

TITLE: COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION POLICY

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1.0 OBJECTIVE

To establish a framework for receiving, investigating and resolving expressions of concern received from the public/parent community.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

2.1 **Board** refers to the Board of Trustees.

2.2 **Complaint** means an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction related to an OCDSB policy, procedure, program, service, facility or actions of a staff member, trustee or the District where the complainant believes that the District has not provided a service experience to the complainant's satisfaction at the point of service delivery and a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

2.3 **District** refers to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

2.4 **Ombudsman** refers to an independent official who investigates complaints from the public about mal-administration in government. The Ombudsman is an officer of the provincial legislature, independent of the government and all political parties, who is appointed for a five-year term.

2.5 **Trustee** means a member of the Board elected or appointed in accordance with the Ontario *Municipal Elections Act* and the Ontario *Education Act*. Student trustees are elected by the Student Senate and Student Presidents' Council to represent the interests of students on the Board.

3.0 POLICY

Policy Statement

3.1 The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board acknowledges that, from time to time, there may be misunderstanding, a lack of communication, or a serious situation that needs to be addressed with regard to the operation of the District. The establishment of standard processes, built on the principles of open communication and cooperative problem solving are essential to ensuring fair and equitable service for all clients.

Guiding Principles

- 3.2 The District is committed to open and transparent communications with the community.
- 3.3 The process of addressing public concerns is an opportunity to improve relationships with parents/guardians, students and the community.
- 3.4 Clients shall be served promptly and concerns resolved as quickly as possible at the level closest to the source of the complaint.
- 3.5 The District shall be guided by the values and character attributes that form the foundation of positive and productive relationships (acceptance, appreciation, cooperation, empathy, fairness, integrity, optimism, perseverance, respect, and responsibility) while addressing public concerns.
- 3.6 The District shall ensure that the process for the review of complaints shall be fair, impartial and respectful to the parties involved, and shall be handled in such a way as to protect the privacy of those involved.

4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

4.1 Client Service

The District shall ensure that information about client service, complaint resolution and feedback mechanisms are available to the public and clearly outlined on the District and school websites.

Appeal Mechanisms

- 4.2 This policy is not intended to be an appeal mechanism for decisions of the Board of Trustees. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and community members have an opportunity to influence Board decisions through a consultation process and/or appearing as a delegation at Board or at a committee of the Board.
- 4.3 The District has established appeal mechanisms and shall clearly communicate the process and timelines for those appeal mechanisms, including, but not limited to those set out in Board Procedure PR.670.GOV, Complaints Resolution.
- 4.4 Complaint Resolution Process
 - a) Inquiries, questions and/or complaints may be made by personal contact, telephone, email or letter. Please refer to Board Procedure PR.670.GOV Complaints Resolution. Wherever possible, the parties should seek opportunities to resolve the matter informally.
 - b) A person who makes or is the subject of a complaint shall not conduct or oversee any aspect of the complaint resolution process.
 - c) The appropriate District staff shall endeavor to acknowledge and act on complaints promptly and, to the extent reasonably possible, no later than two (2) working weeks from the date of the complaint and, wherever possible, the District shall endeavor to resolve complaints within thirty (30) school days. Where the complaint cannot be resolved within 30 days, the complainant shall be advised the work towards resolution is ongoing.

- 4.5 Anonymous, Frivolous or Vexatious Complaints
Anonymous or pseudonymous complaints shall not be considered, copied, distributed, repeated, responded to or entertained by the District, unless it is believed that such complaint references an illegal, abusive or child protection matter, or is otherwise believed to be relevant in law in which case they will be referred to the appropriate party or parties, such as the police and/or Children's Aid Society.
- 4.6 Concerns/Complaints Concerning a Student (Academic Complaints)
If parent(s)/guardian(s) have a concern about a school matter, the concern is best resolved at the school level using the following steps:
- a) Step 1: Talk with the teacher;
 - b) Step 2: Talk with the school principal. Where a complaint cannot be resolved locally to the satisfaction of the parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal will refer the matter to the superintendent of instruction;
 - c) Step 3: Talk with the school's superintendent of instruction; and
 - d) Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education or his/her designate.
- 4.7 Concerns/Complaints About Client Service (Administrative Complaints)
Where a complainant has a concern involving client service, the following steps shall be followed to resolve the issue:
- a) Step 1: Talk with the employee who provided the service;
 - b) Step 2: Talk with the employee's supervisor/manager/principal;
 - c) Step 3: Talk with the employee's superintendent; and
 - d) Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education or his/her designate.
- 4.8 Concerns About Safety of School, Property, Facilities or Equipment
Where an individual has a concern relating to the safety of school or District property, facilities or equipment, the individual shall contact the appropriate school or department directly.
- 4.9 Concerns/Complaints About Student Transportation
- a) Student transportation in school boards is governed by the *Education Act* and related regulations which mandate a joint co-terminus board consortium for the purpose of providing a common administration of transportation services for students in a specific region.
 - b) Transportation of students in the Ottawa-Carleton region shall be provided by the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) in accordance with Board and OSTA policies.
 - c) Where an individual has a concern or complaint regarding transportation concerns, the individual shall be directed to contact OSTA.
- 4.10 Role of the Trustee
- a) As representatives and advocates for their constituents a Trustee may assist by facilitating communication between the parent(s)/guardians(s), or community

member and the appropriate staff member at the school or District level. Parents/guardians/community members may contact trustees at any time.

- b) Trustees shall direct the parent(s)/guardians(s)/community member to the appropriate resolution process for the specific concern or to the appropriate employee or department. Such direction shall take into consideration the status of the issue and what steps, if any, have already been taken to resolve the concern at the time the trustee is contacted. The Trustee shall have regard for, and support Board policies in their communication with constituents. (Refer to PR.670.GOV, Complaints Resolution Procedure, Attachment 1, A Guide for Addressing Complaints from Parent(s)/Guardian(s), and Community Members).

4.11 Role of the School Council

- a) School councils were established to act in an advisory capacity to school principals and to the Board on educational matters and shall not be used as a forum to discuss parent(s)/guardians(s)-teacher/student issues.
- b) School councils shall include a process for resolving internal school council disputes in the school council's by-laws and/or constitution.

4.12 Office of the Ombudsman

The District shall advise complainants of their right to contact the Office of the Ombudsman for assistance if the matter is unresolved.

- 4.13 The Director of Education shall have the authority to establish procedures that are consistent with this policy.

5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13, Ontario, 2012

Education Act, Ontario, 2000, Section 171 and Part XIII, Ontario

Human Rights Code of Ontario,

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Ontario, R.S.O. 1990, c. M56,

The Teaching Profession Act, Ontario

Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

Ontario Regulation 610/00 School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees, s.15(2)

Ontario Regulation 181/98 Identification Placement of Exceptional Pupils

Provincial and School Code of Conduct, Ministry of Education, 2000

Ontario Ministry of Education publication: Shared Solutions, A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs, 2007

OCDSB Parent Involvement Committee Publication: Your Child's Education – Be a Part of It!, 2014

Board Policy P.002.COM Board-Community Relations

Board Policy P.014.SCO School Councils

Board Policy P.022.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Suspension)

Board Policy P.023.SCO Expulsion Hearing Panel (Students)

Board Policy P.026.SCO Student Suspension and Expulsion

Board Policy P.032.SCO Safe Schools

Board Policy P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct

Board Policy P.077.PLG Designated Schools/Student Transfers

Board Policy P.083.CUR Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting of Student Achievement

Board Policy P.086.CUR Religious Accommodation
Board Policy P.093.SCO Confidential Communication Between Students and Staff
Board Policy P.096.SES Special Education Programs and Services
Board Policy P.098.CUR Equity and Inclusive Education
Board Policy P.103.HR Alleged Employee Misconduct Towards a Student
Board Policy P.117.SES Special Education Appeal Board
Board Policy P.121.GOV Accessibility
Board Policy P.123.SCO Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Board Policy P.125.SCO School Board Code of Conduct
Board Policy P.126.SCO Appeals Hearing Panel (Student Transfers)
Board Procedure PR.542.HR: Alleged Employee Misconduct Toward a Student
Board Procedure PR.543.HR: Alleged Harassment of a Student
Board Procedure PR.566.GOV Accessible Formats and Communication Supports
Board Procedure PR.586.CUR Religious Accommodation
Board Procedure PR.618.CUR Equity and Inclusive Education
Board Procedure PR.659.SCO: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Board Procedure PR.666.GOV: Accessible Service Delivery
Board Procedure PR.670.GOV: Complaints Resolution Procedure