

Consideration of Permanent Closure of Lochiel U-Connect School Site

Special Meeting of the Board of Education
Tuesday, June 9th, 2015



Original Board Motion

Board of Education Motion, April 7, 2015:

“That the Board of Education serves notice at its Special Meeting of the Board on April 7, 2015 that it intends to consider a motion at a future Regular open meeting of the Board for the permanent closure of the Lochiel U-Connect School.”

Guiding Principles

1. That the consultation process be one of integrity where honesty and transparency are of utmost importance.
2. That trust between communities and the District be developed and maintained throughout the process.
3. That the District listen to communities and sincerely reflect on feedback and ideas.
4. That the District value and honour community members and treat them with respect.

October 2, 2014

Rationale for Closure

Reasoning around the closure consideration of Lochiel influenced by two factors:

- 1. The recent public consultation process regarding the Langley Secondary family of schools did not result in the possible conversion of Simonds Elementary to a middle school, thereby raising the issue of whether the District should consider its closure due to declining enrolment**
- 2. The recent expansion of the distributed learning program at Lochiel to include grade 10 and the plan to continue to add a grade each year so it becomes a K-12 school, requires a larger facility and the relocation of students**

Based on these factors, District staff recommended the closure of the Lochiel site and the relocation of the U-Connect program to Simonds Elementary, thereby providing the large facility required and avoiding the consideration of the closure of Simonds Elementary.

Policy #5029 - School Closure

If considering the closure of any school the Board is required to serve notice

- Served due to the consideration of the potential closure of Lochiel school
- 60 day consultation period (April 7, 2015 – June 9, 2015)

Themes from Community Consultation

Positive support for this proposal has been expressed by both the Lochiel and Simonds' communities. This merger will provide opportunities for students and staff of both schools.

Concerns from the Lochiel community were focussed upon:

- Adequate clerical and administrative time at the site to support both programs
- The state of site readiness for the Lochiel students and staff for September
- A fear that the unique qualities of the U-Connect program may be lost

Board Considerations

From the consultation process the following points are considerations that will inform the Board's decision of the proposed closure:

- **the two student bodies can be accommodated at the Simonds site**
- **there is adequate space there for the future expansion of the U-Connect program to grade 12**
- **the Lochiel site and building have limitations with respect to providing educational programming**
- **the Simonds site provides an improved educational environment and does not require structural seismic upgrading, as the Lochiel site requires**

Board Considerations

- the site committee meetings provided feedback, including answers to questions, have been included in the attached Proposed Closure Information Package. The feedback is both positive and negative
- the feedback that has been received since the May 13, 2015 community meeting suggested the need to have certain issues decided upon before a vote can be taken (staff answers to these concerns are provided later in this report)
- the District has developed a draft implementation plan that would see the Media Center and the English Language teachers (currently located at Simonds) relocated to other locations
- the District has also identified, as part of the implementation plan, potential site work that would need to take place at Simonds to accommodate both student populations

Timeline

April 7, 2015	Board Motion to begin closure review process for Lochiel U-Connect site
April 8, 2015	Letter to Parents regarding Board's motion to begin closure review
April 10, 2015	Information package posted on website per Board Policy No. 5029
April 14, 2015	Simonds Site Committee Meeting #1
April 15, 2015	Lochiel Site Committee Meeting #1
April 28, 2015	Update on Process to Date at In-camera Meeting
April 29, 2015	Simonds Site Committee Meeting #2
April 30, 2015	Lochiel Site Committee Meeting #2
May 4, 2015	Letter to Parents regarding Community Consultation Meeting of May 13th
May 7 & 8, 2015	Local Newspaper Ads regarding Community Consultation Meeting of May 13th
May 8, 2015	Information package posted on website for May 13th Community Consultation Meeting
May 13, 2015	Community Consultation Meeting

Recommendations

That the Board of Education, in accordance with Section 73(1)a) of the School Act, approves the closure of Lochiel U-Connect Center, by Closure Bylaw No. 2015-1, effective July 1, 2015. (Three readings required)

That District Staff commences transition planning with staff and parents, on the relocation of students from the Lochiel U-Connect Program to Simonds Elementary for September 1, 2015.

Next Steps

Steps to be followed should the Board decide to close the Lochiel U-Connect School site include:

- **Advising staff, students and parents**
- **Advising the greater Langley community**
- **Notifying the Ministry of Education**
- **Implementing staffing changes**
- **Transition planning will include:**
 - **Working with families and students to ensure a positive transition for students**
 - **Discussing continuing support service for students of both schools**

Next Steps

- **Logistics of the physical move:**
 - **Discussing plans for re-assigning furniture, equipment, supplies, etc.**
 - **Addressing physical plant needs at Simonds Elementary (i.e., painting/repairs)**
- **A Transition Committee will be established comprised of members from both site committees at Lochiel U-Connect and Simonds Elementary**