



Public Schools: Raising Educational Concerns at the School Level

As a parent, you are entitled to have a voice in your child's education. If you have concerns about any aspect of your child's education you should raise those concerns with your child's teacher. If the nature of your concern requires more than a short conversation that is common in day-to-day communications with your child's teacher, you should consider making an appointment with the teacher to ensure that enough time will be available for your discussion.

The Informal Meeting

Most issues can be resolved between the teacher and parent but, if you wish, you may ask the school principal or vice-principal to assist you in your conversation with your child's teacher.

Here are some helpful suggestions to assist you in resolving your concern in a constructive manner.

- Write down your concerns for your own reference to assist you in the meeting. You can use this as a guide during the meeting to make sure that you cover all your concerns.
- Try to be brief (no more than one page) but include all your concerns.
- You should adopt a cooperative, problem-solving approach and try to find a friendly resolution which achieves a result that is in the best interest of the student.
- At the end of the meeting, ask that a brief summary of the result of the discussion be written. The summary should include:
 - What did the participants agree to?
 - What, if any, issues remain unresolved?
 - When will the agreed-upon decision be acted upon?
 - Are additional discussions necessary?

If your concerns are not resolved after the meeting, you may request a meeting or make a formal written complaint to the principal.

If that does not promptly resolve your concern, you may choose to take the next step, which is to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools in your school district.

Appeal to the Superintendent of Schools

The Superintendent may hear your appeal or designate a senior administrator to hear your concerns. School Districts have administrative procedures for this step or they are described as part of the Districts appeal policy. The person assigned may be an Assistant Superintendent, Director of Instruction or district Principal who supervises the school or program where the concern has arisen. If resolution of the concern is not achieved after this process, you may make a formal appeal to the Board of Education.

Appeal to the Board of Education

The *School Act* provides that decisions or failure to reach a decision about the education, health or safety of a student may be appealed to the Board of Education. It also requires that the Board establish an appeal procedure. If you wish to make an appeal you should inform the principal that you will be doing so. You should review the district policies related to *School Act* appeals on the School District website and seek assistance from school district personnel to initiate your appeal. Each Board of Education has its own appeal policy.

The Board policy will require that you initiate the appeal with a written complaint to the Board. Once the appeal is submitted it will be acknowledged promptly. The timelines are usually in the policy.

You may wish to seek the support of a friend to assist you in the course of the appeal process. BCCPAC (www.bccpac.bc.ca) is also available to provide assistance.

The *School Act* (s.11) requires that a decision must be made within 45 days of receiving your appeal.

Appeal from the Board of Education decision

If you are dissatisfied with the result of the Board decision, that decision may also be appealed to the Superintendent of Appeals of the Ministry of Education.

- This appeal takes the form of a new hearing.
- Details about how you go about appealing to the Superintendent of Appeals can be found at www2.gov.bc.ca [search appeal superintendent of appeals].

In Summary

1. Carefully write out your concern and the manner in which you would like it dealt with for your own reference.
2. Make an appointment with the teacher involved.
3. At the end of the meeting, jointly write down your agreement on resolution and timelines.
4. If resolution is not carried through, make a formal written complaint to the principal.
5. If the concern is not resolved in a reasonable time, appeal to the office of the Superintendent of Schools in your District.
6. If your concern is not resolved in a reasonable time, appeal to the Board of Education.
7. If the concern is not resolved by the appeal to the Board, you may appeal to the Ministry of Education's Superintendent of Appeals.

The BCCPAC (www.bccpac.bc.ca) has prepared an excellent guide entitled "Speaking Up" and a suggested model concern/complaint procedure that treats this topic in more detail.