

## **POLICY 15: SCHOOL CLOSURES**

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### **SCHOOL CLOSURES**

The Board recognizes that the closure of a school or portion thereof, or student transfers, plays a necessary part in ensuring the equitable and responsible use of the resources placed in its trust.

The Board shall consider closure of a school or a portion thereof, or transfer of students, if the critical minimum enrollment for the school is less than the critical minimum enrollment defined herein at any time during the school year and upon consideration of secondary criteria as established by the Board. The Board may consider closure of a school or a portion thereof, or transfer of students, if upon review of the secondary criteria the Board deems that consideration of closure or transfer is required.

Furthermore, special considerations may be necessary when deciding upon the closure or non-closure of a particular school or transfer of students in relationship to the critical enrollment level. Flexibility in the critical enrollment number, especially at the elementary level, could be acceptable in special circumstances.

1. Relative to section 62 of the Education Act, the Board may:
  - a. close a school permanently or for a specified period of time;
  - b. close entirely three (3) or more consecutive grades in a school; or
  - c. transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis
2. The critical minimum for the Board's consideration of closing a school or portion thereof, or student transfer, is defined as follows:
  - a. Elementary Level (1-6) – Less than 50% of the rated capacity of the facility space designated for elementary use. \*
  - b. Junior High (7-9) – Less than 50% of the rated capacity of the facility space designated for junior high use.
  - c. Senior High (10-12) – Less than 50% of the rated capacity of the facility space designated for senior high use.

\* Rated Capacity for schools as established by Alberta Education, Capital Planning.

Secondary Criteria:

1. All pertinent secondary criteria listed below shall be considered in the consolidation, closure or transfer decision:
  - a. the location and suitability of alternate school accommodation for the students involved;

- b. program implications for the students (currently in the receiver schools and those who will be transferred);
- c. program implications for other schools;
- d. transportation needs and implications;
- e. the effect on the social environment of the community;
- f. future enrollment projections;
- g. factors relating to the school building;
  - i. the age and life expectancy of the building proposed by closure;
  - ii. building modernization requirements;
  - iii. general suitability to education program needs;
- h. the educational and financial impact of the closing of the school, including the effect on operational costs, outstanding debentures and the capital implications;
- i. the financial and educational impact of not closing the school;
- j. the capital needs of the receiver school that may have increased enrollment.

The following procedures shall be followed relative to school closures.

1. Where the Board is considering school closure, the matter shall be raised at a regular meeting of the Board and details provided of the specific school or portions of the school affected.
2. The Board shall communicate the facts and implications of the possible school closure, in writing, to the parents of every child affected by the closure. Such communication shall address how the closure would affect the following:
  - a. the attendance area defined for that school and enrollment trends;
  - b. the attendance at other schools, including the number of students relocated by virtue of the school closure;
  - c. the need for, and extent of, busing;
  - d. the anticipated effect on the social environment of the community;
  - e. program implications for other schools;
  - f. program implications for the students when they are attending other schools;
  - g. the educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;

- h. the financial and educational impact of not closing the school;
    - i. the capital needs of other schools that may have increased enrollment as a result of the closure; and
    - j. consideration of possible alternative educational or community uses for all or part of the school building.
3. Where the Board is considering whether or not a school closure should occur, the Board shall organize and convene a public meeting for the purpose of discussing the possible closure, its implications for the students and for the school system, possible implementation plans and possible alternatives. Further meetings may be held at times and places set out by the Board.
4. The date and place of the public meeting shall be:
  - a. posted in five or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure, for a period of at least two weeks prior to the date of the public meeting, and
  - b. published in a newspaper circulating within the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the proposed closure, once a week for at least two weeks prior to the date of the public meeting.
5. A quorum of Trustees must attend the public meeting.
6. Following the meeting there shall be a minimum period of three (3) weeks for electors to present to the Board further responses to the possible closure.
7. The final debate by the Board and the vote upon the resolution shall occur only after procedures 1 through 6 have been completed.
8. Subsequent to the final debate, and if the vote is in favour of school closure, the Board shall inform the Minister, in writing, forthwith and include:
  - a. the name of the school, and
  - b. the effective date of the closure.

**Legal Reference**

Section 33,51,52,53,62,192,222,248,249 Education Act  
Petitions and Public Notices Regulation

**History**

Prepared: September 2003  
Amended: March 2020