

SCHOOL CLOSURES

The Board affirms these basic principles for its overall planning process:

- The overall quality of the educational facilities and programs available to students will be maintained or improved.
- Students in secondary schools will have access to educationally adequate facilities for science, technology and career studies, as well as for fine arts.
- Student transportation distances will be reasonable, and bussing systems will not be disrupted by the proposed accommodation plan.
- Each community with an existing school will have a facility to accommodate its kindergarten and elementary students.
- The accommodation plan will significantly reduce the surplus operations capacity of schools.
- The student accommodation changes will not affect the student-teacher ratio in the jurisdiction.

The Board believes that, under specific conditions, it may be necessary to close a school or a portion of a school to ensure the responsible and efficient use of resources and school space.

1. The Board will make every effort to keep all schools open in the jurisdiction. However, the Board may consider closure of a school or a division within a school (i.e. primary, upper elementary, junior high, senior high) when any one or more of the following conditions exist:
 - a. student enrolments as of September 30th in the current school year, or projected school enrolments for the forthcoming school year, cause school budget allocations to be insufficient to maintain a quality educational environment for students.
 - b. the cost of keeping the school in operable condition or restoring it to operable condition is unreasonably high;
 - c. keeping the school open poses a threat to the health or welfare of students, staff, or the public.
2. A review of the possible closure of a school or division within a school may be initiated by either one of the following groups:
 - a. the Board, after recommendation by the Superintendent
 - b. the School Council, in consultation with the Principal and Superintendent.
3. In accordance with the *School Act - Closure of Schools Regulation*, the Superintendent shall review and prepare a report including the following items:
 - a. how the closure would affect the attendance area defined for that school;

- b. how the closure would affect the attendance at other schools and information on the Board's long-range capital plan;
 - c. the number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure;
 - d. the need for, and extent of, bussing;
 - e. program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools;
 - f. the educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;
 - g. the educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open;
 - h. the capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure;
 - i. if the entire school is to be closed, the proposed use of the school building;
 - j. the time and location of a public meeting called for the purpose of discussing the proposed closure.
4. A public meeting will be called to discuss the report with the residents of the school community.
 5. After careful consideration of alternative programs, the possibility of local supplementary funding, and any other important considerations, the School Council may recommend to the Board the action they feel should be taken for the coming year.
 6. The Board may at any time determine not to proceed with school closure. However, following the review of the above information, if the decision of the Board is to proceed with the closure, the following procedures shall be followed:
 - a. A notice of motion shall be made at a regular meeting of the Board indicating the school or school program which is being considered for closure.
 - b. The Board shall notify the parents or guardians of each child affected by the closure, as well as all staff members, that the Board is considering the closure of the school or school program, and outline all the considerations in guideline #3.
 - c. The Board shall organize and convene a public meeting for the purpose of discussing the possible closure, its implications for the students and for the school division, possible implementation plans and possible alternatives. If required, further meetings may be held.
 - d. The date and place of the meeting shall be:
 - i. posted in five or more conspicuous places in the area(s) of the school(s) affected by the closure for a period of at least two weeks prior to the date of the public meeting.
 - ii. published in a newspaper circulating within the area(s) of the school(s) affected by the closure once a week for at least two weeks prior to the date of the public meeting.
 - e. A quorum of the Board shall be in attendance at this meeting.

- f. The Board shall provide an opportunity for the council of the municipality in which the school is located, to provide a statement to the Board about the impact the closure may have on the community.
- g. After the public meeting, concerned electors shall be allowed 21 days to present responses in writing to the notice of motion, indicating preferred alternatives. Such responses shall be presented to the Superintendent and the party or parties may then elect to present their own responses verbally at the next Board meeting or to have the Superintendent present the written responses.
- h. After accepting all responses and having carefully followed the procedures outlined above, the Board may then debate and vote on the motion.
- i. If the vote is in the affirmative, the Board shall forthwith notify the Minister of Education, in writing, of the decision.

Legal Reference:

Section 58, School Act

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