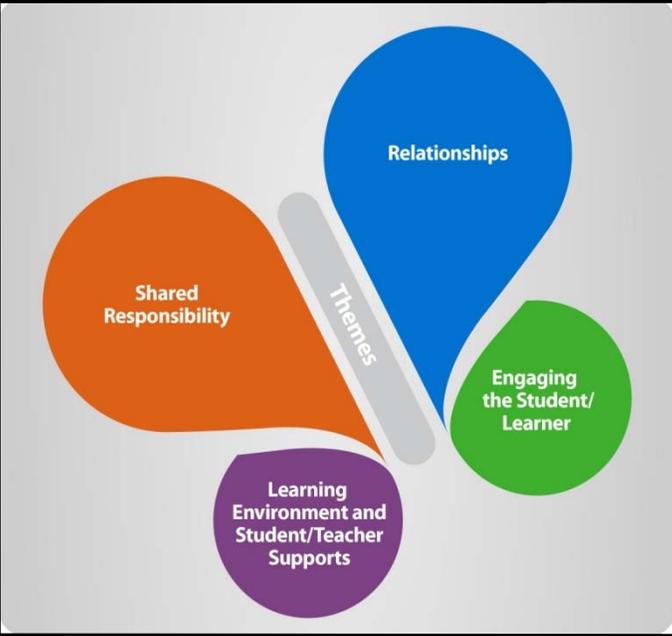
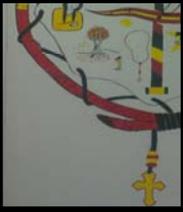
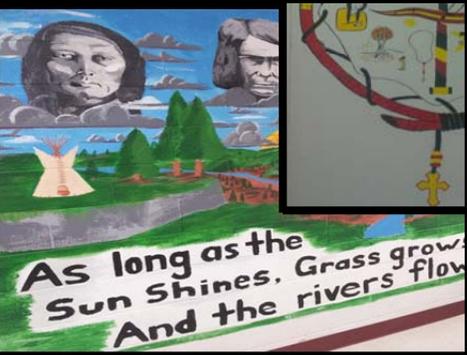


# Student First Engagement Discussion Guide

Prepared for the Student First Advisors  
Russ Mirasty and Patricia Prowse

September 2014



## A FOREWORD FROM THE STUDENT FIRST ADVISORS

---

It has been an honour and a privilege to have served in the role of Student First Advisors. Through this opportunity we have travelled the province listening to what students, parents/caregivers, teachers, educational and community partners had to say about what was working well in education, what barriers exist that are preventing students from achieving at their very best and what changes need to be made as we work together to ensure that the Student First approach guides the education sector's strategic plan and actions. As Student First Advisors we would like to acknowledge and thank the individuals that participated in the Student First engagements. Thank you for generously sharing your profound stories and your insightful feedback with us. We would also like to acknowledge the members of the Ministry of Education internal and secretariat Student First team and those that provided support to us throughout the Student First engagements.

This Student First Discussion Guide was prepared for the following reasons:

- To provide a summary of the process followed, and the resulting findings, from the province-wide Student First in-person and online consultations that the Student First Advisors co-facilitated;
- To provide a resource that will help inform ongoing iterations of the Education Sector Strategic Plan;
- To provide on the ground profiles that reflect the present state of education in our province with the goal of using these eight Student First Profiles to facilitate ongoing widespread stakeholder engagement, dialogue and commitments to action toward the desired state; and,
- To provide a touchstone for cross-ministerial collaboration, and ultimately shared responsibility, for the goals of the Student First approach.

It is our hope that this Student First Discussion Guide will be helpful to individuals, teams, organizations, communities, agencies, and ministries as they reflect on root causes of the identified barriers, celebrate and replicate successes and develop commitments to action within their spheres of influence. We believe the profiles and the stories they tell can act as springboards to conversations that will provoke and promote positive changes within the education sector. During our engagement sessions all stakeholders shared their desire to have a Student First Education Sector Strategic Plan and education system that prioritizes the learning needs of students. Achieving this goal, of putting the “student first”, would be responsive to the voices we have heard throughout our engagements.

Sincerely,  
Russ Mirasty  
Student First Advisor

Patricia Prowse  
Student First Advisor

*“It takes courage to start a conversation. But, if we don’t start talking to each other, nothing will change. Conversation is the way we discover how to transform our world, together.” Margaret Wheatley*

## SECTION 1: STUDENT FIRST APPROACH

---

The Ministry of Education introduced the Student First approach in July 2013 to unify, reorient and re-engage the provincial education system on what matters most – the student. Student First is an approach that is helping the education system in meeting the targets identified in the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 And Beyond*. It is not an initiative, but rather an approach that puts the student front and centre where, as an education system, we ask every day, in everything we do: "What difference does it make for the student?" and "How can we work together to achieve this?" A province-wide engagement process was introduced as a key priority of the Student First approach.

In October 2013 the Government of Saskatchewan appointed Russ Mirasty and Patricia Prowse as independent Student First Advisors to lead the province-wide engagement process to gather feedback from students, parents/caregivers, teachers and the broader education sector on how to improve the education system by putting the student first. The Student First Advisors were supported by a Ministry of Education internal and secretariat team, an external research team and an external communications team.

The engagement process also included an online engagement tool. The online engagement tool aligned with the in-person engagement format and provided an opportunity for students, teachers, parents/caregivers and a wider array of individuals to:

- Complete an online survey to share experiences, thoughts and ideas;
- Make written submissions; and,
- Respond to questions (that changed regularly) on how to put the student first.

In addition, a Student First blog was implemented in April 2014 as a mechanism to share stories the Student First Advisors had been hearing from students, parents/caregivers, teachers and the public during the Student First engagements. <http://studentfirstsk.com/blog/>

The Student First engagement process was based on the principle that every student wants to achieve, every teacher wants each student to achieve and the role of the education system is to support them in that goal.

The engagement process was unique in that student experience and teacher voice guided the process. It was also unique in that the process provided opportunities for media events and news releases throughout to highlight what the Student First Advisors were hearing. Throughout the engagement process, many of the themes, challenges and findings were profiled and shared publicly.

Input received through the engagement process will provide the focus and direction on priorities for action as part of the Education Sector Strategic Plan. Sector priorities will be determined through the broad range of voices heard during the engagement process.

## **1.1 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

The Student First Advisors and their support team traveled across Saskatchewan from December 2013 to June 2014 to gather input. See Appendix A for a complete list of the 33 locations visited, including 25 locations with provincial schools and 8 locations with First Nations schools.

The 120 in-person sessions with students/adult learners, parents/caregivers and teachers (96 in provincial schools and 24 in First Nations schools) helped to highlight areas that were working well and profiled the challenges facing Saskatchewan students. In-person sessions included small group discussions with 6 to 12 participants each. Further, the Student First Advisors led or participated in 42 engagement sessions with educational and community organizations/institutions. The online engagement tool was active from February 28 to April 28, 2014. Overall, 994 students, parents/caregivers and teachers participated in the in-person sessions and 1,532 submissions were provided through the online engagement tool (See Appendix B). Student engagement sessions included students in grades 4 through 12 and adult learners. It included students in traditional schools as well as students in alternative school settings.

The engagement process began with the voices of students, followed by sessions with parents/caregivers, teachers and representatives from the education sector and community agencies. As the process unfolded, the Student First Advisors began to hear similar messages and were able to identify several themes. Eventually, the Student First Advisors were able to articulate these themes and began to seek validation of such themes through discussions with a range of stakeholders. The process concluded by having formal validation sessions with students and teachers to confirm the findings. Five validation sessions were held with both students (three sessions) and teachers (two sessions).

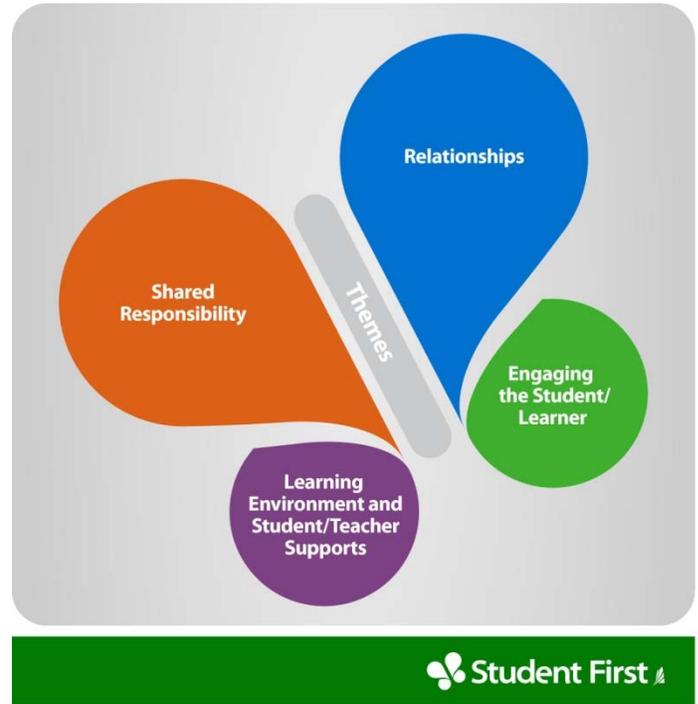
## **1.2 DISCUSSION FOCUS**

Three overarching questions guided the engagement sessions:

1. What is working well?
2. What is holding students back from learning at their best?
3. What needs to change to ensure that students can learn at their best?

## SECTION 2: WHAT WE HEARD

Through the engagement process, four themes and many subthemes arose as students, parents/caregivers, teachers and representatives of the education sector and community agencies shared their experiences. This document does not include a comprehensive report, but rather provides a high level summary of the findings from the engagements. It is intended to act as a springboard for a wider range of conversations that will provoke and promote positive changes towards the goal of ensuring that the student is first in all education sector decisions. The findings within each theme - relationships, engaging the student/learner, the learning environment and student/teacher supports and shared responsibility - are presented below.



### 2.1 RELATIONSHIPS

Strong, healthy relationships between students and teachers were identified as a key factor in students' ability to excel in school. Students believed that strong relationships grew out of teachers being respectful, noticing student absences and showing genuine interest in and care for the student. According to students, teachers and parents/caregivers, strong relationships are:

- The foundation of learning and focus on supporting learning;
- Supportive of learning;
- Key to building trust;
- Accepting of student experiences; and,
- Unique to the student and community.

These findings were supported by students who completed the Student First online survey, as one-half (51%) of high school students reported that the caring relationships they have now with their teachers helps them engage in learning.

*"I like coming to school because I have strong relationships with my teachers. I think I will want to know some of my teachers for the rest of my life." Student*

*"The best teachers are the ones who are interested in us as people. They don't just ignore you when you're having a bad day; they try and make it better." Student*

Although many students currently benefit from strong relationships with their teachers, half (55%) of the students felt that stronger relationships with their teachers would improve their education. The majority (71%) of parents/caregivers who participated in the online survey also felt that stronger relationships between teachers and students, built through direct one-on-one teaching, would improve students' education. Negative or poor relationships can result in students not trusting their teachers or administration, feeling unsafe at school and disengaging from learning.

## 2.2 ENGAGING THE STUDENT/LEARNER

Engaged students wanted to come to school and looked forward to learning, particularly in subjects that interested them or with teachers who were enthusiastic and personally connected with students. Having set goals for the future also helped engage students in their education.

Teachers knew students were engaged when they asked questions, expanding the conversation beyond the core curriculum and when they applied what they had learned to their own lives and in other classes. Purposeful conversations and activity, as well as happy students, were signs that teachers used to measure student engagement. Regular attendance, completion of assignments, seeking assistance when needed and arrival to class on time were also measures of student engagement for teachers.

*“When students ask questions about the class material, that shows that they are interested and making connections between the material and their world.”*  
Teacher

Parents/caregivers knew that their children were engaged in school when they were eager to attend school, shared what they had learned in school and were interested in completing their homework or expanding their learning. The school's ability to provide academic challenge was central to students' engagement.

### 2.2.1 What Works

Throughout the Student First engagements, students, teachers and parents/caregivers identified many aspects of education that were working well for students. Positive aspects of teaching methods, classroom and school environments, programming and parental/caregiver engagement in learning were discussed during the engagements.

Students were engaged in learning when they had opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and when their efforts were reinforced with success and recognition. Freedom to ask questions to expand and clarify the class material allowed students to connect to learning. Students were motivated to achieve their best when they understood and had input into their assessment and set corresponding learning goals.

*“I like it when the teacher relates what we learned back to me and how we will use what we learn.”* Student

Teachers promoted engagement by using a variety of teaching styles in the classroom, including hands-on, interactive and experiential learning, and by adapting teaching methods to meet students' needs and learning styles. Opportunities for both group and individual learning also promoted engagement. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge inspired students to be likewise interested in learning.

*"Kids get engaged in the material when teachers are engaged in the material." Teacher*

Students in adult education programs were often self-motivated. They returned to school to meet their own goals and, often, to provide a good example for their children. However, the positive and supportive classroom environments, including teachers who treated them as equals, often helped them remain in school. Adult learners were also motivated by the sense of accomplishment they received from school.

The Student First Advisors also met with students who had previously disengaged from school and were currently in alternative learning environments. These students felt engaged in the alternative learning environments because the teachers and other staff accepted them, encouraged them to meet their goals and created a supportive classroom environment. Flexibility in terms of class times and assignments was important to these students who often had jobs and family responsibilities.

Programming that spoke to students' futures, by being relevant to their lives and future goals, as well as to their cultures, engaged students in learning. Indeed, 57% of high school students who completed the Student First online survey were better able to engage in learning when they were interested in the subject matter. This was particularly true in northern communities where access to practical and applied arts classes helped students connect the classroom material to their career goals. Programming supported by community career sponsors linked students' learning to real life applications. Highly engaged students also had access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which helped them connect to the school and develop positive relationships with their peers.

Programming that was focused on applicable skill development, including career-oriented skills and job search and retention skills were essential to maintaining the engagement of adult learners. Moreover, many adult education programs provided additional student support, such as in- and after-class tutors. This support reduced students' academic frustration and increased engagement with the class material.

Students were best able to engage in learning when they were supported by a welcoming environment. Students were encouraged to strive for their personal best in school environments that recognized and celebrated a wide range of success. Welcoming environments also supported student ownership through opportunities for leadership and input.

Students often took cues regarding engagement in learning from their parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers who supported their children and encouraged them to excel were seen as key to student engagement. Parents/caregivers supported their children by encouraging them to attend school and do their homework. Parental/caregiver engagement was supported through tools that explained teachers'/administrators' expectations and how students' actions contributed to their success.

### 2.2.2 What Could be Improved

As expressed in the in-person forums, though many schools encouraged engagement in innovative ways, there were also challenges to engagement. These challenges were identified by both students and parents/caregivers who completed the Student First online survey. Distractions from other students (70% elementary and 47% high school students, 75% parents/caregivers), stress (60% elementary and 55% high school students) and the unavailability of teaching methods that reflect students' learning styles (47% high school students, 53% parents/caregivers) were cited as challenges.

Teachers/administrators identified other challenges for students in the survey from their unique perspective as educators, including high absence rates (92%), challenges at home (87%) and literacy skills below grade level expectations (81%).

*"Sometimes when a student does not understand something the teacher will say 'This is simple, you should know this.' But it is simple for them because they already know it; they aren't learning it for the first time." Student*

Barriers to student engagement originated within the school itself, the surrounding community and students' homes. Though some schools offered students a variety of curricular options, others did not. Learning environments that did not speak to students' learning styles, lives, or goals could reduce students' ability to engage in learning. This included limited access to alternative learning environments where all learning styles and levels were included and limited flexibility for students beyond a curriculum intended to prepare students for post-secondary education. Thus, students with advanced curricular interests and those who, due to their talents and interests, wished to transition into the workplace or trades, had few options in some schools. This was of particular concern in northern schools. Stakeholders commented on the lack of funding necessary to provide supplies for trades, accelerated student programming, textbooks, and science and sports equipment.

*"There is a heavy emphasis on preparing students for university that almost does a disservice to those students who will take other paths, because they are not being engaged." Teacher*

Although many teachers expressed a desire to provide enrichment opportunities for students with these interests, there was not sufficient one-on-one time with students to do so due to the demands of teaching a wide diversity of learners.

*“Last year they dropped French Immersion... what’s with that? It means that no one from this school can become Prime Minister.” Student*

Student progress through the grades in elementary and secondary schools was a discussion topic for all stakeholder groups. Students and parents/caregivers questioned the practice of having students move to the next grade when they were not performing at grade level. The term they used to describe this practice was “social passing”. Teachers identified the challenges for some students who begin school without well-developed readiness skills and the lack of wraparound resources necessary to support families and to intervene early. Although teachers spoke to their responsibility to take the learner from where he/she is at, and to differentiate learning to support students’ continuous progress, they admitted that it was increasingly difficult to meet the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms. Stakeholders expressed the fact that some students are not getting the learning assistance they need when they need it. Without interventions students are unable to close learning gaps and it becomes difficult to remain engaged in learning when they do not see themselves as successful, capable learners able to graduate high school. This is particularly evident when students hit the “Grade 10 wall” as it was described by students, parents/caregivers and teachers. In Grade 10 the credit system begins and students who have low literacy/numeracy skills or other learning challenges often find themselves repeating classes in order to obtain a course credit which is required before they can move on to the next level. Without additional supports these students are not able to reach their full potential and often get discouraged and leave school. Beyond the classroom, schools provide a number of supports such as literacy/numeracy teachers, resource/learning assistance teachers, tutors, Elders, and counsellors in an attempt to provide assistance so students can attain grade level outcomes and stay engaged in learning.

*“Students that are having trouble learning get frustrated and they want to quit school.” Student*

The challenges within school were compounded by, and connected to, students’ challenges in the community and at home. These challenges included few visible career opportunities within the community, lack of parental/caregiver engagement in education, poor sleep and nutrition habits and insufficient mental health supports. These factors reduced students’ motivation to obtain an education and/or their ability to be healthy enough to learn at their best.

Engagement in learning can also be limited by students’ social challenges. Teenage pregnancy, family responsibilities, poverty and other challenges at home prevented some students from focusing on learning. Bullying, including physical, social, and cyber, and distracting behaviour from their classmates, prevented

*“We need to deal with what is troubling these students so they can get back to learning.”  
Parent/Caregiver*

students from learning at their best. Some students were challenged by substance abuse issues. These issues, as well as others, could result in low attendance rates and academic frustration which interrupted students' learning.

Schools in some northern communities had a high rate of turnover among teachers that negatively impacted student trust and engagement.

*"The high rate of turnover (among teachers) prevents students from building relationships with teachers because they expect them to leave. Before every break, students used to ask me 'Are you coming back?' Now that I have been here for a while, they ask me 'How long are you going to stay?'"* Teacher

## **2.3 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

In quality learning environments, students felt emotionally and physically safe and received the support they needed to learn. In addition, teachers had the materials and equipment they needed to teach.

### **2.3.1 What Works**

There was widespread agreement that schools should be accepting spaces for all students and community members. This was reflected in the Student First online survey as most elementary (65%) and high school (49%) students, as well as teachers/administrators (88%), felt that schools should be welcoming environments.

*"In a small school everyone knows each other and we have smaller classes (which) lets the teacher help everyone."* Student

Caring and accepting schools were those that welcomed all students and celebrated diversity. Student clubs that fostered and supported student diversity, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) student-led alliances, were believed to promote a welcoming school.

Having a caring and accepting school was important to First Nations and Métis students. Students responded well to schools that included culturally responsive activities and supports such as Elders and smudging. They also appreciated the representative workforce at some schools, particularly when they could build relationships with teachers who were of First Nations and Métis ancestry and/or who implemented culturally responsive practices.

Welcoming schools also included community members from outside the school. When schools served as community hubs, with dedicated space for community use, students and community members felt accepted in the school.

*"The school is welcoming to families. You have a good feeling when you walk into this school."*  
Parent/Caregiver

For many students it was important that technology supported learning. In the Student First online survey, 34% of high school students reported that having current technology and equipment supported their engagement in learning. Students and teachers demonstrated the multiple ways in which technology supported learning, including mobile tablet labs and versatile math resources that engaged students at multiple levels.

### 2.3.2 What Could Be Improved

In the Student First online survey, 32% of elementary students and 15% of high school students reported that feeling unsafe at school impaired their ability to learn. Further, 45% of elementary school students and 30% of high school students indicated their education would be improved if the school provided a safe space to receive support around bullying. Teachers and administrators agreed that schools should be providing safe spaces for students to receive support around bullying (79%).

*"...You know when you don't fit in at school; it gets to be a hard place to go every day."* Student

LGBTQ students were at-risk for feeling unsafe in their schools due to bullying by other students, a lack of awareness of the challenges they face among teachers and school systems that are not inclusive. These students suggested that safe spaces in schools, such as classrooms led by teachers trained to promote inclusivity, could help them feel safer. LGBTQ students are often targeted for bullying in school washrooms and change rooms, creating unsafe spaces for these students. Gender-neutral, single-stall washrooms and change rooms would increase student safety.

Social bullying, which students referred to as "drama", was also an issue in many communities. Rumours can spread quickly, both in school and outside of school. The proliferation of social media posed further challenges to identifying and addressing bullying for teachers and administrators.

In many schools, infrastructure was out of date, in disrepair, lacking, or underutilized. This was of particular concern in communities where student population growth had not been matched by a growth in school facilities. Some schools had re-appropriated specialty rooms such as the gym, art room and shop as classrooms. In general, participants noted the need for:

- Dedicated space for specialized programming, such as practical and applied arts (e.g., commercial

*"Students waiting up to 18 months to see a mental health professional in this community is not acceptable."*  
Teacher

cooking, home economics, construction, welding, mechanics, machining, electronics, cosmetology, graphic arts), band, gym, or music;

- More classrooms to eliminate overcrowding;
- Upgrading of old facilities;
- Integrated community supports (e.g., health and dental services, mental health, addictions and social services);
- Increased community access to school-based facilities after school hours; and,
- Upgraded and improved technology and connectivity.

*“Technology is a great help in terms of getting my daughter interested in school.”* Parent/Caregiver

It was important that students in northern communities had access to up-to-date technology as it was often the only way that students could obtain core programming and resources in their home communities. Some students left home for larger centres to continue their education. Such resources were particularly needed in northern schools as they often had many students who required additional support, such as math and literacy intervention programs.

Children and youth spend a significant amount of time in school. Home and school partnerships are needed to ensure that learning environments and supports are in place for students to reach their full potential. Some students have identified intensive needs that require ongoing support throughout their school careers. Other students require programming and facility modifications, assistive technologies and specific personalized supports as outlined in their individual learning plans.

Students, parents/caregivers and teachers all addressed the increasing diversity of learning needs in the classroom. Students, while being very respectful of their classmates, spoke to the fact that some students took a significant amount of the teacher’s time because of their academic or behaviour challenges. Other students suggested more could be done to meet the needs of advanced learners by increasing academic rigor and being more flexible around high school programming. Parents/caregivers spoke to their concerns about the increasing demands on teachers and teacher associates to be responsive to these diverse needs. They suggested more could be done to offer professional development opportunities for staff so they are better able to meet their child’s needs. They also addressed the importance of facilitating smooth transitions between support staff, and collaborative planning for transitions from the early years through to high school and beyond. Teachers welcomed the involvement of other professionals and community-based resources in developing wraparound supports for students and their families.

In some schools, students, their parents/caregivers and their teachers felt that wraparound supports were lacking or required expansion. Respondents believed that a supportive learning environment would integrate the following services:

- Addictions and mental health workers;

*“The school has a program in place to ensure students have breakfast and lunch, even if they forget their money. Kids don’t go hungry at this school.”* Teacher

- Community health nurses;
- Community school coordinators who create linkages to community and government programming;
- English as an Additional Language supports;
- Infant childcare facilities and early learning centres;
- Nutritional programs;
- Social workers;
- Speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists; and,
- Transportation to and from school.

*“The daycare is really good for my child. Now I can come to school every day.” Student*

Newcomer families, including students and their parents/caregivers, require particular supports to adjust to school in Saskatchewan. Respondents suggested that newcomer students need assessments to ensure that they have access to the services they require and are placed appropriately. Pre-Kindergarten programs for newcomer students would also be helpful. Finally, language and homework supports could help students understand the class material.

Newcomer parents/caregivers also need supports to understand what is expected of parents/caregivers in Canada with respect to children’s education. Parent/caregiver mentors, translated school communications and accommodating cultural differences may support newcomer parents/caregivers as they adjust to life in Saskatchewan.

To ensure students continue to receive a high quality education, teachers must be supported. Many teachers felt that their ability to educate was impaired by the number of roles they held, and by the continually expanding expectations of their roles.

Teachers experienced multiple curriculum changes. They need sufficient time to absorb and integrate changes to the curriculum, a curriculum that is fully aligned with learner goals and Ministry outcomes, and opportunities for teachers to provide input into curriculum changes.

Teachers required tools to aid them in teaching students with diverse needs and learning levels in one classroom.

These tools included resources designed for multiple learning levels and educators with specialized programming knowledge. Teachers also could be supported by a curriculum that includes resources for all learning groups and allows learners to see themselves in the material.

Online teacher resources and learning tools were also suggested as useful supports. To further support diversity and acceptance in the classroom, teachers could be given professional development and resources to meet these needs.

*“As a teacher you need to make sure that students do well. If they are not interested you need to find something that will allow them to succeed so they will be interested in learning.” Teacher*

*“We need to educate those who educate others.” Student*

Northern communities experienced challenges providing professional development for teachers and retaining teachers. Professional development opportunities could be accessed from partnerships with larger centres. Teacher recruitment and retention was impacted in some northern communities by the quality of teacher residences. Teachers in these communities suggested that better quality, more secure and larger teacher residences be developed.

## 2.4 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Students, teachers and parents/caregivers agreed that all members of the community shared responsibility for education. They discussed actions and responsibilities that they and others could take to improve education in Saskatchewan. Depending upon the school and community these roles may already be well defined and the associated actions implemented.

### 2.4.1 What Works

Students recognize that they have responsibility for improving or achieving their intended learning outcomes. Some students worked hard to attend school regularly, complete their homework and participate in class. These students acknowledged their role in creating a positive environment for their classmates.

*“We have to push ourselves to do well in school. We can’t rely on others to do it for us.” Student*

Both students and parents/caregivers appreciate when teachers establish relationships with the students, parents/caregivers and the communities in which they teach to better understand students.

Parents/caregivers of students with intensive needs particularly appreciated a collaborative relationship with the school. In some schools, parents/caregivers, administrators, teachers and community supports met to discuss students’ needs and how their needs could be met in school and at home. When necessary, community resources were brought into the school to support students. Parents/caregivers appreciated this approach because they felt that their children’s needs were acknowledged and they could align the home environment with the school environment.

*“Kids in high school have big dreams now. We used to have big dreams but no way [to make them a reality]. Now, we can support [students] to reach their dreams... There’s hope out there for them now.” Parent/Caregiver*

Schools had an important role in ensuring students had access to a quality education. Administrators worked to ensure schools were safe, caring and accepting environments. Staff members provided students with the supports they need to learn at their best, and regularly communicated with parents/caregivers and students. In many schools, provisions were in place to provide culturally responsive activities and spaces. Many high school students (49%) and

parents/caregivers (61%) who completed the Student First online survey indicated welcoming school environments were important to improving education.

Similarly, teachers commonly examined their teaching practice to ensure that they are engaging, enthusiastic and caring learning facilitators. Indeed, the majority of high school students (75%) and parents/caregivers (71%) who completed the Student First online survey indicated that engaging instructional methods were an essential consideration in improving education.

### 2.4.2 What Could be Improved

Coordination among teachers would help to balance students' workloads across classes, while communication with students would help teachers understand students' responsibilities to their families and other classes.

With respect to shared responsibility, students, parents/caregivers, teachers and other stakeholders all noted that more could be done to improve student learning outcomes, even in schools where successes had been realized. As such, respondents identified responsibilities for all stakeholder groups.

Students agreed that they had a responsibility to attend school daily, prepared to learn. Being prepared to learn meant eating a nutritious breakfast, having sufficient sleep and completing homework. Students noted that they need to pay attention and ask questions in class. Students also had a role in promoting an accepting, supportive environment for their peers. Finally, students felt they should hold themselves accountable for their actions and futures by setting goals and working to reach them, as well as taking leadership roles in the school. Indeed, 53% of high school students who completed the Student First online survey wanted increased involvement in school operations and 43% supported opportunities for students to provide feedback to teachers and administrators. It was acknowledged that some students faced circumstances outside of school that challenge them to meet those responsibilities.

*"Students need to own their own lives and take responsibility for making positive changes." Teacher*

Parents/caregivers, teachers and students agreed that parents/caregivers should be involved and engaged in their children's education. For example, among parents/caregivers and teachers/administrators who completed the Student First online survey, 38% of parents/caregivers indicated they would like more encouragement to be involved in their children's schools and 89% of teachers/administrators felt that parents/caregivers should help their children with their homework and participate in school events and activities.

Specifically, it was suggested that parents/caregivers demonstrate to their children that they value education. This could be demonstrated through celebrating their children’s achievements, holding their children accountable for their attendance, behavior, learning responsibilities, and communicating with teachers and the school. They could encourage their children to set goals and stay in school. Parents/caregivers could also support their children by encouraging good sleeping habits, providing nutritious breakfasts and lunches, and being advocates for their children’s education.

*“We’d like it if parents spoke positively about school to foster a good attitude about education with their children.” Teacher*

Parents/caregivers can also be involved in their children’s school through volunteering and supporting school-sponsored events. Students suggested that parents/caregivers allow students to take ownership and provide input into their future goals and educational path.

Teachers acknowledged they could use multiple teaching methods, including text-independent methods, to engage students with different learning styles and diverse learning needs. Teachers/administrators who completed the Student First survey agreed that they could improve education by offering more hands-on learning opportunities (88%), allowing group work (74%) and celebrating different cultures (73%).

Students, teachers and parents/caregivers also suggested student supports that schools could advocate for and implement. These included partnerships to bring needed wraparound services into the schools, homework supports outside of school hours and methods to support and encourage attendance including consequences for poor attendance.

Participants felt that ongoing, timely and reciprocal communication among stakeholders was important. Communications from the school about students’ successes as well as their challenges was encouraged. Schools could also ensure that students and parents/caregivers understood the methods of assessment and reporting used in the school. Parent/caregiver and student input could be encouraged through clear opportunities for communication. Teachers/administrators who completed the Student First online survey agreed that there should be clear processes in place to allow students (69%) and parents/caregivers (65%) to communicate with the school. Participants also believed that schools could be made more inclusive and welcoming by hiring a representative workforce.

It was suggested that administrators could improve the safety of the school by holding students responsible for their actions by teaching behavioural expectations and assigning consequences for disruptive behaviour.

Participants suggested some responsibilities for the Ministry of Education. These included examining assessment methods and expanding in-school programming to provide life skills and trades training. Also, ways to improve coordination between education and other ministries

providing human services was discussed to ensure that students receive the services they need within and outside of school in a seamless manner.

Transportation barriers were identified in both urban and northern communities. It was suggested that the Ministry examine the options for providing more comprehensive transportation for students.

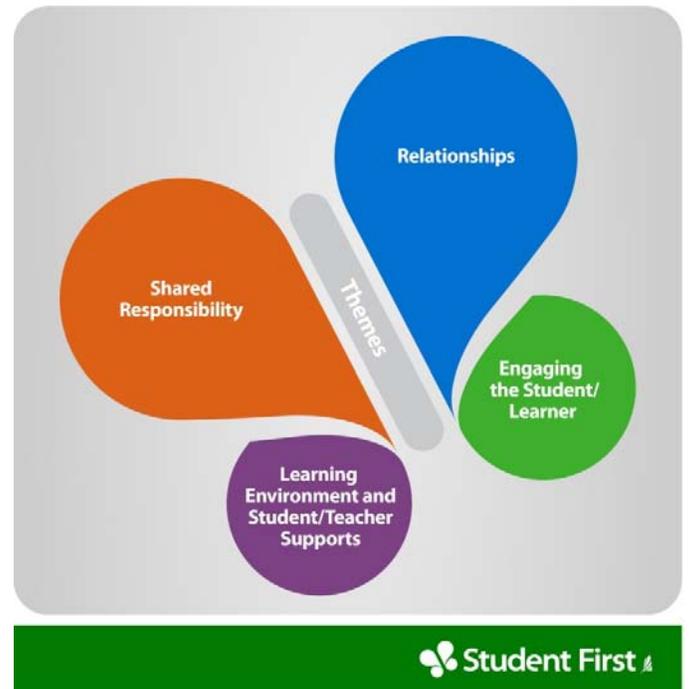
Other recommended priorities for the Ministry included:

- Provide leadership to ensure that all stakeholders accept their shared responsibilities to put the student first;
- Engage stakeholders in the provision of student/teacher supports necessary to deliver quality education for all students in the province;
- Foster and promote a collaborative cross-ministries response to support the attainment of the goals outlined in the education sector plan; and,
- Commit to ongoing student, parent/caregiver and teacher, educational and community partner engagements.

## 2.5 FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

### 2.5.1 Relationships

Students in First Nations schools appreciated the size of their communities which allowed them to develop relationships with their teachers both in school and in the community. Having teachers who missed them when they were not in school motivated students to attend. Knowing their students and their families helped teachers understand the students, their strengths, and challenges they face. Teachers who volunteered in the community built relationships with students’ families and the community as a whole. Unfortunately, these relationships were often disrupted by the high turnover rate among teachers in First Nations schools.



### 2.5.2 Engaging the Student/Learner

In First Nations communities, cultural connections were of particular importance to engaging students, encouraging attendance and achieving learning outcomes. Elders and community school coordinators/liaison workers improved student engagement by connecting the school to the community. Elders act as role models and help students understand

*“Elders are role models for us. I would like more time with them in school.” Student*

their culture and traditions. Opportunities to learn their traditional language and participate in cultural activities such as pow wows, sweat lodges, and culture camps also increased student engagement. These opportunities also improved school, family and community relationships.

Having local traditional language speakers on staff to teach and support students whose first language was not English was also important. Instruction in the local, traditional language(s) helped students connect with their culture and strengthened their sense of self-identity. Indeed, some schools with large populations of traditional language speakers had taken an English as a second language approach to help students make learning connections. A workforce that represented the local community also helped students feel comfortable in school and provided role models.

*“It is important for us to learn traditions like trapping from Elders so that we can pass it on to our kids.”*  
Student

*“My auntie is the first... band member with a PhD. It just shows how far a First Nations person can go with their education. She travelled the world and is a really big role model.”* Student

Innovative teaching methods were used to interest students in classroom content at some schools. These methods incorporated visual and kinesthetic learning opportunities connected through hands-on learning and using images to promote comprehension (e.g., the Picture Word Inductive Model).

*“Students don’t always feel comfortable speaking English, especially when they are frustrated. The tutor helps by letting them express themselves in their first language.”*  
Teacher

In First Nations communities, students, parents/caregivers and teachers discussed the need for expanded in-class supports to address the wide range of learning needs in the classroom. Teachers required resources and support to integrate First Nations’ content and perspectives into the curriculum. Challenges within the school were often compounded by, and connected to, students’ challenges in their homes and community. Academic challenges and social issues were often given as reasons for student disengagement from school. Many parents/caregivers remain hopeful that their children will graduate and attain their life goals.

### 2.5.3 Learning Environment

Participants described the current role of the school and the potential it had to be the hub of the community. Some families were partners with the school while others did not feel comfortable in connecting with the teachers or attending school events. All stakeholders said it was important for the school to be open to all community members in order to develop positive school, home and community partnerships. Encouraging community interaction with, and input into, the school was believed to help students feel welcome and involve parents/caregivers in their children's education. One suggested means of encouraging community interaction was welcoming adult learners to the school through adult education courses. Adult learners also acted as role models of life-long learning for students. Parent/caregiver drop-in nights were also suggested as a means of involving parents/caregivers in their children's education. Including community members in leadership positions in the school, for example as Elders, educators, school-community council members, and coaches helped students feel more comfortable, integrated the community's culture, and provided examples of success for students.

*"It's a privilege to have a principal who is from our community."*  
Parent/Caregiver

To encourage students to promote a positive learning environment, several schools enshrined their values in their student expectations, e.g., the Three A's of Attitude, Academics, and Attendance. To participate in special events such as school trips and extracurricular activities, students were required to honour and practice these values.

*"We keep our culture close in this school."* Student

In some First Nations communities visited, the school acted as a central location to provide students with the necessary services and supports through, for example, co-located medical, dental, social, and counselling services. The addition of early learning supports, particularly literacy and language programming, were suggested to ensure children enter school with the necessary readiness skills.

Student engagement was also affected by the learning environment, including the school building itself. Some schools in First Nations communities lacked basic resources and infrastructure such as paper, textbooks, gyms, and practical and applied arts equipment and spaces. Some schools did not have permanent buildings or hot water. This limited the curricular and extracurricular options available and detracted from students' pride in their school. In turn, students were less likely to look forward to attending school.

*"We need a room for every class and every grade."* Student

There was also a perception in some schools, which may have been related to the lack of resources or infrastructure, that students were receiving a poorer education than in provincial schools. Parents/caregivers and students felt that they were behind in the curriculum and that “social passing” was common. This reduced students’ motivation to attend school and parents/caregivers’ motivation to send students to school.

*“We have seen five or six year stretches without a [community name] high school graduate.”*  
Parent/Caregiver

*“There is social passing all the way through. Because of their age, they are moved up. Then they learn not to care and want to drop out instead of admitting they can’t read in Grade 7.”* Parent/Caregiver

Parents/caregivers and teachers in First Nations communities felt that experienced teachers, additional educational assistants and skilled substitute teachers were required. Teachers also identified the need for school-level supports such as guidance counsellors and social workers, and second- or third-level supports which could improve education in general. In some schools, supports were available but insufficient, and in others many such supports were unavailable. Suggested second- and third-level supports included collaboration among schools to share curricula resources, programs, information technology support, and professional development opportunities.

*“We desperately need a guidance counselor to deal with [social] issues.”*  
Teacher

#### **2.5.4 Shared Responsibility**

The concept of sharing the responsibility for education among the entire community was engrained in many of the First Nations communities visited. They saw the development of youth as a holistic process in which the entire community participates. Coordinated education, health care, housing, and family supports were all seen as essential to the healthy development of not only the student, but the family as well.

Students, parents/caregivers, and teachers suggested that community leaders and families consistently message that education is important. They suggested increased collaboration among band councillors who have portfolios related to education and community service to address community-level issues preventing students from learning at their best. Thus, human services provided by the band would work co-operatively to support education.

Parents/caregivers were seen as having an essential role in their children's education. It was acknowledged that students benefit from family support. It is important that these communities are given adequate resources to address social issues such as poverty, overcrowded and substandard housing, lack of access to nutritious food and limited employment opportunities. Teachers commented that they would welcome parents/caregivers' involvement in leading extracurricular activities in order to expand the healthy options available to students.

*"We need to be involved in education because we are the only ones who can save our children."*  
Parent/Caregiver

For the Ministry and Federal government, there was an opportunity to collaborate and to remove barriers. The most important barrier was identified as the disparity of funding for education between provincial and federal schools. Stakeholders wanted this disparity addressed to improve their children and youth's opportunities to achieve their educational goals and fully enjoy the benefits afforded to citizens of this province.

*"Why are city kids worth more than reserve kids? That's a question I would ask the federal minister."*  
Teacher

Other suggestions from stakeholders included developing life skills programming, supporting summer programming, and offering advanced education opportunities for community adults. They also suggested that information on any strengths or challenges that may affect students' school performance be added to student records. Having more information about students as they transition between First Nations schools and provincial schools would help teachers support students.

*"All schools should be getting the same funding. We are all going to school, aren't we?"* Student

*"They're teaching our kids modified programs when our kids are way more capable. I think if funding was there and we had the right teachers to teach the right programming, the right curriculum, at the right level, that you would get everything - the kids would be more engaged in school and stay in school. Once you lose that focus, it's gone. It's really hard to get it back."* Parent/Caregiver

### SECTION 3: STUDENT FIRST PROFILES

---

The Student First profiles are intended to act as springboards for conversations that will provoke and promote positive changes towards the goal of ensuring that the student is first in all education sector decisions. It is our hope that they will be helpful in fostering ongoing cross-ministry conversations and commitments to action for the benefit of all Saskatchewan students.

The following profiles are included in this section:

- I Want To Be An Electrical Engineer;
- Here Today - Gone Tomorrow;
- From Here To There - Successful Student Transitions;
- Pathways: Finding Their Future;
- Celebrating Student Diversity;
- Teachers: Putting The Student First In Today's Classrooms;
- Education - Who Owns It? and,
- Shining The Spotlight.

# I Want to be an Electrical Engineer



Sandy Bay, Saskatchewan is a northern community located on the banks of the Churchill River at “road’s end”, over 450km northeast of Prince Albert. The community consists of the Northern Village and the Wapaskokimaw Reserve, which is part of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. The traditional lifestyle of the Cree people was impacted as the region became the site of hydro-electric power generation on the Churchill River in the 1920s. Today, all-season roads connect Sandy Bay to the towns of Creighton, Flin Flon and Prince Albert. Hector Thiboutot Community School has over 500 students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. The majority of the students are of Cree and Métis ancestry<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Source: Ministry of Education (2014). *Student Data System*. Regina, SK.



## Student First Engagement

During the Sandy Bay engagement sessions with students, parents/caregivers, adult learners and teachers, the Student First advisors met Leonard<sup>2</sup>, who wants to graduate and be an electrical engineer. Why this career? Could it have something to do with the SaskPower incentive program that hires four high school graduates each year for a fourteen month pre-employment program? Whatever the reason, how can we support Leonard's dreams to become reality?

## What is Working Well?

Students find they are better engaged when teachers provide extra assistance outside of the classroom and one-on-one in-classroom support. They find that when teachers are approachable, easy going and have a good sense of humour, stronger relationships are forged. Students also say they better understand learning opportunities that they can relate to their life experiences and are "hands on".

*"I like it when the things we learn are about real life, like welding and shop."*

– Student

## What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?

Parents/caregivers are concerned that students are not learning enough about their cultural identity and that Elders are not given sufficient opportunities to support learning and the holistic development of children and youth. They note a reduction in learning activities (i.e. culture camps) that teach students about their culture and history. One parent/caregiver suggests that students are not embracing their cultures.

*"Part of your education is to know who you are and be proud."*

– Parent/Caregiver

Students say it is a challenge to attend school. The lack of bus service within the village is a significant barrier to attendance, particularly in the winter. A student spoke about the practice of losing a credit when too many absences occur. He feels this is unfair to students with children and those

with family responsibilities that often keep them from attending school regularly.

Parents/caregivers stress that students in Sandy Bay are interested in going to school in the elementary and middle years, but this interest drops off drastically in high school. They feel that by high school most of the youth are disengaged. They suggest that a lack of community involvement in the school, along with family issues such as teen pregnancy, negatively impact student engagement.

Furthermore, teachers speak of a "lose/lose situation" where the school allows students up to 50 absences. While students usually come back to school, they are often too far behind to understand the material and experience high levels of frustration. This acts as a barrier to continued attendance and graduation. Teachers also express concern that some students start school without school readiness skills.

*A teacher spoke about the importance of "teach[ing] as much as you can on the good learning day."*

– Teacher

## What Needs to Change?

Currently, at Hector Thiboutot Community School only 10-15% of students graduate within three

<sup>2</sup>Name changed.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Ministry of Education (2014). *Student Data System*. Regina, SK.

years of reaching grade 10. Over 30% of students take four to six years to graduate high school and just over 21% of students take seven years (reaching the age of 21)<sup>3</sup>. Other areas of concern in Sandy Bay are drug and alcohol addictions, a significant number of suicides and

high unemployment among youth and adults.

Despite the challenges, students, parents/caregivers and teachers at Hector Thiboutot Community School acknowledge the value in developing strong relationships.

Teachers appreciate being welcomed into the community and shared that the most rewarding aspects of teaching in Sandy Bay are the relationships with students. Students and parents/caregivers spoke highly of the teachers' commitment to the community.



## For Discussion: Action on the Ground

- What are the root causes of the barriers in Sandy Bay? What can we do, within our sphere of influence, to remove these barriers? How can we build on the successes that are happening?
- What can you/your team/ organization/ agency/ ministry do to help Leonard, and all students in this community, reach their full potential? How can we work together to achieve these goals?
- What is the preferred state for students at Hector Thiboutot Community School and the community of Sandy Bay?
- Based on the information gathered, what are the key actions that have to happen to support Leonard in achieving his goals? What are the short- and long-term actions for this community?

## Promising Practices:

- The creation of the **Cameco Centre of Excellence in Science and Mathematics** at Bedford Road Collegiate in Saskatoon, made possible through a \$585,000 donation from Cameco to the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation.

<http://www.spsd.sk.ca/school/bedfordroad/Pages/newsitem.aspx?ItemID=1>

- The engagement of, and **close working relationships** with Elders and the community in Beauval, Ile-a-la-Crosse and Pinehouse Lake to support a holistic approach to students' well-being and learning, including participation in culture camps.

- The demonstrated commitment to partnerships with industry at Estevan Comprehensive, Creighton Community School, Campus Regina Public, Mount Royal Collegiate (Saskatoon) and Saskatoon/Regina Trades and Skills Centres, to support students' exploration of **career pathways**, including participation in programs such as Skills Canada Saskatchewan.

<http://www.skillscanadasask.com/>



# Here Today – Gone Tomorrow



In the spring of 2014, the Ministry of Education began a pilot with several school divisions to collect general information from participating divisions related to student attendance. This data is summarized monthly by student and, to date, there is initial attendance information from about a quarter of the students in school divisions. This does not represent a full provincial picture, but it does indicate initial attendance patterns by grade, by gender, and for subpopulations such as self-identified First Nations and Métis students.

Preliminary attendance information collected from a small number of participating school divisions indicates that from September 2013 to February 2014, students attended just below 90% of school days. About 15% of students attended below 80% of school days during that time.

Attendance declines as students enter higher grades, with the greatest decline in Grade 12. As a result of that decline, Grade 12 students attend fewer school days compared to grades 10 and 11 students.

In all grades, particularly grades 10 to 12, self-identified First Nations and Métis students attend fewer school days than non-First Nations and Métis students.



## Student First Engagement

Across Saskatchewan, the Student First Advisors met with students, parents/caregivers and teachers who spoke to the need to improve student attendance and the importance of sharing the responsibility to ensure that students attend school regularly.

*“My brother left school because he started using drugs. He was in Grade 12 and only needed eight more credits to graduate.”*

– Student

## What is Working Well?

Students said they are motivated to stay in school when they experience academic success. Generally those who attend school regularly experience greater academic success. Students stated that they are more likely to attend school when they have strong relationships with teachers who know them as individuals and notice

when they do not attend class. Students appreciate supports that exist to help them work through challenges encountered in their lives, both in and outside of school. The expertise and care provided by in-school supports such as Elders, tutors, guidance counsellors and others, make a difference to students. Curricular and extra-curricular options that speak to their goals and interests motivate students to attend school, and community agencies that help them address personal and family needs also enable them to achieve their goals. Finally, students stay in schools that are safe, caring, accepting and where they have positive relationships with their peers.

*“Absenteeism isn’t the problem. It’s a symptom of other issues outside the school, things going on in that student’s life. Absenteeism is an invitation to a relationship.”*

– Principal

*“We need to deal with what is troubling these students so they can get back to learning.”*

– Parent/Caregiver

## What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?

Students leave or miss school for many reasons. In some cases, students said they miss school because they have trouble understanding class material. This is then magnified by frequent absences which reduces students’ ability to succeed academically and obtain credits. Other challenges expressed by students include a lack of class material that is relevant or connected to their life goals, distractions from learning and bullying (physical, emotional and cyber).

Student attendance is also impacted by external factors such as poverty, homelessness, teen parenthood and substance abuse, as well as committing significant hours to part-time employment.

## What Needs to Change?

Students, parents/caregivers and teachers spoke about needing to work together to improve student engagement, attendance and retention. By taking responsibility for their attendance and contributing to a safe school environment, students can improve attendance rates. Parents/caregivers encouraging children to attend and complete school, as well as their involvement in the school, is believed to be key to higher attendance rates. Hands-on and experiential learning opportunities in the classroom and extra-curricular activities are also thought to help increase student engagement. Communities and support services can decrease barriers to attendance by meeting housing and transportation needs. Such supports, along with increased employment opportunities, may reduce the number of school moves and transitions students experience.



*“Extra-curricular activities motivate me to come to class. My basketball coach helps me a lot; he says it’s important to stay in school.”*

*– Student*

## For Discussion: Action on the Ground

- What are the root causes of students leaving school? What can we do, within our spheres of influence, to increase student attendance? How can we build on the successes that are currently happening?
- What are the specific short- and long-term actions that need to happen to support students in attending school? What action will you/your team/organization/community/agency/ministry commit to doing? How can we work together to achieve these goals?
- Imagine an education system where all students attend school and look forward to school every day. What does this education system look like? What do the lives of students in this system look like? How can we move closer to the ideal system?
- How does your community/organization/school/agency/team support students to attend school? What are the best practices you would like to share with others? How can you learn from and share your expertise with others?

## Promising Practices:

- The **Shirley Schneider Support Centre** at Balfour Collegiate in Regina provides wraparound services to teen parents, including access to an in-school daycare.
- The Pinehouse Lake community, through a partnership with Minahik Waskahigan School, is working to improve student attendance by **recognizing students** who attend school consistently at an award ceremony.
- The school staff in Sandy Bay **visit absent students' homes** to encourage them to come to school and provide transportation to school if necessary.



# From here to there: Successful Student Transitions



Students, parents/caregivers and teachers often talk about the importance of smooth transitions and the impact transition points have for students throughout their education and beyond high school.

Students with intensive needs, newcomers to Canada, and First Nations and Métis students are often faced with a number of challenging transitions, such as leaving home to finish school where more course options are available.

Students in northern communities are recognizing gaps in the education system that is meant to meet their needs. For Alyx, a Grade 11 student at Churchill Community School in La Ronge, a lack of available senior-level courses led to the difficult decision to leave her home community of Fond du Lac to complete high school where the courses she needs to reach her career goals are available.

While on-line learning options are available for students to access senior-level courses in their community, Alyx says she needs the hands-on learning and teacher support that a classroom setting offers.

Luckily, Alyx has family living in La Ronge that she can live with and get support from, but there are still challenges she faces on a day-to-day basis. English is her second language and she sometimes does not understand or is not understood. She is also only able to go home on school breaks because of the high cost of flying to her remote community. Overcoming these barriers will allow for a successful transition.

There are a number of students at Churchill School in La Ronge from various northern communities who left home at an early age to complete high school. Many of these students aspire to careers that will fill the employment needs in their home community, such as teaching and nursing.



*"I want to be successful in life. School is a step that I need to go through to be successful."*

– Student

### **What is Working Well?**

Student transitions are more successful when students know what to expect, and when the necessary supports and services are in place. Many children with intensive needs require specialized supports and services prior to entering the school system. Parents/caregivers and teachers agree that transitions are smoother when all parties work together.

The transition to high school is more successful when there is a connection between the elementary and high school, and an opportunity for students to become familiar with the high school environment.

Programs where newcomer organizations and school divisions work together to support newcomers, their families and teachers in the transition to school and the community are also beneficial.

First Nations and Métis students say it is important to have Elders in the school for students to talk to, and to learn more about their cultures and languages.

Summer reading programs are seen as helpful in supporting students to maintain or improve their reading level over the summer months.

In-school math programs, as well as the extra support teachers provide to students are also found to be helpful.

*"A lot of people dropout here after grade 10. They decide it's too hard."*

– Student

### **What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?**

Children with intensive needs experience challenges and barriers as they transition from early childhood services to the school

system as some services are different, reduced or non-existent compared to those received prior to starting school.

Newcomers and their families experience challenges such as parents/caregivers participation in their children's education, student access to specialized supports, communicating in an unfamiliar language, and limited access to prekindergarten programs for 3- to 4-year old refugee children. With the growing number of newcomers to the province, teachers need tools and resources that will assist them in understanding and supporting these students.

Many stakeholders are concerned about students who are not able to perform at grade level, and they refer to the practice of "social passing." This challenge is evident when students hit the "Grade 10 wall." In Grade 10 the credit system begins and students with low literacy/numeracy skills or other learning challenges often find they are unable to meet the requirements of the courses they are taking.

Some students in northern and other remote rural communities are faced with the challenge of not having access to the senior-level courses necessary to graduate on-time or achieve their career goals. Students and their families also face challenges when moving between First Nations and provincial schools, their home communities and urban centres. Some schools identify programming challenges, lack of student counselling services, teacher retention and recruitment as barriers to smooth transitions.

*"We need someone or some organization to help create a seamless approach to service delivery and access for students with intensive needs."*

*– Parent/Caregiver*

*"Students who have gaps in literacy and numeracy need more support to catch up. They need longer than one year."*

*– Teacher*

### **What Needs to Change?**

Partnerships among school divisions, government, community and human service agencies should be nurtured to provide a seamless transfer of support services.

Students with intensive needs should start being prepared earlier for their transitions to and from high school. Students need to be prepared for high school during elementary school.

More could be done to prepare students for transition out of the school system. Many stakeholders feel that students are unprepared for expectations relative to post-secondary education, training and the world of work.

### **For Discussion: Action on the Ground**

- Using available data, what are the transition points where students are having difficulty in successfully moving to the next level of their education? What are the identified transition difficulties/challenges? What are the current transition successes that are happening and how can we build on them?
- What are the specific short- and long-term actions that need to happen to support students in moving successfully through these transition points? What supports are needed from schools/organizations/community/government agencies?
- What actions will you/your team/school/organization/government agency commit to doing? How can we work together to achieve these actions?

## Promising Practices:

- The creation of **transition teacher** positions at three elementary community schools in Regina support Grade 8 students transitioning from elementary school to Scott Collegiate High School. The three teachers each work as half-time transition teachers at their respective elementary school and have a half-time teaching assignment at Scott Collegiate.
- The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and the Advanced Placement Program at Bedford Road Collegiate in Saskatoon offer supports for students to **transition to post-secondary education**.
- The implementation of a school-based outreach program, **Settlement Support Workers in Schools (SSWIS) program**, connects newly arrived families with services and resources in the school and community.

<http://www.sods.sk.ca/Services/SettlementServices.aspx>

<http://rods.sk.ca/pages/settlement-support-workings-in-schools>



# Pathways: Finding Their Future

*"I like to learn when I know it will help in my future."*

*- Student*

*"Students need to be exposed to a variety of career options."*

*- Parent/Caregiver*

Students, parents/caregivers, and teachers throughout Saskatchewan highlighted the importance of career exploration and career transition. Some students know what they want to do and are on their way to achieving their goals while others are still "finding their future." In some schools, learning experiences are supported by businesses, community organizations and collaborative programming to provide hands-on opportunities for students to apply their academic learning to real life career situations.

The Transition-to-Work program at Creighton Community School is funded through an Individual Achievement Accounts (IAA) grant. It is designed to meet the outcomes of the Career and Work Exploration 10/20 courses where students develop work experience skills, including resume and cover letter writing, job applications, and financial awareness, as well as support to transition to paid employment. One student, named Curtis, said the IAA program was the best thing that ever happened to him. Here is his story in his own words.



*"The first day of school was always fun, getting some new clothes, new shoes, a haircut for school photos. I like the first and last days of school. My grade two teacher was a little mean to me because I would sleep in and miss the morning bus a lot. Whenever I told her that I slept in, she would look at me then tell me that kindergarteners come to school in the afternoons and not grade twos. I found that mean during that grade. I slept in and missed a lot of school during elementary. I would mostly miss the morning classes and attend the afternoons classes. When I would miss the mornings, there were only two reasons why... The first reason was because there were parties at my house. The second reason was because I felt like giving up. I wanted to give up on my life. I felt depressed and suicidal. During this time I felt as though I had nothing to look forward to. From grade 7- 9 these feeling of hopelessness started to change. My little sister came into my life. I wanted her to look up to me just like my younger brother Dayne did. When she looks at me I want her to see a big brother that is always there to feed, change and care for her. I want her to see a good man. When I think about what makes a good man, it is someone who is caring, loving, who has a Grade 12 diploma. Earning my diploma is important so I can get a good job to support my family. Money is not important to me, my family is important. Currently I am finishing my Grade 11 classes. School has helped support me to get my paperwork (Social Insurance Number card, birth certificate) to get a job. Mrs. Sutherland (the community school coordinator) helped me find my job placement and took time to help me with an application for Bold Eagle. Without her, getting a job would have been impossible for me. I like my shop class and my welding class calms me and I look forward to it every day. It has shown me that I may want to be a welder after I graduate."*

## What is Working Well?

Life goals motivate students to attend school and engage in their studies. Many students are focused on obtaining the grades necessary to enter post-secondary education and training. Some students appreciate advanced placement courses or the opportunity to work with peers who have similar

strengths, interests and commitment levels.

Students want more than "book work" and are particularly interested in hands-on learning, experiential learning, or curriculum that is relevant to their interests and lives. Multiple academic pathways provide students with a variety of course options and allow them to choose classes based

on their interests and future plans. Students say that their exposure to programs sometimes inspire career choices. In career-focused programming, students appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate their learning, which further encourages attendance, provides a sense of accomplishment and promotes learning.

*“...There is a perception that every kid will go to university, and I think their parents think that too. That is almost a disservice to those kids. As a community we are doing society a disservice by pushing only one set of values.”*

– Teacher

### **What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?**

For some students, the core curriculum acts as a barrier to achievement as they feel courses have no relevance to their chosen career, and therefore, they are less engaged in learning. These students want access to a wider range of programming. Insufficient opportunities for hands-on learning or a lack of diversity in teaching methods negatively impacts student learning. Students who enter high school with large gaps in literacy and numeracy skills are at a distinct disadvantage and find the transition

to work and post-secondary education particularly challenging. Parents/caregivers also express concern that the current curriculum does not provide sufficient exposure to life skills or allow for career planning.

### **What Needs to Change?**

To improve students' readiness for lifelong learning and career transitions, stakeholders identify the need to increase the relevance of the curriculum. Increased relevance could be achieved through expanded programming and learning opportunities. A greater emphasis could be placed on preparing

students for their futures, whether that is post-secondary education or transitioning directly into careers. In some cases, gaps in school infrastructure need to be addressed to allow for expanded programming.

Professional development for teachers that goes beyond course instruction to address vocational issues and general life skills is also thought to be important. Expanding co-op programs and mentoring opportunities are methods through which career planning could be enhanced. Additionally, it is important to begin career planning earlier in students' academic careers.

*“I come to school because I want to be successful in life and having a degree is important to get steady employment.”*

– Student

## **For Discussion: Action on the Ground**

- What are we currently doing to help students “find their futures?” Is this working? What needs to change?
- What would the education system look like if all students were able to easily transition to post-secondary education, training or employment following high school? What would need to change in the current system for this to happen? How can the current system move closer to the ideal? What actions can your team/school/organization/government agency commit to that would improve student transitions? How can we work together to achieve this goal?
- How can the education system honour the career goals of all students? What can we do within our spheres of influence to support career planning and transitions? How can current successes serve as models for future work?

## Promising Practices:

- Comprehensive high schools around the province offer a variety of practical and applied arts programming and a variety of **community partnerships**. Mount Royal Collegiate is the location for the Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centre and partners with the Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology (SIAST), Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and Dumont Technical Institute.
- At Blaine Lake Composite School, Practical and Applied Arts **students are building ready-to-move cabins**. The cabins are sold in order to raise money for school activities.
- La Loche Community School has instituted a **staggered trimester**, in which the first two terms are three months long while the last is two months. This enables the school to have three intake periods for students who wish to return to school.
- The **Academic Adoption Program** at Bedford Road Collegiate in Saskatoon offers support to First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. This mentorship program matches students with teachers, counsellors or school-based administrators who work with students and their families to ensure all students have the supports they need to succeed.



# Celebrating Student Diversity



Students, parents/caregivers and teachers talk about the important role that caring and accepting schools play in our communities as welcoming environments that celebrate student diversity. They work together to create environments that are inclusive, free of racism and bullying, and empower students to learn and succeed.

As Saskatchewan continues to grow, our student population continues to diversify. The following information, taken from the Ministry of Education Student Data System (SDS), helps to frame the conversation moving forward.

- Between 2009 and 2014, the number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students in Saskatchewan schools has risen from 2,953 in 2009-2010 to 14,104 in 2013-2014.
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit students represent approximately 21% of the total population of Saskatchewan students (176,178). In some provincial schools, this First Nations and Métis student population ranges from 50% to 95%.
- The current three year graduation rate for all students is 75% compared to 37% for First Nation and Métis students. Extended to five years, the graduation rate for all students is 80% compared to 48% for First Nations and Métis students.
- There are approximately 1,903 students in the Conseil des écoles francsaskoises school system.
- There were 1,211 students enrolled in Hutterite schools as of September 30, 2013.
- In the 2013-14 school year, 8,713 students, 4.95% of the total student population were reported by school divisions as requiring intensive supports.



### **What is Working Well?**

Many schools successfully foster welcoming, inclusive learning environments where students feel they belong and have supportive peers. Students spoke of non-judgmental school atmospheres that encourage attendance and class participation, and celebrate diversity.

An integral part of inclusive schools is acknowledgment of, and respect for, different cultural practices. Many schools demonstrate cultural responsiveness through spaces dedicated for First Nations and Métis cultural activities and the inclusion of cultural symbols throughout the school. Similarly, Elders and traditional language

teachers are available in some schools to support First Nations and Métis students. Students appreciate learning about their cultures and other cultures from around the world.

Many schools in Saskatchewan have taken steps to address bullying and create environments free of racism. This sometimes includes student clubs that acknowledge and support diversity, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) student-led alliances. Efforts have also been made to open lines of communication in order to build trusting relationships with parents/caregivers, and encourage a more robust family and school partnership.

*“The system is inside the box and needs to be outside the box.”*

*– Parent/Caregiver*

### **What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?**

While steps have been taken to create inclusive school environments, some students leave school, return to alternate school settings, or transfer to new schools seeking an environment in which they feel included. These

students speak of not having a sense of belonging at the school they attended and the negative impact it had on them and their academic success. Others speak of negative judgments from peers, teachers and administration that discouraged their participation, engagement and subsequent attendance at school.

For some students, there are insufficient supports to engage them in school and meet their learning needs. Parents/caregivers identify the need for greater supports for students with special learning needs, including those for whom English is not their first language and gifted students. Some schools serving First Nations students whose primary language is not English, struggle to provide adequate supports to these students. Parents/caregivers suggest that knowing more about a variety of cultural backgrounds will help teachers better understand the challenges First Nations, Métis and new Canadian students face. Teachers note that they are

challenged to meet the diverse needs in the classroom, and don't always have the resources needed to devote sufficient one-on-one time to students who require additional assistance.

*"I think of the newcomers to Canada... by being welcoming [at the school] we are giving the parents and children a sense of belonging."*

– Teacher

### **What Needs to Change?**

Students, parents/caregivers and teachers suggest that greater resources should be provided to support appropriate services for students with intensive needs,

new Canadians and First Nations and Métis students. Increased access to specialist services (i.e. speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, educational psychologist) or wrap-around services is thought to be critical in meeting unique learning needs. Finally, examining the representation of the school workforce at some schools will assist in creating inclusive and welcoming schools in which all students can build relationships with teachers and experience culturally responsive practices.

*"The Cree and Elder classes make me want to come to school. It's important for us to learn about our culture."*

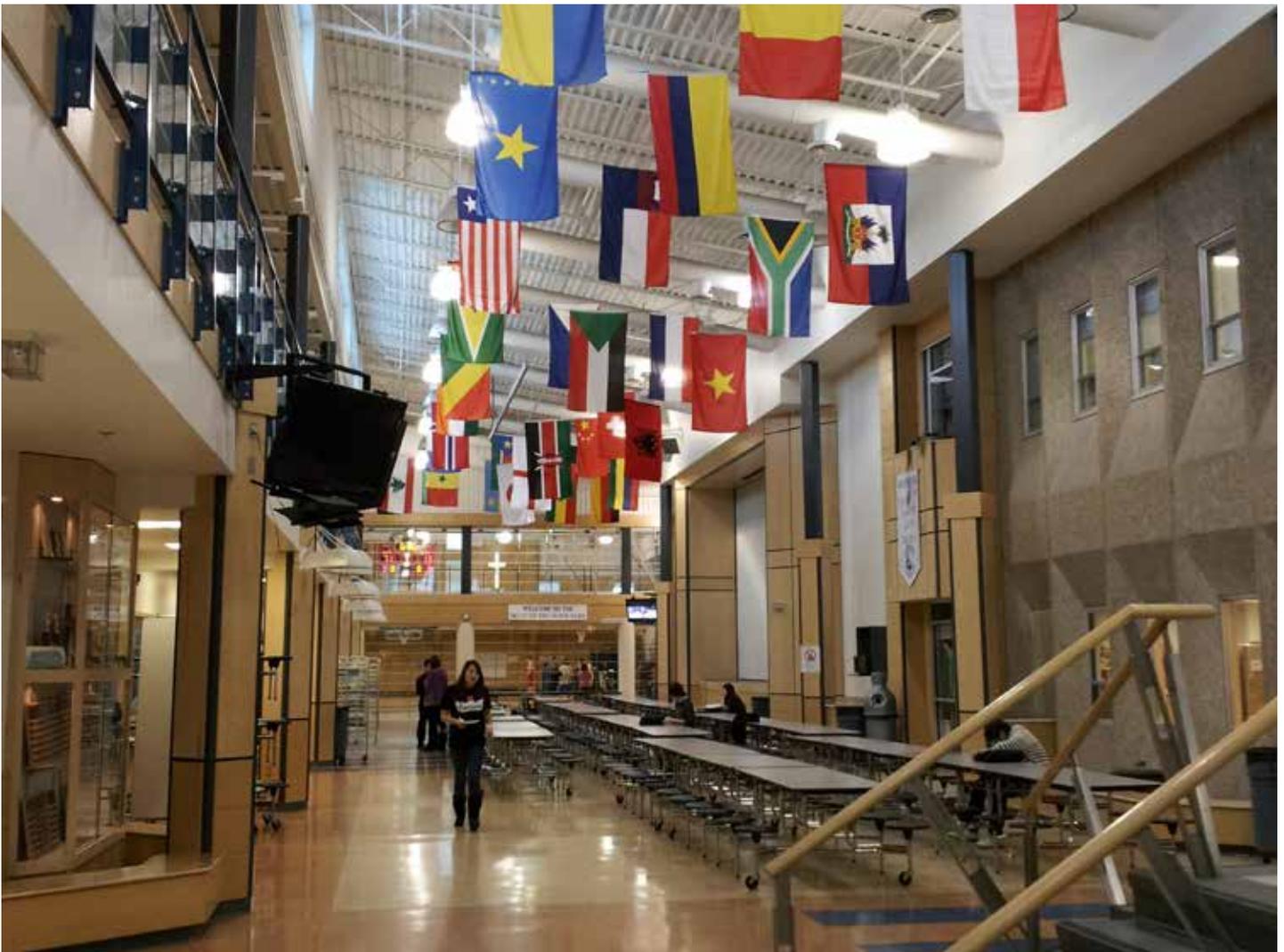
– Student

## **For Discussion: Action on the Ground**

- How can the education system acknowledge and meet the unique learning needs of all students? What can we do within our spheres of influence to better support our First Nations and Métis students, new Canadians, and students with intensive needs?
- What would the education system look like if all cultures were reflected in the curriculum, school workforce and school practices? What would need to change in the current system for this to happen? How can the current system move closer to the ideal?
- What short- and long-term actions would help the education system be more effective in supporting and embracing diversity? How can you learn from and share your expertise with the school system and other organizations?

## Promising Practices:

- The **culturally responsive practices** at schools such as Tisdale Middle and Secondary School, Mount Royal Collegiate in Saskatoon and Archbishop M.C. O'Neill High School in Regina that include First Nations and Métis cultural symbols and ceremony rooms for cultural activities.
- The Saskatchewan Hutterian Educators Association provides **professional development and network opportunities** for English and German speaking teachers throughout Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and the Northern United States who teach in colony schools.
- L'École Père Mercure provides **in-school immigration and settlement services** to students and the community.
- **Student clubs** that foster and support student diversity, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) student-led alliances.



# Teachers: Putting the Student First in Today's Classrooms



*"Teachers try to do so many things."*

*– Teacher*

Throughout the engagement process, the Student First advisors heard approximately 1,000 students, parents/caregivers and teachers describe the education system and, in particular, their classrooms and their schools. A recurring theme from the engagements focuses on the learning environment in today's classroom. Teachers are at the heart of the classroom and are leaders in putting the student first.



*"I hear about good school experiences every day from my child."*

*– Parent/Caregiver*

### **What is Working Well?**

Students and parents/caregivers speak favourably about teachers' commitment to learning. They value the relationships that teachers nurture, their professionalism and expertise, and their willingness to serve the student, and often the community, well beyond the school day. Students and parents/caregivers are aware of the myriad of responsibilities that teachers have

and they acknowledge the growing diversity of the classroom and the subsequent demands placed upon teachers. When asked what students and parents/caregivers are proud of about their school, they often respond by putting teachers and administrators at the top of their list. However, some educators say there are times when they feel undervalued and that their voices do not matter on important educational issues.

*“If you truly want education to be a success... everyone has to feel their voices have been heard.”*

*– Teacher*

Students and parents/caregivers speak favourably about teachers providing extra assistance in class, before and after school, and during lunch breaks. The extracurricular dedication provides students a healthy, holistic and well-rounded education.

Teachers feel that inquiry learning, career education, alternate pathways, transition supports and community partnerships are working well in some settings, but there is room for improvement in order to better serve students and their families. They are hopeful that the Education Sector Strategic Plan will provide the opportunity to unite the province on important educational priorities.

### **What Challenges are Teachers Facing in Today’s Classroom?**

Teachers want to teach, but there are barriers they face that take their energy away from their core teaching responsibility, such as administrative tasks, disruptions in the classroom, and the diversity of needs in their classrooms that are beyond what they can meet using current resources and supports.

Students talk about how difficult it is for their teachers to address classroom disruptions and meet the diverse social, behavioural and learning needs in the classroom. While not judging their classmates, a number of students share their frustration in having to wait to get help from their teacher who is often busy helping those with greater needs. Students want to be challenged and to maximize their learning opportunities and teachers want that as well. The tension lies between seeing the needs and being able to effectively respond to the needs in a timely and sustainable manner.

Although teachers know it is their responsibility to teach students based on where they are at, and to differentiate learning to support students’ continuous progress, they admit that it is increasingly difficult to meet the diverse needs of students in their classrooms.

### **What Needs to Change?**

Teachers say they would appreciate the education sector having a better understanding of today’s classrooms and the demands it places on teachers in meeting the learning needs of all of their students. As the needs continue to increase, the

sector must make a real commitment to shared responsibility for the children and youth of this province. While the school is often seen as a natural hub for the community, the school cannot be the only human service provider; nor can the teacher continue to assume responsibilities for children, youth and their families that fall outside the educational mandate. Teachers put the needs of the student first and they need all education stakeholders and other human service providers to do the same.

*“I like coming to school because I have strong relationships with my teachers. I think I will want to know some of my teachers for the rest of my life.”*

*– Student*

Parenting supports, early childhood education, health, mental health and addictions, justice and social services must collaborate to ensure that the supports that students, families and teachers require are provided when they are needed. This proactive shared responsibility and commitment will enable teachers’ to refocus their expertise and energy on the student as a learner.

*“We get caught up on what has been, instead of what could be.”*

*– Teacher*



## For Discussion: Action on the Ground

- What do your teachers say is working well in their classrooms/schools/divisions? How can we build on these successes?
- What does a system look like where all teachers have what they need to teach? What are the differences between that preferred state and the current system? What needs to change?
- What do your teachers say is creating barriers for their students in achieving their very best? What would it take to remove these barriers? Which partners need to share the responsibility of putting the “student first”, and what would they need to bring to the table?
- If you could do one thing tomorrow to provide responsive supports for teachers in the classroom, what would it be? How did you prioritize this action? What would those supports look like? What would it take to make this happen?
- During the engagement, stakeholders suggested that efforts be made to improve communication between the student, the home, the school, educational agencies and community partners. What communication strategies are currently being utilized? What new strategies could be explored?

# Education – Who Owns It?



Students, parents/caregivers and teachers talk about their responsibilities and what they expect from other stakeholders/partners. There is a broad understanding and expectation that every stakeholder can and should contribute in some way to ensure that the education system provides students with the best opportunity to achieve their learning goals.

Students know their role and the roles of their parents/caregivers, teachers, and the community. The idea of sharing responsibility for the student is expressed by many; going beyond the classroom and the school to include a broad range of partners, including:

- Administrators and school divisions
- Government agencies
- Health and human services
- Community groups
- Local businesses and corporate partners
- Municipal services
- First Nations communities
- Sports and cultural groups

## What is Working Well?

Students achieve at their best when they have the supports in place to ensure they can sustain a focus on learning. Students who are not under stress due to the pressures of poverty, sub-standard housing and family responsibilities are better able to attend school and achieve their goals. Students who feel safe and accepted attend school without fear of being bullied or excluded. Students with intensive needs are better able to grow and learn when they and their families are supported by services that are seamlessly integrated with the school. Schools and community agencies support student wellness through a variety of programs and processes that remove external pressures and facilitate learning. Supports that students, parents/caregivers and teachers mention as being particularly helpful include:

- On-site daycare;
- Teen parent services;
- Nutritious meals and snacks provided for no or low cost;
- Safe, caring and accepting school environments free of bullying; and,
- Co-ordination of health, social services and community agency partnerships with the school.

*“The daycare is really good for my child. Now I can come to school every day.”*

*– Student*



*“The challenges some students face are extraordinary, but they are not insurmountable. Students just need to be given options and have our support.”*

*– Principal*

## What Barriers are Keeping Students from Achieving at their Best?

While there are many innovative partnerships and community-based support services for students, parents/caregivers and teachers also acknowledge there are children and families who struggle to achieve at their best because of the barriers they face.

Some students talk about health issues, such as mental health and addictions challenges, and not having the nutrition, physical exercise and sleep they require to stay physically healthy. They share how their home lives prevent them from learning at their best. Their lives can be affected by homelessness

or sub-standard housing, abuse, poverty and parents/caregivers who are unable or unwilling to support their education. Teen parents also have responsibilities to their children which can detract from their ability to attend school and graduate.

Parents/caregivers question if teachers have the supports they need to teach, referencing high student-teacher ratios, crowded classrooms, and lack of resources (i.e., inadequate educational funding; the need for more educational assistants to help students with intensive needs; counsellors; speech language pathologists; educational psychologists; occupational therapists; textbooks; technology; etc.).

Parents/caregivers and teachers talk about the lack of access, involvement and coordination among government ministries. There are instances when services are lost or decreased when students transition from early childhood to school. They also say that the time needed to get assessments and services for students in some communities is excessive. Some parents are frustrated about not knowing what services are available to their children and the lack of coordination between school and community services. These issues are particularly prevalent among parents/caregivers and teachers of students with intensive needs who require diverse supports at home, in school, and in the community.

*“Students waiting up to 18 months to see a mental health professional in this community is not acceptable.”*

*– Teacher*

*“Parents have to be involved in learning; the school and home environment are so different, but both are important for learning. If we have good communication between the two, all parties would be better off.”*

*– Parent/Caregiver*

### **What Needs to Change?**

The responsibility for promoting student success is seen as a shared responsibility among the provincial government, parents/caregivers, teachers, schools, students and communities. Partnerships should be nurtured to ensure students can receive the supports they require, when and where they require them.

Wrap-around services that bring the student, their family, school and community agencies together to determine how a student’s need can be met could provide the support required by students with multiple needs. Wrap-around services can address diverse needs, including

housing, nutrition, health issues and criminal justice involvement.

Human service providers must work seamlessly with the education sector to support children, youth and their families. Parenting supports, early childhood education, health, mental health and addictions, justice and social services must partner to ensure that the supports that students, families and teachers require are provided when and where they are needed. This proactive, shared responsibility and focused commitment on the child, youth and family will also enable teachers to re-focus their expertise and energy on the student as learner.

### **For Discussion: Action on the Ground**

- What does “Education, Who Owns It?” mean to you/your team/school/organization/government agency?
- What does student success look like?
- What barriers are preventing you/your team/school/organization/government agency from supporting students? How can those barriers be removed?
- Which partners do you/your team/school/organization/government agency currently work with to support students? What partners and inter-agency plans do you have for the future?

## Promising Practices:

- The creation of a partnership between SaskPower and Sandy Bay's Hector Thiboutot Community School provides **pre-employment opportunities** to four graduates each year.

<http://www.saskpower.com/about-us/media-information/news-releases/saskpower-delivers-jobs-to-sandy-bay-youth/>

- The La Loche Community School provides **space for health services**, including mental health workers, dental therapists and social workers, to improve student access.
- The **nutrition programs** seen at several schools, including St. Mary High School in Prince Albert, support students who do not get meals at home by providing access to nutritious food at school for little or no cost.



# Shining the Spotlight



The Student First Advisors heard firsthand from students, parents/caregivers, teachers, educational partners and community leaders their personal stories, along with their suggestions, on how the education system and, in particular, the Education Sector Strategic Plan can collectively put the “student first.”

Throughout the engagement process, the Advisors saw many successes and promising practices. As part of the engagement process, they were asked to shine the spotlight on these promising practices with the hope that the successes could be replicated elsewhere and that schools and divisions would be empowered to create similar or other unique solutions. The intent is not to replicate the successes in a one size fits all approach, but rather look at what might be applicable, adjust it to suit the learning context and spread the initiative widely – student by student, classroom by classroom and school by school.

The two promising practices highlighted in this profile stood out for the Student First Advisors as unique examples of meeting the needs of students based on what they heard throughout the engagement process. They are good examples of the four themes that emerged from the Student First engagement process.



## Campus Regina Public

Campus Regina Public (CRP) is a dedicated facility that provides senior high school students (grades 11 and 12) from across the Regina Public School Division with the opportunity to enroll in a speciality field of study. When participating in the CRP program, a speciality course is paired with a core course, e.g., the Electrical and Electronics course is paired with a Math course; the Cosmetology course is paired with an English course. Students come to CRP from their home school every afternoon to take the two credit courses they have chosen. In September 2014 CRP will offer full day programming.

There are currently 20 specialty courses offered at CRP, providing various opportunities for students to engage in learning with peers who share their interests. Participation in courses at CRP supports students as they prepare for the transition to post-secondary studies and the workplace.

CRP opened at the beginning of the 2012-13 school year and had a total enrolment of just over 600 students in 2013-14. 92% of *all* students were successful in receiving their course credits; and 80% of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students were successful in receiving their course credits.

For more information contact:  
<http://campusreginapublic.rbe.sk.ca>

*“There are places  
for every student  
in the Saskatchewan  
education system.  
Students need to  
be celebrated for  
their strengths.”*

*– Parent/Caregiver*

Here’s what a recent graduate told us about CRP:

*The education available at CRP is much different than in a main stream high school. The practical learning aspect of the CRP courses allows students to choose a career pathway to focus their studies on. The classes I took enabled me to explore two careers that were of interest to me. The teachers and students were constantly engaged and focused because they are interested in what they are learning.*

*CRP has made choosing a career path an easier transition from high school and has helped me to distinguish where my passion lies.*

## Sun West Distance Learning Centre

The Sun West Distance Learning Centre (DLC) in the Sun West School Division was created in May 2008 to provide high quality distance learning opportunities to students across Saskatchewan.

Kenaston School was chosen to be the DLC site based on the average size of its grades and the comfort level of the staff with the various technologies needed. With an average grade size of 10 students, it allows students from other schools to be added to the class and still keep the overall class size reasonable.

*“Hands on learning keeps you engaged.”*

– Student

The DLC currently offers a wide range of classes, from Math to Science to Psychology, through two types of broadcasts. The first is a live broadcast that runs during a particular period each school day. Schools from across the division sign up to receive these broadcasts and SMART boards are used in all sites to display notes, post questions, share instructional videos and encourage collaboration and participation. The broadcasts have full audio and video feeds running, so students at any site can ask questions and see the teacher at any time. Students who are at the receiving sites have the support of an educational assistant, and the classroom teacher travels out to each of the schools three times per semester. This in-person visit allows the teacher to get to know each of the students, and it helps to promote discussion.

The second type of broadcast is a recorded instructional segment that has an online repository for class

notes, assignments, tools, learning materials and class discussions. This type of broadcast has been growing at a fast pace as it allows for continuous enrollment and students can work on courses at any time of the day. This gives students flexibility with their learning based on their personal circumstances.

*“We need to put more focus on the career pathway. They [students] want choices”*

– Teacher

In 2013-14, 340 full-time students were taking all of their courses online and 3,000 part-time students were taking one course while based in another school.

For more information contact: <http://www.sunwestdlc.ca>





## For Discussion: Action on the Ground

- What challenges are you facing that you would like to know how they are being addressed by other schools or divisions?
- Do the promising practices described in this Student First profile match learning needs in your classroom/school/division? How could these promising practices be replicated in your context? What opportunities can you leverage and what barriers will you face as you move forward?
- What would you like to shine the spotlight on in your classroom/school/division or organization?
- How are we currently sharing our promising practices? How could student, classroom, school and school division promising practices be shared more broadly?

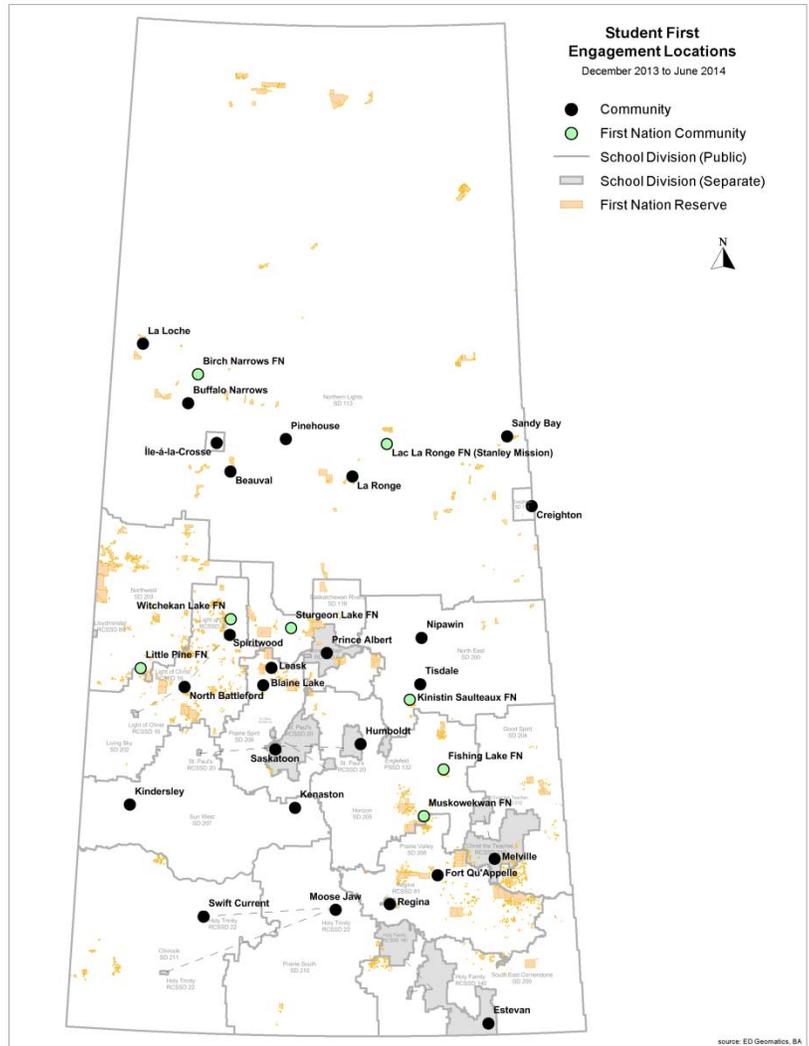
**APPENDICES:  
Additional Information**



**APPENDIX A:  
In-Person Engagement Session Locations**

In-person engagement sessions were conducted in 33 locations in Saskatchewan:

- Beauval;
- Birch Narrows Dene Nation;
- Blaine Lake;
- Buffalo Narrows;
- Creighton;
- Estevan;
- Fishing Lake First Nation;
- Fort Qu'Appelle;
- Humboldt;
- Île-à-la-Crosse;
- Kenaston;
- Kindersley;
- Kinistin Salteaux Nation;
- La Loche;
- La Ronge;
- Leask;
- Little Pine First Nation;
- Melville;
- Moose Jaw;
- Muskowekwan First Nation;
- Nipawin;
- North Battleford;
- Pinehouse Lake;
- Prince Albert;
- Regina;
- Sandy Bay;
- Saskatoon;
- Spiritwood;
- Lac La Ronge Indian Band (Stanley Mission);
- Sturgeon Lake First Nation;
- Swift Current;
- Tisdale; and,
- Witchekan Lake First Nation.



**APPENDIX B:  
Description of Engagement Participants**

The following table describes the individuals who participated in the engagement activities:

**Table B-1: Engagement Participants**

Participant Group	Number of Participants
In-person Engagement Sessions in Provincial Schools (students/adult learners, parents/caregivers and teachers)	784
In-person Engagement Sessions in First Nations Schools (students, parents/caregivers and teachers)	210
Online Submissions*	
Students under 18 years	11
Adults	101
Online Survey Completions	
Students	87
Parents/Caregivers	513
Teachers/Administrators	593
Other Stakeholders	227

\*Includes Key Question responses and Written Submissions.

The Student First Advisors engaged with the following educational and community organizations through in-person meetings:

- Avenue Community Centre;
- Best Interest of the Child Conference;
- Camp fYrefly;
- Canadian Red Cross;
- Chamber of Commerce;
- CUPE Education Workers Saskatchewan;
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN);
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Provincial Coordinating Committee;
- File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council;
- First Nations Directors of Education and Principals (3 sessions);
- Health Promoting Schools;
- Kilburn Hall Youth Centre;
- League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS) (2 sessions);
- Mayor of La Loche;
- Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan (2 sessions);

- Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S);
- Ministry of Education Staff (3 sessions);
- Northern Lights Director of Education;
- Northern Teacher Education Program (Nortep);
- Northlands College;
- Post-secondary education and training organizations/institutions (2 sessions);
- Regina Open Door Society;
- Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO) (2 sessions);
- Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) (4 sessions);
- SASBO/SSBA Communicators group;
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) (3 sessions);
- Sun West Distance Learning Centre;
- Treaty 4 Governance Centre; and
- University of Saskatchewan, Faculty of Education.

