

COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

Whom to Contact - Knowing whom to contact at your son or daughter's school (or the Board Office) is important to deal effectively with a concern.

" **First** - Contact your child's teacher. Most situations are resolved at this level. Throughout the school year, take advantage of opportunities to talk with your child's teacher(s). Talking about a concern may be less awkward if you know the teacher first. Also, try speaking with the teacher a second time if your first discussion does not resolve the concern.

" **Next** - Contact the school's Principal or appropriate Vice-Principal if a solution is not reached with the teacher.

" **Then** - contact the **Superintendent of Education** for your son or daughter's school if the situation is still not resolved.

" **Finally** - Contact the **Director of Education** if the Superintendent of Education is unable to resolve a concern. You may also contact the **Board Trustee** who represents your area if a concern remains unresolved.

Telephone Calls and Meetings

Resolving concerns may involve telephone calls and meetings with teachers and Board staff. The following suggestions may help make these more effective in resolving a concern.

- Identify yourself clearly and state the specific purpose of your telephone call or reason for a meeting.
- Make a note of the date(s) and time(s) of telephone calls and meetings. Also, know with whom you are speaking - keep a note of the names and titles of staff with whom you spoke or attended meetings.
- Have your notes ready to identify concerns and state the facts.
- Be prepared to discuss alternative solutions. Listen to the suggestions of others and compromise when necessary to find the best solutions. Advocating for your child can trigger emotional reactions. We recommend you consider bringing a friend or someone who can support you during a meeting and help you stay focused. You may want to have your support person take notes for you during a meeting.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you do not understand what someone is saying, ask for clarification.

Stay Involved

Once a solution is reached, everyone involved should:

- **Follow through** with agreed upon actions;
- **Keep in touch** as those involved need to know if a solution is working well, or if other ideas need to be considered;
- **Agree to move forward**, remembering what was learned and what was involved in resolving a particular situation

COLLABORATION IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Helping all students reach their potential requires an effective working relationship between homes and schools with ongoing, two-way communication. However, situations may arise that cause concern for parents, teachers and students.

Our School Board wants to help parents and school staff work together in partnership to resolve any difficulties your children may experience.

When resolving concerns you should consider the following:

- » First, listen to your child: to help your child, listen carefully to his or her views on a particular problem. Ask your child questions that will help you gather information. Try to avoid 'why' questions. They can be intimidating and evoke defensive reactions. Instead, begin your questions with 'how' or 'what'.
- » Identify the concern: it is difficult to solve a problem if you don't understand what it is. Talking with your child will help identify and clarify any problems. Do not assume or predict that there is a problem; determine how serious the concern is for your child.
- » Encourage independent problem solving: resolving concerns independently is an important life skill that will benefit a child. Encourage your son or daughter to use strategies that may resolve a concern for himself or herself.
- » Model respect: discussing a school or teacher negatively in the presence of your children may affect their attitude toward the school or teacher.
- » Know the facts: after identifying the concern, it is important to get all the facts of a situation as this will allow you to better discuss the problem with Board staff, if needed. While it is important to respect your child's point of view, it is also important to seek all pertinent information before reaching a conclusion about the matter. Don't jump to conclusions.
- » Make notes: while talking with your child, it is easy to get confused or forget a concern or the facts. Make notes on the information your child has provided, as these will be useful later.
- » Plan: you may want to have some suggestions prepared to share with teachers and Board staff. A solution will most likely emerge if a number of options are discussed.