Dream • Learn • Grow
Bloorview
SCHOOL AUTHORITY

Title: **EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN**

Adopted: June 2, 2009
Revised: October 13, 2015, May 2018

Authorization:

POLICY

It is the policy of the Bloorview School Authority that complaints or expressions of concern should be received and handled with courtesy, diplomacy, promptness and clear communications. The Bloorview School Authority is committed to addressing public concerns in a fair, respectful and effective manner.

It is the policy of the Bloorview School Authority that anonymous complaints will not be addressed.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Bloorview School Authority is guided by its values while addressing public concerns or complaints.

The Bloorview School Authority is committed to working cooperatively and responsibly with all members of the school community. We believe that the process of public concerns is an opportunity to improve relationships with our parents, students and community.

The Bloorview School Authority recognizes that on occasion there may be a disagreement with a decision and a dispute or complaint may arise.

PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

1) A complaint is defined as any oral or written communication expressing dissatisfaction with or criticism of the actions or methods of an employee of the school system or with policies, procedures, or programs of the school.

2) It is the desire of the School Board that all complaints be addressed as quickly as possible. However, anonymous complaints are not addressed.

3) All complaints should be received and handled with courtesy, diplomacy, promptness and clear communications. However, in situations where the complainant is doing so in an excessively belligerent, angry or threatening manner, staff will advise that the conversation must end until a calmer approach is possible.

4) A key feature of the process is that the resolution should take place involving the right individual in the right role (i.e., as close to the issue itself as possible).

5) If any staff person receives a complaint from a student, parent or member of the general public….

a) if the staff person is an EA or other support person the complainant shall be referred to the appropriate teacher or to the Principal

b) if a teacher receives a complaint but is not in a position to be able to deal with the complaint (e.g., a teacher who receives a complaint about another teacher, about transportation or class composition) the complainant shall be referred to the appropriate teacher or to the Principal

c) the person to whom the complaint has been made (or referred) will

- notify the complainant that the concern has been received and will be addressed
- indicate when some follow up can be expected
- address the concern in a timely manner and
- communicate the resolution of the issue,

6) Individuals have a right to be informed as soon as is reasonably possible when a written complaint has been made against them (unless such a notification would be contrary to legislation or other policies e.g., CAS)

General guidelines for addressing concerns brought to the attention of the Principal or Supervisory Officer

7) Parents will sometimes bring to the attention of the Principal or Supervisory Officer concerns about classroom-based or school-based matters that require a response. In addressing these concerns, the Supervisory Officer or Principal should adhere to the following principles:

- a climate of respectful dialogue is maintained, with focus on mutually acceptable solutions
- all parties involved have an adequate opportunity to express concerns, and to have their contributions to the discussion acknowledged
- a concern is initially addressed at the level at which the concern is identified,

except where circumstances warrant otherwise
- the process for addressing a concern is fair and equitably applied
- a written record of a concern is maintained, where necessary, for follow-up
- appropriate procedures governed by legislation or Board policy are followed where a concern relates to such legislation or policy.

8) If after the steps outlined below have been conducted the Principal anticipates that an issue has not been resolved and that there may be further contact on the part of the complainant, the Principal will provide notification to the Supervisory Officer (who will inform the trustees if appropriate.)

9) The Supervisory Officer will also inform the trustees if he/she anticipates further contact.

Classroom-based Concerns Brought to the Principal

10) If a parent or guardian brings a concern to the Principal about a classroom-based matter, the Principal will advise the parent or guardian to review of the issue with the Child's Teacher and resolve it at that level.

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

b) If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the school principal (or designate). The principal (or designate) will review the issues and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

c) If the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Principal are not able to resolve the issue, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may request the matter be reviewed by the Supervisory Officer. The Supervisory Officer (or designate) will review the matter and respond to the parent(s)/guardian(s) about the concerns.

11) In addition, the Principal may undertake one or more of the following actions depending on the nature of the concern and its circumstances…….

- discuss the concern with the teacher and offer advice to the teacher where advice is required to resolve the concern, and inform the parent of the outcome.
- discuss the concern with the teacher and, where the concern proves to be unfounded, respond to the parent with an explanation.
- meet jointly with the teacher and the parent to discuss the concern where the Principal determines that such a meeting will facilitate the resolution of the concern.
- consult with other board staff or agencies where appropriate, or request legal advice from the Board's general counsel, in order to assist in resolving the concern.

- refer the matter for school council discussion and advice where the concern relates to a matter appropriate for school council consideration.

School-based Concerns Brought to the attention of the Supervisory Officer

12) If a parent brings a concern about a school policy, procedure, activity or situation to the Supervisory Officer, the Supervisory Officer will undertake one or more of the following actions depending on the nature of the concern and its circumstances:

- advise the parent to discuss the concern directly with the teacher or Principal and resolve it at that level.
- contact the parent to discuss and resolve the concern.
- consult with other board staff or agencies where appropriate, or request legal advice from the Board's general counsel in order to assist in resolving the concern.
- refer the matter for school council discussion and advice where the concern relates to a matter appropriate for school council consideration.

Complaints/Concerns brought to the attention of a trustee

13) The Board recognizes that, on occasion, oral or written expressions of concern involving students, staff, policies or procedures may be received by individual trustees.

Trustees will facilitate the communication process between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff. 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 parents/guardians 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.

14) It is very important, at the initial contact, to gather the information in an open and non-judgmental manner and to avoid making commitments regarding the eventual resolution. As per #4 above, the trustee who receives this complaint should respond by:

a) apprising the student/Parent/Guardian that their concern will be addressed while also asking if the staff member or Principal are aware of the concern ,

b) advising the complainant to wait a reasonable length of time for the complaint to be addressed,

c) following the recommended process (as outlined in #15, 16 and 17 below)

d) informing the Supervisory Officer that this concern has been expressed.

e) If necessary and appropriate, calling the person back within a reasonable amount of time to enquire as to the resolution of the issue.

15) When a Trustee receives a complaint or expression of concern from the Parents/Guardians of a student about any academic problem the suggestion will be made that the Parents/Guardians contact the teacher of the student. If the complainant is not satisfied, the Parents/Guardians should then approach the principal of the school. If the problem is still not solved satisfactorily, then the Supervisory Officer is to be contacted.

16) When a Trustee receives a complaint or expression of concern from the Parents/Guardians of a student about any problems which are not strictly academic the parent should be directed to the Principal. If the problem is not solved satisfactorily the complainant should contact the Supervisory Officer.

17) If the Trustee has ongoing concerns, these should be discussed with the Supervisory Officer.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

18) Consideration will be given to the notification of the entire Board (by the Supervisory Officer or designate) in the following situations:

a) Prior to any school community letter addressing a significant concern/incident going to all homes.
b) Parental concerns or school council concerns not resolved at the school which could reasonably come to the attention of the Trustees.
c) Incidents

i) Injuries – requiring Emergency Medical Services
ii) Safety Issues, i.e., bomb threats, health issues
iii) Deaths of staff/student/parent
iv) Other matters of a serious nature

19) A complaint of a Trustee will be referred directly to the Chairperson of the Board and heard in the In-Camera Meeting of the Board.

20) Employee complaints related to working conditions and Collective Agreement items will be investigated as provided in the respective Collective Agreements.

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)

21) From time to time the 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 parents/guardians are attending meetings with staff employed by the board.

a) 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 cost/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

b) The Principal and staff will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

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

SCHOOL COUNCILS

22) School council are established to advise principals on matters such the implementation of school programs, the school improvement plan and code of student behaviour. They are not forums to discuss individual parent/guardian-teacher-student issues or concerns regarding School Authority staff, volunteers, students or their parents/guardians. Any of these matters brought to a school council member or any school council meeting will be referred immediately to the principal.

MATTERS THAT SHOULD NOT BE DISCUSSED WITH STAFF

23) Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians 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 parents'/guardians' students(s) at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff are unable to discuss with parents or guardians.

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

b) In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the parents'/guardians' student(s) at the school in question), as necessary, staff will bring closure to any meeting which becomes a discus-

sion of personal details concerning other students or personal details about staff or issues relating to staff performance.