Vancouver School Board

# Working Together to Support Your Child

## Conflict Resolution Process for School-based Concerns

**FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS ARE PARTNERS**

We want to work alongside you to support your child. When a concern comes up, our goal is to listen, share information and work collaboratively with you to find helpful next steps.

This guide explains the process for resolving concerns that parents or guardians have about their own child's experience, education or participation at school. It applies to concerns that directly affect their own child, rather than concerns about other students or broader school, community, procedure or policy matters. In most cases, concerns can be resolved through open, timely conversations involving the people closest to the situation.

Parents or guardians and school staff may not always see a situation in the same way. That is a normal part of working together. Some concerns can be resolved quickly, while others may require ongoing planning for a child, more than one meeting or additional time for shared problem-solving. The goals of this process are to understand the concerns clearly, share information and identify next steps that support the child.

### Begin with the staff member closest to the situation

In most cases, this will be your child's teacher. If there is a concern with another school staff member, please connect with the principal or vice-principal. A helpful conversation may include:

- sharing relevant information
- asking questions and listening
- addressing misunderstandings
- determining next steps

**KEEP YOUR CHILD AT THE CENTRE**

Focus on your child's experience, the information available to the family and school, and the actions or supports that may help.

### Speak with the principal or vice-principal

If the actions taken do not resolve the concern, contact the principal or vice-principal to arrange a meeting. They can listen, review what occurred, gather information, bring people together when helpful, and support next steps and follow-up.

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**RESOLUTION CAN TAKE TIME**

Resolution may require more than one conversation. It may also take time to put a plan in place and determine whether it is addressing the concern.

### Request director of instruction support

Most concerns are resolved at the school level. If a concern remains after the principal or vice-principal has provided support, a director of instruction may help the family and school team continue the resolution process.

The director of instruction may review information, speak with those involved and help identify next steps to address the concern. The school will continue to play a central role in supporting the student and carrying out agreed actions.

**THE SCHOOL REMAINS CENTRAL TO SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD**

District involvement is meant to support the work already happening with the school, not replace it. In most cases, the school team remains central because they know the child, the context and the possible supports. If the concern has not been raised at the school level, the director of instruction will refer you back to the school to address the matter there.

### Associate superintendent review

If a concern remains unresolved after support from the director of instruction, it may be referred to an associate superintendent. The associate superintendent will review the concern and work with the family, school, and district staff, as needed, to ensure there is a clear understanding of the issues, the impact on the student, the actions that have been taken to resolve the concern, and the outcomes being sought.

This is the final stage of the conflict resolution process. The associate superintendent will review the steps taken to this point, work with the family and school to resolve the matter and provide a written decision about the concerns. The decision will include the associate superintendent's understanding of the concerns and their conclusion about whether any unresolved matters significantly affect the student's education, health or safety.

Only decisions that significantly affect the education, health or safety of a student may proceed to formal appeal.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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| **How do I contact the principal, vice-principal or director of instruction?** | Contact information is available on your school's website. |
| **What support is available to help me?** | The school principal can support your request for language assistance through the support of a VSB Multicultural Liaison Worker in your native language. VSB Multicultural Liaison Workers can support translation and help answer questions you may have.<br><br>You may bring an advocate or support person to a meeting. Please let the school know who will attend.<br><br>If you have other accessibility needs, please advise the principal. |
| **Should I contact the trustee assigned to my school to help me resolve the issue?** | While trustees welcome communication with parents, they cannot become involved in specific school issues because of the conflict that may occur should you later wish to appeal the issue to the Board of Education. |
| **Should I contact the superintendent to help me resolve the issue?** | The superintendent's role is to ensure that concerns are addressed through the appropriate process. Concerns raised directly with the superintendent will be referred to the school or department best positioned to review and resolve the matter. |
| **I feel my concern is not being addressed. Should I file an appeal?** | An appeal is available only after you have completed the district's conflict resolution process and received a formal written response from an associate superintendent. Please refer to the Appeal Procedures section for information about eligibility, timelines, and next steps. |

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**FORMAL APPEAL**

Most school-based concerns do not lead to a formal appeal. However, the Vancouver School Board recognizes and respects the fact that parents/guardians and students may strongly disagree with decisions made by school employees that significantly affect the health, education or safety of a student at school. In this rare case, a formal appeal may be launched in accordance with the Appeal Policy and Procedures Bylaw. Appeals must be started within fifteen (15) days of the completion of the Conflict Resolution Process, unless good reasons are shown why the time should be extended. Please review the Conflict Resolution Process prior to launching a formal appeal. If a matter has not been addressed through the conflict resolution process, the matter will be referred back to the appropriate school or district staff.

Please see Appeal Policy and Procedures Bylaw.
Please review the Parent and Student Appeal Guide.

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