



PARENT/GUARDIAN OR CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Responsibility:	<i>Coordinating Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being</i>
Legal References:	<i>Education Act</i>
Related References:	<i>Board Policy 2005 – Parent/Guardian or Caregiver Support Protocol & Guidelines for Procedures and Joint Responsibilities When Working with Children and Youth in Care</i>
Revisions:	<i>November 2016, May 14, 2018</i>
Reviewed:	<i>November 2016</i>

1. Preamble

- 1.1 The procedures that follow provide guidelines and expectations for parents/guardians or caregivers (hereafter referred to as “parents”) looking to communicate a concern to the school or school board. The procedures also outline the roles of parent “representatives” and trustees, and matters that cannot be discussed at meetings between parents and staff.
- 1.2 The intent of these procedures is to address “informal” support for parents (i.e., friend or family member) as opposed to paid professional support (i.e., legal counsel, professional mediator, etc.).

2. General

- 2.1 Every day, parents, volunteers, teachers, and support staff work together to provide the best education possible for all students.
- 2.2 To work together effectively, the relationship between home and school must be strong. This relationship can be strengthened through open, receptive, and honest two-way communication.
- 2.3 From time to time there may be a misunderstanding, a lack of communication, or a serious situation that needs attention. When this happens, all parties must work together to resolve the matter. A parent has the right to express concerns, a teacher has the right to respond, and the Board has an obligation to support students, parents and staff.

3. Steps in Communicating with Schools

- 3.1 If a parent has a concern about a school matter, these are the steps they should follow:
 - 3.1.1 The parent should discuss their concern or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time.
 - 3.1.2 If the parent and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, it should be discussed with the school principal (or designate). The principal (or designate) will gather facts from everyone involved to clarify the problem and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Basic to every investigation is the Board’s expectation that employees and students will follow school and Board policies and procedures.

- 3.1.3 If the parent and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, the parent may discuss the issue with the school superintendent. The superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and respond to the parent about his/her concerns.
- 3.1.4 If the parent and the school superintendent are not able to resolve the issue, the parent may discuss the issue with the Coordinating Superintendent. The Coordinating Superintendent will review the matter and respond to the parent about the concerns. The Coordinating Superintendent may choose to consult with the Director of Education at this time.
- 3.1.5 If the parent and the Coordinating Superintendent are not able to resolve the issue, the parent may register as a delegation and make a presentation to trustees at an In Camera (private) Meeting by contacting the Manager of Corporate Services to set up a mutually convenient time.

4. “Representative” of the Parent(s)

- 4.1 From time to time, parents 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 are attending meetings with Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) staff. Parents 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 costs/expenses associated with such a “representative” are the responsibility of the parents.
- 4.2 Principals, staff, and parents will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance. In the event parents wish to have legal representation at the meeting, staff will be notified at least 72 hours in advance so that WRDSB staff can also arrange for legal representation if so required.
- 4.3 The role of such a “representative” will be to provide the parent with support before, during, or after any meetings with Board staff. In most cases, such a “representative” will not be in attendance as an advocate to present the parents’ concerns or to seek a particular resolution of their concerns. However, in certain circumstances, for example when there is a language barrier which inhibits communication by the parents, a parent may choose to request that the “representative” speak on their behalf throughout the meetings with-WRDSB staff. As a result, a “representative”, as referred to in these procedures, is not usually a paid advocate attending the meeting on behalf of the parent.
- 4.4 A “representative” supporting the parents must agree at the outset or in advance, of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of any matter discussed at a meeting between parents and staff.

5. Matters Which Should Not Be Discussed at Meetings of Parents with Staff

- 5.1 Although the subject matter of meetings between parents and staff (including meetings at which a “representative” of a parent is present) may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parents’ student(s) at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff normally is unable to discuss with parents or guardians. Such matters that normally cannot be discussed include: personal details concerning other student(s); or, personal details concerning matters relating to staff performance issues. In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting [generally the education of the parents’ student(s) at the school in question], as necessary, staff will bring closure to any meeting that becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or personal details about staff performance.

6. Trustees

- 6.1 Parents, guardians or caregiver may contact trustees at any time. Trustees will facilitate the communication process between the parent and the appropriate staff. Trustees shall direct the parent to the processes which should be followed in resolving any concerns or to the appropriate person or applicable step in the process (dependent upon the steps the parent has already undertaken to resolve the concerns at the time the trustee is contacted). Trustees are not to act as a “representative” of the parent at a meeting between parents and staff.