## 1.0 PREAMBLE:

1.1 The District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) is committed to providing the best educational facilities and learning environments to support student success.

1.2 The DSBN will strive to maintain and operate its schools as effectively and efficiently as possible to support student success and to ensure educational programs and facilities are commensurate with Ministry of Education funding and Board policies.

1.3 Where possible the preferred model of school configuration is JK to 8 for elementary or grade 1 to 8 for elementary French Immersion schools; and grade 9 to 12 for secondary schools.

1.4 The DSBN recognizes that changes in enrolment patterns, demographics of the population, funding and operational realities, educational policies and curriculum, provincial legislation, and aging facilities and infrastructure may result in the need to consolidate, close, or relocate a school or school programs in order to achieve the goals set out in 1.1 and 1.2 above.

1.5 The consolidation, closure, or relocation of a school or school programs will be subject to an accommodation review in accordance with the Ministry of Education's Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines and this policy.

1.6 The purpose of the accommodation review process is to develop viable accommodation options and solutions that support student success.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

**Business day** refers to a calendar day that is not a weekend or statutory holiday. It also does not include calendar days that fall within the DSBN's Christmas, spring, or summer holidays.

**Community partner** refers to a community organization that has an established and ongoing relationship with the DSBN and offers programs or services that support students in the community.

**Enrolment** refers to the number of students attending a school as of October 31st of a given school year. Enrolment is expressed as a head count.

**Group of schools** means two or more schools that are grouped for review under the accommodation review process.

**Facility** refers to the physical components of a school.

**Facility condition index** is a building condition determined by the Ministry of Education by calculating the ratio between the five year renewal needs and the replacement value for each facility.

**Nearest available elementary or secondary school** means a school that has a sufficient number of empty pupil spaces available to receive the redistributed school population immediately and over the next 5 years without creating an overcapacity situation.

**Notice of Initiation** refers to the notice of the Board of Trustees approval to commence an accommodation review.

**On the ground capacity** refers to the capacity of the school, as determined by the Ministry of Education, by loading all of the instructional spaces within the facility to current Ministry standards for class size requirements and room areas.

**School Community** refers to the school administrators, teachers, and staff members that work in the school under review, the students that attend the school under review, and the parents or guardians of these students.

**Stakeholder(s)** refers to a person, group, organization, or government body that has a direct interest in the school under an accommodation review or subject to closure.

**Utilization** is the comparison of the school's enrolment to the on the ground capacity of the facility. It is calculated by dividing the school's enrolment by its capacity rating and expressed as a percentage. A utilization rate of less than 100% means a school is underutilized while a rate of over 100% would mean the school is overcapacity.

## 3.0 ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

3.1 A school or group of schools may be considered for an accommodation review if one or more of the following conditions apply:

i. There is an excess number of pupil spaces in a school.
ii. Declining enrolment has created a negative impact on learning opportunities for students at the school or group of schools.
iii. The school or group of schools is unable to provide a suitable and equitable selection of learning opportunities for students.
iv. Program and learning opportunities could be enhanced by reorganization of the school or group of schools.
v. Facility conditions are not suitable to provide the programs needed to serve the students and the community and retrofitting would involve major capital investment or be cost prohibitive.
vi. Other accommodation related reasons upon the recommendation of the Director of Education and subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. Examples include, but are not limited to: health, safety or environmental conditions affecting the school or surrounding area; unforeseen changes in funding, policy, or legislation; a request from the community; etc.

3.2 Where possible, accommodation reviews should include a group of schools within a specific planning area.

3.3 Schools should only be subject to an accommodation review once in a five year period unless any of the conditions under 3.1 exist, as determined by the DSBN, which would warrant another accommodation review within 5 years. This section (3.3) does not apply if the school is to be closed due to unusual circumstances or unsafe conditions.

3.4 The DSBN recognizes the importance of a collaborative accommodation review process that provides for meaningful community dialogue and input. To this end the public, affected school communities and other stakeholders will be provided with opportunities to participate and share relevant information during the accommodation review process.

## 4.0 PLANNING PRIOR TO AN ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

4.1 Before the Board of Trustees can decide to initiate an accommodation review, the Director of Education, or designate, must undertake long term capital and accommodation planning, informed by any relevant information obtained by local municipal governments and other community partners, which takes into consideration long term enrolment projections and opportunities for the effective use of excess space in all schools under the DSBN's jurisdiction.

4.2 Where the initiation of an accommodation review of a school or group of schools is being considered, an Initial Staff Report with one or more options that address the accommodation issue(s) must be prepared and presented to the Board of Trustees.

4.3 The Initial Staff Report must include the following:

i. Information on actions taken by DSBN staff prior to the commencement of the accommodation review process, including a supporting rationale as to any actions taken or not taken;
ii. Supporting rationale for the accommodation option(s);
iii. A recommended option if more than one option is presented;
iv. A timeline for implementation for each accommodation option;
v. A summary of accommodation issue(s) for the school(s) under review;
vi. Where students would be accommodated;
vii. If proposed changes to the existing facility or facilities, or new facilities, are required;
viii. Any program changes as a result of the proposed option;
ix. Impact on student transportation;
x. If new capital investment is required and how the DSBN intends to fund it or a proposal on how students would be accommodated if funding does not become available; and,
xi. Any relevant information obtained from municipalities and other community partners prior to the commencement of the accommodation review including any confirmed interest in using underutilized space.

4.4 Efforts to obtain information from local municipal governments as well as other community partners that expressed an interest prior to the accommodation review must be documented and included as part of the Initial Staff Report.

4.5 A School Information Profile Report must be prepared to inform the Accommodation Review Committee and the community of the context surrounding the decision to include specific school(s) in an accommodation review.

4.6 The School Information Profile Report must include the following for the school(s) under review:

i. Value to the student;
ii. Value to the School Board; and,
iii. The minimum requirements as set out in Appendix A.

4.7 The School Information Profile Report may include additional items that reflect local circumstances and priorities.

4.8 The decision to commence an accommodation review rests with the Board of Trustees.

4.9 The Initial Staff Report and School Information Profile Report must be made available to the public and posted on the DSBN's website following the Board of Trustees' decision to undertake an accommodation review.

## 5.0 NOTICE OF INITIATION OF AN ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

5.1 Upon the Board of Trustees' approval to initiate an accommodation review the DSBN shall give Notice of Initiation within 5 business days to the following:

i. Affected school Principal, school council(s), and School Community;
ii. Affected local and upper tier municipalities;
iii. Community partners that expressed interest prior to the pupil accommodation review;
iv. The general public;
v. The Directors of Education of coterminous boards (Catholic, French, French Catholic); and
vi. The Ministry of Education through the office of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Financial Policy and Business Division.

5.2 Notice of Initiation shall be given in the following manner:

i. Posting on the DSBN website;
ii. Providing it to the local newspaper for publishing;
iii. Mailing or emailing to the Principals of affected schools, the school councils of affected schools, the Clerks of single and upper tier municipalities, and community partners that expressed interest prior to the pupil accommodation review.

5.3 Notice of Initiation must include an invitation to municipalities and such community partners for a meeting to discuss and comment on the recommended option(s) in the Initial Staff Report.

5.4 Affected single and upper tier municipalities and other community partners must provide their response on the recommended options in the Initial Staff Report before the final public meeting.

## 6.0 ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE (ARC)

6.1 Upon the Board of Trustees' approval to initiate an accommodation review an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) shall be established by the Board. This policy (6.1) does not apply to the optional modified accommodation review process set out in section 8.0.

6.2 The ARC must be established prior to the first public meeting.

6.3 The Superintendent of Planning or designate shall:

i. Coordinate appointments to the ARC;
ii. Ensure that DSBN staff resources are available to the ARC to compile feedback and provide support;
iii. Interpret and ensure compliance with this Accommodation Review Policy;
iv. Ensure meeting records are kept;
v. Ensure attendance registers are filed for all meetings; and,
vi. Organize and chair all ARC and public meetings

6.4 Membership of the ARC shall include the Superintendent of Planning or designate and:

i. One parent/guardian representative from each of the schools under review chosen by their respective school communities to represent the views of the parent community;
ii. One student representative from each school where secondary schools are part of the review process to represent the views of the student body; and,
iii. A Trustee from each review area and one additional Trustee to act as a resource.
iv. Principals from each of the schools under review to:
    a. act as a resource;
    b. to coordinate the appointment of a parent/guardian representative and student representative in the case of a secondary school accommodation review;
    c. to ensure notices are posted in school communications and on the school website;
    d. to arrange space for ARC meetings;
    e. to arrange and coordinate school staff input; and
    f. to respond to day to day inquiries about the accommodation review.

## 7.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

7.1 The Board shall provide terms of reference to the ARC that include the following matters:

i. The mandate of the ARC which will refer to the DSBN education and accommodation objectives in undertaking the accommodation review and reflect the DSBN's strategy for supporting student achievement and well being;
ii. The procedures to be followed by the ARC;
iii. The role and responsibility of the ARC is to represent the schools under review and to act as the official conduit for information sharing between the School Board and school communities. The ARC:

a. Will review the Initial Staff Report and other information presented by staff;
b. May provide feedback on the Initial Staff Report options;
c. May seek clarification of the Initial Staff Report;
d. May provide other accommodation options with supporting rationale;
e. Does not need to achieve a consensus regarding information provided to Trustees;
f. May request clarification about information provided in a School Information Profile Report, but has no role in approving the Report.

iv. The ARC shall hold a minimum of two public consultation meetings in the review area to receive input or comments from the public on the accommodation review and the Initial Staff Report.
v. The ARC shall hold a minimum of two working meetings, and may hold as many working meetings as it deems necessary within the timelines established in Section 11, below.

7.2 In carrying out its duties the ARC shall have regard for the following matters:

i. Attention should be paid to the value of the school(s) to the student and to the School Board;
ii. There is a full range of actions that can be recommended to the Board of Trustees, including school closure, boundary changes, changes in the grade organization of schools, construction of replacement facilities, facility upgrades and renovations, program changes, etc.;
iii. ARC members shall refrain from any discussions about specific personnel, property or legal matters;
iv. The ARC working meetings and public consultation meetings should be held at a school(s) in the review area or, if necessary, at another community facility if physical accessibility cannot be provided at a school(s); and
v. The ARC will be informed at the beginning of the process about partnership opportunities or lack thereof as identified as part of the Board's long term planning process.

7.3 Feedback from the ARC, as well as the broader public consultation, will be compiled into a Community Consultation section of the Final Staff Report that will be prepared by DSBN staff.

## 8.0 OPTIONAL MODIFIED ACCOMMODATION REVIEW PROCESS

8.1 The Board may find it appropriate to conduct a modified accommodation review process in circumstances where potential accommodation options are less complex. The optional modified accommodation review process may only be undertaken where two or more of the following criteria apply to one or more school(s) within a group of schools:

i. Enrolment:
   a. An elementary school with an enrolment of less than 150 students for the current year and which is projected to remain below 150 for the next two years.
   b. A secondary school with an enrolment of less than 350 students for the current year and which is projected to remain below 350 for the next two years.

ii. A school with a utilization rate of 65% or lower. Utilization will be determined by dividing the school's enrolment by the on-the-ground capacity of the school building.

iii. A school facility that is physically not suitable to serve the school community and:
   a. Where retrofitting may involve major capital investment; or
   b. Where the Facility Condition Index deems the school prohibitive to repair.

iv. Distance to nearest available accommodation:
   a. In the case of elementary school review where the nearest available accommodation option is 10 kms or less from the school(s) under review; and
   b. In the case of a secondary school review where the nearest available accommodation option is 20 kms or less from the school(s) under review.

v. The relocation of a program or grades where the enrolment constitutes 50% or more of the school's enrolment. The enrolment will be based on the enrolment at the time of the relocation or the first phase of relocation carried over a number of years.

8.2 The modified accommodation review process is implemented in accordance with the remainder of this policy document except for the following:

i. The Initial Staff Report must provide rationale for exempting the school(s) from the standard accommodation review process;
ii. No ARC is required to be established; and,
iii. A minimum of one public meeting must be held no fewer than 30 business days following the decision to conduct a modified accommodation review.

## 9.0 COMPLETING THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

9.1 At the conclusion of the accommodation review process (after the final public meeting) DSBN staff will submit a Final Staff Report to the Board of Trustees.

9.2 The Final Staff Report should build on the information provided in the Initial Staff Report and through the accommodation review process, and must include the following:

i. The recommended option(s) which may be amended from the Initial Staff Report;
ii. A proposed accommodation plan which contains a timeline for implementation; and,
iii. A Community Consultation section that contains feedback from the ARC, any public consultations, and any relevant information obtained from municipalities and other community partners prior to and during the accommodation review process.

9.3 The Final Staff Report must be available to the public and posted on the DSBN's website.

9.4 After the Final Staff Report is submitted to the Board of Trustees, members of the public must be provided with an opportunity to provide feedback on the Final Staff Report through public delegations to the Board of Trustees.

9.5 After any public delegations, DSBN staff will compile feedback which will be presented to the Board of Trustees as an addendum to the Final Staff Report. Any changes to the Final Staff Report as a result of public delegations will be detailed in the addendum.

9.6 The final decision regarding the future of a school or group of schools under accommodation review rests solely with the Board of Trustees.

9.7 In making its decision the Board of Trustees will consider the Final Staff Report along with the addendum from public delegations.

9.8 The Board of Trustees has the discretion to approve the recommendation(s) of the Final Staff Report as presented, modify the recommendation(s), or approve a different outcome.

9.9 Should the Board of Trustees vote to close a school or schools the Board must provide clear timelines regarding the closure(s) and ensure that a transition plan is provided to all affected school communities.

9.10 Board of Trustee decisions on an accommodation review should not be made during the school summer holiday period.

## 10.0 TRANSITION PLANNING

10.1 In situations where the Board approves a recommendation to close a school, a Transition Team shall be established to facilitate the closing process.

10.2 The Transition Team should include the Principals, parents, and staff representatives of the affected schools, student representatives in the case of a secondary school closure, the Superintendent of Schools for the review area, and other appropriate Board staff. The Superintendent of Schools for the review area shall act as Chair of the Transition Team.

10.3 The Transition Team will identify the issues, needs, and responsibilities related to the implementation of the school closure. It will monitor progress on transition activities and the well being of students affected by school closure, and communicate this information to stakeholders on a regular basis.

10.4 Normally, resource materials will move with students to their new school location(s).

## 11.0 PUBLIC MEETINGS AND TIMELINES

11.1 A minimum of two public meetings must be held for a (standard) accommodation review process and a minimum of one public meeting must be held for a modified accommodation review process to receive broader community input and comment on the Initial Staff Report. Staff are expected to facilitate the public meetings to solicit broader community feedback on the recommended options contained in the Initial Staff Report.

11.2 The Notice of Public Meetings shall be given in the same manner as outlined in section 5.2 of this policy.

11.3 There must be a minimum of 30 business days between the date of the Board of Trustees approval to initiate the accommodation review and the first public meeting.

11.4 The first public meeting, at a minimum, shall include the following:

i. An overview of the ARC orientation session;
ii. The Initial Staff Report with recommended option(s); and
iii. A presentation of the School Information Profile Report.

11.5 There must be a minimum of 40 business days between the first and final public meeting.

11.6 Affected single and upper tier municipalities and other community partners must provide their response on the Initial Staff Report before the final public meeting. The DSBN shall provide advance notice of when the final public meeting is scheduled to take place.

11.7 The Final Staff Report must be publicly posted a minimum of 10 business days after the final public meeting.

11.8 From the public posting of the Final Staff Report there must be a minimum of 10 business days before public delegations.

11.9 There must be a minimum of 10 business days between public delegations and the final decision of the Board of Trustees.

## 12.0 EXEMPTIONS

12.1 The Ministry of Education's Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines provide a number of exceptions where School Boards are not required to undertake an accommodation review process. These include:

i. Where a replacement school is to be built by the Board on the existing site or located within the existing attendance boundary as identified through the Board's policies;
ii. Where a replacement school is to be built by the Board on the existing site or located within the existing attendance boundary, and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students and staff during reconstruction as identified through the Board's policies;
iii. When the Board is considering the relocation of grades or programs where the enrolment constitutes less than 50% of the enrolment of the school. The enrolment will be based on the enrolment at the time of the relocation or the first phase of relocation carried over a number of years.
iv. When the Board is repairing or renovating a school, and the school community must be temporarily relocated to ensure the safety of students during the renovations;
v. Where a facility has been serving as a holding school for a school community whose permanent school is under construction or repair;
vi. When a lease is terminated;
vii. Where an accommodation proposal does not involve a school offering elementary or secondary regular day school programs.
viii. Where there are no students enrolled at the school at any time throughout the school year.

12.2 Although an accommodation review is not required in these situations, the Board should provide appropriate notice of decisions where the accommodation circumstances of students will be affected.

## APPENDIX A: School Information Profile Report

A School Information Profile Report (SIP) will be completed by DSBN staff for each of the schools under review and include the following information:

**Facility Profile:**

- School name and address.
- Site plan and floor plan(s) (or space template) of the school with the date of school construction and any subsequent additions.
- School attendance area (boundary) map.
- Context map (or air photo) of the school indicating the existing land uses surrounding the school.
- Planning map of the school with Zoning, Official Plan or Secondary Plan land use designations.
- Size of the school site (acres or hectares).
- Building area (square feet or square metres).
- Number of portable classrooms.
- Number and type of instructional rooms as well as specialized classroom teaching spaces (i.e. science lab, tech shop, gymnasium, etc.).
- Area of hard surfaced outdoor play area and/or green space, the number of play fields, and the presence of outdoor facilities (i.e. tracks, courts for basketball, tennis, etc.).
- Ten-year history of major facility improvements (item and cost).
- Projected five-year facility renewal needs of school (item and cost).
- Current Facility Condition Index (FCI) with a definition of what the index represents.
- A measure of proximity of the students to their existing school, and the average distance to the school for students.
- Percentage of students that are and are not eligible for transportation under the School Board Policy, and the length of bus ride to the school (longest, shortest, and average length of bus ride times).
- School utility costs (totals, per square foot, and per student).
- Number of parking spaces on site at the school, an assessment of the adequacy of parking, and bus/car access and egress.
- Measures that the School Board has identified and/or addressed for accessibility of the school for students, staff, and the public with disabilities (i.e. barrier-free).
- On-the-ground (OTG) capacity, and surplus/shortage of pupil places.

**Instructional Profile:**

- Describe the number and type of teaching staff, non-teaching staff, support staff, itinerant staff, and administrative staff at the school.
- Describe the course and program offerings at the school.
- Describe the specialized service offerings at the school (i.e. cooperative placements, guidance counseling, etc.).

- Current grade configuration of the school (i.e. Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6, Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12, etc.).
- Current grade organization of the school (i.e. number of combined grades, etc.).
- Number of out of area students.
- Utilization factor/classroom usage.
- Summary of five previous years' enrolment and 10-year enrolment projection by grade and program.
- Current extracurricular activities.

**Other School Use Profile:**

- Current non-school programs or services resident at or co-located with the school as well as any revenue from these non-school programs or services and whether or not it is at full cost recovery.
- Current facility partnerships as well as any revenue from the facility partnerships and whether or not it is at full cost recovery.
- Community use of the school as well as any revenue from the community use of the school and whether or not it is at full cost recovery.
- Availability of before and after school programs or services (i.e. child care) as well as any revenue from the before and after school programs and whether or not it is at full cost recovery.
- Lease terms at the school as well as any revenue from the lease and whether or not it is at full cost recovery.
- Description of the school's suitability for facility partnerships.