



Ministry of Education
School Reorganisation (SCORE) Advisory Committee
Terms of Reference
2015

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1. Definitions

This section is intended to explain and where necessary, clarify terms commonly-used within the context of school reorganisation and school closure.

School Reorganisation (SCORE) Advisory Committee is an independent body, made up of parents, educators and community representatives that was established to inform the Minister of Education on the issues of school reorganisation and closure. The SCORE Advisory Committee is not itself granted the authority to make decisions on behalf of the public. However, it was put in place to follow a process that will allow for the presentation of findings to the Minister about the feasibility of school closures, and which schools should be closed, if any.

Public School Reorganisation is an umbrella term which may include changes to elements of the structure of the schools and programmes within the Bermuda Public School System. It can also include the consolidation or closure of schools.

School closure “means a decision to cease the operation of a school and to accommodate all the students in another school or schools.”¹

Consolidation refers to the combination of schools or classes.

Stakeholder refers to a person or group with an interest or concern in something. In the context of school closure and reorganisation, stakeholders include: students, parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, other school support staff, school counsellors, principals, community members and organisations, and any individual or group that may be affected by school reorganisation or closure.

¹ (Eastern School District, Prince Edward Island, 1995)

2. Preamble

Preschool and primary education and experiences hold a special place in our hearts and in our communities. Even as adults most people retain a connection to or hold a few great memories of their first school, of one special teacher, and of their first experiences. For many, schools are centres of their communities, connecting children, parents, extended families, friends neighbours, businesses and charities.

Bermuda is in the same position as many other jurisdictions worldwide. It is trying to improve the quality of public education, while facing the realities of uncertainty. The ongoing effort to improve the public education system, and the need to reduce expenditures, to identify efficiencies in the delivery of services and programmes, to deal with dwindling enrollments and the underutilisation of physical and other resources, presents few choices.

Instead of maintaining the status quo, or looking at the issue simply as a problem to be solved, a decision has been made to use this challenge as an opportunity. The issue of school reorganisation, inclusive of closure is both delicate and complex. After much concern, a thoughtful, inclusive approach guided by the principles of integrity, transparency, student-centredness, sensitivity and respect is being undertaken.

3. Background and Context for the Current Approach to School Reorganisation

In March 2015, the Minister of Education, the Hon. R. Wayne Scott, J.P., M.P. presented the public with the possibility of school reorganisation. The difficult decision to consider the closure of preschools and primary schools was made as a result of the significant economic challenges facing the Government of Bermuda and the Ministry of Education, coupled with demographic trends such as a declining birthrate and a pattern of decline in enrolment.

The Minister listened and deeply considered the thoughtful comments, feedback, submissions and discussions on possible school reorganisation and closure. As a result, he decided that the difficult challenge of reorganisation would be more successful if a different approach was taken. The Minister determined that additional time was required in order to look at the public education system in greater depth, and that stakeholders should be engaged for the development and implementation of a process to consider the issue of school reorganisation and closure. The additional time allows for further engagement and the examination of the issues over several months.

The School Reorganisation (SCORE) Advisory Committee is an independent body, made up of parents, educators and community representatives that was established to inform the Minister of Education on the issues of school reorganisation and closure. The SCORE Advisory Committee is not itself granted the authority to make decisions on behalf of the public. However, it was put in place to follow a process that will allow for the presentation of findings to the Minister on school reorganisation.

The Minister has committed to take the SCORE Advisory Committee findings into serious consideration, but is not obligated to accept its findings.

The members of the SCORE Advisory Committee have recognised the Ministry of Education for its willingness to consider a different and more robust process that includes and engages parents, educators and community members in the decision-making process.

4. Minister's Request and Expectations of the SCORE Advisory Committee

The Minister has requested and expects the SCORE Advisory Committee to provide findings in regards to these issues:

- i. Schools for consolidation or closure for the 2016/2017 academic year and beyond; preferably using the initial input of decreasing the number of primary schools by 1 primary school per zone; i.e. East, West, and Central;
- ii. Plans for improving the quality and consistency of programming across primary schools, keeping in mind the ideal or model school (e.g. structured sport, music and art programming, improved therapy services, etc.); and
- iii. Opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings (e.g. more effective use of human resources, reduced maintenance costs, alternative building use, rent reductions, etc.).

5. Mandate

The SCORE Advisory Committee is responsible for conducting a comprehensive review of the programming, building use, and stakeholder needs of preschool and primary schools within the Bermuda Public School System. Following this review, the SCORE Advisory Committee will provide findings to the Minister regarding school reorganisation, with the primary goal of improving and expanding the *student experience*, and with the additional goal of achieving cost savings and efficiency where possible.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will provide findings regarding school reorganisation and closure to the Minister for his or her consideration and decision.

The findings on school reorganisation and closure will be presented to the Minister in the form of a report that will contain supporting rationales.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will make itself available to the Minister to present the findings and respond to any questions.

The SCORE Advisory Committee is required to utilise the terms of reference and process as outlined herein, although adjustments may be made following agreed upon changes by the SCORE Advisory Committee.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will consider all of the information and data provided to it and will engage and give opportunities for input from parents, educators and community members in support of its mandate.

6. Guiding Principles

The SCORE Advisory Committee will be guided by the following principles in carrying it out its mandate:

- i. Integrity
 - Maintain minutes of meetings
 - Respect the confidential nature of information shared with them
 - Follow a structured process for analysing information and drawing conclusions
 - Remain focused and follow through with commitment to the process.
- ii. Transparency
 - Provide regular information to the Minister and the public about the process that is followed and about the rationale for reaching decisions, and
 - Use language that is clear, free of jargon, direct, easily understood, and relevant to the topic.
- iii. Student-centred
 - Understand that the core reason for this work is that each student should experience the best possible learning environment.
- iv. Sensitivity
 - Understand that reorganising or closing schools may have a profound impact on families and the community, and to have empathy for diverse perspectives.
- v. Respect
 - Act with professional courtesy and respect towards educators, parents, the general public, Ministry personnel and others on the SCORE Advisory Committee
 - Emphasise the importance of active listening to understand others and the value of patience.

7. SCORE Advisory Committee Membership and Voting

The SCORE Advisory Committee membership was designed to reflect the interests of students, parents, educators and the Bermuda Public School System. It consists of stakeholders reflective of the education and broader community in Bermuda. Whilst the membership focuses on 'representation,' the membership has been carefully chosen, keeping in mind the interests that must be considered, but also the experience, skills and wisdom required to carry out the work.

The membership is to include at a minimum, the following:

- i. Five parents
- ii. Two community members
- iii. One preschool administrator
- iv. Two teachers, including 1 primary school teacher

- v. One member designated by the Bermuda Union of Teachers
- vi. Three principals, including 1 primary school principal
- vii. One member of the Board of Education
- viii. One employee of the Department of Education, with responsibility for student services (i.e. special education, school counselling, etc.), and
- ix. The Acting Commissioner of Education or designate (ex-officio)

The Acting Commissioner of Education may participate in discussions and deliberations, but shall not have a vote.

At least 1 member, who is not an employee of the Ministry or Department of Education, shall be the chairperson.

At least 1 member shall serve as a facilitator.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will be deemed to be fully constituted, whether or not all members participate and attend meetings; however attendance will be recorded and provided to the Ministry of Education.

The membership of the SCORE Advisory Committee has been structured such that not all members may need to attend all meetings. For example, if not all parents are in attendance, the other parents shall represent their interests.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will meet when needed as a group, but may also work and meet as sub-committees.

When a meeting of the full SCORE Advisory Committee is required, 50% plus 1 of all members will represent a quorum.

8. Support Resources

The SCORE Advisory Committee will be supported by a dedicated working liaison employed by the Department of Education. Further the SCORE Advisory Committee may invite individuals to act as resources, including school principals or designates, the policy analyst, facilities manager, information technology manager or designate, a human resources manager, the attendance co-ordinator, assistant directors, curriculum officers, mentor teachers, etc.

The Ministry of Education will facilitate the request for assistance, when help is required from Government employees from outside of Bermuda Public School System (e.g. Ministry of Public Works).

Following consultation with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, the SCORE Advisory Committee may also call upon support resources outside of the Ministry of Education and the Government of Bermuda, such as private companies or non-profit organisations.

9. Process for the Development of Findings on School Reorganisation

A summary of the process utilised by the SCORE Advisory Committee to fulfil its mandate is as follows:

- i. Gather data and information, and meet with selected information holders and stakeholders to better understand and contextualise the data, information and history as much as possible;
- ii. Study and analyse the data, information and history;
- iii. Apply the analysis of data, information and history to the study of factors that should be considered to fulfil the mandate; engage information holders and stakeholders to foster creative thinking and ideas for the study;
- iv. Develop draft scenarios and options for possible closure; use a deliberative process to prioritise which schools should not be considered for closure based on study factors, and which schools should be considered; develop cost estimates; and consider how negative impacts can be mitigated;
- v. Consider with sensitivity testing these scenarios and options for feasibility with selected representative and possibly affected stakeholders (e.g. principals, teachers, parents, etc.);
- vi. Evaluate the scenarios and options for reorganisation and closure;
- vii. Write a findings report, and include a peer review process before the report is finalised;
- viii. Present the report to the Board of Education for feedback;
- ix. Finalise the report and submit it to the Minister for his or her consideration.

The SCORE Advisory Committee will develop a project plan outlining key milestones, timescales, and individual streams of work which are linked to the larger project and process.

10. Bermuda Public School System and School Information

System and school information profiles and other documents deemed relevant to school reorganisation will be provided by the Ministry and Department of Education, and may include the following information:

- i. Information informing the context of the decision for school reorganisation;
- ii. Overviews of the Ministry of Education, Department of Education and school budgets, including the capital budget;
- iii. Any completed strategy documents, or summaries of working or planned strategy relating to educational improvement (e.g. inclusive and special education system improvement plan, literacy strategy, math strategy, middle school transformation);
- iv. Summaries of partially developed initiatives that may affect school reorganisation (e.g. early childhood strategy);
- v. Current and projected organisation and planning information for each school; grade configurations, staffing, etc.
- vi. Information on what is unique about each school, and what types of challenges it faces, including student strengths and needs;
- vii. School zone boundaries and schools within each boundary;

- viii. Enrolment trend data and estimates on enrolment capacity; current, past and future enrolment projections;
- ix. Information on where students attending each school reside;
- x. Information on transportation of students to their school (i.e. estimates of the percentage of students who walk, take the bus, are driven, etc.);
- xi. Available school facility information (size of schools, number of classrooms, age of school, state of school facility, floor plans, site plans, etc.);
- xii. Community partnerships with each school and community support of schools;
- xiii. Information on community use of each school; and
- xiv. Expenditure and revenue for each school.

The Ministry and Department of Education will be responsive to reasonable and relevant requests for additional information.

11. Historical Information

Historical information about the BPSS is documented, but may also be accessible through oral history or individuals' personal archives. The SCORE Advisory Committee may seek historical information from the Ministry of Education, but also from current and former educators, parents, and community members, etc.

12. Parent and Community Information

Parents, community members and organisations also hold current information about schools, including school strengths, challenges and needs. They can be engaged to offer data, information and history that may impact findings and decisions on school reorganisation.

13. Study of Factors and Supporting Information from the Bermuda Public School System

The SCORE Advisory Committee will consider the following non-exhaustive list factors when considering school reorganisation and closures:

- i. School capacity and utilisation**
 - How many children can a particular school hold and still deliver the educational programming? Is there school space that is underutilised, overutilised or appropriately maximised? How is the indoor and outdoor space utilised?
- ii. School enrolment**
 - What is the past, current and projected enrolment of the school?
- iii. The operating cost of the school, and the cost per student**
 - What is the comparable cost of the school and the cost per student?
 - What are the maintenance, human resource and energy costs to operate the schools?
 - What is the appropriate staffing required to deliver school programming?

- iv. Quality and condition of school buildings**
- What is the age, condition and safety and health of buildings, cost and efficiency of operation, the potential for expansion and green space?
 - Is the school accessible for all individuals?
 - Are all classrooms and specialised instructional spaces adequate?
- v. The quality and extent of programme offerings**
- What strengths and weaknesses exist in the educational program at the school due to staffing, organisation, school size, etc.
 - How well developed is the programming?
 - Are there any additional programmes offered at the school, including co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes?
- vi. Comprehensive, inclusive and special education**
- What is the range of support services, such as guidance, special education, etc. provided at the school?
 - Are there any special programmes or services offered that are unique to the school?
 - How might closure impact students' educational needs, special or otherwise?
- vii. Geographical location, access and transportation of students**
- How do children get to school? How would they get to school if their school closed?
 - How should travel and traffic patterns be considered? (For example, travelling in the direction of Town).
- viii. Effect on school communities**
- What might the effect of the closure of the school be on the educational program at the school?
 - What might the effect of closure be on schools which are designated to accommodate students from the closing school?
 - What might the effect of school closure be on parents, students and the general community?
- ix. Possible and likely alternative uses of a school building**
- What are the other possible uses of school buildings that would benefit the community and children in particular?
- x. Sustainability of findings and impact on future enrolment options**
- Will a school closure decision be sustainable over time given the information currently available?
- xi. Financial costs and or savings from closure**
- What are the likely financial costs and/or savings from closure?

14. Legislative Constraints and Possible Impacts

As some proposed findings may require legislative changes, the SCORE Advisory Committee will consider the development of its findings within existing legislation (e.g. zone boundaries can be changed by the Minister), and what types of legislative changes might be required (e.g. changing enrolment criteria would likely require legislative changes).

15. Role of the Board of Education

The Board of Education plays a support and advisory role to the Minister of Education. The development of findings on school reorganisation and closure both overlap and interface with some of the responsibilities of the Board of Education (e.g. recommendations for educational policy, strategy for education and school budgets).

The Board of Education is represented on the SCORE Advisory Committee and will be provided with milestone updates on progress towards the fulfilment of the SCORE Advisory Committee mandate. The Board of Education will be provided a copy of the SCORE Advisory Committee's report for its review and to provide any advice to the Minister on school reorganisation.

16. Report of the SCORE Advisory Committee Findings

The recommendations on school reorganisation and closure will be presented to the Minister in the form of a report. The SCORE Advisory Committee will make itself available to the Minister to present the findings and respond to questions. The Minister will review the report, and share it appropriately.