



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 reasonable resolution.

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

| Classroom Experiences | Special Education | Other School Operations | School Counselor |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Classroom Teacher | Special Education Teacher | Directly Involved | School Counselor |
| Department Chair | Special Education Coordinator | | |
| Director | Director of Students | Director of Operations | Director of Students |
| 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 respectful manner to resolve any conflicts and concerns with the party directly involved.

Conflicts or concerns should be addressed as soon as possible following the date when the concerned parties became aware of the conflict or concern.

Parents

A parent who has a complaint regarding a school employee should, to the best of their ability, 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.

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 should first communicate his/her concern with that employee in a cooperative and respectful manner to the best of their ability.

Director

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

STEP 2:

If concerns are not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant should communicate their concerns in writing via letter or email personally or with the help of a trusted third party adult. Communication in writing 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 in the correct order of the organizational structure above, 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 complaint in writing, 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:

After a conflict has been resolved, a written notice of the outcome will be provided to each party as necessary or appropriate. Direction will be given on steps to prevent recurrence of the issue, especially when involving discrimination.

Board Appeal (if needed):

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 reasonable effort in steps 1, 2, 3, or 4, 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. They 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 their best effort, 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. Then the complainant would take the case to another Administrator. If necessary, the Administrator may involve the Board. The Board will strive to work with the Administration on resolving the issue.

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. Also, it is recognized that any party involved may have physical or emotional conditions limiting their ability to communicate such conflicts. It is understandable that such situations warrant desired assistance with communicating.

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 It is important to note that issues involving personnel concerns will not be addressed in an open, public meeting of the Board.

Prevention Guidelines:

Merit Academy will review their Conflict Resolution Policy with staff, students, and parents annually. Administration will work with staff, students, and parents on components of a positive school culture throughout the year in order to prevent conflict. Such prevention may include unifying activities, trainings, assemblies, or programs. All groups will be able to give input and feedback on how preventative strategies are working. Retaliation towards any individual involved in an issue involving conflict will not be tolerated. Further action may be taken, if so.

Provisions:

- Merit Administration reserves the right to remove a complainant or alleged offender from the School's education programs or activities on an emergency basis if an immediate threat to physical health or safety is evident. Notice will be provided and the right to appeal.
- No person shall suffer recrimination or retaliation because of participation in the grievance procedure.
- Confidentiality shall be maintained until a resolution is made.
- Employees shall exhaust all grievance procedures before seeking other legal remedies.

Grievance Policy Support Contacts:

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Board Approved: 2019

Board Revision: September 20, 2022