

Working Together to Resolve Differences

Parents Working with Schools and School Systems

First Steps

Alberta schools are required to make every reasonable effort at the school and district level to resolve concerns collaboratively with you as parents. Despite these efforts, when you do not agree with a decision related to your child's educational programming at school, your first step is to **talk to the Teacher** to try to resolve the concern together. If that fails, your next step is to **talk to the school's Principal or Assistant Principal**. Together with the teacher and school administration, you should be able to resolve most issues that affect your child at school.

Next Steps

The teacher and school administration may not be able to resolve the concern with you, and they may **refer** you to the **Associate Superintendent at the central office of the school system**. If, after this step, you still do not agree with the staff member's decision, you should **write or telephone the Superintendent** and explain your concern. If the concern is not resolved by the Superintendent, you may apply in writing to the school board chairman to initiate a **Board-level appeal**.

All school boards are required to have a board-level appeal procedure. You may use the board-level appeal procedure when you disagree with any decision that significantly affects the education of your child. Your school board office can provide you with a copy of its appeal procedures for you to follow.

The process of a board-level appeal must be open, fair and timely. Procedural fairness includes the right to be heard and the right to an unbiased decision. The appeal process must be open; that is, all relevant information must be shared with you and others involved in the appeal. The appeal process must also be timely in completing each step so that you and the school board personnel have time to prepare, but the process is not delayed unnecessarily.

Another Step

Some of Alberta's school systems make provision for **mediation of disputes**. Mediation can occur at any point during the appeal process, and requires that both the school system and the parents agree to a third party working with them to resolve the dispute. Both parties to the dispute must agree to the mediator, and either party may end the mediation process at any time. The mediator will try to bring the parties together on a consensus, or agreement, about how the problem will be solved. Both parties will sign the agreement.

The Final Step

If you don't agree with the board's decision after the board hearing, you may request in writing that the Minister of Education conduct a **Review by the Minister for specific decisions**. Under the *School Act* of the Province of Alberta, the Minister may review a board decision on a matter that board and parents have not been able to solve with respect to placement in a special education program, Francophone Charter 23 issues, an expulsion decision, home education matters, the amount and payment of fees, and accuracy or completeness of a student record.