to consider these eight characteristics of an effective school board:<sup>7</sup>

1. commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.
2. have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.
3. are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Public-education/Eight-characteristics-of-effective-school-boards/Eight-characteristics-of-effective-school-boards.html>

4. have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.
5. are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.
6. align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.
7. lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.
8. take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.

## Evaluating the Board and Individual Board Members

Board evaluations are the final step in your Handbook, the final link in the chain that closes the circle of good governance.

Board evaluations are not merely an assessment done on an annual basis without thought for actions to address improvement areas. You should treat this an exercise to improve the board and move towards high performance. Measuring board effectiveness helps to fulfill your accountability responsibilities and identify areas for improvement.

Just as with all diagnostics – including Director of Education and organizational performance evaluations – board evaluations are about helping us look through the windshield of the car informing the future, and not through the rear view mirror to point the finger of blame on shortcomings.

First, you will want to agree on WHY we're conducting this board evaluation:

***Education and Awareness:*** One common driver is to build awareness of, and educate on, the expectations of the board and individual members. By simply asking questions, participants gain a more fulsome awareness of what is being asked of them in terms of their roles and responsibilities. Another benefit is identifying skills gaps and therefore training and development opportunities.

***Continuous Learning and Growth:*** Promotion of personal and organizational growth drives School Boards to embrace evaluation. Performance standards are set and raised over time, and compared against peer organizations and individuals in order to measure and reach for growth in performance.

***Communication, Understanding and Commitment to Priorities:*** Using the evaluation process as a communications mechanism is another common driver. Processes are designed to open up lines of communication among board members and with management, toward the goal

of building unity and trust, combined with a desire to reach consensus and commitment from all board members on the board's priorities.

***Audit and Assurance:*** Another basic driver is to provide assurance to the board itself, stakeholders, regulatory bodies and others of the depth, breadth and effectiveness of the organization's governance practices. Conducting a comprehensive governance "best" practices audit is a tangible means to identify and deal with the strengths and weaknesses of governance structure.

***Accountability and Compliance:*** Governance reforms and codes have mandated annual board evaluation for publicly traded companies in the U.S., and mandatory "comply or explain" standards in Canada, leading to rapid and wide adoption of the practice. These compliance guidelines are an accountability mechanism designed to ensure the board and board members are fulfilling their legal and governance responsibilities.

***Value Added, Positive Change and Mission Accomplishment:*** The ultimate driver of board evaluation is the desire to add value to the accomplishment of the School Board's strategy. If one believes that all governance practices should align and contribute to corporate strategy and mission, then this driver is a given.

A board is usually not seeking to accomplish all of these objectives during a single annual evaluation process: you will want to agree on which are, and which are not, sought after. Regardless of the motivation or the previous results, board evaluation, done well, promotes positive change and contributes to the creation of a road map to success for the whole organization.

Boards can choose from a number of tools for assessing governance effectiveness and conducting board evaluations: for example, documentation reviews, questionnaires, interviews, behavioural observation, boardroom and executive team cultural analysis and group facilitated dialogue. The tool you choose will depend on your drivers agreed on. Each tool tests and probes for differing aspects of structural, cultural, behavioural and relational governance and leadership issues.

Every governance process comes with potential challenges and pitfalls. Here are the main pitfalls commonly experienced with board evaluation:

- ***Unclear or Unarticulated Drivers:*** The drivers of the evaluation dictate the processes that will be used. Take the time to fully understand and agree on why you are conducting the evaluation and what you really want to get out of it.
- ***An Exercise in Compliance:*** Checking boxes to meet the letter of the law and missing its spirit may satisfy the rules and regulators, however it will not go beyond compliance to add value to the School Board or students. And it will leave you, whose time and energy are at a premium, feeling frustrated. Expect more of your process.
- ***Subjectivity:*** Because most evaluations are conducted via self-assessment surveys, these can quickly become very subjective. Based more on feelings than facts, subjective results can lead to misinformed solutions. Find ways to include objective facts, like peer benchmarks, into the evaluation.

- **Working on the Wrong Problem:** There is a tendency in evaluation to focus solutions on the symptoms rather than the causes, sometimes related to an over-reliance on questionnaires. Work to understand and address the underlying issues.
- **Lack of Independence:** Using internal resources like the Board Secretary or Legal Counsel to conduct board evaluations puts these individuals in a vulnerable position. These people rely on the board for their jobs, so face a dilemma when difficult messages need to be delivered. Having the Board Chair or other lead board member report on the results also lacks an independent view of what is really going on, and may actually feed undiagnosed dysfunction in the boardroom. Find ways to build independence into the board evaluation.
- **Lack of Expertise and a Disciplined Approach:** Using an experienced external consultant or governance professional brings rigour, expertise, objectivity and peer benchmarks to the process and ultimately increases the evaluation's impact. A caution, though: choose your advisor carefully for this very sensitive and impactful work.
- **Minimal Investment:** As the old adage says, "you will get out of something what you put into it." When making decisions about how to use scarce financial resources, boards are tempted to conduct their evaluation "on the cheap". A healthy investment of both time and money in board evaluation should actually pay off in terms of heightened efficiency and effectiveness, and alignment of effort to strategy.
- **Using the Wrong Tool:** Using the wrong tool for the job can create more problems than it solves. Link back to the drivers of the evaluation and match the tool to those.

Despite the pitfalls associated with board, committee, chair and individual evaluation, which can all be mitigated through effective methodology and implementation, there are significant benefits to be gained.

## Post-Board Evaluation: Development and Actions

Perhaps the least well-done aspect of board evaluation, yet the most important, is taking corrective action:

- Identify skills gaps, resource and undertake training and development opportunities.
- Institute appropriate changes in any area where the board and members are not fulfilling their legal and governance responsibilities.
- Disclose outcomes and changes to owners of the evaluation: the board and senior management.
- Communicate with and coach individual board members in filling identified performance gaps. It is common for the Chair to take the lead in this.
- Give stakeholders, regulatory bodies and others assurance that the board has undergone a rigorous evaluation, by disclosing the process.
- Use the results to feed into next year's planning process, objectives, priorities, and resource allocations, and board and committee work plans.

To effectively tackle the issues and opportunities a School Division may face, the board as a collective must possess a range of competencies. No board member will know everything about governance and everything about the education sector. So boards often use a "Board Matrix" or

Profile to identify competency gaps that can then be filled through orientation and ongoing education and training, or through the use of outside experts in specifically identified areas of weakness..

The matrix compiles the skills, experience and other capacity attributes of a board. The matrix below includes general competencies, although you should discuss and agree on the attributes sought after for effective board functioning and governance for *your board*.

This competency matrix, which is often completed in conjunction with the annual board evaluation, is usually done through a self-assessment process with each board member self-reporting their proficiency related to a given competency, or it may be completed by a board Committee or Chair in collaboration with board members. You should agree on the appropriate process and rating system.

Board Competency Matrix	Director							Average
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>General</b>								
Director Experience								
Leadership Role								
Business Acumen								
Business Judgment								
Senior Management Experience								
Strategy/Vision								
People Skills								
Communication Skills								
...								
<b>Specific/Technical</b>								
Risk Management and Assurance								
Industry Expertise								
Financial Literacy								
Financial Expert								
Human Resources								
Technology								
Legal								
Teaching Experience								
Education Administration Experience								
...								
<b>Average Score</b>								

The combined results of the board evaluation and attributes matrix are then used to bolster and inform the on-boarding process for new board members, and ongoing education for all.

Tips for on-boarding new Board members:

- ✓ Commences upon election and takes place over a few months (hold three different sessions, three months apart, not just one overwhelming one)
- ✓ Includes orientation both to the institution (operations) and the board (governance):
  - *SSBA Governance Handbook*
  - School Board functioning
  - *The Education Act 1995*, legal duties, powers, accountabilities and implications

- Governance Manual, Board level policies
- Board and Committee structure, charters and work plans, agendas and meetings
- ✓ Combination of reading material, meetings with key board leaders, Director, senior staff:
  - Facilities Tour with Director
  - Orientation meeting with Chair
- ✓ Expectations of you:
  - Attendance
  - Meeting participation
  - Committee service
  - Conduct, confidentiality, conflicts of interest and fiduciary duty
  - Expenses and travel
  - Training and education
- ✓ Align orientation and ongoing education with identified capacity needs/gaps, consider making these prescriptive and mandatory

**TOP 10 BENEFITS TO  
THE BOARD MEMBER,  
THE BOARD AND THE  
SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ONGOING GOVERNANCE  
EDUCATION**

1. Board members add value to the School Board and students
2. The School Board has a reputation for good governance
3. Effective oversight of the direction and control of the School Board
4. Reduced risk and increased capacity
5. Common frames and healthier relationships
6. Board members know what they are doing
7. Board members hit the ground running

## Key Questions the Board Should Ask About Governance and People

8. Board members stay current
9. Board members obtain certification
10. Board members have instant credibility

1. How appropriate is our plan for the Director of Education assessment and evaluation system?
2. How appropriate is our succession plan for the Director of Education at all 3 levels: Emergency, Orderly, Beyond the Next Transition?
3. How clear are we on our role in human resources and collective bargaining?
4. How well do we encourage the Director of Education?
5. How appropriate is our plan for the School Board assessment and evaluation system?
6. How effective is our onboarding and orientation program for School Board Members?
7. How committed are we to continuous education including for the Director of Education and School Board Members?
8. To what extent are our board and committee meetings linked to and aligned with our board and committee charters/terms of reference and work plans: before, during and after the meetings?
9. How healthy is our boardroom culture and how might we strengthen it?
10. To what extent am I fulfilling my responsibilities to the work of the board?

## About SSBA

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) is a non-profit, nonpartisan, voluntary membership organization, offering board development opportunities, advocacy, and services. The SSBA provides leadership and support for our members as a unified voice of Saskatchewan's 27 democratically elected public, Catholic and Francophone school boards.

Education is a shared responsibility in Saskatchewan. The education system serves students best when there is meaningful collaboration and engagement in decision-making regarding funding, investment, accountability processes, setting provincial priorities, and resolving issues.

Locally elected school boards have a vital role in serving Saskatchewan's publicly funded education system. The longest lasting and most fundamental responsibility of school boards has been to bring the voice of the public to publicly funded education.

In the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, operating on treaty territories and the Métis homeland, the work of the SSBA and its member boards remains deeply rooted in the belief that every child in Saskatchewan, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances, must have the resources and supports they need to achieve and succeed. Collectively, the people who serve on Saskatchewan's boards of education are committed to serving children, youth, parents, families, and communities.

### **Our Vision**

A strong publicly funded education system that supports, promotes, and provides opportunities for each student to achieve their full potential regardless of where they live in the province and their personal circumstances.

### **Our Mission**

The SSBA represents and supports the collective voice of locally elected school boards by providing leadership in advocacy, board development and high-quality services.

For more information, please visit: [saskschoolboards.ca](http://saskschoolboards.ca)





# Appendix 1: Other Education Programs

Board members should consider additional formal governance training such as:

Johnson-Shoyama:

<https://www.schoolofpublicpolicy.sk.ca/programs/executive-education/public-sector-governance.php>

Governance Solutions:

<https://www.governancesolutions.ca/governance-solutions/events-and-education>

# Ministry of Education Abbreviations and Acronyms

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## English

### Numbers/Symbols

**&** – and

**4Cs** – Children Communicating, Connecting and in Community

### A

**AASP** – Authorization and Access Service Provider (MSS/MÉS)

**ABE** – Adult Basic Education

**ACAN** – Advance Contract Award Notice

**accred** – accreditation

**acct** – accounts

**acctg** - accounting

**ACDME** – Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education

**achvmt** – achievement

**ACTC** – Agency Chiefs Tribal Council

**actpl** – Action Plan

**ACY** – Advocate for Children and Youth

**ADEA** – Athabasca Denesuline Education Authority

**ADM** – Assistant Deputy Minister

**admin** – Administrator/Administrative

**ADO** – Azure Dev Ops (MSS/MÉS)

**advsy** – Advisory

**AE** – Ministry of Advanced Education

**AEPS** – Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System

**AFL** – Assessment for Learning

**AFM** – Alternate Format Materials

**AFS** – Audited Financial Statements

**AGEN** – Aboriginal Government Employees Network

**AGM** – Annual General Meeting

**agency** – Agency

**agrmnt** – Agreement

**AIM** – Ability in Me

**AITC** – Agriculture in the Classroom

**ALTED** – Alternative Education

**AMS** – Agreement Management System

**AMS** – Application Managed Services (Fujitsu)

**AMS** – Application Management Services (SaskBuilds and Procurement – ITD)

**AP** – Advanced Placement Canada program

**AP** – Administrative Procedure

**appl** – Application

**appts** – Appointment

**appx** – Appendix

**aprvd** – Approved

**aprvl** – Approval

**ARF** – Approval Routing Form

**ARMS** – Administrative Records Management System

**ARRUC** – Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada

**ASD** – Autism Spectrum Disorder

**ASQ** – Ages and Stages Questionnaire

**assoc** – Association

**assmt** – Assessment

**attch** – Attachment

**attnd** – Attendance

**AU** – Assessment Unit

**AUP** – Acceptable Use Policy

**auth** – Authorities

### B

**BATC** – Battlefords Agency Tribal Council

**BB** – Blackboard

**bblgrphy** – Bibliography

**BEAR** – Board of Education Annual Reports

**BILCN** – Big Island Lake Cree Nation

**bio** – Biography

**bio** - Biology

**BIT** – Business Impact Template

**bk** – Book

**bldg** – Building

**BN** – Briefing Note

**BoD** – Board of Directors

**BOFN** – Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation

**BOG** – Business Operations Group (MSS/MÉS)

**BTC** – Battlefords Tribal Council

**BTS** – Business and Technology Solutions Unit

**BWB** – Bi-Weekly Bulletin

**BYOD** – Bring Your Own Device

### C

**CAC** – Curriculum Advisory Committee

**CALS** – Committee on Aboriginal Library Services  
**Can-SK Bilateral ELCC** – Canada-Saskatchewan Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Agreement  
**Can-SK CW-ELCC** – Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement  
**CASLT** – Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers  
**CAT** – Change Advisory Team (MSS/MÈS)  
**cb** – Catchball  
**CBA** – Collective Bargaining Agreement  
**CAP** – Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol  
**CAPER** – Child Abuse Prevention Education and Response  
**CBC** – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
**CBO** – Community Based Organization(s)  
**CCPD** – CCPD – Citizen Centric Program Delivery (SaskBuilds and Procurement – ITD)  
**CDI** – Cabinet Decision Item  
**CDN** – Canadian  
**CEFR** – Common European Framework of Reference  
**CELA** – Centre for Equitable Library Access  
**CESC** – Canadian Education Statistics Council  
**CF** – Core French  
**CFEE** – Canadian Foundation for Economic Education  
**CFN** – Cowessess First Nation  
**CFR** – Common Framework of Reference  
**chem** – Chemistry  
**CII** – Cabinet Information Item  
**CIS** – Certified Independent Schools  
**CLC** – Critical Learning Cycle  
**CMEC** – Council of Ministers of Education, Canada  
**cmptncy** – Competency  
**CMS** – Content Management System  
**cmte** – Committee  
**CNet** – CommunityNet  
**CNIB** – Canadian National Institute for the Blind  
**CNP** – Child Nutrition Program  
**COFLA** – Council of the Federation Literacy Award  
**collab** – Collaboration  
**comm** – Communication  
**CompF** – Complimentary Funding

**conf** – Conference  
**confid** – Confidential  
**corr** – Correspondence  
**CPA** – Chartered Professional Accountants  
**CPF** – Canadian Parents for French  
**CPOB** – Canadian Points of View Reference Centre  
**CR** – Change Request  
**CRM** – Change Release Management  
**CRM** – Change request management  
**CS** – Corporate Services  
**CSCC** – Class Size and Composition Committee  
**CSCH** – Comprehensive School Community Health  
**CSR** – Communications and Sector Relations  
**CSTM** – Council of Science and Technology Ministers  
**CTC** – Computational Thinking Curriculum  
**CTKNN** – Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation  
**ctrl** – control  
**CU** – Curriculum Unit  
**CUPE** – Canadian Union of Public Employees  
**curr** – Curriculum  
**CWEL** – Canada-Wide Early Learning Curriculum Visioning Groups

## D

**D&R** – Diagnosis & Review  
**dept** – Department  
**desc** – Description  
**dev** – Development  
**dev** – Development Environment (MSS/MÈS)  
**dft** – Draft  
**DI** – Decision Item  
**dir** – Director  
**div** – Division  
**DLRDC** – Diagnostic Leveled Reading Data Collection  
**DM** – Deputy Minister  
**DMO** – Deputy Minister’s Office  
**doc** – Document  
**DoE** – Directors of Education  
**DSA** – Data Sharing Agreement  
**DTEP** – Dene Teacher Education Program  
**DV** – Data Validation (MSS/MÈS)  
**DVI** – Data Value and Interpretation Unit  
**DVM** – Daily Visual Management

## E

**E** – East  
**EA** – Educational Assistants  
**EAL** – English as an Additional Language  
**EBMP** – Enterprise Business Modernization Project  
**EC** – Executive Council  
**ECE** – Early Childhood Educator  
**ECIP** – Early Childhood Intervention Programs  
**ED** – Education  
**ED Funding** – Education Funding  
**EDGE** – Engaging & Developing Government Employees Network  
**EDI** – Early Development Instrument  
**EDO** – Earned Day Off  
**EEP** – Electronic Educator Profile  
**EFAP** – Employee and Family Assistance Program  
**EFP** – Emergent Funding Program  
**ELA** – English Language Arts  
**ELCC** – Early Learning and Child Care  
**ELCCR** – Early Learning and Child Care Renewal  
**ELCCS** – Early Learning and Child Care System  
**ELE** – Early Learning Experience/Early Learning Evaluation  
**ELIS** – Early Learning Intensive Support  
**ELP** – Early Learning Programs  
**EMC** – Excel Model Calculator  
**empl** – Employee  
**EN or Eng** – English  
**enh** – Enhancement (MSS/MÈS)  
**EPFOL** – Effective Practices for Online and Blended Learning  
**EPP** – Education Partnerships Program  
**EPT** – Education Property Tax  
**ERM** – Enterprise Risk Management  
**ESA** – Education Services Agreements  
**ESC** – Employee Service Centre (now HRSC)  
**ESD** – Education for Sustainable Development  
**ESES** – Elementary-Secondary Education Survey  
**ESSP** – Education Sector Strategic Plan  
**eval** – Evaluation  
**ex comm** – Executive Committee  
**exec** – Executive  
**exp** – Expense  
**EY** – Early Years  
**EYE** – Early Years Evaluation

## F

**FAB** – Francophone Affairs Branch  
**fac** – Facilitator  
**FAM** – Financial Administration Manual  
**FAR** – Formative Assessment Resources  
**fe** – Familiarization Environment (MSS/MÈS)  
**fed** – Federal  
**Fed-Prov** – Federal-Provincial  
**FHQTC** – File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council  
**Fin Lit** – Financial Literacy  
**FIP** – Functionally Integrated Program  
**FLFN** – Fishing Lake First Nation  
**FN** – First Nations  
**FNEO** – First Nations Education Organizations  
**FNM** – First Nations and Métis  
**FNMEAF** – First Nations and Métis Education Achievement Fund  
**FNMI** – First Nations, Métis and Inuit  
**FNUniv** – First Nations University of Canada  
**FOI** – Freedom of Information  
**FOIPPA** – Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
**FPT** – Federal/Provincial/Territorial  
**FR** – French  
**fr imm** – French Immersion  
**franco** – Francophone  
**FRC** – Family Resource Centre  
**FSIN** – Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations  
**FTE** – Full-Time Equivalent  
**FTP** – File Transfer Protocol  
**FTV** – Following Their Voices

## G

**GDI** – Gabriel Dumont Institute  
**GEM** – Government Enterprise Management  
**GoS** – Government of Saskatchewan  
**gov** – Government  
**GP** – Growth Plan  
**gr** – Grade  
**grad** – Graduation  
**GSD** – Gender and Sexual Diversity  
**guid** – Guidelines

## H

**HBE** – Home Based Education  
**hdbk** – Handbook  
**HHS** – Historical High Schools

**HMTAM** – Help Me Talk About Math  
**HMTMS** – Help Me Tell My Story  
**HR** – Human Resources  
**HRCC** – Human Resource Centres Canada  
**HRSC** – Human Resource Service Centre  
(formerly ESC)

## I

**IAC** – Infrastructure Advisory Committee  
**IB** – International Baccalaureate  
**IDI** – Internal Decision Item  
**IEF** – Internal Expense Form  
**IIP** – Inclusion and Intervention Plan  
**ILL** – Interlibrary Loan  
**IMAC** – Information Management Advisory  
Committee  
**imprv** – Improvement  
**IMS** – Information Management and Support  
Branch  
**INAC** – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada  
**INF** – Infrastructure Branch  
**info** – information  
**intjur** – Interjurisdictional  
**intl** – International  
**invnt** – Invitation  
**IPAC** – Institute of Public Administrators of  
Canada  
**IRCC** – Immigration Refugees and Citizenship  
Canada  
**IS** – Independent Schools  
**IS** – Inspiring Success  
**IS** – Intensive Supports  
**ISBN** – International Standard Book Number  
**ISC** – Indigenous Services Canada  
**ISHBE** – Independent Schools Home-base  
Education  
**ISSI** – Invitational Shared Services Initiative  
**ITD** – Information Technology Division  
**ITEP** – Indian Teacher Education Program  
**ITGC** – Information Technology Governance  
Committee  
**ITMC** – Information Technology Management  
Committee  
**IYS** – Integrated Youth Services

## J

**JCSH** – Joint Consortium for School Health  
**jrnI** – journal

**JSGS** – Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of  
Public Policy  
**JTF** – Joint Task Force on Improving Education  
and Employment Outcomes for First Nations  
and Métis People  
**jur** – Jurisdictional  
**JUSP** – Joint-Use Schools Projects

## K

**K** – Kindergarten  
**KCDC** – Keewatin Career Development  
Corporation  
**KF** – KidsFirst  
**KHP** – Kids Help Phone

## L

**L1** – Level 1 (MSS/MÈS)  
**L2** – Level 2 (MSS/MÈS)  
**L2L** – Leading to Learn  
**L3** – Level 3 (MSS/MÈS)  
**L4** – Level 4 (MSS/MÈS)  
**LAC** – Library and Archives Canada  
**LAN** – Local Area Network  
**lang** – Language  
**LDC** – Locally Developed Courses  
**LDTC** – Locally Determined Terms and  
Conditions of Employment of Teachers  
**LEADS** – League of Educational Administrators,  
Directors and Superintendents  
**leg** – Legislative  
**LINC** – Local Implementation and Negotiations  
Committee  
**lit** – Literacy  
**LIVE** – Live Interactive Video Education  
**LLRIB** – Lac La Ronge Indian Band  
**LMC** – Locally Modified Courses  
**LMS** – Learning Management System  
**LND** – Library Network Development  
**LOA** – Letter of Agreement  
**LOO** – Letter of Offer  
**LOP** – Learning Opportunities Program  
**LOU** – Letter of Understanding  
**LRE** – Learning Resource Evaluation  
**LSSAP** – Library Services for Saskatchewan  
Aboriginal Peoples  
**ltr** – Letter  
**lvl** – Level  
**lvld** – Levelled

## M

### Maint - Maintenance

**MARS** – Ministry Agreement Request System  
**math** – Mathematics  
**MCP** – Major Capital Program  
**MDLP** – Multi-type Database Licensing Program  
(now SERP)  
**memo** – Memorandum  
MFI – Martin Family Initiative  
**mgmt** – Management  
**MHAAP** – Mental Health and Addictions Action  
Plan  
MHCB – Mental Health Capacity Building  
MHFA – Mental Health First Aid  
**MIDAS** – Multi-Informational Database  
Applications System  
**min** – Ministry  
**MLA** – Member of the Legislative Assembly  
**MLB** – Multi-type Library Board  
**MLS** – Ministerial Log System  
**MLTC** – Meadow Lake Tribal Council  
**MN-S** – Métis Nation – Saskatchewan  
**MO** – Minister’s Office  
**MO** – Minister’s Order  
**MoE** – Ministry of Education  
**MOI** – Memorandum of Intent  
**MOU** – Memorandum of Understanding  
**MRM** – Ministry Reference Manual  
**msg** – Messages  
**MSS/MÈS** – MySchoolSask/MonÈcoleSask  
**MT** – Multi-tenant  
**mtg** – Meeting

## N

**N** – North  
**NEO** – Northern Education Office  
**NFB** – National Film Board  
**NIPA** – Non-Instructional Personnel and  
Administration  
**NNELS** – National Network for Equitable Library  
Services  
**no.** – number  
**NORTEP** – Northern Teacher Education Program  
**NYCU** – News You Can Use

## O

**obs** – Obsolete

**obsv** – Observation  
**OC** – Order in Council  
**OCLC** – Online Computer Library Center  
**OECD** – Organization for Economic  
Co-operation and Development  
**offl** – official  
**OFN** – Ochapowace First Nation  
**OGAC** – Operating Grant Advisory Committee  
**OHS** – Occupational Health and Safety  
**OLCN** – Onion Lake Cree Nation  
**OLP** – Official Languages Programs  
**OPA** – Office of the Provincial Auditor  
**ORB** – Operational Run Book  
**org** – Organization  
**orig** – Original  
**ORS** – Operational Records System  
**OS** – OurSCHOOL  
**OTC** – Office of the Treaty Commissioner  
**OTtG** – On-track to Graduate

## P

**P3** – Public-Private Partnership  
**P4G** – Plan for Growth  
PAA – Practical and Applied Arts  
**PAC** – Public Accounts Committee  
**PAGC** – Prince Albert Grand Council  
**PASI** – Provincial Approach to Student  
Information (MSS/MÈS)  
**PAT** – Priority Action Team  
**PBCN** – Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation  
**PCAP** – Pan-Canadian Assessment Program  
**PCEIP** – Pan-Canadian Education Indicators  
Program  
**PCH** – Canadian Heritage  
**PCN** – Peepeekisis Cree Nation  
**PCO** – Provincial Comptroller’s Office  
**PD** – Professional development  
PE – Physical Education  
**PEBA** – Public Employees’ Benefits Agency  
**PEC** – Provincial Education Council  
**PEPIT** – Provincial Education Plan  
Implementation Team  
**perf** - performance  
**PF** – Plan finalization  
**PFN** – Pasqua First Nation  
**PIAAC** – Programme for the International  
Assessment of Adult Competencies  
**PILS** – Progress in International Literacy Study



**PISA** – Programme for International Student Assessment  
**pkg** – Package  
**PLC** – Professional Learning Committees  
**PLD** – Provincial Learning Development  
**PLLO** – Provincial Library and Literacy Office  
**Plng** – Planning  
**PLT** – Provincial Leadership Team  
**PMR** – Preventative Maintenance and Renewal  
**PMLS** – Pahkisimon Nuyeháh Library System  
**POM** – Plant Operations and Maintenance  
**post-sec** – Post-secondary  
**PPE** – Personal Protective Equipment  
**PCN** – Poundmaker Cree Nation  
**ppt** – PowerPoint  
**PreK** – Prekindergarten  
**PreK-12** – Prekindergarten to Grade 12  
**pres** – Presentation  
 prjct – Project  
**prgm** – Program  
**proc** – Procedure  
**prod** – Production Environment (MSS/MÈS)  
**prof** – Professional  
**prov** – Province/provincial  
**PSAB** – Public Sector Accounting Board  
**PSC** – Public Service Commission  
**PT** – Provincial Team (MSS/MÈS)  
**PT** – Provincial/Territorial  
**PTPLC** – Provincial and Territorial Public Library Council  
**PTR** – Pupil-teacher Ratio  
**pub** – Publications

## Q

**Q&A** – Questions and Answers  
**QA** – Quality Assurance (MSS/MÈS)  
**QIS** – Qualified Independent Schools

## R

**RAP** – Saskatoon Restorative Action Program Inc.  
**RCC** – Regina Centre Crossing  
**RCP** – Relocatable Classroom Program  
**rdg** – Reading  
**ref** – Referral  
**regf** – Regular Funding  
**rel** – Relation  
**res** – Research

**resp** – Responsibility  
**rev** – Revised  
**RFB** – Request for BID  
**RFI** – Request for Information  
**RFP** – Request for Proposal  
**RFSQ** – Request for Supplier Qualifications  
**RFQ** – Request for Quotations  
**ROVER** – Recommended Online Video Education Resources  
**RPL** – Regina Public Library  
**rpt** – Report/Reports  
**RPT** – Response Planning Team  
**rqmt** – Requirement  
**rsce** – Resource  
**rvw** – Review

## S

**S** – South  
**SACE** – Saskatchewan Association for Community Education  
**SAMA** – Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency  
**SARM** – Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities  
**SaskDLC** – Saskatchewan Distance Learning centre  
**SAS** – Student Achievement and Supports Branch  
**SASBO** – Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials  
**SASC** – Saskatchewan Association of School Councils  
**SAYCW** – Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Well-Being  
**SBP** – Saskatchewan Builds and Procurement  
**SCA** – Saskatchewan Cancer Agency  
**SCA** – Saskatchewan Construction Association  
**SCC** – School Community Council  
**sch** – School  
**sci** – Science  
**SD** – School Division  
**SDA** – Saskatchewan Digital Alliance  
**SDAR** – School Division Annual Reports  
**SDO** – Scheduled Day Off  
**SDS** – Student Data System  
**SEB** – Supplemental Employment Benefits  
**SECA** – Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association

**SEIP** – Saskatchewan Education Indicator’s Program  
**SELU** – Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit  
**SERP** – Saskatchewan Electronic Resources Partnership  
**SES** – Student and Educator Services Unit (IMS Branch)  
**SET4TC** – South East Treaty #4 Tribal Council  
**SETA** – Saskatchewan Educational Technology Association  
**SFL** – Supports for Learning  
**SFTP** – Secure File Transfer Protocol  
**SGEU** – Saskatchewan Government Employees Union  
**SHLA** – Saskatchewan Health Libraries Association  
**SHRC** – Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission  
**SHO** – Saskatchewan History Online  
**SICC** – Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre  
**SIDRU** – Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit  
**SIETC** - Saskatchewan Indian Education and Training Commission  
**SIGA** – Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority  
**SIIT** – Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies  
**SILS** – Saskatchewan Information & Library Services (Consortium)  
**SILS** – Saskatchewan Integrated Library System (Technology)  
**SIMS** – Senior Inter-ministry Steering Committee  
**SIS** – Student Information System  
**SK** – Saskatchewan  
**SLA** – Saskatchewan Library Association  
**SLN** – Saskatchewan Literacy Network  
**SLT** – Senior Leadership Team  
**SLT** – Strategic Leadership Team (MSS/MÉS)  
**SLTA** – Saskatchewan Library Trustees Association  
**SM** – School Messenger  
**SMC** – Strategic Management Committee  
**SMFN** – Stanley Mission First Nation  
**SMG** – Strategic Management Group (MSS/MÉS)  
**SOS** – **Statement of Sensitivity**

**SPDU** – Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit  
**SPSC** – Saskatchewan Principals’ Short Course  
**SPF** – Standard Payment Form  
**SPL** – Saskatoon Public Library  
**SPP** – Strategic Policy and Planning Branch  
**SPTRB** – Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board  
**SR** – Service Request  
**SRNet** – Saskatchewan Research Network Inc.  
**SRP** – Summer Reading Program  
**srvs** – Services  
**SSA** – Saskatchewan Student Assessment  
**SSAIS** – Supporting Student Assessment in Saskatchewan  
**SSBA** – Saskatchewan School Boards Association  
**SSC** – Specialized Support Classroom  
**SSLA** – Saskatchewan School Library Association  
**SSLA** - Supporting Student Learning and Assessment  
**SSON** – Small Schools of Necessity  
**SSU** – Student Supports Unit  
**STAT** – Statistical  
**STATS** – Statistics  
**STC** – Saskatoon Tribal Council  
**STF** – Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation  
**STFPL** – Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation Professional Learning (formerly SPDU)  
**STNS** – Sector Technologies and Network Services Unit (IMS Branch)  
**strat** – Strategic  
**STSE** – Science Technology Society and Environment  
**subm** – Submission  
**SUMA** – Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association  
**symp** – Symposium

## T

**TATC** – Touchwood Agency Tribal Council  
**TB** – Treasury Board  
**TBM** – Treasury Board Minute  
**TBS** – Treasury Board Secretariat  
**TC** – Tribal Council  
**TCB** – Teacher Classification Board  
**TE** – Training Environment (MSS/MÉS)  
**TEA** – Treaty Education Alliance

**TECC** – Teacher Education and Certification  
Committee  
**TEL** – Treaty Essential Learning  
**TFN** – Thunderchild First Nation  
**TISF** – Teacher Innovation Support Fund  
**TOG** – Technical Operation Group (MSS/MÈS)  
**TR** – Transitional Record  
**transl** – Translation/translating  
**TRC** – Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
**trng** – Training  
**TSC** – Teachers’ Superannuation Commission  
**TSEC** – Treaty Six Education Council  
**TTFM** – Tell Them From Me  
**TULA** – Treaty Understandings and Language  
Arts

### **U**

**UA** – User Acceptance (MSS/MÈS)  
**UAT** – User Acceptance Testing (MSS/MÈS)  
**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization  
**UFE – Unfixed Furniture and Equipment**  
**USIS** – Unified Student Information System  
(now MSS/MÉS)

### **V**

**VC** – Video Conferencing  
**VPN** – Virtual Private Network

### **W**

**W** – West  
**WDFN** – Whitecap Dakota First Nation  
**WDN** – Wahpeton Dakota Nation  
**WNCP** – Western and Northern Canadian  
Protocol  
**wrtg** – Writing

### **X**

### **Y**

**yr** – Year  
**YTC** – Yorkton Tribal Council

### **Z**

**ZFN** – Zagime First Nation

# Ministry of Education

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

### Français

#### nombres/symboles

**&** – et

**3e à 5e années** = 3e-5<sup>e</sup>

#### A

**Accréd** – Accréditation

**ACELF** – Association canadienne de l'éducation de langue française

**ACF** – Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise

**Admin** – Administrateur/trice, administrative

**Agnce** – Agence

**AJEFS** – Association des juristes d'expression française de la Saskatchewan

**AJF** – Association jeunesse fransaskoise

**ALA** – Anglais langue additionnelle

**AMAPDM** – Aide-moi à parler des maths

**Amél** – Amélioration

**An** – Année

**Ang** – Anglais

**Anglo** – Anglophone

**Annx** – Annexe

**APEF** – Association professionnelle des enseignant.e.s fransaskois.es

**APF** – Association des parents fransaskois

**Appl** – Application

**Approb** – Approbation

**Assoc** – Association

**Autoch** – Autochtone

**Autor** – Autorités

#### B

**Bbm** – Bulletin bimensuel

**BduMin** – Bureau du ministre

**Bibliog** – Bibliographie

**Bio** – Biologie

#### C

**CAFS** – Communauté des Africains francophones de la Saskatchewan

**CAmC** – Cadre d'amélioration continue

**Can-SK** – Canada-Saskatchewan

**CCF** – Conseil culturel fransaskois

**Cdn** – Canadien(ne)

**CDNL** – Collecte de données du niveau de lecture

**CÉF** – Conseil des écoles fransaskoises

**Chim** – Chimie

**CMEC** – Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)

**Cmté** – Comité

**Collab** – Collaboration

**Conf** – Conférence

**Confdtl** – Confidentiel(le)

**Consul** – Consultatif

**Corr** – Correspondance

**CPF** – Canadian Parents for French

**Cpts** – Comptes

**CSF** – Conseil scolaire fransaskois

#### D

**DAF** – Direction des affaires francophones

**DdeP** – Demande de proposition

**Dépt** – Département

**Dévlpmt** – Développement

**Dir** – Directeur(trice)

**DirÉduc** – Directeurs de l'éducation

**DivScol** – Division scolaire

**DSSC** – Division scolaire séparée catholique

#### E

**Ébch** – Ébauche

**Écol** – École

**Écrt** – Écriture

**EdFrsk** – Éducation fransaskoise

**Édif** – Édifice

**EDP** – Équipe de direction provinciale

**Éduc** – Éducation

**EET** – Enseignement essentiel à propos des traités

**EIQ** – Écoles indépendantes qualifiées

**ENP** – Éditions de la nouvelle plume

**Entnt** – Entente

**EPE** – Évaluation de la petite enfance

**EQLARAM** – exemples de questions liées aux résultats d'apprentissage en mathématiques

**Éval** – Évaluation

**Exéc** – Exécutif(ve)

**Exigs** – Exigences

## F

**FAQ** – Foire aux questions

**Fcltr** – Facilitateur(trice)

**Féd** – Fédéral(e)

**Féd-Prov** – Fédéral-provincial ou fédérale-provinciale

**FL1** – Français langue première

**FLM** – Français langue minoritaire

**FLP** – Français langue première OU

**FLS** – Français langue seconde

**Fr** – Français

**Franco** – Francophone

**Frmtn** – Formation

## G

**GdesE** – Guide des examinateurs

**Gest** – Gestion

**Gouv** – Gouvernement

## H

**Hblté** – Habileté

## I

**ImmFr** – Immersion française

**Intgouv** – Intergouvernemental

## J

**Jrsdctnl** – Juridictionnel(le)

## L

**Lang** – Langue

**LangOff** – Langues officielles

**Lect** – Lecture

**Légis** – Législatif(ve)

**LÉM** – Lecture, Écriture, Mathématiques

**LETR** – Lecture, écriture, traités

**LignDir** – Lignes directrices

**Lit** – Littérature

**Ltr** – Lettre

## M

**Maths** – Mathématiques

**Min** – Ministère

**MinÉd** – Ministère de l'Éducation

**Mnl** – Manuel

## N

**NdeB** – Note de breffage OU NdeSyn - Note de synthèse

**NdeS** – Note de service

**Niv** – Niveau

**NivdeLec** – Niveaux de lecture

**NLSI** – Numéro de livre standard international

**NotrÉcol** – NotreÉcole

## O

**ObDipl** – Obtention du diplôme de fin d'année d'études secondaires

**OEPN** – Organismes éducatifs des Premières Nations

**Ofcl** – Officiel(le)

**Org** – Organisation

**Orig** – Original

## P

**P.J.** – Pièce-jointe

**PCH** – Patrimoine Canadian Heritage

**PCLPE** – Pensée computationnelle en lien avec les programmes d'études

**PEP** – Plan d'éducation provincial

**PISA** – Programme international pour le suivi des acquis des élèves

**PlnAct** – Plan d'action

**PlnCons** – Plan de consolidation

**PlnCroiss** – Plan de croissance

**PLO** – Programmes de langues officielles

**PN** – Premières Nations

**PNM** – Premières Nations et Métis

**PNMI** – Premières Nations, Métis et Inuits

**Polttq** – Politique

**PPCE** – Programme pancanadien d'évaluation

**Préstn** – Présentation

**Prgm** – programme

**Pro** – Professionnel(le)

**ProgÉt** – Programme d'études

**Psec** – Postsecondaire

**PSSE** – Plan stratégique du secteur de l'Éducation

## R

**RADS** – Rapports annuels des divisions scolaires

**RapAnnl** – Rapport annuel

**Rch** – Recherche

**Réf** – Référence

**Renctr** – Rencontre  
**Resp** – Responsabilité  
**Ress** – Ressources  
**RetR**– Recrutement et rétention  
**Réuss** – Réussite  
**Rév** – Réviser (v) révision (n)  
**RSFS**– Réseau santé en français de la  
Saskatchewan  
**Rvisé** – Révisé

## S

**SantMent** – Santé mentale  
**Sc** – Sciences

**SDS** – Système de données scolaires  
**SHS**– Société historique de la Saskatchewan  
**SM** – Sous-ministre  
**SMA** – Sous-ministre adjoint(e)  
**Soumiss** – Soumission  
**Stat** – Statistique  
**Stats** – Statistiques  
**Strat** – Stratégique

## T

**TauxdeDip** – Taux de diplomation  
**Trad** – Traduction

## School Divisions

**CEF** – Conseil des écoles Fransaskois  
**CHSD** – Chinook School Division  
**CSD** – Creighton School Division  
**CTTCS** – Christ the Teacher Catholic Schools  
**GSCS** – Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (St.  
Paul’s RCSSD)  
**GSSD** – Good Spirit School Division  
**HFRCSSD** – Holy Family RCSSD  
**HTCSD** – Holy Trinity Catholic School Division  
**HZSD** – Horizon School Division  
**ICSD** – Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division  
**LCSD** – Lloydminster Catholic School Division  
**LOCCSD** – Light of Christ Catholic School  
Division  
**LPSD** – Lloydminster Public School Division  
**LSSD** – Living Sky School Division

**NESD** – North East School Division  
**NLSD** – Northern Lights School Division  
**NWSD** – Northwest School Division  
**PACSD** – Prince Albert Catholic School Division  
**PRSSD** – Prairie Spirit School Division  
**PSSD** – Prairie South School Division  
**PVSD** – Prairie Valley School Division  
**RCSD** – Regina Catholic School Division  
**RPSD** – Regina Public School Division  
**SECP**SD – South East Cornerstone Public School  
Division  
**SPSD** – Saskatoon Public School Division  
**SRPSD** – Saskatchewan Rivers Public School  
Division  
**SWSD** – Sun West School Division

## First Nations Education Authorities

**ACTC** – Agency Chiefs Tribal Council  
**ADEA** – Athabasca Denesuline Education  
Authority  
**BATC** – Battlefords Agency Tribal Council  
**BILCN** – Big Island Lake Cree Nation  
**BOFN** – Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation  
**BTC** – Battlefords Tribal Council  
**CFN** – Cowessess First Nation  
**CTKNN** – Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation  
**FHQTC** – File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council

**FLFN** – Fishing Lake First Nation  
**FSIN** – Federation of Sovereign Indigenous  
Nations  
**LLRIB** – Lac La Ronge Indian Band  
**MLTC** – Meadow Lake Tribal Council  
**OFN** – Ochapowace First Nation  
**OLCN** – Onion Lake Cree Nation  
**PAGC** – Prince Albert Grand Council  
**PBCN** – Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation  
**PCN** – Peepeekisis Cree Nation

**PFN** – Pasqua First Nation  
**SET4TC** – South East Treaty #4 Tribal Council  
**SMFN** – Stanley Mission First Nation  
**STC** – Saskatoon Tribal Council  
**TATC** – Touchwood Agency Tribal Council  
**TEA** – Treaty Education Alliance

**TFN** – Thunderchild First Nation  
**TSEC** – Treaty Six Education Council  
**WDFN** – Whitecap Dakota First Nation  
**WDN** – Wahpeton Dakota Nation  
**YTC** – Yorkton Tribal Council  
**ZFN** – Zagime First Nation

### **Provinces and Territories**

**AB** – Alberta  
**BC** – British Columbia  
**MB** – Manitoba  
**NB** – New Brunswick  
**NL** – Newfoundland and Labrador  
**NT** – Northwest Territories  
**NS** – Nova Scotia  
**NU** – Nunavut  
**ON** – Ontario  
**PE** – Prince Edward Island  
**QC** – Quebec  
**SK** – Saskatchewan  
**YT** - Yukon