

Administrative Procedures for Addressing Constituent Concerns  
(Attachment to Policy No. 906)

**PURPOSE:**

The Board of Education (the Board) recognizes there may be times when a student, family or community member will need to address a concern or may disagree with a decision or action taken by The School District of Philadelphia (the District) personnel. To maintain strong relationships with these partners it is important that they have an opportunity to make their concerns known to the District and that their complaints be addressed in a fair, accessible, and timely manner.

The purpose of this administrative procedure is to: (1) provide a process to address concerns, problems, issues, and questions raised by constituents; (2) clarify the procedures for the communication and resolution of concerns; and (3) to facilitate systematic improvements by the periodic review of such matters.

**DEFINITIONS:**

- Constituent – students, guardians of currently enrolled students and community members will be referred to as constituents for the purpose of this procedure.
- Concern – the matter for which the constituent is seeking resolution.
- School-Level Concern – concerns brought to the school’s attention and resolved by the school administrator.
- Central-Level Concern – concerns brought the central office for resolution.
- Resolution – the response provided by the school or the central office to address the constituent’s concern, which aim for joint agreement. It is acknowledged, however, that, from time to time, concerns may not be resolved to the complete satisfaction of the constituent.
- Family Engagement Liaison (Liaison) – District staff trained and experienced in supporting schools, families and community members through their knowledge of District programs, policies and procedures. Liaisons serve as a neutral party, collaborating with District personnel to ensure a fair process that equitably and reasonably addresses concerns received by constituents.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The process of addressing concerns relies on the cooperation of constituents, school staff, and District offices. All parties involved have a responsibility to take part in the concern resolution process. The following is a description of the key individuals and their corresponding responsibilities in addressing concerns.

Constituents

All participants in the process of concern resolution have responsibilities including the constituent seeking resolution. Constituents are required to follow the District’s procedures and policies in order to receive resolution. In bringing concerns to staff or the District,

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constituents should strive to provide complete and factual information including relevant times, places, and the parties involved. Constituents should present information in a calm and respectful manner. Constituents should respect the reasonable timeline for addressing and resolving their concerns as laid out in these procedures.

**Unreasonable and Abusive Behavior** – The District and its schools are committed to seeking resolutions to concerns with sensitivity. The District will listen and address constituent concerns productively and professionally. Therefore, all parties are to conduct themselves in a civil manner and refrain from verbal abuse and/or threatening behavior.

The District may disregard correspondence that is abusive to staff or contains allegations that lack substantive evidence. District staff will end a discussion or meeting if the constituent is aggressive, abusive, or otherwise offensive. Discussion may then only continue at an appropriate time when an agreement to continue in a professional and positive manner is entered into by the constituent. Accordingly, threats or physical abuse against staff is unacceptable behavior, and will be referred to law enforcement authorities.

**Employee Misconduct** – Constituents may raise concerns and disclose information they reasonably believe demonstrates that an employee has violated District policy or procedure, ethics code or state or federal statute. Allegations of misconduct should be reported to the immediate supervisor. If the person of concern is a teacher, contact the school principal so the school's administration is aware of the issues or concerns. If the person of concern is a school principal or other employee contact the FACE office who will escalate the concern to the appropriate administrator for review and investigation. When an employee is suspected of misconduct, he or she is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Any supervisor who receives a report of misconduct will consult with the Office of Employee Relations to address employee performance and conduct issues. Any corrective or disciplinary actions taken against an employee will be in accordance with the terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreement. Privacy and confidentiality laws prohibit disclosure of investigative findings involving employee matters.

#### Teachers

Teachers will make time available as soon as reasonably possible to discuss and respond to constituents when concerns are brought to their attention. Teachers will attempt to resolve constituent concerns within their own discretion or advise the constituent on next steps for resolution.

#### Principals

Upon receiving a constituent concern, principals or designees are responsible for gathering relevant information, communicating with constituents and District staff, and attempting to resolve school level concerns. Principals are encouraged to document these efforts.

#### Assistant Superintendents and Chief Designees

Assistant superintendents and chief designees will work in collaboration with the FACE office to resolve school level concerns within their areas of responsibilities. Absent other controlling

District policy or procedure the resolution provided by the Assistant Superintendent and/or chief's designee is considered final.

#### Office of Family and Community Engagement Office (FACE)

The FACE Office is responsible for developing and maintaining the operational systems and processes necessary to implement Policy 906. The office follows Board policies and District procedures, and does not have the authority to change policy or force school personnel to take specific action.

FACE staff will assist constituents in completing the District concern process by collaborating with District staff. A Family Engagement Liaison (Liaison) will serve as the primary contact for constituents as they complete the District concern process. The Liaison does not decide who is "right" or who is "wrong." However, the Liaison will listen, review the situation, and assist with the timely and equitable resolution of concerns.

The FACE office is committed to serving schools by providing resources, direct support, and technical assistance to address common challenges and provide opportunities to exchange ideas and promising practices across the District.

## 2. CONCERN TIMELINE

Absent other controlling policy or procedure, the District will attempt to resolve or respond to constituent concerns within (15) fifteen school days. For concerns that cannot be addressed within the allotted time frame, the constituent shall be notified as to when a response is to be expected.

## 3. CONCERN MANAGEMENT PROCESS

#### School-Level Concern Process

All concerns will be handled in a timely, objective manner, and must follow established District policies and procedures. School level concerns must be resolved within (15) fifteen school days from the date the school receives the concern.

#### Central-Level Concern Process

If a concern is not resolved at the school level, either the principal or the constituent may refer the matter to the FACE office. Except in certain circumstances, and at the discretion of the FACE office, FACE will not process any concerns that have not been first addressed at the school level.

#### Reporting a Concern at the District-level:

Constituents may use one of the following methods to report a concern at the central-level:

1. Contact the school's assigned Family Engagement Liaison located online at <https://dashboards.philasd.org/extensions/philadelphia/index.html#/>
2. Call the District's Main Number – (215) 400 - 4000

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3. Walk-in to the Parent and Family Resource Center – 440 N. Broad Street between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday
4. Email – [ask@philasd.org](mailto:ask@philasd.org)
5. Complete the District’s Online Concern form located at <http://www.philasd.org/face/concerns>

Constituents who need help reporting a concern in a language other than English, may seek interpretation support by calling (215) 400–4180, option 4.

#### Steps for Central-Level Concern Resolution

##### A. Assessment of Proper Channel to Process the Concern:

1. Referral to Alternative policy, procedure or reporting process: The FACE representative will determine if there is an independent or separate policy, procedure or reporting mechanism relevant to resolution of the concern. If so, FACE will refer the constituent to that policy or procedure and assist the constituent with submitting the concern according to the relevant policy; or
2. Referral to Appeal Process: If the concern brought to FACE is more appropriately handled through the District’s procedures for appeal process. Decisions made by school and/or central office staff that may be appealed include: Disciplinary transfers; Programmatic transfers; Neighborhood school transfers; School selection; Homelessness designation; Parental exclusion letters; and/or Bullying/harassment findings. The Procedures for Appeals can be found at <https://www.philasd.org/studentrights/>; or
3. Assignment of Family Engagement Liaison (Liaison): If the concern cannot be addressed via one of the above two channels, the constituent will be assigned to a Liaison.
  - a. The Liaison will verify with the constituent that the constituent attempted resolution at the school level. Except in certain circumstances, and at the discretion of the Liaison, if the concern has not been addressed at the school level, the Liaison will refer the constituent back to the school level for resolution.
  - b. If resolution of the concern has been attempted at the school level or the Liaison determines that resolution at the school level is not warranted, the Liaison will document the concern and assist the constituent throughout the central-level resolution process as set forth below.

##### B. Documentation of Concern

1. The Liaison will document the concern and provide the constituent with a copy of the concern report.
2. The FACE office will maintain an electronic copy of all documented concerns.

### C. Notification to School or District Administrator:

If the concern was previously addressed at the school level, the Liaison will forward the concern to the principal and request information and a written response summarizing the steps taken to address and resolve the concern.

The FACE office will review the matter and either respond to the constituent with the outcome of its review or, if appropriate, coordinate with the assistant superintendent or district administrator(s) necessary to address the concern. The assistant superintendent or district administrator will work with the school and the constituent to attempt to resolve the matter. The central level investigation into the concern will be completed within ten school days, unless the constituent is otherwise notified.

The assistant superintendent or district administrator will work with FACE to formally notify the constituent in writing of the outcome of the investigation. The response to the constituent will be in accordance with applicable confidentiality laws or regulations.

## 5. OTHER CONCERN PROCESSES

This policy is intended to address concerns not addressed by another Board policy or reporting mechanism. The following are examples of reporting processes for specific types of concerns:

- **School Police Officer (SPO) Complaints**- report a complaint by submitting the SPO complaint form by visiting, <https://www.philasd.org/studentrights/school-police-officer-student-complaint/>
- **Bullying and Harassment (Policies 248 and 249)**- report acts of bullying by calling (215) 400-SAFE or submit a reporting and investigation form by visiting <https://www.philasd.org/bullying/programs-and-services/reporting-bullying-and-harassment/>
- Student Transportation – report an issue by calling (215) 400-4350.
- **Office of the Inspector General** – report a complaint regarding administrative and criminal investigations of corruption, fraud, criminal activity, mismanagement, conflicts of interest, and waste by calling (215) 400-4030 or by email to [inspectorgeneral@philasd.org](mailto:inspectorgeneral@philasd.org).

### RELATED POLICIES:

1. Pol. 218 – Student Conduct and Discipline

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2. Pol. 219 – Student Complaint Process
3. Pol. 233 – Suspension and Expulsion
4. Pol. 249 – Bullying/Cyberbullying
5. Pol. 317.1 – Educator Misconduct
6. Pol. 806 – Child Abuse
7. Pol. 824 – Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries
8. Pol. 918 – District-Wide Parent and Family Engagement Policy
9. Pol. 248 – Harassment and Discrimination of Students
10. Pol. 317 – Conduct/Disciplinary Procedures