

RETIREMENT OF FACILITIES

The Division's facility and program planning processes are designed to ensure the provision of well maintained and highly utilized school facilities that effectively accommodate student learning needs through strong faith programming. A variety of facility and program planning considerations may necessitate the closure or reconfiguration of a school. Facility is defined as a school.

This policy is designed to ensure Division compliance with the principles and requirements of Alberta Education policy and regulations on school closure.

Specifically

1. The Superintendent will, every September, determine whether or not to conduct a feasibility study on the status of all schools when:
 - 1.1 Elementary enrolment declines below one hundred (100).
 - 1.2 Elementary/Junior High enrolment declines below one hundred and fifty (150).
 - 1.3 Senior High Enrolment declines below three hundred (300).
 - 1.4 Essential maintenance/renovation costs place excessive demands on operating budgets.
 - 1.5 Transportation costs place excessive demands on operating budgets.
2. The feasibility study shall include an examination of:
 - 2.1 The educational program offered by the school.
 - 2.2 The operational costs per student.
 - 2.3 The school's building utilization factor.
 - 2.4 The impact on other schools
 - 2.5 Other relevant factors including, but not restricted to enrolment trends and patterns, maintenance, custodial, utility, renovation costs, transportation costs, and long-range plans.
3. In the event of a possible school closure or realignment of attendance areas affecting three or more consecutive grades, the Board will communicate the proposed changes to School Councils, staff, parents and students and other affected rate-payers prior to any decision being made.
4. Affected groups will be given the opportunity to be engaged in a public consultation process in order to suggest possible changes prior to any decision being made.

5. When the Board is considering school closure, the matter shall be tabled where possible at a regular Board meeting before or during November outlining the proposed changes and the specific school(s) or grade(s) involved.
6. Communication channels will be utilized to ensure that every parent/guardian of every child in the school(s) affected will receive notification of the facts and the implications of the possible school closure. The communication should include the answers to questions relating to how a specific closure or realignment of grade would affect the following:
 - 6.1 Attendance area(s) for affected school(s);
 - 6.2 Attendance at other schools by students relocated because of the potential school closure or realignment;
 - 6.3 The need for, and extent of, bussing;
 - 6.4 The effect on the social environment of the community;
 - 6.5 Program implications for the students when they are attending other schools;
 - 6.6 Program implications for other schools;
 - 6.7 The educational and financial impact of closing the school or realignment of the; grades, including the effect on operational costs and the capital implications;
 - 6.8 The financial and educational impact of not closing the school or realigning the grade structure;
 - 6.9 The capital needs of other schools that may have increased enrolment; and
 - 6.10 Proposed disposal or use for the school that is to be closed.
7. The Superintendent shall meet with the staff at the school(s) to discuss the possible closure and its implications for students and staff.
8. Stakeholder meetings should include parents or guardians of the students, attended by at least two (2) trustees, and the Superintendent or designate. The meetings shall be held at each of the schools concerned prior to the end of January. The structure of these meetings will be determined at the start of the process and may include but not limited to open house format, coffee house format, round table discussions and any other form of meeting that allows for community feedback and engagement.
 - 8.1 Notice of this meeting shall be communicated utilizing the various channels available and through a letter distributed through the school(s).
 - 8.2 This meeting will also be advertised in the parish bulletin and the newspaper.
 - 8.3 At this meeting, the Superintendent or designate shall indicate that the purpose of the meeting is to provide information and solicit parental input. The following should be addressed where applicable and available:
 - 8.3.1 The attendance area of the school under consideration;
 - 8.3.2 The attendance area and enrolment of other schools to be affected by the possible closure;

- 8.3.3 The need for, and extent of, bussing;
 - 8.3.4 The educational program implications for the students in the school being considered foreclosure in other affected schools;
 - 8.3.5 The financial and educational implications of closing the school and of not closing the school; and
 - 8.3.6 Proposed future utilization of the school.
9. Meetings shall provide stakeholders the opportunity to engage trustees, administration, and other stakeholders in a conversation around proposed changes.
10. The assembly shall be informed by the Board members in attendance that:
- 10.1 The expressed concerns shall be considered by the Board in making a decision; and
 - 10.2 The Board will be receptive to a delegation at a public meeting if it is deemed necessary as adding value to the process that is already in place.
11. As part of the public consultation process, all meetings should be held prior to the end of February and include:
- 11.1 Any delegations as deemed necessary as stated in 10.2.
 - 11.2 The Board will provide an opportunity for the Council of the municipality in which the school is located to provide a statement to the Board of the impact the closure or reconfiguration may have on the community.
12. Following presentation of briefs, the Board, at its next public meeting, shall render a decision with reference to the proposed closure.
13. The decision will be communicated forthwith to the School Council(s), the school staff(s), and the parents or guardians of students attending the school(s).
14. In the event that prior agreement exists within the community that a school should be closed, the Board may act expeditiously to affect school closure.

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