

## **Policy Statement:**

The Board recognizes that under certain specific conditions related to enrolment, finances, student health/safety, the state of the facilities and/or reorganizational needs, a reconfiguration of grades within a Division or the closure of a particular program or school must be considered. After consideration of all relevant data, the Board shall decide whether a particular division within a school or a school is to close or whether a program is to be reduced, transferred or supplied through alternative means, and the Minister of Education will be notified forthwith in writing in accordance with the *School Act*.

## **Rationale:**

The Board believes that circumstances may arise that make it necessary to examine the viability and appropriateness of the continued operation of a school or selected grade levels within a school and recognizes that under certain conditions it may become necessary to consider the closure of a school or program. Discontinuance or transfer of a school program, or an alternative or special needs program is not considered a school closure.

## **Scope:**

This policy shall not apply to schools located on Hutterite Colonies or to special programs. Hutterite colony programs are exempt from this policy in that they are not housed in Board owned property.

## **School Grade Configuration**

### **1. Criteria for School Grade Configuration Changing**

The Board shall consider changing the grade configuration of a school when any one or more of the following conditions exist:

- 1.1 The school's five-year enrollment projections and previous trends indicate the probability that future enrollment numbers in the school may not allow for programming which is effective and efficient.
- 1.2 The continued operation of the school will create excessive costs to the Division.
- 1.3 Total student enrollment in three or more grades falls below numbers considered viable from a financial operations and program delivery perspective.

### **2. Process and Timelines for School Grade Configuration**

The Superintendent will annually review the school grade configuration of the Division's schools and notify the Board at its first meeting in November in any year as to which schools meet the criteria for a school grade configuration change. This report will be part of the report regarding school closure criteria.

- 2.1 When making a recommendation to change the grade configuration the Superintendent shall consider how the grade configuration change would affect:

- 2.1.1 Program implications for the school in question and other schools impacted by the change and for the students when they are attending other schools;
  - 2.1.2 The educational and financial impact;
  - 2.1.3 The number of students who would need to be relocated;
  - 2.1.4 The need for, and extent of, bussing;
  - 2.1.5 The school that the students will be directed to;
  - 2.1.6 The duration of the change.
- 2.2 The Superintendent will meet with the School Council and School Staff to discuss the grade change configuration and make a recommendation to the Board no later than February 28<sup>th</sup> of the current school year.

## School Closure

### 1. School Closure Authority

Pursuant to section 58 of the *School Act*, a Board may:

- 1.1 close a school permanently or for a specified period of time
- 1.2 close entirely three (3) or more consecutive grades in a school
- 1.3 close the entire junior high school program or the entire high school program in a school; or
- 1.4 transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.
- 1.5 Transfer a school building to another public school authority for other public education uses for the school building.

### 2. Criteria for School Closure

The Board shall consider closure of a school when any one or more of the following conditions exist:

- 2.1 The continued operation of the school poses a health or safety threat to students, staff or public.
- 2.2 Total student enrollment in three or more grades falls below numbers considered viable from a financial operations and program delivery perspective.

School closure will be considered when education programming becomes ineffective and/or inefficient due to other factors, including but not limited to, low enrolments, class composition, availability of staff, and proximity to other schools.

From a financial perspective, school closure will be considered if minimum enrollment as of September 30 in the current school year is below the following levels:

- Grade K - 3 enrollment is less than 20 students
- Grade 4 - 6 enrollment is less than 20 students
- Grade 7 – 9 enrollment is less than 20 students
- Grade 10 – 12 enrollment is less than 20 students
- Grade K – 6 enrollment is less than 45 students
- Grade K - 9 enrollment is less than 80 students
- Grade K – 12 enrollment is less than 100 students
- No stand-alone school shall be less than 45 students

- 2.3 The Board's five-year enrollment projections and previous trends indicate the probability that future enrollment numbers in the school may not allow for programming which is effective and efficient in the judgment of the Superintendent.
  - 2.4 Less than 60% of eligible students in a school's attendance area attend the school in their attendance area.
  - 2.5 The continued operation of the school will create excessive costs to the Division.
3. Process and Timelines for School Closure  
The Superintendent will annually apply the school closure criteria to the Division's schools and report to the Board at its first meeting in November.
  4. Where the Board is of the view that a school closure needs to be publicly considered, it shall raise the matter through a Notice of Motion at a regular board meeting and ensure that the following are carried out:

A written communication, the contents of which are consistent with policies established by Alberta Education, is sent to the parents of every student enrolled in the school who, in the opinion of the Board, would be significantly affected by the closure of the school.

- 4.1 At a minimum, such notice will include:
    - how the closure would affect the attendance area defined for that school
    - how the closure would affect the attendance area at other schools
    - the number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure
    - information on the board's long-range capital plan
    - the need for, and extent of, bussing
    - program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools
    - the educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications
    - the educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open
    - the capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure
    - the possible uses of the school building if the entire school is being closed or 3 or more consecutive grades in the school are being closed
    - the time and location of the public meeting referred to in Section 5, called to discuss the school closure issue.
5. Public meeting  
At least four (4) trustees of the Board shall attend the public meeting.

Minutes of the public meeting held under this section are prepared and available to the public within three weeks of the meeting held.

The date and place of the public meeting shall be:

- posted in five (5) or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the proposed closure, for a period of at least 14 days before the date of the public meeting
- advertised in a newspaper circulating within the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the proposed closure, on at least two occasions as close as is practicable to the date of the meeting

- posted on division and school website
6. The Board may hold other meetings with respect to the proposed closure at times and places as the Board may determine.
  7. The council of the municipality in which the school is located shall be given an opportunity to provide a statement to the Board of the impact the closure may have on the community.
  8. Following the public meeting attended by trustees, there shall be a period of four weeks for parents and community members to present to the Board further responses to the proposed closure.
  9. The Board will give consideration to any written or oral submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting. The Board's debate and vote on the Notice of Motion shall take place only after all requirements in this policy have been completed.
  10. The Board will by resolution decide whether to close the school and will forthwith notify the Minister in writing if the decision is to close the school.
  11. Where a decision is made to close an entire school, the Board will consult the community relative to future use of the land and school building. Decisions relative to the land, building, playgrounds and other structures that are on the property will be made by the Board subject to *Disposition of Property Regulation 181/2010*.
  12. All school closure procedures will be initiated and completed within the school year in which the decision to close the school is made, whereby "school year" means the 12-month period beginning on September 1 and ending on the following August 31.

**Reference:**

Section 57, 58 [School Act](#)  
[Closure of Schools Regulation - Alberta Regulation 238/97](#)  
[Disposition of Property Regulation 181/2010](#)  
[Policy 13 Appeals to the Board Regarding Student Matters](#)  
[AP 20-03 External Communication Protocol](#)  
[Form 2-3 – Closure of Schools Checklist](#)