School Closures Policy

3510 | School Closures Policy

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POLICY

The Board of Education is responsible under the School Act for the management of the schools in its school district and for the custody, maintenance and safekeeping of all property owned or leased by the board, as well as for the effective and efficient use and operation of school buildings and associated grounds.

From time to time the Board may consider the possible closure of a school or schools in the District as authorized by the *School Act*. This policy sets out the processes that will be followed by the Board in the event it is to consider such a possibility. The Board may close schools for reasons including but not limited to:

- Declining enrollment resulting in a school no longer being educationally, operationally, or economically viable;
- Restructuring of educational programs, consolidation of operations, relocation of students to other schools, or similar, such that the school is deemed surplus to the District's educational needs; and
- Replacement of a school with a newly constructed school.

Permanent closure of a school is a significant event and therefore before a closure is effected, the Board will follow a process that provides for sufficient consultation with those who are or may be impacted by the possible closure.

The process for considering a school closure is as follows:

1. Initial Resolution
    1. If the possible closure of a school is to be considered, the Board must pass a resolution at a regular open meeting of the Board determining that it will consider the closure of a school or schools within the district.
    2. The Board must provide the public with no less than two weeks' notice that such a resolution will be considered at an upcoming open meeting.
2. If the Board passes such a resolution, the consultation process set out below must occur prior to any final decision regarding the closure or closures under consideration by the Board.
3. Consultation Process
    1. The community and any relevant constituencies (including but not limited to parents, students, First Nations, employee groups, community members and community organization(s) will be provided an opportunity to provide input, information and opinion(s) to the Board through the consultation process.
4. The Board will give fair consideration to public input before making any final decision with respect to school closure(s).
5. The consultation process will last at least sixty days measured from the date the Board passes a resolution providing for the consideration of a school closure or closures.
6. To support effective participation form the public in the consultation process, the Board will disclose

relevant facts and information that will or may be considered by the Board in respect of the school closure(s) being considered. Such disclosure may include:

1. The specific school(s) for which closure is being considered;
2. The reasons for the potential closure of the school(s);
3. The general effect of the potential closure(s) on surrounding schools;
4. The number of students potentially affected at both the closed school(s) and surrounding schools;
5. The effect of the potential closure(s) on student transportation;
6. Educational program implications for any affected students;
7. The proposed date of the closure(s);
8. Financial considerations;
9. Impact on the Board's capital plan;
10. Proposed use of the closed school(s); and
11. Any other relevant information which will be considered by the Board related to the possible closure.

7. At any time prior to the conclusion of the consultation process, members of the public may provide written submissions to the Board in respect of school closure(s) under consideration. Information and directions regarding the provision of such submissions to the Board will be provided to the public within twenty days of the Board passing a resolution or bylaw providing for the consideration of school closure(s). The information and directions will advise potential correspondents that their written response may be referred to and made public as part of the consultation process, unless the correspondent specifically states in the written response that the correspondent wishes their name and address to remain confidential.
8. The Board will hold a minimum of one public consultation meeting to hear opinion and submissions from the public regarding the school closure(s) under consideration. The Board may hold additional public consultation meetings as it deems necessary in order to meet its obligation to receive and consider public input.
9. The time and location of any public consultation meetings will be advertised to the public to ensure the community and relevant stakeholders are provided adequate advance notice of the meeting(s). Notice will include written notification to students and/or parents/guardians of students currently attending the school(s) considered for closure and public notice in local print or online newspapers and/or electronic postings on the Board's website. Specific notice will also be provided to affected or potentially affected First Nations.
10. At any public consultation meeting(s), the Board will welcome input on all matters relevant to the school closure(s), including the following:
    1. The implications or consequences of the potential school closure;
    2. implementation plans including the timing of the potential closure;
    3. options that the Board should consider as alternatives to the potential closure;
    4. the possibility of future enrolment growth in the area of the potential closure;
    5. possible future uses for the school building or property; and
    6. other relevant written submissions provided to the Board by members of the public.
11. Minutes will be kept of any public consultation meeting(s). The Board will also maintain the following consultation records: advertising and notice of meetings, meeting agendas and dates, working group and public community consultation meeting submissions, names of trustees/district staff who attended these meetings, a record of individuals attending public community consultation meetings, a record of questions asked and responses given, and any other related correspondence to and from the Board.
12. Decision of the Board

    1. The Board may vote to close the school, not to close the school, or make another decision, based on the results of the consultation process, which may include engaging in further consultation on options other than the school closure(s) under consideration.
13. A decision to close a school or schools must be effected by the Board through the passing of a bylaw.
14. Notification of the Minister
    1. If the Board decides to proceed with a school closure or closures pursuant to to section 72 of the *School Act*, the Board will, without delay, provide the Minister with written notification of the decision containing the following information:
        1. The school's name'
        2. The school's facility number,
        3. The school's address, and
        4. The date on which the school will close.
15. Opportunities for Students Displaced by a School Closure
    1. The Board will ensure that any students displaced by a school closure will have opportunities to receive an appropriate educational experience in another school in the district or otherwise.

REFERENCES

BC Ministry of Education School Act, Section 73
BC Ministry of Education School Opening and Closure Order, 194/08
BC Ministry of Education Policy, School Building Closure and Disposal

Related Policies and Procedures

3510-10 School Closure Regulation