

**RESCIND BOARD REPORT 01-0425-PO3 AND ADOPT NEW
POLICY ON THE CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATION OF SCHOOLS**

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:

Rescind Board Report 01-0425-PO3 and Adopt New Policy on the Closing and Consolidation of Schools.

TEXT:

When considering the matter of closing schools or the consolidation of school facilities, it is the intent and desire of the Board of Education to provide students high quality academic opportunities in a supportive educational atmosphere. If the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO") plans to recommend any school closing or consolidation, he or she shall convene a hearing to elicit public comment before May 15th of any year. After public hearing, and by the date of the May Board meeting, the CEO may recommend to the Board any proposed school closings or consolidations. The Board will take final action on the recommended closing or consolidation prior to the beginning of the following school year.

The Board will consider the following criteria in its decision to close and/or consolidate schools:

I. CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS FOR NON-ACADEMIC REASONS

A. Availability of Relocation Space. No school will be closed unless another school within a 2.5 mile radius has available space, as measured by design capacity, to relocate students from the closed school. School attendance boundaries will be redrawn to ensure that no student is required to walk more than 1.5 miles to a school site. In addition to distance, other factors will be considered, such as natural barriers (*i.e.*, cemeteries, industrial complexes, streams, and wooded 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), and/or neighborhood conditions (*i.e.*, abandoned buildings, criminal activity, etc.)

B. Space Utilization Level. Whether the site is efficiently utilizing available space, as determined by the facility's design capacity.

C. Physical Condition of Building. To operate the system in a less costly, more efficient manner, this criterion will be considered when selecting the best candidate for closing among a cluster of schools.

D. School Performance. Students whose schools are closed should have access to an educational environment that the Board, in its sole discretion, determines to be equal to or better than the school that is closed. The Board's determination of school quality may be based upon, but is not limited to: student performance on academic proficiency testing, implementation of the School Improvement Plan, dropout rate, and graduation rate.

E. Potential Alternative Use of School Sites. The Board may decide to use sites designated for closing for other programmatic/educational purposes (*i.e.* pre-school centers, etc.), for support services (*i.e.*, special education units, early childhood clusters, etc.) or to open a new school with a different educational focus. The Board may lease closed facilities 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. The Board may agree to engage in joint development initiatives with the private sector, or to sell the closed facility to another governmental agency or private entity. If no viable alternative use can be found, the Board may raze the closed structure. The Board will endeavor to ensure that the final disposition of the site maintains a positive impact upon the surrounding neighborhood.

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F. Enrollment in Other Schools. Children from closed schools will be reassigned to the neighborhood school. Parents may apply for enrollment at a school outside the child's attendance area, subject to space availability.

G. Students with Special Needs. The Board shall ensure that appropriate programs and educational services (including special education and bilingual education) are available in the schools that will be receiving students from a closed school.

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

II. CRITERIA FOR SCHOOL CONSOLIDATIONS

A. Space Utilization Level. Whether the site is efficiently utilizing available space, as determined by the facility's design capacity.

B. School Performance. Students whose schools are consolidated should have access to an educational environment that the Board, in its sole discretion, determines to be equal to or better than the schools they previously attended. The Board's determination of school quality may be based upon, but is not limited to: student performance on academic proficiency testing, implementation of the School Improvement Plan, dropout rate, and graduation rate.

III. PROCESS FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND/OR CONSOLIDATIONS FOR NON-ACADEMIC REASONS

In accordance with existing Board actions and consent decrees and to the maximum extent consistent with financial constraints, the Board will avoid closing schools for non-academic reasons when such closings will have a negative impact on desegregation or integration of any school. Therefore, before the CEO presents to the Board a proposal for any school closing, his or her staff will review October pupil enrollment data for the current school year and prepare three-year enrollment projections, broken down by racial category, for all schools affected by the proposed action. In addition, before any school closing is proposed, the CEO's staff shall prepare an impact analysis setting forth:

A. The projected impact on the racial composition and stability of all schools affected by such action (with three-year enrollment projections attached);

B. Any projected negative impact on the racial composition and stability of any affected school;
and

C. Possible alternatives to the proposed action, including maintenance of the status quo, along with the projected impact that each alternative would have on the racial composition and stability of each school affected by such action.

IV. CRITERIA FOR CLOSING SCHOOLS DUE TO CHANGE IN EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

The Board may determine that school closure is necessary to address the educational needs of students. Schools may be closed to make any of the following changes:

A. implementation of new curriculum and/or instructional programs;

B. extensive reassignment of school faculty and staff;

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C. transformation of a school's educational focus, which may result in significant change in the student population.

The Board will determine the duration of a school's closure based upon the time needed to implement the changes in educational focus.

V. CRITERIA FOR CLOSING SCHOOLS DUE TO ACADEMIC FAILURE

Pursuant to Section 34-8.3 of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/34-8.3, schools that have been on probation for at least one year and have failed to make adequate progress in correcting performance deficiencies may be closed by the Board following an opportunity for public hearing. The decision to close a school due to chronic academic failure shall be based on a consideration of the factors that led to a school being placed on probation, the availability of a "higher performing school" (as defined in section 1.D. above) in close proximity, and the following additional academic performance criteria:

A. Results on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, Prairie State Examination or other designated annual test of academic proficiency are in the lowest academic performance category.

B. Fewer than 20% of students are performing at or above grade level in reading, as determined by results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills ("ITBS") or other designated annual test of academic proficiency.

C. The school has a history of chronic probation status.

D. Student progress of less than one school year in reading, as measured by results on the ITBS or other designated annual test of academic proficiency.

VI. PROCEDURES FOR CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATING SCHOOLS

It shall be the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to oversee the orderly closing and consolidation of schools. The CEO or designee shall issue procedures for the conduct of public hearings to address proposals to close and/or consolidate schools.

VII. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S BOARD REPORT ON CLOSING AND CONSOLIDATION

The CEO or designee shall prepare a final board report regarding the closing of a school based on all pertinent information, including relevant information received at the public hearing. The board report shall be submitted to the Board of Education for final action.

VIII. ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS IN OTHER SCHOOLS

A. When a school is closed for academic reasons, children enrolled in that school will be reassigned to a higher performing neighborhood school.

B. Students who need special programs or services (including special education and bilingual education) will be assigned to schools where their special needs can be met.

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IX. LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCILS AT CLOSED OR CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS

Local School Councils in schools that are closed for any reason shall be dissolved when the school closes. 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, 105 ILCS, 5/34-2.1.

X. APPOINTED TEACHERS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED SCHOOLS

Regularly certified and appointed teachers at schools closed pursuant to this policy shall become reassigned teachers pursuant to the Board's policy, "Reassignment and Layoff of Regularly Certified and Appointed Teachers Due to Changes in Staffing Needs," (Board Report 97-0723-PO2).

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.

Respectfully submitted,



ARNE DUNCAN
Chief Executive Officer

Reviewed for Consideration:



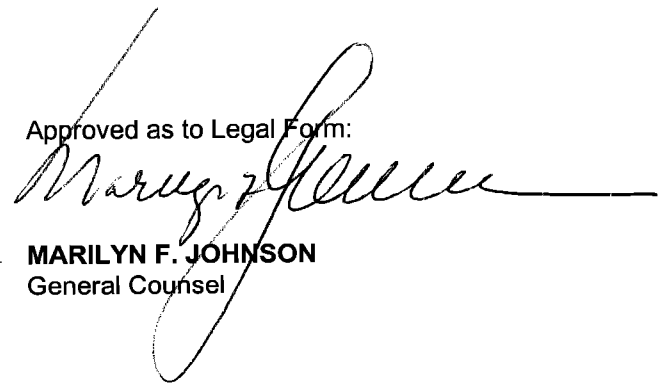
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Noted:



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