

St. Lawrence Academy *Mediation Policy*

As with any institution involving fallen human beings in a fallen world, St. Lawrence Academy is not immune to misunderstandings and disagreements between, or even misconduct committed by, those associated with the school—teachers, administrative personnel, clergy, volunteers, parents, students, etc. Nevertheless, according to Holy Scripture (cf. Mt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1*) and the teachings of the Orthodox Church, all conflict should be dealt with in an orderly manner, in a spirit of love, forgiveness, and humility.

The following outlines the steps Academy parents should take if they have a concern involving a St. Lawrence Academy staff member or others as listed above, or if they disagree with specific policies or procedures. Both staff members and parents should make every effort toward resolving issues in a timely and courteous manner. In addition, in most cases concerns should be about current issues.

Academy parents should observe the following procedure:

1. **The parent(s) will make arrangements to speak to the staff member concerned.** As most issues can be resolved at the two-person level, the first step is to schedule a face-to-face meeting or dialogue by phone. Confidentiality concerning the issue and those involved should be maintained in order to minimize further conflict.
2. **If the parent(s) cannot satisfactorily resolve the issue with the staff member, they will speak with the principal.** Any parent who wishes to take an issue concerning a staff member to the principal should have documented attempts to address the concern with the staff member such as a face-to-face meeting or dialogue by phone. The parent should obtain a Mediation Form (available at the St. Lawrence Academy website or in the office) with which to document these attempts and the issue about which the matter is concerned. The Mediation Form should then be submitted to the principal. The

aim of the principal will be to facilitate a resolution between the staff member and the parent(s) rather than impose a solution.

If the issue is about the principal, it should be taken on to the Academy Advisory Committee following attempts to find a resolution as described in step 1 above.

- 3. In the event a satisfactory resolution is not reached through steps 1 and 2, the parent(s) will speak with the Academy Advisory Committee (AAC).** As outlined in the Charter of the Academy Advisory Committee, the AAC has the responsibility to “Act as the escalation channel for Academy parents or others in the church community *if issues cannot be resolved with the school administration*” (Section 3a, Article 2). Thus, the AAC will help the principal facilitate a resolution between the parent(s) and staff member involved by providing advice and making recommendations as they see necessary. (If the issue is about the principal, the AAC will help to facilitate a resolution between the parent(s) and the principal in a similar manner.)

Parents may communicate informally and confidentially with AAC members at any time with the understanding that all subsequent actions will be informal (i.e., undocumented and unofficial). An AAC member may help a parent or staff member through any stage of the mediation process.

Parents may take a formal complaint on to the AAC only if the issue was *a*) still not resolved or *b*) if the situation is serious and cannot be brought first to school staff. (“Serious” should be interpreted as an issue involving conduct that is unethical or criminal in nature such as abuse, fraud, theft, or other similar form of misconduct. The church board should be informed of the situation.) The AAC will only accept an anonymous complaint if it contains allegations of a serious nature.

If the parent(s) would like to submit a formal complaint to the AAC the proper procedure is as follows:

- The concern must be stated in writing so that it is clearly communicated in the parent’s own words. Thus parent(s) should

- submit a copy of the original Mediation Form and any further documentation to the AAC demonstrating that attempts were made to fulfill steps 1 and 2 above prior to communicating formally with the AAC about the matter. If steps 1 and 2 were not followed the AAC will refer the parent back to the school staff, except in the case of serious issues (as defined above).
- The AAC will meet to discuss the matter and invite any other people who may be involved with the situation for formal discussion and evaluation of the parent's concern. The staff member against whom any complaint/allegation is made must be given an opportunity to explain any actions or refute any allegations before any action is taken on the part of the principal or the AAC.
 - A written response will be mailed to the parent.
 - The AAC will CC a copy of the AAC's response to the principal. The AAC may also submit a copy of their response to the church board at their discretion.

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Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

— Matthew 18:15-17

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

— Galatians 6:1