

Education Sector Planning Submission to the Ministry of Education

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
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Introduction

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation submits this feedback on the first cycle of the Education Sector Strategic Plan on behalf of its 13,000 members.

Teachers see the need for strategic and long-term sector planning and applaud the Ministry for the leadership shown in recognizing this need and bringing forward ambitious goals for the sector to work towards by 2020. To date, messages from the Ministry around feedback on the sectorial plan have reflected an openness and responsiveness to input that is appreciated.

Teachers' understandings are that this draft sector plan is an initial starting point developed primarily by the Ministry and the directors of education, and that the process of Hoshin Kanri encourages both flexibility and adaptation as the sector works collectively to improve the education system in the province. Teachers' initial feedback focuses on:

- The strengths and potential of a sector plan process.
- The need for meaningful and widespread teacher engagement as part of the next cycle of planning.
- The need to place teaching and learning at the core of the sector planning process to better reflect the interdependence of student and teacher success.
- Careful consideration of the types, nature and method of knowledge collection to inform system improvement.
- More inclusive and expansive leadership moving forward at both the individual Hoshin and outcome levels and on the provincial leadership team.

Hoshin Kanri and Education Sector Planning

The initial implementation of the new Hoshin Kanri model of strategic planning in Saskatchewan's education sector has not been without its challenges. Lack of early and meaningful engagement with teachers and other stakeholders outside the Ministry of Education and school division leadership has left the impression of another top-down initiative. In some instances, this has been exasperated by the manner in which the draft plan has been communicated at the school level as a *fait accompli* during the feedback phase.

However, there appears to be opportunity within the Hoshin Kanri model for meaningful engagement, shared responsibility and the invitation to build upon collective knowledge. This model of strategic planning provides significant opportunities to focus the collective knowledge of teachers, administrators and other educational partners to strengthen and improve the sector.

At its most foundational level, Hoshin Kanri recognizes that each individual is the expert or specialist in their own position, and that by harnessing the collective thinking, power and knowledge of individuals on the front line, in the community and at management levels, the overall system can only be strengthened. The long-range nature of the process and ability to intentionally work towards breakthrough targets are particularly appealing within education.

As a planning model, Hoshin Kanri relies on achievable and measurable goals, focused plans to achieve the goals and frequent check-ins and course corrections to ensure results are achieved. Drawing on a primarily business model requires some adaption within the education sector; however, the potential of focused and resourced short-, medium- and long-term planning across the sector is promising. Within education, Hoshin Kanri can utilize the resourcefulness of teachers, students, administrators, parents and other community members that have a vested interest in education to develop the intricate level of knowledge needed for successful sectoral reform.

From a uniquely Saskatchewan perspective, Hoshin Kanri is another tool to further develop partnerships in education that have historically served the sector well. While education cannot and should not be viewed as an end product produced on a shop floor, improving the overall quality of the educational experience for our youngest citizens is a shared primary goal. Strategic planning that relies on a Total Quality Management (TQM) program will both allow the Ministry to provide broad direction and leadership as well as recognize the invaluable experience, expertise, knowledge and professionalism that teachers and other partners bring to the education system.

With proper engagement at all levels, Hoshin Kanri provides a model for strong, focused collective leadership as well as significant opportunities for grassroots input and adaptations based on local contexts. While this has not been fully actualized in this initial round, the process provides opportunity for increased levels of meaningful engagement, leadership development and collaboration moving into the next cycle.

One of the greatest strengths apparent in the Hoshin Kanri model is the initial focus on vision, mission and values that are the basis upon which the strategies, objectives, goals and actions are built. Articulating these underlying beliefs is particularly important in the education sector as they are the common purpose that draws the sector together and are fundamental to building a strong and healthy education system.

Teachers have expressed beliefs about the goals of publicly funded education in the policies of their professional organization and it is to these foundational beliefs teachers turn to begin the process of strategic planning and sector renewal:

- Every child and youth of Saskatchewan has the right to a public education that recognizes and respects their diversity, enriches their character, and prepares them for life's opportunities and challenges.
- A student-centred, broadly based understanding of education prepares our youngest citizens to become confident, creative and caring individuals while gaining valuable experience and knowledge to fuel future endeavours.
- Accessible and equitable learning opportunities for all Saskatchewan students regardless of their circumstances or learning potential are essential to their and the province's well-being and growth.
- Public education is a common good that provides benefits to all of society, not just to the students currently enrolled.
- Our schools are a source of community and provincial pride that greatly contributes to the quality of all our lives.

Teachers believe that, as collaborative leaders in education, they have a responsibility to model positive values, practices and relationships for the children and youth they serve. The perspectives and actions of their professional organization have reflected this throughout its history by working openly and collegially with our partners. This has created a uniquely Saskatchewan experience in public education marked by a collaborative and co-operative spirit and long-standing relationships that have endured over time. Teachers believe in strengthening engagement with parents, communities, employers and government in order to share their specialized knowledge and collective experiences working with children and youth in classrooms across the province.

As the primary contact point with students, teachers also experience on a daily basis the challenges facing the education system. Social determinants of health including living conditions, unemployment, social instability and poverty impact students' abilities to access and succeed in the education system. Teachers understand the reasons for the loss of children and youth from their classrooms long before attendance and graduation rates provide the statistical evidence of their departure, yet this knowledge is not captured on a broader level in time to support students prior to their leaving the system.

Too many young people feel discouraged and disengaged from the education system and may be marginalized for a variety of reasons including racism, sexism, ableism or classism. A disproportionate number of these students are First Nations, Métis or Inuit and a growing number of them are newcomers who see little evidence or appreciation of the richness of their own cultures, traditions and worldviews reflected in Saskatchewan schools. In order to succeed within the system, students require access to relevant curricula, flexible opportunities that meet their needs and highly competent teachers. All students need to feel a sense of belonging and purpose and be valued for their diversity to succeed.

One of the primary strengths of both the sector plan and the Ministry's Student First initiative is the potential recognition that student readiness and engagement must be at the core of any educational initiative. Student engagement is inherently linked to the learning relationship with the teacher. To separate out learning from teaching or student from teacher overlooks the interconnected and inseparable nature of this relationship.

Additionally, while the identification of strategies, target indicators, and outcomes is appropriate at the provincial level, grassroots input at the school and community level needs to be the foundation of education strategic planning. Teachers fully support change and assessment that benefits students; however, the target indicators require stronger correlations than found in the initial draft plan.

Shifting the Strategic Intent to Students and Teachers

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation strongly recommends that the strategic intent of any sector plan recognize that the student-teacher relationship is at the heart of education. Once student and teacher success is placed at the centre, the subsequent planning processes shift from "I" to "we" statements. This properly reflects the shared responsibility of education between the student and teacher as well as the need for community supports in the teaching and learning process.

Broadening the strategic intent to include both students and teachers, and focusing it back on the core of education, which is teaching and learning, would also have an impact on the proposed Hoshins:

Intersectoral Student Supports

The need for provincewide and intersectoral supports for students has been raised by teachers and identified in numerous studies and reports over the years in Saskatchewan. Most recently, the Government of Saskatchewan's Children and Family Agenda has emphasized the need for the integration and mobilization of supports and services for children, youth and families from all child-serving sectors, including health and social services, to ensure the well-being of all students including their readiness to learn.

This complex issue is reflected in the draft sector plan in a Hoshin. Teachers echo the importance and urgency of this Hoshin, yet are concerned that the improvement targets and outcomes related to it are unrelated, unrealistic, and unachievable even if other sectors are ready and willing to work together at this time. There is a fear that teachers will be held responsible if these targets and outcomes are not reached even though the factors that contribute to student absenteeism and engagement in education are complex and dependent upon much that is outside the control of teachers.

In order to be freed to focus on the core of their professional practice, teachers are eager for a re-imagining of the ways that parents, the community and other human services providers can contribute to the education system. Teachers recognize the importance of working with others on these issues and have demonstrated through past initiatives, such as School^{PLUS}, the efficacy of such approaches. However, past efforts have faltered without the requisite resources and supports being made available in all sectors.

So while there is strong support for a Hoshin of this nature, the Federation recommends that further collaborative planning be done so that the related strategies, outcomes and improvement targets are reasonable and achievable, and appropriately resourced and supported.

Culture of Education

The second Hoshin relating to graduation rates is a symptom of a larger issue. Graduate rates are an obvious indicator of a system failure and need to be addressed at a system-wide level. Teachers have indicated that both external supports such as those that are to be addressed in the intersectoral plan and student engagement are primary factors in graduation rates.

To address low graduation rates, the culture of education must be addressed. This includes the educational environment, the ways a sense of belonging is created, how relationships are built and sustained, and how students and teachers are made to feel safe, supported and respected in their daily educational lives. Meaningful cultural engagement for both Indigenous students and newcomers, graduation paths that acknowledge students' realities and time for purposeful relationship building will positively impact graduation rates in both the short and long term.

There is concern that short-term plans based on a three-year graduation model may further alienate students who are currently not highly engaged and will not address their diverse and complex educational needs. Rather than focusing on an arbitrary time frame, plans need to focus on creating environments that support students in becoming global citizens and lifelong learners as well as successfully navigating the secondary system.

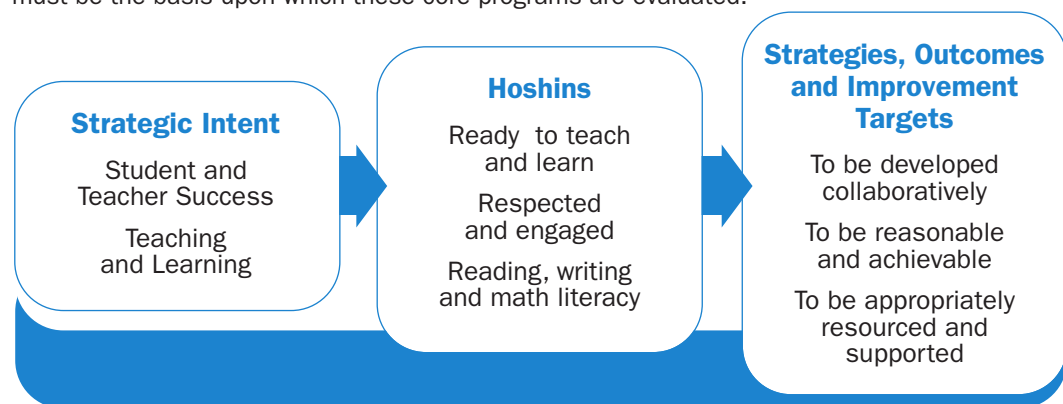
A shift in focus from problematizing the individual student to addressing limitations in the system is needed to benefit all students, but particularly students who are currently alienated from the very education system that is meant to support them.

Core Foundations

Focusing on the core foundations necessary for developing reading, writing and math literacy also resonates with teachers. Teachers continue to express concern that unnecessary assessment requirements incongruent with curriculum philosophy diverts their focus from individual instruction and supporting growth, particularly at the primary levels.

Shifting from a focus only on reading levels in the current Hoshin to include reading and writing literacy as well as math literacy would ensure the core foundations for learning are in place. Assessment programs that have been proven effective and relevant to teachers and meet students' individual needs would result in student competence in math, reading and writing.

However, for these interventions to be successful they must be properly supported and it is not clear in the plan what resources are available. In addition, a focus on evaluation that demonstrates the growth and development of the individual student as the benchmark of success must be the basis upon which these core programs are evaluated.



Embedding teaching and learning into the core of the strategic plan does shift the priorities and focus of the Hoshins, yet the overarching visions are not irreconcilable. The improvement breakthroughs remain focused on student support, readiness and success. Shifting the focus from the student to the student-teacher relationship also allows for a closer correlation of the enduring strategies which acknowledge a need for cultural relevancy, high-quality instruction, appropriate assessment and resources and relevant professional learning.

More Inclusive and Expansive Engagement and Leadership

To date, the process of strategic plan development has occurred primarily at the Ministry and director of education levels. While there has been room for input from other stakeholders through a variety of connect-the-dots and catchball sessions, for the process of Hoshin Kanri to be actualized there must be significant and meaningful engagement from a range of educational partners including teachers as an intricate part of the strategy deployment phase of the cycle.

This process of engagement must be grassroots, community-based and occur within a culture of shared ownership and joint responsibility. This shift from after-the-fact consultation to purposeful and meaningful engagement at all levels will eliminate the current siloing of responsibilities and decision-making between management and grassroots partners and ensure a broad sense of ownership and shared responsibility across the educational sector.

The philosophy of Hoshin Kanri outlines that those most directly affected by a process or system have the primary knowledge needed to correct or improve the system. Within education, teachers and other frontline supports intimately understand the classroom and school. The shared collective knowledge needed to positively address current limitations in the education system exist within schools and communities but needs to be purposefully collected and analyzed.

While statistical data is a useful starting point for system reform, intricate knowledge of the system is contained within the experiences of students, teachers, parents, community leaders and administrators. Particular attention must be paid to groups and individuals whose needs are not being met by the current system. This collective knowledge is needed on an ongoing basis to ensure the education system is meeting the needs of all children and youth in the province and that the system can adapt to the needs of the young citizens it is created to serve.

The draft sector plan outlines an aggressive statistically based data collection regime. The process of system knowledge collection must be integrated into ongoing assessment and evaluation work that teachers already do as part of the teaching and learning process. Ensuring that system knowledge collected at the classroom level is purposeful, relevant, efficient and unobtrusive to learning will be essential. The best assessment would not be noticed.

The next cycle of the planning process needs to contain significant and broad-based processes designed to tap into the collective knowledge contained at all levels of the education system, and ensure that those who are not currently succeeding in the system are prioritized, their experiences affirmed and a commitment to shared action result. Culturally appropriate processes that honour and respect the existing and growing diversity within the province are needed to ensure the public education system is meeting the needs of all children and youth, and that no one is expected to relinquish their sense of community or cultural identity in order to participate in public education.

For Hoshin Kanri to be actualized in a system as diverse and complex as the Saskatchewan educational sector, strong and broad-based leadership is also a necessary component. While the initial leadership displayed by the Ministry and directors of education has been valuable, the scope of what is needed to support and truly implement changes needed for improvement breakthroughs needs to be sector wide.

Given the expertise within the sector in each of the Hoshin and Outcome areas, we propose leadership teams for each of the Hoshins and Outcomes that are representative of the partners in education and include experienced teachers within each area, intersectoral partners, as well as management. These more inclusive leadership teams will not only offer a broader base of collective knowledge within the teams, but ensure a shared sense of accountability and responsibility across the sector as the work moves forward.

The provincial leadership team must also reflect the full spectrum of the educational sector if responsibility and ownership are truly to be shared. The current process reflects a top-down strategy that is inconsistent with the principles of Hoshin Kanri and continues the siloing of decision-making and responsibilities. Unless significant change occurs in the processes feeding into subsequent iterations of the education sector plan, there is a risk that the plan will continue to lack the necessary resonance with teachers and broader support within the sector to be successful.

Conclusion

Instability within the educational sector in Saskatchewan in the recent past has resulted in rapidly shifting ground. Teachers are looking for opportunities for leadership and authentic engagement that will facilitate the student-teacher relationship and student success.

The Hoshin Kanri model and strategic plan can offer a process for meaningful engagement, continued development of local leadership and sector-wide renewal. Teachers look forward to the opportunity to work in collaborative and meaningful ways with partners in education for the betterment of all students as this plan continues to move forward.

Teachers will be looking for future planning processes to be more reflective of the beliefs they hold regarding the goals of publicly funded education, the core of teaching and learning, and educational accountability. As the feedback included in this submission is considered, the Federation invites the Ministry of Education and school division leaders to read more about these beliefs found in Appendix A: Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Related Policies.

Appendix A: Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Related Policies

1.4 Goals of Publicly Funded Education

1.4.1 Definition

Publicly funded education refers to the provincially funded education system, as defined by *The Education Act, 1995*. Basic principles underlying publicly funded education are that the system is universally accessible and inclusive, funding is a societal responsibility, and the system is governed by elected representatives who are accountable to the public. The goals of publicly funded education provide an important context for teaching and learning, and for the professional growth of teachers.

1.4.2 Beliefs

(1) General

- (a) Publicly funded education is intended to meet the educational needs of all children in a society.
- (b) Publicly funded education must recognize and respect diversity among students, staff and communities, and must be committed to promoting equity within schools and society.
- (c) Publicly funded education must shape and enrich the character and life opportunities of each student.
- (d) The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation supports the curriculum-related Goals of Education for Saskatchewan (1984), as established by the provincial ministry responsible for PreK-12 education through a public consultation process. These goals affirm a student-centred, broadly based understanding of education which will prepare students to become knowledgeable, caring and responsible citizens.

(2) Processes to Define and Revise Goals

- (a) The goals and curriculum of publicly funded education should have sufficient flexibility to balance provincial as well as local interests and needs.
- (b) The goals and direction of publicly funded education are best defined and revised through processes in which the interests of all stakeholders are heard and considered.
- (c) Teachers must have a central role in the processes used to define and revise the goals and direction of publicly funded education.

(3) Responsibilities and Supports

- (a) Although publicly funded education has a central role in meeting the educational needs of students, the general well-being of children is a collective responsibility that is shared among the home, school and community.
- (b) Teachers have a responsibility to model decision-making values and practices that are associated with democratic societies.
- (c) Teachers, in carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, should be active supporters of publicly funded education.

(2001)

1.5 Education Funding

1.5.1 Beliefs

- (1) **Societal Good and Responsibility**
 - (a) Public education provides benefits to all of society, not just to the students currently in the education system.
 - (b) Public education is a common good.
- (2) **Achieving Goals of Public Education**
 - (a) School finance needs to be linked to programs and services required to accomplish educational goals and to provide equity in opportunities to learn.
 - (b) Education funding must ensure the capacity to achieve provincial goals for education, without the use of fundraising, student fees or corporate contributions.
 - (c) Educational opportunities should be equitable for all students and not be limited by a student's place of residence, learning potential or ability to pay or a school division's characteristics or ability to pay.
 - (d) Education funding must be adequate to ensure a healthy and safe teaching and learning environment.
- (3) **Relationships**
 - (a) Education funding should enable local autonomy and school autonomy.
 - (b) The funding of education must support and encourage collaborative intra- and inter-organizational and government relationships.
 - (c) The funding of education must recognize the unique relationship in law between separate school divisions and the province of Saskatchewan.
- (4) **Sources of Funding**
 - (a) The provincial government should provide at least 60 per cent of the cost of education with the remainder paid by local authorities.
 - (b) The system for the collection and distribution of resources for public education must ensure fair and equitable financial responsibility and equitable quality of education.
 - (c) Alternatives to the property tax or other major sources of education funding should be continually assessed. The sources of education funding should be revised as necessary.
- (5) **Allocation of Funding**
 - (a) Provincial grants to schools should be largely unconditional so that the needs and priorities of individual school divisions can be addressed. However, provincial funds for specific programs should be earmarked for that program.
 - (b) The system used to distribute provincial education funds to school divisions should recognize the same basic per pupil costs and actual costs to provide the same level of basic services for all students while ensuring equitable education and taxation fairness.
 - (c) The grant program for education funding and its objectives should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that its objectives are relevant to the context and to ensure that the program is meeting its stated objectives.

- (6) **Integrity of Education Funding**
- (a) The vast majority of public monies available for public education should be spent in publicly funded schools that do not limit access to their services.
 - (b) The funding of education must be transparent and support open decision-making and accountability.

(2006)

1.8 Social Justice and Equity

1.8.1 Definition

Social justice and equity is a foundational characteristic of a fully inclusive educational system and, more generally, a democratic society. Achieving social justice and equity requires a shared commitment to the removal of systemic barriers that prevent students, teachers and other participants from achieving their full potential in all educational and societal settings.

Systemic barriers generally refer to institutionalized beliefs expressed through policies and practices that have an exclusionary impact on groups or individuals.

1.8.2 Beliefs

- (1) In carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, teachers demonstrate their professional commitments to social justice and equity by modelling inclusive practices.
- (2) Teachers require a deep understanding of social justice and equity to promote equitable learning environments.
- (3) The provincial organization supports efforts to enhance the teaching profession's awareness of social justice and equity issues, and provides members with opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to create and sustain equitable learning environments.
- (4) Publicly funded education is a common good that benefits all of society and requires support from every individual, school, community and institution in society to ensure that all students experience an equitable quality of education.
- (5) The provincial organization advocates with the provincial government and other organizations to provide the resources and professional development required to integrate social justice and equity principles, content and perspectives into all dimensions of schooling.
- (6) The Federation advocates for and supports any policy development processes or initiatives that seek to eliminate systemic barriers at the provincial, school division and school level.

(2013)

2.4 Educational Accountability

2.4.1 Definition

Educational accountability refers to the processes through which institutions and individuals demonstrate their responsibility to the public for their respective roles and duties in educational governance, funding, administration or practices. In turn, all sectors of the public share responsibility to support these institutions and individuals in the education of students.

2.4.2 Beliefs

- (1) The focus of educational accountability is to strengthen teaching and learning.
- (2) Teachers' educational accountability is limited to their professional roles and duties.
- (3) The teaching profession must be involved in decisions about educational accountability policies and procedures at all levels of the education system.
- (4) Educational accountability processes must be sustainable and take into consideration the many demands on the time and energy of students and teachers.
- (5) Teachers' self-directed professional development, as well as the supports required to access these learning opportunities and resources, must be foundational to educational accountability processes.
- (6) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should be transparent.
- (7) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should focus on ways to strengthen teaching and learning, and not make comparisons among jurisdictions, school divisions, schools, administrators, teachers or students.
- (8) Educational accountability measures, data, reports and related information should always include references to the various contexts that can affect teaching and learning, as identified by the teaching profession.

(2009)

2.8 Teaching and Learning

2.8.1 Preamble

Teaching and learning involves complex, dynamic processes through which participants explore together new ideas, activities and experiences. At its best, this relationship can be a transformative experience for both the student and the teacher. The student grows through the teacher's sharing of knowledge, guidance and inspiration. The teacher grows professionally and personally with the challenge of reaching out to each student, identifying needs and strengths, and recognizing every individual's abilities as well as possibilities.

The processes and experiences involved in teaching and learning cover a broad spectrum. These range from the formal types of instructional strategies that are guided by the curriculum to the many kinds of informal interactions that take place every day among students and teachers. Some teaching and learning processes require a considerable amount of planning whereas others require teachers to exercise their professional judgment in "seizing teachable moments."

2.8.2 Beliefs

(1) General

- (a) Teaching and learning processes and activities must be student centred, holistic and equitable.
- (b) Teaching and learning processes and activities should be guided by and support *Directions* (1984) and the core curriculum, and should reflect the goals of education for Saskatchewan.
- (c) Effective teaching and learning is grounded in a relationship of acceptance and trust among teachers and students. Through this multi-faceted relationship, teachers demonstrate an ethic of care for their students.

(2) Responsibilities and Supports

- (a) The teacher's primary professional responsibility is to create learning opportunities that support and encourage each student in reaching the highest level of individual achievement possible.
- (b) Teachers must have a central role, in partnership with the other education stakeholders, in curriculum development, implementation and renewal.
- (c) The main purpose of student achievement goals and standards must be to improve teaching and learning.
- (d) Teachers must have direct involvement in the development and application of student achievement goals or standards. These goals or standards must be challenging but attainable, and sensitive to the diversity of students' needs and abilities.
- (e) The main purpose of student assessment and evaluation must be to improve teaching and learning. Teachers must have the responsibility to assess and evaluate students.
- (f) Teachers must have direct involvement in the development and revision of student assessment and evaluation policies at the school, school division and provincial levels.
- (g) Effective teaching and learning depends upon having a complex set of necessary conditions in place, not all of which are the full responsibility of teachers. These include parental and community support, a safe and secure learning environment, sufficient funding for educational programs and services, appropriate and sufficient learning resources, preparation time, and opportunities for professional growth and reflection, as well as other personnel and material supports that the profession has identified as essential.

(2001)

2.9 Student Evaluation

2.9.1 Definition

Student evaluation refers to the teacher's professional judgment of the student's progress in reaching educational goals and curriculum outcomes, as informed by sound assessment practices. This evaluation involves the formal application of multiple performance-based measures of what students know as well as what they can do.

2.9.2 Beliefs

- (1) The focus of student evaluation is to strengthen teaching and learning.
- (2) Teachers have the professional responsibility, knowledge, skills and judgment to evaluate students' learning.
- (3) The teaching profession must be proactively involved in decisions about student evaluation policies at all levels of the education system and advocate for policies that:
 - (a) Are based on sound educational research as identified by the teaching profession.
 - (b) Clearly indicate and align the purposes, principles and procedures of student evaluation.
 - (c) Encourage and support teachers in taking diverse approaches to evaluation.
- (4) The approaches taken to evaluate students' learning must be based on sound educational research as identified by the teaching profession.
- (5) Reporting methods must support the teaching profession's beliefs about student evaluation.
- (6) Reporting methods must focus on students' learning and indicate to both the student and parents the individual's progress in reaching educational goals and curriculum outcomes as well as provide suggestions to further strengthen learning.

(2011)



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