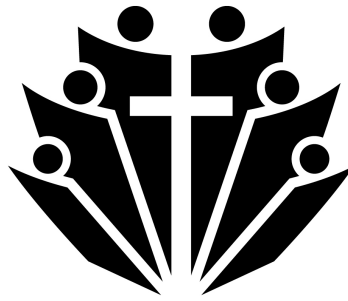


# **HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools

## **RESPECTING HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS:**

### **RESOLVING CONFLICT BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL**

- A) PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDELINES**
- B) STAFF GUIDELINES**
- C) ADMINISTRATIVE REFERENCES**

MAY 2012

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Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board Mission and Vision Statement.....	
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Hamilton-Wentworth  
Catholic District School Board

## MISSION

**The mission of Catholic Education in Hamilton-Wentworth, in union with our Bishop, is to enable all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model.**

**The Catholic Community of Hamilton-Wentworth believes the learner will realize this fullness of humanity**

### **If the learning process**

- begins at home and is part of family life
- is nurtured in the Parish
- is anchored in the Catholic Faith
- takes place within the context of worship, sacraments, and the life of the Church is enhanced by the school community
- is embraced by the learner as a personal responsibility for life.

If learning takes place in an appropriate and challenging environment

- in which members of the school community exemplify the teachings of Jesus Christ
- which reflects Gospel values and responsible use of human, financial and natural resources which promotes academic excellence and clear indicators of achievement.

## VISION

**Learners from Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools will demonstrate**

- knowledge and practice of their Catholic Faith
- the capability of nurturing a strong family unit
- esteem, respect and responsibility for self and others
- academic competence
- the ability to listen accurately and express knowledge clearly
- independence, critical thinking and effective problem solving
- proficiency with technology in order to adapt to a challenging world
- the values, attitudes and skills for effective partnerships
- the ability to transform our society

**To enable learners to achieve this vision, the faith community of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board will reflect**

- the centrality of Jesus Christ in our lives
- the teachings of the Catholic Church
- exemplary role models
- social justice, respect and fairness for all
- a dedicated staff
- a curriculum that is dynamic, practical and relevant
- high standards
- an environment conducive to learning
- effective partnerships
- accountability at all levels

(Board Approved - November 3, 1992)

SECTION A

PARENT/GUARDIAN  
GUIDELINE



## PREAMBLE

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*A school is a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment.*

*All students, parents, teachers and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to be law-abiding citizens and to be accountable for actions that put at risk the safety of others or oneself.*

*The Ontario Code of Conduct sets clear provincial standards of behaviour. It specifies the consequences for student actions that do not comply with these standards.*

*The Provincial standards of behaviour apply not only to students, but also to all individuals involved in the publicly funded school system – parent or guardians, volunteers teachers and other staff members – whether they are on school property, on school buses or at school-authorized events or activities.*

(Ontario Schools Code of Conduct, 2001)

*The Catholic School is directed towards the formation of the individual, individuals experience a sense of security when they believe that they belong to the community; when they believe they can impact on the decisions made within that community; when they believe they are responsible for their own actions and relationships; and when they believe that interpersonal problems can be solved in a positive, constructive and conciliatory manner.*

(Code of Student Conduct, HWCDSB, 2012)

## AUTHORITY

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board invites the involvement of all members of its inclusive school community in establishing and sustaining a safe and nurturing school environment that is an example of Christian community in our Catholic schools and is one that is Christ-centred and visibly and demonstrably Catholic. It is an environment in which all stakeholders are called upon to be role models of Gospel values, Catholic doctrines, teachings and beliefs. Everyone who contributes to our Catholic school community is welcome.

- All members of our Catholic community are expected to apply Christian values to life's opportunities, challenges and choices.
- The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board encourages visits to the schools and school sites, operated by the Board, from those with a statutory right to visit and from those whose presence will be of benefit to the pupils.

- The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board does not tolerate visits to its schools and school sites from those who, by conduct, or attitude, demonstrate or promote a philosophy, tenet, practice or teaching that is incompatible with:
  - ▷ The denominational philosophy, tenets, practices or teachings of Catholicism;
  - ▷ Honour and respect for the Queen and country;
  - ▷ The mission statement, objectives or policies of the Board;
  - ▷ The effective operation of the schools; or
  - ▷ The physical or mental well being of the pupils or staff.
- Control of access to school premises under the Board's jurisdiction shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada and s.53, s.212, s.265(m), and s.305 of the Education Act and Regulation 474/00 made under the Education Act.
- The Board further authorizes principals, vice-principals or other person(s) authorized by Board policy to exercise rights as occupiers under the provisions of the Trespass to Property Act, the Occupiers Liability Act, Regulation 474/00 made under the Education Act and the Use of School Facilities Board Policy.
- As a school system founded on Catholic beliefs and traditions, the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is committed to resolving disputes in ways that take into consideration the common good of the whole community.
- As Catholic educators, it is our duty to encourage and support mutual respect among our community members. With Christ as the Exemplar, we have the privilege of leading our students toward a higher calling in social responsibility where peace, justice and service to others are paramount.



## PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDELINES

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### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board understands that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children. The Board is committed to supporting parents/guardians in their efforts to provide their children with an excellent Catholic education which supports academic, emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs within an inclusive educational community.
- 1.2 The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board is also committed to addressing parent/guardian concerns about the education of their children in a collaborative, efficient, effective and respectful manner. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve issues brought to the attention of the Board and its staff.
- 1.3 The "*Resolving Conflict Between Home and School*" guidelines is intended to describe for parents/guardians the process which they are encouraged to follow when they have a concern about the education of their children.
- 1.4 The identification of a "parent" is *"the lawful and natural father or mother of a person"*.

The definition of a "guardian" is *"a person lawfully invested with the power, and charged with the obligation, of taking care of and managing the property and rights of a person who, because of age, understanding, or self-control, is considered incapable of administering his or her own affairs."*

### 2.0 Nature of Issues and Concerns

- 2.1 Differences in beliefs, interpretations, opinions, and values are inevitable in any diverse community. This is also the case within a Catholic school community. While the beliefs and values rooted in our faith are what we hold in common, there is ample room within the sphere of the education of children and adolescents for a diversity of views. Thus differences are to be expected.
- 2.2 The concerns which parents/guardians have with respect to the education of their children tend to focus on four different aspects or levels of the educational process:
  - classroom activities, procedures and programs (e.g. disciplinary methods, homework assignments, learning difficulties, students with Individual Education Plans (I.E.P.s);
  - school practices and procedures (e.g. school uniforms, transportation procedures, student medical problems);
  - policies and procedures of the school board (e.g. school boundaries, transportation policies); and

- policies and procedures of the Ministry of Education (e.g. school curriculum, funding of Education).
- 2.3 When parents/guardians begin to be concerned about a particular aspect of their children’s education, it is important that they first attempt to identify where the problem originates – at the classroom, school, school board or Ministry of Education level. This will allow the parent/guardian to begin the problem-solving process by speaking with those individuals who best understand the activity, policy, procedure and/or program which is affecting their children.
- 2.4 If the parent/guardian is not sure to whom they should be speaking about their concern, it is always advisable to begin at the classroom level by speaking to their child’s teacher. If the teacher is unable to address the parent’s/guardian’s concern, he/she will be able to direct the parent/guardian to those individuals who are able to help.

### 3.0 STEPS TO COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board identifies personnel at various levels who may be called on to assist in resolving conflicts. The sequence in the example chart reflects the typical process used in Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board schools:

#### EXAMPLE OF CONSULTATION SEQUENCE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

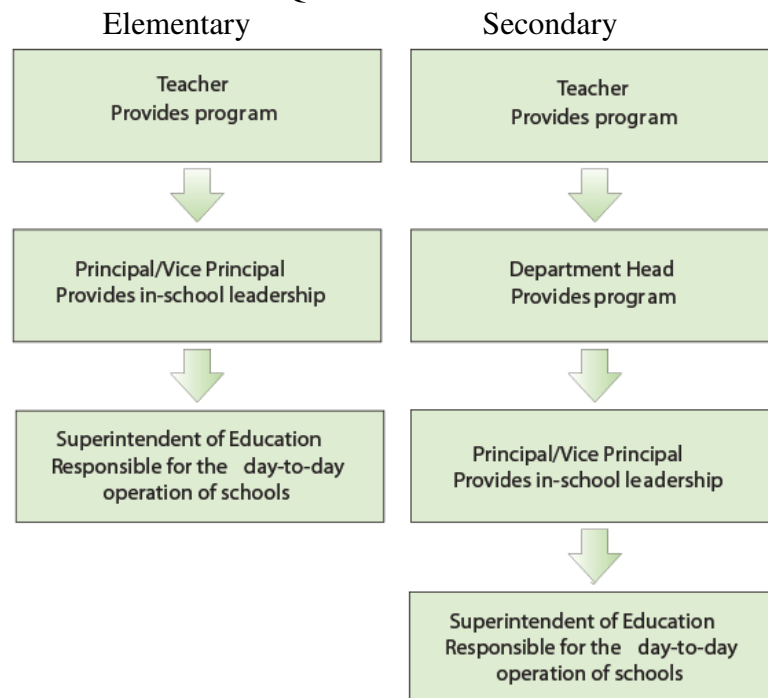


Figure A provides the “Response to Parental Concerns” chart sequencing procedures.

Regardless of the nature of the concern or the level of the educational system which the parent/guardian is dealing with, it is important to keep in mind that the focus of the



discussion or the meeting is on problem-solving. The most effective problem-solving discussions are those in which a priority is placed on supporting the educational needs of the child rather than trying to find someone to blame for the problem. An emphasis on blame usually ensures that the problem will not be solved.

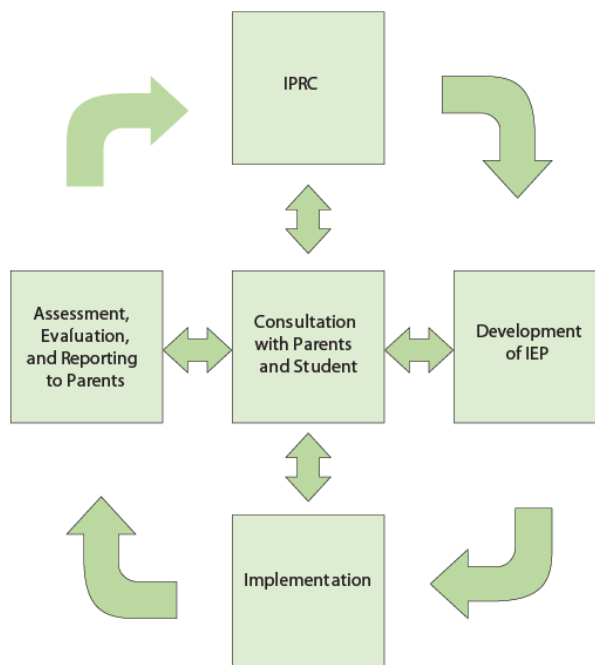
## 4.0 Specialized Procedures

### 4.1 Special Education Programs & Services

Specific procedures related to dealing with issues and concerns with respect to students who are receiving special education programs and services are outlined in the document entitled “*Parents Guide to Special Education Programs and Services*” which may be found on the Board’s website ([www.hwcdsb.ca](http://www.hwcdsb.ca)). A copy of this document may also be obtained from your child’s school.

The chart below represents the development and delivery of special education programs and services, including the IPRC process. Consultation with parents and students is important in all parts of the process.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



[REF: Shared Solutions” pg.8]

### 4.2 Progressive Discipline

The “progressive discipline” approach for addressing inappropriate behaviour is a whole-school model that utilizes a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports and consequences and builds upon strategies that promote and foster positive behaviour.

The framework shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive. Schools utilize a range of interventions, supports and consequences that are developmentally appropriate and include learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour while helping students make good choices [Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009].

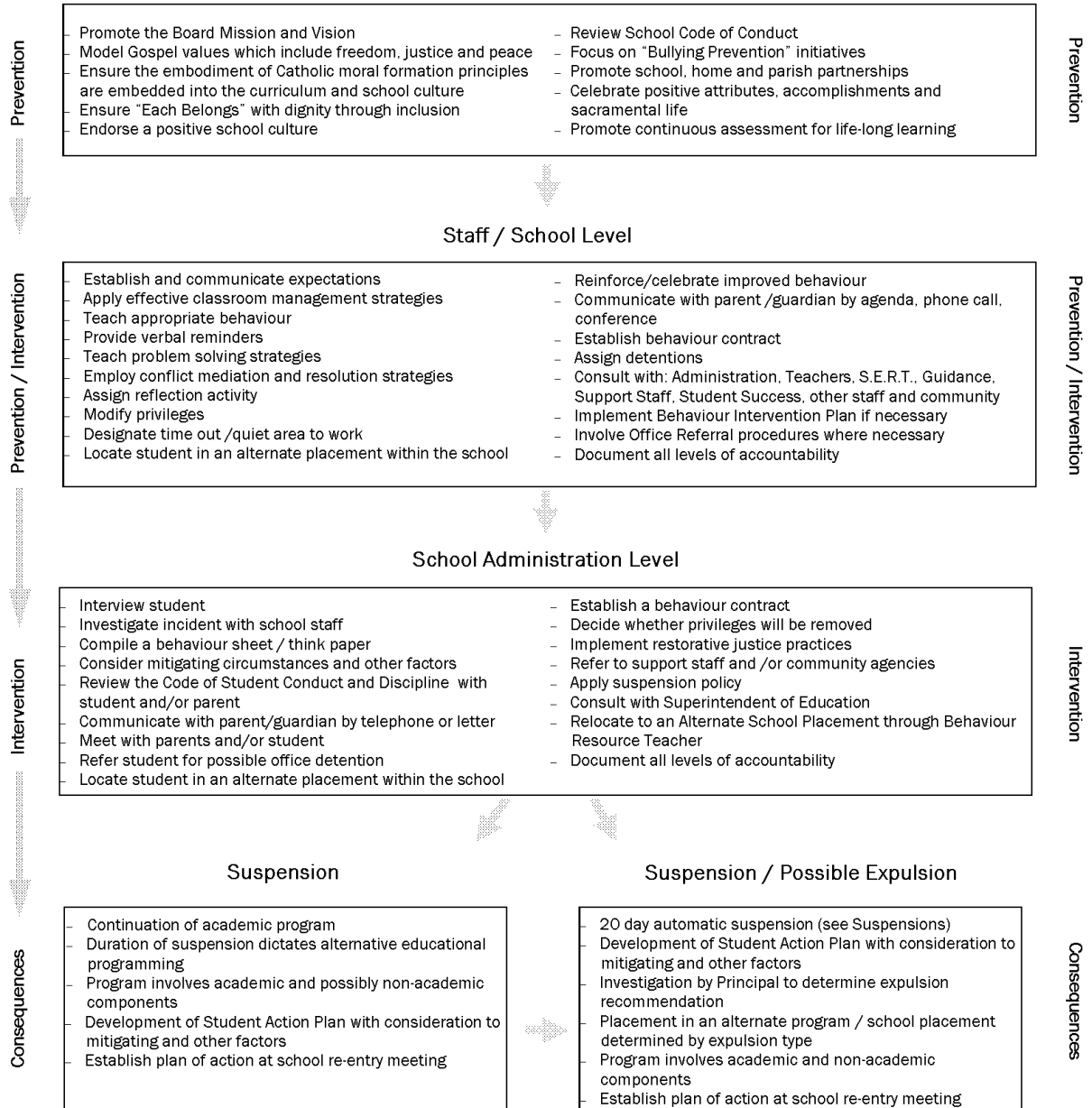
The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board supports and actively promotes the practice of progressive discipline [Code of Student Conduct, HWCDSB, 2012]. A graphic model of this progressive discipline is included on page 8 of this guide.

#### 4.3 Disciplinary Procedures

Procedures which parents/guardians follow if they wish to appeal the suspension or expulsion of their child from school are outlined in the letter which is sent to the parent/guardian by the school Principal informing them of the fact that the child has been suspended or expelled. More information about suspension and expulsion procedures is available by contacting the Manager of Social Work Services at the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (905-525-2930).



## Creating Catholic School Community



This chart outlines suggestions, not in sequential order, for prevention and intervention at different levels.  
June 2008

## Problem Solving

Problem solving is the most informal of the three approaches to conflict resolution outlined in this guide and the one that gives parents, educators, and students the most influence over the outcome. It is important for everyone to keep an open mind during discussions and to be willing to consider creative solutions.

Often problem solving can be done with a phone call or a brief informal meeting, or by a written exchange, including email communications, particularly when there is a positive school climate.

*For problem solving to be successful, each person must:*

- ✓ agree on what the issue is;
- ✓ understand the assumptions and beliefs that underlie the issue;
- ✓ know what options (supports and resources) are available;
- ✓ come to the process without preconceived ideas about solutions;
- ✓ stay focused on the benefits for the student;
- ✓ be willing to share all information that relates to the issue;
- ✓ be open to others' ideas and suggestions;
- ✓ use open and closed questions as a method of inquiry;
- ✓ be willing to explore creative ways of reaching a shared solution.

[REF: "Shared Solutions, pg. 34)]

## Steps in Problem Solving

### *Define the issue.*

- Clarify the purpose of the conversation.
- Determine how others define the issue initially.
- Discuss any opposing views.
- Agree on a shared definition of the problem.

### *Share information and ideas.*

- Identify assumptions and related information/data upon which each party's understanding is based. Test assumptions if necessary.
- Identify different points of view and clarify the thinking behind them.
- Highlight new ideas and information that may affect the outcome.

### *Generate and explore possible solutions.*

- Be realistic: identify the implications of each solution.
- Ensure that all parties understand the implications.

### *Predict consequences.*

- Envisage the likely consequences of each solution.
- Eliminate the least workable solutions.
- Rank the final few.

### *Choose a solution and develop a plan for action, including performance measures.*

- Identify the most likely outcome(s) of the decision.
- Set a timeline to give the solution a fair chance.
- Record who is doing what.
- Set a date for the follow-up evaluation.

### *Do a follow-up evaluation.*

- Evaluate outcomes and explore learning: (1) Is the proposed solution working? (2) Are any changes needed?
- If problems are identified, have another brainstorming session and consider another possible solution.

## Finding Common Ground

When everyone agrees that problem solving isn't working, it's time to try finding common ground.

With this approach, a face-to-face meeting, or a fulsome written/verbal exchange is always necessary, since part of the problem is that the parties have preconceived ideas about the solutions they want.

*This approach requires each party to:*

- ✓ focus on the student's strengths and needs;
- ✓ discuss and explain the assumptions or beliefs that define the problem for him or her;
- ✓ have a clear understanding of what the issue is;
- ✓ clearly articulate how he or she sees the issue;
- ✓ share all information that pertains to the issue;
- ✓ listen actively and ask open-ended questions to elicit more information, such as "What would happen if...?", "Would you be happy if...?";
- ✓ be willing to brainstorm to identify possible options;
- ✓ be willing to identify interests, perceptions, or needs that are common to the parties;
- ✓ be willing to compromise in order to narrow the scope of the issue;
- ✓ recognize and accept common ground when it is discovered;
- ✓ agree to a written plan to implement the agreed-upon solution;
- ✓ agree to attend a follow-up meeting or participate in a follow-up written/verbal exchange, within a set time frame to discuss how well the solution is working

### BALANCING POWER

Parents and educators have different responsibilities when it comes to educating students. For both parties to carry out their respective mandates effectively, each must acknowledge the role, responsibilities, and rights of the other.

### FAIRNESS

Processes for resolving issues must be fair and equitable. All parties must feel that their own views and those of others have received a fair hearing and have been adequately taken into account in the outcome.

### TRANSPARENCY

All communication should be open and all information freely available to all involved.

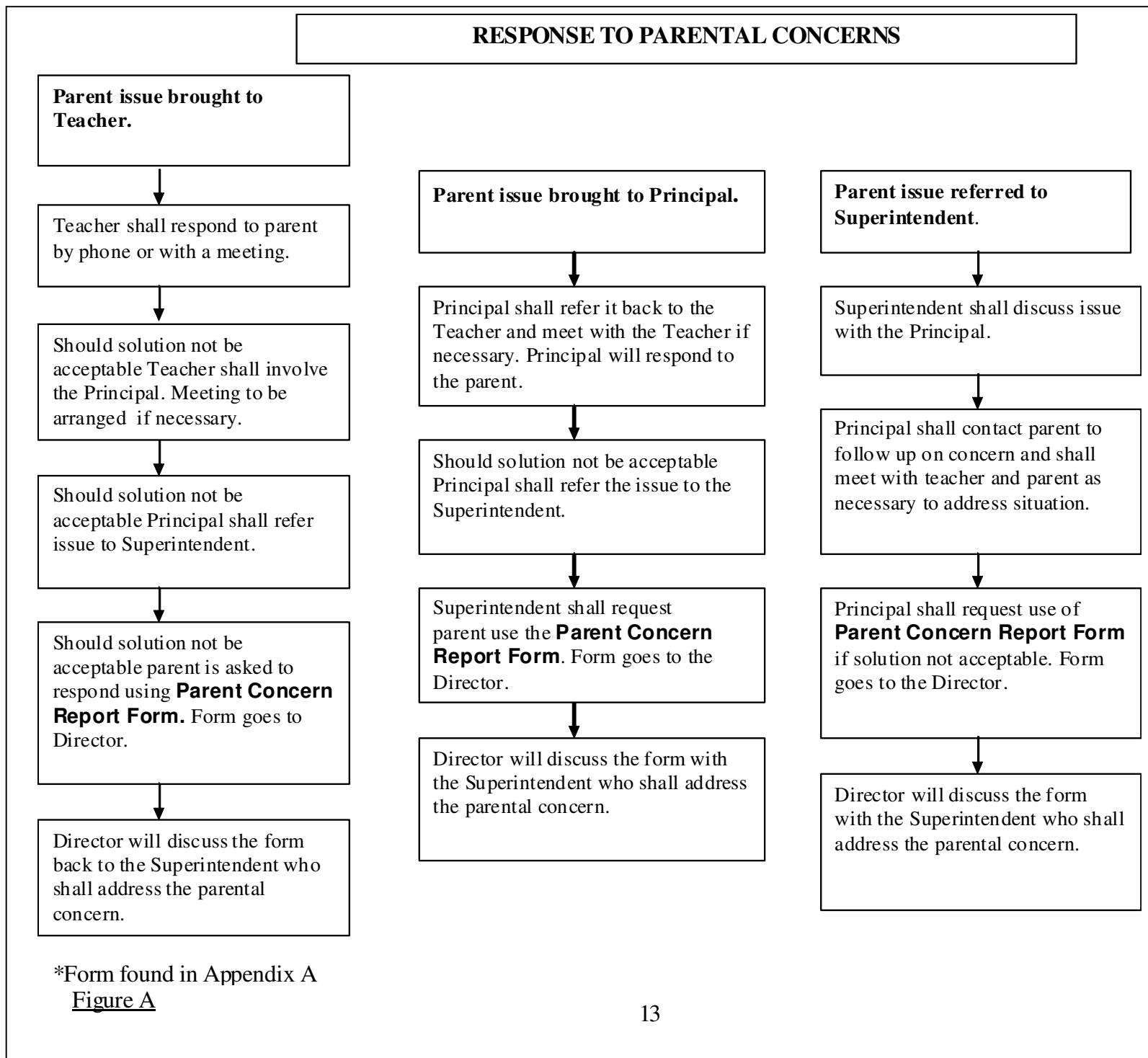
[REF: "SharedSolutions" pg.37]

### 5.3 Unresolved Differences

In the event that the meeting becomes unmanageable, the parent or principal may choose to recommend that the meeting conclude immediately and possibly reconvene at a later, mutually agreed-upon date and time.

Should the parent/guardian invoke threats towards any staff, the principal will request that such behaviours be discontinued. If the parent/guardian continues threatening behaviours, the principal may request that the parent/guardian leave the school property. In extreme cases police may be notified or a “Cease and Desist” letter excluding the parent/guardian from school property be served.

Figure A: Response to Parental Concerns (pg. 13) outlines the procedural sequence for seeking solutions to concerns. A copy of the Parent Concern Reporting Form is found in Appendix A and provides the parent/guardian with an opportunity to inform the Director of Education of unresolved differences at the school level and identify the anticipated outcomes. The Director of Education or his/her designate will respond to the parent/guardian with a written summary of how the concern was handled. A copy of the Board Response to Parental Concern Report is found in Appendix A.





**SECTION B**

**STAFF GUIDELINES**



## STAFF GUIDELINES

### PARENTAL HARASSMENT OF SCHOOL BOARD STAFF AND AGENTS OF THE BOARD

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#### INTRODUCTION

##### 1.0 Parental Harassment

Black's Law Dictionary defines harassment as:

*Words, conduct or action (usually repeated or persistent) that, being directed at a specific person, annoys, alarms, or causes substantial emotional distress in that person and serves no legitimate purpose.*<sup>1</sup>

**Harassment is defined** in the Ontario Human Rights Code as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome". [Subsection 10(1)e].

*Harassment can be, but is not limited to, misuse of power. It is unacceptable and unsolicited conduct, action, beliefs and attitudes which, intentionally or unintentionally, demean the victim and/or assert control and/or influence over the victim. It is behaviour that is not welcomed and may make you feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, offended or scared. It may include:*

- *something done to you and/or something done to someone else including unnecessary and unwelcome physical contact such as touching, petting or pinching, leering, suggestive staring and/or other gestures, unwanted sexual attention, remarks, behaviours, sexually degrading words and/or solicitation made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwelcome;*
- *comments which hurt someone's feelings including insults, jokes, name-calling, slurs and teasing;*
- *fighting and/or bullying;*
- *graffiti, insulting words, messages, slogans, pictures, and offensive posters, video, or a form of electronics transmission;*
- *lack of sensitivity to a person's gender, sexual orientation, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, employment status and/or disability;*
- *making and/or distributing material which contains biased or hateful ideas;*
- *implied and/or expressed verbal threats;*
- *a happening and/or a series of repeated happenings, but only has to happen once, to affect you;*
- *a non-intentional occurrence (which could be construed as harassment).*

The concept of parental harassment is discussed in "An Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal" written by Eric Roher & Simon Wormwell as follows:

*An appropriate definition of parental harassment could also include the following:*

- *unwanted comments, interferences or suggestions;*
- *various forms of intimidation and aggressive behaviour;*
- *verbal threats;*
- *verbal and emotional abuse;*
- *the application of force or physical assault;*
- *“bullying” which is an attempt to undermine an individual through cruel or humiliating behaviour; and/or*
- *“mobbing” which involves a collective effort to psychologically harass a person.*

Robert Keel and Nadya Tymochenko in “An Educator’s Guide to Parental Harassment” indicate that there are two categories of harassment recognized by law: civil harassment and criminal harassment. They also point out that within each of these categories, there are five types of harassment: verbal; physical; telephone; written; and Internet (also known as cyberbullying). In general, fear for one’s safety is an essential element for a criminal harassment charge.

***Bullying is defined*** as repeated and aggressive behaviour by any person, including ie. a pupil where:

- *the behaviour is intended [by the person] to cause, or [the person] ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to cause harm, fear, or distress to another individual, including psychological harm or harm to the individual’s reputation and;*
- *the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, race, disability or the receipt of special education (intimidation)*

*For the purposes of the definition of “bullying”, behaviour includes the use of any physical, electronic, written or other means (Accepting Schools Act, 2011 Bill 13).*

## **2.0 School Board Staff and Agents of the Board (CPCO, CUPE, LIUNA, OECTA, PASS, PECW)**

The guidelines for the management of parental harassment apply to **all** staff members of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. The guidelines also apply to agents of the Board including Lunch Room Supervisors, School Bus Drivers, Contractors hired by the Board, Volunteers and Trustees of the Board. In the discussion which follows, where reference is made to staff member, please note that this term also includes agents of the Board.

## **3.0 De-escalating Potential Conflict**

- 3.1 Despite a staff member's best efforts to avoid problems with parents, they do occur. In these cases it is important to recognize the warning signs of potential conflict and implement strategies to de-escalate the conflict.

Warning Signs of Potential Conflict:

- frequent, unscheduled, or inappropriate presence in the school, or phone calls;
- frequent difficult telephone conversations or meetings, e-mails, faxes;
- refusal to meet in person to discuss a concern;
- refusal to sign communications from the school;
- student defiance that is endorsed by parents;
- complaints from more than one parent, possibly with a ringleader organizing the action;
- a reminder of a parent's position of authority (e.g. police officer, lawyer, etc.);
- threats to involve legal counsel or media without reasonable discussion.

- 3.2 As soon as a staff member picks up on the warning signs that relations are strained, it is important to take steps to prevent the matter from escalating:

Teacher:

- notify the Principal;
- reflect on what has been happening in your relationship with the student;
- document all communication with parents (i.e. notes, emails, telephone, face-to-face) meetings with the Principal, description of disruptive incidents, and request for assistance. It is important to maintain a professional tone and to maintain confidentiality. Personal documentation should be dated, filed and securely retained;
- meet with the parent(s); invite the Principal if the meetings are challenging.

Educational Assistant:

- notify classroom teacher, and if necessary, the Principal;
- the student is the responsibility of the classroom teacher, and as such, he/she must assume the position of link to the parent.

Principal:

- notify the Superintendent;
- reflect on what has been happening in the relationship between the student and teacher;
- document all communication with the parent and between the parent and teacher, including descriptions of disruptive incidents. It is important to maintain a professional tone and to maintain confidentiality. Personal documentation should be dated, filed and securely retained;
- gather background information and history of the parent's past behaviour;
- meet with the parent, invite the Superintendent if these meetings are difficult and provide the parent with a copy of the "Respecting Home-School Relationships: Guidelines For Resolving Conflict Between Home and School";

- invite another staff member or a Board support staff representative and/or a union representative to attend the meeting if you feel that representation is required. (Such a request should be discussed in advance of the meeting).
- Figure B outlines the staff communication guide to addressing parental harassment.

### 3.3 **Protocol of the Meeting**

Prior to a parent meeting, the Principal should discuss with the staff member the ground rules for how the meeting will be conducted. Examples of such ground rules are:

- a purpose for the meeting will be established;
- both parties will have the opportunity to speak and to listen;
- all parties will be treated with respect;
- the meeting will discontinue if conflict escalates;
- fair expectations will result from the meeting;
- a course of action to be taken will be developed;
- a written summary of decisions will be shared with all parties.

### 3.4

## **STRATEGIES FOR USE BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER A MEETING**

*Before a meeting*, it's important for the people conducting the meeting to make sure that:

- ✓ the appropriate people will be in attendance, ensuring a balanced representation parties (e.g., parents; educators; the student, if appropriate; a parent advocate; a community service agency representative; an interpreter for English language learners);
- ✓ necessary accommodations (e.g., the provision of sign-language interpreters) are made for parents (and/or the student) attending the meeting;
- ✓ all the participants understand the IEP process and have a copy of the plan well before the meeting, if it is to be discussed;
- ✓ specific concerns and questions that can be addressed prior to the meeting have been dealt with;
- ✓ the purpose of the meeting has been established and/or an agenda has been prepared and agreed upon, in consultation with all participants;
- ✓ everyone involved knows the purpose of the meeting and has all the information necessary to engage in informed discussion;
- ✓ adequate advance notice of the meeting has been given;
- ✓ the location and meeting time are acceptable to everyone;
- ✓ a realistic amount of time has been set aside for the meeting;
- ✓ adequate seating is provided, and chairs are arranged so that people are facing each other;
- ✓ any necessary materials (e.g., reports) have been gathered;
- ✓ if notes are required, a note-taker has been identified and agreed upon in advance.

*During a meeting*, the person conducting the meeting should:

- ✓ ensure that all parties remember that *the student's* interests come first;
- ✓ ensure that all participants are introduced and have an opportunity to state how they see the issue;
- ✓ listen attentively and with an open mind to others' views;
- ✓ avoid drawing premature conclusions about others' views and/or about potential solutions;
- ✓ invite questions and comments to clarify assumptions, perceptions, and information;
- ✓ seek clarification about the thoughts, feelings, and assumptions of others, paraphrasing if necessary to ensure that others' views have been correctly interpreted;
- ✓ acknowledge key points made by others and ensure that they have fully understood another's position before responding;
- ✓ politely express disagreement about substantive matters if necessary, but avoid personal attacks and be prepared to intervene to prevent personal attacks by others;
- ✓ recognize the value of allowing people to vent their feelings, while keeping in mind that the meeting may need to be rescheduled if emotions can't be calmed;
- ✓ if emotions are out of hand and/or the meeting has reached an impasse, be prepared to stop the meeting and reconvene on another day;
- ✓ use paraphrase and exploratory questions to help less articulate participants express their concerns and feelings;
- ✓ ask questions such as "How would this benefit the student?" to keep the discussion focused on the student's interests;
- ✓ thank all parties for coming and provide them with the name of a contact person for follow-up questions and feedback, along with details of how this person can be reached.

*After a meeting*, the note-taker should:

- ✓ prepare a summary of the meeting that clearly outlines:
  - the key points discussed and any action items or decisions made;
  - the next steps agreed upon;
  - the date time, location, and purpose of any follow-up meeting scheduled;
- ✓ ensure that copies of the summary are sent to all those who attended the meeting.
- ✓ ensure that copies of the summary are maintained in secure and confidential files.

(Source: Adapted from Portland Public Schools, *Guidelines for Conflict Management in Special Education*, 2000.) [ref. "Shared Solutions" pg. 22, 23]

## 4.0 **Managing Serious Parental Issues**

- 4.1 When a parent's behaviour is interpreted to be consistent with the definition of harassment or bullying, the situation can be deemed as parental harassment. Behaviour

may include threats to one's personal reputation, disruptions to one's ability to perform effectively or affecting one's personal health.

Signs of serious parental issues:

- parent(s) refuse to meet with board officials;
- conducting meetings or telephone or e-mail campaigns with other parents;
- demanding that a staff member be moved, disciplined or fired;
- a written complaint to a third party without discussing concern with the staff member first (e.g. Principal, Superintendent, Ontario College of Teachers, etc.);
- harassing or abusing a staff member including stalking, damages to staff property;
- making unsubstantiated allegations of abuse/assault against the staff member;
- attempts to defame the character of the staff member.

When all efforts at trying to resolve the problems have failed and a staff member is experiencing harassment or abuse from a parent, the staff member must notify their Principal and/or Superintendent that he/she expects support and protection, by filling out and submitting the Staff Report of Parental Harassment form (Appendix B). It is the Board's responsibility to protect employees and agents of the Board from unfair practices of parents and others who may interfere with the school program and jeopardize the staff member's rights.

#### 4.2 The Board's Options for Dealing with Problem Parental Behaviour

The Board is provided with options for dealing with persons who pose a threat to the physical or mental well-being of the students and/or staff.

Provisions for actions are included in several Acts, including:

- the Education Act;
- the Occupational Health & Safety Act;
- Bill 168, Violence and Harassment in the Workplace Act (2009);
- the Trespass to Property Act;
- section 265(m) of the Education Act outlines exclusion from school property as an option for persons who pose a threat or demonstrate harassing behaviour

Bill 168, "Occupational Health & Safety Amendment Act, Violence and Harassment in the Workplace 2009" recommends that any threats of violence or actual threats must be reported by staff to the Board, and the Board can consult with police on the legal ramifications and possible safety precautions recommended.

Dependent on the circumstances, the Superintendent of Education may request that the Board's Solicitor draft a "Cease-and-Desist" letter. Such a letter should explain the nature of the wrong doing and the potential legal consequences if such conduct continues. A parent will need to be made aware of how inappropriate the behaviour has become, the real threat posed to a staff member's reputation and well-being and what the Board's

intentions are in the event that the actions continue (Refer to the Staff Guidelines section of this document).

Once action has been taken by the Board, the Director or designate should complete the Board Response to Staff Report of Parental Harassment form (Appendix B) as a follow-up to how the concern was handled. It is suggested that a copy be submitted to the Superintendent of Education, the Principal or Manager and the local union/association office, and a copy given to the originating staff member.

#### 4.3 The Staff Member's Options for Dealing with Problem Parental Behaviour

In this situation the staff member is advised to:

- speak to the school Principal and/or the Superintendent of Education about the problem;
- in the case of a school Principal who is being harassed, he/she shall contact their Superintendent of Education;
- contact the local union/association office (CPCO, CUPE, LIUNA, OECTA, PASS, PECW);
- if there has been violence either perpetrated or threatened, a safety plan may be required as per the Board's Violence and Harassment in the Workplace policy and procedure.

If the staff member feels that the parental harassment concern has not been resolved, he/she may:

- notify the school Principal and the Superintendent of Education in writing using the Staff Report of Parental Harassment form (Appendix B) and send a copy to the local union/association office;
- make a report to the Health and Safety Officer of the Board, who in turn will bring the issue to the Joint Health and Safety Committee;
- if there has been violence either perpetrated or threatened, a safety plan may be required as per the Board's Violence and Harassment in the Workplace policy and procedure;
- if the issue is not resolved at this point, it may then be referred to the Ministry of Labour.

#### 4.4 The Options of Agents of the Board for Dealing with Problem Parental Behaviour

In this situation, Agents of the Board are advised to:

- use form Appendix B;
- speak to the school Principal, department manager and/or the Superintendent of Education about the problem;
- contact their local union/association if they have one.

#### 4.5 When to Involve the Authorities



The Board's Violence and harassment in the Workplace policy and procedure provides employees with strategies to assist in developing safety plans if required.

Staff members are strongly encouraged to involve the Police or appropriate legal authorities in cases of threats, assault and/or stalking, cyber-stalking, harassment or bullying.

Assault is defined in the Criminal Code of Canada as follows:

*A person commits an assault when:*

- *without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly;*
- *he attempts or threatens, by an act or gesture, to apply force to another person, if he has, or causes that other person to believe on reasonable grounds that he has, present ability to effect his purpose; or*
- *while openly wearing or carrying a weapon or carrying a weapon or imitation thereof, he accosts or impedes another person or begs.*

This section applies to all forms of assault, including sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm and aggravated sexual assault.

Uttering Threats is defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, (section 264(1) as:

Everyone commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat:

- to cause death or bodily harm to any person;
- to burn, destroy, or damage real or personal property;
- to kill, poison or injure an animal or bird that is the property of that person

Stalking is defined in the Criminal Code of Canada (section 264(1)(2)) as follows:

*No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or recklessly as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.*

*(2) The conduct mentioned in subsection (1) consists of,*

- *repeatedly following from place to place the person or anyone known to them;*
- *repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;*
- *besetting or watching the dwelling house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or*
- *engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family;*
- *engaging in the use of the Internet or social media to repeatedly contact a person, known as cyberstalking.*

If a parent becomes violent or utters threats of physical violence, it is imperative that the Police be contacted immediately. The staff member is to notify the school Principal and/or the Superintendent of Education as well as the union/association that the police are involved.

In extreme cases where a staff member is being repeatedly followed or watched at work or at home, the behaviour may be considered stalking. If this occurs, the staff member and the school Principal are advised to contact the Police for their assistance and advice, as well as the Superintendent of Education and their union/association representative.

#### 4.6 Dealing with the Emotional Strain of Parental Harassment

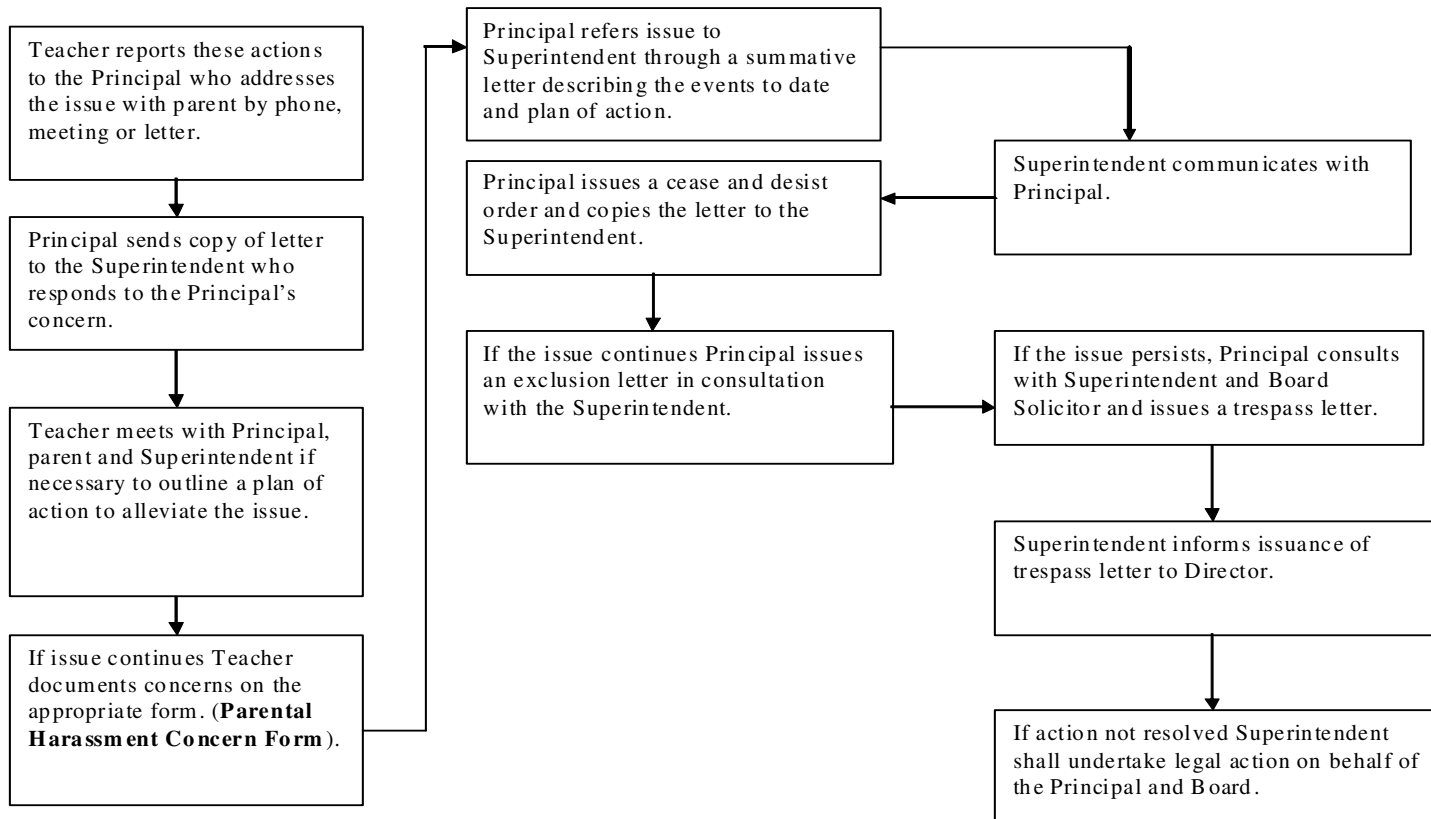
The emotional cost of being harassed must also be addressed by the staff member. The staff member is advised to:

- discuss concerns with the Principal, and or Superintendent;
- consult his/her physician;
- contact the Employee Assistance Program.

## STAFF GUIDE TO PARENTAL HARASSMENT

Where concerns lead to harassment, which is characterized by the following actions:

1. Parent repeatedly phones, e-mails or interrupts class to address concerns;
2. Parent threatens, bullies or uses improper language in the school or directed to staff;
3. Parent writes petition or involves other parents;
4. Parent defames staff or administration or board personnel and undertakes a campaign of intimidation.



**Figure B**

SECTION C

ADMINISTRATIVE  
REFERENCES



## **PARENTAL HARASSMENT AND THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR**

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### **1.0 Regulations**

Anyone desiring access to a school remains subject to school-based access protocols [ref. 1.15]

- 1.1 The Board recognizes that the following persons are permitted to be on school premises pursuant to Regulation 474/00 – Access to School Premises:
  - a person enrolled as a pupil;
  - a parent or guardian of such pupil (may include persons who act as temporary guardian of pupils such as grandparents, neighbour, sibling, day care provider or foster parents as specified by parent or guardian to Principal);
  - a person employed or retained by Board;
  - a person who is otherwise on the premises for a lawful purpose (delivering mail, voting) but only while and in connection with the discharge of their respective duties, for example –
    - ▷ a person who is invited to attend an event, a class or a meeting on school premises, provided the person is on the premises for that purpose;
    - ▷ a person who is invited onto school premises for a particular purpose by the Principal, Vice-Principal or another person authorized by Board policy, provided the person is on the premises for that purpose.
- 1.2 Persons authorized to be on school premises are not automatically entitled to have access to all areas of the school premises.
- 1.3 The Board has the right to lock the school premises when the premises are being used for a purpose authorized by the Board.
- 1.4 An authorized person is not permitted to remain on school premises if in the judgement of the Principal or designate, his or her presence is considered detrimental to the safety or well being of a person on the premises.
- 1.5 An authorized person is not permitted to remain on school premises if he/she fails to report their presence on the premises in the manner specified by this policy.
- 1.6 Any person who has been excluded from school premises shall not be reinstated until the exclusion has been lifted.
- 1.7 The Principal or designate shall exercise the rights of the Board as an occupant under the provisions of the Trespass of Property Act, the Occupiers Liability Act, the Education Act 265(m), the Safe Schools Act, 2000 s. 305(4) (5) and Regulation 474/00 with respect to an individual determined to be in non-compliance with the provisions of the policy.
- 1.8 Each Supervisory Officer of the Board and each person designated by the Director of Education is hereby authorized to make a determination as to whether the presence of a person on any school premises is detrimental to the safety or well-being of a person on such school premises.
- 1.9 In addition, the Board recognizes that there are other persons who have a legal right to visit under the Education Act:

- Trustee of the Board;
- Member of the Provincial Legislature for the school in his/her constituency;
- a member of the clergy for the Roman Catholic Church who has pastoral charge of the area in which the school is situated.

#### 1.10 Persons Whose Visits Are Encouraged

This group includes persons invited by the Director, the appropriate Supervisory Officer, the Principal or a teacher to make instructional or other presentations to and for the benefit of the pupils or the staff of the school. Presentations must be in harmony with the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations. Care must be taken to ensure that the person or group does not fall into the category whose attendance is opposed by the Board. For this reason, appropriate staff is required to scrutinize the aims, objectives and methods of those invited to make presentations in the school.

##### 1.10.1 Announcements by Political Parties (Provincial)

- Between provincial elections, the Governing Party shall have the ability to hold announcements in schools related to Education and Early Childhood policies. Requests for access shall be made through the Director of Education prior to the event. All provisions of Policy S.S. 04 shall be adhered to.
- During a writ period of a provincial election no political parties may make public announcements in the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board.

#### 1.11 Persons Whose Visits Are Permitted

This group is composed of persons to whose presence the Board has no objection, so long as their presence does not interfere with the needs of the school and so long as they respect the personal and property rights of others, including the Board. The group includes those authorized to use Board facilities pursuant to other Board policies (e.g. Public Health Nurses, facility renters).

#### 1.12 Persons Whose Visits Are Opposed

The Board is opposed, in addition to the persons described in a general way in the statement of this policy, to the presence of the following persons:

- those whose presence, in the judgement of the Principal and/or designate, would be detrimental to the safety or well-being of the pupils or others who have a legitimate right to be in the school;
- those demonstrating a lack of regard for the personal and property rights of others, including the Board.

#### 1.13 Contravention to Access to School Premises

Where a contravention to the Policy and Procedures with respect to Access to School Premises is brought to the attention of the school administration, the Principal shall:

- investigate the circumstances of the contravention and, if a first occurrence is minor in nature, remind the individual(s) involved of the Board Policies and school expectations. This reminder may be followed up in writing;
- implement the following course of action for repeated incidents and/or where safety is involved, on an escalating basis may be utilized:

<b>OFFENDING PARTY</b>	<b>ACTION BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR</b>
STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contact parents</li> <li>• issue suspension</li> <li>• send letter of trespass</li> <li>• involve police</li> </ul>
STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform Superintendent</li> <li>• issue possible reprimand in writing</li> </ul>
PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issue warning letter</li> <li>• issue letter of trespass</li> <li>• involve police</li> </ul>
VOLUNTEERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• revoke volunteer status</li> <li>• issue letter of trespass</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY GROUPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recommend revoking use of facilities through the use of Community Use of Schools Policy</li> </ul>
VISITORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deny access</li> <li>• issue letter of trespass</li> <li>• involve police</li> </ul>
NON-AUTHORIZED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involve police</li> </ul>

\*\*Samples of letters are located in the Safe Schools Manual

#### 1.14 Safety Practices

In order to ensure safety of all members of the school community, the Principal shall:

- ensure that all visitors to the school, including parents, report to the office. Visitors shall sign a Visitor's Book that is maintained in the office if they are there for a purpose other than dropping off, picking up students (see 1.16 below);
- ensure that procedures are in place to identify volunteers and visitors to the school (e.g. the use of name tags or badges consistent with applicable Board policies);
- ensure that where staff has access to the premises outside of regular school hours, the appropriate Entry/Exit procedure complying with the School Security System be followed and that a Sign In/Out procedure is implemented.
- address other safety issues specific to their premises that would enhance the teaching/student environment.

#### 1.15 Appointment to Visit

School communities plan and schedule activities for the general benefit of the pupils enrolled in the school, or for individual pupils. Visitors to the schools, during such times, may disrupt these activities to the detriment of the pupils involved. In all cases, therefore, visitors including parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to make an appointment in advance so that mutual convenience and minimal disruption may be assured.

#### 1.16 Report to the Office

Upon arrival at the school, during normal school hours, all visitors are required to report to the office, thus giving the Principal the opportunity to meet and welcome them. Visitors will be required to sign the Visitor's Book, stating name, reason for the visit, as well as sign in and sign out times, unless the Principal has set aside this requirement for special celebrations, during entry and dismissal times when parents/guardians/supervisors are arriving for the specific purpose of picking up/dropping off pupils in the school.

#### 1.17 Identification of All Visitors to School Site

Because of the obligation of the Board, the Principal, the teachers and other staff to safeguard the welfare of the pupils, in appropriate cases the Principal must be satisfied that the visitor is the person whom he/she purports to be.

Unless the visitor is known to the Principal, proper identification should, with sensitivity and discretion, be insisted upon. This may be accomplished, among other ways, by:

- a personal identification of the visitor by someone in the school;
- production of current driver's license or other government-issued photo identification;
- verification of information given by the visitor against information contained in school records.

#### 1.18 Refusal of Access

Where, because of demeanour or other reason, the Principal determines that the presence of the visitor would be detrimental to the safety or well-being of a particular pupil, the pupils generally and/or others who have a statutory right to be in the school, the Principal has the power under the Education Act to, and should, refuse admission to the visitor. However, the Principal is required to advise the visitor that he/she has the right to appeal that refusal directly to the Board through the Director of Education (see also Notes 1 & 2 at the end of this section 1.0).

#### 1.19 Access to Pupils

The right of a person to visit a school operated by the Board does not carry with it the inherent right to visit with or speak to a pupil in the school. Staff should consult the specific policy of the Board related to such access (see also Note 2 at the end of section 1.0).

#### 1.20 Access to Information

The right of a person to visit a school operated by the Board does not carry with it the inherent right to have access to information in the possession of the Board. Staff should consult the specific policy of the Board related to such access (see also Note 2, and O.S.R. Guideline, 2000).

#### 1.21 Children's Aid Societies

A special set of circumstances arises in those cases in which a Children's Aid Society seeks to interview or remove a pupil from school. The Board has specific policies related to such circumstances. Staff should consult the specific policies of the Board related to such matters (see also Note 3 at the end of section 1.0).

#### 1.22 Police



A special set of circumstances arises in those cases in which the Police seek to interview or remove a pupil from school. Staff should consult the specific policies of the Board related to such matters, including specifically Police/Board Protocol included in the Board's Safe School Manual (see also Note 2 at the end of section 1.0).

#### 1.23 Informing the Local School Trustees

The school Principal will inform the local school trustee prior to the visit of specially invited visitors to the school including members of the federal or provincial legislatures, municipal politicians, or representatives of the Crown or the church hierarchy, such as the Bishop or Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese.

The school Principal may inform the local school trustee prior to the visit of other invited visitors to the school building including:

- members of the clergy and religious other than the local pastor and associate pastor;
- special guests invited by the Principal or the Director of Education.

#### **Note 1:**

In any case in which there is some question, doubt, or difficulty, the Principal should seek the guidance of the appropriate Supervisory Officer.

#### **Note 2:**

Some of the Board's policies referred to in this document specifically address the topics of visitors' access to pupils, pupil information, child maltreatment, custody access, and apprehension or arrest of pupils. For details, staff may wish to consult the Board's Policy Manual and/or the Board's Safe Schools Manual.

#### **Note 3:**

The guide, *"Together We Can Help...A Child Protection Protocol"*, contains specific details and instruction regarding the reporting of suspected child maltreatment. Copies are available in each school. Additional copies can be obtained from the Social Work Services Department.

### 2.0 Proactive and Reactive Responses

- 2.1 Based on the acts and the regulations, the school administrator has a variety of responses available to him/her when responding to situations in which parents have a concern about the education of their child or about other issues related to the education system in general.
- 2.2 Figure B: Staff Guide To Parental Harassment describes the steps followed when responding to harassing behaviour on the part of a parent of a student.



## REFERENCES

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1. Access to School Premises Act, Regulation 474/00
2. Accepting Schools Act, 2011 Bill 13
3. Bill 168 – Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act Violence and Harassment in the Workplace Act, 2009
4. Black's Law Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, St. Paul: West Group, 1999.
5. Child and Family Services Act, 1990
6. Code of Student Conduct, HWCDSB, 2012
7. Criminal Code of Canada – s.53, s.212, s.265(m) section 264(1)(2)
8. Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, C.E.2 265(m), s305 and Regulation 474/00
9. Eric Roher & Simon Wormwell. An Educator's Guide to the Role of the Principal". Aurora : Aurora Professional Press, 2000.
10. Occupiers Liability Act, 1989
11. Ontario Code of Conduct – Ministry of Education – Education Amendment Act (Progressive Discipline and School Safety, 2007
12. Ontario Human Rights Code [subsection 10(1)e]
13. Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009
14. Ontario Schools Code of Conduct -2001
15. Robert Keel & Nadya Tymochenko. An educator's guide to parental harassment. Aurora : Canada Law Book, Inc., 2004.
16. Safe Schools Act, 2000 s.305(4),(5)
17. "Shared Solutions" A guide to preventing and resolving conflicts regarding programs and services for students with special education needs. Ministry of Education 2007
18. Trespass To Property Act, 1980
19. Use of School Facility Board Policy

## APPENDICES

- Appendix A
  - Parent Concern Report
  - Board Response To Parental Concern Report
  
- Appendix B
  - Staff Report of Parental Harassment Form
  - Board Response to Staff Report of Parental Harassment Form



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Schools  
*150 years of 'Believing, Achieving, Serving'*

## Appendix A

### HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## PARENT CONCERN REPORT

[To be completed by the parent(s)/guardian(s)]  
CONFIDENTIAL

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

The Parent Concern Report form is to be used when a school-based resolution has not been achieved. The parent/guardian is to provide a brief summary of the issue including when the problem occurred, names of persons involved, and other relevant details. Anticipated outcomes are to be identified.

Date of Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) Involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of Concerns:

Anticipated Outcomes:

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form may be mailed, faxed or emailed to the Director of Education:

90 Mulberry Street  
P.O. Box 2012  
Hamilton, ON L8N 3R9  
FAX: 905-525-1724  
PaquetteA@hwcdsb.ca

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**BOARD RESPONSE TO PARENTAL CONCERN REPORT**

[To be completed by the Director of Education or Designate]

CONFIDENTIAL, NON-DISCLOSURE DOCUMENT

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent of Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of how concern was handled: Details to include names of persons involved, dates, relevant details, outcomes and whether or not the issue was resolved.

Director of Education or Designate:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

cc: School Principal, Superintendent of Education and/or manager and local union/association office.

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**Staff Report of Parental Harassment**

[To be completed by any employee, i.e. Teacher, E.A. Custodian, Principal]

STAFF MEMBER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL/SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRINCIPAL/MANAGER: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_

The Staff Report of Parental Harassment form is to be used by an employee of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board who perceives that he/she is being harassed by a parent or guardian, and that despite measures to deter such actions, harassing behaviours have persisted.

The staff member is to provide a brief summary of the issue including when the problem occurred, names of persons involved and the relevant details. Anticipated outcomes are to be identified.

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of concerns:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Board Response to Staff Report of Parental Harassment**

[To be completed by the Director of Education or Designate]  
Confidential and Non-Disclosure Document

Staff member name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent of Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of how concern was handled: Details to include names of persons involved, dates, relevant details, outcomes and whether or not the issue was resolved.

Director of Education or Designate:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

cc: School Principal, Superintendent of Education and/or manager and local union/association office.