



POLICY SECTION: ADMINISTRATION

SUB-SECTION:

POLICY NAME: Guidelines for Trustees, Parents and Staff in Addressing School Related Concerns

POLICY NO: A. 33

Date Approved: January 12, 2011- Board	Date of Next Review: January 2019	Dates of Amendments: November 15, 2015- Board
<p>Cross References: T. 04, Trustees Code of conduct H.M. 14, Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace; Respectful Workplace Operational Procedure H.M. 19, Conflict Resolution H.M. 30, Complaint Against a Staff Member</p>		

Purpose:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is committed to providing a learning environment for our students supported by fair and equitable system wide policies focused on improving the achievement and well-being of all students. Effective and ongoing communication at every level of the system is integral to ensuring we are meeting this commitment. Positive working relationships among trustees, staff, and parents, respectful of the important and distinct role each plays in promoting student success, are strengthened by establishing clear and effective lines of communications. The role that trustees and staff play in addressing parent or stakeholder concerns is vital to ensuring the success of all of our students.

The programs and policies of the Toronto Catholic District School Board are intended to foster and enrich student learning. When individuals or groups raise concerns staff will identify the issue, investigate and propose resolutions.



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Scope and Responsibility:

This policy extends to the entire TCDSB community and all relevant stakeholders. The Director of Education, supported by the Human Resources department, is responsible for this policy.

Alignment with MYSP:

Living Our Catholic values

Strengthening Public Confidence

Fostering Student Achievement and Well-Being

Inspiring and Motivating Employees

Financial Impact:

Minimal financial impact other than time and administrative resources allocated to resolving issues at the Board level.

Legal Impact:

If concerns are not addressed and resolved at the local level, issues may be escalated externally, including to the Ombudsman of Ontario.

Policy:

In addressing parent and stakeholder concerns, staff is to resolve issues at the source, whenever possible, respect the spirit and practice of system wide policy, and respond in a timely and effective manner. A first response acknowledging receipt of the concern is expected within two school days.



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Trustees, as elected officials, are sometimes asked by parents to intervene on local school and system- wide issues. The *Education Act* requires trustees to entrust the day- to- day management of the Board to its staff through the Director of Education. Trustees have the responsibility to ensure that policies and practices are in place to address issues and that Board staff, through the Director of Education, are accountable for implementation. Therefore, the role of the trustee is to hear the request or concern and advise the parent/stakeholder to contact the appropriate staff to resolve the matter. The Trustees of the Board engage regularly in productive and supportive dialogue with the leadership of schools to encourage and champion student achievement and community engagement. Any direction to principals comes from the principal's School Superintendent.

All concerns shall be addressed in a respectful and professional manner that is consistent with the Education Act and all other relevant legislation and Board policies including T.04 (Trustees Code of Conduct), H.M.14 Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace; Respectful Workplace Operational Procedure), H.M. 19 (Conflict Resolution) and H.M. 30 (Complaint Against A Staff Member).

Procedures:

A parent/stakeholder who expresses a concern about a local school-related issue will be directed to the appropriate teacher/staff member to resolve the matter.

1. If the parent/stakeholder has not been successful in resolving the concern with the teacher/staff member, the parent will address the concern with the principal. If not resolved at the school level, the parent will be directed to the School Superintendent.
2. When a specific staff member is involved in the concern, the principal or School Superintendent will inform the staff member of the nature of the



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concern and the process for its resolution, in accordance with the terms of the appropriate collective agreement.

3. Trustee inquiries, information or suggestions to staff about possible resolutions to a school concern are to be directed to the appropriate School Superintendent who can then assist the principal, in accordance with the terms of the appropriate collective agreement.
4. Where the School Superintendent determines that the concern about a school or community of schools requires informing and consulting with the Associate Director or other appropriate central staff, the School Superintendent will initiate such communication with those persons and inform all affected parties.
5. The School Superintendent and/or Associate Director will communicate with the trustee and other concerned parties in a timely manner regarding the resolution/decision about the concern raised and/or information that may impact their school community.
6. The School Superintendent and/or Associate Director will ensure that the Director of Education and Chair of the Board are apprised of any local concerns that may have system wide implications or may be the object of media interest, and may require a system response or Board motion.

Guiding Principles for Addressing Parent/Stakeholder Concerns

- (a) Foster a climate of respect and trust which focuses on working towards mutually acceptable solutions and is consistent with relevant Board policies.



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- (b) Ensure that every parent with a concern has an adequate opportunity to express the concern fully.
- (c) Encourage the parent to address the concern at the level at which the concern originates.
- (d) In addressing a concern, respond in a manner consistent with the principles of procedural fairness and that is seen to be fair by the parent and by all other parties directly involved.
- (e) Maintain a written record of the concern and response, where appropriate.
- (f) Provide the parent and other parties involved with timely updates, as needed, about the progress made in resolving the concern.
- (g) Ensure that confidentiality is maintained by all parties regarding student and personnel matters.

Guidelines for Parents

- (a) Present their concern to staff and allow the opportunity for due consideration of the concern.
- (b) Address the concern first to the staff member responsible for the area to which the concern directly relates.
- (c) Ensure that confidentiality is maintained by all parties concerning student and personnel matters.



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Guidelines for Principals

- (a) Advise the parent to discuss the concern directly with the staff member and, if possible, resolve it at that level.
- (b) Gather any relevant information to determine the facts and circumstances.
- (c) Discuss the concern with the staff member; consider the staff member's perspective and offer advice, where advice is required to resolve the concern, and inform the parent and all affected parties of the outcome.
- (d) Meet jointly with the staff member and the parent to discuss the concern and work together toward resolution.
- (e) Consult with the School Superintendent and/or other Board staff in order to assist in resolving the concern.
- (f) Refer the concern to the School Superintendent if the parent does not agree with the decision of the principal and wishes to appeal to a higher staff authority.
- (g) Where the principal refers the concern to the School Superintendent, the School Superintendent will consult with the principal and parent and, in collaboration with them, will make a final decision that reflects school and system policy and is in the best interests of the student.

Guidelines for School Superintendents

- (a) Refer the parent to the principal where prior discussion with the principal has not taken place and follow up with the principal on the outcome.



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- (b) Gather any relevant information to determine the facts and circumstances.
- (c) Consult with the principal about the concern and advise the principal of options to consider, or make a recommendation to the principal for addressing the concern and inform the parent of the outcome.
- (d) Make a final decision about the concern in consultation with the principal and inform the parent and principal about the outcome.
- (e) Inform the trustee about the outcome.
- (f) Where the School Superintendent determines that the concern about a particular school or community of schools requires informing and consulting with the Associate Director, or other appropriate central staff, the School Superintendent will initiate such communication with those persons.

Guidelines for Trustees

- (a) Encourage the parent to address concerns with the staff member and/or school principal. If the situation is not resolved, direct the parent to the School Superintendent. Inform the School Superintendent of the concern and/or make the inquiry on behalf of the parent to the School Superintendent for investigation and resolution. The School Superintendent will apprise the Trustee of the resolution to the concern and provide any information which will assist the Trustee in communicating with the affected parties.
- (b) If the concern involves a personnel matter, inform the appropriate School Superintendent about the inquiry. If apprised of the concern by a third party, inform the party that the concern has been shared with the appropriate School Superintendent for investigation and resolution. Indicate that all



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further inquiries about the concern should be directed to the School Superintendent who will follow-up.

- (c) Share information or perspectives which are pertinent to the resolution of parental concerns and issues with the appropriate School Superintendent who, if needed, will assist the Principal to resolve the issue.
- (d) A concern regarding school facilities will be directed to the School Superintendent, the Superintendent of Planning and Facilities or the Associate Director of Planning and Facilities.
- (e) Ensure that confidentiality is maintained by all parties concerning student and personnel matters.
- (f) Ensure that exemplary policies and practices are established and that, through the Director of Education, Board staff is held accountable for responding to parent/stakeholder concerns.

Evaluation and Metrics:

The effectiveness of the policy will be determined by measuring the following:

1. Complaints filed externally after the internal complaint and appeal process has been exhausted.