

Policy 14

CONSOLIDATION AND CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS

The Board of Education recognizes that, from time to time, declining and shifting student populations may necessitate the closure of schools. Before any decision is made, the Board will make its proposed plans regarding closure clear to all concerned, provide ample lead time and support a process that provides an opportunity for consultation with those who will be affected.

Specifically,

The Board recognizes that the number and location of schools must be balanced with education program needs and operational efficiency and must be considered within available resources. If at any time on its own initiative or upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board intends to consider a motion which proposes the closure of any school, the Board shall give notice of its intent to do so at a regular open meeting of the Board, undertake a full and comprehensive consultation process of no less than ninety days and discuss and make a decision on the closure at a subsequent open meeting of the Board.

Consolidation Closure Process

1. The Board, by resolution at an open meeting of the Board, may give notice that it intends to close a school.
2. As early as possible in the calendar year, the Superintendent shall present to the Board at a regular open meeting, an analysis of schools, using the criteria set out below, and make any recommendations for the closure of schools.
 - 2.1 Student achievement and education programs
 - 2.2 Capacity and usage of the school
 - 2.3 Present and three to five-year enrolment projections
 - 2.4 Effect on the catchment area of schools, if more than one school was proposed to be closed and the general effect on surrounding schools
 - 2.5 Number of children in the catchment area that do not attend school
 - 2.6 Number of students attending the school from outside the catchment area
 - 2.7 Impact on transportation
 - 2.8 Condition of the facility and the need for capital expenditures to keep the building operational
 - 2.9 Other financial considerations
 - 2.10 Alternative configuration options
 - 2.11 Impact on the community

- 2.12 Any additional information considered pertinent
- 2.13 The Board will consider the information provided by the Superintendent and either,
 - 2.13.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 2.13.2 Begin the consultation process.

3. Public Consultation Process

- 3.1 Whether the decision to consider the possible closure of a school is on the Board's initiative or upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the consultation period shall be no less than 90 days and shall consist of the procedures set out below.
- 3.2 One of the purposes of the public consultation process is to afford the Board, at a public information meeting, an opportunity to:
 - 3.2.1 Present its reasons for proposing the closure of a school, or
 - 3.2.2 Hear the Superintendent's reasons for recommending the closure of a school and at a separate public forum to be conducted at a later date,
 - 3.2.3 Receive the responses of those concerned.
- 3.3 All trustees are expected to adopt a position of neutrality throughout the consultation process and to attend the public information meeting, the individual meetings with invited community leaders and the public forum, a description of each of which follows.
 - 3.3.1 The Board Chair shall notify in writing the parents and where appropriate, the First Nations' Chiefs and Council, that the school has been identified for possible closure and indicate the purposes, dates and venues of the public information meeting and the public forum and the date of the Board Meeting at which a decision on school closure will be made.
 - 3.3.2 The Superintendent will notify in writing the school Principal and the Parents' Advisory Council Executive that the school has been identified for possible closure and indicate the purposes, dates and venues of the public information meeting and the public forum and the date of the Board Meeting at which a decision on school closure will be made.
 - 3.3.3 The Board Chair will advise in writing the following groups and individuals that the school has been identified for possible closure and of the purposes, dates and venues of the public information meeting and the public forum, as well as, issue an individual invitation to meet with the Board.
 - 3.3.3.1 The Cowichan Valley Teachers' Federation
 - 3.3.3.2 The Cowichan Valley Principals' and Vice Principals' Association
 - 3.3.3.3 The Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 5101
 - 3.3.3.4 The United Steelworkers of America Local 1-80
 - 3.3.3.5 The District Parents' Advisory Council
 - 3.3.3.6 The Member of the Legislative Assembly in whose constituency the school is located
 - 3.3.3.7 Municipal Government Leaders

3.3.3.8 First Nations' Chiefs and Council

3.3.3.9 Métis Association

3.3.4 The Board shall use the local media and the school District's web site to advertise the purposes, dates and venues of the public information meeting and the public forum, in sufficient time to enable individuals or community groups to respond.

4. Public Information Meeting

- 4.1 The Superintendent shall make available at a public information meeting facts and information with respect to the proposed school closure, including:
- 4.1.1 Educational effectiveness, including educational program or course implications for affected students
 - 4.1.2 Capacity or usage of the school
 - 4.1.3 Present and three to five year enrolment projections
 - 4.1.4 Number of students affected at the school and surrounding schools
 - 4.1.5 Effect on the current catchment area of affected and surrounding schools
 - 4.1.6 Number of children in the catchment area that do not attend school
 - 4.1.7 Number of students attending the school from outside the catchment area
 - 4.1.8 Assessment of the projected student population growth in the catchment area
 - 4.1.9 Impact on District provided student transportation
 - 4.1.10 Condition of the facility and the need for capital expenditures to keep the building operational
 - 4.1.11 Other financial considerations
 - 4.1.12 Options considered as alternatives to the proposed closure
 - 4.1.13 Impact on the community
 - 4.1.14 Implementation plans including the proposed effective date of the closure
 - 4.1.15 Date of the meeting at which the Board will make a decision on closure of the school
- 4.2 An opportunity shall be provided for a question period at the public information meeting.

5. Written Responses

- 5.1 The Board shall provide an adequate opportunity for individuals and representatives of community groups to submit written responses to the school closure information presented at the public information meeting, with directions as to how to submit written responses and the closure date for receipt of written responses including petitions, seven clear days before the meeting at which the Board will make a decision on the closure of the school.

6. Individual Meetings with Community Leaders

- 6.1 The Board shall conduct individual meetings with the community leaders and representatives of the groups identified in the aforementioned item 3(c), at which the Board will hear responses and answer questions regarding the proposed closure of the school. The meetings shall be open to the public with the exception of closed meetings that may be requested by partner groups or community leaders. The Board will keep a public record of closed meetings.

7. Public Forum

- 7.1 The Board shall host a public forum at which individuals and representatives of community groups may address the Board on the proposed school closure.

8. Public Record

- 8.1 The Board shall keep a public record of the school closure consultation process, including copies of all correspondence from the Board Chair and the Superintendent; dates, advertising, names of attendees, agendas and minutes of the public information meeting, the individual meetings with community leaders and the public forum; and all written correspondence received by individual trustees and the Board.

9. Board Decision

- 9.1 At the end of the ninety day consultation period, the Board, at an open meeting, shall consider the information provided during the consultation process and by adopting a bylaw, make a final decision as to whether the school will be closed.

10. Notification of the Minister

- 10.1 If the Board decides to permanently close a school under Section 73 of the *School Act*, the Board shall, without delay, notify the Minister in writing of the decision and the following information:
- 10.1.1 The school's name, facility number and address,
 - 10.1.2 The date on which the school will close.

Legal Reference: *School Act*, section 73 and 168, Ministerial Order 320/02