

SD 42 POLICY: 6801

SCHOOL CLOSURE

The Board is responsible under the School Act for the effective and efficient operation of schools in the school district. The Board has the authority to close a school for reasons which include but are not limited to:

- declining student enrolment such that the school is no longer economically or operationally viable;
- restructuring of educational programs, consolidation of operations and relocation of students to other schools in the school district which results in the school being deemed surplus to the districts educational needs;
- the school is being replaced with a newly constructed school.

The permanent closure of schools is a significant issue of public concern and therefore the Board will follow a process that provides adequate time and opportunity to consult with those who will be affected prior to any decision being made.

A. Public Board Meeting

Any proposed closure of a school should first be raised at a regular open meeting of the Board.

B. Public Consultation

The process of consultation for school closure shall require at least 60 days commencing from the time when the Board provides public notice as to which specific school(s) are being considered for closure.

The process of consultation should provide an opportunity for those who will be affected by a proposed closure to participate in the process. Such participation should include trustees, parents, community members, district staff, and school staff.

Any decision to close a school must be made no later than the first Board meeting in April.

Public consultation shall be undertaken by the Board prior to making a final decision on any proposed closure of a school.

The Board should take the following steps to ensure that an open and meaningful public consultation has taken place:

1. make available, in writing, a full disclosure of all facts and information considered by the school board with respect to any proposed school closure, including:
 - a) reasons for the proposed school closure;
 - b) which specific school(s) are being considered for closure;
 - c) how the proposed closure would affect the current catchment area for each school;
 - d) the general effect on surrounding schools;
 - e) the number of students who would be affected at both the closed school(s) and surrounding schools;
 - f) the effect of proposed closures on board-provided student transportation;
 - g) educational program/course implications for the affected students;
 - h) the proposed effective date of the closure(s);
 - i) financial considerations;
 - j) impact on the Board's five year capital plan;
 - k) proposed use of the closed school(s) including potential lease or sale.
2. 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 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.
3. hold at least one public meeting to discuss the proposed closure, summarize written submissions, and listen to community concerns and proposed options.
4. maintain records of all consultation, including agenda, minutes, dates of consultation working group and public community consultation meetings, copies of information provided at these meetings; names of trustees and district staff who attended these meetings, a record of individuals attending public community consultation meetings, record of questions asked, and a record of transition plans/activities identified for parent/staff/students at both the school considered for closure and the school to which the students would be moved.

C. Public Meeting

The time and place of the public meeting should be appropriately advertised to ensure

adequate advance notification to interested 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.

The Board should also specifically notify, in writing, any potentially interested local governments, First Nations, business associations, and community associations of the time and place of the public meeting.

Discussions should include 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, including possible alternative community use for all or part of the school;
- d) consideration of future enrolment growth in the district of persons of school age, persons of less than school age and adults; and
- e) contents of written submissions presented to the Board by members of the community.

The Board should keep minutes of the public meeting which include a record of concerns or options raised to 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.

D. Notification to the Minister

If the Board decides to permanently close a school the Board must, without delay, provide the Minister with written notification of the decision containing the following information:

- a) the school's name;
- b) the school's facility number;
- c) the school's address; and
- d) the date on which the school will close.

E. Criteria for Considering School Closure

If a school meets any of the criteria, the school will be considered for closure.

- a) when there is sufficient space to accommodate the students in neighbouring schools;
- b) the operating cost per student where excessive;

- c) the condition of the facility and the need for capital expenditures to keep the building operational where excessive;
- d) the limitations of the facility that restrict appropriate education programming;
- e) other criteria that in the view of the Board, should be considered.

F. Opportunities for Students Displaced by School Closure

The district will ensure that all district students displaced by a school closure will have opportunities to receive an appropriate educational experience in another school in the district.

APPROVED: October 29, 2014