

POLICY

SOMERSET COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Date Submitted: February 25, 1986 Date Reviewed: May 25, 1999 May 16, 2006 December 15, 2009	Number: 200-10
Subject: School Closings	Date Approved: February 27, 1986 June 20, 2006 January 19, 2010 Effective Date: July 1, 1999 June 20, 2006 January 19, 2010

1. **PURPOSE**

To establish procedures in accord with COMAR to be used in making decisions on reorganizing the facilities of the county and closing a school.

2. **PROCESS**

- A. Consideration should be given to the impact of the proposed closings on the following educational factors:
 - (1) Student enrollment trends
 - (2) Age or condition of school buildings
 - (3) Transportation
 - (4) Educational programs
 - (5) Racial composition of student body
 - (6) Financial considerations
 - (7) Student relocation
 - (8) Impact on community in geographic attendance area for school proposed to be closed and school, or schools, to which students will be relocating.
- B. The factors that may to be used in evaluating the above include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (1) Student Enrollment Trend
 - (a) What are the enrollment trends in the schools in the area?
 - (b) At what level does the declining student enrollment cause a reduction in normal ancillary service?
 - (c) What effect will the closing of a school have on the racial balance in the neighboring schools?
 - (2) Age or Condition of School Building
 - (a) Can the student population be accommodated in nearby facilities without overcrowding any schools?
 - (b) Would the closing of a school impact adversely on class size in any school?
 - (c) Does the building in question meet contemporary specifications for educational programs?
 - (d) Is the school site adequate for a full educational program'? How does it compare with that of other area schools?
 - (e) How does the age and condition of the building compare with that of other schools in the area?
 - (f) What future use may the Board of Education make of the facility?

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- (g) When may the facility be declared surplus and turned over to the county authorities if no specific use by the Board of Education is anticipated?
 - (3) Transportation
 - (a) Could students be transported safely and at reasonable costs to other area schools?
 - (b) Would transportation place undue demands on the part of the students' day devoted to education?
 - (4) Educational Program
 - (a) Will the program of studies for the students involved in the consolidation be negatively affected?
 - (b) Will the special services received by students with special needs remain available in the new situation?
 - (c) Will the distribution of children in grades affect the program of studies?
 - (d) Optimum school size?
 - (5) Racial Composition Assurance of Compliance with Federal Guidelines.
 - (6) Financial Situation
 - (a) What savings could be anticipated which would result from those positions which would not have to be filled were a school to be closed?
 - (b) What savings would result from reduced or eliminated operational and maintenance costs?
 - (7) Student Relocation
 - (a) Maximum stability to minimize future movement of students.
 - (b) Neighborhood considerations.
 - (8) Impact on Community.
 - (a) Rate of enrollment decline.
 - (b) Density of school age population.
 - (c) Location of school in community.
- C. The Board of Education shall provide an opportunity for concerned citizens and parents to submit their views orally, or in writing, at a public hearing prior to any final decisions on any proposed closing. Requests for input will be made in the announcement of the public hearing, accepted prior to or at the hearing, and received up to 24 hours after the hearing.
- D. Notice shall be given at least two weeks prior to any scheduled public hearings in at least two newspapers having circulation in the geographic attendance area for the school or schools proposed to be closed and the school or schools to which students will be relocated. Said notice shall contain:
- (1) Names of schools under consideration for closing.
 - (2) Time limits for submission of written testimony and data.
 - (3) Dates and times of public hearing, including time limit on and/or procedure for submitting oral testimony at the hearing.
- E. The Board of Education of Somerset County shall provide notice of its final decision to close a school to the community in the geographic attendance area of the school proposed to be closed and the school to where students will be relocating through a published announcement in newspapers of general circulation in accord with item 2D of this policy. Notice of any final

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Board of Education decision shall advise that **“An appeal to the State Board may be submitted in writing within 30 days after the decision of the local board of education. “**

- F. Time of final decision (COMAR 13A.02.09.02)
 - (1) Any Board decision to close a school shall be announced at least 90 days before the date the school is scheduled to be closed no later than April 30 of any school year.
 - (2) If the decision to close a school cannot be announced at least 90 days before the date a school is scheduled to close or before April 30 of any school year due to unforeseen circumstances, then an "emergency circumstance" is deemed to exist and the decision may be made after April 30 or less than 90 days before the date the school closing is to occur.
- G. The Superintendent and his/her staff shall submit data to the Board of Education based upon consideration of citizen and staff impact. Citizens are encouraged to submit data and their opinions to the Board of Education according to the guidelines set forth herein.
- H. Final deliberations and decisions will be made at public meetings of the Board of Education.