

Lesson 4:

Saskatchewan School Board Governance

LESSON 4: SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

1. Possible Inquiry Questions:

1. Who has the authority to make decisions in a school?
2. Why do we have elections for our leaders and law makers?
3. What might happen if only one person ran for an election?
4. What is an Educational Authority?
5. Why have school boards and education authorities instead of having school principals govern and operate schools?
6. How are school boards created?
7. What are students' rights in school boards?
8. In what ways do school board policies affect student's lives?
9. How can we make sure we choose good leaders?
10. What kinds of decisions do our school boards make for students?

2. Background Information for the Teacher:

In Canada, the Constitution Act of 1867 gives the provinces responsibility for making laws regarding Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Education. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 explicitly recognized and affirms pre-existing and inherent Aboriginal and Treaty rights of Indigenous nations, including the right to Education. Therefore, as a shared responsibility of both the Provincial and Federal governments, the education of Saskatchewan youth is lead in the province by the Ministry of Education, First Nations Educational Authorities and independent First Nations.

Saskatchewan School Boards:

In fulfilling its responsibility for the education of young people, the Province has delegated local monitoring and guidance to School Boards. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association was established in 1915 under its former name, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association or SSTA. Locally elected Boards of Education are an important part of the democratic process that provide a connection between the community and the education system. School boards act on behalf of the citizens they represent and have authority over the school system and its resources. Every 4 years, School Board Trustees are elected. Together, these trustees form the local school board. There are three types of school divisions in Saskatchewan: Public, Separate and Francophone

The elected local school boards have responsibility to manage and administer the kindergarten to Grade 12 school system in their school division, within the regulations and guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education through acts, regulations, policies and processes:

- Act: Approved by the government (The most important Act governing School Boards is The Education Act, 1995)
- Regulations: Approved by Ministers
- Policies: Approved by the Board
- Process: Approved by the Director of Education and Staff

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The school board is responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning. To do so, they have a duty to:

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

School Boards Also Have the Power to:

- employ ancillary staff
- enter into agreements with other school boards, the conseil scolaire, or First Nations
- provide scholarships and bursaries
- acquire vehicles for student transportation.

In practice, the board of trustees governs and monitors the delivery of education to the youth enrolled and the Director of Education and their staff perform the actual day-to-day work of providing a quality education to the young people of the region.

First Nations and First Nations Educational Authorities:

Education is also an inherent and treaty right of First Nations peoples. Prior to the Indian Act of 1876, Indigenous peoples maintained full control over the education of their youth, including networks of family members, extended community and Elders. With the establishment of residential schools in 1849, control of education was involuntarily removed from the First Peoples in an attempt to isolate and assimilate First Nations peoples. After decades of advocacy “respecting the principle of First Nations control of First Nations education, First Nations, and organizations designated by First Nations, are [currently] responsible for managing and delivering education programs and services for students who are ordinarily living on reserve. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) provides funding for students who ordinarily live on reserve, are 4-21 years of age, and are enrolled in and attending an eligible elementary or secondary program” (<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1476967841178/1531399315241>).

While some bands continue to operate their own education system through their local government, some bands, either on their own or together with other First Nations, have established a First Nations Educational Authority, the legal equivalent to a school board, to operate, administer and manage its education system. Following the regulations, policies and processes established by the First Nation Council, independent bands or a First Nations Educational Authority then make decisions in the best interests of their learners including such decisions as:

- Hiring the Director of Education, School Principal(s) and staffing decisions
- Graduation requirements and curriculum, including the option to follow the provincially mandated curriculum and graduation requirements.
- Approving the budget
- Determining the facility plans

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- Provide transportation for students and staff
- Purchasing furniture and equipment as needed.
- Enter into agreement with other school boards or agencies as needed.

3. Key Vocabulary:

Minister of Education • First Nations Educational Authority • School Board • Trustees
School division • Director • School division management • School Community council
Principal • Superintendents

4. Focus/Supplementary Outcomes:

PA4. Analyze the relationship between governance institutions in Saskatchewan and the quality of life of people in the province.

- a) Identify ways in which Saskatchewan people can be involved in making decisions which affect their local communities (e.g. run as a candidate for school board, local government, or band elections; vote during elections; attend community forums).

5. Timeline: 45-60 minutes

6. Materials:

Chart paper or bulletin board with 6 columns titled from left to right:

School Board	Municipal (town or city)	Provincial (Saskatchewan)	Federal (Canada)	First Nation	Métis Nation

(Adapted with permission from Hands-On Social Studies Grade 4, Saskatchewan Edition)

- Small images to place in the “School Board” chart You may choose to use Velcro dots on the back of cards and on the chart for easy maneuverability.
 - Picture of the Director of your School Division
 - Small pictures/images of: dollar sign/money, school, books, school bus (See teacher resources for sample images)

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- Optional:
 - make multiple copies and have students work in groups
 - Glue the chart to a file folder. Place smaller images in an envelope and have students work at a centre, adding items as the unit progresses.
- Copies of the Graphic organizer for students• Maps and Graphics:
 - [Map of School Divisions in Saskatchewan](#) (See printable copy in Teacher Resources)
 - [Separate](#)
 - [Francophone](#)

7. Motivational Set:

Ask students what rules they need to follow in school. What school rules might they want to change? Whom might they approach to try and change a rule?

8. Process:

(Adapted with permission from: <http://civix.ca/resources/elementary-school-trustees/>)

Activity 1:

- 1) Invite students to share what they know about their school board. Questions to prompt discussion:
 - a) What is the name of our school division?
 - b) Who creates the vision and sets goals for the school division?
 - c) Who establishes rules/policies for all schools in the division?
- 2) Explain to students that each school board has a group of elected representatives, called school trustees, which form a decision-making body.
 - a) The board of trustees makes decisions as a whole; individual trustees have no individual authority. Board decisions are made by voting, where motions (decisions) are passed if they have majority support.
 - b) Some decisions a school board can make:
 - i) Hire and direct the director of education (Place a photo of your Director of Education on the chart or bulletin board)
 - ii) Decide budget priorities: Where to spend their money for the best education for students. (Place a dollar sign on the bulletin board)
 - iii) Approve the subjects students will study and the books and resources teachers use. (place the books icon on the bulletin board)

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iv) Build, renovate or maintain schools and other facilities (place the icon of a school on the bulletin board)

v) Organize transportation for students (place the icon of a school bus on the bulletin board)

3) Divide students into groups of six or eight and have them model the role of the board of trustees.

a) Present one of the following scenarios to your students or come up with one of your choosing.

Many students come to school without eating breakfast each morning. Teachers believe this is negatively affecting students' focus and interest. Some schools are able to have breakfast programs but some cannot afford to.

Many students are taking their smartphone devices to schools. Some teachers allow them to use their devices in class for learning purposes. However, students also spend a lot of time using their devices for non-educational reasons so it is becoming a distraction.

Cyber-bullying is increasing within schools across the board. Some students are avoiding coming to school and it is causing many negative consequences.

b) Explain the process: Three roles must also be assigned within each group.

i) One team member will act as 'board chair' and manage the meeting discussion, ensuring all members have a chance to contribute their opinions and to move, second and pass one or more motions (actions/decisions).

ii) One team member will be the note taker and summarize the team's ideas.

iii) Another team member is an observer and makes notes about group dynamics and the process by which the final decision is made.

iv) All students in the group (with or without specific roles) can also contribute their ideas to the discussion.

c) Remind students that the goal is to pass one or more motions, which will determine which actions/rules will be implemented to address the problem. Students should listen to all ideas from all group members, consider the merits of each, discuss further for clarification, and decide which idea to vote for. In order for any motion to be put into place, it must be voted on and have support from more than half of the group members.

d) Provide guiding questions to help structure the discussion. Select questions based on the scenario.

i) Possible suggestions:

What are some possible solutions or actions that could be taken to improve the situation?

What rules could be established?

On the board website, have students research what is the current policy and/or procedure that addresses the problem? (Or provide a printed copy) What is good about the policy? What could be improved?

Since the solution will need to be implemented for all schools of the board, what considerations need to be taken into account?

4) Each team's ideas are presented to the class with a quick report about how the group functioned and the decision-making process. Have the board chair share their group's results.

5) Afterwards, have a follow up discussion:

What are the opportunities and challenges in making collective or group decisions?

How might you make group decisions with a group of people who do not all agree?

How might you get your point across to someone you are debating with?

How can you ensure that you clearly understand the points of someone you disagree with?


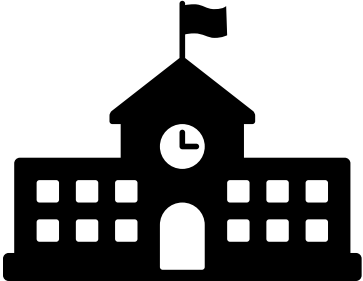


What skills are useful within a group that is debating an issue or determining a decision that may have opposing viewpoints?

9. Assessment:

Student Assessment booklet: "Who Governs Me?" Graphic Organizer – Students add the information on the School Board page.

10. Teacher Resources:

School Board Roles and Responsibilities (Print out this page. Cut out and laminate images. You may wish to use Velcro for ease of placing on the chart)

<p>Add an image of your Director of Education</p>	
	
	

Activity #2 – Choosing a School Board Trustee:

(Source: <http://civix.ca/resources/elementary-school-trustees/>)

In this activity the students will examine the characteristics that make a good school board trustee.

1. Explain to students that school trustees provide a link between local communities and the school board, bringing the issues and concerns of their communities to board discussions and decision-making. Trustees have no individual authority; the board of trustees makes decisions as a whole.
2. As a class, review key information about your school board using your board's website.
 - What are the geographic boundaries of our school board?
 - 6. As a class, review key information about your school board using your **board's website**.
 - What are the geographic boundaries of our school board? (Use a map as a visual aid)
 - How many schools are in our school board?
 - How many school trustees are elected?
 - How many student trustees are on the board?
 - Does our board have any Métis or First Nation trustees?
3. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them create a profile for their 'ideal' school trustee on the School Board Trustee Chart handout. Guiding questions:
 - What personal characteristics would the school trustee possess?
 - What skills or work experience would they have?
 - What would be their motivation to become a school trustee?
 - What priorities would they have?
4. If there is an election happening, have students analyse the current candidates. Or, choose four fictional people as candidates. Write a brief description of each on a chart paper, white board or powerpoint slide. Examples could include, but not limited to:
 - retired police officer whose priority is order, discipline, and school safety
 - an elder whose priority is inclusion and understanding
 - convenience store owner in a small town whose priority is having more vending machines and business opportunities in schools
 - librarian at the city library whose priority is literacy
 - a parent with 2 children, one of whom has special needs.

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5. Preview and discuss each candidates' job and what kind of skills and experience they may possess that would make them ideal school board trustees.
6. Have a closing discussion about the candidates and have students write their reflections on the School Board Trustee Chart handout. Please note that more than one copy may be needed depending on the number of candidates.
7. Allow time for student discussion. Allow students to explain their reasoning about which candidate do you think would make the best school trustee and why? Which candidate most closely matches your ideal school trustee? Explain with evidence or examples.

Assessment –

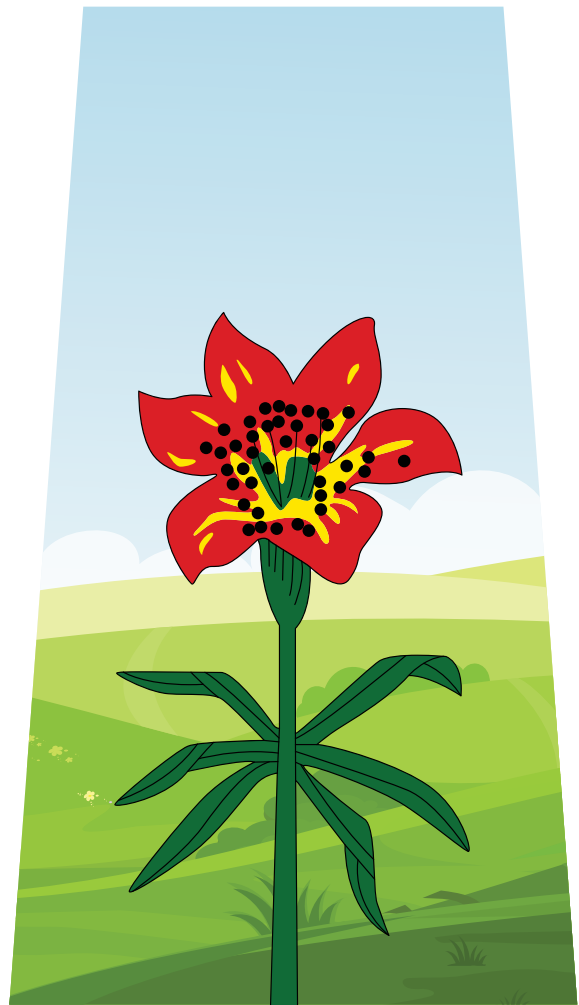
Students will complete the School Board Trustee Chart handout. Optional: Journal reflection entitled “My Ideal School Board Trustee” detailing how the candidate will address the needs of the classroom and school.

Also, allow time for students to add thoughts about the School Board Governance in their Student Assessment Workbook or Project.

Power and Authority

Social 4 Student Handbook

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Name: _____

The purpose of Our Government Unit is to learn about how decisions are made to help Canadians and people in Saskatchewan.

Who's Who?

My teacher is : _____

My Principal is : _____

My Superintendent is : _____

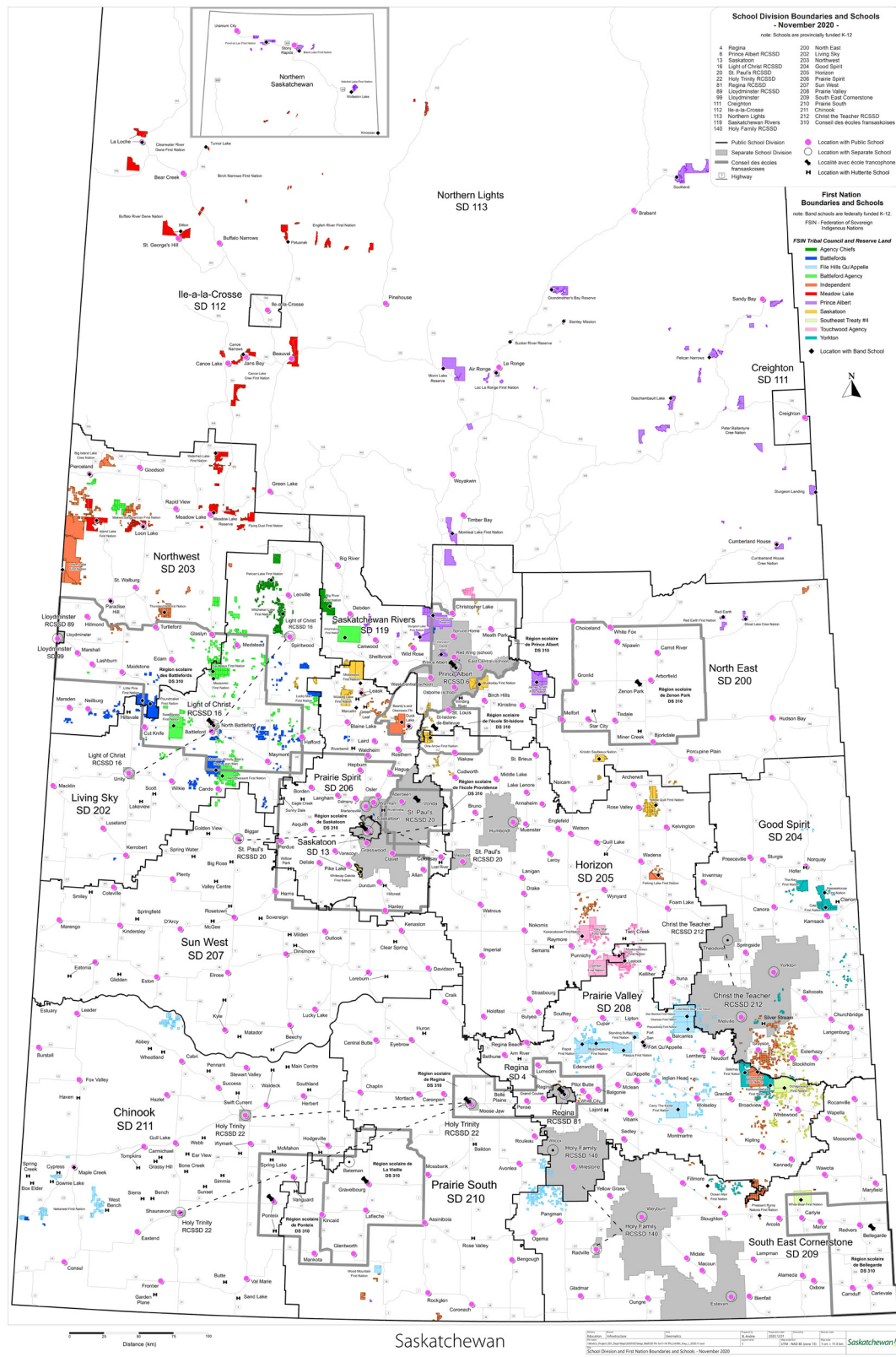
My Director of Education is: _____

My School Division is: _____

My School Board Trustees are:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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Source: <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/74218>

Activity 7.1; Who will make a good school trustee?

Create a profile for your ideal school trustee. Afterwards research the candidates running for election and determine which most closely resembles your ideal candidate.

Qualities	My Ideal School Trustee	School Trustee Candidates			
Personal characteristics					
Work experience, education and skills					
Educational priorities					
Motivation to become a trustee					

<http://civix.ca/resources/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Activity-7.1-1.pdf>

References:

C.I.V.I.X. Citizenship Education Resources . (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://civix.ca/resources/elementary-school-trustees/>

Lawson, J., & Jardine, R. L. (2013). Hands on social studies: Grade 4 Saskatchewan Edition. Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press.