

Title: Public Concerns

Adopted: September 21, 2015

Effective: September 21, 2015

Amended/Reviewed: March 23, 2026

1.0 RATIONALE

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) is committed to fostering strong, respectful, and collaborative relationships with parents/guardians, students, staff, and community members. Clear and consistent processes for raising and addressing public concerns support trust, transparency, accountability, and student well-being.

This policy aligns with the DDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, its commitments to Indigenous rights and human rights, and Ministry of Education expectations regarding parent communication and responsiveness, including those outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170 (PPM 170). It supports consistent, transparent approaches to receiving and responding to public concerns across the District.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

- a. The objective of this policy is to outline the DDSB's commitment to addressing public concerns from the DDSB community.
- b. It is not the intention of this Policy to override, supersede or duplicate other resolution, complaint, appeal or review processes established through other DDSB policies, procedures, or guidelines (e.g., Accommodation Review Committee, Identification, Placement and Review Committee, discipline processes, Human Rights Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure, Student/Family Human Rights Issue, Incident and Complaint Resolution Procedure, etc.) or those established by law.
- c. This policy is to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the DDSB's commitment to promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and human rights in all learning and working environments. This includes anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist approaches that support services and employment that are safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, accessible and free from discrimination and harassment consistent with the DDSB's Indigenous Education Policy, the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, and the Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy and related procedures.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

- a. **Policy Concerns:** Concerns related to Board-level policies, priorities, or

decisions affecting the broader school community. These concerns are addressed through established governance processes, including Board and Committee meetings in accordance with the Board's Consolidated By-Laws. Policy concerns do not include individual operational or service delivery matters, which are addressed through established operational processes.

- b. **Operational Concerns:** Concerns related to day-to-day DDSB operations, services, decisions, or interactions affecting an individual student, school, or staff member. These concerns are addressed through established operational processes and through direct communication with appropriate DDSB staff, with the goal of resolving the matter at the level closest to the concern.
- c. **Timely Response:** Acknowledgement and follow-up of a concern within established timelines, as set out in Board procedures and consistent with Ministry expectations.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The **Director of Education** is responsible for the implementation, administration, and communication of this policy and may delegate operational responsibilities to appropriate staff.

The **Governance and Policy Committee** will review the policy prior to Board approval.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the governance framework for how the Durham District School Board (DDSB) engages with and responds to public concerns in a respectful, fair, accessible, and timely manner.

It applies to all DDSB schools, programs, services, and workplaces, and to all students, parents/guardians, community members, staff, and Trustees when a concern is raised regarding DDSB operations, decisions, or practices.

This policy is intended to support early, collaborative, and proportionate resolution of concerns at the level closest to the issue, while providing clear pathways for escalation where appropriate.

This policy does not replace, override, or duplicate legislated or Board-approved complaint, appeal, or dispute resolution processes. Where a concern falls within the scope of another established process or legal requirement, that process shall take precedence.

6.0 POLICY STATEMENT

6.1 DDSB supports open, respectful, and collaborative engagement with parents/guardians and community members as an essential component of student achievement and well-being.

6.2 DDSB recognizes the right of parents/guardians and community members to raise concerns and the corresponding responsibility of the Board and its staff to respond in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

- 6.3** DDSB is committed to addressing public concerns in accordance with principles of procedural fairness, accessibility, and effective use of staff time and resources.
- 6.4** DDSB acknowledges Ministry of Education expectations regarding timely communication and responsiveness to parent concerns, including those set out in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170.
- 6.5** Public concerns are best addressed at the organizational level closest to the issue, unless circumstances warrant escalation.

7.0 POLICY DIRECTIVES

- 7.1** Only the Board of Trustees may adopt, amend, or rescind this policy.
- 7.2** The Director of Education shall establish and maintain procedures to support the implementation of this policy, including processes for receiving, acknowledging, escalating, and resolving public concerns, in accordance with applicable accessibility requirements.
- 7.3** Procedures shall outline clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines, including expectations for timely acknowledgement of concerns, consistent with Ministry direction and operational realities.
- 7.4** This policy shall be reviewed at least every five years or earlier if required by legislative or Ministry changes.

8.0 EVALUATION

This policy shall be monitored on an ongoing basis and formally evaluated every five years to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with DDSB's strategic priorities and legislative requirements.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

This policy shall be published on the DDSB public website in an accessible format and communicated to the DDSB community as appropriate.

10. APPENDICES

None

11. REFERENCES

- Policy/Program Memorandum No. 170 – Parents' Engagement
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
- Indigenous Education Policy
- Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy
- Public Concerns Procedure