
Process for Addressing Public Concerns

1. PURPOSE

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) is committed to student achievement and well-being to help each student move toward graduation in their chosen pathway. The Board shares this responsibility with parents/ guardians and the community. The Board is further committed to fostering positive relationships and effective communication within the education system and with the community at large. The director of education is responsible for maintaining effective and consistent channels of communication with all stakeholders.

The process of addressing public concerns is an opportunity to improve service for students, parents/ guardians, and the community. The HPEDSB Growing with Character attributes—caring, cooperation, honesty, humour, integrity, respect, responsibility and trustworthiness—provide foundations for high levels of student achievement and well-being. They also contribute to making connections with students, each other and the community in an environment that fosters freedom from bias and harassment.

This administrative procedure outlines the steps that should be followed if a parent/guardian or community member has a concern about a school- or HPEDSB-related matter.

2. ADDRESSING CONCERNS

- a. Public concerns and questions should be dealt with at the level closest to the issue whenever possible.
- b. If a parent/guardian/community member has a concern about a school- or HPEDSB-related matter, the appropriate steps below should be followed to help resolve the issue.
 - i. A school-related concern expressed by a parent/guardian concerning their child should first be referred to classroom teacher. Refer to Step 1 below.
 - ii. A school-related concern expressed by a community member should first be initiated with the school principal. Refer to Step 2 below.
 - iii. Issues or concerns that are not school based should be directed to the appropriate superintendent. Refer to Step 3 below.

STEP 1: Talk with the child's teacher

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

STEP 2: Talk with the school principal

If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, or the concern is expressed by a community member, it should be discussed with the school principal or designate. The principal or designate will gather facts from everyone involved to clarify the issue and work to resolve it as quickly as possible. Basic to every investigation is the board's expectation that employees and students will follow school board policies and procedures.

STEP 3: Talk with the superintendent

If the parent/guardian or community member and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, or if it is not school based, they may discuss the issue with the appropriate superintendent. The superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and will respond to the parent/guardian or community member.

STEP 4: Talk with the Director of Education

If the parent/guardian or community member and superintendent are not able to resolve the issue, they may discuss it with the director of education. The Director of Education will review the matter and respond to the parent/guardian or community member.

3. REPRESENTATIVE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- a. From time to time parents/guardians may need support in order to adequately address their child's interest. This support may be necessary while parents/guardians are attending meetings with employees of the school board.
- b. Parents/guardians have the right to have a representative of their choice in attendance at meetings with school board employees, subject to any limitations established in board procedures. Costs or expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.
- c. School board employees and parents/guardians will be notified in advance of the meeting about who is anticipated to be in attendance.
- d. The representative supporting the parents/guardians must agree at the outset or in advance of the meeting, to respect and maintain confidentiality of any matter discussed at the meeting.

4. MATTERS THAT SHOULD NOT BE DISCUSSED WITH EMPLOYEES

- a. Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians or community members and school board employees may be fairly broad, meetings will generally be related to the education of the parent's/guardian's child/children at the school in question or the community member's specific concern. However, employees are unable to discuss certain matters with parents/guardians or community members, including personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other students(s), and personal matters related to employee performance issues.
- b. The meeting will be brought to a close in the event that the discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting, such as noted in 3) a) above.

5. ROLE OF TRUSTEES

- a. Parents/guardians or community members may contact trustees at any time. Trustees can assist to facilitate the communication process between the parent/guardian/community member and the school board personnel, and provide information and direction. Trustees will direct the parent/guardian/community member to the process which should be followed in resolving any concerns, or to the appropriate person or step in the process, but will not act as representative of the parent/guardian/community member at any time.

6. ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

- a. School councils are established to advise principals on matters such as school initiatives as they relate to student achievement and student code of conduct. They are not a forum to discuss individual issues related to teachers or other school board employees, or specific students or their parents/guardians. Any issues of this matter brought to a school council member of any school council meeting will be referred immediately to the school principal.

Legal references

- *Education Act*
- *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014*

District references

- Board Policy 1: Board Mission and Goals
- Board Policy 3: Board Operations
- Board Policy 9: Role of the Board Member
- Board Strategic Plan
- Special Education Plan
- Administrative Procedure 135: Equity and Inclusivity Education
- Administrative Procedure 145: Board Code of Conduct and Student Code of Conduct
- Administrative Procedure 147: Technology Use
- Administrative Procedure 175: School Councils
- Administrative Procedure 194: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
- Administrative Procedure 196: Privacy Breach Protocol
- Administrative Procedure 225: Character Development
- Administrative Procedure 312: Ontario Student Record
- Administrative Procedure 378: Student Discipline, Bully Prevention and Intervention
- Administrative Procedure 422: Safe Workplace – Workplace Harassment

Looking for Help with Questions or Concerns?

At HPEDSB, addressing public concerns is an opportunity to improve service for students, parents/guardians and the community. Questions and concerns are dealt with at the level closest to the issue, whenever possible. If you have a question or issue about your child and their learning, a school, or the school board, please talk about it with us, following the steps below.



Contact the Teacher

Talk with the teacher as the first step when looking for help or information. The parent/guardian and teacher can arrange a convenient time to speak on the phone or in person.



Contact the School Principal

Talk with the school principal (or designate) as the next step, if the parent/guardian and teacher are not able to resolve the issue, or if the concern is expressed by a community member.



Contact the Superintendent

If the school principal and parent/guardian or community member are not able to resolve the issue, or if it is not school-based, contact the appropriate superintendent to discuss the issue.



Contact the Director of Education

If the issue is not resolved after speaking with the superintendent, the director of education will review the matter and will respond to the parent/guardian or community member.

The process of addressing public concerns is an opportunity to improve service for students, parents/guardians, and the community.

Contacting Trustees

Parents/guardians or community members may contact trustees at any time. As the representatives of their community, trustees listen to concerns and needs, bring them to the attention of the Board of Trustees, provide information and direction, and connect the parent/guardian/community member to the process that should be followed, or to the appropriate person or step in the process, to resolve concerns.