

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 25, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Possible Closure of Ritchie School
ORIGINATOR: T. Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Donna Barrett, Jenise Bidulock, Bruce Coggles, Will Deys, Michael Ediger, Leanne Fedor, Kerry-Ann Kope, Roland Labbe, Ron MacNeil, Sandra Mason, Bob Morter, Ann Parker, Lorne Parker, Tanni Parker, Cindy Skolski, Betty Tams

RECOMMENDATION

That the closure of Ritchie School at the end of the 2007-2008 school year be approved.

* * * * *

School Closure Process and Public Meeting

On September 11, 2007, the Board of Trustees approved the *Annual Implementation Plan* which identified five District schools where the viability of the school was of concern. Sustainability and Continuation Reviews were undertaken at these schools which included Ritchie School. On January 29, 2008 the Board of Trustees received information on the results of the reviews and initiated the provincially mandated process to consider Ritchie School for closure (Appendix I). The recommendation to close Ritchie School was considered in accordance with the criteria outlined in Board Policy FL.BP – School Closures (Appendix II).

A public meeting was held on February 25, 2008 to hear public representations regarding the potential closure of Ritchie School. The following arrangements, which meet or exceed requirements as set out in the provincial *Closure of Schools Regulation*, were made prior to the public meeting:

- Parents/guardians of students registered at the school received a letter notifying them of the public meeting and a Question and Answer (Q&A) document that answers questions set out by the provincial *Closure of Schools Regulation* (Appendix III)
- Parents also received a Question Submission Form to submit their individual inquiries, in addition to using letters and e-mails. The District did not respond to individual inquiries prior to the public meeting. Submissions were reviewed by the administration and representative questions were answered at the public meeting,

following the opening presentation. This approach allowed all participants to benefit from the responses to the individual questions that were submitted.

- Notice of the public meeting appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Edmonton Sun*, and the *Edmonton Examiner*.
- Public meeting notices were posted in five or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure.
- Posters advertising the public meeting were e-mailed to principals and administrative assistants of schools identified for closure and receiving schools as well as any other schools that may be affected by closure. Each school was to post the advertisements.
- A letter was sent to the City of Edmonton providing notice of the public meetings and requesting that the municipality provide a statement to the Chair of the Board of Trustees regarding the impact the closure may have on the community.
- The president of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and presidents of the local community league received notification of the meetings and an invitation to attend.
- Written submissions were posted on a weekly basis in the Trustee's on-line reading room. This is done in accordance with the provincial *Closure of Schools Regulation* such that a Board shall give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure.

The purpose of the public meeting on Monday, February 25, 2008 at Ritchie School, was to share information and receive input from parents and community members about the possible closure of Ritchie School. Of the participants who signed in at the meeting, there were 34 parents, 43 community members, two principals, three school staff members and 29 others, which included provincial electoral candidates and community league presidents for Ritchie and Woodcroft neighbourhoods. All Trustees were in attendance. District staff from the Superintendent's office and Planning Department were also in attendance.

Minutes of the meeting and the PowerPoint presentation were posted on the District website at www.epsb.ca.

Feedback Received During School Closure Process

Through the closure process parents or community members expressed a desire to keep Ritchie School open for the following reasons:

- that the Continuation Review process was flawed
 - o there was limited time between notification of the Continuation Review and its completion to address enrolment concerns
 - o data provided by the District was biased and flawed
- that the community will be rejuvenated in the near future as the community ages and new families move into the area
- that the small school atmosphere would be lost
- that there will be negative impact on the quality of the neighborhood
- that the decline of the building condition has kept new students from enrolling at the school
- that the potential use of the school as an arts centre for artists in residence programs at the school has not been explored
- that parents still desire the International Spanish Academy program to be consolidated from Mill Creek School to create a kindergarten to Grade 9 in Ritchie School

- that a modernization is needed in order to attract new student enrolment to the school
- that the District has neglected the 1913 school wing to the point that it is a detriment to the community and to attracting students.

Recommendation

Ritchie School is recommended for closure because of low and declining student enrolment and the school is located in a mature neighbourhood with the number of school aged children in decline. There is excess student space in junior high schools located in this area of the city. Consideration to close Ritchie School is consistent with a long term strategic approach to ensure that the learning needs of students are met and that programs are sustainable to serve the Ritchie neighborhood and the South Central Sector for years to come.

There are 12 schools in the South Central Sector that provide Junior High programming; Allendale, Avalon, Avonmore, Donnan, Grandview Heights, Hardisty, Kenilworth, King Edward Academy, McKernan, Ottewell, Ritchie, and Alberta School for the Deaf.

The viability of schools in the immediate area, and the South Central Sector are dependent on taking students from other sectors to increase enrolment. Currently, 53 per cent of the students enrolled in South Central Sector live outside the sector, many of whom will have access to a local Alberta School Alternative Procurement (ASAP) school in 2010.

Enrolment, Grade Organization, Capacity, Staffing and Operational Costs

Ritchie School offers regular programming for students in Grades eight and nine, as well as Literacy and Opportunity Special Education programming at Grades seven, eight and nine. In June 2007, seven students had enrolled in the Grade seven program. For a variety of reasons, parents chose to withdraw their children from the school and enrol them elsewhere. The District anticipates that there would be no Grade seven or eight regular program in the next year. Ritchie School has organized combined classes for all optional programs in order to offer students some choice.

Enrolment at Ritchie School was 92 students as of September 30, 2007. There were 89 students registered as of December 20, 2007. Of the 89 students enrolled, 50 students are registered in the regular program, and 39 students were registered in the Literacy and Opportunity Special Education programs.

Ritchie School’s student enrolment and grade configuration as of December 20, 2007 is as follows:

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total
Regular		29	21	50
Literacy	3	11	10	24
Opportunity	8	5	2	15
TOTAL	11	45	33	89

Current Grade Organization (December 20, 2007)

Regular Program

Grade 7	No students
Grade 8	29 students
Grade 9	21 students

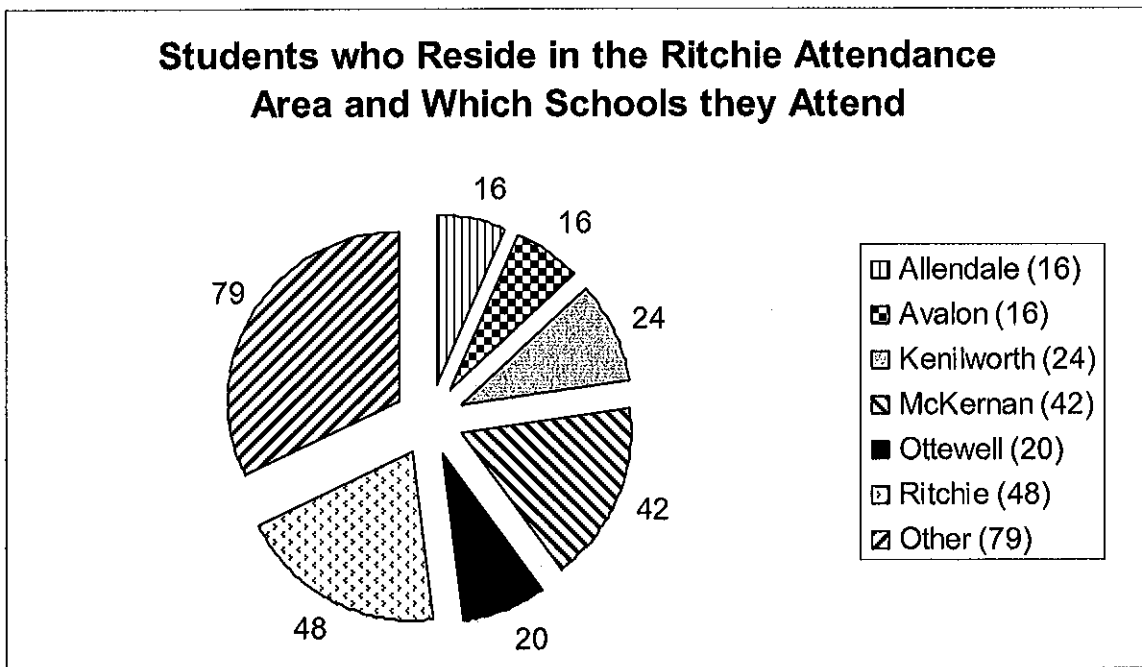
Literacy Program

Combined Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9	10 students
Combined Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9	14 students

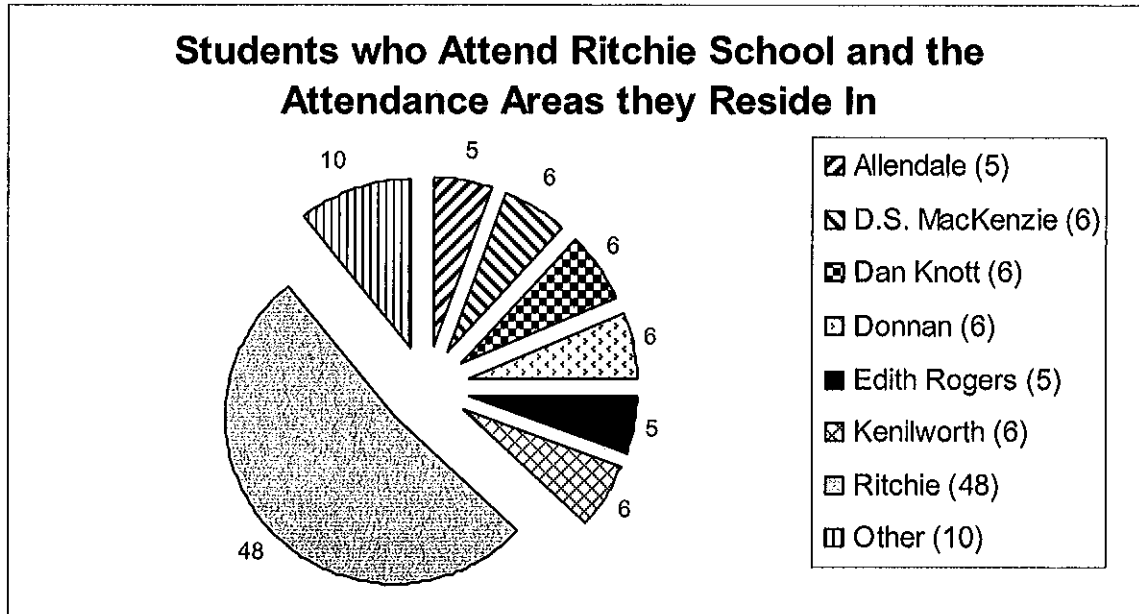
Opportunity Program

Combined Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9	15 students
------------------------------------	-------------

There are 245 EPSB junior high students residing in the Ritchie School attendance area. As shown in the following pie chart, 48 students attend Ritchie School and the remaining 197 students attend various other District schools. This information is based on September 30, 2007 enrolment.



The following chart indicates the neighbourhoods in which current Ritchie School students reside. This information is based on September 30, 2007 enrolment.



School Capacity

- Ritchie School opened in 1913. In 1954 a 1,138.5 m² addition was added, and in 1956 a 1061.8 m² addition was built. A further 2,178.5 m² addition was added in 1975. The school remains attached to the original 1913 facility, which houses the boilers for the 1954 addition. Use of the 1913 portion of the building was discontinued shortly after construction of the 1975 addition.
- The Provincial Infrastructure capacity is rated for 887 students (19 per cent utilization rate)
- The Alberta Learning Commission's capacity, based on recommended class size is 900 students for the entire Ritchie School facility (10 per cent of student space occupied). For review purposes, at the request of parents, the district ACOL school capacity is rated at 500 student spaces which does not include the 1913 facility (18 per cent student space occupied).
- When you compare Ritchie School's enrolment to either measure of capacity all result in under utilization of space.

Cost of Staff and Operations for the Educational Programs

Currently there are 11.3 full time equivalent staff positions at Ritchie School, consisting of seven certified teaching staff including the principal, two teacher aides, one administrative assistant, and one custodial worker. The total operating and instructional allocations provided to Ritchie School for 2007-08 was \$933,413. Instructional and Plant Operational and Maintenance funding is distributed by the province on a per student basis.

Recommended Designated Receiving School

The current 33 students in Grade nine at Ritchie School will move to high school next year. If Ritchie School were to close, the remaining 29 regular program students would be designated to another junior high school such as McKernan School. The administration is recommending McKernan School for a number of reasons.

- More students who reside in the Ritchie attendance area, and do not attend Ritchie School, are choosing McKernan School. Of the 245 students residing in the Ritchie attendance area, 48 attend Ritchie School and 42 students attend McKernan School.
- McKernan School has a strong regular program student population.
- McKernan School will provide more opportunities for single grade groupings and additional program resources.
- McKernan School has adequate space to accommodate Ritchie School students.
- McKernan School has been designated as the International Spanish Academy junior high site for September 2008. Designating the regular program to McKernan School will provide continuity for Mill Creek/Ritchie families.
- Edmonton Transit routes are accessible to McKernan School from the Ritchie neighbourhood.

Students have direct access to the designated school for their attendance area as defined by their residence. If Ritchie School were to close, some students may choose other District schools. Should parents of Ritchie School request to register in a different school other than the designated receiving schools, students would be able to register in that school as long as the school provides the appropriate program and the student meets entrance criteria.

If Ritchie School were to close, the remaining Literacy Program students (14) would be designated to Avalon School, and the remaining Opportunity Program students (13) would be designated to Ottewell School. All special needs students would be provided access to other existing Special Education District Centres closer to where they reside.

Transportation

Subsidized Edmonton Transit bus passes would be provided to students to attend their designated or other junior high school. Special transportation is provided for eligible students with mild, moderate or severe disabilities.

Ritchie School is located in Transportation Zone 2. There are 37 students who are transported to District Special Education Centres at Ritchie School. Eight students live in Transportation Zone 2. Ten students live in the Transportation Zone 1. Eleven students live in Transportation Zone 3. One student lives in the Transportation Zone 5. This list does not include students under parent provided transportation.

Impact of Closing the School on the Community

Ritchie School was built in 1913 and is located on non-reserve land, which the District owns, with no other school facility adjacent to the site. The land includes playfields. Under the *Joint Use Agreement* with the City of Edmonton, the sports fields are maintained and administered by the city. This would continue as long as the District retains property ownership. There would be no impact on playfield access if Ritchie were to be closed. Ritchie School does not provide *Joint Use Agreement* evening community access as it does not have an evening custodian.

Should Ritchie School be closed, the school will first be considered by the District for educational purposes, for example, District operations that are in leased space, lease to non profit organizations or sold. Closed schools have been leased on long-term basis to organizations such as NAIT, the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation, and the City of Edmonton Community Services Department. A number of closed schools have been sold to: the City of Edmonton for green space, the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, and the Turkish Canadian Cultural Society. The District will consult with stakeholders prior to determining the future use of the closed facility.

The Edmonton Hispanic Bilingual Association rents Ritchie School every Wednesday evening and Saturday morning for Spanish language classes. Alternative accommodations for their rentals would be explored. There are currently no lease tenants in the building.

WD:CS:cp

- Appendix I Closure of Schools Regulation
- Appendix II Board Policy FL.BP School Closure
- Appendix III Notice of Meeting – Monday, February 25, 2008

(Consolidated up to 170/2004)

ALBERTA REGULATION 238/97

School Act

CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS REGULATION

Table of Contents

- 1** Definitions
- 1.1** Non-application of sections
- 1.2** Exemption from requirements
- 2** Closure of schools, etc.
- 3** Policies and procedures for closure of schools
- 4** Notification of proposed closure
- 5** Public meetings
- 6** Decision on closure
- 7** Closure within school year
- 8** Expiry

Definitions

1 In this Regulation,

(a) "closure" means any action referred to in section 2;

(a.1) "Ministers" means, for the purposes of sections 6 and 7, the Ministers determined under section 16 of the *Government Organization Act* as the Ministers responsible for Part 7 of the *School Act*;

(b) "school year" means the 12-month period beginning on September 1 and ending on the following August 31.

AR 238/97 s1;223/2002;257/2003

Non-application of sections

1.1(1) Sections 4 to 7 do not apply to a closure that occurs

(a) in connection with the transfer by one board to another board or to the operator of a charter school of the ownership of real property on which a school building is located and the school building will continue to be used for the instruction or accommodation of students,

(b) as a result of the Minister's having directed the board to dispose of the school building pursuant to section 200(3) of the Act, or

(c) pursuant to section 2(b) if

(i) the school has more than one education program,

(ii) the students in the grades being closed are all in the same education program, and

(iii) the education program referred to in subclause (ii) is to be transferred to another school.

(2) Where a board plans to transfer an education program pursuant to subsection (1)(c)(iii), the board shall organize and convene an information meeting for the purpose of informing the parents of the students affected by the transfer of the transfer and the alternative arrangements for continuing the education program at another school.

AR 135/2003 s2;257/2003;170/2004

Exemption from requirements

1.2(1) The Minister may, on the written request of a board or on the Minister's initiative, exempt a board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure that occurs

- (a) as a result of the board's inability to comply with section 57(2) of the Act, or
- (b) for health or safety reasons.

(2) The Minister may, on the written request of a board, exempt the board from the requirements of sections 4 to 7 in respect of a closure if the Minister is satisfied that the board has consulted with the community regarding any change in grades and programs in one or more of the schools operated by the board.

AR 257/2003 s4;170/2004

Closure of schools, etc.

2 A board may

- (a) close a school permanently or for a specified period of time,
- (b) close entirely 3 or more consecutive grades in a school, or
- (c) repealed AR 257/2003 s5,
- (d) transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.

AR 238/97 s2;257/2003

Policies and procedures for closure of schools

3 A board may develop and implement policies and procedures with respect to closure of schools that are not inconsistent with this Regulation.

AR 238/97 s3;257/2003

Notification of proposed closure

4**(1)** Where a board is considering the closure of a school, the board shall

- (a) raise the matter by way of a motion at a regular meeting of the board, and
- (b) in writing notify the parents of every child and student enrolled in the school who, in the opinion of the board, will be significantly affected by the closure of the school.

(2) A notice referred to in subsection (1)(b) shall set out the following:

- (a) how the closure would affect the attendance area defined for that school;
- (b) how the closure would affect the attendance at other schools;
- (b.1) information on the board's long-range capital plan;

- (c) the number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure;
- (d) the need for, and extent of, busing;
- (e) program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools;
- (f) the educational and financial impact of closing the school, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications;
- (g) the educational and financial impact if the school were to remain open;
- (h) and (i) repealed AR 257/2003 s7;
- (j) the time and location of the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

(3) A notice referred to in subsection (1)(b) may set out the following:

- (a) the capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure, and
- (b) the possible uses of the school building or space in the school building if
 - (i) the entire school is being closed, or
 - (ii) 3 or more consecutive grades in the school are being closed entirely.

AR 238/97 s4;257/2003;170/2004

Public meetings

5(1) Where a board has given notice of motion at a regular meeting of the board that it is considering the closure of a school, the board

- (a) shall organize and convene a public meeting for the purpose of discussing the information provided to the parents under section 4,
- (b) shall provide an opportunity for the council of the municipality in which the school is located to provide a statement to the board of the impact the closure may have on the community, and
- (c) may hold other meetings with respect to the closure at times and places as the board may determine.

(2) The date and place of the public meeting referred to in subsection (1)(a) shall be

- (a) posted in 5 or more conspicuous places in the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the closure, for a period of at least 14 days before the date of the public meeting, and

(b) advertised in a newspaper circulating within the area or areas of the school or schools affected by the proposed closure, on at least 2 occasions as close as is practicable to the date of the meeting.

(3) At least 2 trustees of the board shall attend the public meeting referred to in subsection (1)(a).

(4) A board shall ensure that minutes of all public meetings held under this section are prepared.

AR 238/97 s5;257/2003

Decision on closure

6(1) A board shall not make a final decision on the proposed closure until at least 3 weeks have passed since the date of the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

(2) A board shall give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting referred to in section 5(1)(a).

(3) A board

(a) shall by resolution decide whether to close the school, and

(b) if the decision is to close the school, shall forthwith notify the Ministers in writing of the decision.

AR 238/97 s6;223/2002;257/2003

Closure within school year

7(1) All school closure procedures shall be initiated and completed within the school year in which the decision to close the school is made.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), on the written request of the board, the Ministers may extend the school closure procedures beyond one school year.

AR 238/97 s7;257/2003

Expiry

8 For the purpose of ensuring that this Regulation is reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be re-passed in its present or an amended form following a review, this Regulation expires on November 1, 2008.

AR 238/97 s8;223/2002;257/2003

9 Repealed AR 223/2002 s5.

BOARD POLICY FL.BP SCHOOL CLOSURE

[Policies](#) -> [Table of Contents](#) -> [Facilities](#)

Edmonton	Public	Schools
<u>Board Policies and Regulations</u>		

CODE: FL.BP
TOPIC: School Closure

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07-11-2006
ISSUE DATE: 08-11-2006
REVIEW DATE: 11-2011

The board believes that the closure of schools is an important consideration in ensuring the responsible use of the resources placed in its trust; making efficient use of the district's school space; and safeguarding the health and safety of students, staff, and the public.

A. SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

1. The authority of the Board is derived from the *School Act* and the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation, which say that the Board of Trustees may:
 - a. close a school permanently or for a specified period of time, or
 - b. close entirely three or more consecutive grades in a school, or
 - c. transfer all students from one school building to one or more other school buildings on a permanent basis.

The process for closure of schools under this authority is explained in section C, Process for School Closure.

2. The board authorizes the administration, under the direction of the superintendent of schools and with consultation as determined by the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation to:
 - a. close or permanently relocate fewer than three consecutive grades in a school, or
 - b. temporarily relocate any number of grades from one school to another.

The process for this shall be in accordance with the Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation, which says that, the board will convene an information meeting with parents of the students affected by the transfer and the alternative arrangements for continuing the education program at another school.

Discontinuance or relocation of a regular program or an alternative program or a special needs program, is not a school closure. The process for discontinuance or relocation of an alternative program is addressed in HA.BP - Student Programs.

B. CRITERIA FOR RECOMMENDING SCHOOL CLOSURE

Before recommending the closure of a school to the Board of Trustees, the administration

will develop viability benchmarks and school profiles through the Ten-Year Facilities Plan and will consider all of the following criteria:

- the educational impact on students in the school;
- the enrolment of the school and programs within the school;
- the population and demographic data;
- the amount and cost of excess space in the school;
- the cost to staff and operate the educational program at the school;
- the cost to maintain the facility in operable condition or to restore the facility to operable condition;
- the location and accessibility of the school and the proximity of other schools;
- the necessity to safeguard the health and safety of students, staff, and public;
- the need to consolidate or relocate existing programs;
- the impact of closing the school on the community taking into account existing or proposed development plans.

C. PROCESS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

The process for closure will be in accordance with the *School Act* and Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation

A process for school closure flow chart is provided for reference. In case of conflict between this policy and the flow chart, the policy shall prevail.

Reference(s):

HA, BP - Student Programs

School Act Section 58

Alberta Closure of Schools Regulation

Ten-Year Facilities Plan 2007-2016

Process for School Closure Flow Chart

Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation - School Infrastructure Manual

NOTICE OF MEETING

MEETING TO CONSIDER CLOSURE OF RITCHIE SCHOOL

Date: Monday, February 25, 2008
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: Ritchie School
Gymnasium
9750 - 74 Avenue

INFORMATION REGARDING THE POTENTIAL CLOSURE OF RITCHIE SCHOOL

1. How the school closure would affect the attendance area defined for Ritchie School.

Ritchie School, located at 9750 - 74 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, currently offers a Grade 8 to 9 regular program and is a District centre for two Special Education programs: the Literacy Program and Opportunity Program for Grades 7 to 9. The Board of Trustees is considering the closure of both the regular junior high program, and the Special Education Programs.

Ritchie School does not have a regular Grade 7 program because in June 2007 there were a total of seven students pre-enrolled for this school year. At this time, parents expressed a desire to relocate their children to another school. Students were provided assistance in enrolling at another District school of their choice.

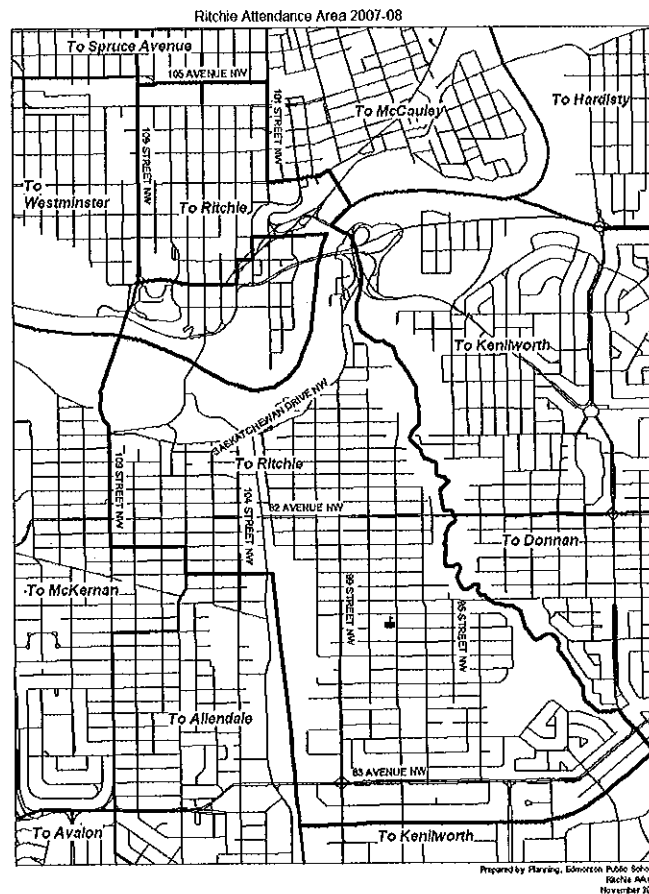
The attendance area for the regular junior high program at Ritchie School consists of the Ritchie, Hazeldean, Argyll and Strathcona neighbourhoods, along with small portions of the Garneau and Queen Alexandra neighbourhoods.

In the event of the closure of Ritchie School, the Ritchie junior high attendance area would remain unchanged. The District is proposing that students residing within the Ritchie attendance area would be designated to McKernan School. Confirmation of the designated receiving school would be determined in consultation with the parents of Ritchie School students during the school closure process. McKernan School provides elementary and junior high programming and is located at 11330 - 76 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta.

The Literacy and Opportunity Programs are Special Education District centre programs that accommodate students, whose residence are broadly distributed throughout South Edmonton. Special Education District Centres do not have an attendance area. However, the District endeavours to place students at a school within the same transportation zone as they reside. Ritchie School is located in Transportation Zone 2. Currently, students from Transportation Zone 1, 2, 3, and 5 attend Ritchie School.

Leadership Services will consult with parents and the principal to determine the best location for individual Special Education students. There will be space for students next year in the Literacy Program at Avalon School and the Opportunity Program at Ottewell School. Avalon and Ottewell schools currently are District centres that provide Special Education programming.

The following map illustrates Ritchie School's Attendance Area for 2007-08:



2. How the closure of Ritchie School would affect the attendance at other schools.

With a capacity of 675, according to the District's calculation of Alberta Commission on Learning (ACOL) guidelines, McKernan School can accommodate all 29 students currently enrolled in the regular program at Ritchie School who will be proceeding to Grade 9 next year. Current enrolment at Ritchie School includes students who reside inside and outside the Ritchie attendance area. The September 30, 2007 enrolment at McKernan School was 552 students (Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 9), and the projected enrolment for September, 2008 prior to consideration of closure of Ritchie School, is 518 students (Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 9). The current enrolment for McKernan School's junior high program (Grades 7 to 9) is 331 students and the projected junior high enrolment for September 2008 is 316 students, prior to the consideration of closure of Ritchie School.

If Ritchie School closes, an additional enrolment of 29 Grade 9 regular program students could be designated to McKernan School for a projected junior high enrolment of 344 students (Grades 7 to 9) for the 2008-09 school year.

Currently there are 245 public junior high students living within the Ritchie School attendance area. Forty-eight students (19.5 per cent) currently choose to attend Ritchie School. Forty-two (42) students attend McKernan School, 24 students attend Kenilworth School, 20 students attend Ottewell School, sixteen students attend Allendale and Avalon schools, and the remaining 79 students attend other District schools for junior high programming. On average 45 per cent of all junior high students

District-wide attend their designated school. Some of the students currently attending Ritchie School could choose to attend District schools other than McKernan School.

The current ACOL school capacities for other neighbouring schools are as follows: Allendale School 585 student spaces, Donnan School 517 student spaces, Kenilworth School 600 student spaces, McKernan School 675 student spaces, and Ottewell School 825 student spaces.

As mentioned, Leadership Services will consult with parents and the principal to determine the best District centre location for individual Special Education students. There will be space for students in the Literacy Program at Avalon School and the Opportunity Program at Ottewell School.

3. *Information on the Board's long-range capital plan.*

Edmonton Public Schools has a plan to build new schools in growth areas, renew existing schools in areas where enrolments are sustainable and transform the way facilities are managed into a model of efficiency for the future.

Please find enclosed:

- brochure with information on Edmonton Public Schools Ten-Year Facilities Plan (2008-2017) and Three-Year Capital Plan (2008-2011)
- copy of the Ten-Year Facilities Plan (2008-2017)
- copy of the Three-Year Capital Plan (2008-2011)

Ritchie School is located in the South Central Sector, which is made up of mature neighbourhoods. A strategy to decrease the amount of excess space in this sector will be undertaken, that may necessitate program relocations, program closures and school closures, in order to maximize learning opportunities for students.

4. *The number of students who would need to be relocated as a result of the closure of Ritchie School.*

The current 33 students in Grade 9 at Ritchie School will move to high school next year. If Ritchie School were to be closed, the remaining 56 students would move up a grade and be designated to McKernan School for regular junior high programming (29 students), to Avalon School (14 students) for the Literacy Program and Ottewell School (13 students) for the Opportunity Program. There will be space available in each of these schools to accommodate students from Ritchie School.

Students have direct access to the designated school for their attendance area as defined by their residence. If Ritchie School is closed, some students may choose other District schools. Should parents of Ritchie School request to register in a different school other than the designated receiving schools, students would be able to register in that school as long as the school provides the appropriate program and the student meets entrance criteria.

5. *The need for, and the extent of, bussing.*

Subsidized Edmonton Transit bus passes would be provided to students to attend their designated or other junior high school. Special transportation is provided for eligible students with mild, moderate or severe disabilities. Edmonton Transit Information can be accessed at:

<http://www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt?space=CommunityPage&control=SetCommunity&CommunityID=265>

6. Program implications for other schools and for the students when they are attending other schools.

Students in the regular program at Ritchie School are organized into combined classes. If Ritchie School were to close, students attending McKernan School would become part of a larger peer group being provided the opportunity for single grade class groupings. Resources allocated to the designated receiving school would reflect the increased student population and student eligibilities. Students who choose to attend McKernan School in the regular program would have access to an extensive list of extra-curricular, volunteer and leadership opportunities.

If Ritchie School closes, the students in the Literacy and Opportunity Programs would benefit in the same way as students in the regular program. They would also gain from the financial supports for inclusion in a larger school. As well, specialized teaching for students with Special Education program requirements can be more readily provided in a school with a larger population.

Educational opportunities and benefits that would be available to Ritchie School students through the regular junior high program offered at McKernan School are outlined below.

School	McKernan
Staffing	Increased teaching staff for additional support, leadership and collaboration opportunities Full Time library technician Music Specialist CTS Specialist
Curriculum and Resource Program Benefits	Multiple languages instruction (English, French and Spanish) Multi cultural focus Video Conferencing ESL support Strong Fine Arts Focus
Support Services	Access to all social services Partnership with University of Alberta that includes student mentorship
Facilities	Two computer labs Internet access in each room Access to Smart Board technology Access to community skating rink Two large gymnasiums Easy access to Edmonton Transit and LRT
Extra and Co-Curricular Activities	Band program and Jazz and Honour bands Individual and Team sports – Interschool for example cross country running, basketball, volleyball, badminton Intramurals Many clubs and activities for example ski, Handbell choir, drama productions, Citadel club, fine arts,

7. *The educational and financial impact of closing Ritchie School, including the effect on operational costs and capital implications.*

Educational Impact

If Ritchie School closes, students in the regular program will become part of a larger peer group at McKernan School and there will be the possibility of a greater number of students at the same grade level and/or ability level, and increased opportunities for peer group interactions and age-appropriate activities.

If Ritchie School closes, students in the Literacy Program will be provided programming at Avalon School or another District centre for Special Education that meets their social and academic needs.

If Ritchie School closes, student in the Opportunity Program will be provided programming at Ottewell School or another District centre for Special Education that meets their social and academic needs.

In each case, the designated school will engage in welcoming and community building activities to support successful transition to the school.

Financial Impact – Operational and Capital

The current school budget for Ritchie School is \$933,413, which includes staffing and Supplies Equipment and Services allocations. If Ritchie School was closed, the budgeted funds will be available for use in other schools. Direct savings from the reduction of an administrative assistant, and a head custodian would amount to \$96,178 per year. With the closure, approximately \$146,101 in operational and maintenance costs will be saved. An Architecture review of Ritchie School conducted last year, estimated it will cost approximately \$16.5 million to complete a full modernization, including the 1913 wing.

8. *The educational and financial impact if Ritchie School were to remain open.*

Educational Impacts

If Ritchie School remains open, the District anticipates that there would be no regular Grade 7 or 8 program next year. There would be 29 students in the Grade nine regular program.

Resources would be allocated to the school on the basis of the projected 2008-09 enrolment of 29 students in the regular program and 42 students in the Special Education programs. In addition, resources for the purchase of instructional materials and equipment would continue to be limited or further reduced.

The challenges for teachers working in the regular program in multiple subject areas groupings could include:

- Limited flexibility when organizing for instruction related to student learning groups
- Challenges in teachers being required to teach in areas outside of their expertise
- Continued reduction in teacher staff
- Loss of on-site administrator

- May impact ability to select adequate resources to reflect range of student interests, abilities and needs in a classroom e.g. library reading materials
- Limited opportunities to share ideas, strategies and resources with other teachers of similar course offerings at the same grade level or in the same subject area
- May impact opportunities to attend or engage in professional collaboration opportunities within the school
- May impact ability to offer range of options classes to meet student interest

Financial Impact – Operational and Capital

Based on staffing and operating costs for the projected enrolment of 71 students, the total annual cost to operate Ritchie School will be approximately \$799,448. If Ritchie School were to remain open, the annual budget would continue to be subsidized because of low student enrolment. Architecture review of Ritchie School conducted last year, estimated it will cost approximately \$16.5 million to complete a full modernization, including the 1913 wing.

9. The capital needs of the schools that may have increased enrolment as a result of the closure of Ritchie School.

McKernan School is in acceptable condition and is able to accommodate the potential increased student enrolment without additional capital. Avalon and Ottewell schools currently have District Special Education centres and there will be no additional capital needs to accommodate additional students. Ottewell School was modernized in 2002. Avalon School has been identified in the District's Three-Year Capital Plan for a preservation request to complete a general upgrade.

10. What is the proposed use the school building if it is closed?

Should Ritchie School be closed, the school will first be considered by the District for educational purposes, for example, District operations that are in leased space, lease to non profit organizations or sold. Closed schools have been used by the District for the Home School Centre, the Environment Education Centre, and the Rites of Passage Program. A few have been leased on a long-term basis to organizations such as NAIT, the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation, and the City of Edmonton Community Services Department. A number of closed schools have been sold to: the City of Edmonton for green space, the Edmonton Society for Christian Education, and the Turkish Canadian Cultural Society.

The District will consult with stakeholders prior to determining future use of a closed facility.

11. What are the impacts on Lease Agreements if the school were to be closed?

Tenants in the building will be provided with four options.

- a) The tenant (or tenants) may remain in the building for the remainder of the term of the lease;
- b) The tenant (or tenants) may express an interest to remain in the building for future lease renewal term;
- c) The tenant (or tenants) may terminate the lease at any time without penalty; or
- d) The tenant (or tenants) may express an interest to relocate to another District school.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information regarding the School Closure Process or to provide feedback, visit Edmonton Public Schools website www.epsb.ca and select the link to the Planning website.

In accordance with the School Act Alberta Regulation 238/97 – *Closure of Schools Regulation* a Board shall not make a final decision on the proposed closure of Ritchie School until at least three weeks have passed since the date of the public meeting. The Board will give due consideration to any written submissions on the proposed closure that it receives after the public meeting and prior to the final debate and decision at the public board meeting on Tuesday, March 25, 2008.

Form for Return:
"Question Submission Form"

*Questions regarding the Board of Trustees' consideration of closure of **Ritchie School** may be submitted in writing prior to **Wednesday, February 20, 2008** to the attention of:*

Lorne Parker, Managing Director
Planning and Student Transportation
Centre for Education
1 Kingsway
Edmonton, AB T5H 4G9
Fax: (780) 425-0323
E-mail: School.Closures@epsb.ca

It is not possible to respond to individual questions or inquiries prior to the public meeting which is scheduled for **7:00 pm, Monday, February 25, 2008 at Ritchie School**. At the public meeting, representative questions will be responded to. Should your specific question(s) not be selected for response at the public meeting, you will have ample opportunity to direct questions to administration and you are invited to do so.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Your name and contact information is being collected by the EPSB as a record of stakeholder involvements