

SCHOOL CLOSURES/GRADE RECONFIGURATIONS

The Board believes that one of its major responsibilities is to strive to provide school facilities throughout the District that will allow for operational efficiency and program effectiveness for all students. In keeping with the intent of its philosophies, objectives and major responsibilities, it may from time to time have to consider consolidation or closure of schools.

The Board will receive data pertinent to the educational and economic impact of declining and/or shifting enrollment on the organization of the schools. Should the data indicate an area to be studied for reorganization the Board will initiate a process of discussion and consultation with parents, staff and the community in accordance with this policy. The Board will then make a decision on the reorganization of schools based on the preceding process so that any school closure or grade reconfiguration necessary would be effective June 30 of a particular year.

Specifically

1. The Superintendent may recommend to the Board at a meeting in October, consideration of schools for closure or grade reconfiguration.

The Superintendent, in making a recommendation for consideration for closure or grade reconfiguration will assess the following factors:

- 1.1 Decline in program diversity or educational experience for students;
- 1.2 Safety of access for students being relocated;
- 1.3 Class size;
- 1.4 Accommodation and suitability of program offerings available in nearby schools;
- 1.5 Decline in student enrollment will continue;
- 1.6 Age, operation and maintenance costs of the facility, including the need for seismic upgrades;
- 1.7 Funding formula considerations;
- 1.8 Alternate potential uses of a facility that could create additional revenue for the District or could improve community services; and,
- 1.9 Parental and community support for the school.

In making its decision, the Board shall consider the aforementioned factors and must be cognizant of pecuniary interest and possible apprehension of bias during the process.

The Board will consider the information provided by the Superintendent and either:

- 1.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 1.2 Forward the information to the Finance and Facilities Committee.
2. The Finance and Facilities Committee shall review the materials and provide its recommendations to the Board no later than the following January.
 3. The Board will review the recommendations from the Finance and Facilities Committee and either
 - 3.1 Conclude that no action or further study is required, or
 - 3.2 Initiate discussion and consultation with parents, staff and the community.
 4. The Board may decide to permanently close a school, following a public input process, and must provide written notification to the Minister of Education without delay.
 5. Discussion and consultation must be initiated by January 1 and concluded not later than March 1 in the same year, providing for a period of 60 days for public consultation to take place between the time a proposal to consider a school for closure is initiated through a Board resolution at a public Board meeting and when the final decision is made to close a school by adoption of a School Closure Bylaw at a public Board meeting. This public consultation will include:
 - 5.1 Advertising a public meeting or meetings in the District to explain the proposed reorganization and invite interested members of the public to submit their suggestions to the Board.
 - 5.2 Information initially provided by the Superintendent and an invitation to the WVTA and WVMEA, the Parents' Advisory Council, concerned parent groups and the affected municipal council(s) in the District for their input.
 6. By March 31, the Board will consider the information received and decide if a facility is to be closed or reorganized on June 30 for the following September. In accordance with Ministerial requirements, the Board will seek approval of the Minister of Education to close schools or dispose of land or improvements.
 7. The Board's power to close a school must be exercised by bylaw.
 8. The alternate use of a closed facility will be determined by the Board after receiving a recommendation from the Superintendent, and in accordance with Ministerial orders.

Legal Reference: *Sections 22, 65, 73, 85, 96, 100 School Act*
Section 23 Ombudsman Act
School Opening and Closure Order M320-02
Disposal of Land or Improvement Order M233/07

(Last updated May 2009)