

Title: Public Concerns

Adopted: June 26, 2018

Effective: June 26, 2018

Amended/Reviewed: February 17, 2026

This procedure must be interpreted, applied, and implemented in ways that uphold Indigenous and human rights and responsibilities, promote accessibility, and prevent and address (and do not reinforce) discrimination/discriminatory barriers.

1.0 RATIONALE

The procedure sets out how concerns raised by parents/guardians and community members are received, acknowledged, reviewed, and addressed by the Durham District School Board (DDSB).

This procedure supports fair, respectful, accessible, and timely engagement, promotes early resolution at the level closest to the issue, and ensures consistency with applicable legislation, Board policies, and Ministry of Education expectations, including Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170.

It is intended to provide clarity, consistency, and transparency for families, staff, and community members, while supporting procedural fairness and responsible use of Board resources.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- a. **Acknowledgement:** Confirmation that a concern has been received and is being reviewed. Acknowledgement does not constitute a resolution.
- b. **Concern:** A question, issue, or matter raised by a parent/guardian or community member related to a school, program, service, decision, or Board operation.
- c. **Business Day:** A day on which DDSB schools and/or Board offices are open for business.
- d. **Timely Response:** Acknowledgement and follow-up of a concern within established timelines, as outlined in this procedure. Timely response does not guarantee resolution of the concern.
- e. **Parent:** A parent, guardian, or caregiver.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 All DDSB staff share responsibility for fostering respectful, professional, and responsive engagement with parents/guardians and community members.

3.2 The Director of Education is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this procedure and may delegate responsibilities to appropriate staff.

3.3 Principals, Superintendents, and other designated staff are responsible for addressing concerns within their area of responsibility and authority.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

4.1 This procedure applies when a parent/guardian or community member raises a concern regarding DDSB operations, programs, services, or practices.

4.2 This procedure does not replace or supersede other legislated or Board-approved complaint, appeal, or dispute resolution processes. Where a concern falls under another established process, staff shall direct the individual accordingly, and communication regarding the concern may be coordinated in a manner consistent with this procedure and applicable processes.

5.0 TIMELINES FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RESPONSE

5.1 DDSB staff will acknowledge receipt of a concern within **48 hours**, consistent with Ministry of Education expectations outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170.

5.2 For the purposes of this procedure:

- “48 hours” means **two (2) DDSB business days**.
- Business days are defined as days when DDSB schools and/or Board offices are open.

5.3 During summer operations, statutory holidays, winter break, or other Board-approved closures, acknowledgement and response timelines may be adjusted.

5.4 Where a concern cannot be resolved within the initial acknowledgement timeframe, staff shall provide the parent/guardian or community member with an update outlining next steps and anticipated timelines.

6.0 PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING CONCERNS

6.1 School or Classroom-Based Concerns

Step 1: Review with Classroom Educator

Parents/guardians are encouraged to first raise concerns directly with the classroom educator at a mutually convenient time, where appropriate.

Step 2: Review by School Principal

Parents/guardians may request review by the school principal (or designate). The principal will review the concern, consider relevant information, and work toward resolution. The principal may consult Board staff as appropriate.

Step 3: Review by Superintendent

If the concern remains unresolved, the parent/guardian may request review by the school's Superintendent. The Superintendent (or designate) will review the matter in relation to Board policies and procedures and provide a response.

Step 4: Review by Director's Office

Concerns escalated to the Director's office will be reviewed and referred to the appropriate Associate Director, Superintendent or designate for examination and response.

6.2 System-Based Concerns

System-based concerns relate to Board-wide policies, priorities, partnerships, programs, or decisions that affect the broader school community rather than an individual student matter. These concerns may be raised with the appropriate Superintendent, the Director's Office, or through established Board governance processes, including correspondence with Trustees or participation in Board or Committee meetings in accordance with the DDSB By-Laws.

Trustees are responsible for governance, policy, and budget decisions. The Director of Education and staff are responsible for operational implementation and administration.

6.3 Repeated or Overlapping Concerns

Where a concern is already being addressed through this or another applicable DDSB process, staff may manage communication in a coordinated manner and are not required to restart timelines for the same matter.

7.0 ACCOMODATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

7.1 DDSB is committed to meeting its obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and DDSB Accessibility Policy and associated procedure.

7.2 If a parent/guardian or community member requires accommodation or has an accessibility need (for example, an interpreter) under the Code or the AODA to raise a concern or to take part in an issue resolution process under this procedure, the DDSB will work with the parent/guardian/family or community member to provide appropriate accommodation in accordance with the DDSB Accessibility Policy and related procedure.

8.0 PARENT/GUARDIAN(S) SUPPORT

8.1 Parents/guardians may choose to have a representative or support person, such as a community advocate, accompany them to meetings with DDSB staff where they feel support is needed to address a concern. Any costs associated with

such representation are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

8.2 Parents/guardians shall inform DDSB staff in advance of a meeting of any support person, representative, or legal counsel who will be in attendance. Parents/guardians will also be informed of the DDSB staff who will attend the meeting, including any staff acting as a note taker.

8.3 Support persons or representatives must agree, in advance of or at the outset of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of all matters discussed, and to communicate in a manner that is respectful and consistent with DDSB's Code of Conduct. Where legal counsel is engaged by a parent/guardian, DDSB staff must be notified at least 24 hours in advance, and the presence of legal counsel may affect the timing or format of the meeting.

9.0 LIMITATIONS ON MEETING DISCUSSIONS

9.1 Meetings between parents/guardians and DDSB staff are intended to focus on matters related to the education and well-being of the parent's/guardian's own student(s). While discussions may be broad in scope, DDSB staff are unable to discuss personal information or disciplinary matters concerning other students, or confidential staff personnel matters.

9.2 Where discussion extends beyond the appropriate scope or involves matters that cannot be shared due to privacy or confidentiality obligations, DDSB staff will redirect the discussion and may bring the meeting to a close as necessary.

10.0 ROLE OF TRUSTEES

10.1 Trustees may facilitate communication between parents/guardians or community members and appropriate DDSB staff but do not investigate, direct, or resolve operational concerns.

10.2 Trustees are responsible for governance, policy, and budget decisions. Operational matters are the responsibility of the Director of Education and staff.

11.0 RECORD KEEPING AND COMMUNICATION

11.1 DDSB staff may maintain records of concerns and actions taken, in accordance with DDSB records retention practices, where appropriate, to support transparency, accountability, and continuity.

11.2 Communication throughout the concerns resolution process shall be respectful, professional, and focused on constructive resolution.

12.0 APPENDICES

DDSB Public Concerns Protocol Flowchart

13.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Public Concerns Policy
- Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170
- School Community Councils and Parent Involvement Committee Policy
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
- Indigenous Education Policy
- Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy
- Student/Family Human Rights, Issue, Incident, and Complaint Resolution Procedure
- DDSB Code of Conduct