



Policy

Title: Community Concern Protocol	Policy #: PO443
Policy Area: Operations	
Source: Superintendent of Education – Policy Development	
Date Approved: February 16, 2016	
Dates of Amendment:	

1.0 Introduction

The Board values its relationship with its parents, guardians and the community and believes that ongoing communication between the home, school and parish supports a student's spiritual, emotional and academic growth. The Board believes by listening and receiving input from parents, guardians and the community, it develops relationships that value the Gospel and Catholic teachings. When parents or guardians report concerns about students, staff or trustees, the Board believes that these concerns will be addressed in a fair, respectful and effective way consistent with but not limited to the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accepting Schools Act and the Board's Code of Conduct policy (PO610).

2.0 Definitions

Parent – includes a legal guardian or caregiver with the recognized responsibility for the care of a student of the Board.

School/Community Concern – a school-related problem, issue or complaint affecting a child/children, families or the community, which is perceived to require the attention of a school or the Board.

3.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for parents, staff, trustees and the community when concerns are brought forward about a school or community issue.

4.0 Application/Scope

This policy applies to all parents/guardians of students enrolled in the Board, Board staff, trustees and community members.

5.0 **Principles**

- 5.1 The Board is guided by Catholic teachings including the Catholic Virtues which support the foundation of positive and productive relationships while addressing public concerns.
- 5.2 The Board believes that by addressing the public's concerns it improves relationships with parents/guardians, students and the community.
- 5.3 It is the practice of the Board that parent concerns or questions be dealt with at the level closest to the issue.
- 5.4 The Board will comply with all relevant legislation related to privacy for all members of the community.

6.0 **Requirements**

- 6.1 The Director of Education or designate shall:
 - 6.1.1 listen to the concerns of parents and community members and act as a resource so that the concerns are resolved;
 - 6.1.2 provide advice to Board staff and trustees as needed.
 - 6.1.3 refer a concern to the appropriate family of schools Superintendent if a parent brings a matter directly to she/he, the Chair of the Board or the local trustee.
- 6.2 The Superintendent of Education shall:
 - 6.2.1 refer an issue or question to the appropriate Family of Schools principal to address a parent or community concern and be available to support the school principal and parent as needed or requested;
 - 6.2.2 be available as a resource to parents, community members or the principal if a concern or issue is unresolved.
- 6.3 Trustees shall:
 - 6.3.1 assist in facilitating communication between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff member at the school or Board level;
 - 6.3.2 in the case of community member issues, facilitate communication directly with the Principal;
 - 6.3.3 be representatives of their communities and be advocates for students, parents and community members;
 - 6.3.4 foster positive relationships to promote partnerships between home, school and parish when receiving parent concerns.
- 6.4 Staff, in addressing parent concerns shall strive to:
 - 6.4.1 foster a climate of respect and trust which focuses on working towards mutually acceptable solutions;
 - 6.4.2 ensure that every parent with a concern has an adequate opportunity to express the concern fully;

6.0 **Requirements** (Cont'd)

6.4 (Cont'd)

6.4.3 encourage the parent to address the concern at the level at which the concern is related, except where circumstances warrant otherwise.

6.5 Parents shall strive to:

- 6.5.1 present their concerns to staff or trustees in a respectful manner which allows the opportunity for due consideration of the concern;
- 6.5.2 allow for a reasonable timeline for addressing and resolving the concern;
- 6.5.3 address the concern first to the staff person (s) responsible for the area to which the concern directly relates, unless circumstances warrant raising the concern with staff at a higher level;
- 6.5.4 direct a concern about a board policy or program matter to the appropriate Superintendent of education, central staff or trustee where the concern should be addressed at those levels;
- 6.5.5 maintain an openness to receiving information and advice that may be offered by staff or trustees as possible solutions to a concern.

6.6 Process for Parents to Address Concerns

6.6.1 If a parent or guardian has a concern about a school matter, they are advised to follow steps in resolving the issue as follows:

6.6.1.1 Step 1: Review of the Issue with the Child's Teacher

The parent/guardian should discuss a concern or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time.

6.6.1.2 Step 2: Review of the Issue with the School Principal

If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, it should be discussed with a school principal (or designate). Again, in the case of a concern expressed by a community member, the first point of contact should always be the school principal. The principal (or designate) will gather facts from everyone involved to clarify the problem and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Basic to every investigation is the Board's expectation that employees and students will follow school and Board policies and procedures.

6.6.1.3 Step 3: Review of the Issue with the Superintendent of Education

If the parent/guardian/community member and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, they may request that the matter be reviewed by the school's Superintendent of Education. The superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and will respond to the parent/guardian about his/her concern.

6.0 **Requirements** (Cont'd)

6.6 (Cont'd)

6.6.1.4 Step 4: Review of the Issue with a Member of the Director's Office

If the parent/guardian/community member and the Superintendent of Education are not able to resolve the issue, they may request that the matter be reviewed by the Director of Education who will review the matter and respond to the parent/guardian/community member about the concerns.

6.6.2 Representative of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

6.6.2.1 The Board understands that the parent/guardian may need support in order to adequately address their child's interests (for example, a translator). This support may be necessary while parents/guardians are attending meetings with the staff employed by the Board.

6.6.2.2 Parents/guardians have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff, subject to any limitations established in these procedures. Any costs/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

6.6.2.3 Principals, staff and parents/guardians shall be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

6.6.2.4 A representative supporting the parents/guardians must agree, at the outset of or in the advance of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of any matter discussed at a meeting between parents/guardians and staff.

6.6.3 Matters that should not be discussed by Staff

6.6.3.1 Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians and staff may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parents'/guardians' student(s) at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff members are unable to discuss with parents/guardians/community members, including personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other student(s), and matters related to staff performance issues.

6.6.3.2 In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the child of the parent/guardian at the school in question), staff will bring closure to any meeting that becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or matters related to staff performance issues.

6.0 **Requirements** (Cont'd)

6.6 (Cont'd)

6.6.4 Role of Trustees

6.6.4.1 Parents or guardians may contact trustees at any time. Trustees will facilitate the communication process between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff and provide information and direction. Trustees shall direct the parent or guardian to the process which should be followed in resolving any concerns or to the appropriate person or step in the process (dependent on the steps the parent(s)/guardian(s) have already undertaken to resolve the concerns at the time the trustee is contacted) but shall not act as a representative of the parents or guardians.

6.6.5 Role of School Councils

6.6.5.1 School Councils are established to advise Principals on matters that relate to improving student achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. They are not a forum to discuss individual issues related to teachers, other staff members, specific students or their parent/guardian. Any of these matters brought to a school council member or any school council meeting should be referred immediately to the Principal.

7.0 **Sources**

- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accepting Schools Act
- Education Act

8.0 **Related Policies and Administrative Procedures**

- Freedom of Information and Protection of Individual Privacy Policy (PO201)
- Code of Conduct Policy (PO621)
- Code of Conduct Administrative Procedure (AP621-1)