

AMEND THE POLICY ON THE CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:

Amend Board Report 95-0208-P01, the Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools.

DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this Board Report is to stream-line school closing and consolidation procedures in order to give the Board greater flexibility in making school closing and consolidation decisions.

TEXT:

It is the intent and desire of the Board of Education, when considering the matter of closing or consolidation of school facilities, to provide facilities that will enable our students to take the best advantage of the district's educational offerings while at the same time endeavoring to improve the educational atmosphere for our students. ~~By April 30 the date of the May Board meeting of any year, and preceeding formal Board action on the school budget for the next fiscal year, the General Superintendent the Chief Executive Officer, or his designee, shall offer recommendations for to the Board any proposed school closings or consolidations. Schools that are not on this list will not be considered for closing or consolidation for the ensuing fiscal year.~~ Final Board action on the recommended closing or consolidations will be completed by June, ~~prior to the end~~ prior to the beginning of the following school year, ~~in order to provide ample time for implementation of the action during the summer months prior to the opening of school in September.~~ In giving consideration to the closing or consolidation of the recommended schools, the following criteria will be examined and reported on in the order presented.

CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS

(1) Schools to be Exempted. ~~(a) Schools may be considered for exemption based on historical value, as well as impact on the school, the community and city as a whole. (b) Year-round schools are to be exempt from school closings. (c) Stably Integrated or Desegregated Schools, Magnet Schools and Community Academies are exempt from school closings.~~

(2) Availability or Relocation Space. In considering the closing of a school, it is necessary that closed schools be within 2.5 miles from other schools with available space, as measured by ~~program design~~ capacity, for relocation of students. School attendance boundaries will be redrawn in order to ensure that no student is required to walk more than 1.5 miles to a school site. Other factors will be considered in concert with distance, including natural barriers (i.e. cemeteries, industrial complexes, streams, and wood areas), safety hazards (i.e. multiple rail lines, expressways, railroad viaducts over one-half block long, streets of four or more lanes with heavy traffic without lights or crossing guards), neighborhood conditions (i.e. abandoned buildings, etc.)

(3) Program Space Utilization Level. In schools recommended for closing consideration will be given ~~as~~ to the unique instructional needs of the students, and whether the site is efficiently utilizing available space, as determined by ~~program~~ the facility's design capacity. ~~Program capacity is defined as the number of full-time teachers who can be accommodated within the building's classroom space and who provide direct instruction to students.~~

(4) Physical Condition of Building. Since schools need to be closed in order to operate the system in less costly, more efficient ways, physical condition is a relevant factor which should be taken into account; however, in that availability of relocation space is a necessary prior condition for school closing, physical condition can only be applied as a secondary criterion. This criterion comes into play when selecting, from a cluster of schools, the best candidate for closing. ~~If consideration is given to closing Public Building Commission (PBC) schools slated for rehabilitation, or already in the process of rehabilitation, it will be determined what the future use of the facility would be prior to deciding the course of action: (a) if the~~

~~building is to be rented, or if it is likely that the facility would be reopened as a school in the future, the scheduled rehabilitation work should be continued and completed; (b) if the building is to be sold, a marketing decision must be made as to whether the proposed work would increase the resale value to an amount equal to or higher than the restoration cost; (c) if the cost cannot be recovered through the sale, the work should not proceed; (d) if the building is to be razed, all planned PBC work should be halted and the remaining funds reallocated to other projects; (e) if considerable work is already being done, or has been done, on the site, an alternate school should be selected for closing.~~

(54) School Performance. When considering a cluster of schools for closing, school performance, as determined by the Board, should be a criterion in determining schools to be closed and in designating receiving schools, all other things being equal after relocation space, ~~program space~~ utilization, and physical condition have been considered. Where students are moved from one school to another, due to closing, those students shall should have access to "an equal to, or better than" educational environment. For purposes of this policy "equal to, or better than" means "higher performance rating" as designated in the sole discretion of the Board, which may be based upon, but is not limited to, the following criteria: implementation of the School Improvement Plan, dropout rate, and percent of students who graduate, percent of parents who participate in report card pick-up and thoroughness of implementation of the following Board policies: ~~Systemwide Objectives and Standards, Kindergarten to Grade 12; Organization and Staffing of Elementary Schools; the Promotion Policy; and the Homework Policy.~~

(5) Potential Use of School Sites. When a school has been designated for closing, the potential use of the site must be taken into account. Alternative uses of the Board of Education may include utilizing the structure for programmatic/education purposes (i.e., pre-school centers, etc.), or for support services (i.e., special education units, early childhood clusters, etc.) or to open a new school. Leasing alternatives may include leasing to city or other quasi-public taxing bodies; other public educational entities; private educational organizations; community or other non-profit civic organizations or associations; or other private sector entities. Sale options may include joint development with the private sector, sale to other governmental agencies, or sale to the private sector. Consideration may also be given to razing the closed structure. The Board will endeavor to give priority consideration to continued alternative use of the facility by the community. Furthermore, final disposition of the site shall serve to maintain a positive impact upon the surrounding neighborhood.

(6) Availability of Transfer Opportunities. Enrollment in Other Schools. When a schools are is closed, children will be reassigned to in the neighborhood school or applying for enrollment at a school outside of their attendance area. Parents may apply for enrollment at a school outside the child's attendance area but such enrollment is dependant upon the availability of space.

(7) Needs of Special Students. Availability of special educational services (including special education and bilingual education) and program in receiving schools must be considered and provided, where appropriate, to students in schools to be closed.

(8) Opening a New School. Schools may be recommended for closing if it is in the best educational interest of the district to open a new school at that site.

CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL CONSOLIDATIONS

(1) With regard to consolidation, ~~consideration will be given to consolidating schools offering similar programs in the same geographic area, resulting in the formation of a new attendance center. Schools/programs identified as Stably Mixed, Predominantly Minority, or Racially Identifiable implement desegregation-related programs (Options for Knowledge, including voluntary transfer, Project CANAL- Creating a New Approach to Learning, and Chicago Effective Schools Project), should be replaced elsewhere within the school system so as to ensure no reduction in citywide program offerings, pursuant to the court-ordered Desegregation Consent Decree.~~

(2) Program Space Utilization Level. In schools recommended for consolidation, consideration should be given as to the ~~unique~~ instruction needs of the students, and ~~the Board should consider~~ whether the site is efficiently utilizing available space, as determined by program design capacity. ~~Program capacity is defined as the number of programs providing direct instruction to students which can be accommodated within the building's classroom space.~~

(3) School Performance. When considering schools for consolidation, school performance, as determined by the Board, should be a criterion in determining schools to be consolidated and in designating receiving schools, all other things being equal after relocation space, program space utilization, and physical condition have been considered. Where students are moved from one school to another, due to consolidation those students ~~shall~~ should have access to "an equal to, or better than" educational environment. For purposes of this policy "equal to, or better than" means "higher performance rating" as designated in the sole discretion of the Board, which may be based upon, but is not limited to, the following criteria: implementation of the School Improvement Plan, dropout rate, and percent of students who graduate, ~~percent of parents who participate in report card pick-up and thoroughness of implementation of the following Board policies: Systemwide Objectives and Standards, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Organization and Staffing of Elementary Schools, the Promotion Policy, and the Homework Policy.~~

PROCESS FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND CONSOLIDATIONS

With regard to schools closings, in accordance with existing Board actions and consent decrees, the Board will avoid, to the maximum extent consistent with the financial constraints, school closings which have a negative impact on desegregation or integration of any school. Therefore, before a proposal for any school closing is presented to the Board of Education for approval, ~~Board~~ the Chief Executive Officer's staff will review ~~February~~ October pupil enrollment data of the school year in which the analysis is conducted and prepare three-year enrollment projections, broken down among racial categories, for all schools affected by the proposed action. In addition, before the implementation of any such action, ~~Board~~ the Chief Executive Officer's staff will be required to prepare an impact analysis setting forth:

- (1) The projected impact on the racial composition and stability of all schools affected by such action (with three-year enrollment projections attached);
- (2) Any negative impact on the racial composition and stability of any affected school projected to result from such action; and
- (3) The possible alternative to the proposed action, including the maintenance of the status quo, along with the projected impact that these alternatives would have on the racial composition and stability of all schools affected by such action.

Local School Councils in schools approved for consolidation shall be dissolved, and an election shall be conducted to establish a new Local School Council to serve the new attendance center, pursuant to section 34-2.1 of the School Reform Act.

~~All schools proposed to be closed or consolidated will be visited and assessed by Board staff. Following presentation of recommendations to the Board Committee, the Board, or its designated committee, The Chief Executive Officer or his designee, will conduct public hearings on the recommendations. The hearings will be held on a sub-district level in order to receive input from the affected local schools, and Local School Councils, and Sub-District Councils. The Board Committee Chief Executive Officer will consider the input prior to making its his final recommendation to the Board of Education.~~

IMPLEMENTATION OF CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATIONS

It shall be the responsibility of the ~~General Superintendent of Schools~~ Chief Executive Officer to oversee the orderly closing and consolidation of schools.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

STATUS: Not applicable.

PERSONNEL

IMPLICATIONS: None.

FINANCIAL

REVIEW: Not applicable.

LEGAL

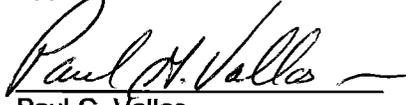
REVIEW: This policy was revised with the assistance of the Law Department.

Approved for Consideration:



Cozette Buckney
Chief Education Officer

Approved



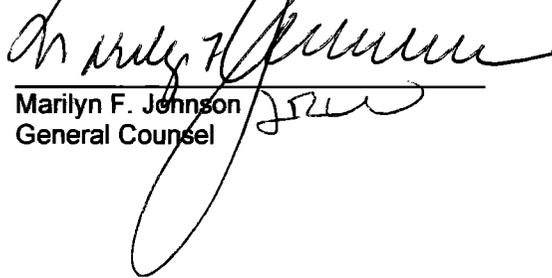
Paul G. Vallas
Chief Executive Officer

Noted:



Kenneth Gotsch
Chief Fiscal Officer

Approved as to Legal Form:



Marilyn F. Johnson
General Counsel