

If a concern cannot be reasonably resolved within the 10 school days, the principal may extend the time for not more than 10 additional school days. The parent will be informed of the extension in writing.

- c. The parent will sign and return the Parent Concern Form. Signing indicates receipt of the form.

If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, or the concern directly involves the principal, the parent will be referred to the appropriate Administrative Director in the Division of Instruction. The principal will forward copies of all applicable documentation to the Central Office, including the Parent Concern Form. Parents may also submit applicable documentation.

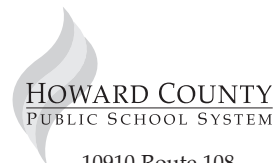
2 The second level in the formal process is a review by the appropriate Administrative Director. Upon receipt of the referral, the Administrative Director will:

- a. Contact the parent.
- b. Confer with the parent, principal, and other appropriate staff members regarding the concern.
- c. Complete the Parent Concern Form, documenting any decisions or agreements made and forward copies to the principal and parent within 10 school days of receipt of the request.

3 If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Administrative Director, the parent may request that the matter be reviewed by the Chief Academic Officer, who serves as the Superintendent's designee. A parent desiring this review must submit a written request to the Chief Academic Officer explaining the concern and clearly stating the outcome or relief desired by the parent. The Chief Academic Officer will review the documentation and provide a written response to the parent's request within 15 school days of receipt of the request.

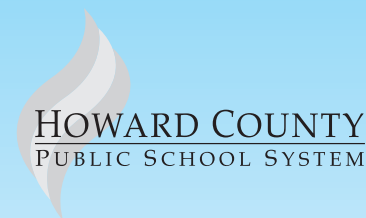
***NOTE:** Specific information can be obtained from the schools or the Public Information Office at the Department of Education regarding the formal process for addressing issues specifically governed by regulation or Board of Education policy, including requests for reasonable accommodations or modifications under the Americans with Disabilities Act, special education appeals, appeals of student suspensions/expulsions or other administrative actions, equity assurance concerns or discrimination complaints, and requests for information under the Maryland Public Information Act.

The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042 or call 410.313.6654.



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A Parents' Guide to **Resolving School Concerns and Complaints**



What to do when you have a concern...

Parents, families and community members have a vital role in ensuring school success. Therefore, the Howard County Public School System supports parental, family and community involvement in the educational process. There will be times when a parent, guardian or custodian may need to ask school system employees to address a concern. This document outlines the steps for responding to parental school-based concerns so that inquiries or problems are resolved as quickly and satisfactorily as possible.

The school system has both informal and formal processes for responding to parental inquiries, concerns and complaints. Exceptions to these procedures are noted for issues where an alternative process is specifically provided by statute or other regulation.*

When issues arise, parents are encouraged to direct their concerns to the persons most closely involved. However, when the informal process fails to provide resolution, a parent may file a formal complaint and seek review at a higher administrative level. In both processes, the intent is to protect the confidentiality and preserve the dignity of everyone involved.

The Ombudsman for the Board of Education, who serves as a neutral party in the resolution of concerns or conflicts,

is available to assist the parent, family or community member at any point in this process.

Informal Process

1 The first level in resolving concerns and issues is to address them with the school staff member who is most closely and directly involved. Through a process of cooperative agreement, the individuals can usually reach a mutually effective resolution.

If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the parent(s) should be referred to the school's administrative team (the principal or assistant principal).

2 The second level in resolving the concerns is to contact a member of the school's administrative team. The administrator will take into consideration the needs of all parties as well as all applicable HCPSS policies and procedures.

- a. The administrator will confirm that the parent has attempted to resolve the issue or concern with the classroom teacher or other school-based staff member, when appropriate.
- b. If the concern requires the involvement of other Central Office departments, the administrator will assist the parent in accessing the appropriate office and provide a synopsis of the concern to that office (i.e. transportation, special education, curriculum, food services).

Central Office personnel will respond to the parent within 10 school days and inform the principal of the response.

If the concern has not been resolved through the informal process, the parent may submit a written request for a formal meeting with the principal.

Formal Process

1 The first level in the formal process is to request a meeting with the school administrator in writing, outlining specific concerns by completing Part I of the Parent Concern Form.

- a. The principal or the principal's designee will contact the parent within three school days to arrange a mutually agreed upon meeting date and time. The principal or designee will furnish the parent with a copy of this document that explains the formal process.
- b. The principal will formally document any agreements that are made at the meeting. The principal will follow up the meeting by completing Part II of the Parent Concern Form, summarizing the outcome of the meeting, identifying areas of agreement, and laying out steps to address any issues still unresolved. This response will be sent within 10 school days from the date of the meeting.