

Lower Merion School District

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

Policy No.:	006
Section:	LOCAL BOARD PROCEDURES
Title:	CIVILITY
Date Adopted:	7/21/03
Date Last Reviewed:	12/3/21; 12/04/2020

R006 CIVILITY

Purpose

This regulation implements Board Policy No. 006 “Civility” by:

- identifying and defining “incivility” in the context of Policy No. 006
- suggesting strategies for dealing with incivility when it arises in the school setting
- establishing a complaint procedure to address complaints of individuals who believe they have been treated in an unprofessional and disrespectful manner

Definition and Examples of Incivility

“Incivility”, when used in this regulation, means the following:

- rude, abusive or intolerant behavior in any type of school setting when such behavior may tend to erode education or diminish an atmosphere of professionalism or mutual respect
- use of offensive or obscene language in person, voice-mail, written correspondence, e-mail or any other form of communication
- threatening or belligerent conduct that in any way interferes or threatens to interfere with the orderly operations of the District or places another person in fear of imminent physical harm
- intentionally disrupting or impeding the orderly conduct of a public school board meeting. This does not include statements made by a formally recognized speaker during the audience recognition portion of the meeting where such statements are within the time limits set by the Board for all speakers and where the comments relate to matters of concern, official action or deliberation which are or may be before the board.

Strategies for Addressing Incivility when it Occurs

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1. If a participant in a school meeting becomes verbally abusive, immediately ask the participant to stop and let them know that if they do not stop that the meeting will be terminated. If necessary, request a five-minute break to allow everyone to regroup. If problems recur after the meeting is reconvened, the meeting may be terminated. Document the basis for the meeting termination.
2. If District is under a timeline to conduct a meeting involving an uncivil participant, advise the participant that the meeting will be completed without them.
3. If at any time a staff member, student, parent/guardian or other individual threatens bodily harm or attempts to physically touch in a threatening and harmful manner any person on school property, the police should be notified.

Complaint Procedure

Employees Complaints About Other Employees

All complaints by District employees against other District employees shall be handled in accordance with Administrative Regulation 426 irrespective of the classification of the employees involved.

Complaints by Students

The student should first make the complaint known to the staff member most closely involved (if one is identifiable) or a guidance counselor; and both shall attempt to resolve the issue informally and directly.

Examples:

- A student is subjected to repeated verbal harassment from a student in physical education class. The student may seek the intervention of the physical education teacher or guidance counselor, whomever the student prefers.
- A student is verbally belittled by a teacher. The student may choose to make the problem known to the teacher or, if the student prefers, the student may seek the intervention of the guidance counselor.

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For complaints that must move beyond this first step, the student shall prepare a written statement of their complaint which shall set forth:

- a) Specific nature of the complaint and a brief statement of relevant facts.
- b) Manner and extent to which the student believes the student has been adversely affected.
- c) Relief sought by the student.

The complaint may then be submitted, in turn, to the building principal, the Superintendent and the Board.

At each level below the School Board the student shall be afforded the opportunity to be heard personally by the school authority. Once the complaint reaches the Board level, the student may request the opportunity to be heard personally at a non-public meeting of the Board. If the request is granted, the Board may request the attendance of District personnel at the meeting for the purpose of obtaining a balanced presentation.

The student may seek the help of a parent/guardian at any step.

Other Complaints

All other complaints should be raised with the applicable building administrator or supervisor. If necessary, complaints should be reviewed through successive administrative levels to the Superintendent and subsequently to the Board, where appropriate. Board members shall be encouraged to advise complainants to first consult with the appropriate staff member or administrator and then, if necessary, to bring the problem to the attention of the Board through the administrative process.

Examples:

- A teacher is uncivil towards a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian should seek the intervention of the principal.

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- A bus driver is uncivil toward a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian may seek the intervention of the principal or the Supervisor of Transportation.
- A parent/guardian is uncivil toward district personnel. The employee may seek the intervention of the principal or other administrator.
- A parent/guardian is repeatedly uncivil toward district personnel. The parent/guardian may be directed to communicate with the district only through specific individuals.
- District personnel, parents/guardians, or others use email to communicate in an uncivil manner. The individual may be directed to cease using the email for such correspondence and may be provided with appropriate alternatives such as using postal services, in-person meetings, or phone conferences.

Record of Complaint

Each administrator shall keep a written record of properly presented complaints whether presented by letter, informal conference or through a scheduled meeting. Such written records shall include the administrator's response.