

A Parent's Guide for Being Heard at School

Submitted by Pamela Hood, Superintendent of Champion Local Schools

It is the intention of all school staff & Board of Education members of the Champion Local School District to listen to and resolve issues of concern as quickly and effectively as possible. Following the procedures outlined in this article will help to bring about what we all want for our children – a truly effective education in a safe and encouraging environment.

Step 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 and openly.

If you call for an appointment to see your child's teacher, why not let him or her know in advance what the general nature of your concern is. This gives the teacher an opportunity to ask the staff members for information that might relate to your problem or concern. If a personal visit isn't possible, why not call once 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 be corrected once it is brought to the attention of the staff member most directly involved. Give the staff member a chance to tackle the issue first.

Step 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 transportation director supervises 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.

Step 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.

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 to the superintendent to call you or designating a time you will call him/her. This provides the superintendent an opportunity to research the issue.

Step 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. Policy is constantly being reviewed and updated.

Board members are here to listen to your concerns & relay your information to the entire Board.

So when should Board members be contacted?

- After you have gone thru all the steps and you still have questions or a concern

Board members may take one or all of the following actions:

- Contact Superintendent
- Bring info to full Board for discussion