

Board Operation 3 – 2 R1

Permanent School Closure

A school may be identified for potential closure when an analysis indicates that the closure is worth considering from a demographic, fiscal, or educational perspective. When a school will potentially be closed, the Board of Education will provide a minimum of 60-days for the consultation process relating to the specific schools proposed for closure.

Public Board Meeting

Any proposed closure of a school will first be raised at a regular open meeting of the board. If a school is identified for closure, the closure process shall be guided by a Consolidation Working Committee which shall be formed at least 60-days prior to a final decision on school closure. The superintendent of schools will form a committee that will develop timelines for consultation.

The superintendent will invite participation from:

- the secretary-treasurer (or designate);
- trustees;
- the principal of the school being considered for closure;
- another school principal;
- district staff members as appropriate;
- two (2) representatives from the school staff;
- three (3) members of the school PAC;
- one (1) representative from each of the CDTA, CUPE, and DPAC;
- one (1) representative from the Aboriginal Educational Council;
- one (1) representative from each affected municipality; and
- others as appropriate.

The committee's terms of reference shall include:

- An analysis of demographic trends, facility status, and other relevant data related to the school being considered for closure;
- Analysis of information presented at public meetings and a summary of information gathered and presented through community and municipal input;
- Analysis of educational and fiscal implications of the proposed closure/consolidation; and

- The preparation of a final report to the superintendent that includes recommendations. The recommendations should include items for the superintendent to consider if the closure proceeds as considered.

Public Consultation

Public consultation will be undertaken by the board prior to making a final decision on any proposed closure of a school. The board will take the following steps to ensure that an open and meaningful public consultation has taken place:

- a) Make available, in writing, a full disclosure of all facts and information considered by the Board with respect to any proposed school closure, including but not limited to:
 - detailed reasons for the proposed school closure;
 - which specific school(s) are being considered for closure;
 - the proposed new catchment areas for all schools proposed to be affected;
 - the number of students who would be affected, at the school(s) being considered for closure as well as surrounding school(s);
 - the effect of proposed closures on board-provided student transportation;
 - educational program/course implications for the affected students;
 - the proposed effective date of the closure(s);
 - financial considerations, and
 - impact on the Board's five year capital plan.
- b) Provide an adequate opportunity for affected persons to submit a written response to any proposed school closure as well as providing information and directions on how to submit a written response to the board. The information and directions should advise potential correspondents that their written response may be referred to at subsequent public forums respecting the closure, unless the correspondent specifically states in their written response that the correspondent wishes his or her name and address to remain confidential.
- c) Hold at least one (1) public meeting to discuss the proposed closure, summarize written submissions, and provide a process for the community to outline their concerns and proposed options.

The public consultation process must include:

- A fair consideration of the community's input and adequate opportunity for the community to respond to a board's proposal to close the school permanently;
- Consideration of future enrolment growth in the district of persons of school age, persons of less than school age and adults; and
- Consideration of possible alternative community use for all or part of the school.

Public Meeting

The time and place of the public meeting should be appropriately advertised to ensure adequate advance notification to affected persons in the community. Generally, this will mean a letter to students and parents of students currently attending the school, and a clearly visible notice in a local newspaper and notification on the district and school web page.

The board should also specifically notify, in writing, any potentially affected local governments and First Nations of the time and place of the public meeting.

Meeting Format

The meeting will be organized to have attendees seated at tables of 10-12 participants. Each table will have a facilitator to discuss and overview the following:

- a) implications of the closure
- b) implementation plans, including timing of the closure
- c) options that the board considered as alternatives to closure;
- d) possible future community growth in the area of the school; and
- e) contents of written submissions presented to the board by members of the community.

At the conclusion of the group discussions facilitators will report back the information collected from the discussion group to all those in attendance. Information collected from the group discussions will form part of the meeting minutes.

The board should keep minutes of the public meeting that include a record of options suggested or concerns expressed about the proposal.

Following the public meeting, the board should give fair consideration to all public input prior to making its final decision with respect to any proposed school closures.

Final Decision

At the conclusion of the consultation process and after receiving the reports from each of the working committees of the schools considered for closure, the superintendent will provide a report to the board on the consultation process and the schools considered for closure.

The report to the board will identify the issues to be considered and will include recommendation(s) on whether or not to proceed with the closures as proposed. The report shall also include items for the board to consider regardless of the final decision on closures.

The board will make its final decision regarding the proposed school closure at an advertised public board meeting following the consultation process and receipt of the superintendent's report.