



## **Catholic School Department** **Diocese of Sacramento, CA**

### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

#### **A. AIM**

Disputes often arise in schools due to misunderstandings, differences in judgement, opposing interpretations of school policy, or alleged inequalities in the relationship between and among students, parents, teachers, and the principal. All parties involved in a dispute are expected to manifest good faith in their efforts to resolve disputes by maintaining an atmosphere of mutual understanding, confidentiality, and Christian charity.

Every effort should be made between differing parties, through open and honest discussion at the onset, to resolve the dispute. In each case the parties need to meet to provide the opportunity to state the issue(s) clearly and begin work on solutions. The parties are empowered by their participation in the process to affect the outcome. In every case, the parties should attempt to resolve their differences at the level at which the dispute has taken place and before entering this process. For example, a dispute with a teacher must involve an attempt to resolve the difference with the teacher before beginning this process, and before contacting the principal.

For conflicts that involve an employee's due process rights, the procedure outlined in Part D of the *Personnel Handbook - Diocese of Sacramento* must be followed.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

**Step One:** In the event that the situation cannot be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of either party through open and honest discussion, the dispute shall be presented within ten (10) calendar days of the incident that caused the dispute to the person most directly responsible for the matter involved in the dispute. For example, a parent complaint regarding a teacher's homework policy should be taken directly by the parent to the teacher for resolution.

**Step Two:** Disputes concerning school policy or unresolved disputes concerning school personnel shall be referred within ten (10) calendar days of the incident that caused the dispute, or within ten (10) calendar days of the presentation described in Step One above to the principal for his or her review and decision. If the dispute is concerning an employee, the principal shall advise the employee of the nature of the complaint. The employee shall be given ample opportunity for explanation, comment, and presentation of facts as the employee sees them. The principal shall conclude his/her review of the dispute and render his/her decision within ten (10) calendar days of the referral described in this Step.

**Step Three:** If the dispute cannot be resolved in Step Two, the complaining party within ten (10) calendar days of the principal's decision in Step Two may present the dispute to the pastor for his review and decision. The pastor shall conclude his review of the dispute and render his decision within ten (10) calendar days of the referral to him described in this Step. This step does not apply to Diocesan high schools.

**Diocesan Review:** If the dispute cannot be resolved at Step Three, any party to the dispute, within ten (10) calendar days of the pastor's decision at Step Three, may petition the Superintendent of Catholic Schools in writing for his/her review of the dispute. The Superintendent, at his/her sole discretion, may decide to review or not to review the dispute in question. If the Superintendent chooses to review the dispute, he/she shall render an advisory recommendation to the pastor in writing within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the written petition.