

Procedure Title	Staff Communication Guidelines – Problem-Solving		
Date of Issue	June 7, 2000	Related Policy	BP 1604-D
Revision Dates	October 18, 2006; May 9, 2018; November 8, 2023; January 17, 2024	Related Forms	
Review Date		Originator	Administrative Council
References			
Bluewater District School Board Multi-Year Strategic Plan; BP/AP 7530-D “Progressive Discipline – Employee”			

1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 In support of the Bluewater District School Board Strategic Plan priority to “Ensure the well-being of students and staff in a safe supportive environment for teaching, learning and working” this procedure will provide all staff members with consistent guidelines for communicating issues or concerns they may have about individual situations in schools or in administrative offices.
- 1.2 All staff members share the goal of supporting each other in achieving the most positive learning and working environments in the schools and administrative offices of Bluewater District School Board.

2.0 GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 2.1 The most efficient way to run an organization is to deal with issues or problems as close as possible to the place where they occurred. Everyone in Bluewater District School Board should refer concerns or complaints to the individual(s) most directly involved in the action to begin the problem-solving process. Regardless of position, the problem-solving can take place between any individuals involved in the situation.

The whole purpose of such meetings is to participate in problem solving and/or in conflict resolution, not to intimidate or blame employees. The problem-solving communications Guidelines are preventative in nature.

- 2.2 It is important for staff members and their immediate supervisors to establish a relationship of trust, and for the staff member and supervisor to discuss expectations for the sharing of information. A trusting relationship is established when both the staff member and the immediate supervisor inform each other of their goals and actions and of workplace events and decisions.

This sharing of information is of great importance when events or decisions may result in questions or concerns from students, other staff members or the community. The staff member and immediate supervisor should share as soon as possible any compliments, concerns, or questions that either individual receives from parents, students, staff members or the broader community that have to do with their workplace and procedures. The staff member and immediate supervisor also need to share as soon as possible any issues related to the workplace that are of personal concern.

This two-way notice of issues is the key to building a strong partnership.

- 2.3 Most problems will be resolved by the individual most directly involved or by that individual and the immediate supervisor.
- 2.4 Senior administration may become involved, particularly when this involvement can provide a consistent solution to a system problem.

3.0 PROBLEM-SOLVING COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

- 3.1 It is important to establish trusting relationships among staff members, and between staff members and their immediate supervisors. This relationship is based upon effective, ongoing communication, and the implementation of appropriate problem-solving measures.
- 3.2 The staff member and/or supervisor may involve and/or consult with others at any time during the problem-solving process, including a union/federation president and/or advocate, where applicable.
- 3.3 The staff member(s) may choose to:
- i. put their concerns in writing for their use in resolving the issue.
 - ii. seek representation (supervisor/advocate/union/federation) at any time, as opposed to following the steps exactly as they are outlined below.
- 3.4 All parties involved will be informed in advance regarding who will be attending any meetings that are arranged.
- 3.5 **Recommended Problem-Solving Steps**
The following steps are provided as a guideline to use when resolving staff-related issues. Issues should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and the steps applied as appropriate:
- STEP ONE**
- i. Meet with the individual(s) directly involved, whether this is someone from the same or a different employee group, or the supervisor.
 - ii. Issue resolved. If the issue has not been resolved, please proceed to Step Two.
- STEP TWO**
- i. Request supervisor/advocate/union president/federation president problem-solving support, where applicable (e.g., unionized staff would request support from union/federation president; non-union or Association of Bluewater Administrators staff would request supervisor or advocate support). In some cases, it can be helpful for each individual to have representation.
 - ii. Issue resolved. If the issue has not been resolved, please proceed to Step Three.
- STEP THREE**
- i. If the issue has not been resolved by this step, it may be helpful to involve others in the problem-solving process (e.g., system support staff, senior staff, community agencies).
 - ii. The staff member will be kept informed about what is being done to resolve the issue, at each step of the process, and regarding the final outcome.
- 3.6 **Solution / Follow-up**
- i. It will be important to review the situation at regular intervals to evaluate whether the solution to the problem remains effective.
 - ii. It is advisable to have a written record of the implemented solution, to be shared by participants.

4.0 DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

- 4.1 Bluewater District School Board reserves the right to pursue remedial action in proceedings that are not resolved in a problem-solving process, including the right to discipline (BP/AP 7530-D "Progressive Discipline – Employee").
- 4.2 Bluewater District School Board recognizes the right of the supervisor/advocate/union/federation to represent an employee at any meeting when the conduct or competence of the employee is being considered if the issue may lead to discipline. The board also recognizes the right of the employee to request representation in any matter which leads to discipline, and the right of an employee to be advised in advance if a meeting will be considering their conduct or competence, or lead to the discipline of the member.
- 4.3 This right does not prevent the immediate supervisor from speaking one-to-one with a staff member about strengths and areas for improvement or about ways to work more effectively, as per the applicable

performance appraisal process. The need for representation begins when there is a concern that may lead to discipline. Some indicators that the issue is disciplinary are a written report of areas for improvement and the attendance of others, in addition to the immediate supervisor at the meeting.