

<b>Administrative Procedures Manual</b>	<b>Administrative Procedure 395</b>
	<b>Resolving School-Level Complaints</b>
	APPROVED: March, 2021
Page 1 of 4	AMENDED/REVIEWED: January 2024; September 2024
LEGAL REFERENCE:	Education Act

## Background

Section 41 of the *Education Act* requires a Board to implement a process to resolve school level complaints. This Administrative Procedure sets out the Grande Prairie School Division's (the Division) school level complaint resolution process.

The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to provide guidelines for teachers, principals, and school staff employed by the Division to address complaints by parents or independent students which are not otherwise addressed by other policies and procedures.

The guidelines set out in this Administrative Procedure should be used to ensure that complaints are addressed using a consistent and fair process and in a timely and efficient manner. [Administrative Procedure 390 Appendix A- Appeal Matrix](#) describes the types of decisions that are subject to appeal.

## Guiding Principles

The following principles of procedural fairness must inform how teachers, principals and other school staff receive and respond to complaints from parents and independent students:

- Concerns are most easily resolved with the relevant parties, between individuals at the centre of a matter. It is important that relevant parties have the opportunity to resolve complaints.
- Each step of the process must be fair. The process may be appropriately modified on a case-by-case basis to ensure that each complainant (the person making the complaint) has a full and fair opportunity to have their complaint considered.
- The complaint must be fully considered and investigated in good faith at each step of the process prior to making a decision on the complaint.
- Decisions regarding how a complaint will be addressed must be made by unbiased decision-makers. Complaints should be referred to an appropriate school staff member who can address the concerns without bias.
- A complainant has the right to make a complaint without the fear of retaliation. No teacher, principal, or school staff may take any adverse action, or threaten adverse action, against a student or parent because a complaint has been made.
- Complaints should be addressed in a timely manner.
- The respondent (the person against whom the complaint is made) shall be provided with an opportunity to respond to any complaint which is brought forward to him/her or against him or her.
- Both the complainant and the respondent shall be informed how the complaint will be addressed and/or resolved.

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- Throughout the complaint process the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP) and/or *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) will be observed as required.
- Although it is preferable to resolve a matter on an informal basis, the complainant and respondent shall be informed about all formal avenues of recourse which may be available.

## Procedure for Parents Making a Complaint

### STEP 1

A complainant may first attempt to resolve the dispute by speaking to the Division employee directly involved (example: teacher, vice-principal, principal).

- Division employees should encourage complainants to attempt to resolve complaints by speaking directly with the employee(s) who are responsible for the subject matter of the complaint.
- Where a complainant makes a complaint to a Division employee about that employee's practices, the employee must make reasonable efforts to resolve the dispute directly with the complainant.
- If the employee is unable to resolve the complaint with the complainant, the employee shall inform the complainant that they may bring the complaint to the attention of the principal.
- If an employee receives a complaint about another employee, the employee will encourage the complainant to speak directly to the other employee about the complaint or refer the complaint to the school's principal as may be appropriate in the circumstances.

### STEP 2

- Where the complainant believes their complaint has not been adequately addressed at STEP 1, or where a complaint is brought to the school principal at first instance, the school principal may ask the complainant to submit a written account of the complaint to the principal.
- Upon receipt of the written account of the complaint, the principal will assess the merits of the complaint by reviewing the complaint and making whatever inquiries the principal deems appropriate or necessary to determine if the complaint may have merit and is not frivolous or vexatious
- If, after assessing the complaint, the principal finds that the complaint does not have merit, the principal shall inform the complainant that the principal has assessed the complaint, made relevant inquiries into the allegations, and has determined that there is no need for corrective action. The complainant will also be informed that if they are

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dissatisfied with the principal's decision, they may refer the complaint to the Director of Schools responsible for the school or subject matter of the complaint under STEP 3.

- If, after assessing the complaint, the principal finds that the complaint has merit, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to resolve the dispute by whatever means the principal deems to be appropriate. This may include:
  - meeting with the complainant.
  - meeting with any respondent(s) involved in the complaint.
  - meeting with both the complainant and respondent(s) involved.
  - encouraging further, or enhanced communication between the employee(s) and the complainant.
  - directing respondent(s) to adjust their practice in a particular area; and
  - any other steps or actions within the principal's authority that the principal deems appropriate.
- If the principal is able to resolve the complaint, the principal will communicate to both the complainant and respondent(s) explaining the steps taken to resolve the complaint and any prospective expectations for the complainant and respondent(s).
- If the principal is unable to resolve the complaint, the principal shall inform the complainant that the complainant may request that the Director of Schools responsible for the school or subject matter of the complaint review the complaint and the principal's decision under STEP 3.

### STEP 3

- Where the complainant believes their complaint has not been adequately addressed at STEP 2, the complainant may bring the complaint to the attention of the Director of Schools responsible for the school or subject matter of the complaint (eg. curriculum, behaviour, personnel).
- The Director of Schools will review the complaint, the steps taken by Division employees at STEP 1 and STEP 2 and make all other inquiries the Director of Schools deems necessary or appropriate to assess the merits of the complaint.
- If, after assessing the complaint, the Director of Schools finds that the complaint does not have merit, the Director of Schools shall inform the complainant that the Director of Schools has assessed the complaint, made relevant inquiries into the allegations and has determined that there is no need for corrective action.
- If the Director of Schools finds that the complaint has merit, the Director of Schools shall make reasonable attempts to resolve the dispute by whatever means the Director of Schools deems to be appropriate. This may include:
  - Meeting with the complainant;
  - Meeting with any respondent(s) involved in the complaint;
  - meeting with both the complainant and respondent(s) involved.
  - encouraging further, or enhanced communication between the employee(s) and the complainant.
  - directing respondent(s) to adjust their practice in a particular area; and

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- any other steps or actions within the principal's authority that the principal deems appropriate.
- If Director of Schools is able to resolve the complaint, the Director of Schools will communicate to both the complainant and respondent(s) explaining the steps taken to resolve the complaint and any prospective expectations for the complainant and respondent(s).
- If the Director of Schools is unable to resolve the complaint, the Director of Schools will inform the complainant that the complainant may request a further review of the complaint and the Director of Schools' decision.
- The Director of Schools will inform the Superintendent of the request for a review of the decision. The Director of Schools will assist the Superintendent in the course of reviewing the decision.