



## **Conflict Resolution Preamble:**

*Adapted from OACS Human Resource Committee Manual (2004)*

It is not unusual for employees to disagree with specific management decisions made by the principal and/or board. When disagreements develop it is the obligation of the principal (in consultation with HRC/Board) to treat the disagreement as a valid event and resolve the matter in the best interest of TBCS.

## **Definition of Terms:**

1. Disagreements can occur over many things however they are considered disagreements when they are about matters that are not identified in the employee contract.
2. Disputes can involve differences over professional judgment about contract related issues and are not addressed in board policy. In these situations, the principal is called upon to use professional judgment and management skills to determine the best solution. If there is board policy on the matter, the principal must defer to enforcement of the policy.
3. Insubordination is a direct challenge to a properly authorized decision. It is not a proper definition of disagreement and has only one process: notice to the HRC by the principal with the charge of insubordination and the consequence of discipline.
4. Employee is any and all individuals who are employed at by Thunder Bay Christian School.

## **General Concepts and Guidelines:**

- A. The key to successful resolution is proper identification of the problem and accurate direction about the processes to be followed in bringing about resolution and healing.
- B. The majority of breaks and frustrations are unnecessarily exaggerated because the process is not understood. Only a few problems are so difficult or impossible to resolve that they lead to irreconcilable conflict.
- C. Serious interpersonal problems that cannot be resolved through understanding, goodwill, inspiration, and persuasion may be resolved through special intervention available from outside the school such as mediation. Schools are encouraged to help the parties find such help.
- D. A respect for distinct and varied roles and responsibilities is central to resolving conflicts and restoring relationships.
- E. The principal's role in conflict resolution is to identify and enforce board policy and contract stipulations, to help the parties in conflict to find appropriate means to work toward a resolution, and to keep the process ethical and civil.
- F. The board and principal should help parents or others with a complaint or conflict to disentangle intertwined issues and deal with each issue in a proper manner.
- G. Sometimes differences can lead to major conflict and open hostility. When this occurs, it is to the board's benefit to call in a professional Christian mediator from outside the local community to help resolve the confrontations.



- H. If the board suspects an underground campaign (e.g., in rumours), it should encourage members and others to come forward with their concerns. This can be done in informal forums organized by the board itself.

**Types of Conflict and Resources:**

The first step in resolving a conflict is to decide what type of conflict it is. This is critical, because the initial response to a problem or conflict is often a key to its eventual resolution.

This Conflict Resolution Guideline deals with conflicts that usually involve “greyer” areas, or those which involve a formal relationship less directly. They may have no ready resolution process and no ready body to deal with them. These conflicts can be classified into four categories, each type having its own character and its own resolution process:

1. Parental disagreements with a teacher,
2. Complaints,
3. Rumours,
4. Other

**Chart 1: Types of Conflict and Their Resolution**

Type of Conflict	Responsibility	OACS Resources
<b>Conflict Resolution Manual</b>		
Parental disagreements with a teacher	Principal	Conflict Resolution Manual
Complaints	Principal	Conflict Resolution Manual
Rumours	Principal or <u>board chair</u>	Conflict Resolution Manual
Internal board conflicts	Board chair or members	Conflict Resolution Manual
<b>Other OACS Manuals</b>		
Disagreement about contract, salary	Contract Partnership Committee	1. OACS/OCSTA Salary Report 2.Contract Partnership Manual
Contract disputes (board-teacher, board-principal)	1.OACS Mediation Commission 2.OACS Arbitration Committee	1.Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.Staff Growth and Development Manual 3.OACS/OCSTA Mediation and Arbitration Manual
Principal-teacher disagreements	Human Resources Committee	1.Personnel Manual 2.Human Resources Manual



**Procedures for Resolving Conflicts:**

1. Parental Disagreements With an employee member

- a. Type of disagreement
  - i. The principal should first determine which type of disagreement is at stake here.
  - ii. Parents may have two different types of disagreement with a school:
    - 1. Disagreements about issues, and
    - 2. Disagreements involving personal behaviours and personalities.
  - iii. Sometimes this type of disagreements comes first to the Board or the School Program Committee. In this case, the letter should be referred to the principal to initiate the resolution.

2. Disagreements on issues

- a. **Substance:**
  - i. These disagreements may be about, but not limited to issues such as assessment and evaluation policies, the school program, the promotion and retention of students, the student code of conduct and the discipline policy and procedures.
  - ii. The issue is not primarily the treatment of the parent's own child, though it may begin there.
  - iii. The Matthew 18 principle is not used here because this is not a personal sin between two people, but a disagreement about ideas.
- b. **Process:**
  - i. parent communicates with the principal;
  - ii. principal may consult with the teacher(s);
  - iii. Principal may refer the matter to the School Program Committee if it falls within the committee's mandate.
  - iv. Principal makes a decision.
  - v. Once the decision has been made, the principal communicates the decision back to the person who raised the issue.

3. Disagreements involving personal behaviours or personalities

- a. **Substance:**
  - i. It is not unusual to have a parent disagree with the teacher about the education or
  - ii. Discipline of the parent's child. It is a normal role for parents to be advocates for their children and they should be encouraged to carry out this role in an appropriate manner.
  - iii. A special problem in OACS school societies is that parents often wear other organizational "hats". Hence they have an opportunity to bypass the official process by using roles other than that of parent. This must be



discouraged by all parties as it will undermine others as they exercise their properly constituted roles in the authorized process.

- iv. The Parent Advocate's Charter of Rights and Responsibilities (see #5, Appendix I of this policy) describes appropriate advocacy and gives guidelines and procedures to help parents be good and responsible advocates for their child in the Christian school.

**b. Process:**

- i. The parent meets with the teacher to discuss the matter. The teacher and parent try to come to a resolution.
- ii. Either the teacher or the parent may request the principal to be at the first meeting if they feel uncomfortable in meeting together.
- iii. The teacher and parent try to come to an agreement to resolve the situation.
- iv. If the parent and teacher cannot agree on a resolution, the teacher makes a decision, or refers the matter to the principal.
- v. The parent may appeal the teacher's decision to the principal. The principal will normally consult with the teacher and may arrange a meeting to discuss the matter with both parties.
- vi. The principal tries to help the two parties come to a resolution. If necessary, the principal makes a decision.
- vii. Both the teacher and the principal make a record of the resolution.

**4. Complaints**

**a. Substance:**

- i. Complaints are negative assessments of specific persons or events which in the opinion of the speaker require school action. They could originate in situations such as:
  - 1. Parents complaining about board policy or operations
  - 2. Members complaining about teachers, support employee, volunteers, students, policies and incidentals
  - 3. Non-member complaining about property (violation, damage) students (misbehaviour) buses (drivers)

**b. Process:**

- i. Every complaint of this type should be directed to the principal.
- ii. The principal will assess the problem and identify how it should be handled.
- iii. It is impossible to be prescriptive or definitive about the precise procedures to be used, because the range of possible problems is very wide. However, the principal may find it helpful to use the following filters in assessing the problem and the methods to use in resolving it
- iv. Is this type of issue normally handled by one of the regular committees?
- v. Educational issues (curriculum, pedagogy) should be referred to the Program Committee.
- vi. Contractual issues (working conditions) would go to the Contract Partnership Committee, or the Human Resources Committee manual.
- vii. What is the real source of the complaint?



- viii. If it is based on misinformation or misunderstanding of policies or procedures, provide the correct information.
- ix. If it is trivial, find out what the issue is under the surface and deal with that.
- x. Occasionally, you may have a mischievous complaint (i.e. there is a hidden agenda). Again, find out what the underlying issue is and deal with that ethically and forthrightly.
- xi. Is this a public relations issue that may affect the reputation of the school? Ultimately, every issue has the potential to affect the reputation of the school, but how the issue is handled has its own effect on the school's reputation.
- xii. What school policies are related to the issue? Are these policies good ones or should they be clarified or reviewed.
- xiii. Is this a new situation that requires action? If so, consult the proper people and begin to address the issue.
- xiv. In every case, the principal must introduce the person to the proper procedures for dealing with the complaint and help work towards a just treatment of the issue.
- xv. The principal must always communicate with the appropriate parties, including the complainant, and advise them of the resolution when this has been achieved.

5. Rumours

a. **Substance:**

- i. A rumour is “an unconfirmed story or report in circulation.” Rumours may become persistent negative talk about the school, the society, or its reputation which have not been officially reported to the board or principal. Most rumours are based to a greater or lesser degree on misinformation. Such rumours are easy to remedy (unless they involve confidential information about a person). They must be taken seriously by the leadership because they will affect the reputation of the school. Spreading rumours is gossip. Gossip is “idle talk, especially about the affairs of others.” It is often of a personal, sensational, or intimate nature. A gossip is “a person who talks idly or lets out secrets.” A gossip may think that the talk is merely trivial, chatty, or witty, but it is still idle talk that damages others. At its worst, gossip is the intentional communication of erroneous or malicious information or damaging insinuations about specific persons or institutions. Scripture has clear injunctions against idle talk, gossip, and defamation and requires all Christians to guard their tongues (e.g. Leviticus 19:16; James 3:1. Everyone has a duty to counteract gossip without fanning the flames.

b. **Process**

- i. Wisdom. The most difficult part of dealing with rumours is to determine specifically what the concern is. It is in everyone's best interest that the concern be addressed promptly and ethically. However, it is equally important that the board does not act on hearsay or gossip and thereby create or validate the gossip.



- ii. One who hears a rumour should report it to a proper receiving authority such as the principal, a board member, or the chairperson of a standing committee. The hearer may want to verify the accusation and information with “the source.” However, the hearer should not become an investigator or a meddler, and the hearer still has a duty to report the rumour.
- iii. The receiving authority should record the complaint with appropriate detail and refer the issue or item, whatever it is, to the person responsible for this area, whether the principal, board chair, committee chair, or another person.
- iv. The authorized person should:
  - 1. determine the reliability of the complaint,
  - 2. determine if immediate action is required,
  - 3. determine if the matter is important,
  - 4. report the matter to the proper authority for disposition,
  - 5. take steps to counteract the possible damage created by general discussion of the complaint.
- v. Committee members who hear a complaint.
- vi. Persons serving on a committee are not to encourage or discuss complaints coming to their attention. Their response should be to refer the complainant to the proper receiving authority.
- vii. Board members who receive a complaint should set an example in referring the complaint to the proper committee, the principal, or the board agenda.
- viii. If a board member wants to refer the matter directly to the board then the complaint should be put in writing and the board chair should authorize it for the appropriate agenda.
- ix. If significant concerns seem to exist in the membership or larger community, the board, after verifying that the concern exists, may request a review of the policy involved, issue a public statement about it without aggravating the concern, call a meeting of those with the concern.

**6. Other:**

- a. Resolved according to OACS manuals.



**Appendix 1**

**1. Biblical and Professional Guidelines**

a. Biblical Guidelines

- i. Each individual is created in God's image, as an important servant of the King and a steward in his kingdom. The Christian school is an institution that is under the rule of Christ and its reputation reflects on the reputation of Christ and his kingdom. Consequently, it is everyone's responsibility to observe and adhere to the ethical rules designed to honour the reputation of God's servants and institutions.

b. Respect each other out of reverence for Christ

- i. The Bible contains many direct rules and indirect stories from which we can learn how we ought to live together and treat one another. The following passages call us to live in harmony as the renewed people of God in all of life's relationships, and to show respect to each other according to the relationships God has put us in.
- ii. Ephesians 4
  1. 1...I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.
  2. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work
  3. 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
  4. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. 26 In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.
  5. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

c. Respect the authority relationships

- i. Thessalonians 5
  1. 12Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.
- ii. Romans 13
  1. 1Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
  2. 7Give everyone what you owe him: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.



- iii. Ephesians 6
  - 1. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

d. Use Biblical procedures in dealing with differences

- i. These passages call us to live as renewed people who know we serve the Lord in our daily work and respect each other according to the relationships God has put us in.
- ii. They also remind us that we do have differences and get angry with each other. The presence of differences and anger is not necessarily a sin: “In your anger do not sin.” However, Scripture calls us to deal with our differences and anger in ways that do not grieve the Holy Spirit or dishonour the name of Christ. The procedures in this manual are meant to help us in doing that.
- iii. A good place to begin when Christians have differences and conflicts is to call to mind the procedures Jesus laid out in Matthew 18:15-17.
- iv. The board of TBCS also endorses the direction set out by the OACS HRC Manual regarding Matthew 18: 15-17 (NEB)
- v. If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV).
- vi. This passage is directed at personal conflicts between adults where one person has sinned against another, e.g., a personal insult. When such problems arise in a school, the adults involved should try to settle the matter themselves using the principles and procedures Jesus gives in this text. However, if they were not able to solve the problem on their own, the offended parties should seek redress in the school organization.
- vii. However, many of the problems and conflicts that arise in a school do not fit the situation that Jesus envisioned in giving these procedures. The conflict may be between a parent and a teacher over the treatment of a child. It may be between a child and an adult. It may not involve personal matters, but official board policies, or professional duties, or the school as an institution. These matters are not personal sins against the person complaining or do not involve two adults. Therefore, these matters should be dealt with ethically and legally in ways that are suited to the school organization, using the procedures recommended in the grievance policy.



**Appendix 2**

1. The Parent as Advocate

a. Principles

- i. Christian schools are based on the premise that the relationship between home and school must be a close one based on mutual trust. Christian parents have a high view of their calling as parents and are therefore involved in all aspects of their child's education and schooling. This is good and necessary.
- ii. A child's best advocate is an informed parent. There is no one who can do a better job standing up for a child in need of special care than a concerned parent. This is also the duty God has given to the parent.
- iii. Schools should help parents be good and responsible advocates for their children.

b. What is an advocate?

- i. The parent is called to be an advocate for his or her children in the meaning that an advocate is "a person who presents a case for, or speaks on behalf of, another."
- ii. A child's best advocate is an informed and assertive parent.
- iii. The parent is informed about:
  1. the authority relationships in the school;
  2. the policies and procedures that apply;
  3. the facts of the case that are the matter of concern.
- iv. A parent is neither passive, nor aggressive, but assertive.
  1. An assertive advocate explains the desired outcome and actively employs the right skills to get to the desired result.

2. Cautions

- a. There can be tension when there is a concern that a parent has about the treatment of their child. The school should recognize this and help the parents to be good and responsible advocates in appropriate ways.
- b. A parent must act in the role of a parent, not in any other role he or she may hold in the school or society. A parent who is a board or committee member may not use these roles to be an advocate for his or her own child.
- c. Board and committee positions are trust responsibilities undertaken on behalf of the entire school society. The reputation of the school and of Christian education should not be held hostage to a personal preference.
- d. All involved in Christian school societies should separate their personal preferences as parents from the best interest of the school as a whole.
- e. Therefore, parents should not abuse a position on the board or a committee to push their own personal views of education for the benefit of their own children.

3. Rights and responsibilities of the parent as an advocate

- a. Rights. The school recognizes that a parent has the following rights as an advocate for a child.
- b. Parents have the right and the duty to be advocates for their child. This is their responsibility from God to their child.
- c. The school recognizes parents' right and duty to be an advocate for their child



- d. The school will deal with any concerns parents have about the treatment of their child.
  - i. Responsibilities. The school will advise parents that they have the following responsibilities as an advocate for their child.
  - ii. They must act only as a parent would. They must not use their position as a board or committee member, or any other official position they may have in the school or society, to advocate for their child.
  - iii. They should become informed about any matters that relate to their concerns about their child.
  - iv. They must respect the teacher and principal and their expertise and authority.
  - v. They must use only appropriate means to further the interests of their child.
  - vi. They must be polite and courteous at all times.
  - vii. They may use effective means to be a good advocate, including the following:
    - 1. Know their child's rights and responsibilities.
    - 2. Know who the decision-makers are.
    - 3. Ask questions until they get an answer.
    - 4. Keep a complete record of all communications about their child, knowing who said what, when, and why.
    - 5. Ensure that they know the school's plan for their child, including the goals, objective, and activities.
    - 6. Be persistent in advocating for their child.