



# Brighter Future Education Survey

## — Results and Highlights —

Saskatchewan NDP Caucus  
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## There is a crisis in our classrooms.

Over the past four months, more than 1,400 people across Saskatchewan have filled out our Brighter Future survey. 39% of those were teachers, 21% of them parents, 28% of them members of the public. (The remaining 12% consisted of students, staff and administrators.)

Learning conditions have worsened.

84% of teachers, 77% of EAs, and 55% of parents said learning conditions at their school have worsened over the last three years. Only 3%, 0% and 12% respectively said they've gotten better.

Staff morale is suffering.

78% of teachers and 65% of Educational Assistants said staff morale has worsened over the last three years. Only 3% and 2% respectively said it has improved.

Kids are facing more complex classrooms with fewer supports.

83% of teachers and 86% of Educational Assistants said they have more students with additional needs in their classrooms than three years ago.

The statistics bear this out. According to the Ministry, the number of kids requiring intensive supports in our schools has grown by 11% in the 6 years between 2012-13 and 2018-19, while the increase in kids requiring "frequent" intensive supports has grown by 17%. Meanwhile, since 2014-15, there are 10,456 more kids in our schools, but there are:

- 5% fewer counselling positions
- 9% fewer psychologists
- 8% fewer speech language pathologists
- 18% fewer occupational therapists
- only 46 more Educational Assistants across the province (growth of 1.3%) when Scott Moe promised 400
- 8% fewer English as an Additional Language teachers, despite 10% more EAL students across K-12 system

Teachers and Educational Assistants are burning out.

74% of Educational Assistants, and 42% of teachers, report experiencing or witnessing violent incidents once a week or more. 38% of EAs said they experience or witness violence every day.

41% of teachers said that they "rarely" (36%) or "never" (5%) have enough support to meet the needs of their students, while 39% of parents said their kids "rarely" (25%) or "never" (14%) get the support they require.

Forty-one% of teachers said they have seriously considered leaving the profession.

Classrooms are too crowded.

82% of all respondents support a cap on class sizes.

## Your words.

Respondents were asked what single message or experience they would want to share about the education system. Here are some of the responses:

### **Teachers:**

“With so many cuts, it becomes harder and harder to do the job. This leads to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and feeling inadequate as a teacher. You put your heart into a job and can’t help students the way you’d like to.”

“We, the teachers, are exhausted. We are working very hard and will continue to put our hearts and souls into our vocation of teaching. But please, do not increase our grade 1 classes to 30 students and pressure us to get the same results as in a class of 22.”

“We are failing the students in our province and as a teacher I am worried about the future of Saskatchewan.”

“The loss of our trained professional librarians was a blow to our students and staff who relied on her to ensure our library was stocked with good quality books, age appropriate and relevant to our curriculum.”

“Everyone is doing more and more and more, and we are burning out. I teach in a rural school. Because our hats are many and the workload intense, we are losing new teachers to the city where they are getting an hour of prep time daily as opposed to our hour once a week. There is no downtime during the day to speak of, and the memes about teachers not being able to use the washroom are often sadly true.”

“Next year, I’m projected to have 28 students, no EA, 2-3 undiagnosed students with autism, ADHD, possible learning disability. I teach grade 1. That is too large of a class with no support even if there were no special needs. How is it okay for one person to be in charge of 28 (or more) students on their own when they are so diverse?”

“I personally have been spit on, bit, pushed over, swung at, and hit in the face. I’ve had students yell and swear at me, and when they do these things to one another, I’m the one who has to step between and try to calm everyone down.”

### **EAs:**

“I am afraid of what the education system is becoming. Higher numbers of aggressive students, lower staff ratios, overstretched frontline workers, and cut health benefits shows a complete lack of respect for the education system.”

“We are all overworked and frustrated beyond our limits. I have seen teachers cry in the staffroom this year because they have students nowhere near grade level but can’t get Educational Support

because there are not enough of us in the school. Sick days were at an all-time high this year because of stress.”

“The needs are higher, and we are run ragged. I go home every day knowing I haven’t met the needs of my children and haven’t help them reach their full potential.”

“Support staff are overworked, the level of violence towards them is at an all-time high.”

“We see multiple students fall through the cracks at any given time and feel helpless as we are always having budgets slashed.”

“I have had scissors thrown at my face by a child. I have been hit, punched, slapped, kicked, bit, spit on, called names, spent three hours or more trying to calm a tantrum. And if you’re only willing to pay max \$15 an hour for that on top of schooling then you are going to have way too many people in child care who don’t belong there.”

### **Administrators:**

“I love my job and I love my students and I feel blessed that I get to feel passion for what I do, but that passion fizzles out a little every time I have to look a student in the eye knowing I don’t have the resources to give them all they need.”

“There are far greater pressures on teachers and far fewer resources. I worked at a highly vulnerable school that had a fantastic year 3 years ago and made huge progress in all ways. The next fall we were cut 2.7 FTE teachers. The difference was dramatic and sad.”

### **Parents**

“As a parent of children who have gone through the education system, I know the value of smaller classes and caring teachers. I would ask this government to stop failing the future of this province.”

### **School staff**

“Teachers are burning out like never before. All school staff, from teachers, support staff like myself, EAs, etc. are starting to look for alternative careers or leave the province altogether.”

### **Members of the public**

“I take my granddaughter to school every day and participate as a volunteer. The teacher is carrying a heavy load with so many students. They require more attention in the early stages.”

“I’m married to a teacher. The toll taken on him mentally and physically because of the lack of support is alarming.”

Some responses have been edited for brevity and to protect anonymity.

# What Saskatchewan people are asking for.

When asked the single most important thing the Saskatchewan government could do to improve the education system, people responded as follows under a few key themes:

## 1. **Ensure adequate funding:**

- Increase funding to hire professionals: EAs, EAL teachers, speech language pathologists, psychologists, counsellors, occupational therapists, full-time library technicians, Social workers, Indigenous knowledge keepers
- More support for vulnerable students, more support in the classroom regardless of designation
- Funding for more programs including fine arts
- Increasing support for rural schools
- Funding that reflects the growth in urban population and special needs of students
- Provide resources for teachers to meet outcomes and indicators
- Develop subsidies for all the extra supplies teachers bring to school
- Increase funding to First Nations schools to make up the difference between federal funding

## 2. **Address readiness to learn:**

- Provide funding for universal school-based lunch programs
- Need to screen students with complex needs early on
- Students with severe delays need to see either a speech therapist or an occupational therapist or a child psychologist early
- Focus on the development of foundational skills

## 3. **Enhance the curriculum:**

- Include social sciences, sciences, artistry, phys ed, the trades and business education at basic levels, followed by the choice to specialize in student favoured subjects
- Change curriculum to reflect today and tomorrow's reality: life skills, writing, critical thinking
- Include mental health education: suicide prevention, mental health awareness, autism, ADHD and other conditions and where to get help for issues
- Mandatory curriculum in mindfulness, body autonomy, and sex education in all public schools K-12
- Focus more on providing kids opportunities for learning through teamwork, experimentation, self-directed learning and exploration
- Include knowledge on Indigenous cultures, languages and treaty rights

## 4. **Improve programs, teaching approach, and assessments:**

- More focus on STEM
- Provide education in a way that respects the diversity amongst us and the importance of promoting interconnectedness

- Allow a greater variety of options for gifted children so that they can maximize their academic gifts
- Implement early screening for dyslexia
- More individualized attention
- Strengthen supports for the formative years of education.
- Bring back the 'Community Schools' philosophy, for it is crucial that the neighbourhood schools support families.

**5. Address class composition and class size:**

- Properly support inclusion
- Cap class sizes, especially in primary and junior grades
- Consider the students in a classroom in terms of their needs as well as their numbers when staffing. If a classroom has six students with extreme needs, that classroom should not be filled to highest capacity.
- Do not count non-teaching staff in class size formulas.

**6. Expanding the education system's mandate:**

- Fully fund health care for children through schools from the health ministry budget
- Develop a mental health strategy and poverty reduction strategy
- Collaborate with the Ministries of Justice, Social Services and Health, as all parties benefit if a young child stays in school and receives a good education
- Establish a comprehensive, system-wide anti-bullying strategy

**7. Value the teaching profession:**

- Give the reins of education to educators
- Provide regulated and consistent prep time
- Increase professional development opportunities
- More respectful bargaining approach
- Give teachers permanent positions sooner (based on merit, not who you know) so that good staff do not leave due to job insecurity
- Fair compensation for performance and extra-curricular

**8. Update the Education Act:**

- Need to include a harassment protocol to protect teachers against violent behaviours
- Create professional bargaining strategies with the idea that this will directly affect students