



## ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

### Title: Public Inquiries

**Effective Date:** September 24, 2008

**Responsibility:** Director of Education

*\* Formerly: Communications: Communication Protocols for Inquiries*

**Revised Date:** August 31, 2015

### Rationale:

The Near North District School Board is committed to developing and maintaining strong relationships with parents, students and the community. Together we create safe, positive climates for learning and working. Therefore, it is the policy of the Near North District School Board to address public inquiries in a fair, respectful and effective manner.

The Near North District School Board believes that the process of addressing public inquiries is an opportunity to improve relationships with our stakeholders. It is the practice of the Board that public inquiries and questions should be dealt with at the level closest to the issue.

### **1.0 Steps in Communicating with Schools**

If a parent/guardian has an inquiry about a school matter, these are the steps that should be followed:

#### **Step 1: Talk with Your Child's Teacher**

The parent/guardian should discuss an inquiry or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time.

#### **Step 2: Talk with Your School Principal**

If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, it should be discussed with the school principal (or designate). In the case of an inquiry expressed by a community member, the first point of contact should always be the school principal. The principal (or designate) will gather facts from everyone involved to clarify the problem and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Basic to every inquiry follow up is the Board's expectation that students and employees will follow school and Board policies and procedures.

#### **Step 3: Talk with Your School Superintendent**

If the parent/guardian/community member and the school principal are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian/community member may discuss the issue with the school superintendent. The superintendent will review the matter as it relates to established policies and procedures and will respond to the parent/guardian/community member about his/her inquiry.

#### **Step 4: Talk with the Director of Education**

If the parent/guardian/community member and the school superintendent are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian/community member may discuss the issue with the Director of Education. The Director of Education will review the matter and respond to the parent/guardian/community member about the inquiry(s).

#### **Step 5: Speak with Your Local Trustee**

If the parent/guardian/community member and the Director of Education are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian/community member are encouraged to discuss the matter with their local Trustee. In the event that all other steps have been exhausted, the parent/guardian/community member may register as a delegation and make a presentation to the trustees at a regular meeting by contacting the Executive Assistant to the Director of Education. The Board will consider requests from members of the public to make presentations at Board meetings as outlined in By-Law XII.

### **2.0 Representative of the Parents/Guardians**

Parents/guardians have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff. Any costs/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

A representative supporting the parents/guardians must agree, at the outset or in advance of the meeting, to respect and maintain the confidentiality of any matter discussed at the meeting between parents/guardians and staff. Parents/guardians and/or representatives may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Principals, staff and parents/guardians will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

### **3.0 Matters That Should Not Be Discussed By Staff**

Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians and staff may be fairly broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parents'/guardians' student(s) at the school in question. However, there are certain matters that staff are unable to discuss with parents/guardians/community members, including personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other student(s) and staff.

In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the child of the parents'/guardians' child(ren) at the school in question), staff will bring closure to any meeting that becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or matters related to staff performance issues.

### **4.0 Role of Trustees**

Trustees play a very important role in education here in the Near North District School Board. As representatives of their communities and advocates for students, parents and community members, the local Trustee can greatly assist to facilitate communication between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff member at the school or Board level. In the case of community member issues, the Trustee can facilitate communication with the school Principal. Parents/guardians/community members may contact Trustees at any time.

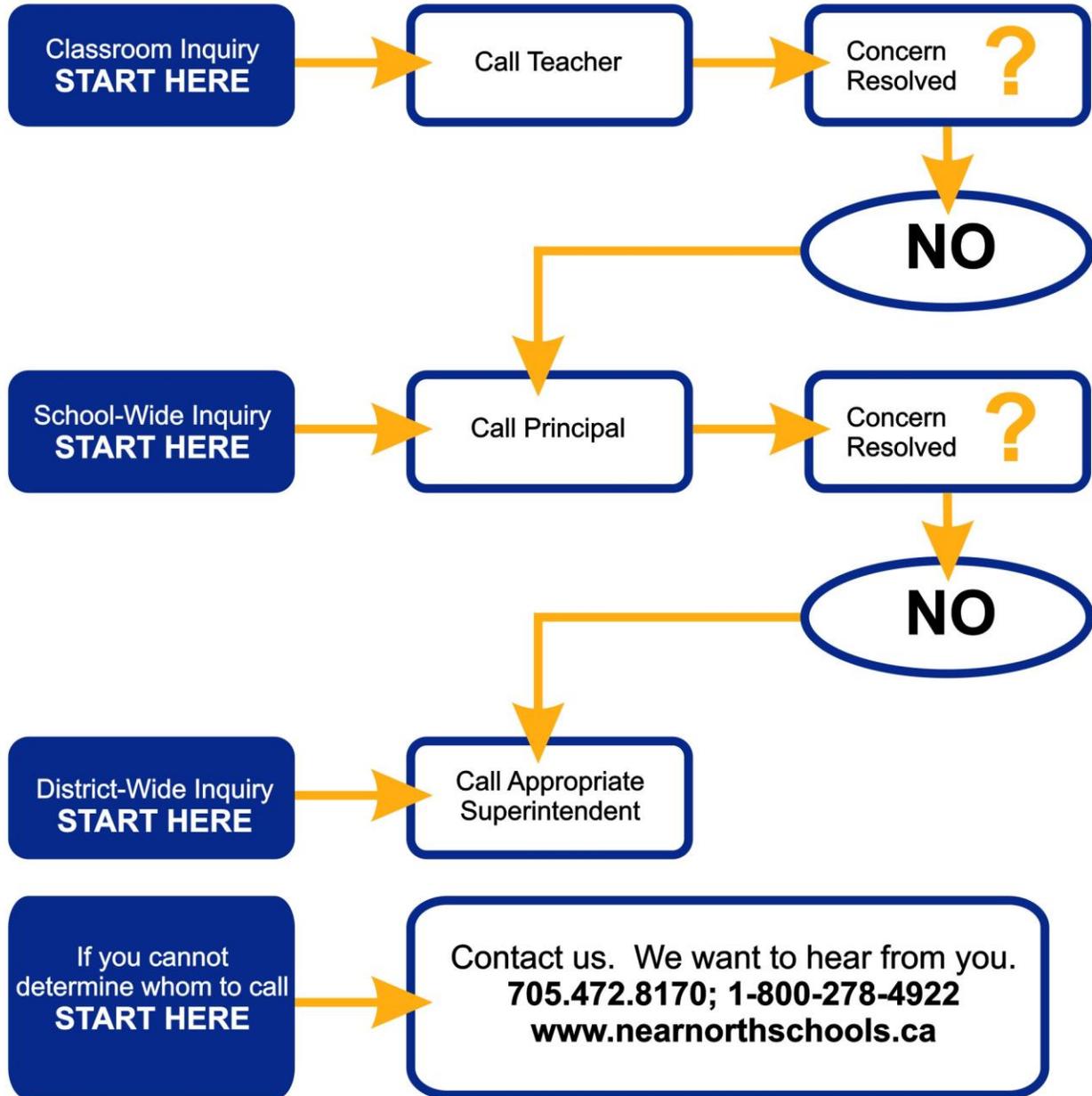
Trustees will direct the parent/guardian/community member to the process which should be followed in resolving any inquires or to the appropriate person or step in the process (dependent on the steps parents/guardians/community members have already taken to resolve the inquiry at the time the trustee is contacted) but shall not act as a representative opposing the policy of the Board.

**5.0 Role of School Advisory Councils**

School Advisory Councils are established to advise principals on matters such as school's efforts to improve student achievement and well-being. They are not a forum to discuss individual issues related to teachers, other staff members, specific students or their parent/guardian. Any of these matters brought to a school advisory council member or any school advisory council meeting should be referred immediately to the school Principal.



# HOW TO GET HELP WITH AN INQUIRY



**Your Trustee can guide you through this process.**