

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 10, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Process for Considering Closure of Westview Village School

ORIGINATOR: Angus McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Del Bouck, Robert Craig, Michael Ediger, June Klassen, Manfred Malzahn, Faye Parker, Deanne Patsula

RECOMMENDATION

That a process of information-gathering, study, and public consultation be undertaken to consider whether Westview Village School should be closed.

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For the second year in a row, no students are enrolled at Westview Village School. The administration proposes to initiate a process for determining whether the school should or should not be closed permanently. The process would comply with the Alberta Learning regulation on school closure (Appendix I) and the board's own policy (Appendix II). Only at the end of the process, when all alternatives have been considered and full consultation has been completed, can the board decide whether the school will close or remain open.

Winterburn School, which currently accommodates the majority of students residing in Westview Village, has sent a newsletter home to all parents to notify them that:

- The future of Westview Village School will be raised at today's board meeting
- If the recommendation is approved, they will receive more detailed information in writing
- There will be opportunities for parent and public input over the next several weeks

Consultation

Effective public consultation is essential in a process of this kind, so that all alternatives to closure are identified and considered, and so that parents and community members will have adequate opportunities to express their views. Information will be widely distributed, and there will be more than one avenue for individuals and groups to make their views known. It will be made clear that the administration must consider a number of factors, one of which is parental and community preference, in formulating its recommendation to the board at the end of the process.

Key steps in the process

1. The administration recommends to the board that a process be undertaken to consider the future of Westview Village School, with one of the possible outcomes being permanent closure. If the board approves the recommendation, the remaining steps will be taken.
2. A written communication will be sent to parents of students potentially affected by a closure, containing the information required by policy, and indicating when a formal public meeting will be held to discuss the matter. A similar communication will be sent to all residents of Westview Village.
3. An information meeting will be held at Winterburn School for parents and the community.
4. A formal public meeting, attended by a majority of trustees, will be held.
5. There will be a period of three or more weeks during which parents and the public have an opportunity to put forward additional input.
6. The administration will present its recommendation, and the board will decide whether to close or not close Westview Village School.
7. A letter will be sent to parents and residents informing them of the board's decision.

The timeline for the process will be somewhat flexible, within the limits set by provincial regulation and board policy, and consultation plans may be modified if necessary to allow sufficient opportunities for parents and the public to participate.

Background

In September 1999, the parents of almost all the students at Westview Village School enrolled their children in Winterburn School. This triggered a series of events:

1. Westview Village School did not operate in 1999-2000 because no students were enrolled.
2. Planning staff reviewed future student accommodation needs in the west rural area and new neighbourhoods in Lewis Farms and The Grange, and took several actions to ensure that students, including those who reside in Westview Village, would be satisfactorily accommodated.
3. An information meeting was held for Winterburn/Westview parents and the community.
4. A petition was circulated by Westview Village residents, the results indicating significant support in the community for keeping the school open.
5. A confidential survey was conducted by the administration, the results indicating that parents would enroll 17 to 19 students at Westview Village School in 2000-2001 if it were operational.
6. In light of the survey results, parents and residents were informed that Westview Village School would not operate in 2000-2001, and that the possibility of closure would be considered in the fall of 2000.
7. Alberta Learning was informed of the district's plans for 2000-2001.

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APPENDIX I – Alberta Regulation 238/97 – Closure of Schools Regulation
APPENDIX II – FL.BP School Closure