



# Regina Catholic Schools

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE REGINA ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 81

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## Catholic Education Addressing Common Perceptions with Realities

Perception: Eliminating Catholic schools in Saskatchewan and moving to one publicly funded system would be easy to achieve.

Reality: The logistics behind such a move would be highly disruptive. For over 100 years, Catholic education has been an important part of the Saskatchewan landscape. It is guaranteed in our constitution. Ending programs that deliver desired results would create havoc, and uproot families depending on educational stability. Additionally, the cost to students in schools during a transition time would be unpredictable and potentially very high, not just in the sense of dollars, but also in social capital.

Perception: One public school system would be more cost effective for Saskatchewan.

Reality: While there may be some minimal initial savings, it would take years for savings to be realized, and those savings would come with a human cost. At best, there could be savings in Trustee and Director compensation, and an elimination of a handful of very specific roles in Catholic Divisions, such as Catholic Connections Consultants or Catholic Education Coordinators. There may also be some savings found eventually in bussing, though this is one area where RCSD is a recognized provincial leader in efficiencies, and is leading the way. There are also large costs involved in prematurely ending bussing contracts. Roughly the same number of teachers, school based administrators, counsellors, and superintendents would still be needed to continue to educate all students in the province. The human cost of emotional and social disruption in many lives (students as well as their families, plus staff), and the financial cost of providing appropriate responses to anyone who may lose a job would be unacceptable. While it's easy to say that one system might mean one set of bills, it's unlikely the overall savings would be significant. The potential costs of the damage done to the common good of all to achieve those minimal savings is an unjust action that we cannot tolerate (parents altering jobs to accommodate different schooling circumstances, severance and/or unemployment for those who would lose positions in an amalgamation, and the loss of a system that delivers positive results for students and the community).

The two largest Catholic divisions in the province, RCSD and Greater Saskatoon, have traditionally been the lowest funded of all divisions, and both consistently do more with less based on dollars allocated by the government and achieve significantly better results than the provincial average according to Ministry of Education statistics. Cost effectiveness in education in Saskatchewan is not well served by suppressing such a system.

Perception: I pay my property taxes, and send them to the Catholic school, so I should be able to choose where my kids go to school. Why are you kicking my child out of your school?

Reality: The last thing we want is for anyone to feel "kicked out." The portion of property taxes intended for education will, as of January 2018, go directly into the provincial government general revenue fund, and the government will then spend the money the way it chooses based on its budgeting formulas for the schools. The recent Theodore decision (which is being

appealed by the SCSBA and the provincial government) says the provincial government will no longer be allowed to pay for a non-Catholic student to attend a Catholic school. The government doesn't like this either, and plans to use the notwithstanding clause to give time for the appeal process to play out and for further discernment before any significant changes are made.

Perception: Why aren't we provincially funding other faith-based schools?

Reality: We are. The funding models vary, but for all schools established and taken into existing school divisions as associate schools, provincial grants are provided at 80% of the amount given for students in Catholic and public schools. Some examples of associate schools are Mother Theresa Middle School, Regina Huda School, Regina Christian School, and Harvest City Christian Academy.

Perception: Catholic schools aren't Catholic anymore if they don't ask for a baptismal certificate.

Reality: The difficulty here is in determining who is Catholic. When a parent arrives at an elementary school to register their child, they are asked to bring the child's health card, birth certificate, and baptismal certificate. Those who do not have a baptismal certificate from a Catholic church are asked to meet with a principal or vice-principal to discuss their desire for a Christ-centred Catholic education for their non-Catholic child. There are even times when those parents meet with the local parish priest to discuss what this type of education will mean for their family. At the high school level, prior to June 1, legislation says we cannot ask for a baptismal certificate to enroll a student. Following June 1st, we are legally permitted to ask about the faith of students applying. At that point, the procedure for non-Catholics is similar to what happens at an elementary school.

Perception: Catholic schools just exist to "brainwash" kids into going to church.

Reality: We appreciate evangelization, but the goal in school isn't to convince the Lutheran, Anglican or non-Catholic student that they ought to convert to Catholicism and bring their family with them. We respect and love our Christian brothers and sisters. The education we offer is openly rooted in the Catholic experience, and as we teach, we expect the non-Catholic student to actively participate in all aspects of their Catholic education. We welcome those who freely choose Catholic schools to learn with us and walk with Christ so that together we can better understand one another and celebrate our diversity as well as our common faith foundations. To varying degrees, other Christian churches hold elements of faith in common with the Catholic Church. Much of the Christian faith being taught in our schools is completely compatible with the faith of our non-Catholic students. It is not our goal to minimize or exaggerate similarities or differences. Most of the differences which keep Christian churches apart do not touch on the daily way that we seek to follow Jesus, loving and serving our neighbours and our community. In turn, we love and respect our fellow human beings of other world religions, and are grateful when we can work together to build a fruitful and compassionate society.

Perception: Parents should just take their kids to church on Sundays if they want them to learn about religion.

Reality: Yes, and many do. These parents have a deep desire to have that faith enhanced in our schools, which is why we work closely with our local parishes. This is part of the holistic ideal of educating the mind, body and spirit. We emphasize the formation and care of the whole person. The intimate partnership of family, parish and school is crucial to that formation.

Perception: Catholic schools are just public schools with a cross on the wall and religion class.  
Reality: Nothing could be farther from the truth! Catholic Education is much more than praying the 'Our Father' in classrooms, and pausing literacy and numeracy to read scripture or attend a liturgy. A worldview, any worldview, informs all of life. Catholic Education is about living the faith in our classrooms, hallways, schools, gymnasiums, libraries, playgrounds, and even on school buses. It is faith permeation in all we do. It is an enhanced, Christ-centred education, focused on the dignity of the human person and the mission of Christ to love and serve the world. We deliver the same academic Ministry of Education approved curriculum that public schools provide, but from the Catholic perspective, which adds a unique educational richness and diversity for anyone choosing to live as a disciple of Christ. Catholic education is for forming the whole person, body, mind and spirit, to enable them to be solid citizens and leaders in our community, our province, and our country.

Perception: Catholic schools do not teach about sexuality and wellness.  
Reality: Catholic Schools teach comprehensive provincially mandated Health and Wellness Programs which are age appropriate. Our Family Life and Catholic Studies programming on sexuality includes exploring abstinence, inclusivity, and a transcendent view of the person, taught from a Catholic worldview. The goal is to provide students with the information to make good and responsible choices rooted in faith and justice, dignity and accountability, and respect for all people as children of God.

Perception: Religion in the world today is irrelevant, so we don't need separate schools.  
Reality: Faith communities have much to contribute to a society that fosters a healthy sense of diversity, including in the field of education. Taking away faith-based educational options for those who desire them would be damaging, both to individuals and families who seek an education grounded in values arising from faith convictions, and to the common good. Religions have often enriched the societies in which they are found. A secular society which hopes to foster diversity cannot do that without creating a space for religious traditions to bring forth or teach values, and a primary place where that happens is in faith-based schools.

Perception: There is no value to faith-based schooling in today's society.  
Reality: Catholic schools are welcoming places where dialogue with others is encouraged, particularly those of diverse cultural and religious traditions - places where people can dialogue on a variety of levels, including faith and spirituality. In Catholic schools we label who we are. We name our identity and convictions honestly, and we invite non-Catholics who choose to join us to do the same, thus creating a space for real and honest dialogue. The importance of such dialogue in today's world is undeniable as forces threaten to entrench religious, cultural and ethnic divisions. Such dialogue is not only desirable, it is essential.