

Elementary School in Saskatchewan

Information for Parents



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Elementary School in Saskatchewan

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In some schools in Saskatchewan, there are people called Settlement Workers In Schools (SWIS) who help newcomer students and their families settle into school and their new lives. SWIS is a program sponsored jointly by local school divisions, service provider organizations and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

We hope that the SWIS workers' support, combined with the information in this guide, will help make school a positive experience for your child and your family. During your first few months in Saskatchewan, SWIS workers will help connect you to schools, services, and activities such as sports and music, both in the schools and in the community. These workers can also refer you and your family to employment services, English classes and other ways to learn about life in Canada. They have the knowledge and experience to help you, so please share your questions and concerns with them



School Divisions and School Boards

In Saskatchewan, children who have reached seven years of age must attend school until they reach the age of 16. Most children start school the year they turn five years old. Youth usually finish high school at age 17 or 18, but may continue to attend school up to the age of 22.

The province of Saskatchewan is divided into geographical areas called school divisions. Larger cities have their own school divisions. In rural areas, school divisions can cover a large area and include many small towns. The major school divisions in Saskatchewan are either Public (secular) or Roman Catholic; public and Catholic school divisions may overlap in area. School divisions are funded by the government.

School divisions are run by school boards. A school board is a group of elected officials, called Trustees, who make important decisions within the school division.

School Staff

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for planning and teaching lessons; supporting and evaluating student learning; monitoring and guiding and student behavior, and disciplining students when necessary; and communicating with families. Some teachers specialize in certain subject areas, while others teach all subject areas.





Principals and Vice-Principals

Principals are responsible for the management of the school, staff and students. They act as leaders and supervisors for the staff; they also deal with student discipline. Some schools have a vice-principal, who assists the principal with these responsibilities.

Other Staff

Schools have many other staff members as well. Administrative assistants (secretaries), educational assistants, and custodians are also essential to school functioning. Other staff members may work at more than one school. These staff members include speech and language pathologists, counsellors, occupational therapists, psychologists, etc.

Language Choices

Canada has two official languages: English and French. School programming is offered in both languages. In most schools in Saskatchewan, instruction is primarily in English. Children will receive a limited amount of French language instruction, learning some basic words and phrases.

Some schools within each school division offer French Immersion. French Immersion classes, instruction is primarily in French. Most students who enter French Immersion programs do not speak French at home.



Curriculum Areas

Teachers follow provincial guidelines, called curriculum, to make sure that learning is consistent across the province. The curriculum is divided into subject areas. The subject areas that are taught in elementary schools in Saskatchewan include:

- English and French
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Health
- Physical Education
- Arts
- First Nations/Aboriginal Studies

The curriculum provides learning objectives for each grade level in each subject area.

Fees and Learning Materials

Students do not have to pay fees or tuition to attend elementary school, except in the case of certain private schools. Many learning materials are provided at school for student use at no cost, including library books, text books, access to computers and other technology. Most schools provide a list of school supplies that children are expected to bring to school, such as pencils, notebooks, glue, and crayons. These supply lists vary by school, grade level, and teacher, so be sure to ask your child's teacher for a list.

Fees may be charged for some optional programming. For example, the teacher may plan a "field trip" to a museum, park or some other site away from the school, and a fee may be required for programming and transportation.





Classrooms and Grade Levels

Children in elementary school are assigned to a specific classroom with other students in the same grade. In some cases, students may be in a split grade classroom, which includes students in different grades. Grade level is typically determined by a child's age as of December 31 of that school year. Children are eligible for kindergarten the year they turn five, grade 1 the year they turn six, etc.

Elementary schools typically include programming for kindergarten through grade 8. In some areas, children will enter a new school, called middle school, when they begin grade 7. Some schools include prekindergarten programming for younger children.

School Year and Hours

A school year in Saskatchewan runs from the beginning of September to the end of June. There are short school holidays, or breaks, during the school year.

School hours vary somewhat by school division. Classes generally begin between 8:30 and 9:00 AM each day. Children are given a lunch break of about 45 minutes to an hour. Classes end between 3:30 and 4:00 PM. Children are typically given two 15-minute recess breaks per day. During this time, students will usually play outdoors, under the supervision of school staff.



How do I register my child at school?

To register a child for school, families need to find out which school attendance area their home is located in. This information may be found online or by contacting the school division office. Registration forms can usually be picked up at the school. Families will need to gather the required documents for registration, which may include a birth certificate, health card, and/or immigration documents. In some districts, families may be required to visit a newcomer welcome/settlement centre prior to school registration. Staff at these centres will make sure that all documents are in order and may help to fill out registration forms.

Transportation

School bus transportation may be available, depending on the distance between home and school. In some cases, transportation is provided due to special needs or other circumstances. Transportation policies differ between school divisions, so families should ask about transportation before registering. There is usually no charge for transportation if a child is eligible. Children who ride the school bus to and from school will need to be at their stop prior to their scheduled pick-up time.





Snacks & Lunch

Children may be required to bring a snack and/or lunch to school. In most schools, children will not be able to heat their lunch. Due to common and severe allergies, many schools do not allow nuts, peanuts or products containing nuts or peanuts. Families should ask their children's school about specific food policies. Aside from these guidelines, there are no rules about what children can bring for snacks or lunch. They may bring food that they are accustomed to eating at home. A healthy and nutritious lunch will provide a student with the energy needed to learn well at school. Foods and drinks that are high in added sugar (such as pop) are discouraged.

Dressing for School

Students in Saskatchewan schools do not wear uniforms to school. Most students wear casual, comfortable clothing. Schools have a dress code or policy that states what students may or may not wear to school. Students are usually required to keep a pair of clean gym shoes at school to wear indoors. It is important that children wear outdoor clothing that is appropriate for the weather as outdoor play is a part of daily school routines.

Recess

Most schools include two 15-minute recess breaks during the school day. Recess is a period of supervised outdoor play in the schoolyard. Supervision may also be available on school grounds for a period of time before school or during the lunch hour.



Field Trips

Teachers often supplement classroom learning by planning trips to community locations outside of the school. Families will be informed of these trips in advance and required to complete a permission form, which will need to be returned to school with the child. A fee may be charged for field trips. If a family is not able to afford the fee, they should speak to the teacher about this as early as possible. Teachers often ask for parent volunteers to assist with supervision on field trips. Parents who are interested in helping on a field trip should speak to the teacher in advance. Most field trips take place within school hours, with occasional exceptions.

Fundraising

Schools and Parent/Community Councils may organize fundraisers to raise money for projects that are not funded through school divisions. Donations and participation are voluntary. Families may choose to donate if they are able to and wish to.

Attendance & Absences

Children learn best when they attend school every day. Students should arrive on time each morning and should only miss school when absolutely necessary. Parents who pick up their young children when school is over should arrive on time as well.

If a child is ill, they should be kept home to avoid spreading germs to other children and staff. Children may also need to miss school occasionally for medical appointments. If your child will not be at school, it is important that you inform the school before the beginning of the school day. This often requires phoning the school, but parents may be able to email as well.





Progress Reports and Conferences

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How I can Communicate with the Teacher & Principal?

Parents are encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns with the teacher or principal at any point in the school year. Communication will be the most useful if it is positive and respectful. It may be more difficult to communicate if a parent is still learning English. Teachers and principals are sensitive to this and appreciate the effort parents make. It may be helpful to bring an adult friend or family member who is able to translate, to use technology to translate (such as Google Translate), or to arrange for an interpreter if possible.

Teachers and schools will often send home written notes. It is important that families read all communication that comes home with their child. Children often forget to give these notes to their parents, so it may be necessary to ask if they have any notes from school each day. Some schools also send information by email. Forms that need to be signed should be returned as soon as possible. If families have difficulty reading notes from school, a friend or family member may be able to help. Translation apps may be of use. Parents can also ask the teacher to explain anything that they do not understand.





Safety, Behavior, Discipline

Teachers and principals are responsible for the safety of all students at school. Any safety concerns should be brought to their attention as soon as possible.

Behavior that goes against school rules and policies will be dealt with by the teacher and/or principal. Discipline may include a verbal warning, written warning, removal of privileges (such as keeping the student indoors for recess), or suspension. Physical punishment is not used in schools. The level and method of discipline will depend on the actions of the student, their age, and their understanding of the consequences.

Schools in Saskatchewan should be welcoming and inclusive environments. All staff and students should be treated with respect regardless of their race, gender, religion, abilities, and sexual orientation. Bullying, harassment and violence are not acceptable under any circumstances. Parents who feel their child is being bullied or harassed should contact the teacher or principal to discuss their concerns.

Parents play an important role in dealing with their children's behavior. Teachers and principals may contact a parent if there are concerns about a child's behavior. Some behavior challenges can be attributed to a child's anxiety about starting at a new school. Parents can help by listening to their child's concerns, talking to their child about their behavior, suggesting positive behaviors that their child may use, and acting as a role model by demonstrating positive behaviors themselves.

