Policy 14

SCHOOL CLOSURE

The Division's planning processes are designed to ensure the provision of well-maintained and highly utilized school facilities that effectively accommodate student learning needs. The Board has tasked the Division to use the Viability Improvement Process to analyze long term viability and sustainability of a school. Upon conclusion of interventions identified through the Viability Improvement Process, factors may necessitate the closure of a school.

The Board believes that schools perform a vital role in the lives of the communities in which they are located and supports active schools in communities that can support sustainable enrolment. However, it may be necessary to close all or part of a school for operational and/or financial reasons. When considering the possible closure of a school, the Board will consult and communicate with the parents and the broader community.

1. Definitions

   1.1 "Board" means the Board of Trustees.

   1.2 "Division" means the Edmonton Catholic Separate School Division.

   1.3 "Minister" means the Minister of Education.

   1.4 "School" means a structured learning environment through which an education program is offered to a student.

   1.5 "School Closure":

      1.5.1 means to close an entire school permanently and transfer students from one school building to another school building; or

      1.5.2 means to close one or more of the following categories of grades permanently:

         - Elementary (Kindergarten to Grade 6)
         - Junior High (Grades 7 to 9)
         - High School (Grades 10 to 12)

   1.6 "Program of Choice" means any program defined by the Division on its public website at any given time.

   1.7 "School Capital Project" means the construction, improvement, equipment, renovation, renewal or repair of any school buildings, structure, facility, site, or other facility improvement project of any part thereof.

2. Exemptions from School Closure

   2.1 Provided that the school continues to be used for Division educational programming within the existing grade level categories set out in Article 1.5.2 prior to the transfer of students, this policy does not apply to the following:

2.1.1 Transfer of students for the purposes of School Capital Projects;

2.1.2 Transfer of students to accommodate over utilized facilities provided that a Ministerial commitment exists for a future funded capital project;

2.1.3 Relocation or closure of a Program of Choice;

2.1.4 Relocation or closure of specialized programs administered through the Division; or

2.1.5 Designation or re-designation of students pursuant to the determination of attendance boundaries.

2.2 The Board may request public participation processes for any of the exemptions in 2.1 to ensure that the community is able to provide their perspective to the Division.

3. School Closure Factors

3.1 One (1) or more of the following factors may lead the Chief Superintendent to submit a School Closure Recommendation to the Board:

3.1.1 Health, safety or facility conditions;

3.1.2 Enrolment numbers;

3.1.3 Operational or financial considerations; or

3.1.4 Viability Improvement Process (VIP) interventions and outcomes.

4. School Closure Recommendation

4.1 A School Closure Recommendation prepared by the Chief Superintendent shall include the following:

4.1.1 The relevant factors set out in Article 3.1;

4.1.2 How the School Closure would affect the catchment area defined for that school;

4.1.3 How the School Closure would affect the enrolments at other schools;

4.1.4 Information contained in the Board's Three-Year Capital Plan and Ten-Year Strategic Facilities Plan that is relevant and material to the recommended School Closure;

4.1.5 Consideration of future growth or decline in student enrolment for the school;

4.1.6 The number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the School Closure;

4.1.7 Student transportation implications;

4.1.8 The educational and financial impact of the School Closure, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;

4.1.9 The educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open;

4.1.10 An engagement plan on how the Division plans to engage the public regarding the impact of the School Closure;

4.1.11 The capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure;

4.1.12 Possible uses of all or part of the building; and

4.1.13 An overview of other Division education options in the sector.

5. Notice of Motion – Proposed School Closure

5.1 In the event that the Board decides to proceed with the proposed School Closure process following its review of the Chief Superintendent's School Closure Recommendation, the matter shall be raised by way of a Notice of Motion made at a Regular or Special meeting of the Board. The Notice of Motion is not debatable and may not be voted upon.

5.2 The Notice of Motion initiates the Division's public participation process regarding the School Closure. No decision with respect to the School Closure will be made until the completion of the procedures outlined in sections 4, 5 and 6 of this policy and at least eight (8) weeks have passed since the date of the Notice of Motion.

5.3 The Notice of Motion shall include:

5.3.1 The school and grades affected by the proposed School Closure; and

5.3.2 The date upon which the Board plans to vote on the motion to close the school.

6. Public Participation and Engagement Commitment

6.1 When a Notice of Motion has been made to consider a School Closure, the Division will include reasonably affected internal and external stakeholders in the public participation process regarding the School Closure.

6.2 The Division shall inform, in writing, the families of every student enrolled in the school who, in the opinion of the Division, will be affected by the School Closure. This written notification shall include the following information:

6.2.1 The School Closure Recommendation, including the engagement plan, that was presented to the Board by the Chief Superintendent;

6.2.2 The date when the public participation process will begin and how long stakeholders will have to provide feedback on the School Closure;

6.2.3 The date on which the Board plans to vote on the motion for School Closure.

6.3 The Division shall provide for the following in the public participation process:

6.3.1 A meeting for stakeholders reasonably affected by the School Closure (a "public participation meeting"); and

6.3.2 An opportunity for stakeholders reasonably affected by the School Closure to give feedback on the School Closure Recommendation.

6.4 The Division shall utilize the ECSD Public Participation Framework in its approach to the public participation process.

6.5 Where a Notice of Motion is made to consider a School Closure, the Board shall:

6.5.1 Advertise the time and place of the public participation meeting in a minimum of four (4) visible places in the school and two (2) visible places in the community surrounding the affected school fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the public participation meeting;

6.5.2 Advertise the time and place of the public participation meeting using the Division website, the website of the school affected by the recommended School Closure, all active Division social media managed through the Department of Communications, and all active social media associated with the school;

6.5.3 Provide notice of the public participation meeting in writing to all families of students enrolled in the school; and

6.5.4 Provide an opportunity for the City of Edmonton to provide a statement to the Board about the impact the recommended School Closure may have on the community.

6.6 Trustees will make best efforts to attend the public participation meeting(s) organized as part of the public participation process.

7. Board Decision on Proposed School Closure

7.1 The Board shall not make a final decision on the proposed School Closure until at least three (3) weeks have passed since the date of the public participation meeting and until at least eight (8) weeks have passed since the date of the Regular or Special meeting of the Board at which the Notice of Motion was introduced.

7.2 A summary of all public submissions related to the School Closure and received by the deadline indicated in the engagement plan, will be presented to the Board.

7.3 The Board shall vote on the motion as stated in the Notice of Motion, or any amendment thereof on the advice of the Chief Superintendent, provided that the amended motion does not broaden the scope of the School Closure in any manner.

7.4 If the decision of the Board is in favour of the School Closure, the Division shall forthwith notify the Minister in writing of the decision.

7.5 All School Closure procedures shall be initiated and completed within the school year in which the proposed School Closure is contemplated.

7.6 In the event of a school consolidation, the School Closure date may be beyond the year in which the School Closure process as set out in this Policy took place provided that the School Closure date is provided in the Notice of Motion. Alternatively, the School Closure date may be identified as conditional upon the completion of a specified School Capital Project intended as a consolidation site.

8. Temporary School Closure

8.1 Notwithstanding the foregoing, and subject to the delegated power of the Chief Superintendent, the Board may temporarily close a school if the health or safety of students is at risk. In this circumstance, the Board may do so by way of motion passed at a Regular or Special meeting of the Board pursuant to Board Policy 7, and provided that prior to the Regular or Special meeting, the Board provides notice in writing that it will be considering the temporary closure of a school to:

8.1.1 Parents/guardians of every student enrolled in the school that may be affected by the temporary School Closure; and

8.1.2 Any other person, municipality, or community organization who in the opinion of the Board may be significantly affected by the temporary School Closure.

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