

Manitoba School Boards Association

# Policies and Requests for Action

Updated June 2024



### ***Note to Users***

This manual is divided into three parts: Foundation Statements, Policies, and Requests for Action. The Foundation Statements are the association's Vision, Mission, Mandate, Beliefs, Values, and Brand. The Policies are statements of principle that have been adopted by the membership of the Manitoba School Boards Association. The Requests for Action section contains resolutions (other than Policies) that have been adopted or reaffirmed by the membership within the past three years, as well as those submitted to the Executive by individual regions.

This manual is updated on an annual basis, following the association's Annual General Meeting.

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## **Part 1: Foundation Statements**

### ***Vision***

A respected and influential voice for public education in Manitoba. A valued and effective advocate for local education governance.

### ***Mission***

The mission of the Manitoba School Boards Association is to enhance the work of locally elected school boards through leadership, advocacy and service, and to champion the cause of public education for all students in Manitoba.

### ***Mandate***

To promote and support the work of elected public school boards within the parameters of Manitoba laws and statutes.

To promote and advance the cause of public education in the province through research, study and public discourse.

To work collaboratively with education partners, stakeholders, and community agencies in addressing the learning and developmental needs of school-aged children and youth.

### ***Beliefs***

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes:

- THAT the public school system is a cornerstone of a free and democratic society and the collective responsibility of all citizens;
- THAT community voice and local control are essential features of a quality public education system;
- THAT the public school system in Manitoba should provide equity of opportunity for all students irrespective of geographic location or community wealth; and
- THAT elected school boards must have the legal authority, the financial flexibility and the local autonomy to reflect the education needs and priorities of their respective communities.

### ***Values***

The Manitoba School Boards Association is committed to excellence in programs and services for member school boards.

The Manitoba School Boards Association respects the authority and autonomy of locally elected school boards.

The Manitoba School Boards Association values openness and transparency in its relationship with association members, education partners, stakeholder organizations and the general public.

The Manitoba School Boards Association values collaboration, partnership and teamwork in the pursuit of organizational goals.

### ***Brand***

Leadership, advocacy and service for Manitoba's public school boards

*Adopted March 2006  
Reaffirmed March 2011*

## **Part 2: Policies**

### **Principles of Public Education**

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the purpose of public schooling is to provide for the development of all children, so that each may take a meaningful place in society. The Manitoba School Boards Association has identified the following principles as key to the fulfilment of that purpose.

- The public school system provides quality programming that respects the intrinsic value of the individual and focuses on the development of each child.
- Public school programming reflects a contemporary view of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are of most worth to the individual and to society.
- Public schools reflect the character, cultural heritage, and democratic institutions of the communities they serve.
- The public school system demonstrates respect and support for fundamental human rights as identified in Canadian and provincial legislation.
- Public schooling is a responsibility shared among the school, the family, and the community.

## **School Boards and Trustees**

### ***Authority***

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that locally elected school boards are essential to ensuring community voice in public education, and that to be effective in this regard, they require the authority to make local decisions within broad parameters established by provincial legislation. This authority, which resides with the corporate board and not individual trustees, includes the ability to:

- access revenue beyond that which is provided by the provincial government for education purposes, through mechanisms such as the local special levy on property;
- manage financial, capital and human resources in an effective and efficient manner;
- determine and modify as necessary the school division's own internal operating structures; and
- adapt or develop curricula and establish academic requirements or standards that reflect community needs or values.

### ***Responsibility***

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the exercise of authority brings with it responsibility. In this light, school boards have a responsibility to:

- abide by all relevant laws by which they are bound, while retaining the right to try to influence the legislative process, or advocate for changes to existing laws;
- conduct school board business in an open and transparent manner, limiting the use of in-camera deliberations for those matters requiring confidentiality;
- preserve to the greatest extent possible the integrity of the school board and the office of school trustee through the development and enforcement of a strong school trustee code of conduct; and
- keep the best interest of students at the forefront of all deliberations.

## **Funding and Financial Matters**

Education is a public responsibility. In Manitoba, that responsibility is shared between the provincial government and school boards. The province has constitutional authority for k-12 education, but it has delegated responsibility for the school system's day-to-day operations to school boards. This model of shared responsibility benefits Manitoba by ensuring a high standard of education across the province, by providing greater equity of educational opportunity, and by providing local communities with distinctive programs and services that meet their own self-identified needs. Education funding—the overall level of support and the mechanisms through which that support is distributed—is a critical component of a strong public school system. School boards believe that the following are key elements of an effective education-funding model.

### ***Operational funding***

- The provincial government should provide the majority of funds (greater than or equal to 80%) required to operate public schools in accordance with all legislation, regulation, and government mandates or directives.
- Elected school boards must have the authority to raise the balance of required operational funds through the local education property tax levy.
- Limitations, restrictions or conditions on allocation of school division budgets should be minimal, and clearly communicated at the time of the annual provincial funding announcement.
- Provincial funding of education should come primarily in the form of block or per pupil grants rather than categorical grants, to provide school divisions with the maximum flexibility in allocating resources.
- The education funding formula should contain equalization measures and other components to ensure equity of opportunity for students regardless of circumstances or location, and fairness for taxpayers in low-assessment divisions.
- The schedule of operational advances should provide funding to school divisions on a twelve-month basis.

### ***Capital funding***

- The provincial government should fully fund new capital construction and major renovations to a level that accurately reflects current construction costs.
- The capital support formula must take into account the inclusion of spaces or facilities necessitated as the result of new mandates or pedagogical developments.
- Capital funding for new school builds, retrofit and maintenance projects should be allocated objectively based on need and according to clear eligibility guidelines, and school boards should be consulted and informed regularly on the status of all divisional funding requests.

### ***Other financial matters***

- Relevant provincial departments (i.e. health) should support financially the delivery of non- educational services to children in schools.
- The purchase of supplies and services required by the public school system should be exempt from fees and taxes levied by federal, provincial, or municipal levels of government.
- All school division property should be exempt from municipal property taxes or special services levies and *The Municipal Assessment Act* formally amended to ensure such exemption.
- The Manitoba Government should extend interim interest-free loans or grants to school divisions pending receipt of municipal revenue disbursements to mitigate acquisition by school boards of privately held debts.



## **Education Programming**

Public schools provide all children with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge that enable them to develop their personal interests, explore and master new areas of inquiry, and build stronger futures for themselves and their communities. In order to fulfill this mandate, public schools must:

- maintain an instructional focus on the core subjects which remain integral to student success, including numeracy and literacy.
- offer a dynamic curriculum that recognizes emerging knowledge and learning needs.
- make available high-quality academic, technical, vocational, and career and other programming, and to the extent possible, ensure such offerings align with post-secondary requirements in technical, vocational and other fields of study.
- include curricular components that will enable young people to better fulfill their current and future roles as contributing family and community members, and as citizens of democratic societies.
- enable such course and delivery modifications as are necessary to ensure that all students, regardless of ability or special needs, geographic location, cultural or linguistic background, or other relevant factor, can benefit from the full range of educational offerings.
- conduct regular, meaningful assessments of student progress towards stated learning goals, with the results of such assessments being used to direct improvements to teaching and learning for both individual students and the student body as a whole.
- align school year start date and instructional time and human/financial resource allocation with curricular requirements and priorities.

## Students

Public schools not only provide academic courses of study for students; they also share in the family and community responsibility for nurturing the whole child, and for helping each one grow into a healthy, happy and contributing member of society. To that end, public schools must:

- recognize the critical importance of the early years for children’s healthy development and learning, and support inter-agency cooperation and collaboration to meet the needs of young children and their families.
- cooperate with organizations having child or youth-focused mandates, including those working with pre-school or young adult populations.
- mitigate the negative impacts of poverty on students, and ensure that equitable educational opportunities are available to all children and youth, regardless of socio-economic status.
- work with other levels of government to promote a “students-first” philosophy that consistently places the needs of children and youth ahead of financial or legal considerations associated with residency, guardianship, jurisdictional boundaries, or similar matters.
- understand the significant roles good physical and mental health, emotional intelligence and empathy play in overall student well-being and achievement, and support or develop programs and initiatives designed to have a positive impact in these areas.
- respect, reflect and celebrate the cultural diversity of Manitoba’s citizens and communities in philosophy and programming and promote appropriate settlement and language training services to meet the needs of newcomer students.

## Human Resources

As employers, school boards have a responsibility to advocate for, develop and implement human resource legislation, policies and practices that will support the recruitment, professional growth and retention of the personnel instrumental to the success of students. These responsibilities to employees must be met within the context of concurrent responsibilities to students, communities, and ratepayers. School boards believe that they can best balance these responsibilities when:

- collective bargaining is informed by local school boards and their respective employee representatives.
- the risk of disruptions to student learning as a result of labour disputes is minimized by the use of binding arbitration rather than strike/lockout as the final dispute resolution process in collective bargaining between school boards and teacher associations.
- arbitrators consider community economic conditions and school boards' ability to pay when awarding settlements.
- certification or other administrative barriers that negatively impact school boards' ability to hire qualified teachers, school clinicians, or other high-demand professionals from jurisdictions outside Manitoba are minimized.
- the provision of professional development in areas such as changing curricula, or training in the delivery of specialized health-care services required by individual students, is treated as a shared responsibility of the school board and the province.
- school boards regularly assess the performance of their superintendents in accordance with a defined set of agreed-to principles and criteria.

## **Transportation**

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that student safety is a key priority for public schools, and that concerns for safety extend to the transportation and movement of students to and from school. In order to maximize student safety, it is imperative that:

- school buses be outfitted with equipment and systems that are known to enhance safety;
- all students be educated on safe school bus ridership;
- appropriate accommodations be made in school zones to ensure the safety of students travelling to and from school (such as reduced speed zones and designated school bus loading/unloading zones);
- traffic laws relating to school buses (such as passing a stopped and signaling bus) be vigorously enforced with appropriate penalties; and
- regular public education campaigns be undertaken to ensure community members are aware of these laws, and the consequences for violating them.

## **Facilities and Materials**

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that appropriate school facilities and material resources are essential components of a strong public education system, and as such, must be available to all students and staff, in all areas of the province. Specifically:

- infrastructure such as broadband internet connectivity and cellular access are essential to Manitoba students, staff and families and must be in place in all Manitoba schools, to enable students to participate fully in curricular offerings;
- new schools must be built with clear guidelines for school boards regarding capital eligibility and prioritization and due consultation. Existing schools must be retrofitted as required, to ensure accessibility and to meet the needs of students and other persons with disabilities;
- school boards must be involved in the planning of new residential developments, with due consultation, to help ensure appropriate accommodations are made for public schools; and
- land required for new school sites must be made available to school divisions at a reasonable cost.

## **External Organizations**

The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that opportunities to advance school board, pupil and community interests through public education is furthered through meaningful and collaborative partnerships. To this end, the Association seeks to:

- itself undertake and encourage all member school boards to engage with community members, organizations and other partners whose mutual interest is vested in the ethical and altruistic provision or promotion of educational opportunities for the benefit of students and school staff;

- support organizations whose aims and objectives align with those of the Association and its members;
- promote continuing dialogue and partnership with formal education representatives from the provincial, national and international education community including but not limited to school boards, superintendents, teachers, school business officials and parent councils;
- establish regular and frequent mechanisms for formal liaison with federal, provincial and municipal governing authorities, and administrative entities related to such authorities, in order to identify opportunities for cooperation, interface on educational issues, advance the cause, and represent the views of its members on matters of mutual interest and concern;
- fulfill the association's legal mandate to raise awareness and interest of educational issues while generally promoting the cause of public education.

### ***Educational Partners***

The Manitoba School Boards Association supports school-level advisory committees or parent councils, and encourages their greater participation and collaboration in educational issues.

## **Part 3: Requests for Action**

### **School Boards and Trustees**

#### **Funding and Financial Matters**

EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the provincial government should provide clarity on the new funding model for education. (FFM-01-23)

SPECIAL LEVY RESTRICTIONS: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the provincial government should remove the restrictions on the use of the education special levy to enable school divisions to respond to local needs and unexpected expenses. (FFM-02-23)

#### **Education Programming**

MANITOBA REMOTE LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning should continue the operation of the Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre (MRLSC) to support students, families and local school divisions in providing a remote learning option for students in Grades K-8. (EP-02-23)

### **Students**

#### **Human Resources**

#### **Transportation**

BUS DRIVER TRAINING CENTRES: The Manitoba School Board Association believes that Manitoba Public Insurance should increase the availability of rural and urban testing sites to support bus driver training. (T-01-23)

#### **Facilities and Materials**

BROADBAND AND CELLULAR CONNECTIVITY: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the Provincial and Federal Governments should increase accessibility, quality and connectivity of broadband internet and cellular services while reducing costs of internet access for students, staff and families. (FM-01-23)

#### **External Organizations**

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the provincial government should add additional seats in post-secondary education programs and minimize administrative barriers for professionals from outside of Manitoba to access their training and certification. (EO-01-23)

## **External Organizations con't...**

CHILD NUTRITION COUNCIL OF MANTIOBA FUNDING: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the Province of Manitoba should provide the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba with sufficient and sustained funding to support meal and snack programs in all Manitoba schools. (EO-02-23)

COMMUNITY LIVING ASSOCIATIONS FUNDING SUPPORT: The Manitoba School Boards Association believes that the Government of Manitoba, Departments of Families should enhance funding support for Community Living Associations that serve critical needs across our province. (EO-04-23)

## **Miscellaneous**