



**POLICY TITLE:**  
**Concerns & Complaints**

**Board Approval:** January 23, 2020

**Board Review:** January 31, 2023

**OBJECTIVE:**

A process of open, transparent, and collaborative communication is the goal for all members of the Summit West Independent School (SWIS) community. While most concerns should be addressed at the classroom level, the Board of Directors has adopted a procedure for concerns and complaints.

**SCOPE:**

The Concerns and Complaints policy applies to:

- All parents, students and community members expressing a concern or complaint except for those matters otherwise provided for in any other SWIS policy.
- All SWIS staff addressing concerns or complaints from a parent, student or community member.

**POLICY:**

1. Principles

The following principles apply:

- a. Concerns and complaints are best resolved as close to the source of the concern or complaint as possible.
- b. The best solutions come from parents, community members, and SWIS staff working together.

- c. Concerns and complaints are investigated and resolved expeditiously.
- d. Concerns and complaints are dealt with in a courteous, timely, and constructive manner.
- e. An individual's concern will be given respectful attention while upholding the integrity of the educational system.

## 2. General Practice

- 2.1. SWIS resolves disputes in a collaborative manner that is respectful of differences and is in the best interests of preserving an open and effective working relationship between the staff, parents, and students.
- 2.2. Collaborative dispute resolution is an open, fair, and timely approach that includes information sharing with all participants to facilitate a resolution.
- 2.3. Individuals shall raise a concern or complaint at the level and with the individual where the responsibility for the decision resides.
- 2.4. If the issue is not school-based, the concern or complaint should be raised with the appropriate individual at Level Three.
- 2.5. Concerns or complaints must be made in a respectful manner, at an appropriate time and place and should not be:
  - a. in the presence of students;
  - b. during instructional time; or
  - c. in the presence of an employee's co-workers.
- 2.6. Employee decisions that do not significantly affect the education of a student are within the final authority of the Executive Director as delegated by the Board of Directors.
- 2.7. A SWIS staff member who is contacted by a parent, student, or community member with a concern or complaint will advise the person of the Concerns & Complaints process.
- 2.8. Every effort should be made to resolve the concern or complaint at the earliest stage of the process.
- 2.9. Each step in the process is completed in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary delays.

### 3. Level One

When a parent, student, or community member has a concern or complaint, the first step is to raise the issue with the individual SWIS employee at the school.

- 3.1. The employee(s) involved with the decision shall make every effort to meet with the individual with the concern or complaint. This meeting should be:
  - a. in person;
  - b. one to one, and
  - c. focused on resolving the matter.
  
- 3.2 If, upon a request from a parent/caregiver to meet with the staff member regarding a concern, the staff member feels that the encounter could be confrontational in nature, the staff member should set the conference date and time but inform the individual that the meeting will include a third party. This third party would be there as a witness and, perhaps, a mediator as required. This individual will be a staff member and, most likely, an administrator. The meeting should only be scheduled to be run at the school at a time when other staff members are around.
  
- 3.3 If the staff member is “ambushed” by a contrary individual and the situation cannot be defused, the staff member should not persist but should excuse him/herself and insist on setting an appropriate time to continue the conversation. If the individual tries to carry on with the discussion the staff member should immediately seek out a fellow staff member to assist in calming things down, or, be a witness to the situation or, go summon further resources.
  
- 3.4 If a meeting is scheduled and held, including the third party witness, and the situation becomes confrontational and abusive (verbally and/or physically), the staff member should immediately attempt to end the proceedings. If the complainant refuses to respect the request to end the session, the staff

member should excuse him/herself and go to a safe place (ie another classroom or the office). There should be no further direct contact between the staff member and the complainant.

#### 4. Level Two

If a resolution is not reached with the individual employee, the individual may direct the concern or complaint to the Principal.

- 4.1. The Principal and appropriate staff members shall make every effort to meet with the individual to discuss the concern or complaint.
- 4.2. The Principal and staff members will work with the individual to find a resolution.

#### 5. Level Three

If the matter is not resolved at Level Two with the Principal, the individual may direct their concern or complaint, in writing, to the Executive Director in writing.

- 5.1. The written documentation shall outline:
  - a. the nature of the complaint; and
  - b. the steps taken, at the previous two levels to resolve the matter directly with the employee(s) involved.
- 5.2. The Executive Director may meet with the individual directly to ensure the issue is heard.
- 5.3. The Executive Director shall consider the concern or complaint which may include:
  - a. gathering information; and
  - b. involving other members of SWIS administration and the Board of Directors as required.
  - c. If the concern is regarding an educational program, the student's educational program shall continue in a manner established by the Principal until the review of the concern or complaint is completed.
  - d. The Executive Director shall communicate his or her decision on resolution of the concern or complaint in writing, including a rationale

for the decision, within 10 business days from the date of the meeting with the individual.

## 6. Level Four

If the matter is not resolved at Level Three with the Executive Director, the individual may ask for the Board of Directors to review the concern or complaint.

- 6.1. The request shall be in writing, to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, and include:
  - a. a description of the nature of the concern or complaint;
  - b. steps taken to resolve the matter;
  - c. a description of the decision complained; and
  - d. the reasons for the review request.
- 6.2. The Chairperson of the Board of Directors may delegate the matter to a Member of the Board of the Directors to review the concern or complaint.
- 6.3. The Board Member delegated to review the matter may meet with the individual to ensure the issue is heard.
- 6.4. Senior administrators and other SWIS employees may be involved at this time.
- 6.5. The Board Chairperson shall communicate a decision on the resolution of the concern or complaint in writing, including a rationale for the decision, within 10 business days from the date of the meeting with the individual.

## 7. Confidentiality

- 7.1. A concern or complaint must be handled in a confidential manner.
- 7.2. When required, the information about the concern or complaint and this identity of the person lodging the concern or complaint will be disclosed to:
  - a. the individual(s) named in the concern or complaint;
  - b. the individual(s) who need to be contacted for information about the concern or complaint;
  - c. the individual(s) who need to know about the concern or complaint as a part of their duties; and

d. the individual responding to the concern or complaint.