

## Merit Preparatory Academy Conflict Resolution Policy

**Merit Preparatory Academy** believes that members of its school community; including parents, students, faculty, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees are entitled to positive experiences when involved with, learning from, teaching, and working with other members of the school community. We acknowledge that conflicts and concerns may arise from time to time. Furthermore, issues that are not dealt with directly can become destructive to the school community, and are therefore detrimental to the learning process of our students. This policy is hereby adopted for the purpose of facilitating the handling of such conflicts and concerns and to provide avenues for their resolution.

**Organizational Structure:** Below is the hierarchy used for addressing grievances in this policy.

<b>Classroom Experiences</b>	<b>Special Education</b>	<b>Other School Operations</b>	<b>School Counselor</b>
Classroom Teacher	Special Education Teacher	Directly involved party	School Counselor
	Special Education Director	Director of Operations	
School Director	School Director	School Director	School Director
Board of Trustees	Board of Trustees	Board of Trustees	Board of Trustees

### **STEP 1:**

The governing board maintains that school community members can generally resolve their concerns by working to find a solution through an open and respectful discussion between the parties involved. Members are encouraged to work in a timely, reasonable, and cooperative manner to resolve any conflicts and concerns with the party directly involved.

Conflicts or concerns should be addressed as soon as possible, but not more than fifteen (15) working days following the date when concerned parties knew, or should have known, of the circumstances which created the conflict or concern.

### **Parents**

A parent who has a complaint regarding a school employee should, in good faith, address his or her concern with the involved employee(s).

A parent (or student) who has a concern with another student or an issue regarding discrimination, harassment, or bullying should reach out immediately to the director or the assistant director.

### **Students**

Students are encouraged to advocate for themselves in a respectful and cooperative conversation when they have concerns involving faculty and staff members.

### **Staff & Faculty**

An employee who has a complaint regarding another employee must first address his or her concerns, in good faith, with that employee.

### **Director**

An employee who has a complaint involving the Director must first address his or her concerns in an open, honest, and respectful discussion with the Director.

### **STEP 2:**

If concerns are not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant should write their concerns and share them with those directly involved. The document should describe the incident, decision or practice that gave rise to the complaint and explain what corrective action is being requested.

### **STEP 3:**

Once complainants earnestly attempt to resolve conflicts using steps one and two, it is the school Director's responsibility to manage the ultimate resolution of conflicts among members of the school community. If the parent, student, or employee is unable to resolve complaints, he or she should contact the school Director, with their written complaint, to discuss the concern in a similar manner.

If the concern is regarding the school Director, and steps one and two have been completed, it would be appropriate, at this step, to involve the Board of Trustees, following the procedures outlined in step four.

The director or Board of Trustees should respond to any written complaints within five (5) working days after receiving the complaint.

#### **STEP 4 Board Appeal:**

The purpose of the Board is to provide the strategic vision for the school; hold the school director accountable for academic success; provide financial oversight; and create policies for the operation of the school, but the Board does not manage the school on a daily basis. Rather, the Director manages by implementing the policies adopted by the Board and aligns operational procedures with the vision the Board has created. As such, the Director is the person to help resolve conflicts within the school. However, in the event that a parent, student and/or employee complaint has not been resolved by good faith efforts in steps 1, 2, or 3 the complainant may then request a Board appeal by writing a detailed letter specifying:

- the name of the individual who is bringing the complaint forward. The board will not give credence to anonymous complaints.
- all individual(s) involved; directly or witness to the event
- details of the events that led to the complaint, including dates and times
- details of good faith efforts to resolve the problem, including dates and times,
- and the requested solution

The governing board will carefully and objectively consider the appeal. The board may, at its discretion, gather additional information from the complainant, witnesses, other employees, administration, or from professional consultants.

The board will then take any action it deems appropriate.

The board is not obligated to hear a conflict or concern, if the complainant has not, in good faith, initiated problem-solving efforts first with the individual(s) directly involved. The only exception to this, is if the concern is regarding illegal workplace harassment or discrimination, health or safety violations, or any other illegal or unethical behavior in regard to school administration. In this case, the complainant may write the Board immediately.

It should also be noted that this policy in no way intends to discourage or limit any individual's legal responsibility to report unlawful activities as mandated by law.

Parents and staff members are welcome to address any concerns with this policy, or any school policy, during the public comment segment of monthly board meetings or in writing to the board at any time. Written concerns should be addressed to [board@meritacademy.org](mailto:board@meritacademy.org) It is important to note that issues involving personnel concerns will not be addressed in an open, public meeting of the Board.