

# The School Trustee

## Perspectives on School Board Education Program

Now three modules into the course, the School Board Member Education Program is more than halfway through its first year. And if the anecdotal and survey evidence tells the tale it has overwhelmingly been one about learning and success.

From trustees who were supporters from the beginning to those who were more skeptical, the modules to date have elicited a favourable response.

"I was very skeptical about the program to the point of being dead set against it," said Sun West Board of Education trustee Scott Sander. "But I talked to a guy who took a similar program for health and he said it was good so I changed my mind – glad I did!"

The program is supported in

part by the provincial government and is delivered by the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy and Brown Governance



*Participants at the School Board Member Education Program module on Governance and Strategy in September 2013.*

with a cross-section of presenters who have experience working with governing boards in the public or private sector.

To date, the program has focused on governance and its relation to

strategy, risk and people. The fourth and final module in March focuses on governance and resources.

For the first two modules, survey

results indicated that 94 percent of all participants were either somewhat or very satisfied with the modules.

"I had not taken any university courses previously so I thought perhaps the material and studying might be a bit over my head," said Regina Catholic Board of Education trustee Lisa Polk.

"Having only been a school trustee for a

year I also wasn't sure I would have the appropriate knowledge base. I am impressed by the quality of the presenters and the material is not

Continued on Page 6...

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President Foord's Remarks  
at Members' Council

2

Student First Advisors  
Meet with Executive

3

Ministry of Education  
Enhances Communications

3

Members' Council in Pictures

4

Campus Regina Public's  
Relevance for Students

5

Prairie Spirit Teacher  
Professional Development

7

Calendar Update

8

Staff Update

8

# President Foord's Remarks at Members' Council

President Janet Foord opened Members' Council during the first SSBA event of 2014 with a look at the year ahead.

She began with an update on the education sector strategic planning process and the anticipated approval of the plan this spring.

"I want to express my appreciation to the trustees, senior administrators and school division staff who have continued to work with the Ministry of Education to finalize the sector plan. Needless to say, a lot of thought, collaboration and dedication have gone into this plan," said Foord. "We anticipate that boards of education and the Provincial Cabinet will approve the plan this spring. That's when the rubber will meet the road, when the actual implementation of the plan will begin. As I have said time and again, this is a historic process for education in the province."

Now into the second year of the SSBA's strategic plan, she spoke about the need to keep the momentum going beginning with a work plan for the resolutions the membership passed at the annual meeting.

"During the Fall Assembly, trustees passed resolutions that provided the Executive with direction on many important issues for boards of education. At their January meeting, your Executive approved a work plan that we will provide to board members to ensure transparency in the process," said Foord. "The work plan will also hold us accountable for the



*Janet Foord during her remarks at Members' Council on February 6.*

outcomes achieved."

One resolution called for board decision making for portable classrooms.

"That resolution sparked discussion on a broader issue of interest to the Ministry of Education – and that is a shared services model for education," asserted Foord. "At their January meeting, the Executive provided direction to further investigate what other service areas a shared services model may encompass."

A second resolution called for a health policy framework in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Education.

"I want to thank Regina Public Schools trustee Cindy Anderson and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools trustee Lisa Lambert for their work at the provincial and national level in this area. Their work has brought this issue to the attention of the SSBA Executive and membership, and they should be commended for their enthusiasm and dedication,"

explained Foord. "As a result of the resolution, meetings are currently being arranged between myself and the Ministers of Education and Health. We need to discuss with these partners what a coordinated policy framework for students may look like and what we can do to support each other in this worthy goal."

Foord also discussed Minister of Education Don Morgan's response to the Education Equity Working Advisory Group's report *Funding Model Equity? A Perspective of Saskatchewan School Divisions*.

"As we have developed a work plan in the coming year so too has the Ministry of Education," said Foord. "[Minister Morgan] mentioned supports for learning and transportation as the primary focus areas of the funding model review for this school year. Meanwhile, the Ministry's focus next year will be locally determined terms and conditions for teachers."

As a result of that response, boards of education have been asked to consider the following question, "How does locally determined terms and conditions for teachers support the advancement of student achievement at the local level?" The information received will ensure boards of education can provide insight and direction to government.

Another topic that will be top of mind for board members throughout 2014 is the governance

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Continued on Page 4...

# Student First Advisors Meet with Executive

In January, the Student First advisors Russ Mirasty and Patricia Prowse discussed their work with the SSBA Executive – how they were appointed, what the purpose is and what the process entails.

The advisors were asked by Deputy Minister Dan Florizone to participate in the process in October. Mirasty said he was interested as a former member of the RCMP to view community engagement from a different lens; meanwhile, Prowse, who is on a secondment from Saskatoon Public Schools, said it was an opportunity to listen to the varying perspectives on education from across the province.

The Student First consultations started in December and to date



*Student First advisors Russ Mirasty and Patricia Prowse discuss their role with the SSBA Executive.*

have been conducted in Fort Qu'Appelle, Regina, Saskatoon, Sandy Bay, Creighton and La Ronge. At each location the advisors listen to students, parents/caregivers and teachers, or a combination of all three, in a forum discussion.

The advisors indicated they “encourage people to speak candidly” and are serving as independent advisors who will inform the Ministry of Education and other education sector partners of the themes they are hearing from participants. There will also be an online engagement process for individuals who are not able to attend the in-person forums.

The advisors presented at Members' Council in February and the SSBA membership will have the opportunity to hear from and converse with the advisors at the Spring General Assembly

For more information on the Student First process visit [education.gov.sk.ca](http://education.gov.sk.ca).

## Ministry of Education Enhances Communications

The Ministry of Education and the education sector are moving forward together with a Student First approach to focus our work on what matters most – the student. Two of the key pieces of Student First are the development of the first ever Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) and a province-wide engagement process that will allow for “deep listening,” beginning with students and parents, teachers and the larger education sector.

As we move forward with sector planning and a shared vision for a Student First approach, we recognized that the Ministry of Education and the sector needed to work together in a more unified way and this begins with better

communication and engagement. In addition to our in-person meetings we have also added bi-weekly calls with school divisions both at the director level and with communications professionals. The calls are designed to increase opportunities for two-way communication and provide regular touch points to address urgent issues, ensure information is being shared, and answer questions in a timely way. We are also working closely with the sector and key stakeholders in our committees and project working groups on key initiatives to ensure opportunity for input, communication, and planning happens along the way.

Ultimately Student First is

about finding the successes in the education system, shining the spotlight and replicating those successes. This includes identifying school division success stories and promising practices that will help shape and share opportunities for student success – and the key to this is communication.

The Ministry of Education is committed to more effective communications with school divisions and we will continue to seek opportunities and be responsive as our shared planning and work continues to evolve.

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*This was submitted by the Ministry of Education upon request by the SSBA to recognize the Ministry's commitment.*

# Members' Council in Pictures



Deputy Minister Dan Florizone (top left) and a number of directors of education: North East's Don Rempel (top middle; clockwise), Saskatoon Public's Avon Whittles, Christ the Teacher's Darrell Zaba, Saskatchewan Rivers' Robert Bratvold and Chinook's Liam Choo-Foo presented the draft education sector strategic plan. (Missing: Light of Christ's Herb Sutton)



On the evening of February 6 at Members' Council, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) presented about their experience of governance restructuring more than a decade ago. Barry Gunther (left), SUMA's vice-president of villages and resort villages, and Laurent Mougeot, SUMA's chief executive officer, led the presentation and fielded questions from delegates.



## 'Our Focus on Student Outcomes'

Continued from Page 2...

review process that is being led by the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

"As we continue to work towards outcomes to advance student achievement in the province, we are also taking time to reflect on our governance structure and processes as an Association," said Foord. "We

are looking inward to investigate options to improve the work we do as an Association to most effectively respond as a governing body."

Following Foord's opening remarks, representatives from the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association shared their experiences and outcomes of their Association's governance restructuring.

In concluding her remarks, Foord

said, "I recognize there are many other issues in the Saskatchewan education sector that I have not touched on; however, I trust during the open forum tomorrow some of those issues will be raised.

Regardless of the topic, I know that what binds us together as trustees is our focus on outcomes for students and how we can best work together to advance our collective vision."

# Campus Regina Public's Relevance for Students

## *2013 Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence submission*

Linking curriculum with community partners for student transitions to post-secondary or the workforce is at the centre of Campus Regina Public's mandate.

"Successful, smooth transitions for our students is a priority for us," said Regina Board of Education Chair Katherine Gagne. "Campus Regina Public gives our students the unique opportunity to try out potential learning and career paths that they normally would not have access to. This leads to students making more informed and prepared transitions into careers and post-secondary education."

Located centrally at Cochrane High School, the program offers two-credit courses – one core and one elective – to all Regina Public Schools students in Grades 11 and 12 at Campus Regina Public. Students can enrol in energy and resource management classes, culinary arts, video game/app design, financial services, plumbing and heating, just to name a few. Currently there are 14 courses expanding to 20 courses next year.

"It's really about finding a creative way to provide opportunities and outlets that are different than what students have had," explained Campus Regina Public Principal Jason Coleman. "These programs hold students accountable. They want accountability when they're taking courses that are relevant to them."

The teachers involved in the courses often instruct in conjunction with community, business and industry partners.

"One of the course offerings is the law, public safety and security course. It's basically a policing course in which there are two teachers in the classroom – one of them is a member of the Regina Police Service," said Coleman. "The kids are provided uniforms and basically treated like recruits but they also learn social studies and history regarding the role of the Northwest Mounted Police in the development of Canada. There is also a physical education aspect. We get creative with curriculum but we meet the objectives and themes that we need to."

In 2012-13, the first year it opened, there were approximately 375 students with an increase to 650 students this school year. By year five, or possibly sooner, the anticipated number of students is between 1,250 to 1,500 students. Last year, it operated with an 88 percent credit achievement rate.

"In terms of phasing in, it's been really important for us to develop our programming right," said Coleman. "The phased approach has allowed us to build slowly, but not too slowly. It's given our teachers the opportunity to plan and evolve."

Currently, the school operates half-days but next year, as more courses are added and more students enrol, the school will operate full days. The phased approach has also allowed the school to build relationships with

community, business and industry partners.

"Partners have really looked at the idea and said, 'It's about time. We think you should've been doing these things a long time ago and we're happy you're on-board,'" asserted Coleman. "A lot of our partners – for instance, SaskTel and the Regina Police Service are huge partners of ours – send their people in to work with our kids."

Not only are the partners excited but the links students see to life outside of school are important.

"One of the pieces that kids said was, 'We need to be taught what they're doing in industry right now, not what was done in 1970.' Sometimes our facilities have not supported that," said Coleman.

"When you have up-to-date equipment that partners have helped to buy or have donated, we're able to use the equipment that's in use by industry right now."

In some cases, students applied for and have been offered jobs upon completion of course work by some of the partners involved at Campus Regina Public.

Although implemented in 2012-13, the discussions to develop the programming and find the space began about four years ago, said Coleman.

"One thing that was needed in the process was somebody to take the risk and to push," he said. "Part of our success here was we developed a team that worked together to achieve our goal."

**Check out the submission [here](#).**

# 'This Course Has Been Invaluable'

Continued from Page 1...

overwhelming."

Even for participants who have more university-level learning experiences, the focus on governance has been welcomed throughout the modules.

"I have participated in equally challenging and rigorous learning experiences like this before in graduate studies but I haven't had this level and intensity of learning about governance before," said North East Board of Education trustee Kathy Ponath. "This is more sustained and deeper knowledge than the professional development we have had the opportunity to take through other SSBA events."

All the work combined – pre-reading materials, presentations and on-site course content – executes the purpose of the program, said Ponath.

Upon reflection, the modules have broadened participant thinking about governance and their own relationships around the board table.

"The one session about different personalities was great. It changed the way I dealt with other people. You got a better understanding of where they were coming from," said Sander. "If you're going to be a trustee, it's up to you to keep improving your trustee skills so we can be leaders in our school divisions to help improve the educational opportunities for students."

Polk indicated that other members of her board were

deterred by travel and cost commitments and, as a result, she has been sharing her experiences with them.

"I can see the boards that have more than one member participating have been able to relate some of the course topics to issues they are currently dealing with," she said.

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*"If you're going to be a trustee, it's up to you to keep improving your governance skills so we can be leaders in our school divisions to help improve the educational opportunities for students across the province."*

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The conversations around some board tables have been enhanced by the common learning experience they have had by taking the modules together.

"I think it's a great course for the whole board to take. To do it by your lonesome is good for your own growth but not as beneficial for the board as a whole," said Sander.

Ponath echoed this sentiment, "Topics, ideas and issues that have been discussed in the course have arisen in our board work and the fact that five of us have gained a shared understanding

of certain governance principles has had an effect on the board as a whole. Currently, we are in the beginning stages of implementing enterprise risk management in our school division and the modules have supported the board's understanding of that process."

However, she understands the perspective of some trustees about the cost and travel commitments to which she responded, "With part of the cost being borne by the government, there will never be a better time to take this kind of quality training. The investment of time and money is worthwhile when one considers the cost of not governing as effectively as possible."

A common theme from the three respondents was that it improved their way of thinking about trusteeship.

Ponath rightly observed, "As school board members we hold a grave and exceedingly valuable trust, not only for the significant dollars spent in education today, but to increase student achievement and narrow the gaps in equity that currently exist. We need to be as equipped as possible to strategically provide direction while also assuring accountability. Board members are entrusted to be an interface, without self-interest, between two self-interested entities – the needs of our communities and the best ideas of the education professionals. This is a complex role and this course has been invaluable to me in better understanding that complexity."

# Prairie Spirit Teacher Professional Development

## *2013 Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence submission*

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It's common for any professional to develop their learning with up to a thousand others at a conference over a couple days, stuffed full of information and sent back to work with limited time to apply the learning back home.

However, as the research told Prairie Spirit School Division this wasn't the most effective professional development method to utilize.

"Our approach to teacher professional development in Prairie Spirit School Division is innovative and effective," said Board Chair Larry Pavloff. "Our board firmly supports adult learning that will improve student achievement in our school division."

To more effectively use the limited amount of professional development time in the school year, a new model was adopted about five years ago starting with two classrooms which has expanded to approximately 15 classrooms this year, said Learning Superintendent Karen Campbell.

"What we've done is reduced the number of times we use the traditional professional development model," said Superintendent of Learning Karen Campbell. "Instead we invite teachers to sign up for a year-long learning experience. They know it requires a commitment of five or six days throughout the year. They know there's professional reading obligations that come with

it. They also know it's no longer hosted at a conference centre or division office, it's based in a school."

The theory of the program originated from a Japanese lesson study model where teachers observe a classroom in action with student participation. With Prairie Spirit's model for teacher professional development, a classroom teacher hosts teachers from other schools who are teaching similar grade assignments. The host teacher models a promising teaching practice in action (i.e., workshop model) with students, while the other teachers observe and take notes for further discussion.

The same group of teachers participate in the "lab classrooms" or workshops throughout the year and discuss the outcomes of their learning, Campbell explained. This school year, more than 100 teachers are involved in the program from Grades 1 to 12. Currently, teachers volunteer to participate and buy-in is developed through word of mouth among teachers.

"We don't want more than 10 teachers in the classroom at a time. The dialogues change when there's too large of a group. The conversation is not as intimate," said Campbell. "The students are really good about having 10 adults in the room. They just carry on with their learning and know the teachers are only there to observe."

The involvement of and relationships among teachers in the program is critical to positive outcomes in their learning.

"We usually start each morning of the program off with a chance to share, 'What are the pieces we took from last time? What did we go away and try in our classroom?' You really see that people are at different places in their learning journey – some are taking baby steps and some have jumped right in," explained Campbell. "But you see this comfort between colleagues and they realize it's okay to be at different levels."

In order for the program to be successful, there has to be support from the board which has been evident.

"The board has been completely supportive. They've been ensuring funding and staffing to allow it to happen," said Campbell. "The board also had the chance to come out to a classroom at one time to see what we were talking about. And when we report achievement results to the board this is one of the strategies that we mention. It's still early but we do see some difference in higher achievement."

Some of the anecdotal responses from teachers to date were included in the **Premier's Award submission**. One teacher indicated, "To see it actually being done rather than just reading about it makes it real. I have changed my way of teaching and like it. It has been successful with my students. It is a great way to get your 'feet wet' and try new things when you know you have the group to fall back on for help. To see other teachers having the same struggles and rewards also helps."

*"The mission of the SSBA is to provide leadership, coordination and services to member boards of education to support student achievement."*

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*The School Trustee* by hardcopy, rather  
than electronically, please contact the  
Association at the email address above.**

## Calendar Update



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Legal Services Workshops: Students, Parents and the Law**  
February 25, Hotel Saskatchewan, Regina  
February 27, Radisson Hotel, Saskatoon

**School Board Member Education Program  
Module 4: Governance and Resources**  
March 27-28  
Sheraton Hotel, Saskatoon

**Spring Assembly**  
April 10-11  
Delta Hotel, Regina

**Employee Benefits Plan Administration Seminar**  
May 8-9  
Elk Ridge

**Trustee Academy**  
June 11-13  
Jackfish Lodge, Battlefords Provincial Park

## Staff Update



**L**ori Mann joined the SSBA in February as the director of corporate services.

Lori comes to us from the Ministry of Education where she served as the Executive Director of Corporate Services. She is a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and brings a wealth of experience in the areas of financial management and business planning gained through various roles with the provincial government and SaskTel.

Lori earned her bachelor of administration, with distinction, from the University of Regina.