

**Policy Number and Name:** 323 Viable Schools

**Policy Section:** 300 Board Governance

**Effective Date:** November 23, 2023

**Revised Date:**

**Purpose:**

The Board of Education is committed to making the best use of its resources to ensure the most positive educational outcomes for its students. The Board will review the viability and sustainability of schools and make decisions regarding resources in the best interest and safety of the students of the Division.

**Policy:**

If requested by the Board, the Director shall conduct a review of elementary and high school facility requirements in areas of the Division specified by the Board. The review may provide options with respect to possible attendance area consolidation and school closure for the efficient accommodation of students and the provision of quality education in the short and long term.

The Board will follow the process as described in *The Education Act, 1995* and associated Regulations.

- 1) A review may be necessary in circumstances where the Board is concerned that:
  - a) Due to rapidly declining enrolments, the quality of education is deteriorating;
  - b) Due to rapidly declining enrolments, the operating costs of the school are excessive;
  - c) Due to the deterioration of the physical plant, the safety of the children may be compromised;
  - d) The costs of repairing and maintaining the plant is excessive; or
  - e) Due to budgetary constraints, cost saving measures must be considered.
- 2) The Board shall advise the School Community Council(s) of the study being undertaken.
- 3) The factors that shall be considered in any report on the future use of a school shall include, but are not limited to:
  - a) The quality of education in the school.
  - b) Projected enrolments over a five-year period.
  - c) Physical condition of the school plant and the extent to which it complies with fire and safety regulations.
  - d) Capital costs required to upgrade the plant.
  - e) Operating costs of the school.



- f) Relocation of the students and the human, physical, and fiscal costs of such relocation.
  - g) The effect of closure on the neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods.
  - h) Transfer and effective use of staff.
- 4) The report shall be presented to the Board in September. If options have been identified that, if adopted by the Board, would result in the closure of one or more schools, the staff and the School Community Council shall, by the end of September, be notified of the possible implications of the review. The School Community Council, parent/guardian committees, community groups, and other interested parties shall be afforded opportunity for consultation with the Board prior to the end of December.
- 5) Upon conclusion of the consultation process, the Board shall, no later than January 15, make its decisions with respect to any consolidation of attendance areas and school closures.
- 6) Should the Board resolve that consolidation of attendance areas and closure of one or more schools is to take place, the Director shall:
- a) Implement procedures for publicizing the Board's decisions and making information available to parties who would be directly affected by the closure(s);
  - b) Prepare plans for the disposition of equipment and materials located in schools cited for closure;
  - c) Identify options for Board consideration with respect to the disposition of the buildings and grounds occupied by schools cited for closure; and
  - d) Notify the appropriate officials of the city or town in which the school is located.
- 7) Notwithstanding the process described above, a school may also be closed if:
- a) A petition is received from parents/guardians representing a majority of the students enrolled in the school, requesting that its attendance area be combined with that of a nearby school or schools; or
  - b) An unexpected decline in enrolment makes its continued operation impractical.

*Reference:*

*The Education Act, 1995, Sections 85, 87, 347*

*The School Division Administration Regulations, 2017, Parts 8, 10, Division 1 (54-64)*