

AMALGAMATION UPDATE

A NEWSLETTER ABOUT MANITOBA SCHOOL DIVISION AMALGAMATIONS

Volume No. 1

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I am pleased to present this first issue of the *Amalgamation Update* newsletter. It is going out to all Manitoba school divisions with timely information on issues and questions about school division amalgamations. I believe a regular newsletter to address emerging issues will greatly improve our communication with all school divisions.

I recognize that amalgamating boards face new challenges and I want to acknowledge the collaborative nature of my recent meetings with board members. I look forward to more collaboration during future meetings about the transitions. As school boards begin this transition, I extend my support and encouragement for continued co-operation between all those affected.

Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister
Education, Training and Youth

Resource manual available for division and district amalgamation

The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO), the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST), Manitoba Education, Training and Youth have collaborated on a resource manual offering practical advice to amalgamating school divisions.

A working group from these organizations developed the manual

and their valuable contributions are appreciated. The manual was reviewed by MAST members in December. Their recommendations are being incorporated into the publication, which will go to school divisions in early January.

The Resource Manual will also be available on line at:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/metks4/parent/amalgamation>



One-time funding to support amalgamation costs

Amalgamating school divisions will receive a transition fee of \$50.00 per pupil (combined eligible enrolment) to help cover the one-time costs of implementing the amalgamation.

1) Divisions/districts that indicated, before November 8, 2001 they would amalgamate voluntarily, will receive the funds, in full, with their 2002/03 annual grants.

2) As a result of consultations with school boards and their officials, the Minister, on behalf of government, has adjusted the policy on one-time funding for school divisions/districts which are being amalgamated. Those school divisions will now receive the full \$50.00 per pupil without any application or justification process. The funds will be paid out over three years — 2002/03 through 2004/05 — as a part of school division annual grants.

FRAME review to ensure consistency

The Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) Committee met December 20, 2001 to review the administration and curriculum consulting and development definitions to ensure clarity and consistency. The

review will help ensure a consistent application of the administration limit policy among schools divisions. These revisions will be released to school divisions in early February.

Boards retain employing authority during transition

School boards will retain their ability to exercise their employing authority throughout their structural transitions from existing to transitional to newly elected boards.

Amalgamating boards may want to consider the advantages of creating a leadership team early in the amalgamation process. Determining the new administration structure's content

and staffing may have a positive effect in reducing ambiguity and uncertainty throughout the transition.

Existing boards exercising authority before June 30, 2002 must make these decisions in full consultation with partnering school divisions, or risk creating obligations for the new school division.



New closures on hold during transition

The provincial government announced a moratorium on school closures in amalgamating divisions when the amalgamation strategy was announced in November. It will ensure a minimal disruption in the school system during the transition period.

The moratorium requires that no school closures take place within amalgamating divisions before September 1, 2005. This does not apply to school closures initiated before the announcement, which are already proceeding under the province's *Guidelines for School Closure*.

Support services available

A facilitator is available to assist school divisions in becoming effective, integrated units during the amalgamation process. The facilitator's services are free of charge. David Church of Wildwood Consulting can be called upon to assist boards in setting up steering committees, developing action plans and mobilizing implementation teams. Divisions wishing to use this support should contact:

Amalgamating school divisions may still consider school closures during the moratorium period. However, at least 20 months' notice and consultation opportunities must be provided to the affected community. Actual closure cannot take place until September 1, 2005.

School closure requests initiated by parents and which satisfy the consultative spirit of the guidelines, may proceed to closure without waiting until September 1, 2005. Program transfer decisions within divisions are not subject to the school closure guidelines.

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