

## **I Have a Concern - a Parent's Guide to Being Heard at School**

Unfairness, misunderstanding, hurt feelings, and conflict are experiences common to us all. When children experience these problems at school, it causes difficulty for everyone -- the children, parents, and school staff.

How to successfully resolve issues at school is what this guide is all about.

### **1. Take your concerns to the person closest to the problem.**

No matter where the problem is, take your concern there first. Whether in the classroom, on the bus, or on the practice field, the quickest and easiest solution is usually found with the staff member most directly involved. It is best if you make time to talk with the school personnel regularly, before problems are encountered.

Know who your children's teachers, bus drivers, and coaches are and how they may be contacted. Tell them when things are going well, and communicate any concerns you have quickly, openly and professionally.

If you call for an appointment to see your child's teacher, let him or her know in advance the general nature of your concern. This gives the teacher an opportunity to ask other staff members for information that might relate to your problem or concern. If a personal visit isn't possible, simply call to state the problem, and during that conversation, offer to call back at a time when you can both discuss the situation in more detail.

The problem you or your child faces may be the result of an oversight or misunderstanding that can be easily corrected once it is brought to the attention of the staff member most directly involved. Give the staff member a chance to explain & resolve the issue first.

### **2. Present your concern to the next level.**

The principal is responsible for supervision of staff within the buildings. The athletic director supervises all school athletics. The superintendent & transportation secretary supervise bus activity. Each one is an example of the next level of school personnel you should contact if the staff member closest to the problem hasn't been able to satisfactorily resolve the difficulty. Supervisory personnel will not always have ready access to the information they need to be of immediate assistance, and working through them will often require additional time. You may also contact them via the school district web site at [www.holgate.k12.oh.us](http://www.holgate.k12.oh.us).

### **3. Talk with the superintendent of schools.**

Sometimes all the best intentions can't solve a problem. When you believe you've worked hard with those closest to the problem, and you have taken the problem to the next level but still haven't achieved a satisfactory outcome, the superintendent of schools is the next place to go. Keep in mind that the superintendent's day starts early and often ends late in the evening. Part of the superintendent's job requires attendance at area-wide meetings outside the district. As a consequence, a meeting with the superintendent will probably require some advance planning. By calling the superintendent's office and setting an appointment, you establish an opportunity to completely discuss the issue and steps previously taken. An alternative would be to explain the issue and steps you have taken through a letter or email requesting the superintendent call you or designating a time you will call her. This provides the superintendent an opportunity to research the issue completely.

### **4. Contact your school board members.**

School board members are elected to represent the interest of all parents and district residents, and you should always feel free to tell them your point of view. School board members do not, however, have direct authority in day-to-day school operations. All authority is the result of official actions by a majority of the board at meetings open to the public.

The board's primary responsibility is to make policies that guide the school district. Any change in policy requires board adoption upon recommendation of the superintendent. Some policy changes may require substantial public input and consultation with the school district's attorney. These requirements often increase the time required for the board to make a response.

So when should board members be contacted and what can they do? Contact a board member. . .

- after other means to solve a problem have been tried
- when a policy is being enforced but you believe it results in bad consequences
- when you believe a policy isn't being enforced
- when polices or procedures are not enforced fairly for all.

A board member may take one or all of the following actions:

- informally discuss the issue with the superintendent or other administrators to consider whether polices or rules should be changed
- request that the board review the specific policies that relate to the situation
- propose new policies for the board's consideration

It is the intention of all school staff and board of education members of the Holgate Local School District to listen to and resolve issues of concern as quickly and effectively as possible. Following the procedures outlined in this brochure will help to bring about what we all want for our children -- a quality education in a safe, orderly and encouraging learning environment.