

SCHOOL CLOSURES/GRADE RECONFIGURATIONS

The Board has a responsibility to provide school facilities throughout the District that will allow for program effectiveness for all students, health and safety of all occupants, and operational efficiency. At times, the Board may consider consolidation or permanent closure of schools.

Closing a school permanently means the closing, for a period exceeding twelve (12) months of a school building used for the purposes of providing an educational program to students. The Board may decide to permanently close a school, following a public input process, and must provide written notification to the Minister of Education.

The Board shall provide a public consultation process with respect to the permanent closure of a school prior to the Board making its final decision of the closure of that school. The public consultation process will be meaningful and must include a fair consideration of public input and adequate opportunity for the public to respond to the Board's proposal to close the school permanently. Meaningful consultation means there is an opportunity to hear and be heard about the reasons for and against closure of a particular school and a legitimate opportunity to attempt to influence the Board's decision. Fair consideration includes the concept that the Board's proposal to close a school could be changed or reversed.

Following the consultation process, the Board will decide on the possible closure of the school. Any school closure or grade reconfiguration would be effective June 30 of a particular year.

Specifically

1. The Superintendent may recommend to the Board at a meeting in October, consideration of schools for closure or grade reconfiguration.

The Superintendent, in making a recommendation for consideration for closure or grade reconfiguration will assess the following factors:

- 1.1 Breadth of program offerings and the educational experience of students.
- 1.2 Accommodation and suitability of program offerings available in nearby schools.
- 1.3 Distances between schools.
- 1.4 Traffic and travel patterns and safety of access for students being relocated.
- 1.5 Current and projected enrolment levels.
- 1.6 Class size.
- 1.7 Funding formula considerations.
- 1.8 Age of the building, physical plant maintenance and operating costs of the facility, including the need for seismic upgrades.
- 1.9 Potential re-uses of school facilities and sites.

Adopted: May 18, 2022

Reviewed:

Revised:

- 1.10 Parental and community support for the school.
- 1.11 Potential effects on local areas,
In making its decision, the Board must be cognizant of pecuniary interest and guard against any possible apprehension of bias during the process.
2. The Board will consider the information provided by the Superintendent and either:
 - 2.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 2.2 Forward the information to the Committee of the Whole for further study.
3. Any proposal to consider a school for closure at this stage shall be initiated through a Board motion at a public meeting of the Board.
4. The Committee of the Whole shall review the materials and provide its recommendations to the Board no later than the following February.
5. The Board will review the recommendations from the Committee of the Whole and either
 - 5.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 5.2 initiate discussion and consultation with parents, staff, and the community.
6. Any proposal to further consider a school for closure at this stage shall be initiated through a Board motion at a public meeting of the Board.
7. Discussion and consultation must be initiated by February 1 and concluded not later than April 1
8. The Superintendent will notify the principal(s), the Parent Advisory Council in writing that the school has been identified for possible closure/consolidation. All persons or groups in the community who could be affected by a school closure are to be made aware of the Board's proposal to close a school. The Board will endeavour to inform the public as thoroughly as possible. This will be done through parent newsletters and notices, meeting with employees, notice to rental groups, and information posted on the District website.
9. The Board shall allow a period of sixty (60) days for public consultation to take place between the time that a proposal to consider a school for closure is initiated through a Board resolution at a public Board meeting and when the final decision is made to close a school by the adoption of a School Closure Bylaw at a public Board meeting.
10. The Board shall take the following steps to ensure that public consultation will take place:
 - 10.1 Make available, in writing, the rationale for the proposed school closure considered by the Board, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information with respect to the following factors for any proposed school closure:

Adopted: May 18, 2022

Reviewed:

Revised:

- 10.1.1 The number of students who would be affected, at both the school to be closed and surrounding schools.
 - 10.1.2 Enrolment trends and utilization for the school and surrounding area.
 - 10.1.3 Availability of space at receiving schools.
 - 10.1.4 Proximity to possible receiving schools and the routes to schools.
 - 10.1.5 Community impact.
 - 10.1.6 Education program/course implications for the affected students.
 - 10.1.7 Financial considerations including anticipated cost savings.
 - 10.1.8 Facility age and condition.
 - 10.1.9 Potential for revenue generation through lease and/or sale of the school building and/or site.
 - 10.1.10 Impact on the Ministry of Education's five-year capital plan submitted by the Board.
11. Once a proposed closure has been initiated through a Board motion at a public Board meeting, at least one (1) community meeting will be held to discuss the proposed closure.
12. The time and location of the public meeting shall be widely advertised to notify affected persons or groups in the community. This will mean written notification to students currently attending and registered to attend the school, notices to neighbouring schools, Parent Advisory Councils, employee groups and information posted on the District website.
13. The Board shall present the following at the beginning of the public meeting:
- 13.1 Rationale for the proposed closure, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information related to the factors identified within the policy.
 - 13.2 The timing of the proposed closure and the implications for the placement of students.
 - 13.3 Possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.
14. Minutes will be kept of the public meeting to record concerns or options raised regarding the proposed closure. Following the public meeting, the Board will consider all input prior to making its final decision with respect to the school closure.
- 14.1 The Board shall provide an opportunity for affected persons to submit written responses to the Board regarding the proposed school closure. The Board will provide information and directions on how to submit the written responses. Written submissions will be summarized, and community concerns and proposed options will be acknowledged.
15. By April 30, the Board will consider the information received and decide if a facility is to be closed or reorganized on June 30 for the following September.

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16. The final decision on a school closure will be made through the first, second, and third and final reading of a School Closure Bylaw at a public Board meeting. Following a decision to close a school, the Board will provide, without delay, written notification to the Minister of Education of its decision containing the following information:
 - 16.1 The school's name.
 - 16.2 The school's facility number.
 - 16.3 The school's address.
 - 16.4 The date on which the school will permanently close.

17. The alternate use of a closed facility will be determined by the Board after receiving a recommendation from the Superintendent.

Legal Reference: Sections 22, 65, 73, 85, 96, 100 *School Act*
 Section 23 *Ombudsman Act*
 School Opening and Closure Order M320-02
 Disposal of Land or Improvement Order M233/07

Adopted: May 18, 2022
Reviewed:
Revised: