

AP 521 – School Closures and/or Alternate School Use

Purpose

The Board of Education recognizes that changing demographics within the school district boundaries necessitates periodic review of each school's ability to meet the educational needs of students. The review may result in a school closure or the alternate use of a school building.

Where school closure or alternate use of schools is contemplated, the Board shall ensure that adequate advance notice and opportunity for community reaction are provided. (Reference: *Ministry Policy Circular 25 [85.11.25]*)

REGULATIONS

1. The Board shall allow a period of not less than 60 days for public consultation to take place between the time that a potential closure or alternate use of a school is announced and the final decision is made.
2. All persons or groups in the community who could be affected by a school closure should be made aware of the Board's proposal to close the school.
3. A public forum will be held to deal with the proposed school closure and shall form part of the public consultation process.
4. Consultation will be meaningful, and fair consideration will be given to all public input prior to the Board making a final decision. Fair consideration includes the concept that the Board's proposal to close a school could be changed by the public consultation process.
5. The closure of a school should not normally take place until the September following the final decision to give parents, students and school staff time to make alternative arrangements.
6. The final decision to permanently close a school or make alternate use of it will be made by bylaw.
7. Following a final decision to close a school, the Board will provide, without delay, written notification to the Ministry of Education of the decision and will include the following information:

- the name of the school
- the facility number of the school
- the complete address of the school
- the date the school will permanently close

Procedure

Decisions concerning the closure or alternate use of schools shall be based on the school's ability to offer a viable program without extraordinary staff or financial entitlements; the neighbourhood school concept*; other factors such as student safety, building modernization needs and future enrolment projections; and any other factors which may be relevant.

To accomplish this, the Board shall adhere to the following procedures:

1. The Superintendent shall, in the fall of each year, present for the Board's consideration, a four year enrolment projection for all schools. Implications for school closure, or alternate use of a school will be brought to the attention of the Board. A recommendation for school closure or alternate use of a school may be made to the Board at any time during the school year.

The proposal to close a school or make alternate use of it shall be raised, discussed and decided upon at a public meeting of the Board.

2. The Superintendent shall ensure a consultative process is established whereby parents, students, residents, community groups and employees are given the opportunity to voice opinions on the recommendation. Information regarding proposed school closure or alternate school use shall be communicated by written notice to all concerned individuals and groups. The Superintendent will establish a representative committee to review the matter and provide reactions to the recommendations.

The following steps shall be taken to ensure that an open, meaningful public consultation will take place over a period of at least 60 days prior to making a final decision on any proposed closure:

- Make available, in writing, pertinent facts and information considered by the Board with respect to school closure, including, but not limited to:
 - a) reasons for the proposed school closure;
 - b) the specific school that is considered for closure;
 - c) how the proposed closure would affect the catchment areas of affected schools;
 - d) the general effect on surrounding schools;
 - e) the number of students who would be affected, at both the closed

school and surrounding schools;

- f) the effect of the proposed closure on district-provided student transportation;
- g) educational program/course implications for the affected students;
- h) the proposed effective date of the closure;
- i) financial considerations; and
- j) impact on the Board’s capital plan, including possible alternate uses.

- Provide an adequate opportunity for affected persons to submit a written response to any proposed school closure and 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 a public forum respecting the closure, unless the correspondent specifically states in their written response that he/she wishes their name to remain confidential.
 - Hold at least one public forum to discuss the proposed school closure, summarize written submissions and listen to community concerns and proposed options.
 - The time and location of the public forum shall be appropriately advertised to ensure adequate advance notification to affected persons or groups in the community. This will necessarily mean written notification to students and parents of students currently attending the school, a clearly visible notice in the local newspapers and electronic posting on the district’s website.
 - The Board should present all written, pertinent facts and information related to proposed school closure, as well as a summary of the written submissions received from members of the community at the beginning of the public forum.
 - Minutes will be kept of the public forum to record concerns or options raised regarding the proposed closure.
 - Following the public forum, the Board will give fair consideration to all public input prior to making its final decision with respect to the school closure.
3. The Board may consider a recommendation for closure or alternate use of a school or schools only after receiving information resulting from the consultative process.

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4. The Board recognizes that, from time to time, there may be extenuating circumstances that necessitate a unique response to an emergent situation.
 5. The final decision to close a school or make alternate use of it will be made by giving first, second and third (and final) reading of a bylaw at a public Board meeting.
- * Definition: A neighbourhood school is one that is within walk limit guidelines as established by Ministry and Board Regulations.

Adopted: March 23, 1988
Amended: February 26, 2003
References: *Ministry Policy Circular 25 [85.11.25]*