



OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDS

at Grand Rapids Public Schools

Navigating, Connecting, Empowering

Office of the Ombudsperson Annual Report 2023-2024

Prepared By:

Maleika J. Brown, Ed.S

Ombudsperson

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September 2023– June 2024

Message from the Ombudsperson

It is my pleasure to serve the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) community and present this first annual report at the completion of my inaugural nine months in this role. The creation of the Office of the Ombuds is a pivotal step in supporting Strategic Theme 6 of our strategic plan: Creating a Culture of Trust, Collaboration, and Stewardship. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering a positive organizational culture and enhancing communication across all levels of GRPS.

One of the most significant benefits of this office is its ability to serve as a safe and impartial space for addressing concerns and resolving conflicts. In any organization, conflicts can hinder progress and harmony, especially in a system that serves scholars, families, and the community. Our strategic plan emphasizes the importance of collaboration and trust, and the Office of the Ombuds is dedicated to supporting these goals by providing a listening ear and offering tools and resources that facilitate constructive resolution.

My aim is to ensure that everyone who visits our office feels welcomed, heard, and respected. This aligns with our strategic commitment to creating an inclusive environment where open dialogue and understanding thrive. My hope is that this sentiment will continue to spread throughout our community, fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation.

I am grateful to the GRPS community for allowing me to serve and learn in this role and for recognizing the value of establishing this office. I also want to express my deepest gratitude to the Superintendent, staff, community, and Board of Education for their support and trust. Together, we are building the first-ever Office of the Ombuds in GRPS, and I look forward to continuing this journey with you all as we work towards the goals outlined in our strategic plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a difference.

Sincerely,
Maleika J. Brown, Ed.S
Ombudsperson, Grand Rapids Public Schools



"The value of the Ombuds is in the possibility, the potential and the hope that we can do better and that we will do better if we raise issues and work through them together – in constructive dialogue."

Source: The IOA Ombuds Report, June 2020

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Office Overview

The Grand Rapids Public Schools Office of the Ombudsperson operates in accordance with the International Ombuds Association (IOA) Code of Ethics and adheres to the following principles:



Confidentiality~Impartiality~Independence~Informality

Supporting Strategic Theme 6: Creating a Culture of trust, collaboration and stewardship, the Office of the Ombuds seeks to empower those who contact the office to resolve issues on their own if possible. Depending on the situation, the Ombudsperson’s office may utilize different methods/techniques to help the visitor. Some of the common methods/techniques used include:

- Listens and helps clarify visitor concerns
- Provides information and explores available options
- Identifies underlying issues and interests
- Facilitates discussions to resolve issues

While the Ombud’s office can assist most individuals, there are some actions the Ombudsman CANNOT take, such as:

- Act as an individual’s advocate
- Serve as a formal office of legal notice for GRPS
- Conduct formal investigations
- Maintain records

To learn more about the office and how we can support you, please visit our [website](#). Due to the confidential nature of the office, visitors are seen by appointment either in-person, virtually, or over the phone. To schedule an appointment directly, please use our [online booking system](#). For any questions/concerns, you can contact us in the following ways:

Email: ombuds@grps.org
Phone: 616-819-3006

The Ombudsperson’s office is located at:

Rev. Lyman S. Parks Administration Bldg.
1331 Martin Luther King Jr. St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

¹ The term “Ombuds” includes all applicable nomenclature in use for an organizational ombudsperson.

² The term “visitor” is generally accepted to describe those who engage the services of the Ombudsman.

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Ombuds Mission and Guiding Principles

The Office of the Ombuds at Grand Rapids Public Schools operates with unwavering commitment to the core values set forth by the International Ombuds Association (IOA). These values—acting with honesty and integrity, promoting fairness and supporting fair processes, remaining non-judgmental while showing empathy and respect for individual differences, and fostering dignity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging—are integral to our daily work. We prioritize active listening to communicate an accurate understanding, and we promote individual empowerment, self-determination, and collaborative problem-solving.

As an accessible, trusted, and respected informal resource, our office aligns with Grand Rapids Public Schools' mission to ensure all scholars become educated, self-directed, and productive members of society. Additionally, we support Theme Six of the [2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#), which emphasizes the importance of building trust through community engagement, transparent practices, and financial sustainability. By integrating these values into our operations, we strive to enhance partnerships that align with community and scholar success, ensuring that our office remains a vital and effective resource for all school constituents.³

Core Values



Confidential - All communication with the office is held in the strictest of confidence



Impartial - Does not advocate for one side or another but for a fair and equal process for all



Independent - Sits outside any chain of command to serve as an early warning system



Informal - A voluntary resource where discussions are considered off-the-record

The result of our work, guided by these core values, is represented in this report which presents data and observations that reflect the experiences of 75 visitors from our school community over a relatively short span of nine months. As the Office of the Ombuds continues to establish itself and expand its outreach, these insights provide a high-level overview of the concerns brought forward during this formative period.

The observations detailed in this report represent a foundational step in our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement within the Grand Rapids Public Schools. This report serves as a critical starting point for our leadership to address key issues and enhance the support provided to our diverse community.

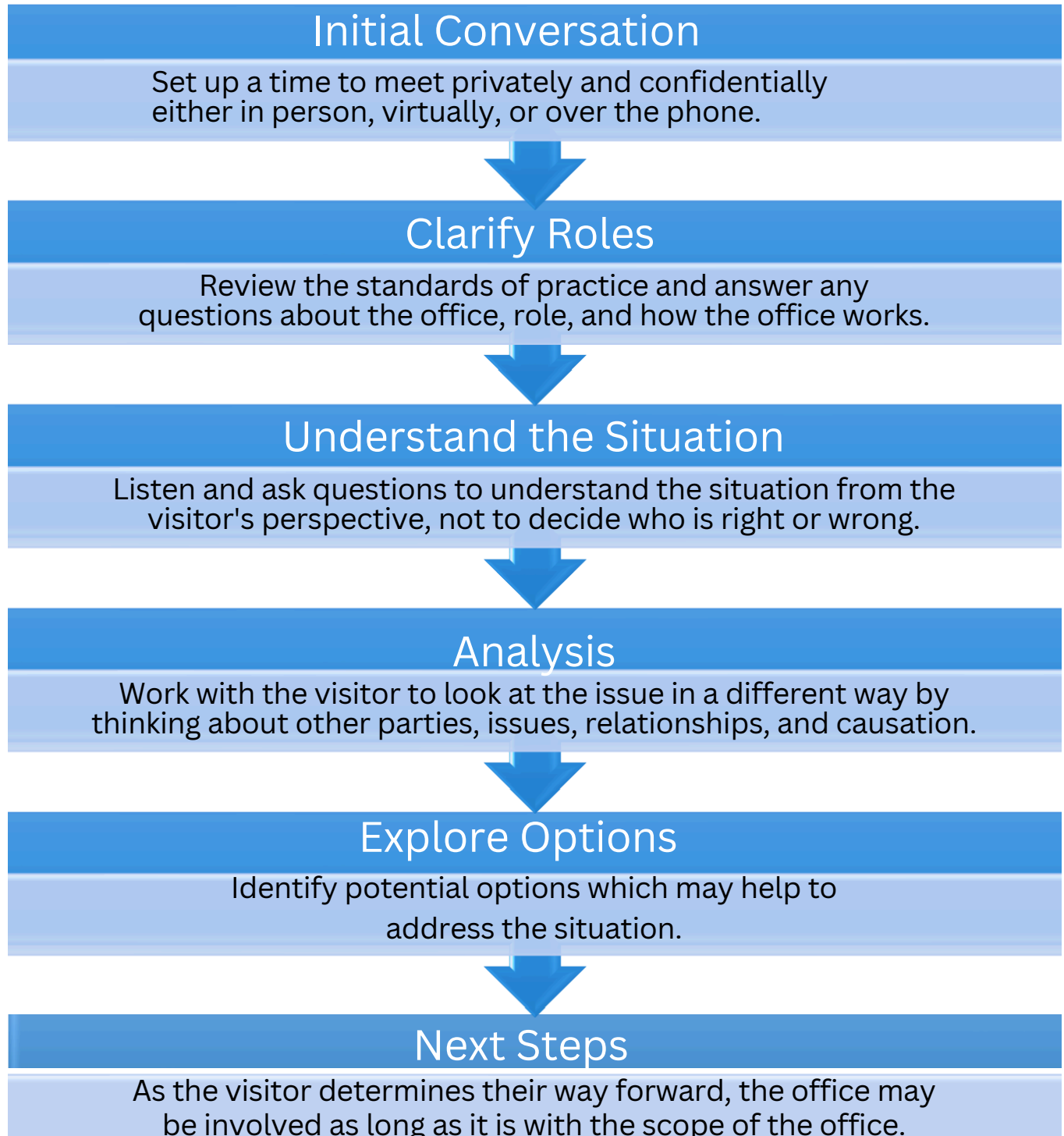
³ The Office of the Ombudsperson is not affiliated with any compliance function of the Grand Rapids Public Schools and does NOT serve as an agent of notice for the school district.

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Working with the Ombudsperson

When an individual or group contacts the office, the following steps are addressed during the initial meeting or over several meetings.



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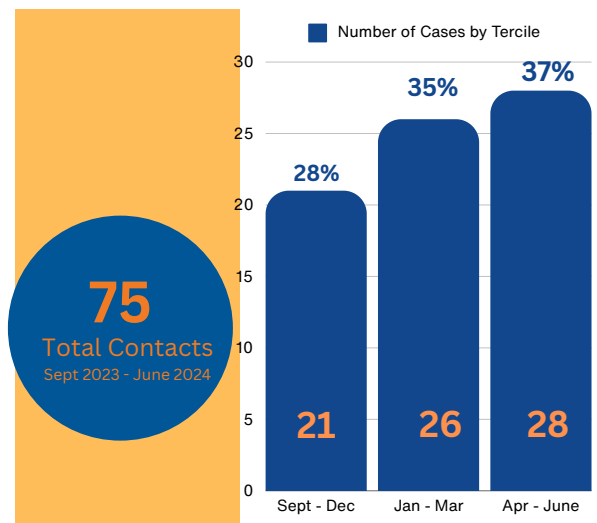
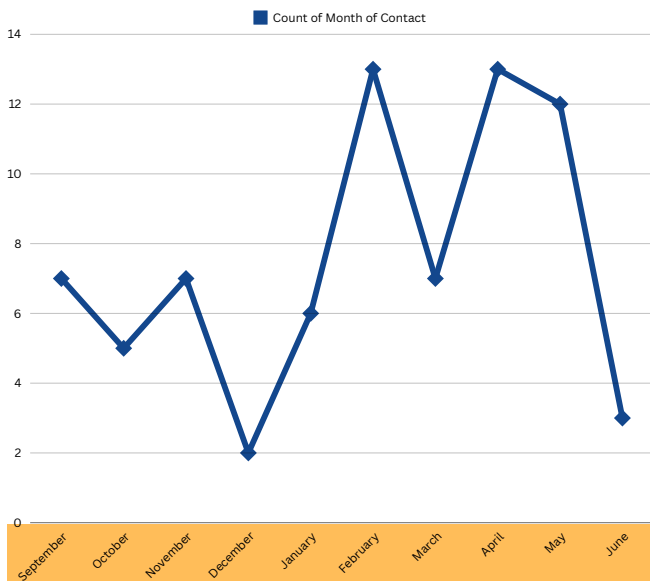
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Year in Review

The Office of the Ombuds for Grand Rapids Public Schools, which began its operations in September 2023 and was formally launched on October 12, 2023, has seen a steady increase in visitors throughout its initial months. To better understand this growth, we have divided the data into three equal parts, known as "terciles." A tercile is a way of breaking down data into three equal sections, each representing one-third of the total.

In the first tercile, covering the earliest months of operation, the office served 21 visitors. This initial period was foundational, as the office was still establishing its presence among all school constituents, including students, staff, and community members. Moving into the second tercile, the number of visitors increased to 26. This growth can be attributed to enhanced awareness through both formal marketing efforts and the spread of information by word of mouth.

The third tercile saw a further increase, with 28 visitors engaging with the Ombuds office. This steady rise in visitor numbers reflects the effectiveness of our outreach and the growing trust and recognition of the office as a resource for the entire school community.



It is important to note that this data does not represent a full calendar year, as the office opened in September, and therefore covers a shorter period. Additionally, there was a notable decrease in visitors during June, following the close of the school year, as many school constituents were less engaged with school-related matters during the summer break.

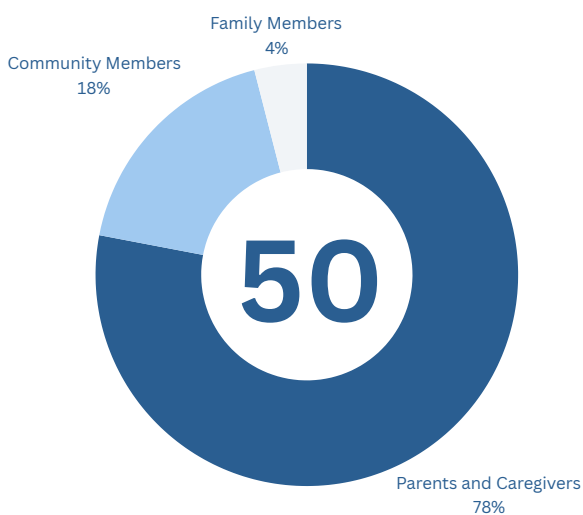
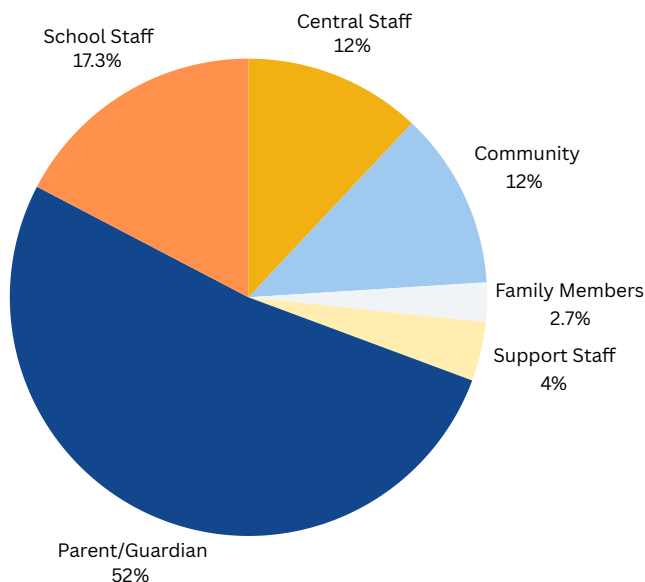
The consistent increase in visitors across the terciles demonstrates the positive impact of our efforts to connect with all members of the school community and reinforces the value of the Office of the Ombuds in supporting the diverse needs of Grand Rapids Public Schools.

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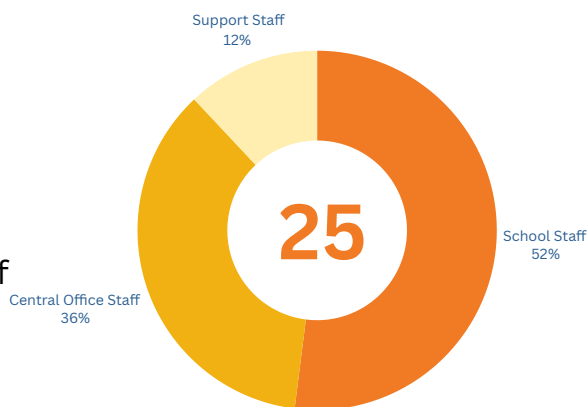
Year in Review Continued

Over the past year, the Office of the Ombuds for the Grand Rapids Public Schools has received 75 visitors from various parts of the school community. Of the 75 total visitors, 50 visitors (67%) were persons who comprise scholars’ home and community support network: family, caregivers and community members. In addition, the Ombuds served 25 visitors (33%) categorized as GRPS employees.



Parents and caregivers represented the largest group, accounting for 52% of the visitors. Community members comprised 12% while family members accounted for 2.7%.

School staff made up 17.3%, while Central Office staff made up 12% , and other support staff members represented 4%.



GRPS Scholars are not included in this data, as the office did not market its services to the scholar population during the first nine months. However, outreach to scholars is planned for the upcoming year to ensure they are also supported by the Office of the Ombuds.

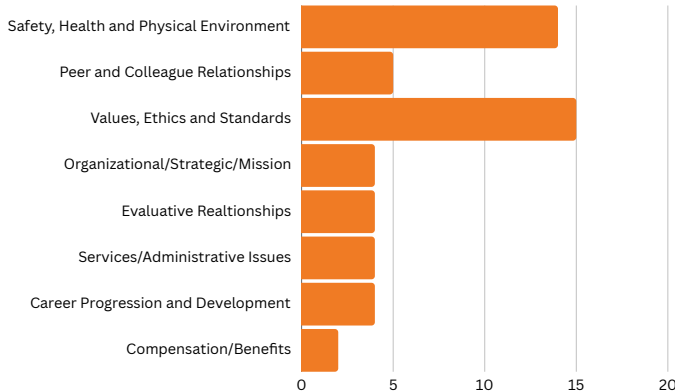
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Uniform Reporting Categories Data

Visitors often express concerns related to more than one category. Within each category there are numerous subcategories. For a more detailed explanation of this data, see Appendix B.

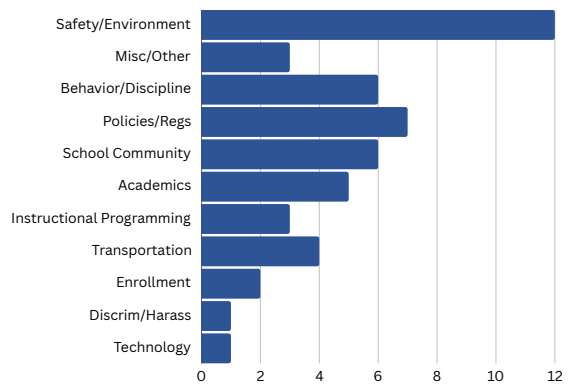
Employee and Volunteer Cases



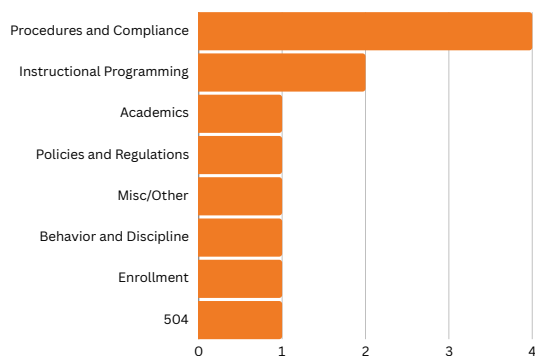
Of Employee and Volunteer visitors, the most often expressed concerns fell within the categories of Safety, Health and Physical environment and Organizational Values and Ethics. It is also worth noting that concerns within the remaining seven reporting categories were closely clustered behind these top two, indicating a broad range of issues that also merit attention.

Parents, Caregivers, and Community Cases

The data from GRPS parents and volunteers show that Safety and Environment were the top concerns, with 12 mentions. Other key areas of concern include Behavior and Discipline, Policies and Regulations, and School Community. Fewer concerns were noted in areas like Academics, Transportation, and Enrollment, with the least focus on Discrimination/Harassment and Technology. This indicates a primary emphasis on safety-related issues.



Cases Specific to Special Education and 504



The data related to Special Education and 504 show that concerns were most frequently expressed about Procedures and Compliance. Instructional Programming also drew attention, followed by individual mentions for Academics, Policies and Regulations, Behavior and Discipline, Enrollment, 504, and Miscellaneous/Other issues. This suggests a primary focus on procedural and compliance matters within Special Education.

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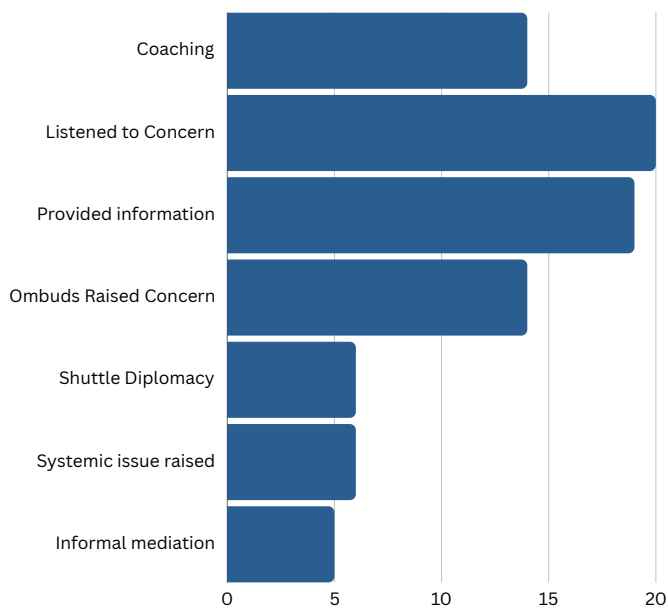
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Common Subcategories

The predominant subcategories that were discussed as related to these top concerns were:

- Communication (quality and/or quantity of communication);
- Safety (security: policies and procedures (all constituents), physical and environmental work and learning conditions)
- Respect/Treatment (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, etc.);
- Trust/Integrity (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.);
- Departmental climate (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors have responsibility);
- Organizational climate (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning); and
- Leadership/Management (quality and capacity of management and/or management/leadership)

Ombuds Actions (All Cases)



To address the concerns raised, the Ombuds employed various approaches while upholding the core values of the profession. These actions reflect a commitment to supporting individuals and addressing issues in a manner consistent with the principles of fairness, confidentiality, and impartiality.

The Ombuds response to concerns is a crucial lever in improving the culture within GRPS and aligns directly with Strategic Theme 6 of the 2022-2027 GRPS Strategic Plan. By addressing issues with fairness, confidentiality, and impartiality, the Ombuds plays a vital role in fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment. This approach not only helps resolve individual concerns but also contributes to the broader goal of enhancing organizational culture and achieving the district's strategic objectives.

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Outreach and Professional Growth

Throughout the year, the Ombudsperson has actively engaged in outreach efforts to educate the GRPS community about the Office of the Ombuds and its role within the organization. These efforts are crucial in building awareness and understanding of how the office can serve as a resource for staff, parents, caregivers, and the broader community.

In collaboration with the Communications Department, a dedicated website for the Office of the Ombuds was developed. This website was carefully organized to ensure easy navigation, making it simple for visitors to access information about the office and the support it offers. Additionally, a video introducing the newly formed office and the role of the Ombudsperson was created and shared with staff, parents, caregivers, and the community, further promoting the office's presence and purpose.

To reach an even wider audience, the Communications Department facilitated an interview with MLive, resulting in a published story that informed the broader community about the office and its mission. The Ombudsperson also conducted informational sessions and presentations for Parent Action Leaders, the Superintendent's Scholar Advisory Council, and various departments within the organization. These presentations provided a comprehensive overview of the office and offered valuable information that could be shared with others.

As part of the ongoing commitment to transparency and community engagement, the Ombudsperson initiated a protocol to involve constituents from a cross-section of the community in reviewing and providing feedback on the Office of the Ombuds charter. This protocol was facilitated by a respected member of the education community, ensuring that the process was guided by expertise and a deep understanding of our organizational goals. This inclusive approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, fostering a sense of shared ownership and accountability. The feedback received was instrumental in refining the charter, which was subsequently adopted and signed by the administration during this past year. This collaborative effort not only strengthened the foundation of the office, but also reinforced its role as a trusted and impartial resource for the entire GRPS community.

These outreach efforts have laid a solid foundation for the Office of the Ombuds, and the commitment to educating and engaging with the GRPS community will continue to be a priority in the coming years.

The Ombudsperson is an active member of the International Ombudsman Association (IOA) and the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA), participating in the IOA's K-12 Ombudsman group and serving on the USOA DEI committee. Regular participation in weekly mentoring sessions, attendance at the IOA and USOA conferences, participation in numerous professional learning opportunities, and involvement in the Michigan Caucus of Educational Ombuds have all contributed to professional growth and networking, ensuring that the office remains informed and effective in its role.

Ombuds Observations

Observation 1

When respectful and trusting relationships and open lines of communication are established, our GRPS community members feel empowered to address concerns and explore options for resolution with greater ease and confidence. Clear, effective, and timely communication, along with ensuring enough time is dedicated to hearing concerns, fosters mutual understanding and a sense of value, respect, and belonging within our district.

Observation 2

When concerns are tied to topics that are clearly outlined in policy, regulation, or protocol, constituents often experience a sense of clarity, with defined expectations and predictable timelines. However, when issues involve less structured processes, there can be feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity. In either case, it's clear that constituents place a high value on being heard and benefit from understanding the reasoning behind decisions that affect them or their families.

Observation 3

Constituents appreciate the establishment of this office, recognizing it as a valuable safe space where they can voice concerns and access essential information. Their positive feedback underscores the importance of the support and resources provided by this office. However, it also highlights the need for greater awareness so that more individuals can benefit from the services and safe space it offers.

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2024-2025 Ombud's Goals



Goal 1

Expand outreach efforts to specifically target families, caregivers, community members, employees, and scholars who are less likely to engage in formal processes. This initiative aims to increase awareness and accessibility, ensuring that all groups feel supported and are more inclined to utilize available resources.

Goals 2

Build and strengthen relationships with both internal and external constituents and leadership. These efforts include holding regularly scheduled meetings with core departments within the district and parent and community groups. This will foster ongoing communication, collaboration, and mutual understanding across the district.

Goal 3

Continue to read, research, and collaborate to develop and provide professional learning opportunities that empower constituents to build their skills in communication and conflict resolution, fostering greater independence and confidence in addressing issues on their own.

Goal 4

Create and publish resources to help constituents navigate issues and concerns more effectively, providing clear guidance and support throughout the resolution process.

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Appendix A

INTERNATIONAL OMBUDSMAN ASSOCIATION Uniform Reporting Categories

VERSION 2
October 2007

1. Compensation & Benefits

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.

- 1.a **Compensation** (rate of pay, salary amount, job salary classification/level)
- 1.b **Payroll** (administration of pay, check wrong or delayed)
- 1.c **Benefits** (decisions related to medical, dental, life, vacation/sick leave, education, worker's compensation insurance, etc.)
- 1.d **Retirement, Pension** (eligibility, calculation of amount, retirement pension benefits)
- 1.e **Other** (any other employee compensation or benefit not described by the above sub-categories)

2. Evaluative Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)

- 2.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 2.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 2.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 2.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 2.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 2.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 2.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 2.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 2.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 2.j **Assignments/Schedules** (appropriateness or fairness of tasks, expected volume of work)
- 2.k **Feedback** (feedback or recognition given, or responses to feedback received)
- 2.l **Consultation** (requests for help in dealing with issues between two or more individuals they supervise/teach or with other unusual situations in evaluative relationships)

2.m Performance Appraisal/Grading

(job/academic performance in formal or informal evaluation)

- 2.n **Departmental Climate** (prevailing behaviors, norms, or attitudes within a department for which supervisors or faculty have responsibility.)
- 2.o **Supervisory Effectiveness** (management of department or classroom, failure to address issues)
- 2.p **Insubordination** (refusal to do what is asked)
- 2.q **Discipline** (appropriateness, timeliness, requirements, alternatives, or options for responding)
- 2.r **Equity of Treatment** (favoritism, one or more individuals receive preferential treatment)
- 2.s **Other** (any other evaluative relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

3. Peer and Colleague Relationships

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)

- 3.a **Priorities, Values, Beliefs** (differences about what should be considered important – or most important – often rooted in ethical or moral beliefs)
- 3.b **Respect/Treatment** (demonstrations of inappropriate regard for people, not listening, rudeness, crudeness, etc.)
- 3.c **Trust/Integrity** (suspicion that others are not being honest, whether or to what extent one wishes to be honest, etc.)
- 3.d **Reputation** (possible impact of rumors and/or gossip about professional or personal matters)
- 3.e **Communication** (quality and/or quantity of communication)
- 3.f **Bullying, Mobbing** (abusive, threatening, and/or coercive behaviors)
- 3.g **Diversity-Related** (comments or behaviors perceived to be insensitive, offensive, or intolerant on the basis of an identity-related difference such as race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- 3.h **Retaliation** (punitive behaviors for previous actions or comments, whistleblower)
- 3.i **Physical Violence** (actual or threats of bodily harm to another)
- 3.j **Other** (any peer or colleague relationship not described by the above sub-categories)

4. Career Progression and Development

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)

- 4.a **Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Processes** (recruitment and selection processes, facilitation of job applications, short-listing and criteria for selection, disputed decisions linked to recruitment and selection)
- 4.b **Job Classification and Description** (changes or disagreements over requirements of assignment, appropriate tasks)
- 4.c **Involuntary Transfer/Change of Assignment** (notice, selection and special dislocation rights/benefits, removal from prior duties, unrequested change of work tasks)
- 4.d **Tenure/Position Security/Ambiguity** (security of position or contract, provision of secure contractual categories)
- 4.e **Career Progression** (promotion, reappointment, or tenure)
- 4.f **Rotation and Duration of Assignment** (non-completion or over-extension of assignments in specific settings/countries, lack of access or involuntary transfer to specific roles/assignments, requests for transfer to other places/duties/roles)
- 4.g **Resignation** (concerns about whether or how to voluntarily terminate employment or how such a decision might be communicated appropriately)
- 4.h **Termination/Non-Renewal** (end of contract, non-renewal of contract, disputed permanent separation from organization)
- 4.i **Re-employment of Former or Retired Staff** (loss of competitive advantages associated with re-hiring retired staff, favoritism)
- 4.j **Position Elimination** (elimination or abolition of an individual's position)
- 4.k **Career Development, Coaching, Mentoring** (classroom, on-the-job, and varied assignments as training and developmental opportunities)
- 4.l **Other** (any other issues linked to recruitment, assignment, job security or separation not described by the above sub-categories)

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5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.

- 5.a **Criminal Activity** (threats or crimes planned, observed, or experienced, fraud)
- 5.b **Business and Financial Practices** (inappropriate actions that abuse or waste organizational finances, facilities or equipment)
- 5.c **Harassment** (unwelcome physical, verbal, written, e-mail, audio, video psychological or sexual conduct that creates a hostile or intimidating environment)
- 5.d **Discrimination** (different treatment compared with others or exclusion from some benefit on the basis of, for example, gender, race, age, national origin, religion, etc. [being part of an Equal Employment Opportunity protected category – applies in the U.S.])
- 5.e **Disability, Temporary or Permanent, Reasonable Accommodation** (extra time on exams, provision of assistive technology, interpreters, or Braille materials including questions on policies, etc. for people with disabilities)
- 5.f **Accessibility** (removal of physical barriers, providing ramps, elevators, etc.)
- 5.g **Intellectual Property Rights** (e.g., copyright and patent infringement)
- 5.h **Privacy and Security of Information** (release or access to individual or organizational private or confidential information)
- 5.i **Property Damage** (personal property damage, liabilities)
- 5.j **Other** (any other legal, financial and compliance issue not described by the above sub-categories)

6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.

- 6.a **Safety** (physical safety, injury, medical evacuation, meeting federal and state requirements for training and equipment)
- 6.b **Physical Working/Living Conditions** (temperature, odors, noise, available space, lighting, etc)
- 6.c **Ergonomics** (proper set-up of workstation affecting physical functioning)
- 6.d **Cleanliness** (sanitary conditions and facilities to prevent the spread of disease)
- 6.e **Security** (adequate lighting in parking lots, metal detectors, guards, limited access to building by outsiders, anti-terrorists measures (not for classifying "compromise of classified or top secret" information)

- 6.f **Telework/Flexplace** (ability to work from home or other location because of business or personal need, e.g., in case of man-made or natural emergency)
- 6.g **Safety Equipment** (access to/use of safety equipment as well as access to or use of safety equipment, e.g., fire extinguisher)
- 6.h **Environmental Policies** (policies not being followed, being unfair ineffective, cumbersome)
- 6.i **Work Related Stress and Work-Life Balance** (Post-Traumatic Stress, Critical Incident Response, internal/external stress, e.g. divorce, shooting, caring for sick, injured)
- 6.j **Other** (any safety, health, or physical environment issue not described by the above sub-categories)

7. Services/Administrative Issues

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.

- 7.a **Quality of Services** (how well services were provided, accuracy or thoroughness of information, competence, etc.)
- 7.b **Responsiveness/Timeliness** (time involved in getting a response or return call or about the time for a complete response to be provided)
- 7.c **Administrative Decisions and Interpretation/Application of Rules** (impact of non-disciplinary decisions, decisions about requests for administrative and academic services, e.g., exceptions to policy deadlines or limits, refund requests, appeals of library or parking fines, application for financial aid, etc.)
- 7.d **Behavior of Service Provider(s)** (how an administrator or staff member spoke to or dealt with a constituent, customer, or client, e.g., rude, inattentive, or impatient)
- 7.e **Other** (any services or administrative issue not described by the above sub-categories)

8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.

- 8.a **Strategic and Mission-Related/ Strategic and Technical Management** (principles, decisions and actions related to where and how the organization is moving)
- 8.b **Leadership and Management** (quality/capacity of management and/or management/leadership decisions, suggested training, reassignments and reorganizations)

- 8.c **Use of Positional Power/Authority** (lack or abuse of power provided by individual's position)
- 8.d **Communication** (content, style, timing, effects and amount of organizational and leader's communication, quality of communication about strategic issues)
- 8.e **Restructuring and Relocation** (issues related to broad scope planned or actual restructuring and/or relocation affecting the whole or major divisions of an organization, e.g. downsizing, off shoring, outsourcing)
- 8.f **Organizational Climate** (issues related to organizational morale and/or capacity for functioning)
- 8.g **Change Management** (making, responding or adapting to organizational changes, quality of leadership in facilitating organizational change)
- 8.h **Priority Setting and/or Funding** (disputes about setting organizational/departmental priorities and/or allocation of funding within programs)
- 8.i **Data, Methodology, Interpretation of Results** (scientific disputes about the conduct, outcomes and interpretation of studies and resulting data for policy)
- 8.j **Interdepartment/Interorganization Work/Territory** (disputes about which department/organization should be doing what/taking the lead)
- 8.k **Other** (any organizational issue not described by the above sub-categories)

9. Values, Ethics, and Standards

Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.

- 9.a **Standards of Conduct** (fairness, applicability or lack of behavioral guidelines and/or Codes of Conduct, e.g., Academic Honesty, plagiarism, Code of Conduct, conflict of interest)
- 9.b **Values and Culture** (questions, concerns or issues about the values or culture of the organization)
- 9.c **Scientific Conduct/Integrity** (scientific or research misconduct or misdemeanors, e.g., authorship; falsification of results)
- 9.d **Policies and Procedures NOT Covered in Broad Categories 1 thru 8** (fairness or lack of policy or the application of the policy, policy not followed, or needs revision, e.g., appropriate dress, use of internet or cell phones)
- 9.e **Other** (Other policy, procedure, ethics or standards issues not described in the above sub-categories)

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Appendix B

Uniform Reporting Categories Descriptions

Below are the IOA Uniform Reporting Categories. This is a list of categories developed by the IOA and used by Ombudsmen around the world to anonymously classify the types of issues brought to their offices and identify trends in requests for services. A more detailed explanation of each category and sub-category can be found under Appendix A.

- 1. Compensation & Benefits**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the equity, appropriateness and competitiveness of employee compensation, benefits and other benefit programs.
- 2. Evaluative Relationships**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries arising between people in evaluative relationships (i.e. supervisor-employee, faculty-student.)
- 3. Peer and Colleague Relationships**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries involving peers or colleagues who do not have a supervisory-employee or student-professor relationship (e.g., two staff members within the same department or conflict involving members of a student organization.)
- 4. Career Progression and Development**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about administrative processes and decisions regarding entering and leaving a job, what it entails, (i.e., recruitment, nature and place of assignment, job security, and separation.)
- 5. Legal, Regulatory, Financial, and Compliance**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that may create a legal risk (financial, sanction etc.) for the organization or its members if not addressed, including issues related to waste, fraud or abuse.
- 6. Safety, Health, and Physical Environment**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about Safety, Health and Infrastructure-related issues.
- 7. Services/Administrative Issues**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about services or administrative offices including from external parties.
- 8. Organizational, Strategic, and Mission Related**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries that relate to the whole or some part of an organization.
- 9. Values, Ethics, and Standards**
Questions, concerns, issues or inquiries about the fairness of organizational values, ethics, and/or standards, the application of related policies and/or procedures, or the need for creation or revision of policies, and/or standards.