



School Closure Policy Saplings Nature School August 2022

This policy refers to a permanent school closure and not a temporary closure that may result from communicable disease exposures, temporary safety concerns such as chemical spills in the area, or inclement weather.

Rationale

This policy responds to the Ministry of Education's requirements that Independent Schools be aligned with the procedures for the permanent closure of public schools.

School closure, particularly with short or limited notice, may have educational, financial, social and emotional impacts on students, families and school staff.

Independent school closures can be caused by a variety of circumstances including a financial shortfall, enrollment decline, or damage to the school facility due to accident or disaster. Typically, in these circumstances, the school's closure will be initiated by the school authority.

School closure can also be the result of suspension or cancellation of a school's Certificate of Group Classification by the Inspector of Independent Schools due to non-compliance with the requirements for certification. The Inspector may cancel or suspend an independent school's Certificate of Group Classification if the school fails to maintain the standards and requirements for the certificate or breaches a condition of the certificate, or if it fails to comply with the *Independent Schools Act (ISA)*, regulations or orders made under the *ISA*, or a requirement of the Inspector. Independent school authorities are promptly advised by the Inspector of any issues that could result in the suspension or cancellation of a school's certificate to enable the school to respond in a timely manner. In exceptional circumstances a school may have its Certificate of Group Classification cancelled without an opportunity to resolve the issues of concern.

Policy

The permanent closure of schools is a significant issue of public concern and therefore the SAP Association (SAP) will follow a process that provides adequate time and opportunity to consult with those who will be affected prior to any decision being made. Important elements of the school closure plan include:

1. Communication
2. Continuity of education for affected students
3. Transferring Permanent Student Records
4. Future employment opportunities for teachers
5. School fee refunds
6. Grants
7. Outstanding Debts
8. Dissolution of the SAP Association

1. Communication

Any proposed closure of the Saplings Nature School will first be raised at a regular public meeting of the SAP Board. All current families, staff, and interested parties will receive notification of this meeting and it will be clearly stated that a possible school closure is on the agenda.

As soon as SAP decides that it will close a school, it will provide an initial notice to the Inspector of Independent Schools and the local school district, as well as the Federation of Independent School Associations. Students, families, and staff, will be informed in a timely fashion, enabling sufficient time for those groups to react to the school's pending closure.

After initial notification, the Inspector will then be provided with formal written notice of closure from SAP that provides the following information:

- the name of the school or authority representative that will oversee Sapling Nature school closure, including email, phone, and cell phone details;
- timing of Saplings Nature school's closure;
- confirmation that the students, families, and staff have been informed of the closure;
- confirmation that the local school district has been advised of Saplings Nature School's closure and the expected number of students who may be enrolling with the district;
- confirmation that student course work and progress assessments have been completed, communicated, and submitted to the Ministry;
- confirmation that transcripts have been sent to the receiving schools;
- confirmation that refunds have been provided in accordance with Saplings Nature School's fee refund policy to families for educational programs not completed or begun;
- steps taken to assist students to find placement in other educational programs and to assist staff to find other employment; and
- confirmation that the school's website, social media accounts, and other publications have been updated to reflect Saplings Nature school's impending closure (all online publications will be further revised to reflect Saplings Nature School's closure after the last day of classes).

2. Continuity of Education of Affected Students

SAP will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the impact on students and families is minimized by:

- timing closure for the end of the school year, term, or semester, if at all possible;
- ensuring that all student records have been maintained and are up to date as required;
- assisting students to transition to new schools;
- transferring Permanent Student Records to new schools or the Ministry of Education.

3. Transferring Permanent Student Records

If Saplings Nature School closes after the completion of classes, it is still required to send the Permanent Student Records to the Ministry as required in the Student Records Order and the school should provide reasonable assistance for students transitioning to other schools.

Saplings Nature School will contact [the MyEdBC Independent School Group](#) for information on the proper disposition of student records in the case of a school's closure.

Records (electronic and physical records) not in MyEdBC must be sent securely to the Ministry.

In accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act, SAP will make plans for the final disposition of any records containing personal information that are not required under the Student Records Order to be transferred to other schools or the Ministry.

4. Future Employment Opportunities for Teachers

It is SAP' responsibility to be aware of and ensure compliance with all applicable provincial or federal employment legislation and requirements including severance and wages.

SAP will make teaching staff aware of the [Make-a-Future](#) website which lists teaching positions in B.C. schools, both public and independent schools.

5. School Fee Refunds

As per Saplings Nature School Fee Refund Policy:

- If Saplings Nature School closes, prorated refunds will be given for the remaining portion of the school year.
- The Inspector of Independent Schools expects schools with interim Group 1, 2, or 3 certification to have access to enough cash-on-hand to provide fee refunds in the event that the school fails to open or fails to receive certification after an initial external evaluation inspection or otherwise closes during its first year of operation.

6. Grants

Depending on the timing of the closure and information provided on the Eligible Student Audit, SAP may need to repay a portion of the grant funding.

7. Outstanding Debts

SAP is solely responsible for any outstanding debts or other financial encumbrances it has upon closure.

8. Dissolution of the SAP Association

SAP is responsible for any processes relating to the dissolution of the society and will seek its own legal advice regarding dissolution.

