

### **BOARD MEMBER RECEIPT OF CONCERNS**

Board members serve as ambassadors for and representatives of the schools to the community, including to parents. In this role, from time to time, board members will hear complaints or concerns about events in the schools. When a board member receives such a complaint, it is important to remember that the board member as an individual has no power to resolve such a complaint and that the board aims to spend most of its time providing strategic direction while respecting the primary role of the superintendent and administrators to manage operations and address specific concerns. At the same time board members care about problems occurring in the schools and want to be responsive to the public.

Towards these ends, board members have two options for addressing a complaint that they receive:

- a) If the complaint is unusually urgent or sensitive, the board member may choose to share it directly with the superintendent. The superintendent shall then act based on her/his best judgment and is no more obligated to act than if a non-board member had brought this issue to her/his attention.
- b) Normally the preferred response of the board member to a citizen is to remind the citizen of the best practice for dealing with a complaint, question or concern. Namely the citizen with the complaint should follow this process:
  - i) If possible and reasonable, address the concern directly with the employee (e.g. teacher) involved.
  - ii) If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved after speaking with the employee or a direct conversation with the employee is problematic (e.g. the complaint is about the behavior or efficacy of the employee), address the concern with the relevant school principal. School principals will whenever possible respect the confidentiality of the complainant unless they have received permission to use the name of the complainant.
  - iii) If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved after speaking with the principal or the complaint is about the principal, address the concern with the superintendent. Again confidentiality will be respected when possible.
  - iv) If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved after speaking with the superintendent, a citizen may bring a complaint to the board as a whole. This can be done by a request to the superintendent or the board chair that the issue be brought to the board. This will only occur after the appropriate steps i-iii have been attempted. The complaint will be placed on the agenda for the next board meeting that has not already had an agenda circulated. This will allow adequate time for the superintendent and administrators to research the issue and address the board knowledgeably and legal consultation may be obtained if appropriate.
  - v) A complaint will be addressed by the board as a whole more rapidly than in (iv) only if a majority of the board votes that the matter is so urgent it must be dealt with immediately.
- c) If a board member hears of complaints of substantial nature related to topics such as harassment, discrimination, abuse or bullying they should encourage the person reporting the concern to make a formal report, but if the board member cannot confirm this has happened, the board member should report it to the superintendent.

If a citizen has a complaint specifically about the superintendent then they should communicate their complaint to the Board Chair. Chair will consult with counsel and determine next steps.

Nothing in this policy affects the relationship of a board member who is a parent with the teachers, staff or principals of the board member's children. Namely board members may discuss questions or concerns about their student's education directly with teachers or principals in the same manner as any other parent, which includes that board members should be clear that they and their children will not receive special attention or treatment because of the fact they are a board member.

Adopted: June 4, 2019

Revised: January 21, 2020