
Policy 14

SCHOOL CLOSURE

At times, the Board may consider the permanent closure of a school.

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

The Board shall provide a public engagement process with respect to the permanent closure of a school prior to the Board making its final decision with respect to the closure of that school.

Following the public engagement process, the Board will make a decision on the possible closure of the school.

Specifically

1. The Superintendent or designate may recommend to the Board at a public meeting consideration of schools for closure. Any such recommendation will also be communicated to the affected school communities.

The Superintendent or designate, in making a recommendation for consideration for closure may assess factors such as (some of which may not be applicable to a specific closure consideration):

- a) Program offerings;
 - b) Space available in nearby schools;
 - c) Distances between schools
 - d) Traffic and travel patterns and safety of access for students being relocated;
 - e) Current and projected enrolment levels;
 - f) Class size;
 - g) Funding formula considerations;
 - h) Age of the building, physical plant maintenance and operating costs of the facility, including the need for seismic upgrades;
 - i) Potential re-uses of school facilities and sites including any written requests from the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (“Conseil”) to the Board, Superintendent or Secretary Treasurer regarding the Conseil’s interest in the facilities or sites;
 - j) Other factors that may be applicable in the circumstances.
2. The Board will consider the information provided by the Superintendent or designate and either:
 - 2.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 2.2 Refer the matter to the Facilities Planning Committee for review and recommendations.
 3. The Facilities Planning Committee shall review the materials and provide its recommendations to the Board.

4. Upon receipt of the Facilities Planning Committee’s recommendations, the Board will either:
 - 4.1 Conclude that no further action is required, or
 - 4.2 Initiate a public engagement process by passing a motion at a public meeting of the Board.
5. The Superintendent or designate will:
 - (a) notify the Principal and the Parent Advisory Council in writing that the school has been identified for possible closure;
 - (b) notify the school community and the public about the school closure public engagement process through various means including parent newsletters and information posted on the District website.
 - 5.1 Notification shall occur in the following sequence:
 - 5.1.1 Initial written notification shall be provided to families of the affected school(s), including the school identified for potential closure and any schools that may receive students;
 - 5.1.2 Within a reasonable period thereafter, the Superintendent or designate shall provide District-wide notification to all families;
 - 5.1.3 All communications shall include clear information about the engagement process, timelines, and opportunities for engagement, including access to submission mechanisms described in Section 6.
6. The Board shall allow a period of at least sixty (60) days for the public engagement process to take place.
 - 6.1 At the commencement of the public engagement process, the Superintendent or designate shall establish and publish a mechanism to collect written submissions from the public.
 - 6.2 The District-wide notification as described in Section 5(b) shall be deemed to mark the commencement of the sixty (60) day public engagement period.
7. The Board shall take the following steps to ensure that public engagement will take place:
 - 7.1 Make available, in writing, the rationale for the proposed school closure considered by the Board, including, but not limited to information with respect to the following factors:
 - 7.1.1 The number of students who would be affected, at both the school to be closed and surrounding schools;
 - 7.1.2 Enrolment trends and utilization for the school and surrounding area;
 - 7.1.3 Availability of space at receiving schools;
 - 7.1.4 Proximity to possible receiving schools and the routes to schools;
 - 7.1.5 Financial considerations including anticipated cost savings;
 - 7.1.6 Facility age and condition;
 - 7.1.7 District Choice and Inclusive Education programs offered at the school;
 - 7.1.8 Impacts on surrounding schools;
 - 7.1.9 Impacts on community users operating in the school to be closed; and
 - 7.1.10 Consideration of any feedback from inherent rights holders; and,

7.1.11 Consideration of any written requests from the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (“Conseil”) to the Board, Superintendent or Secretary Treasurer regarding the Conseil’s interest in the facilities or sites.

8. Once a school closure public engagement process has been initiated, at least one (1) public engagement meeting will be held to discuss the proposed closure.

Public engagement meetings shall be conducted in a forum at which the Board is present and able to hear directly from members of the public.

9. The time and location of the school closure public engagement meeting(s) shall be advertised to notify the community at least fourteen (14) days in advance of any public engagement meeting(s). This may include signage at the school considered for closure, written notification to parents/guardians of students currently attending and registered to attend the school considered for closure, notices to Parent Advisory Councils, employee groups, district wide notification to all families and notice posted on the District website and social media channels.

10. The Superintendent or designate shall present the following at the beginning of the public meeting:

10.1 Rationale for the proposed closure, including, but not limited to the pertinent facts and information related to the factors identified within the policy;

10.2 The timing of the proposed closure and the implications for the placement of students;

10.3 Possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.

10.4 The presentation of the Superintendent or designate should be concise and generally not exceed twenty (20) minutes in length.

11. A designated staff member shall record the proceedings of public engagement meetings, including concerns or options raised regarding the proposed closure.

12. The Board shall provide an opportunity for written submissions to the Board regarding the proposed school closure.

12.1 At the beginning of the public engagement process the Board will provide information and directions on how to provide the written submissions.

12.2 Written submissions shall be acknowledged as received, compiled and summarized; and made publicly available and provided to the Board no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the final decision on school closure.

12.3 Following the public engagement process, the Board will give consideration to all input received prior to making its final decision with respect to the school closure.

13. The final decision on a school closure will be made through the consideration 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 and Child Care and the Minister of Infrastructure of its decision containing the following information:

13.1 The school’s name,

13.2 The school’s facility number,

13.3 The school’s address, and

13.4 The date on which the school will permanently close.

14. Alternate use of a closed facility will be determined by the Board after receiving a recommendation from the Superintendent or designate.

Legal Reference: Sections 73, 85, School Act
 School Opening and Closure Order M194/08
 Disposal of Land or Improvement Order M 193/08

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