

Office of the Ombudsman Operational Guidelines

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Office of the Ombudsman Operational Guidelines is to implement Policy 180, "Office of the Ombudsman." The School Board authorized the ombudsman to develop the operational guidelines on October 2, 2019. The guidelines will be reviewed and, if determined necessary by the ombudsman, revised, at least every five years and as needed.

II. Visitor Intake

- A. The Office of the Ombudsman will take appropriate steps to ensure individuals seeking assistance (visitors) are provided with information as to the purpose of the Office, ethical standards upheld by the ombudsman, and limitations concerning the role and responsibilities of the Office of the Ombudsman.
- B. Whenever practicable, prior to meeting with a visitor, the Office of the Ombudsman will review the following information pertaining to formal complaint processes and litigation, as provided by the Division: list(s) of pending matters related to internal Division grievance processes, pending special education mediation, due process hearing or litigation, or any other pending mediation, legal or administrative proceeding outside of PWCS, including but not limited to, lawsuits pending in any court, and charges/complaints filed with the Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education, the United States Department of Justice, the United States or Virginia Departments of Labor, the EEOC, the Prince William County Human Rights Commission, the Virginia Department of Education, or any other local, state, or federal agency. Pursuant to Policy 180, the ombudsman shall not intervene or participate in any such proceedings.
- C. Whenever practicable, prior to meeting with a visitor, the Office of the Ombudsman will review the list of individuals against whom No Trespass orders have been issued, as maintained by the Office of Risk Management and Security Services.

III. Informal Conflict Resolution

- A. Information Related to Specific Individuals/Matters: It is understood that where the ombudsman has received permission from a visitor to discuss a concern with Division personnel, the ombudsman is authorized to receive information from Division personnel that would otherwise constitute private, confidential, or otherwise protected information. The ombudsman will take reasonable steps to safeguard all information received.
- B. Pursuant to Policy 180, where the ombudsman believes facilitation and/or mediation may be appropriate to informally resolve concerns, the ombudsman may facilitate and/or

mediate between individuals or groups. Said conflict resolution processes are strictly voluntarily and no individual may be compelled to participate.

- C. In accordance with the International Ombudsman Association's Code of Ethics and pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-4115-4119 and/or § 8.01-581.22, communications with the Office of the Ombudsman are confidential.

IV. Data Collection

- A. The Office of the Ombudsman does not maintain records identifying visitors on behalf of the Division. The Office of the Ombudsman will collect and maintain information related to the types of issues surfaced.
- B. Information Pertaining to Demographic Characteristics: Where necessary to carry out the data collection and reporting functions of the Office of the Ombudsman, the ombudsman will access information maintained by the Division that is related to individual employee, student, and school demographic characteristics in a manner that does not compromise the anonymity of the visitors.

V. Quarterly Reports and Annual Report

- A. The Office of the Ombudsman will compile and analyze data documenting the number and types of issues, and identify trends, issues, and systemic concerns in an annual report and quarterly reports, while protecting the anonymity of visitors. The reports will include trends, if any, and areas of concern, as identified by the ombudsman. The reports may include recommendations for systemic and organizational change, improvement, or resolution within PWCS, its schools, and departments. The reports will also include the outreach activities conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman and professional development in which the ombudsman or staff assigned to the Office of the Ombudsman have engaged.
- B. The Division Superintendent and senior leadership will be provided the report and the ombudsman will meet with the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee to discuss the report.
- C. Prior to providing the report to the School Board, the ombudsman will consult with Division Counsel to determine if the report (or portions thereof) may or must be provided to the School Board in closed session, to the extent that aspects of a report implicate confidential individual student or personnel matter(s) or other matters which may be discussed in closed session under one or more exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act.

D. Reports will be provided to the School Board as follows and in accordance with the submission schedule established by the School Board for the relevant meetings, subject to change in date for scheduling reasons as determined by the School Board Chairman at Large or in his/her absence by the Vice-Chairman:

<u>Quarter</u>	<u>School Board Meeting Schedule</u>
July 1 – September 30	1 st Meeting in November
October 1 – December 31	1 st Meeting in February
January 1 – March 31	1 st Meeting in May
April 30 – June 30	Information included in annual report; 1 st Meeting in September

VI. Evaluation

Pursuant to Policy 180, the ombudsman shall be evaluated by the School Board with the input of the Division Superintendent. Such evaluation will occur annually at a September meeting of the School Board, subsequent to the ombudsman's submission of the annual report. Any compensation increases related to the receipt of a positive evaluation will be retroactive to July 1, if applicable.