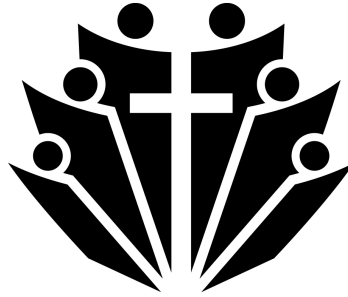


**HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**



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

**Parent Concern Protocol**

**January 2006**



## PARENT CONCERN PROTOCOL

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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 meets 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 an efficient, effective and respectful manner. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve issues brought to the attention of the Board and its professional staff.
- 1.3 The "*Parent Concern Protocol*" 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.

### 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);
  - 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 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 **Problem-Solving Procedures**

#### 3.1 Classroom Level

If the parent/guardian has a concern about an activity, program, procedure or any other aspect of what is happening in the classroom, it is suggested that he/she arrange to meet with their child's teacher. It is best to make these arrangements by telephoning or meeting face-to-face with the school secretary and scheduling an appointment with the teacher. It is also suggested that the parent/guardian inform the teacher about the nature of their concern before the meeting takes place. This will allow the teacher to investigate the concern and to have options to present to the parent/guardian which may solve the problem. It is suggested that the Plan of Action that is agreed to by the teacher and the parent/guardian be put in written form with a copy for the parent/guardian. Regardless of whether or not a written Plan of Action is agreed to, parents should always record the decisions made at each meeting they have with their child's teacher. Students do not normally attend the problem solving meeting. It is not advisable for the parent/guardian to arrive at the teacher's classroom expecting to speak with the teacher without an appointment.

#### 3.2 School Level

If the concern of the parent/guardian relates to a procedure or practice which applies to all of the students in the school, it is best that they speak with the Principal of the school or his/her designate (Vice-Principal, Principal Assistant or Principal Intern). Again, it is suggested that the parent/guardian telephone or meet face-to-face with the school secretary to schedule an appointment with the Principal. It is also helpful if the parent/guardian outlines the nature of their concern so that the Principal can investigate before the meeting. It is suggested that the Plan of Action that is agreed to by the Principal and the parent/guardian be put in written form with a copy for the parent/guardian. Again the parents should maintain their own record of the meetings they attend. It is not appropriate for the parent/guardian to arrive at the school office expecting to meet with the Principal without an appointment.

### 3.3 School Board Level

Parent/guardian concerns that relate to the policies and procedures that apply to all students within the school board need to be discussed with a Superintendent of Education of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. The most appropriate way to discuss a concern with a Superintendent of Education is to telephone the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board (905-525-2930) identify the name of the school which your child attends and ask to speak to the secretary of the Superintendent of Education who is responsible for your child's school. The Superintendent of Education's Secretary will record the nature of the concern and will discuss it with the Superintendent of Education who will either contact the parent/guardian directly or will request that another staff member of the Board who is responsible for, or knowledgeable about, the policy/procedure in question contact the parent/guardian to discuss the concern. It is suggested that the Plan of Action agreed to by the Superintendent and the parent/guardian be put in written form with a copy for the parent/guardian. Parents should also maintain their own written record of the meeting. It is not appropriate for the parent/guardian to come to the Catholic Education Centre and expect to meet with the Superintendent of Education without an appointment.

### 3.4 Ministry of Education Level

When the concern is related to educational legislation or policies of the Government of Ontario, the parent/guardian needs to contact the Ministry of Education Area Office which is located in London, Ontario. It is suggested that the parent/guardian telephone the Ministry of Education Area Office (1-800-265-4221) and identify the school your child attends, the name of your school board (Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board) and the nature of your concern. The receptionist will then put you in contact with an Education Officer of the Ministry of Education who can assist you. Parents will also want to record the advice given to them by the Ministry of Education officials.

3.5 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 meeting 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 Mediation Procedures

4.1 The outcome of an effective problem-solving discussion or meeting is a plan of action designed to solve the problem or address the issue in a timely fashion. If such a plan of action is not developed and agreed upon, the parent/guardian needs to understand the steps that should be taken to ensure that an effective plan of action is established:

- if the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the problem-solving which has occurred at the classroom level, he/she needs to schedule a meeting with the Principal of the school;
- the Principal may wish to invite members of the school board's Professional Support Staff (Consultants, Psychologist, Resource Teachers, Social Workers, Speech Language Pathologists) to attend this meeting as well to assist with the problem-solving;
- if the parent/guardian remains dissatisfied after discussing the matter with the Principal and the Professional Support Staff of the school board, they are advised to contact the Superintendent of Education responsible for their child's school;
- if the problem is not resolved after speaking or meeting with the Superintendent of Education, then the parent/guardian is encouraged to obtain a copy of the Parent Concern Reporting Form from the Superintendent of Education, complete it and forward it to the Director of Education;
- if the parent/guardian believes that the problem is still not resolved after speaking with the Director of Education, they may wish to discuss the issue with their Trustee;
- if the parent/guardian is still not satisfied after discussing the issue with the various individuals within the Board, they are advised to contact the Ministry of Education Area Office at (1-800-265-4221) to obtain assistance;
- if the parent/guardian believes the Ministry of Education has not resolved the problem, they may contact their Member of the Provincial Parliament (MPP).

## 5.0 Specialized Procedures

### 5.1 Special Education

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.

### 5.2 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).

### 5.3 Other Extraordinary Circumstances

Sometimes due to a variety of factors, a parent/guardian may become emotionally upset about the problem which their child is experiencing at school. If the parent/guardian begins to lose emotional control during a meeting with their child's teacher or Principal or if a parent/guardian arrives at the school in a very emotionally upset condition, a series of steps will be taken by the school staff to manage the situation:

- the staff will listen empathically to the parent/guardian and will attempt to understand the reasons for their emotional upset – in the majority of situations, this helps to calm the parent/guardian and a plan of action to address the problem can be implemented;
- if the parent/guardian's emotional upset continues to escalate and they begin to complain about physical symptoms (e.g. chest pains), the school staff will call 911 and request that a paramedic team come to the school to address the parent/guardian's health needs;
- if the parent/guardian's emotional upset continues to escalate and they begin to make threats towards members of the school staff, the teacher or the Principal will request that the parent/guardian discontinue this behaviour. If the parent/guardian complies, then the discussion or meeting may continue. If the parent/guardian refuses to comply, the teacher or the Principal will request that the parent/guardian leave the school. If the parent/guardian refuses to leave, the teacher or Principal will contact 911 and request that a Police Officer come to the school to escort the parent/guardian off the school property, in accordance with section 305(4) of the Education Act: -
  - ▷ the school Principal will then send a "Cease-and-Desist" letter to the parent/guardian which outlines the nature of the unacceptable behaviour and the fact that, if the parent/guardian engages in this behaviour again with school personnel, they will be excluded from being on school property on a permanent basis in accordance with section 265(1)(m) of the Education Act;
  - ▷ if the parent/guardian returns to the school property after being excluded, the school staff will contact the Police who will remove the parent/guardian from school property and charges will be laid under the Trespass to Property Act;
  - ▷ if the parent/guardian does not return to school property but continues to threaten or harass the school staff through telephone calls, facsimile transmissions, e-mail, websites or any other means, the school Principal may

consult with the Police to determine if criminal charges should be laid and/or may consult with the Board's Solicitor to determine if a civil action needs to be undertaken;

- ▷ finally, if a parent/guardian, who has been excluded from their child's school wishes to have this order rescinded they must apply to the Superintendent of Education of their child's school.

## PARENT CONCERN PROTOCOL

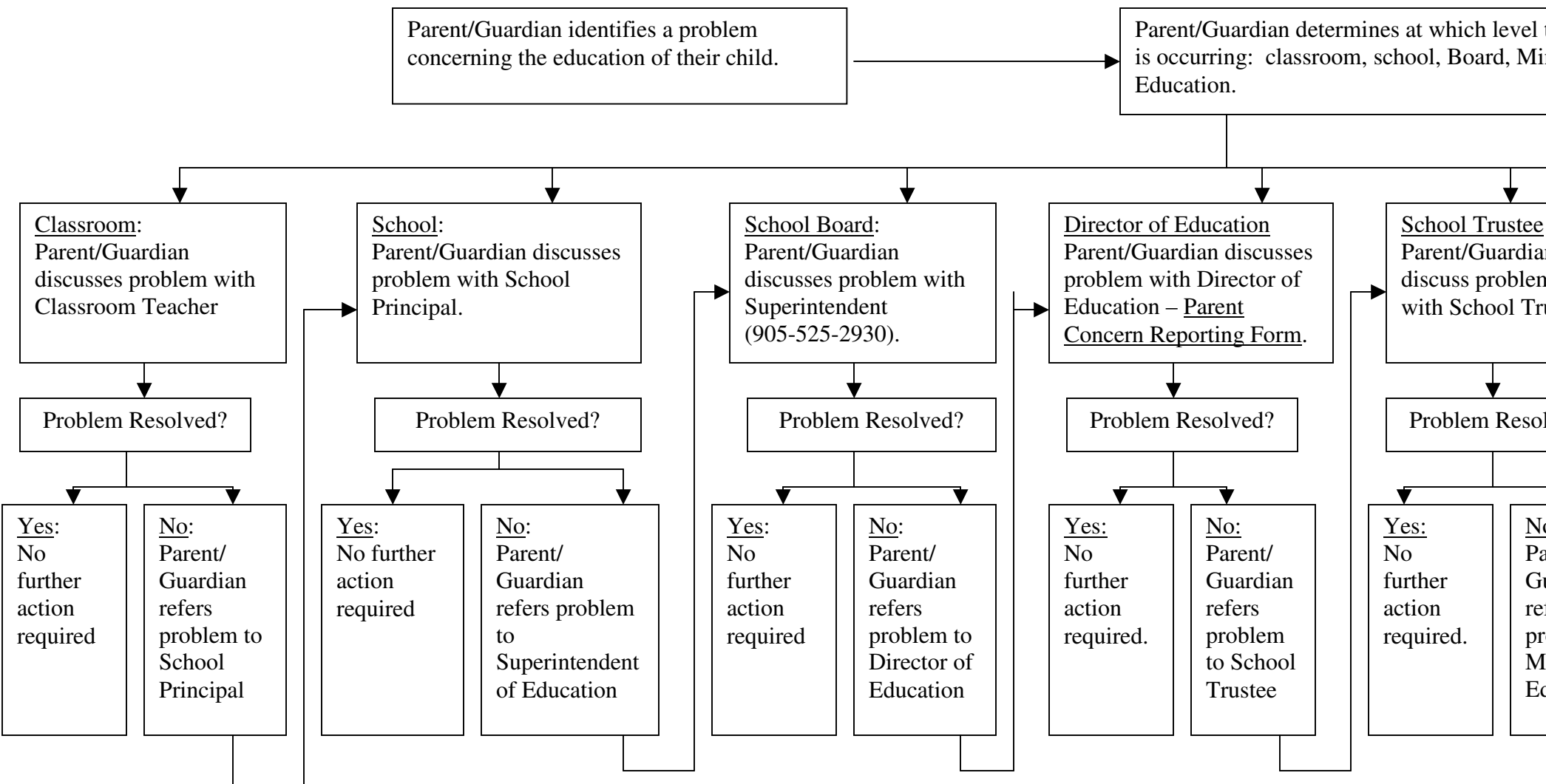


Figure 1: Flowchart of the problem solving and mediation process.