

Policy 15

VIABLE SCHOOLS

The Board, in its efforts to provide meaningful learning experiences that reflect what is best for students and to assist students in developing their full potential, recognizes that it needs to maintain viable schools and classrooms within the context of the entire Division.

In order to ensure quality education for its students, the Board may, from time to time, have to review the operation of one (1) or more of its schools and consider discontinuing one (1) or more grades offered in a school or closing schools.

A SCC may initiate the review process by recommending to the Board that the school they represent be reviewed according to this policy.

Therefore, the Board will adhere to the following guidelines of operation with regard to determining the possible review status of a school. Review status is an opportunity to explore the facts; it does not necessarily mean the school will be closed. These guidelines will provide a process and procedure so that school review can be clearly predicted, giving people assurance as to how and when a decision process might be initiated.

Specifically

1. Legislative Conditions for Review

[The Education Act, 1995](#) and the Education Regulations set out the process and criteria around school reviews for closure or grade discontinuance.

Pursuant to Section 95.8 of the Education Regulations, the Board may only carry out a review of a school pursuant to Section 87.2 of the Act if the following conditions are met:

- 1.1 For students in kindergarten to Grade 8 who are enrolled in the school:
 - 1.1.1 The nearest school is not more than forty (40) kilometres from the school under review, based on the shortest route by regularly maintained roads;
 - 1.1.2 At least ninety per cent (90%) of those students live within seventy-five (75) minutes of the nearest school if travelling by motor vehicle under normal driving conditions;
 - 1.1.3 The Board arranges for alternative transportation that minimizes the transportation time for those students who live more than seventy-five (75) minutes from the nearest school; and

- 1.2 Projected enrolment for the school under review for the following school year is less than:
 - 1.2.1 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 4 only, twenty-five (25) students;
 - 1.2.2 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 5 only, thirty (30) students;
 - 1.2.3 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 6 only, thirty-seven (37) students;
 - 1.2.4 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 7 only, forty-four (44) students;
 - 1.2.5 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 8 only, fifty-one (51) students;
 - 1.2.6 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 9 only, fifty-eight (58) students;
 - 1.2.7 For a school offering kindergarten to Grade 12 only, eighty-eight (88) students.

2. School Review Criteria

Pursuant to Section 95.81 of the Education Regulations, in carrying out a review of a school pursuant to Section 87.2 of the Act, the Board shall consider the following:

- 2.1 Physical condition of the school;
- 2.2 Operational cost per student;
- 2.3 Number of grades combined in each classroom;
- 2.4 Distribution of enrolments by grade level;
- 2.5 Projected enrolments;
- 2.6 Condition and capacity of potential receiving school(s);
- 2.7 Transportation implications to the potential receiving school(s); and
- 2.8 Availability of educational programming.

Each of the above criteria will be considered in the context of best interest of students, the school, the Division and communities.

3. Process for Placing a School in Review

- 3.1 Enrolments for all schools will be monitored and reported to the Board on a regular basis. Schools with September enrolments that fall below, or are projected to fall below, the thresholds set in legislation will be identified to the Board annually.
- 3.2 For schools that meet the Legislative Conditions for Review, the Director will compile a report on the School Review Criteria and report to the Board with a recommendation as to the review status of the school(s) following the timeline in Board Policy 15– Appendix A – Calendar Guideline.
- 3.3 The Board will consider the information and, if the Board wishes to place a school into the review process, will pass a motion to that effect.

4. Review Process

- 4.1 Consultation Process with SCC

Once a school is placed in review status, the Board will consult with the SCC and the community in accordance with the process set out in *The Education Act, 1995*.

 - 4.1.1 If the SCC consents to closure or grade discontinuance, the Board will make the appropriate motion.

- 4.1.2 If the SCC does not agree to the closure or grade discontinuance, the process continues as outlined below.
 - 4.2 Information and Analysis
 - As per section 95.84 of the Education Regulations, the Board will establish a School Review Committee and provide the following information to the School Review Committee and SCC by November 1:
 - 4.2.1 Enrolment history of the schools for the past five (5) years.
 - 4.2.2 Projected enrolment for the school for the following five (5) school years, and the source of this data.
 - 4.2.3 Current number of teaching and non-teaching staff at the school.
 - 4.2.4 Projected number of teaching staff based on:
 - 4.2.4.1. Projected enrolment outlined in clause 4.2.2, and
 - 4.2.4.2. Board policy.
 - 4.2.5 Information respecting the physical condition of the school.
 - 4.2.6 Any other information that the Board plans to consider in reviewing the school.
 - 4.3 Decision by the Board to Consider Possible Closure or Grade Discontinuance
 - 4.3.1 The information and data collected by the School Review Committee and the Director will be considered by the Board.
 - 4.3.2 Pursuant to Section 87.5(1) of *the Education Act, 1995*, if the Board decides to consider the closure of any school that has been the subject of a review, the Board must, not later than February 1, pass a motion to consider the possible closure of the school or discontinuance of one (1) or more grades or years taught in the school stating the effective date of the possible closure or discontinuance.
 - 4.3.3 The Board must notify the public of the motion passed.
 - 4.4 Public Meeting
 - The Board, not later than March 31 of the year in which the potential closure of the school or discontinuance of grades or years taught in the school is to come into effect, must hold a meeting of electors as per Section 87.5 (2) of *the Education Act, 1995*.
5. Decision Regarding Closure or Grade Discontinuance
- 5.1 After a thorough review of the information gathered and considering the consultations with the community, if the Board decides to close a school or to discontinue one (1) or more grades or years taught in the school, the Board must pass a motion to that effect by April 30 and provide notice as required under *the Education Act, 1995*.

6. School Closures or Grade Reduction and Integration Process

In schools where the Board has passed a motion approving a school closure or grade discontinuance, the Director shall, in consultation with the School Community Council, develop and implement a Transition Plan that includes:

- 6.1 Notifying the parents of the students attending the school affected.
- 6.2 Consulting with the SCC.
- 6.3 Consulting with all affected staff, parents and community.
- 6.4 Preparing an implementation schedule.
- 6.5 Ensuring that a familiarization program for new students and their parents is offered at the receiving school(s).
- 6.6 Redistribution of division assets shall not be done until after the conclusion of the school year.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 87.1, 87.2, 87.3, 87.4, 87.5, 87.6, 87.7, 87.8, 109, 347 *The Education Act, 1995*
Part XIX.3 Education Regulations