

**The Teaching Profession of Saskatchewan**

# **Code of Ethics**

**Adopted by The Teaching Profession of Saskatchewan  
in Council on October 14, 2000**



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# 1

## Introduction: Development of the Code of Ethics for Saskatchewan Teachers

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In 1948, amendments to *The Teachers' Federation Act* gave the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation the power to discipline its members for unprofessional conduct. At that point a Code of Ethics Committee was in place to develop among the members of the STF a common understanding of the ethical standards expected of teachers and to codify this understanding for the guidance of the STF's newly formed Discipline Committee. The results of the committee's work were laid out in the 1949 STF handbook in the form of the *National Code of Ethics for Teachers*, which had been developed by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, and an additional detailed statement of Professional Etiquette.

In 1954, the STF established a new Advisory Committee on Ethics to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing Code. The committee met for three years, and over that period of time, its membership changed through resignations and the addition of a high school superintendent and a representative from each of the Department of Learning and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA).

Upon examination, the committee found the 1949 Code to be inadequate and began to develop a new one on the basis of intensive discussions with STF members. Its efforts were closely linked with those of the research director of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, who was assisting member organizations with the development of codes of ethics. Saskatchewan teachers were sent a CTF questionnaire that asked local groups of teachers to write out incidents involving ethical behaviours and classify them into groups that the Advisory Committee on Ethics could use to generate ethical standards. From the specific cases gathered from teachers, the committee worked out the general

principles enunciated in the new Code. As each section of the Code was drafted, it was submitted in the form of a bulletin to local groups of teachers for discussion and feedback. Seven bulletins were sent out, each enunciating a foundational principle, proposing a number of ethical statements, and presenting a number of case studies. Ethics was also a topic of discussion at the 1955 Council, and the STF carried out regional workshops on Public Relations and Ethics in conjunction with the STF Advisory Committee on Public Relations, providing financial sponsorship for the attendance of two teachers from each local. In addition, a series of short articles on incidents involving ethics and school law were featured in the *Bulletin*, and sessions on ethics were provided at fall teachers' conventions. Eventually a study guide was developed for the use of teachers in the on-going study of the Code and its implications.

For a time the committee considered recommending its amalgamation with the Advisory Committee on Public Relations, but decided that the workloads of both committees were too onerous. Instead, it made a number of recommendations to the STF Executive regarding structures and procedures, which were not implemented. However, the *Code of Ethics* drafted by the advisory committee received virtually 100% approval from teachers who responded to its requests for feedback, while opinion was evenly split on the merits of the interpretations and case studies that accompanied the Code. The Code went into effect upon approval by the 1957 Council.

In 1971, the STF Executive again established an Ethics Committee to review and rewrite the *Code of Ethics*, largely in response to the new provisions of *The Teachers' Federation Act*, 1970, which established a professional competency committee

for the STF as well as a discipline committee. Other motivating factors were:

- the belief that the current code was an offshoot of the *CTF Code of Ethics* and did not reflect the principles and aspirations of Saskatchewan teachers,
- a perception that the code was excessively ambiguous and subject to conflicting interpretations, and
- the objection of younger teachers to the code's tendency to "interfere in many ways with their individuality"; they characterized the code as "cumbersome, unnecessarily moralistic, characterized by trite expressions, and inflexibility."

The committee developed guidelines for rewriting the *Code of Ethics* that stipulated it should be general, simple, clear, contemporary, realistic, enforceable, positive in tone, acceptable to the teachers of Saskatchewan, and complementary to other codes currently in force. In 1972, the STF Executive received a final report from the committee providing a new *Code of Ethics* that was adopted by 1973 Council. Included in the report was a commentary on each statement in the code that explained its origin and any changes from previous, similar statements.

Subsequent amendments to the 1973 STF *Code of Ethics* were passed by Council in 1977, 1979 and 1996. These amendments updated the Code by deleting one statement that treated substance abuse as an ethical matter and adding two regarding the need for teachers to pursue needed changes in school system policies and to act to eliminate discrimination in education. Also, housekeeping amendments were made to the code to update language or terminology, e.g., in response to the 1996 Council resolution that the *STF Code of Ethics* use inclusive language.

In 1997, *The Teachers' Federation Act* was again amended giving the STF additional disciplinary

powers to maintain the collective interests of teachers. In the wake of the new legislation, the STF Executive recognized the need to conduct a review of the STF's policies regarding teacher conduct in order to take into account the mandates of the STF's three disciplinary committees on Professional Ethics, Professional Competency and Collective Interests. An Ad Hoc Committee on Professionalism was established with the following terms of reference:

1. assist the Federation in developing an expression of the profession's consensus on professional conduct related to ethics, competency and collective interests;
2. develop guidelines to support the decision-making required of the committees and the Executive in the ethics, competency and collective interests processes;
3. advise the Federation on communication and continuing education programs to involve the membership in issues related to professional conduct; and
4. prepare a report to the Executive by December 1, 1998.

Among the committee's first activities were an examination of the existing STF *Code of Ethics* and a discussion of how the statements related to the STF's disciplinary mandate regarding ethics, competency and collective interests. Statements related to teachers' contractual obligations and collective action were removed for inclusion in a separate code of collective interests, and replaced with one general statement regarding the ethical duty of teachers to respect the collective interests of the teaching profession. Similarly, among the few new statements introduced to cover perceived gaps in the code is a general statement about the ethical duty of teachers to be competent in delivering teaching services to students; detailed consideration of this duty was channelled into separate discussions about the STF's responsibilities in maintaining competence in the teaching profession. The remaining statements in

the *Code of Ethics* were reworked into a different format. Recognizing that there is such extensive overlap between the teacher's commitments to the student, the employer, the profession, and the community that most statements in the code cannot be justifiably categorized under just one of these commitments, the committee removed these headings from the code. The articles in the code itself were expressed as principles governing the conduct of individual teachers. The committee also added a commentary to each article in order

to provide further information to teachers and the public and assist the deliberations of the Professional Ethics Committee. The commentary elaborates informally on the articles articulating principles of teacher conduct by providing background information, interpretation and related principles.

The Code, as presented in this document was adopted by Council on October 14, 2000.

# 2

## The Code of Ethics

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### Preface

Throughout the Twentieth Century, teaching evolved as a profession in all the provinces and territories of Canada. This evolution took place in response to the enormous value placed by society on public education through a gradual recognition of the need for a body of teachers<sup>1</sup> whose integrity, competence and commitment to their students were assured.

In order to provide teaching services effectively, teachers must command the confidence and respect of the public. Moreover, the organizations that represent them must also command such confidence and respect on behalf of their members. In teachers' evolution towards professional status, it has been decided that a high level of public respect and confidence is best achieved when teachers themselves establish and maintain a reputation for integrity, competence and commitment. Through their professional organizations, teachers have developed and imposed upon themselves basic standards of professional conduct and professional competence.

The Saskatchewan Legislature has entrusted the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation with responsibility for maintaining high standards of professional conduct and discipline among its members. This responsibility is carried out through the policies and bylaws of the STF, including this *Code of Ethics*, and through disciplinary processes that involve three quasi-judicial committees elected to hear complaints

against teachers for unprofessional conduct, incompetence, or actions contrary to the collective interests of teachers. The Executive of the STF may upon receiving a written complaint make a preliminary investigation into the facts regarding the conduct of a member, and if in its opinion, the facts justify a more thorough investigation, the Executive shall order a hearing by the Professional Ethics Committee, the Professional Competency Committee or the Collective Interests Committee, as the case requires.

*The Teachers' Federation Act* authorizes the Professional Ethics Committee to inquire into and determine any matter of complaint against a teacher where it is in substance alleged, or the committee has reasonable grounds for believing that the member has been guilty of professional misconduct or conduct not becoming to a teacher. Without limiting the generality of the committee's mandate, Section 38 of the Act further defines as guilty of professional misconduct any teacher who:

- (a) *wilfully takes, because of animosity or for personal advantage, any steps to secure the dismissal of another teacher;*
- (b) *wilfully circulates false reports, derogatory to any fellow teacher or to any other person directly associated with education in Saskatchewan;*
- (c) *maliciously, carelessly, irresponsibly or otherwise than in fulfilment of*

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that throughout the *Code of Ethics* and the discussions related to it, the term 'teachers' is understood to include school principals and vice-principals. In Saskatchewan, principals, vice-principals and teachers are all members of the same profession of teaching, and they belong to the same professional organization, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

*official duties, criticizes the work of a fellow teacher in such a way as to undermine the confidence of the public and pupils;*

*(d) publishes or circulates any false or mischievous statement or enters into any collusive arrangement intended to circumvent or nullify any of the Acts of the Legislature pertaining to teachers or schools or the regulations of the department;*

*(d.1) has been convicted of an offense pursuant to section 151, 152, 153, 155, 160, 170, 271, 272, or 273 of the Criminal Code.<sup>2</sup>*

Neither the legislation nor the policies and bylaws of the STF provide a comprehensive definition of conduct that would subject a teacher to professional discipline. It is the responsibility of the committees of peers established under *The Teachers' Federation Act* to determine whether or not a teacher's professional conduct has been acceptable or unacceptable in a particular case. However, the behavioural principles expressed in the *Code of Ethics* are relied upon by members of the Professional Ethics Committee and have been the basis of findings of professional misconduct or conduct unbecoming to a teacher. These ethical principles, which are expanded and clarified through the informal commentaries provided in the Code, are intended both to provide general guidance and to indicate that some forms of conduct are unprofessional. It should be noted that the articles in the *Code of Ethics* are bylaws of the STF and have been adopted as such by the STF Council, while the commentaries consist of background information, interpretations and statements of related principles that are revised and expanded from time to time as needed without formal approval by Council.

It is expected that teachers who act at all times with good faith towards their students, their school, their colleagues and the members of the public will conduct themselves professionally. Given the complex network of relationships within which teachers work and the variety of demands that they are expected to meet, however, it is inevitable that problems of conduct will sometimes arise. The *Code of Ethics* does not attempt to foresee and deal with all potential problems. Its purpose is to provide a framework of behavioural principles and reference points that may be used to consider the quality and integrity of teaching in a wide range of ever-changing contexts.

It is also recognized that the articles in the *Code of Ethics* do not define a minimum standard of teacher conduct with respect to the ethical matters raised in the articles. As noted earlier, whether or not a teacher's ethical behaviour in relationship to any article has fallen below the standard of conduct acceptable to the teaching profession is a matter for decision by the Professional Ethics Committee. At the same time, how far a teacher's conduct should rise above the minimum standard that is acceptable to the profession is a matter to be decided personally by each teacher within the particular context that shapes each individual's teaching practice, keeping in mind the responsibility that a professional has to the public. To maintain the respect, confidence and trust of the educational community, including the other members of the teaching profession, a teacher should strive to demonstrate the highest possible degree of ethical conduct. The level of esteem within which the teaching profession is held by the society it serves will be determined by the collective will of teachers not to compromise the highest standards of professional ethics.

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<sup>2</sup> All these sections of the *Criminal Code* deal with sexual offenses. In 1995, to recognize the recent re-conceptualization of alcoholism and other addictions as an illness, a clause was removed from Section 38 of *The Teachers' Federation Act* that included in the definition of misconduct addiction to the excessive use of intoxicating liquors or the excessive or habitual use of narcotics. In 1997, another clause related to bargaining by an STF member on his or her own behalf was deleted and dealt with under the Act in a new section concerning the collective interests of teachers.

Public confidence is also furthered by the willingness of teachers to be open and accountable for their disciplinary processes and standards. That is why a member of the public appointed by the provincial government has recently been added to the Professional Ethics Committee. It is also why a *Code of Ethics* articulating principles of teacher conduct is important in assuring the public that teachers are working through their professional organization to ensure that the interests of students and the

public remain the primary consideration in teaching. The Code is properly read in the light of the responsibility of self-government granted to teachers to be carried out through the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. As a self-governing profession, teaching must demonstrate that teachers are more than mere citizens; they are worthy upholders of the public interest in educating future generations that will shape and re-shape society according to its highest aspirations.



# Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Code of Ethics

These are the ethical ideals for Saskatchewan teachers:

1. To act at all times in a manner that brings no dishonour to the individual and the teaching profession.
2. To act in a manner that respects the collective interests of the profession.
3. To make the teaching profession attractive in ideals and practices so that people will desire to enter it.
4. To respond unselfishly to colleagues seeking professional assistance.
5. To respect the various roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in the educational community.
6. To inform an associate before making valid criticism, and inform the associate of the nature of the criticism before referring the criticism of the associate to appropriate officials.
7. To support objectively the work of other teachers and evaluate the work of other teachers only at the request of the other teacher or when required by role as a supervisor.
8. To strive to be competent in the performance of any teaching services that are undertaken on behalf of students, taking into consideration the context and circumstances for teaching.
9. To deal justly, considerately and appropriately with each student.
10. To develop teaching practices that recognize and accommodate diversity within the classroom, the school and the community.
11. To respect the right of students to form their own judgements based upon knowledge.
12. To encourage each student to reach the highest level of individual development.
13. To seek to meet the needs of students by designing the most appropriate learning experiences for them.
14. To implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, taking into account the context for teaching and learning provided by students, the school and the community.
15. To be consistent in the implementation and enforcement of school, school system and Department of Learning policies, regulations and rules.
16. To render professional service to the best of the individual's ability.
17. To keep the trust under which confidential information is exchanged.
18. To keep parents and the school community informed of and appropriately involved in decisions about educational programs.
19. To model the fulfillment of social and political responsibilities associated with membership in the community.
20. To protect the educational program from exploitation.
21. To seek to be aware of the need for changes in local association, Federation, school, school division and Department of Learning policies and regulations and actively pursue such changes.

These ideals, set by Council guide:

- a) the ethical behavior of Saskatchewan teachers,
- b) the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Executive in decision-making regarding the disposition of complaints, and
- c) the deliberations and judgements of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Ethics Committee.

# ARTICLE 1

## The Honour of the Teaching Profession

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***To act at all times in a manner that brings no dishonor to the individual and the teaching profession.***

### Commentary

1. In acquiring a teaching certificate and accepting a teaching contract, the teacher becomes an active member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and acquires an obligation to maintain the dignity of the teaching profession. The STF has developed policies and processes that represent the profession's standards regarding appropriate and inappropriate teacher behaviour. Chief among the available guides to ethical conduct are the *Code of Ethics* and the *Code of Conduct Respecting the Collective Interests of Teachers*. Every teacher has a duty to be aware of and act in accordance with these codes. To further regulate the behaviour of teachers, the STF has in place a Professional Ethics Committee, a Professional Competency Committee and a Collective Interests Committee that give teachers the judgment of their peers on the acceptability of their conduct in questionable instances.
  - 1) If a member is convicted of an indictable offence under the Criminal Code of Canada, the STF General Secretary places the Notice of Conviction before the Professional Ethics Committee. No referral to the Executive is required, nor is preliminary investigation required.
  - 2) If a member is convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada by way of summary proceedings, and the court gives a conditional or absolute discharge, there is no automatic referral. However, if a written complaint is received, the matter will be referred to the Executive for preliminary investigation and/or referral to the Professional Ethics Committee.
2. Teachers are also subject to the standards of teacher conduct that prevail within society at large. Numerous court decisions have made it clear that society expects teachers to behave in a manner that encourages their students to live ethically and will in no way exert a degrading influence on the conduct of others. Teachers have a duty to understand their social function as role models and to work within the prevailing social standards.
3. Given the above, it casts a shadow on the teaching profession when a teacher is convicted of a criminal offence. To dispel this shadow, the STF Executive has approved two procedures:
  4. It is recognized that accepted patterns of behaviour vary across the province and are subject to change over time. At times the teacher's personal and professional principles may conflict with the behavioural expectations of a school or community. So far as it is possible without compromising these principles, the teacher may adapt to the expected lifestyle while working towards change in the community's behavioural standards.

## ARTICLE 2

# The Collective Interests of Teachers

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***To act in a manner that respects the collective interests of the profession.***

### Commentary

1. Saskatchewan teachers have organized themselves to work collectively through local associations and their provincial organization to solve educational problems and further the interests of students and teachers. Legislation, policies and processes have been developed to support this collective action by teachers. Most recently, a *Code of Conduct Respecting the Collective Interests of Teachers* has been

established to ensure teachers understand and respect their obligations as part of a profession that acts collectively. It is the duty of teachers to conduct themselves in a manner that recognizes the importance to education and the benefits to teachers of uniting in the pursuit of collective interests rather than individually pursuing their own interests.

# ARTICLE 3

## Promotion of Teaching

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*To make the teaching profession attractive in ideals and practices so that people will desire to enter it.*

### Commentary

1. Through their conduct and the way they refer to teaching, teachers leave the public with a perception of the teaching profession. It is the duty of the teacher to show through words and deeds that teaching is a noble, rewarding and challenging profession. Only when teachers themselves demonstrate respect for their work is the teaching profession able to maintain the confidence of the public and attract the dedicated, capable individuals that it needs.
2. The expectation that teachers will convey a positive impression of their profession does not prevent them from also conveying a realistic picture of the difficulties and discouragements that may be involved in teaching. The intent of this article is not to cover up problems or prevent teachers from voicing their concerns, but to encourage teachers to take positive action toward the solution of educational problems and to aspire to the highest possible level of teaching ideals and practices.

# ARTICLE 4

## Support from Teaching Colleagues

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*To respond unselfishly to colleagues seeking professional assistance.*

### Commentary

1. Teaching is a profession in which teachers work together to provide students with an education. Typically, the teacher is assigned to a grade level, a subject area, a teaching function, or a group of students, but the assignment is best seen as part of a collective effort to provide all students with a range of educational services that meet the goals of education over the course of their school careers. When a teaching assignment is new or when students present a teacher with a new teaching challenge, teachers must be able to approach each other for help.
2. When approached by a colleague seeking professional advice and assistance, it is the duty of the teacher to share ideas, new educational information, methods of presentation, and sources of further assistance. Materials, programs and lesson plans personally developed by the teacher may also be made available to needy colleagues; however, it is incumbent upon the recipients of such resources to honour appropriately the professional expertise that colleagues are contributing to their teaching. It is also incumbent on teachers not to make themselves dependent on resources provided by other teachers and to develop ideas, information and resources that they may in turn share unselfishly with colleagues.
3. More specifically, it is a professional duty of experienced teachers to assist new members of the profession. Any information that would enable a beginning teacher to succeed and remain a productive member of the teaching profession should be made freely available.
4. This article is not intended to prevent teachers from developing ideas and materials related to education that may be marketed for profit or an increase in professional status. As long as any such enterprise respects copyright laws and the rights of employers, it is appropriate that teachers should at times derive benefit from their own initiative and hard work. Nevertheless, the article also encourages teachers to see themselves as part of a collective dedicated to the interests of students and their profession with a specific duty to share with colleagues in need.
5. For the most part, teachers should regard interns and student teachers as colleagues, providing them with the encouragement and support due to any beginning teacher. However, it must be recognized that if teachers have a teacher-student relationship with interns, then the teachers have an obligation to avoid any behaviours that are inappropriate in view of their privileged position of closeness and authority over the interns. Romantic or sexual relationships between these teachers and interns would be inappropriate.

## ARTICLE 5

# Loyalty to Colleagues with Administrative or Other Special Responsibilities

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*To respect the various roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in the educational community.*

### Commentary

1. A united and harmonious staff is an asset to any school. A school staff is strongest when all its members observe a reasonable and proper loyalty to each other that combines understanding and respect for the principle of collegiality among teachers with understanding and respect for the specialized roles and functions assigned to some teachers. Collegiality within teaching does not preclude the creation of specialized roles that give some teachers different functions, scope and authority than others.
2. School staffs are structured to give principals and vice-principals a specialized role that requires them to exercise leadership and authority in the organization of instruction, the assignment of duties, the resolution of disputes, and the solving of problems. Teachers must accept this specialized role, realizing that principals and vice-principals do not deliberately make decisions and exercise authority in order to antagonize or separate themselves from their teaching colleagues. When a principal makes a legitimate request of teachers or issues reasonable instructions, teachers have a responsibility to carry out the directive regardless of whether or not they agree with it.
3. Teachers also have a responsibility to respect the leadership and authority attached to other specialized positions within education, e.g., department heads, and specialists and consultants.
4. A reasonable and proper loyalty to the internal school administration does not rule out disagreements and debates within the school staff. Those in specialized roles have a responsibility to consult with and listen to colleagues in developing policies, programs and directions that will affect their teaching duties and practices.

# ARTICLE 6

## Criticism of Associates

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***To inform an associate before making valid criticism, and inform the associate of the nature of the criticism before referring the criticism of the associate to appropriate officials.***

### Commentary

1. The nature of teaching often puts the members of a school staff in a position to observe and criticize each other's professional conduct. Teachers value collegueship in teaching and find that an open exchange of constructive criticism among colleagues can play an important part in their professional development. However, a distinction must be made between formative criticism offered in a spirit of collegueship and support and criticism that gives a summative evaluation and is potentially damaging to the reputation and well-being of an associate and the reputation and standing of the school, the education system or the teaching profession.
2. To maintain the trust that is the foundation of collegueship within teaching, any criticism of an associate must first be made directly to the associate concerned. The criticism may be made verbally or in writing, should state the grounds for the criticism, and should inform the associate of any intention to make the criticism to appropriate officials. The associate should be allowed time to respond to the criticism and/or take any action deemed necessary if the criticism is to be made to others. Fairness should dictate how, when and to whom any criticism is made, since it is a principle essential to the maintenance of collegueship in teaching.
3. It is not unethical for a teacher to discuss concerns regarding a colleague with one or more fellow teachers as an initial step towards jointly approaching the colleague about them. Criticism does not always have to be made as an individual; it may be made collectively, provided the principles of fairness and due process are observed.
4. Teachers who have concerns about the conduct of a colleague and wish to discuss them with a staff member of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation should feel free to do so. Such discussion does not constitute unethical criticism of a colleague. It is assumed that communications between the STF and its members are privileged and confidential. Moreover, they may well result in benefits to all parties as steps are taken to either resolve the concerns or pursue them in the fairest, most ethical manner.
5. In criticizing an associate's professional conduct, the teacher should have reasonable grounds to believe the criticism is valid. Rumour, circumstantial evidence and hearsay are not in themselves an adequate basis for criticism. Any criticism of an associate should be substantive rather than malicious, vexatious or frivolous in nature. At the same time, when teachers perceive a serious problem with the professional conduct of an associate that is not amenable to correction upon communication to the associate, it is their responsibility to safeguard the interests of students and the honour of the teaching profession by drawing such conduct to the attention of those in a position to take appropriate action.



6. Again, to maintain the trust that is the foundation of relationships within teaching, it is essential that criticisms be made only to “appropriate officials.” The most appropriate official is generally the person in the closest position of authority over the teacher, e.g., a department head, principal or director of education. In some cases, depending on the nature of the criticism, the person being criticized, and the context in which the teacher and the official work, it may be necessary to direct the criticism to another “appropriate official” than the one in the closest position of authority over the teacher.
7. An important exception to the rules of conduct concerning criticism of an associate must be made in cases of sexual, racial or other forms of harassment or physical, emotional or sexual abuse. A teacher with any grounds for suspicion of abuse or harassment by an associate should immediately report these to an appropriate official. The teacher should not inform an associate suspected of harassment or abuse that such a report will be made. It is recognized that giving such information may result in steps by the perpetrator of the harassment or abuse that would intensify or perpetuate the harm being inflicted on the victim. Also, where a teacher is the victim of the abuse or harassment, it is not reasonable to expect the teacher to confront the perpetrator personally.
8. Teachers may criticize in an appropriate manner any associate with whom they work on a school staff. In most cases, the associate will be a fellow teacher. It is recognized that only certificated teachers who are members of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, including substitute teachers, are bound by the *Code of Ethics*. By extension, student teachers are also considered to be covered by the Code. Other individuals employed by school boards, including teacher associates, school secretaries, custodians, other support staff and some shared services personnel, may not be expected to meet the standards of conduct laid out in the *Code of Ethics*. However, it is also recognized that the steps teachers are expected to follow when making criticism of a fellow teacher attempt to meet criteria of fairness and due process that may reasonably be applied to other educational employees in order to establish relationships with them based on trust and mutual respect.
9. This article is not intended in any way to restrict teachers’ discussions concerning education issues. It is intended, however, to encourage teachers to respect the individual personalities of those involved in educational issues and to regard with charity colleagues who may seem to be in error.
10. It should be noted that Section 38 of *The Teachers’ Federation Act* defines as guilty of professional misconduct any teacher who:
  - (a) *wilfully takes, because of animosity or for personal advantage, any steps to secure the dismissal of another teacher;*
  - (b) *wilfully circulates false reports, derogatory to any fellow teacher or to any other person directly associated with education in Saskatchewan;*
  - (c) *maliciously, carelessly, irresponsibly or otherwise than in fulfilment of official duties, criticizes the work of a fellow teacher in such a way as to undermine the confidence of the public and pupils.*



# ARTICLE 7

## Evaluation of Teachers

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***To support objectively the work of other teachers and evaluate the work of other teachers only at the request of the other teacher or when required by role as a supervisor.***

### Commentary

1. The policy of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation distinguishes between formative and summative evaluations of teachers. Formative evaluations are an important part of the supervision of teachers and are designed to provide teachers with criticism and feedback that will improve their performance, while summative evaluations are more formal and designed to assess teaching performance in a way that will affect the teacher's employment, assignment or professional status. While teachers are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation and to provide formative evaluations of each other, only appropriate officials who have been explicitly designated and trained to evaluate teachers should engage in summative evaluations. It is believed that asking teachers to participate in summative evaluations of each other undermines the trust that provides the foundation for collegueship within the teaching profession. The teacher has a responsibility to be aware of the type of evaluation that is being undertaken and to provide information and opinions concerning the work of other teachers only in contexts that do not undermine their relationships with colleagues.
2. Those who have been charged with responsibility for evaluating the work of a teacher have a duty to be accurate, objective and honest in their assessment of the teacher's ability. They should also ensure the teacher has been informed of the evaluation.
3. In some schools, principals are expected to supervise but not evaluate the teachers within the school, while in other schools, the duty of evaluation is an explicit part of a principal's role. In assigning supervisory and evaluative functions, the tension that exists between collegueship and evaluation needs to be recognized with a view to establishing the most effective instructional team for each school.
4. Teachers sometimes engage in activities that are evaluative of other teachers, e.g., by providing letters of reference or recommending the use of a particular substitute teacher. Teachers should recognize that such activities have implications for a colleague's employment and professional status and duly execute their duty to be accurate, objective and honest in their assessment of the teacher's ability. It is also the teacher's professional duty to inform colleagues first when criticizing their professional conduct to others.
5. Both student teachers and substitute teachers stand in the relationship of colleagues to the other teachers in a school where they are teaching. These teachers are expected to live up to the same standards of ethical conduct as those who possess a teaching certificate and are employed under a contract. At the same time, the processes for providing them with feedback, evaluation, and criticism may be different in order to recognize their different employment status. Nevertheless, student teachers and substitute teachers are owed the same professional courtesy and high standard of ethical treatment from their colleagues that are the right of every teacher.

# ARTICLE 8

## Competence to Teach

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***To strive to be competent in the performance of any teaching services that are undertaken on behalf of students, taking into consideration the context and circumstances for teaching.***

### Commentary

1. At the heart of the teacher-student relationship is the belief that the teacher can create appropriate learning experiences for students. If a teacher lacks the knowledge, skills or abilities necessary to perform teaching services that students may rightfully expect from their teacher, and is unable or unwilling to remedy this lack, the teacher may be considered incompetent.
  - the range and extent of the teachers' teaching experience,
  - the educational background of the teacher,
  - the number of students for whom the teacher is to provide services,
  - the range, depth, complexity and urgency of the educational and other needs characterizing the students for whom the teacher is providing services,
  - the respective cultural, linguistic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds of the teacher and the students,
  - the amount of preparation time necessary to provide adequate teaching services,
  - the preparation and study the teacher is able to give to extending competence in required areas,
  - the availability of an associate or consultant who has the expertise to support the teacher's provision of the teaching services, and
  - the emotional and physical health of the teacher.
2. Competence in teaching is developed through teacher education and continuing professional development. It is not necessarily to be equated with the possession of a teaching certificate.

Generally speaking, all certificated teachers should know how to diagnose students' educational needs, adapt the curriculum to meet those needs, employ a variety of instructional strategies, and evaluate student achievement. However, competence in teaching may involve more than an adequate general knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy. It must be recognized that competency in teaching is subject to the complex interplay between many factors. A teacher who is competent, even exemplary, in providing teaching services under one set of circumstances may experience difficulty if the circumstances or context for teaching are changed. Some of the factors that affect teacher competency include:

  - the complexity and specialized nature of the teaching services required,
3. Given the many factors that may affect teaching competence, it is important that teaching assignments take due account of the education, experience and abilities of teachers. As noted in Section 175 of *The Education Act, 1995*, the assignment of teaching duties is most appropriately made "in consultation with members of the staff".

School staffs that take a collaborative approach to the assignment roles and duties are likely to maximize the competence of staff members.

4. To ensure they maintain an adequate range and level of teaching competencies, teachers

should seek to keep abreast of developments in all aspects of teaching practice that they may reasonably be expected to deliver. It is an on-going professional responsibility of teachers to willingly undertake appropriate professional development.

# ARTICLE 9

## Dealings With Individual Students

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*To deal justly, considerately and appropriately with each student.*

### Commentary

1. In a public education system, teachers are committed to the faithful and diligent education of every student assigned to them.
2. Each student presents the teacher with a unique educational challenge. Teachers should recognize the individuality of every student and work to meet the educational needs of each one to the best of their ability.
3. Students frequently differ from each other and their teachers in terms of their language, religion, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, family status, physical abilities and mental abilities. Teachers are not allowed to discriminate against any student or group of students on the basis of any such factor, but must make an equitable effort to meet the educational needs of all their students.
4. The teacher's dealings with all students should be characterizable as "just", "considerate" and "appropriate". The word "just" implies both moral uprightness and legal and procedural correctness. The word "considerate" implies that the teacher has duly considered the characteristics and circumstances of each student and is endeavouring to treat all students according to their individual merit. The word "appropriate" implies that the teacher respects and maintains the teacher-student relationship, in which an adult professional in a privileged position of closeness and influence over young people refrains from any personal exploitation of students and focuses interactions on the students' well-being and learning.
5. It must be recognized that the amount and kind of consideration that a teacher can give to each student is determined to a significant degree by the context and circumstances for teaching. For example, the care and attention that a teacher is able to give a student or group of students may be affected by the demands of the teaching assignment, the range and nature of student needs, or the environment provided by the classroom.
6. At no time in dealing with a student should a teacher be physically, verbally, emotionally or sexually abusive, nor should the teacher be physically or emotionally neglectful. It is the duty of the teacher, within the context of the school program, to care for students, enhance their well-being, and protect them from harm of any kind.
7. It is not appropriate for teachers to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with their students. Such liaisons represent a breach of the teacher-student relationship and may undermine the trust that students and parents should be able to have that all teachers will use the authority and closeness they have with their students in ways that are consistent with that relationship. The onus is on teachers, as adult professionals, to ensure that their behaviour does not encourage romantic or sexual feelings in their students or indicate that they reciprocate such feelings.
8. Teachers' obligation to be just and considerate in dealing with each student does not undermine their right under Section 231 of *The Education Act, 1995* to exclude a student from the classroom in the interests of other students.

# ARTICLE 10

## Recognition of Diversity in Education

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*To develop teaching practices that recognize and accommodate diversity within the classroom, the school and the community.*

### Commentary

1. The educational policy of inclusiveness means that school classrooms typically contain students who are diverse in terms of their backgrounds and abilities. It is common for teachers to work with students who differ in language, religion, ethnic background, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical abilities, and mental abilities. As a result of such significant differences, the students also have differing educational needs.
2. The history and culture of Saskatchewan's First Nations and Métis require recognition by those within the province's education system. Teachers should endeavour to understand and accommodate the special educational needs of Aboriginal students.
3. The teacher must recognize that one teaching approach will not work for all students in classrooms characterized by diversity. In the interests of providing an equitable education to all students, the teacher must use varied teaching strategies and instructional techniques that are appropriate to the individuals and groups within the classroom. It is a professional duty of teachers to recognize to the best of their ability the significant differences among their students and develop teaching practices that accommodate them.
4. Diversity among students is usually paralleled by diversity within the communities served by schools. Teachers need to recognize significant differences that exist among parents and community members and adjust their communications and interactions to account for such differences. Teachers should also involve parents and community members in the development of teaching practices that are appropriate for particular students and groups of students.
5. The teacher must respect diversity within the school staff, learning to work as a colleague with those who differ significantly from themselves in attitudes, background, lifestyles, sexual orientation, abilities, role and approaches to teaching. The teacher should recognize that diversity within the school staff provides a valuable opportunity to draw on the insights and ideas of others in meeting the diverse educational needs of students and communities.
6. Diversity among students, communities, and school staffs is best regarded as an asset to the teacher in the provision of high quality learning opportunities.

# ARTICLE 11

## Respect for Freedom of Thought

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*To respect the right of students to form their own judgements based upon knowledge.*

### Commentary

1. The teacher will sometimes deal with controversial topics in the classroom in order to develop students' ability to think critically and increase their knowledge of important issues. The purpose of introducing such topics is never the indoctrination of students to a particular point of view. It is a professional responsibility of the teacher to present the controversy to students fairly and objectively.

of discussing controversial topics, depending on the age of the students, community standards, and the nature of the topic. However, in exercising their professional judgement on the appropriateness of this course of action, teachers must ensure that students have the freedom and are encouraged to draw their own conclusions and form their own opinions.
2. All teachers bring their values and beliefs to their interactions with others, including their interactions with students. It may be appropriate for teachers to present their own values and opinions to students in the course
3. In allowing students to form and express their own judgements, the teacher is responsible for ensuring that students are making judgements on the basis of adequate knowledge of the topic.

# ARTICLE 12

## Commitment to Student Development

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*To encourage each student to reach the highest level of individual development.*

### Commentary

1. The Saskatchewan goals of education aspire to develop each student intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually. The teacher is committed to encouraging all students to develop in each area to the greatest extent possible.
2. Individual development of the student does not preclude student development in accordance with national and community goals. The teacher is also committed to encouraging each student to develop in ways that have been identified by society as important to the common good. It is a professional role of the teacher to mediate between the individual and societal goals of education.
3. It is recognized by teachers that the setting of high goals and high standards usually results in the highest levels of educational attainment. However, it is also recognized that the goals and standards must be attainable if students are to experience success and develop self-esteem. Teachers will work towards achieving the best possible balance between varying needs and aspirations in furthering the greatest overall development of individual students.
4. Given the diversity that exists among students in the various areas of individual development, a flexible education system that allows the curriculum and teaching practices to be tailored to match student interests and abilities has the greatest chance of successfully developing all students in all areas.

# ARTICLE 13

## Improvement of Teaching and Learning

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*To seek to meet the needs of students by designing the most appropriate learning experiences for them.*

### Commentary

1. Individual students, classrooms and schools continually present teachers with new educational needs and challenges. In striving to meet these needs and challenges, teachers continually extend and improve their teaching practices.
2. The knowledge base for teaching continues to grow dramatically. Each subject area is expanding; new educational theories are being proposed and tested; new instructional strategies and techniques are being developed; and vehicles for communicating new ideas and information to teachers abound. As a result, teachers have a duty to be open to new and better methods of teaching and to welcome instructional changes that benefit their students, within the limitations imposed by circumstances and the context for teaching and learning.
3. Teachers are expected to model lifelong learning for their students in both a personal and professional capacity. Teachers should actively and constantly seek information, theories, experiences, materials and ideas that will assist them in improving the learning experiences provided for students.
4. The rate and nature of teachers' professional development will vary according to the individual, the learning opportunities available, and the context for teaching and learning.



# ARTICLE 14

## Mediation of the Curriculum

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***To implement the provincial curriculum conscientiously and diligently, taking into account the context for teaching and learning provided by students, the school and the community.***

### Commentary

1. The provincial curriculum represents a social consensus as to what students should be learning at school and provides a structure and sequence for that learning. The teaching profession must play a central role in developing curricula, but must do so in partnership with other stakeholders in education. The teacher has a duty to students and to society to accept the consensus that is reached through appropriate curriculum development processes and to implement the resulting curricula.
2. The teacher also realizes that a particular curriculum may not match the immediate needs and interests of students, the priorities and goals of the school or the expectations of the community. Where such dissonance occurs between the curriculum and the context for teaching and learning, it is the role of the teacher to mediate between them and achieve for each student the best possible education. With some students or groups of students, it may be necessary for teachers, in consultation with the appropriate parties, to adapt the curriculum or develop an alternative curriculum.
3. Teachers have a professional obligation to contribute their knowledge and experience to the development of curricula in order to minimize possible dissonance between the provincial curriculum and the context for teaching and learning.
4. In order to implement a new curriculum as intended, teachers must be provided with the necessary time, training and resources. It is the responsibility of boards of education and the Department of Learning to provide these.

# ARTICLE 15

## Implementation of Educational Policies

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***To be consistent in the implementation and enforcement of school, school system and Department of Learning policies, regulations and rules.***

### Commentary

1. The Department of Learning has constitutional authority to establish laws, regulations and policies for education in Saskatchewan. School boards have been given authority in *The Education Act, 1995* to establish school policies and procedures. Section 175 of *The Education Act, 1995* gives principals responsibility for setting rules, standards and procedures for the school with respect to such matters as reporting to parents and student discipline. It is the duty of the teacher to carry out policies and to enforce any rules and regulations that have been duly established under these authorities. The teacher is obliged to carry out all policies, procedures, rules and regulations with impartiality. Even if teachers are personally opposed to a policy or a procedure, they may not independently pursue a contrary course of action or work to undermine its implementation.
2. In order to avoid internal and external conflicts, it is important for educational authorities to involve teachers in the development of policies and procedures. Policies, procedures and rules work best when they are supported by those expected to enforce them and they are consistent between the school, the school system and the province.
3. It should be noted that Section 38(d) of *The Teachers' Federation Act* defines as guilty of misconduct any teacher who “publishes or circulates any false or mischievous statement or enters into any collusive arrangement intended to circumvent or nullify any of the Acts of the Legislature pertaining to teachers or schools or the regulations of the department.”
4. Since most educational facilities are owned by the public and administered on its behalf according to policies established by school boards, it is a specific obligation of teachers to be aware of existing policies on the use of educational facilities and conduct themselves accordingly. Unless the school board has given permission to use educational equipment or facilities for a particular purpose, teachers should not take advantage of their position to use them in a way that has been neither intended nor sanctioned.

# ARTICLE 16

## Effort to Render Professional Service

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*To render professional service to the best of the individual's ability.*

### Commentary

1. In hiring a teacher, the employer expects an acceptance of professional obligations and the maintenance of an acceptable level of service.
2. The professional commitment of the teacher to render service extends further, however. Not only the employer, but also the students and the public, are entitled to a teacher's best efforts. Recognizing that not all teachers have the same abilities and capacity for work, the acceptability of a teacher's level of service is most accurately measured against the teacher's own abilities and capacities.

# ARTICLE 17

## Confidential Information

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***To keep the trust under which confidential information is exchanged.***

### Commentary

1. The teacher is in a position to receive confidential information about students, parents, teachers, and others with whom they have a professional relationship. It is the duty of the teacher to understand that such information is given to them in trust and, except in specific circumstances, confidential information should be divulged only in the best interests of or with the permission of the students, parents, teachers or other individuals involved. This duty survives the professional relationship and applies to former colleagues and former students and their parents.
2. Teachers are obliged to cooperate with a large variety of other individuals in the education of students. Such cooperation typically involves reporting in some detail to parents on the achievements and behaviour of their children, to administrators on student performance and behaviour within the classroom, to specialists and consultants on the progress and behaviour of students with special needs, to colleagues who are delivering to students aspects of their educational program, and to teacher associates who need to be aware of any circumstances that may affect their work with students. Outside the requirement to be open and cooperative in educational partnerships, the teacher should divulge information about student performance, test scores, student abilities, student behaviour or school records only in accordance with school and school system policies.
3. It is the responsibility of school boards to provide teachers and other employees with policies and guidelines regarding the sharing of school-related information. Such policies and guidelines will reflect the provisions in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. They should also take into account the possibility that by providing some kinds of information to the public, e.g., posting students' names and pictures on the worldwide web, schools may unintentionally compromise students' privacy or safety.
4. Teachers cannot render full and effective service to their students unless there is free and unreserved communication between them, and at times that communication is extended to the students' parents. The teacher has a duty to keep confidential any information that is received about a student's affairs or the affairs of the student's family.
5. In the course of their work, teachers may also acquire confidential information about other educational employees, including other teachers, that relates to job performance, the results of evaluations, or personal or business affairs. Such information is obtained under the trust of collegueship and should not be divulged unless there is a need to make a valid criticism of an associate to appropriate officials and then only when the colleague has been informed of the intent to criticize.

6. Teachers should avoid indiscreet conversations, even with colleagues, students or parents, about students or circumstances at school. They should also shun any gossip about such things even if the students or other individuals are not named or otherwise identified. Indiscreet shop-talk by teachers may result in harm to the individuals who are the subject of the conversation as well as lower the respect of listeners for the teachers concerned and the teaching profession generally.
7. Notwithstanding all the preceding comments, in some instances, teachers have a duty to report immediately to an appropriate authority any suspicion of a possible suicide or child abuse or neglect, regardless of how the information was obtained that created the suspicion.

# ARTICLE 18

## Informing the Public about Education

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*To keep parents and the school community informed of and appropriately involved in decisions about educational programs.*

### Commentary

1. Public education is most effective when communities are knowledgeable about and support the educational programs implemented in their schools. Moreover, schools have an obligation to account to the public for the educational achievement of students and their use of tax dollars in the provision of educational services. To foster support and meet demands for accountability, teachers should individually and collectively develop ways of communicating effectively with the public about education.
2. Schools and school boards should have in place policies and procedures for teachers to follow in providing information to the public and consulting parents and community members on educational issues. Teachers should be aware of and implement these policies and guidelines.
3. Teachers have a professional responsibility to be informed about educational issues and to enter into discussions about them with students, colleagues and community members. Local teachers' associations and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation provide appropriate avenues for teachers to develop positions and policies on complex educational issues and to communicate these positions and policies to educational partners and the public.
4. The most effective communications link that schools have with the public they serve is the relationship between teachers and the parents of their students. Each teacher should attend to the development of a positive relationship with the parents of students and conscientiously work to keep them informed about, involved in and supportive of their children's education and public education in general. However, it should be noted that the provision of time and resources by boards and administrators is important in assisting teachers to fulfill this function.
5. Teachers should also attend to the development of good public relations with other members of the community served by the school. Lines of communication should be established and kept open so that, where it is necessary and appropriate, information can be provided to the community on educational issues and community input can be sought on decisions affecting educational programs. Within the limits set by circumstances, the educational program and common sense, teachers should recognize the need for schools to be part of their communities and respond to community events, interests and priorities.

# ARTICLE 19

## Responsibilities of Community Membership

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*To model the fulfillment of social and political responsibilities associated with membership in the community.*

### Commentary

1. One of the goals of a public education system is to develop in students the values, attitudes and interests that will encourage them to fulfill their social and political responsibilities to the community. In this context, the 'community' may be seen to encompass, not only geographically defined political and economic units like the nation, the province, the municipality, or the area served by the school, but also the largest sense of the word (e.g., the global community) and a variety of groups with differing degrees of structure with which individuals may be associated (e.g., Hutterite colonies or the deaf community). The curriculum contains opportunities to instruct students in their future role as citizens and group members, but an important foundation for these opportunities needs to be established by the example of adults. Teachers, in particular, are expected to model for their students acceptance of the expectations that flow from community membership.
2. It should be recognized that as parents, community members and members of the teaching profession, teachers have duties and interests outside their performance of their role within the school. Every teacher is entitled to and encouraged to devote time and energy to family life, to participate in the social life of the community, and to undertake activities that contribute to the professional development of the teacher and the development of the teaching profession.
3. Some examples of the responsibilities of community membership that teachers may fulfill are:
  - the observance of duly enacted laws and bylaws,
  - respect for government and law enforcement agencies,
  - participation in public life, e.g., participation in public debates and elections, or running for political office,
  - service to individuals, organizations or agencies in the community, and
  - stewardship of human and natural resources.
4. There is a reciprocal benefit for teachers and the communities served by schools in the teacher's involvement in local activities and affairs. The teacher acquires a better understanding of students, builds positive relationships with parents and students, and develops local support for the school. In providing the teacher with a livelihood, local taxpayers feel the community served by the school has gained an active and supportive member. In spite of the reciprocal benefit, however, teachers who choose for any reason not to participate in the life of the school community should not be the object of resentment by community members.
5. The teacher should not allow any activities outside the school to result in unresolved conflict with professional obligations to students.

# ARTICLE 20

## Protecting Education from Exploitation

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*To protect the educational program from exploitation.*

### Commentary

1. The educational program of the school is based on the provincial curriculum, which has been developed in accordance with established goals of education and with reference to the interests of students and society at large. Nevertheless, it is common for activities, materials, or programs to be brought forward from a variety of sources for implementation in the schools as part of the educational program. Some of these proposed additions enhance the curriculum; some address special local needs or interests that are not met by the curriculum but enhance the education of students; and some seek to use the educational program for commercial, political, religious or personal purposes. It is the use of the educational program in ways that do not serve and may even detract from the interests of students and the public that constitutes educational exploitation. In determining whether or not the educational program is being exploited in a way and to a degree that requires action, teachers should use their best professional judgment in reference to available policies and guidelines provided by school boards and the Department of Learning.
2. It is the responsibility of the Department of Learning and school boards to provide policies and procedures that guide schools in evaluating and approving activities, materials and programs that have been proposed for incorporation into the educational program. Teachers have a duty to observe these policies and procedures in their development of the educational program.
3. The teacher should be vigilant in recognizing and protecting the school or classroom from a wide range of possible exploitations, including the following:
  - the purchase of instructional supplies upon the provision of compensation to teachers or the school from the producers,
  - the exposure of students to advertisements or promotions that encourage them to buy particular products,
  - the use of materials or activities that propagate personal political or religious views, or
  - the invitation into the school of personnel whose objective is the indoctrination of students and teachers.



# ARTICLE 21

## Improvement of Educational Policies

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***To seek to be aware of the need for changes in local association, Federation, school, school division and Department of Learning policies and regulations and actively pursue such changes.***

### Commentary

1. Teachers are in a unique position within the education system to identify situations that require a change in school, school system or Department of Learning policies and regulations. Recognizing that their role puts them in this unique position, teachers should conscientiously seek to be aware of problems or opportunities that may be addressed through changes to policies or regulations.
2. Once the teacher recognizes a problem or opportunity that might lead to a beneficial change in school, school system or Department of Learning policies or regulations, the teacher has a responsibility to pursue actively the possibility of educational improvement.
3. Local teachers' associations and the provincial teachers' federation provide avenues for teachers to pursue collectively the improvement of education. In fact, Section 31 of *The Teachers' Federation Act* prohibits any teacher or body of teachers from making representations to the provincial government except through the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. It is therefore an obligation of teachers to work within their professional organization to bring about needed changes in provincial policies and regulations related to education. It is also recognized as an obligation in the collective interests of teachers for teachers to work through their local associations for policy changes at the level of the school system.







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