

POLICY

SECTION:	SCHOOL OPERATIONS	POLICY:	G-38
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REVIEW DATE:	October 2020	REVISED:	

The District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) is committed to encouraging a strong relationship with parents/guardians, students and community. The DSBN is committed to addressing public concerns in a fair, respectful and effective manner.

GENERAL INQUIRIES

In the normal course of business, the DSBN receives inquires, questions and/or concerns via the DSBN reception, letter or email format and social media. These inquiries, questions and/or concerns are redirected to appropriate departments and/or supervisor who will then respond to the inquiry or facilitate a resolution or routinely disclose the information.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is defined as any oral or written communication expressing dissatisfaction with the application of policies, procedures, programs, services or actions of an employee, or Trustee or the DSBN. Those expressing an oral complaint will be required to put the complaint in writing, dating and signing the complaint to facilitate the investigation.

Anonymous or pseudonymous complaints or material, unless it is believed that such complaint or material references an illegal, abusive or protection matter, or is otherwise believed to be relevant in law will not be considered, copied, distributed, repeated, responded to or entertained by the Board. In consultation with the appropriate Superintendent, anonymous or pseudonymous complaints or material of an illegal, abusive or protection matter will be referred to the appropriate party or parties such as the police and/or Family and Children Services. Anonymous or pseudonymous written complaints received by staff, excluding those which it is believed refer to an illegal, abusive or protection matter will be shredded.

PROCESSING OF COMPLAINT

Complaints will not be processed, where the complainants are members of the public who have had a recent opportunity to comment on a Board decision or a similar complaint by the individual has already been processed, or where another process is in place to hear complaints, such as public meetings.

Complainants, who persist in opposing rules, routines and functions of a school or the Board, to the point of complaints being malicious, frivolous, vexatious or harassing of employees, will be advised that such action will not be condoned or tolerated.

PROCESS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS OF PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) ON SCHOOL BASED MATTERS

From time to time, a parent/guardian may contact the Education Centre or Trustees for further discussion relating to school issue. A parent/guardian should be directed to follow the process outlined below in the hope that the issue can be resolved at the school level. In order to assist individual complainants regarding the appropriate process, it is important to listen to see if the question relates to a classroom concern, a school-wide concern, or district wide Board concern.

If a parent/guardian has a concern about a school matter, the following steps (which may require one or more meetings at each step) should be followed:

- Step 1:** Review of the issue with the student's Teacher
- Step 2:** Review of the issue by the School Administrator(s)
- Step 3:** Review of the issue by the Superintendent of Education
- Step 4:** Review of the issue by the Director of Education or Designate

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

From time to time, a parent/guardian may believe or feel that they need support in order that they can adequately address their child’s interests. This support may be necessary while the parent/guardian is attending meetings with the staff employed by the Board.

A parent/guardian has the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff, subject to any limitations established in administrative procedures. Any costs/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Principals, staff and the parent/guardian will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

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

Matters that should not be discussed with Staff

Although the subject matter of meetings between parent/guardian and staff (including meetings at which a representative or a parent/guardian is present) may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parent’s/guardian’s student at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff are unable to discuss with the parent or guardian.

Such matters that cannot be discussed include, for example, personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other students, and personal details related to staff or performance issues related to staff.

In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the parent’s/guardian’s student at the school in question), as necessary, staff will bring closure to any meeting which becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or personal details about staff or issues relating to staff performance.

Role of Trustees

A parent or guardian 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/guardian has already undertaken to resolve the concerns at the time the Trustee is contacted) but shall not act as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Members of the public may contact Trustees for further discussion relating to other types of issues and decisions of the Board. Trustees will then contact the Chair of the Board, Vice Chair, or the Director of Education in order to facilitate further discussion of the issue.

Role of School Councils

School councils are not forums to discuss individual parent/guardian-teacher-student issues. Any of these matters brought to a school council member or any school council meeting will be referred immediately to the principal.

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APPEAL TO THE BOARD: DELEGATIONS

If not satisfied with the outcome of the above complaint process, individual complainants may also make a written request to the Chair of the Board to make a delegation to the Board. Any approved delegation will be conducted in accordance with DSNB Board By-Laws and Procedures on Delegations and depending on the nature of the issue may be dealt with at an in camera private session or in the open Board meeting.

References:

- Policy D-09: Framework for the Provision of Special Education Services
- Policy D-12: Home Use of Equipment Purchased Through the Special Equipment Amount (SEA)
- Policy D-13: Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Policy E-09: Human Rights
- Policy G-02: Safe Schools
- Policy G-13: Use of Physical Intervention with Students
- Policy G-15: Student Medical Information
- Policy G-16: Administering Emergency Health Services to Students
- Policy G-17: Provision of Health Support Services to Students
- Policy G-28: Student Discipline
- Policy J-01: Transportation Policy