COMMUNITY RELATIONS: Community Involvement

Closing of School Buildings

I. Purpose

To implement Board of Education of Baltimore County (Board) Policy 1290 by establishing guidelines for the closing of a Baltimore County Public School (BCPS) building.

II. Definitions

A. Attendance Area – The geographical boundary of a school where students are assigned based on the location of where they are domiciled.

B. School – Any Board-owned, controlled, or leased property where students are present.

C. Student – A school-aged child who meets specified conditions for establishing domicile in Baltimore County and who is currently enrolled in a Baltimore County public school.

D. Student Demographics – Student demographics include, but may not be limited to: enrollment, race/ethnicity, grade level, special programs, and free and reduced-price meals (FARMS) status.

III. Process

A. Proposal

1. The Superintendent will designate appropriate, assistant superintendent(s) and department heads to develop a proposal to close a school.

2. In making its proposal, staff shall consider the following:

   a. Factors set forth in COMAR 13A.02.09.01B:

      (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; and
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(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. Other factors shall include but not be limited to:
   (1) community input;
   (2) Student demographics;
   (3) student attendance areas;
   (4) staffing impact; and
   (5) fiscal impact plan for redistribution of students and or programs.

3. The proposal to close a school will be submitted to the Superintendent for approval.

B. Notice of the Proposal
   1. Prior to making a recommendation to the Board to close a school, the Superintendent will provide notice of the proposal to:
      a. Principal(s) of the affected school(s);
      b. Staff of the affected school(s);
      c. PTA board of the affected school(s).

C. Recommendation
   1. The Superintendent, during a regular meeting of the Board, shall recommend the closing of a school.
   2. Notice of the recommendation to the Board by the Superintendent to close a school shall be conveyed as follows:
      a. A letter from the principal to parents/guardians of all students attending the school(s) recommended for closing;
      b. A letter from the Superintendent to the PTA/PTSA board of the school(s) recommended for closing;
      c. A press release issued by the office of communications announcing the recommendation.

D. Public Hearing
   1. Following announcement of the recommendation to the Board and prior to making a final decision to close a school, the Board shall convene a public hearing to permit public testimony by interested citizens.
   2. Notice of the Board’s public hearing will be provided at least two (2) weeks in advance of the public hearing on the proposed closing, and include:
      a. The date, time, and location of the public hearing;
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b. Clear time limits for submission of written testimony or data; and

c. The proposed date of the Board’s vote on the Superintendent’s recommendation.

E. The chief communications officer is responsible for ensuring that notice of the public hearing is provided as follows:

1. Advertised in at least two (2) newspapers having general circulation in the affected area(s) of the county.
   a. The newspaper notification shall include the procedures that will be followed by the board in making its final decision.

2. Distributed to parents and guardians of students at schools proposed for closure.


4. Transmitted via automated telephone message to the parents and guardians of the attending students of the school recommended for closing.

IV. Decision

A. At a regular meeting of the Board subsequent to the public hearing, the Board shall issue its final decision regarding the recommendation to close a school.

1. The decision shall:
   a. be in writing and include the rationale for the school closing and address the factors set forth in section III(A)(2) above.
   b. include notification of the right to appeal to the Maryland State Board of Education as set forth in state regulation.

B. The chief communications officer is responsible for ensuring that notice of the Board’s decision to close a school is disseminated as follows:

1. To the parents and guardians of the affected school(s).

2. Via a press release to the community in the geographic attendance area of the school proposed to be closed and school(s) to which students will be relocating. The written notification shall include the right to appeal the decision to the Maryland State Board of Education as set forth in state regulation.

C. Except in emergency circumstances, the decision to close a school(s) shall be announced at least 90 days before the date the school is scheduled to be closed, but not later than April 30 of any school year.
V. Implementation

A. The Department of Physical Facilities shall:
   1. Prepare documentation as appropriate to notify the Maryland Department of State Planning, the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, and the Interagency Committee for Public School Construction regarding the change in the status of the school(s).
   2. Coordinate as appropriate the property transfer to Baltimore County government.

B. Reassignment of Students
   1. Students will be reassigned in accordance with Board Policy and Superintendent’s Rules.

C. Reassignment of Staff
   1. Staff at schools approved to close will be reassigned through the transfer process and in accordance with the Board’s collective bargaining agreements.

D. Redistribution of Assess
   1. The Office of Logistics shall oversee reassignment of assess and shall coordinate with all offices responsible for the assets.
   2. Articles that have been deemed surplus, obsolete, or broken will be disposed of in accordance with Board Policies, Superintendent’s Rules, and operating procedures.

Legal References: Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article §4-115(d), Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property; Construction, Etc., of School Buildings
COMAR 13A.02.09, Closing of Schools

Related Policies: Board of Education Policy 1280, Boundary Changes
Board of Education Policy 3620, Inventories
Board of Education Policy 3640, Disposal of Surplus or Excess Property
Board of Education Policy 7110, Determining Needs