

**NLSchools** refers to all public K-12 English schools and school-related facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, Education Operations Branch and all employees working therein providing services and supports to such schools, including those who work in the areas of school facilities, student transportation, program implementation, student services, and procurement.

## Policy Name

School System Review

## Policy Statement

The Department of Education is mandated to organize and administer primary, elementary and secondary education for public English language schools. In doing so, the department strives to ensure the provision of well-maintained and highly utilized school facilities that effectively accommodate student learning needs and to make the best use of school and school-related infrastructure, financial and human resources for all students. An important element in achieving this goal is to have a review process that considers all the elements within a school system(s) to ensure school infrastructure is best used for student success.

Where a school system review identifies a school closure as a possible outcome, subsection 51.4(2) of the **Schools Act, 1997**, requires the Department of Education, prior to closing a school, to provide parents/guardians of students an opportunity to make representations to the department.

## Background

The Department of Education (the department) administers over 250 schools for more than 63,000 students through NLSchools. Its vision is effective and modern learning environments that foster inclusive and healthy communities for all learners in the province. The department is working to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources and the best possible outcomes for all students in the school system.

The school system review process is conducted by the department when there are opportunities identified to maximize use of resources and improve student experience and student outcomes.

This school system review policy outlines the process for initiating and carrying out a school system review.

## **Scope**

This policy will apply when the department decides that a school system review is required for a school system within NLSchools.

## **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

### **Affected Stakeholder**

Individuals or groups impacted by the potential outcome of a school system review. This includes school staff, students, and parents/guardians of students currently attending a school within the system under review. It also includes unions, school councils, members of the community(ies) within the school system, and agencies located in a school facility, such as a public library or Family Resource Centre.

### **Catchment Zone**

Refers to the geographic zone for a school or a group of schools. A student's residential address determines the school(s) they are zoned for and where they must register.

### **Grade Configuration**

Grade groupings established for a school or school system (e.g. K-3, K-12).

### **School**

As per the [Schools Act, 1997, subsection 2\(q\)](#) "school" means the body of school students that is organized as a unit for the purpose of education and includes the teachers and other staff members associated with the unit and the lands and premises used in connection with the unit.

## **School Closure**

The discontinuation of operations and permanent closure of a school operated by NLSchools for educational purposes.

## **School System**

Refers to a group of schools that constitute a K-12 feeder system for a catchment zone.

## **Policy Directives**

1. The department may initiate a school system review, based on one or more of the following considerations:
  - Increased or decreased enrolment in a school or grade;
  - Potential for enhancements and access to programs for students;
  - Changing demographics which may require catchment zone reconfiguration;
  - The addition of a facility within a catchment zone;
  - Improving school facility utilization;
  - Condition of school infrastructure and/or safety or environmental concerns associated with a school(s); and/or
  - Other circumstances that, in the opinion of the Minister, merits a review of the school system.
2. Where it is determined that a school system review is to be initiated, department officials will begin compiling all relevant information, as outlined in Appendix A, for each of the schools within the school system under review.
3. A school system review will be conducted in a manner that respects the principles of procedural fairness, and provides the opportunity for parents/guardians, and other affected stakeholders, to be informed about the review and to have input.
4. The outcomes of a school system review may include:
  - Maintain status quo;
  - Modify or replace facility(ies) and/or enhance programs;
  - Change in school operational matters (e.g., bussing schedules);
  - Reconfiguration of the grades in a school(s) or school system;
  - Reconfigure the catchment zone for the school(s) or school system; or
  - Close a school(s).

5. When a decision is made to initiate a school system review, the Superintendent or Senior Management Officials will notify all school staff and school councils within the system.
6. Notice will be provided by department officials to the parents/guardians and other affected stakeholders that a school system review process will take place. The notice will be provided in a variety of forms/mediums such as:
  - Memos to parents/guardians,
  - NLSchools website,
  - Department of Education releases/memos,
  - Other media/social media options.
7. Consultation Plan – Grade or Catchment Zone Reconfiguration: If, upon consideration of the information prepared by departmental officials on the school system under review, the department determines there is a potential for a grade or catchment zone reconfiguration, the department will determine the scope and extent of the consultation process appropriate for the situation.
8. Consultation Plan - School Closure: If, upon consideration of the information prepared by departmental officials on the school system under review, the department determines there is a potential for a school closure, further notice will be given that the department is considering a school for closure.

All information considered by the department in making a decision to consider closure of a school will be made available to parents/guardians school staff, and other affected stakeholders.

Parents/guardians and other stakeholders will be provided an opportunity to make submissions in a variety of ways including through email, regular mail, online sources or by dropping submissions off at the school. Virtual or in person meetings may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In accordance with the **Schools Act, 1997**, when the department is considering a school closure, parents/guardians of students from the school will be provided a minimum of 30 days to make representations to the department. The form of such representations will be determined by the department on a case-by-case basis

ensuring compliance with the **Schools Act, 1997** and the requirements of procedural fairness.

9. School Closure – no student enrollment:

The department will determine the extent of the consultation process required, on a case-by-case basis, for closing a school where there are no students enrolled and there is no projected enrollment.

10. Where, after completion of the consultations and review of all relevant information, the department decides to reconfigure or close a school, notice will be provided by the department to parents/guardians and other stakeholders of this decision, including the effective date of implementation of the decision.

11. Information used by the department to make the decision to close a school will be made available to all stakeholders. Any personal information will be governed by the [Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015](#).

12. Where a school or school system is being reconfigured, or a school in the system is being closed, the department will initiate a transition planning process to address programming, staffing, infrastructure, transportation, and other factors. This will be done in consultation with school councils, parents/guardians, relevant staff and unions.

13. The public consultation process does not apply when: a school facility has been destroyed or significantly damaged by fire, or structural failure; or where circumstances exist that present a significant and immediate health or safety threat; where other emergent situations exist that require an immediate response; or when the affected stakeholders agree to a school reconfiguration or closure. In such circumstances, the Minister of Education may immediately make necessary changes to accommodate students.

## Appendix A

### School Review Profile (SRP)

This will be used by departmental staff as a guideline for preparing information on an individual school(s) that are the focus of a school system review. This is a guideline only and not all information outlined below will be compiled for all schools under review. The department will determine the relevant information necessary for the SRP on a per review basis.

#### 1. Student Enrollment

- Historic and current student enrollment figures for the school and individual grade levels as well as available projections.
- Grade configuration
- Class size
- School system description

#### 2. Programming and Services

- Impact on a suitable and equitable range of learning opportunities for students due to declining enrollment.
- Reorganization potential to enhance learning opportunities and outcomes for students.
- Class composition
- Core curriculum
- Kindergarten
- French programming
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular programming
- Staffing
- Optional programming
- Specialist programming, instructional spaces and resources (e.g., Music, Art)
- Student Support Services
- Community programs in school (e.g., public library, childcare, breakfast/lunch program)

#### 3. Teaching services

- Teaching staff including specialist staffing
- Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation programming and staff capacity

#### 4. Facility

- Geography
- Age of facility/facilities
- Capital projects/repairs carried out in recent years
- Capital projects/repairs required
- Health/environmental/safety concerns
- Infrastructure to support programming
- Capacity and utilization

#### 5. Transportation

- Transportation description and resources required
- Distance and average travel time to proposed school
- Potential challenges and opportunities with transportation to proposed school

#### 6. Finances

- School(s) operating costs
- Transportation costs
- Funds required for capital projects/repairs

#### 7. School(s) Where Students Will be Transferred in the Event of a School Closure or Reconfiguration

- The capacity of the proposed school(s) to accommodate the students
- Changes and associated costs required to accommodate students at the school(s)
- Maintenance or enhancement of programming and supports for the incoming students
- Other relevant information