

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Quarterly Report – July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020



PWCS Office of the Ombudsman

The PWCS Office of the Ombudsman www.pwcs.edu/ombuds began offering ombuds services to employees, parents/guardians, students, and members of the community in August 2019. Pursuant to PWCS Policy 180, the Office of the Ombudsman provides confidential, impartial, and informal assistance in resolving Division-related concerns, conflicts, and issues.

Services include:

- Listening and helping to clarify underlying interests;
- Providing information and exploring options available to visitors;
- Facilitating discussions and/or mediating disputes to resolve issues, as appropriate;
- Collecting data on emerging trends and patterns while safeguarding anonymity;
- Utilizing data to make quarterly and annual reports to the School Board and the Division Superintendent, including annual recommendations for systemic and organizational change.

The Office of the Ombudsman operates in accordance with the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) Code of Ethics, including:



Confidentiality: The Office of the Ombudsman “holds all communications with those seeking assistance in strict confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so” to the extent permissible by law.* The exception is where the ombudsman believes there is a risk of serious harm. The ombudsman is a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse/neglect.

Impartiality: “The Ombudsman, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial.”

Independence: The Office of the Ombudsman “is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.” The Office of the Ombudsman reports to the School Board and Division Superintendent.

Informality: The Office of the Ombudsman, “is an informal resource, [and] does not participate in any formal adjudicative or administrative procedure related to concerns brought to his/her attention.”

**The Office of the Ombudsman is not affiliated with any compliance function and does NOT serve as an agent of notice.*

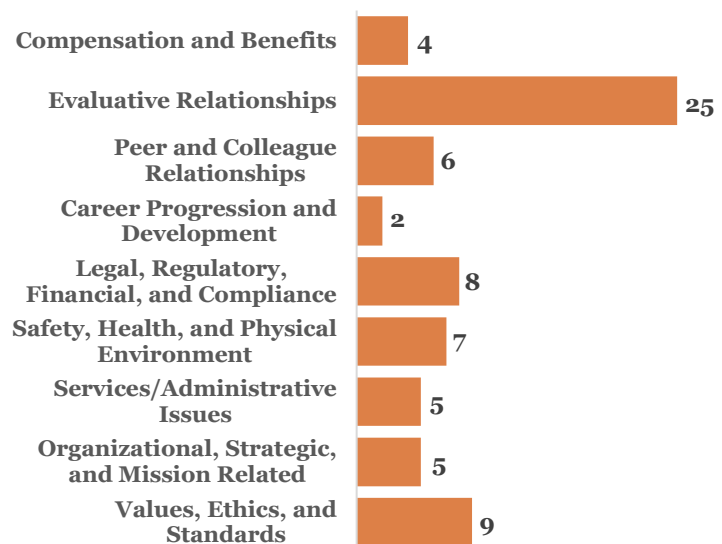
Office Activity- Visitors & Concerns

Between July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2020 (the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021), there were 36 visitors to the Office of the Ombudsman. Of these visitors, 33 were employees of the Division and three were parents/guardians and community members.

Visitor Concerns

Fourteen visitors expressed concerns primarily related to the middle school level, six visitors expressed concerns related to the elementary school level, and four visitors expressed concerns related to the high school level. The remaining 12 visitors expressed concerns primarily associated with central administration offices/functions. To promote uniformity and protect anonymity, visitor concerns are categorized into the nine uniform reporting categories suggested by the IOA, as follows: (1) Compensation and Benefits; (2) Evaluative Relationships; (3) Peer and Colleague Relationships; (4) Career Progression and Development; (5) Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance; (6) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment; (7) Services/Administrative Issues; (8) Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related; and (9) Values, Ethics, and Standards. Additionally, there are numerous subcategories associated with each category. Visitors often express concerns related to more than one category.

Concerns Expressed by Visitors



The most prevalent category of concerns involved *evaluative (supervisor/employee) relationships*. Twenty-five of the 33 employee visitors expressed concerns related to evaluative relationships. The often-most expressed sub-categories within the category of evaluative relationships were: *retaliation or fear of retaliation* (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments); and *respect/treatment* (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, etc.).

Respectfully Submitted by Sarah Miller Espinosa, J.D.