



To the parents and patrons of DUS...

We welcome your input into the operations of Dowagiac Union Schools. The DUS school board and administration welcome your constructive complaints and requests for the improvement of our school district.

If at any time you have a complaint or request, we invite you to share it with us. Please follow the procedures outlined in this brochure so that your concerns will be handled in a timely manner and with the utmost consideration.

We promise to listen sincerely as we value your input for the improvement of our schools.

Paul Hartsig
Superintendent of Schools



Whom to call to appeal a decision made by a principal or building administrator/supervisor:

Step #1:
Dawn R. Conner
Deputy Superintendent
269.782.4408

Step #2:
Paul Hartsig
Superintendent of Schools
269.782.4402

Step #3:
Larry Schmidt, President
Dowagiac School Board
269.782.4400

10/2015

Parents & Patrons Guide for Resolution

Filing Requests or Complaints

Dowagiac Union Schools

Dowagiac Union Schools

243 S. Front Street
Dowagiac MI 49047
269.782.4400
www.dowagiacschools.org

Phone: 269.782.4400

Complaint/Request Procedure

1. Meet first with the building level staff member with whom you may have a complaint or request.
2. If your complaint or request is not resolved, fill out the complaint/request form provided by the school, give it to the principal and request a meeting.
3. If the complaint or request is not resolved within 5 days of the meeting, you may file a complaint/request form with either of the Assistant Superintendents, or their designee, and request a meeting.
4. If the complaint or request is not resolved within 5 days of the meeting with either of the Assistant Superintendents, or their designee, you may ask the Superintendent to review the complaint or request. This is done by filing the complaint/request form with the Superintendent.
5. If the complaint/request is not resolved within 5 days, you may appeal to the school board by filing the complaint/request form with the school board president or any local school board representative.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Why can't I just go first to the Superintendent or school board with my complaint or request?

- A. Effective school governance in a large and complex organization requires delegation of some decision-making authority. The individual closest to or most directly connected to the complaint/request may have more facts and be better able to resolve disputes. A sure way to increase low employee morale is to ambush employees by allowing the airing of complaints about staff in a public board meeting without following the chain of command. Another reason to follow the chain of command is the time constraints faced by the Superintendent and school board. They have the responsibility for managing and governing the entire school district.

Q. I pay taxes...so why can't I always get what I ask for?

- A. Most requests impact other people in some way. The school staff member must balance competing interests among parents, employee and taxpayers.

Q. When I appeal a decision...won't the "higher ups" just always agree with the principal?

- A. Although it is true that a principal's judgment will not be replaced by a person higher in the organization, there are specific criteria all reviewers must use when reviewing a decision (see Standards of Review of Subordinate's Decisions). If any one criterion is not met, the decision may be overruled.

Q. Won't they "take it out" on my child if I file a complaint or request?

- A. No! District policy prevents any reprisal against a child because of his parents' actions. Also, our staff is client-centered and this would be against their principles and ethics.

STANDARDS OF REVIEW OF SUBORDINATE'S DECISIONS

1. Is the decision legal?
2. Does it **comply with school board policy**, administrative regulation, collective bargaining agreements and other contracts?
3. Is it a decision **within the assigned jurisdiction** of the job responsibilities of the employee?
4. Is it **within the budgeted appropriations** for that type of expense?
5. Is there **cash available** for the expenditure?
6. Is there any **factual basis** upon which the decision is made, or is the decision **arbitrary and capricious**?
7. Does the decision *not* in any unreasonable way cause substantial and lasting **physical or emotional harm or other serious irreparable damage** to any student, parents, employee, or other person for whom the school is responsible?
8. Is the decision *not* **clearly erroneous** (i.e. can it be proven to be in error by quantitative data or objective, evidence, not by judgment or speculation)?
9. Does the decision *not* unnecessarily, unreasonably, and in a substantial way **impact negatively upon the work environment** of employees in general?
10. Does the decision *not* unnecessarily, unreasonably, and in a substantial way **hinder or prevent an employee from fulfilling his or her job responsibilities**?
11. Does the decision *not* unnecessarily, unreasonably, and in a substantial way interfere with or **diminish the learning opportunities** of students?
12. Is the decision consistent with **client-centered education**? (i.e. the needs of the school's clients prevail over all other conflicting interests—**kids first!**)
13. Is the decision *not* inconsistent with the school system's **mission and strategic plan**?