

CONTEXT

The Board's elementary schools are generally organized in groups, usually linked to a secondary school. The goal of providing a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities in a school or group of schools requires monitoring and active curriculum and programming decisions. Decisions that might require consolidation, closure or major program relocation will take into account the needs of all of the students in all of the schools in a particular group. There may, however, be circumstances in which a single school should be studied for closure or relocation.

Any decisions under this policy will take into account the Board's Long-Term Capital Plan.

The following are not actions to which this Policy applies:

- Where a replacement school is to be rebuilt by the Board on the existing site or located within the existing school attendance boundary as identified through the Board's existing policies; i.e., replacement of a rural school within its existing rural community;
- When a lease is terminated;
- When the Board is considering the relocation of a grade or grades, or a program, where the enrolment in the grade or grades, or program, constitutes less than 50% of the enrolment of the school;
- When the Board is repairing or renovating a school, and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students during the renovations;
- Where a facility has been serving as a holding school for a school community whose permanent school is under construction or repair.

PROCEDURES

1. The Preliminary Report

Board Staff will present a preliminary report to the Board identifying a school or group of schools in which challenges may be faced in providing a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities for students, and in respect of which there may be a need to consider the possible consolidation, closure or major program relocation in respect of one or more schools.

A school or group of schools may be considered for study if one or more of the following conditions apply:

- The school or group of schools is unable to provide a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities for students;
- The school or group of schools has experienced or will experience an adverse impact on learning opportunities for students due to declining enrolment;
- Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;

- Teaching/learning spaces are not suitable to provide the programs needed to serve the community and retrofitting may be cost prohibitive;
- Under normal staffing allocation practices, it would be necessary to assign three grades to one class in one or more of the schools;
- One or more of the schools is experiencing significantly higher building maintenance expenses than the average for the system and/or is in need of major capital improvements;
- In respect of one or more of the schools there are safety and/or environmental concerns attached to the building, the school site or its locality;
- The consolidation of schools is in the best interests of the overall school system;

Except where extenuating circumstances warrant, (e.g. an unexpected economic or demographic shift, or a change in a school's physical condition) a school should not be reconsidered for study by PAC for five years from the start of a previous study.

2. Establishing a Pupil Accommodation Committee

After reviewing the Preliminary Report, the Board may direct the formation of a Pupil Accommodation Committee ("PAC") for a group of schools or for a single school.

Parents/guardians, staff and school council members of the affected schools will be informed within one week, in writing, through their respective schools, of the Board's decision to form a PAC and the decision will be posted on the Board's website.

2.1 The Mandate of the PAC

The PAC will study, report and make recommendations on the accommodation options respecting the group of schools or single school referred to it in the manner set out below.

2.2 Composition of the PAC

The PAC will consist of the following persons:

- One or more Trustees, at least one of whom represents the area under study;
- The appropriate Board staff;
- From each affected school:
 - the school principal or designate
 - one teacher
 - one non-teaching staff member
 - three parents, one of whom will be the school council chair or designate (if more than 2 parents apply, then the names will be selected by drawing lots)
 - representative from local parish (parish priest or representative)

Once the PAC is constituted, it will invite a municipal councillor or delegate and a member of the business community to join the PAC. The PAC will be deemed to be properly constituted whether or not all of the listed members are willing and able to participate, as long as a clear and timely invitation is provided.

The PAC has the authority to co-opt additional members.

2.3 Operation of the PAC

The Board will appoint the Chair of the PAC. The Chair will convene and chair meetings, and will, in cooperation with the Superintendent, ensure that the PAC successfully carries out its obligations under this Policy.

A Board staff person will function as secretary and resource person.

Other resource personnel can be requested to provide information to the PAC including employees or consultants for third party private and public bodies such as municipalities, post-secondary institutions and coterminous school boards.

2.4 Meetings of the PAC

The PAC will complete its work within the timelines in this Policy.

The PAC Chair will call the first public meeting of the PAC no earlier than sixty (60) days after the date of its appointment, excluding from the calculation school holidays such as summer vacation, Christmas break and Spring break.

The PAC will meet as often as required.

Prior to the first public meeting, the PAC will customize the Board's generic School Valuation Framework referred to in *Appendix 1* for application to the schools under review. The PAC may add factors but may not subtract or alter factors. The PAC will make the customized School Valuation Framework public prior to its public meetings.

The PAC will hold at least four public meetings in accessible facilities:

- At the first public meeting, the PAC will describe its mandate, outline its study process, give the public a briefing on the data and issues to be addressed. The PAC will also describe how the School Valuation Framework referred to in Appendix 1 has been customized. The PAC will receive community input.
- At the second public meeting, the PAC will present its draft school-specific valuation reports applying the School Valuation Framework in Appendix 1 to the schools under consideration to the public and will receive community input.
- At the third public meeting, the PAC will receive community input on the accommodation options to be considered and will receive community input.
- At the fourth public meeting, the PAC will present its draft School Valuation Report and recommendations to the public and will receive community input. The PAC may make changes to the report based on feedback at the meeting.

Public notice of the public meetings will be provided through school newsletters, letters to the school community, the Board's website and advertisements in local community newspapers, and will include date, time, location, purpose, contact name and number. Notice of the first public meeting will be provided no less than sixty (60) days in advance of the meeting, excluding from the calculation school holidays such as summer vacation, Christmas break and Spring break. A minimum of two weeks notice will be provided in respect of the other public meetings.

In addition to the Public meetings, all meetings of the PAC will be open to the public. This will allow members of the public to attend and observe the work of the PAC. Input from the members of the public will be through the prescribed Public Meetings.

Detailed minutes will be kept of the PAC meetings and will be posted on the Board's website.

The PAC will provide information to the affected school communities on an ongoing basis.

2.5 The Work of the PAC

As noted above, the Board is committed to providing the best educational opportunities for its resident pupils. Active curriculum and programming decisions that might require school consolidation, closure or program relocation must take into account the needs of all

of the students in all of the schools in a particular group, recognizing that the schools form a community and have a common set of interests. The Board encourages PACs to work actively against any inclination for individual school communities to divide into adversarial groups.

Attention should first be paid to the current educational situation in the school or group of schools and how it is likely to evolve if things are left as they are. Attention should then be paid to the potential for enhancing the learning environment for students. The questions set out in *Appendix 2* are intended to help the PAC to focus on common issues in order to reach a constructive and positive outcome. It is not possible, however, to avoid the assessment of individual schools.

In carrying out its mandate the PAC will weigh the value of the schools to the student above the other factors to be assessed.

2.6 The PAC School Valuation Report Framework

In respect of the school or group of schools being studied, the PAC will consider the questions set out *Appendix 2*, and may consider such additional questions as it determines to be relevant.

In answering the questions in *Appendix 2*, the PAC will consider the School Valuation Framework, both in respect of the existing organization of the schools and any proposed organization, and may add factors to be addressed.

2.7 Information and Documentation

An information package necessary to permit the PAC to carry out its mandate will be provided no later than at the commencement of the PAC's first public meeting.

The package will include the following with plain language explanations, which will also be made available to the public via posting on the Board's website and in print format at the head office of the Board:

- The most recent Long Term Capital Plan of the Board to provide a context for the accommodation review;
- Background information regarding the schools located within the area of the accommodation review. This information is to include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
 - Organization and programming information for each school under study
 - Maps of area
 - Enrolment and capacity information for each school in the review area;
 - Information outlining where students attending each school in the review area reside;
 - Demographic projections concerning future enrolments at schools within the review area;
 - Information on transportation
 - Floor plans of schools under study
 - Site plans of schools under study
 - Data on portables
 - Expenditures and revenues for each school in the review area with particular emphasis on school operations (ie heating, lighting, cleaning, routine maintenance), school administration;
 - Information regarding renewal needs of each school in the review area; and
 - Information regarding the current community use of each school in the review area.

- tenant information/agreements and other relevant information.
- Alternate accommodation plans for the students in the schools located within the area of the accommodation review including suggestions as to where the students could be accommodated, what changes to existing facilities might be required, what programs could be available to the students, and associated transportation requirements.

Board Staff will respond to reasonable requests for additional information from the PAC and will append responses to the minutes of the meetings at which the questions prompting the responses were raised, and will post the responses on the Board's website.

2.8 The PAC School Valuation Report

The PAC will prepare a School Valuation Report addressing the questions set out in *Appendix 2* to these procedures and those that it chooses to add, and will provide its advice to Staff and the Board on the matters to be addressed in Staff's report to the Board. The PAC will also ensure that the following issues are addressed:

- The implications for the program for students both in the school under consideration for consolidation, closure or program relocation and in the school(s) where programs may be affected.
- The effects of consolidation, closure or program relocation on the following:
 - The attendance area defined for the schools
 - Attendance at other schools
 - The need and extent of bussing
- The financial effects of consolidating or not consolidating the school, including any capital implications
- Revenue implications as a result of the consolidation, closure or program relocation
- Savings expected to be achieved as a result of the consolidation, closure or program relocation
 - School operations (heating, lighting, cleaning, routine maintenance)
 - Expenditures to address school renewal issues which will not longer be required
- Additional expenditures, if any, at schools which will accommodate students displaced as a result of a consolidation, closure or program relocation decision taken by the board
 - School operations (heating, lighting, cleaning, routine maintenance)
 - School administration
 - School renewal
 - Transportation
- Net savings/costs associated with:
 - Teaching staff
 - Paraprofessionals
 - Student transportation
- The possible alternative use or disposition of an empty building

The PAC will deliver its School Valuation Report to the Director of Education not earlier than ninety (90) days and not later than ninety-five (95) days after the beginning of the PAC's first public meeting, excluding from the calculation school holidays such as summer vacation, Christmas break and Spring break.

3. Consideration of the PAC School Valuation Report

3.1 Staff's Report to the Board

Planning Staff will review the recommendations of the PAC and prepare a report to the Board.

Staff's report will include as appendices the PAC's School Valuation Report and recommendations, the information package provided to the PAC, minutes of the PAC meetings and any material received by the PAC or the Board from the public.

The recommendation accompanying Staff's report will be one or more of the following:

- To maintain the schools and to continue to monitor them;
- To reorganize the schools, their programs or their grade structures;
- To change the boundaries of the schools;
- To consolidate and/or close one or more of the schools.

Staff's report and recommendations will be presented to the Board in public session at a regularly scheduled meeting not less than thirty (30) days after the PAC School Valuation Report was delivered to the Director of Education.

3.2 Board Meeting for Public Input

The Board will hold a meeting for public input no sooner than thirty (30) days after Staff's report and recommendations are presented to the Board in public session, in order to provide an opportunity for the public to make formal presentations to the Board concerning Staff's report and the matters that are addressed in it and in the PAC School Valuation Report. The public meeting may be scheduled as part of one of the Board's regularly scheduled meetings. On the date that the Board schedules the Meeting for public input, it will also schedule the Board meeting to consider school accommodation referred to in s. 3.4 of this Policy.

A minimum of two weeks notice of the public Board meeting for input will be provided via school newsletters, letters to the school community, the Board's website and advertisements in local community newspapers and will include date, time, location, purpose, contact name and number.

The public may provide written input to the Director of Education at any time.

3.3 Staff's Follow-up Report to the Board

Following the Board meeting for public input, Staff will prepare a report to the Board in which it will report on and respond to the representations made by the public, for the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Staff may revise its earlier recommendations to the Board.

Staff's follow-up report will include copies of the presentations made by the public during the board meeting for public input and those received directly, and minutes of the Board meeting for public input.

Staff's follow-up report will be released publicly and be posted on the Board's website.

3.4 Board Meeting to Consider School Accommodation

The Board will make its decision regarding the school accommodation recommendations in the PAC Report, Staff's Report and Staff's Follow-up Report to the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting, which will not occur sooner than sixty (60) days after the presentation of the Staff's Report, thirty (30) days after the Board meeting for public input and fifteen (15) days after the Staff's Follow-up Report is released publicly.

Notice of the meeting at which the Board will make its decision regarding the school accommodation recommendations in the PAC School Valuation Report, Staff's Report and

Staff's Follow-up Report to the Board will be provided through school newsletters, letters to the school community, the Board's website and advertisements in local community newspapers, and will include date, time, location, purpose, contact name and number at least sixty (60) days prior to the date of the Board meeting, excluding from the calculation school holidays such as summer vacation, Christmas break and Spring break.

Parents/Guardians, Staff and School Council members will be informed within one week, in writing, through their respective schools, of the Board's decision, which will also be posted on the Board's website.

The Board may make any accommodation decision that it deems advisable in relation to the schools under review by a PAC despite a PAC recommendation to the contrary.

If the Board decision is consolidation, closure or program relocation, the following school year will be used to plan for and implement the Board's decision, except where the Board and the affected community believe that earlier action is required. The Board decision will set clear timelines.

Appendix 3 to these Procedures includes a Table of Timelines that summarizes the Accommodation Review Process as detailed above.

3.5 Administrative Review of the Accommodation Review Process

An administrative review of an accommodation review process undertaken by the Board may be available under the Ministry document entitled "**Administrative Review of the Accommodation Review Process**" posted on the Board website and available at the head office of the Board.