

<b><u>DUFFERIN-PEEL CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD</u></b> <b><u>POLICY</u></b>	
<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>	<b>P-6001</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Advocacy: Responding to Concerns and Inquiries
<b>REFERENCE:</b>	Policy/Program Memorandum 170: School board communication with parents
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	October 25, 2022
<b>AMENDED DATE:</b>	June 18, 2024

*“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.”*

*1 Corinthians 1:10*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. As members of a Catholic education community, all are required to respond to concerns and inquiries that may occur.
- 1.2. This Policy defines the roles and responsibilities of each member of Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) when a concern is raised by, or an inquiry is received from, a Community Member (defined below). It aims to promote a culture of respect, equity, inclusion, and efficiency that is aligned with the Catholic faith and DPCDSB’s vision, mission, and strategic commitments.
- 1.3. The successful implementation of this Policy requires a continued and consistent expression of common respect for the important and distinct roles that each member of the DPCDSB community assumes in the promotion of student success and well-being and the effective resolution of concerns or responses to inquiries.
- 1.4. For clarity, this Policy does not govern concerns raised by individual Staff (defined below) or DPCDSB vendors. Such concerns are addressed under DPCDSB policies and procedures applicable to employee relations and human resources and finance/supply chain management, respectively.
- 1.5. In this Policy, the following words have their corresponding meanings in Section 2 (below).

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Concern:** means any communication from a Community Member expressing dissatisfaction with or other feedback regarding the following aspects of DPCDSB operations:
  - a) actions, decisions, or methods of DPCDSB Staff; and/or
  - b) policies, procedures, and practices; and/or

- c) facilities; and/or
- d) programs and services.

- 2.2. **Senior Management:** means, collectively, DPCDSB's Director of Education, DPCDSB's Associate Directors of Education and DPCDSB's Superintendents of Education.
- 2.3. **Staff:** means, collectively, Senior Management and each individual employed or engaged by the DPCDSB but does not include DPCDSB vendors.
- 2.4. **Community Members:** means DPCDSB students and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) and members of the public.
- 2.5. **Trustee:** means an individual elected as a DPCDSB trustee (excludes Student Trustees).

### 3. PURPOSE

- 3.1. This Policy dictates the process for the resolution of Concerns raised by Community Members (Resolution Process). Trustees, Staff, and Community Members must comply with this Policy to promote a fair and impartial review of Concerns and their equitable, inclusive, respectful, and efficient resolution.
- 3.2. Inquiries made of DPCDSB Staff shall receive a response within two (2) business days.

### 4. EXEMPTIONS FROM THIS POLICY

- 4.1. Either the Director of Education, an Associate Director of Education, or an Executive Superintendent may exempt the use of the Resolution Process to resolve a Concern if, in that individual's sole discretion, it would be in the best interest of the DPCDSB, Staff, and/or a student.

### 5. ANONYMOUS CONCERNS

- 5.1. Community Members raising a Concern are encouraged to provide their name and contact information. If this information is not provided, Staff may be limited in the extent to which they can resolve the Concern.

### 6. STEPS ASSOCIATED WITH RESOLUTIONS PROCESS

- 6.1. To activate the Resolution Process, Community Members are to follow the steps outlined in this Policy, as summarized in Schedule "A."
- 6.2. When the Resolution Process cannot be completed within 5 business days, Staff will provide the Community Member with a reasonable estimate of how long the resolution is anticipated to take to complete.

## 7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. **Community Members:** In bringing concerns to Staff, Community Members will do the following:

- a) Address the Concern *first* with the Staff member responsible for the area to which the concern relates (e.g., classroom teacher for classroom-related Concerns).
- b) Present Concerns in a clear and respectful manner which allows the opportunity for their due consideration.
- c) Allow for a reasonable timeline for addressing and resolving the Concern.

7.2. **Trustees:** The *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E .2. (*Education Act*) **requires** Trustees to entrust the day-to-day management of DPCDSB to Staff through the Director of Education. When Concerns are raised, it is Staff that investigates, manages, and provides resolutions to the Concern in a reasonable timeframe in accordance with relevant DPCDSB policies. That said, Community Members may contact their Trustee(s) as they play an important advocacy and advisory role in the Resolution Process as summarized below. However, Trustees do not investigate, manage, or provide resolutions to Concerns covered by this Policy:

a) **Individual Trustees:**

- (i) When a Community Member raises a Concern to a Trustee, the Trustee shall refer them to the Resolution Process as summarized in Schedule “A” and then shall immediately forward the Concern to the appropriate Superintendent for management of the Resolution Process.
- (ii) Trustee inquiries about resolutions to a Concern are to be made directly to the appropriate Superintendent by the Trustee.

b) **System-wide Concerns:** Senior Management will inform the Director of Education of local concerns that may have system-wide implications, may be the object of media interest, and/or may require a system response or Board of Trustees’ motion. It is the role of Senior Management, not the Trustee, to inform the Director of Education as required by this section.

7.3. **Staff:** In addressing Concerns and managing the Concerns Resolution Process, Staff will do the following:

- a) Provide the Community Member with the acknowledgement of their inquiry within 2 business days and make every effort to provide an estimated date of response if an inquiry cannot be fully addressed within 5 business days of receipt.
- b) Principals shall provide information to parents, guardians, and students regarding this Policy at registration and the beginning of each school year;
- c) All Staff shall foster a climate of respect and trust which focuses on working towards mutually acceptable solutions;

- d) All Staff shall ensure that each Community Member with a Concern has an adequate opportunity to express the Concern fully;
- e) If a Community Member communicates a Concern at one stage without having attempted resolution at the appropriate earlier stage, Staff shall refer the Community Member back to the appropriate earlier stage;
- f) All Staff shall engage in the Resolution Process in a manner that is fair and seen to be fair;
- g) All Staff shall, when appropriate, consult with Staff and/or their designates with expertise in the subject matter of the Concern, for example:
  - (i) Superintendent responsible for Equity and Indigenous Education, for Concerns related to equity, inclusion, and any of protected grounds under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 19 (*OHRC*): [The Ontario Human Rights Code | Ontario Human Rights Commission \(ohrc.on.ca\)](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/);
  - (ii) Superintendent responsible for Human Resources and Employee Relations, where a concern relates to the alleged acts or omissions of Staff;
  - (iii) Superintendent responsible for Support Services for Concerns related to access to services;
  - (iv) Superintendent responsible for Planning and Operations for Facilities and Transportation-related concerns, including, air conditioning, property maintenance, and bussing;
  - (v) Superintendent responsible for student privacy for Concerns regarding the collection and use of student personal information and/or records retention;
  - (vi) Superintendent responsible for curriculum for students for Concerns related to programming; and/or
  - (vii) DPCDSB Legal Services for the interpretation of applicable laws and their application in specific circumstances;
- h) While a Principal often receives a Concern, some Concerns will be transferred by or on behalf of the Principal to other Staff for investigation and resolution. For example, the investigation and resolution of Concerns raised about Staff may be transferred to the Human Resources and Employee Relations department as required by DPCDSB policies, procedures and practices or as directed by Senior Staff. In such cases, the department to whom the Concern is transferred will inform, as appropriate, the Community Member of its processes, contacts, and timelines, which, for that specific Concern, will supersede the DPCDSB processes, contacts and timelines identified in this policy for Concerns generally.

- 7.4. **Legal Services:** If at any point in the Resolution Process a lawyer and/or paralegal is involved and/or attempts to communicate with a Trustee or Staff regarding any Concern, the Trustee or Staff member shall forward the request directly via email to DPCDSB's Legal Services (and copy the appropriate Superintendent) for communication. For clarity, DPCDSB's Legal Services represents DPCDSB and does not communicate directly with Community Members nor provide them with legal advice.

## **8. CONCERNS RELATED TO ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION**

- 8.1. DPCDSB recognizes that where the subject matter of the Concern involves alleged discrimination based on one or more protected grounds under the *OHRC*, the Community Member may not be comfortable raising the issue at the local level. In such circumstances, Community Members may raise the Concern with the appropriate Superintendent through the Resolution Process beginning with Step 3 of Schedule "A".

## **9. DECISION FINAL**

- 9.1. As referenced in Schedule A, where a resolution to a Concern does not occur at one stage of the Resolution Process, it is escalated to the next stage. The decision of the Director of Education, or designate, should a Concern reach that stage, is final.

## **10. EXTERNAL AVENUES OF RESOLUTION**

- 10.1. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, this Policy does not deny or limit access to external avenues of resolution, including the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), the Ombudsman of Ontario and/or the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) (each an External Avenue).
- 10.2. For certainty, as soon as a Concern is being addressed through an External Avenue (for example, a Concern has been raised or an application has been filed with the HRTO and/or the OCT), the procedures in this Policy shall be suspended (to the extent required as determined by the appropriate Superintendent in consultation with Legal Services) pending the resolution of such Concern through the External Avenue.

## **11. REFERENCES**

- 11.1. References relevant to this Policy include:
- a) Section 218.1(f) of the *Education Act* and the DPCDSB *Procedural By-law* requires Trustees to entrust the day-to-day management of DPCDSB to Staff through the Director of Education.
  - b) DPCDSB *Policy 9.01: Catholic Code of Conduct*, and other DPCDSB policies and procedures regarding appropriate behaviour and access to property owned or operated by DPCDSB, including schools, continue to apply throughout each Resolution Process. If there is a conflict between the terms of this Policy and either the *Catholic Code of Conduct* or any other DPCDSB policy, the *Catholic Code of Conduct* or other DPCDSB policy, as the case may be, shall govern.
  - c) The *OHRC* has primacy over provincial legislation and DPCDSB policies and other administrative documents.

- d) All references set out in this Policy include such references as may be amended or replaced.

## 12. SCHEDULE A: RESOLUTION PROCESS

- 12.1. Community Members, Trustees and Staff shall comply with the following Resolution Process within the timelines set out in this Policy.

Step	Concern	Contact Person	Community Member Instructions
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom-specific Concerns (e.g., access to support school services, school programs, curriculum, classroom dynamics, relationships, student discipline etc.)</li> </ul>	Classroom Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review with the classroom-specific concern with the student's classroom teacher.</li> <li>A classroom-specific concern is first addressed with the person responsible for the subject matter or to whom the Concern relates.</li> </ul>
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transportation and School/Property Maintenance and other Concerns</li> <li>Classroom-specific Concerns not resolved at the classroom level</li> <li>School-specific Concerns</li> </ul>	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Concerns raised at Step 1, if the classroom teacher and the Community Member are unable to resolve the Concern, the Community Member may request that the Concern be reviewed by the school Principal.</li> <li>All other local school concerns are addressed with the school Principal.</li> <li>Regardless of the type of Concern, any requests for review by the school Principal shall be made by phone by contacting the school office through the school secretary at the school's general telephone number or address located on the school's website. Local school telephone numbers and addresses are also available by calling 905-890-1221 or toll-free at 1-800-387-9501. The Principal (or designate) will review the Concern and work to resolve it in a reasonable timeframe.</li> <li>At any stage, the Principal may transfer the investigation and resolution of a Concern to an appropriate DPCDSB department, in which case 7.3 h) of this Policy applies (e.g., Human Resources/Employee Relations for Concerns about or by Staff; Planning and Operations for student transportation and/or school facility maintenance-related Concerns; or Financial Services for finance matters).</li> </ul>

Step	Concern	Contact Person	Community Member Instructions
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom- or School-specific Concerns not resolved by a local Principal</li> </ul>	Family of Schools Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the school Principal is unable to resolve the Concern, the Community Member may request that the Concern be reviewed by the Office of the Family of Schools' Superintendent. Such requests shall be made by phone by contacting 905-890-1221 or toll-free at 1-800-387-9501. The requests can also be made in writing addressed to the relevant Office of the Family of Schools' Superintendent at the Catholic Education Centre at 40 Matheson Blvd. West, Mississauga, Ontario, L5R 1C5. The Office of the Family of Schools' Superintendent will review the Concern and consult with DPCDSB Staff as they determine appropriate to resolve the Concern.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns unrelated to school operations</li> </ul>	Appropriate Corporate or Instructional Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For Concerns unrelated to school operations, the Community Member may request a review by the appropriate Corporate or Instructional Superintendent. Such requests shall be made by phone by contacting 905-890-1221 or toll-free at 1-800-387-9501. The requests can also be made in writing addressed to the relevant Superintendent Office at the Catholic Education Centre at 40 Matheson Blvd. West, Mississauga, Ontario, L5R 1C5. The appropriate Superintendent's Office will review the Concern and consult with DPCDSB Staff as they determine appropriate to resolve the Concern.</li> </ul>
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom- or School-specific Concerns not resolved by a Family of Schools Superintendent</li> </ul>	Executive Superintendent or Associate Director, Instructional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the Office of the Family of Schools or other DPCDSB Superintendent is unable to resolve the Concern, the Community Member may request that the Concern be reviewed by the Office of the Executive Superintendent or the Office of the Associate Director of Education, Instructional Services, as the nature of the Concern may require. Such requests shall be made via the Office of the Family of Schools' or other DPCDSB Superintendent. The Office of the Executive Superintendent or the Office of the Associate Director of Education, Instructional Services, as applicable, will review the Concern and consult with DPCDSB Staff as they determine appropriate to resolve the Concern.</li> </ul>

Step	Concern	Contact Person	Community Member Instructions
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns unrelated to school operations not resolved by a DPCDSB Superintendent</li> </ul>	Executive Superintendent or Associate Director, Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the Office of the appropriate DPCDSB Superintendent is unable to resolve the Concern, the Community Member may request that the Concern be reviewed by the Office of the Executive Superintendent or the Office of the Associate Director of Education, Corporate Services, as the nature of the Concern may require. Such requests shall be made via the Office of the appropriate DPCDSB Superintendent. The Office of the Executive Superintendent or the Office of the Associate Director of Education, Corporate Services, as applicable, will review the Concern and consult with DPCDSB Staff as they determine appropriate to resolve the Concern.</li> </ul>
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom- or School-specific Concerns not resolved by a Family of Schools Superintendent</li> <li>Concerns unrelated to school operations not resolved by a DPCDSB Superintendent</li> </ul>	Director of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the Community Member is not satisfied with the resolution offered by the Executive Superintendent, Associate Director, Instructional Services, or Associate Director, Corporate Services, they may request, through the Office of the appropriate Executive Superintendent, the Office of the Associate Director of Education, Instructional Services, or the Office of the Associate Director, Corporate Services, that the Director of Education review the proposed resolution. If so requested, the Director of Education will review the proposed resolution and the Office of the Executive Superintendent, Associate Director of Education, Instructional Services, or Associate Director, Corporate Services, will advise the Community Member whether there will be further investigation into the matter or if the Director of Education's decision is final within the DPCDSB organization. The Director of Education's decision is final and cannot be appealed within the DPCDSB organizational structure.</li> </ul>