



1301 CONFLICTS, DISPUTES & APPEALS PROCESS

Policy Type: Board Policy Manual
Applies To: Board Directors, All Staff, Students, Visitors, Parents
Approved By: LCS Board
Policy Reviewed: every 2 years
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1. PURPOSE:

- (a) This document outlines Langley Christian School's values, beliefs and procedures for dealing with conflicts, concerns, disputes and appeals. At LCS, it is not the absence of conflict that defines our community, but rather the way in which we deal with conflict.
- (b) This policy recognizes that dealing with conflict, disputes and appeals is a necessary process for any organization or workplace culture to maintain its health. Transparent procedures and processes are required to proactively address issues when they arise and to ensure effective and respectful relational governance of the organization.
- (c) This policy is designed to put protocols in place so that issues can be resolved in a manner modeled on Christian principles. This policy constitutes a foundational policy which underlies all the subsequent policies drafted to deal with workplace, parent/caregiver, student and school relationship conflicts, disputes over operational issues, student discipline, concerns about educational delivery, and appeals processes at the administration or Board level.

2. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY:

- (a) Processes and procedures for conflict, disputes and appeals involving employees of Langley Christian School are outlined in section 3300 Employee Disputes and Appeals of the Human Resource Policy Manual.
- (b) Duty to Report: All statutory or professional requirements of employee's duty to report or notify a supervisor of potential safety issues or potential harm to students or other minors supersedes this policy. All professional requirements requiring a certified teacher's duty to report professional misconduct also supersede the steps outlined in this policy and its sub-policies.
- (c) Person(s) involved in a conflict or dispute are expected to keep the issues/concerns confidential and contained within the circle of parties directly involved and to refrain from escalating the issues by drawing in person(s) not directly involved, or by engaging in gossip, slander or triangulating others.
- (d) The following groups or individuals are covered in this policy:

- o Full members of the LCS Society, and non-member parents, guardians and caregivers of students
- o Current students enrolled in the school
- o Employees of LCS including administration and Head of Schools
- o Members of the community external to LCS where the Board deems it in the interests of the Society

3. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES FOR CONFLICT, CONCERNS & DISPUTES

- (a) As a Christian community, we make every effort to live in peace and harmony with one another. The Bible is rich in lessons about forgiveness, love, humility and putting others first. (Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14, Colossians 3:12-15).
- (b) Reconciliation and restoration of relationship is a desirable goal of all conflicts and disputes (Ephesians 2:11-19). The best outcome in any conflict or dispute is a healthy workplace and school environment where issues are dealt with fairly, and trust and integrity prevail.
- (c) The starting point for dealing proactively with any conflict is transparency and candidly disclosing to the offending party any implicit or explicit communication and actions, whether intentional or unintentional. (Matthew 18: 15-16).
- (d) Some conflicts and disputes may not be resolvable, but a Biblical principle exists to not have vengeful hearts but to live in peace with one another so far as possible (Romans 12: 17-19), to speak truthfully and not allow the sun to go down on anger (Ephesians 4:25-26).
- (e) Christ instructs His followers to quickly and efficiently resolve their differences to avoid lengthy arguments and disputes, but to act swiftly and make amends (Matthew 5:25).
- (f) The Bible does not provide a simple formula for dealing with conflict and disputes but records a variety of helpful principles (James 3:17-18):
 - o bearing with one another
 - o peace-loving; considerate; thinking higher of others than oneself
 - o risk taking; stepping out in faith; courage
 - o listening more; speaking less
 - o openness, transparency and honesty
 - o taking responsibility; accountability; repenting from mistakes and harming others
 - o encouraging a mutual willingness to reconcile or resolve the issue

4. RELATIONAL OR OPERATIONAL/PROCEDURAL

- (a) For the purpose of this policy and its sub-policies, conflict and disputes are distinguished by whether the issue is primarily relational or operational/procedural.

- (b) The process for resolving a conflict or dispute is different depending on the nature of the issue. Protocols are established in sub-policies. Conflicts may become disputes, so in some cases multiple processes may be required.
- (c) Discerning where an issue concerns a concern relating to core values, governance principles and philosophical or theological disagreements may require some discernment in deciding which protocols apply.

5. CONFLICTS & DISPUTES COVERED IN THIS POLICY

- (a) between staff members
- (b) between staff and administration (excluding Head of Schools)
- (c) between staff and or administration and the Head of Schools
- (d) between staff/administration/Head of Schools and Society members/parents/external parties
- (e) between students
- (f) between Board and staff/administration or Head of Schools
- (g) between Board Directors

6. DOCUMENTATION

- (a) Parties involved in conflict and/or disputes are advised to keep accurate documentation, keeping in mind the questions: who, where, what, why, and how (it happened). If the issue is ongoing, keeping a journal account is recommended.
- (b) Documentation improves accuracy and may become critically important in resolving the issue. Any documentation with names attached is considered confidential and protected under the Personal Information Protection Act (2003).
- (c) Principals/supervisors will keep documentation of all concerns, conflicts and disputes, but may not place any documentation in a student record or employee file without following proper procedure and policies.

7. RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH CONFLICTS & DISPUTES

STAGE ONE

Communicate directly with the party involved in the conflict or dispute. Prepare in advance to ensure clarity and accuracy. Wait 24 hours if emotions are intense and there is no immediate urgency to resolve the issue.

STAGE TWO

Request informal assistance from another person(s) who can listen, help clarify and facilitate the conversation. As far as possible, or when appropriate, stages one and two should be followed before more formal intervention is pursued.

- Peer/colleague facilitators are appropriate at this stage.
- Principals will be notified if the conflict is between staff.

STAGE THREE	Involve relevant school representatives at the organizational level best situated to immediately resolve the issue. Bring information, solutions and a posture of win-win. Assume all parties are working toward best interests of students at LCS. • Interveners may enter at stage three and may include: administration, supervisor/manager, school-based-team and/or school counsellor. • Intervention should be initiated as soon as possible to prevent a toxic culture from emerging and to ensure a healthy workplace and school environment. • Principals are responsible to ensure that any conflict and disputes between staff and/or staff and administration and/or staff and non-staff are addressed promptly and professionally, and not permitted to simmer or escalate due to inaction.
STAGE FOUR	Mediate the conflict with a neutral, third-party mediator.
STAGE FIVE	Initiate a formal appeal and arbitration at the Head of Schools and Board level. • Decisions made at the Board level are final and may not be appealed.

8. BASIC TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- Advanced training and professional development in restorative practices, conflict resolution, mediation and effective communication is recognized as valuable and necessary for Board Directors, administration, and Employee Relations Committee representatives.
- The Head of Schools will ensure that a core group of peer facilitators are trained and ready to assist staff in dealing with workplace conflict and disputes.
- The Head of Schools will maintain a list of external, third-party mediators (male and female) who may assist in conflicts and disputes.
- Training in restorative practices, conflict resolution, mediation and effective communication skills will be embedded in the K-12 Bible curriculum so that students can be equipped effectively with valuable life skills.

9. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

(a) Arbitration (Internal)

In this policy the term arbitration is also used to refer to an internal third party intervention to bring a conflict or dispute to a conclusion by mutual agreement of the disputants to accept the decision of the arbitrator. Internal refers to parties within the LCS organizational structure who have the authority to arbitrate a decision—usually the Head of Schools or the Board. While the arbitrator should be trusted by the parties and be as neutral and impartial to the conflict or dispute as possible, it needs to be understood that an internal arbitrator, in the end, has the interest of LCS as a priority and therefore

cannot be entirely impartial. Neutrality and impartiality can only be assured by an external mediator/arbitrator who has no interest in the outcome other than resolving the dispute to the best satisfaction of the disputing parties.

(b) Conflict

For the purpose of this policy, the use of the term conflict is oriented to interpersonal, relational conflict. Conflict is normal and occurs as people who hold to differing interests/goals, values and world views (including faith perspectives), communication styles and personalities, come into tension as they work and interact with each other. Dealing constructively with conflicts, when they arise, can become opportunities for growth, change and revitalization. When conflict is dealt with creatively and with love and grace, people have been heard and respected, issues have been processed and better solutions have been found. This results in growth in people—and in the organization.

However, when issues remain submerged under the surface, when contrasting behaviours and attitudes become incompatible, when communication breaks down and when conflicts and disputes become difficult to manage, conflict can begin to do harm. Unresolved conflicts and disputes introduce tensions that undermine the health of the school and can lead to organizational and school stress that consumes energy, goodwill and morale. It also erodes the ability of school personnel and students to work productively and cooperatively. Trust erodes as conflict deepens. Unresolved conflicts tend to escalate and broaden over time until harm is done. In the long term, serious conflicts become toxic to the school and become endemic. Unresolved conflicts can potentially evolve into grievances (disputes) when distrust interferes with conflicting parties' handling of routine operational matters. When conflict results in broken relationship(s), special efforts are required to restore trust, the relationship(s) and a healthy working and school environment.

(c) Conflict management

The goal of conflict management is to restore a functional working or student environment by restoring trust between the parties at the professional level in spite of unresolved issues that generated the conflict. This is the minimal level of dealing with conflict that should be expected. Conflict management will be less likely to be needed when values of mutual respect, transparency, honesty and integrity and good operational procedures are maintained. Managing conflict requires considerable discipline when relational stress has not been resolved. It is also recognized that not all workplace conflicts will be resolved even with our best efforts.

(d) Conflict resolution

Most conflicts can be resolved. When caught early, most are resolved without third-party assistance. Protracted conflicts may require the assistance of mediation to resolve. The goal is to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions to issues that generated the tension or conflict and to bring the parties back into a healthy working relationship. Conflict resolution does not have the goal of healing relationships (though that may happen), but rather of restoring a productive and cooperative working environment through creative processes that result in growth and a return to productivity.

(e) Conflict transformation

Healing relationships affected by conflict is the desired goal, but requires considerable effort. The aim is to reconcile and transform conflicting relationships through a process that leads to exploring underlying conflicting issues and interests, achieving mutual acceptance in spite of differences, repentance/acknowledgement and forgiveness that restores personal relationships in the spirit of love

and grace. Conflict transformation processes recognize that the conflict is an opportunity for personal and institutional growth. Though not always achievable in a workplace or student body, conflict transformation is the ultimate goal in achieving outcomes based on Biblical values.

(f) Dispute

For the purpose of this policy, disputes are differentiated from conflicts in that they focus on differences of opinion and interpretation over school values and positions, and operational procedures, practices and decisions that bring parties into fundamental disagreement. A dispute or complaint may be elevated to a formal expression of an unsatisfactory condition in the form of a formal complaint for the purpose of appeal regarding a lack of action or a decision that has been taken, on the grounds that the inaction or decision either contradicted core values, policies and/or operational procedures or practices or was in some way unfair to the aggrieved individual. In this policy, the dispute resolution process in some ways mirrors that of a grievance resolution process. The term "dispute" is preferred over "grievance".

(g) Mediation

Mediation brings a mutually agreed upon third party into a conflict or dispute when the parties are no longer able to find the resources internally to deal with their differences. Ideally, the third party should have no vested interest in a specific outcome of the mediation. The mediator's role is to create a "safe place" for parties to express themselves, help parties hear each other, build trust and respect, and facilitate the parties to achieve mutually satisfactory solutions to which they can hold each other accountable. The mediator meets with the parties separately before bringing them together. The parties in a conflict should mutually agree to the mediation and the selection of the mediator. In situations where one of the parties in a conflict is unwilling or uncooperative, mediation may be imposed in an effort to stop further harm from being done and to resolve an impasse.

(h) Colleague facilitation

Peer facilitators are staff or student colleagues who have basic training in conflict resolution and mediation skills and who can be called upon by mutual consent to assist in dealing with early stage conflicts. They work at the same goals as professional mediators but are not accredited or as experienced to work on complex conflicts. In the workplace peer facilitators are trusted colleagues with natural listening, mediation and facilitation skills selected by their colleagues to receive basic training. Peer facilitators in the student body are students with natural abilities who are selected by teachers to receive basic training and mentoring in conflict resolution skills that are age appropriate. Student peer facilitators can be called upon by students or teachers to assist students resolve disputes and conflicts, including incidents of school bullying.

10. EXTERNAL MEDIATION

- (a) The Board may, at its discretion, engage an independent, qualified external mediator when internal resolution processes outlined in Section 7 of this policy have been exhausted and when such mediation would serve the interests of fairness, restoration, and the school community.
- (b) The decision to engage an external mediator, the selection of the mediator, and the terms and scope of the mediation are at the discretion of the Board. The Board will select a mediator who is qualified through training and experience, who is independent of LCS, the complainant, and any directly involved

staff or Board members, who has no conflict of interest in the matter, and who is willing to conduct the mediation in a manner consistent with the Christian values and mission of LCS.

- (c) External mediation under this section is consultative in nature and non-binding. An external mediator is not an arbitrator and does not have the authority to make a binding decision unless otherwise determined by the Board. The mediator may facilitate discussion, clarify issues, and offer recommendations. The Board is not bound by any recommendations made by the mediator.
- (d) A request for external mediation must be submitted in writing to the Board Chair. The request must demonstrate that all internal stages of dispute resolution outlined in Section 7 have been followed. The Board will normally respond in writing within 15 business days to acknowledge receipt and to communicate its decision regarding whether external mediation will be engaged.
- (e) External mediation under this section cannot be used to investigate matters related directly or primarily to the employment, dismissal, discipline, or performance management of a person employed by LCS. Employee disputes are governed by Section 3300 of the Human Resource Policy Manual.
- (f) All parties participating in external mediation are expected to maintain confidentiality regarding the proceedings, consistent with the principles outlined in Section 2(c) of this policy.
- (g) Costs associated with external mediation will be borne by the school, unless the Board determines an alternative cost-sharing arrangement is appropriate.
- (h) Decisions made by the Board following external mediation are final and may not be further appealed within the LCS governance structure.

10.h.1. This section replaces the former FISA Ombudsperson Policy & Procedures, which referenced a centralized ombudsperson maintained by the Federation of Independent School Associations. FISA no longer maintains this role. This section establishes LCS's own Board-governed external mediation framework.

Reviewed: 06 2026

APPENDIX: OVERVIEW OF LCS POLICIES RELATED TO CONFLICT, CONCERNS, DISPUTES & APPEALS

