



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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June 20, 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to you as Superintendent of Schools to tell you about the possibility of school closures in our district. Today, a preliminary list of schools which the Board of Education *may* consider closing has been released and is attached to this letter. It is important to note that **no decisions to close a school have been made at this time**. This letter is simply to inform you of the possibility of school closures. Between now and the middle of December 2016, the Board will engage in a process to determine whether some or all of the schools on this preliminary list will be closed effective June 30, 2017. If approved by the Board, the earliest any closure would occur would be for the 2017-18 school year.

For the past several months VSB staff have been consulting with the public in order to inform the development of the school district's Long Range Facilities Plan. As part of these consultations we spoke with many parents and members of the community about the possibility of school closures. Staff heard that there was some support for possible school closures from members of the community provided the closures improved educational programming within the VSB. In addition, there was support for some school closures provided it would allow for the seismic upgrading of schools to be completed more quickly and that it would strengthen funding requests to the Ministry of Education for new schools in areas of significant growth.

In addition, most of you are likely aware that the VSB has struggled with many consecutive years of significant budget shortfalls. These ongoing shortfalls have resulted in reductions to direct supports, services and programs for students. Reducing the number of school facilities would result in greatly decreased operating costs and could help prevent further cuts to staffing and student programming in our district.

The decision to place a school on the preliminary list of schools that may be considered for closure is not one I have taken lightly as Superintendent. However, in order to address budget shortfalls, get schools seismically upgraded, and build new schools where they are needed, the school district must consider school closure. It is essential that all our staff and students have access to a seismically safe school as quickly as possible and that as a district we move toward the achievement of greater budget stability.

As a former teacher and school principal and as a long time public educator I fully understand the important role schools play within the lives of students, families, staff and communities. I also acknowledge and recognize that the prospect of school closure will be unsettling for many families and that you will likely have many questions about what may happen if your school is to be considered for closure. I want to assure you that the district is committed to the open sharing of information and to engaging parents and the public in inclusive public consultation prior to any decisions being made regarding school closure.

This coming September, VSB staff will provide trustees and the public with a detailed report providing background information and outlining proposed plans for each school identified on the preliminary list. At that time, the Board will decide which, if any, of the schools on the preliminary list will move forward to be considered for closure. If trustees support a school moving forward for closure consideration, parents and members of the public will be asked to share their thoughts and feedback in October and November. This feedback will be taken into consideration by trustees in making decisions as to whether or not to close a school. The Board will make the formal decision in December 2016 as to whether or not it closes any schools.

If a school closure is approved in December by the Board, staff will work closely with the school community in order to support implementation of the closure and the transition of students and families to other VSB schools. This will include paying special attention to students and families who may require additional support in order to make a successful transition. Every effort will be made to ensure that existing supports follow students to their new schools.

Attached please find a list of schools identified by staff for potential consideration of closure. Included you will find some preliminary information on where students from a closed school would go to school in the future. Further information regarding the school closure process will be available at <http://engage.vsb.bc.ca>. I encourage you to check this site frequently as updates will be provided starting in mid-September.

I understand that the possibility of school closure may weigh heavily on the minds of many in our school communities during the summer months. With this in mind I encourage you to focus on celebrating the successes of the past school year and on enjoying the summer months ahead. I assure you that more detailed information will be provided in September and that your voices and opinions will be heard in October and November prior to any closure decisions being made by trustees in December.

Sincerest regards,



Scott Robinson
Superintendent of Schools

cc. Trustees
Russell Horswill, Secretary-Treasurer



Preliminary List Of Schools That Might Be Considered For Closure

After a year of development and months of public consultation, Vancouver School Board approved a Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) on May 24, 2016. The LRFP provides a road map for managing VSB facilities over the next 14 years while seismic upgrading is completed.

The LRFP includes consideration of school closures. VSB recognizes that the prospect of school closures will create anxiety and uncertainty within school communities. As we move through this process we intend to provide as much information as possible to answer questions and help reduce uncertainty.

Please note: At this point no decisions regarding school closures have been made.

This preliminary list identifies schools the Board may consider for closure. In September trustees will review a detailed staff report on each school identified on the preliminary list. At that time, trustees will decide whether or not a school, or schools, on the preliminary list should be considered for closure. Following this decision significant consultation with each affected community would occur in October and November.

Some of the reasons for considering closure include:

- Reducing the number of school facilities will reduce operating costs allowing funds to be redirected to educational programming
- Supporting VSB requests for Ministry of Education funding to complete the seismic mitigation program as quickly as possible
- Providing sites for use in temporary accommodation for school communities undergoing seismic construction enabling timely completion of seismic upgrading
- Supporting district funding requests for the construction of new schools in areas experiencing significant population growth
- Reducing the overall cost of facility maintenance including significant deferred maintenance requirements across VSB schools

In compiling the preliminary list of schools all 110 VSB schools were reviewed based on the factors for closure outlined in the Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP). This included careful consideration of the impact of proposed school closures on the delivery of educational programming. Where possible, attempts were made to identify potential closures which keep communities together and minimize negative community impacts.



Staff will spend the summer reviewing and developing a detailed report on each school on the preliminary list. This will include looking closely at the impact of closures on vulnerable students and families, developing plans to address impacts on childcare services, and ensuring a clear understanding of school-specific programs and services. These detailed studies on each school will be presented to trustees and made public in mid-September.

If trustees approve moving forward with the closure process, significant communication and consultation with affected communities would begin in early October 2016. This public feedback will inform trustees as part of their decision-making regarding school closures. The process of deciding school closures is governed by VSB policy and the School Act. ("Potential Consideration for Closure" <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-policy/fl-r-school-closures-formerly-retirement-facilities>).

In December trustees will decide whether any schools will be closed. The earliest any school closure would take effect is June 30, 2017 (for the 2017-18 school year).

If approved for closure, VSB intends to use some closed schools to provide temporary accommodation (swing space) for students and staff from schools undergoing seismic construction. In cases where a closed school is not needed for temporary accommodation, VSB will look for possible community uses for the building and/or land.

For more information, visit engage.vsb.bc.ca.

PRELIMINARY LIST OF SCHOOLS FOR POTENTIAL CLOSURE CONSIDERATION:

1. Queen Elizabeth Annex (K - 3)

If approved for closure, the primary French Immersion program offered at Queen Elizabeth Annex would be accommodated at Queen Elizabeth Elementary.

Locating the French Immersion program at Queen Elizabeth Elementary could support closer connections and collaboration between staff and students in this primary program and the main school program at École Jules Quesnel, where students already go for Grade four.

2. Champlain Heights Annex (K - 3)

If approved for closure, students at Champlain Heights Annex would be accommodated at Champlain Heights Elementary.

The annex shares a catchment with the main school. Students enrolled at Champlain Heights Annex already move to the main school for Grade four.



3. Tecumseh Annex (K - 3)

If approved for closure, students at Tecumseh Annex would be accommodated at Tecumseh Elementary.

The annex shares a catchment with Tecumseh Elementary, where students already go for Grade four.

Tecumseh Elementary has been seismically upgraded, placing students in a seismically safe school.

4. McBride Annex (K - 3)

If approved for closure, students at McBride Annex would be accommodated at McBride Elementary.

The annex shares a catchment with the main school. Students enrolled at McBride Annex already move to the main school for Grade four. McBride Elementary has been seismically upgraded.

5. Dr. A.R. Lord Elementary

If approved for closure students at Lord Elementary would be accommodated at Begbie Elementary.

Begbie is on the priority list for seismic upgrading.

6. Admiral Seymour Elementary

If approved for closure, students at Seymour Elementary would be accommodated at Strathcona Elementary. **This would not occur until 2018/19** after seismic upgrading of Strathcona is complete and once the new school at International Village is open.

7. Graham D. Bruce Elementary

If approved for closure, students at Bruce Elementary would be accommodated at Grenfell Elementary and Collingwood Annex. Collingwood would become the annex of Grenfell.

Both Bruce and Grenfell are in need of seismic upgrading. By combining the school communities, VSB can make a stronger case for potentially building a replacement school for this community.



8. Sir Guy Carleton Elementary

If approved for closure, students at Carleton Elementary would be accommodated at Cunningham Elementary and MacCorkindale Elementary.

By combining these three school communities into two sites at MacCorkindale and Cunningham, VSB can make a stronger case for funding to complete the seismic upgrading of these two schools.

9. Queen Alexandra Elementary

If approved for closure, students at Queen Alexandra Elementary would be accommodated at Grandview Elementary and Florence Nightingale Elementary.

By combining these three school communities into two sites at Grandview and Nightingale, VSB can make a stronger case for funding to complete the seismic upgrading of these two schools.

10. Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary

If approved for closure, students at Trudeau Elementary would be accommodated at Walter Moberly Elementary.

Moberly Elementary has completed seismic upgrading.

11. Britannia Secondary

If approved for closure, students at Britannia would be accommodated at Templeton Secondary.

The combined school community would not fit into Britannia's building. But by combining the communities at Templeton, VSB can make a stronger case for potentially building a replacement school for the combined communities.

12. Gladstone Secondary

If approved for closure, students at Gladstone would be accommodated at Windermere Secondary, Vancouver Technical Secondary, John Oliver Secondary and Tupper Secondary.

The buildings at Tupper and Van Tech have been seismically upgraded, so students would get a safer school. With the incoming students, John Oliver and Windermere's new enrolment makes those sites better candidates for seismic upgrades or new school buildings in the coming years.



CONSULTATION TIMELINE

2015
Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) developed.



JANUARY 2016
Board seeks **PUBLIC INPUT** on Interim LRFP.



FEBRUARY-MAY 2016
PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS



Over 2000 surveys completed
865 parents, students, community members and staff participated in workshops and pop-up events.

MAY 2016
VSB UPDATES LRFP to reflect public input.
Board approves updated plan.



JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2016
VSB staff draft detailed **REPORT ON PRELIMINARY LIST** of schools for potential closure consideration.



Public consultation process planned for fall 2016. No consultations at this time.

JUNE 2016
To support implementation of the LRFP, **VSB STAFF RELEASE PRELIMINARY LIST** of schools for potential closure consideration. Board receives list at June 20, 2016 public meeting.



WE ARE HERE

SEPTEMBER 2016
VSB report goes to board.
TRUSTEES DECIDE whether schools from preliminary list should be considered for closure.



OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2016
Students, parents and staff invited to participate in third-party led **CONSULTATION** with affected school communities.



NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016
Third-party facilitator **WRITES REPORT** on consultation feedback and submits to VSB.



DECEMBER 2016
Public Consultation Report and technical analysis go to Board.
TRUSTEES DECIDE on school closures.





Consultation Timeline Overview

2015

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) and BC Ministry of Education sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that the VSB will develop a Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP).

The LRFP looks at facilities needs for the next 14 years, over the course of the seismic mitigation program, with the goal of getting students and staff into safe schools as soon as possible.

JANUARY 2016

The Board approves the Interim LRFP in January 2016, and sends the LRFP to the public for input and feedback.

FEBRUARY-MAY 2016

Public consultations on the Interim LRFP take place between February and May 2016.

Over 2000 public surveys (online and in-person) are completed. 865 parents, students and community members also participate in workshops and pop-up events, where their feedback is collected.

MAY 2016

The Interim LRFP is updated to include public feedback. The Board approves the updated LRFP in May 2016.

JUNE 2016

To support the implementation of the LRFP, VSB staff undertake a technical review of all 110 district schools.

Schools are reviewed based upon LRFP-approved factors in order to develop a preliminary list of potential schools considered for closure.

In collaboration with district educators, staff further examine the impact on educational programs, student needs and learning.

The preliminary list of schools for potential closure consideration includes schools where there is the ability to keep communities together as much as possible. The preliminary list of schools is presented to the Board on June 20, 2016 at a public meeting.



JUNE-SEPTEMBER 2016

VSB policy requires a preliminary list to be presented in order to provide affected school communities notice of potential public consultations. Policy requires a minimum of 60 days notice. Public consultations only proceed if Trustees decide to consider the listed school for closure. During the notice period, VSB staff develop a policy-mandated report detailing each school. The report includes factors for vulnerable students at both school and district level and identifies students who would need extra support if their school underwent a change.

SEPTEMBER 2016

The in-depth technical report of each school is presented to Trustees for review and consideration. Trustees decide at their September public meeting, which, if any schools on the preliminary list will be considered for closure. Following the Trustee decision, schools identified and affected by a potential closure are notified, and provided with a timeline for upcoming public information and feedback meetings.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2016

Consultations with each affected school community take place, providing an opportunity for people to discuss the schools identified for potential closure and to provide feedback on how a closure would affect them.

Neutral, third-party facilitators design and deliver the consultation process. Students, parents, staff and the general public are invited to participate through multiple opportunities—information sessions, feedback sessions and online feedback opportunities.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016

Third-party facilitators write a detailed report summarizing information collected from the consultations and submit to VSB.

DECEMBER 2016

The consultation report is presented along with the detailed report on each school (developed in the summer of 2016) to Trustees for review and consideration.

Trustees decide at their December public meeting which, if any, schools considered for closure will be approved for closure. The decision to close a specific school is communicated to the school and the general public as soon as possible. VSB staff proceed with developing a school closure plan with the first school(s) closing by June 30, 2017 (prior to the 2017-18 school year).



HOW SCHOOLS ARE IDENTIFIED FOR POTENTIAL CLOSURE

The VSB Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP) identifies several key factors VSB staff must consider when identifying potential school buildings for closure. These key factors are divided into two levels.



All schools within the district are considered for level one factors. Only schools that meet the criteria in level one will be considered for level two factors.

LEVEL ONE:



All continuing students can be accommodated within neighbouring schools

Future student enrolment within the catchment area can be accommodated



LEVEL TWO:

BROAD CONSIDERATIONS:



Seismic risk of the building



Maintenance and operating costs



Impacts, services and supports for vulnerable communities

GEOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS:



Catchment size



Walking distances and route



Location of schools relative to each other

SCHOOL SITE CONSIDERATIONS:



Proximity to major roadways



Play space



Use of building for temporary accommodation of school during seismic upgrade of other schools



FAQs – Preliminary list of schools for potential closure consideration

WHY IS VANCOUVER CONSIDERING SCHOOL CLOSURES?

VSB recognizes the possibility of school closures will create uncertainty for members of the school community. As we move through the process of potential school closure we intend to provide as much information as possible to help answer questions and reduce anxiety.

There are several key reasons why VSB is considering the closure of schools.

1. Reducing the number of school facilities will reduce annual operating costs allowing funds to be redirected to educational programming.
2. Closing schools will increase school utilization and would support VSB requests for Ministry of Education funding to complete the seismic mitigation program as quickly as possible.
3. Some closed schools will be used to provide temporary accommodation for school communities undergoing seismic construction.
4. Increasing school utilization will support requests for provincial funding for the construction of new schools in areas of growth.
5. Closing schools will significantly reduce VSB liability for deferred maintenance on facilities.

WHEN WOULD THESE SCHOOLS CLOSE?

No decisions have been made about closures. This is a preliminary list.

Trustees will make decisions on whether schools will close based on information contained in a detailed staff report, which is being prepared this summer, and consultation with school communities in October and November.

The final decision on whether or not to close a school will be made by trustees in December 2016. The earliest a school closure would take effect would be June 30, 2017.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE WHICH SCHOOLS TO PROPOSE FOR CLOSURE?

Facilities planners reviewed all 110 VSB schools based on level one and two factors for consideration in closing schools as identified in the Long Range Facilities Plan (LRFP), including:

- Ability to accommodate students in nearby school(s)
- Building condition and deferred maintenance



- Expediting the seismic mitigation program by using a closed school as swing space for temporary accommodation of students and staff from nearby schools set for seismic upgrades
- Current enrolment and future projections including projected development
- Assessment of walk distances, transportation routes, and catchment sizes for newly created catchments
- Geographical and site considerations such as major roadways
- Opportunities to consolidate communities to support requests for funding to advance the seismic program
- Education and social impacts on students and families, particularly where there are high concentrations of vulnerable students

In compiling the preliminary list of schools, every attempt was made to keep communities together. More detailed study on each school will now take place and a detailed report will be made public in mid-September.

WHEN WILL WE GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE SCHOOL CLOSURES?

In September 2016 trustees will decide which schools, if any, on the preliminary list will be considered for closure. That decision will happen after trustees review the detailed report on each school.

Extensive consultation with each school community advanced for closure consideration would then take place in October and November. Information regarding consultations will be communicated directly to affected school communities and will be posted at **engage.vsb.bc.ca**.

In December, following consideration of public consultation with affected communities, trustees will make decisions regarding school closures.

The earliest a school closure would occur would be June 30, 2017.

IF TRUSTEES DECIDE TO CLOSE A SCHOOL, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE EMPTY BUILDING?

Some schools that are closed will be used as temporary accommodation for students and staff from neighbouring schools undergoing seismic construction. Opportunities to use school buildings not needed for temporary accommodation to provide community services will be explored.



WHAT HAPPENS TO TEACHERS AND STAFF AT A SCHOOL IF IT IS CLOSED?

Trustees will not decide whether schools will close until December, after reviewing staff reports on each school, holding information meetings and receiving feedback from school communities. Enrolment determines the allocation of staffing for schools. Any staff movement would be guided by collective agreements and overseen by VSB Employee Services.

HOW CAN I HAVE A SAY ABOUT SCHOOL CLOSURES?

Trustees will decide whether or not to consider schools on the preliminary list for closure in September.

If a school is supported for closure consideration, VSB will consult with the affected community. This consultation will include online opportunities and public meetings in October and November.

Information about closures and public consultations will be updated regularly at engage.vsb.bc.ca.

IF THERE'S NO CONSULTATION UNTIL THE FALL, WHY ARE YOU PUTTING OUT THIS LIST NOW?

VSB policy requires that a preliminary list of schools for potential closure consideration be published at least 60 days prior to staff presenting a detailed administrative report on each school to trustees. Following presentation of this report in mid-September, trustees will determine which schools on the preliminary list should be considered for closure and move to public consultation.

WHY ARE SO MANY OF THE SCHOOLS LISTED ON THE EAST SIDE OF VANCOUVER?

VSB has more schools located on the East side of Vancouver. These schools tend to have smaller catchments, be located closer together, and have lower enrolment and lower utilization.

HOW WILL PARENTS KNOW WHICH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL ATTEND IF SCHOOLS ARE BEING CLOSED?

If the board decides to proceed with a school closure, VSB would communicate directly with parents regarding school placements. We intend to work with families as much as possible in order to understand and support individual student and family needs, especially in circumstances where a student or family is likely to be more adversely impacted by change.



WHAT ABOUT BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL CARE AT MY SCHOOL?

The VSB understands the important role that childcare plays in the lives of families. We are committed to work with the City of Vancouver and the program operators in order to maintain out-of-school care spaces within communities.

WILL VSB SELL SCHOOLS?

No entire school properties will be sold. The Board has approved a motion to not sell entire school sites. This does not preclude long-term leases, land swaps or sales of portions of school properties.

WHAT ABOUT PROPERTIES VSB OWNS THAT DON'T HAVE SCHOOLS ON THEM?

During public consultation on the LRFP, three-quarters of respondents said they were supportive of VSB selling or developing non-school sites. The board is considering options for non-school sites.

WHEN CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IMPACT OF A CLOSURE ON MY SCHOOL?

Trustees will consider a detailed staff report on schools identified on the preliminary list in September. If the board decides to proceed with consideration of a school for closure, significant consultation with each affected school community will take place in October and November 2016.

VSB will post documents shared with parents, staff and public regarding school closures. Please visit **engage.vsb.bc.ca**. You can download:

- Letter from Superintendent June 20 2016
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/letter-superintendent-06-20-16.pdf>
- Preliminary list of schools that might be considered for closure
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/summary-pre-list-closure.pdf>
- Consultation Timeline
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Consultation-Timeline-Infographic.pdf>
- Consultation Timeline Overview
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/consultation-timeline-text.pdf>
- How schools are identified for potential closure
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Criteria-for-Selection-Infographic.pdf>
- FAQs for parents and staff
<http://engage.vsb.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/faq-parents-staff.pdf>

Updated information will be available on an ongoing basis at engage.vsb.bc.ca.