

Dear Gouverneur Central School Board Members,

During a phone call I received from Erik Sweet, Executive Director of the Office of Early Learning with the New York State Education Department, Mr. Sweet suggested I provide the school board with a written formal complaint to address my grievance regarding notifying parents of classroom evacuations. He informed me that given the board's decision the grievance may proceed to an appeal to the commissioner if needed. Therefore, the following is my formal complaint per Mr. Sweet's suggestion.

Upon learning of how frequently my daughter's class was utilizing a buddy classroom during Kindergarten and the first months of the school year in first grade, I requested all parents of the students in the class be informed of the evacuations, not just my husband and me. Since the 2024/2025 school year, we have attempted to collaborate with the administration resulting in the decision that information could only be shared with us, not with the broader parent community, primarily due to concerns regarding confidentiality. Our suggestion has been to send a generic notification through ParentSquare that would not interfere with maintaining confidentiality. For example:

On 01/09/2026 Mrs. Jane Doe's class utilized a buddy classroom. The class participated in the buddy classroom's curriculum for 10 minutes before returning to their own room. If you have any questions please contact Mrs. Jane Doe or the principal.

This request comes from a parent's expectation of open communication with teachers, principals, and administration regarding their child's learning environment especially when it deviates from the expected plans for the day and for transparency regarding safety, rather than being merely a courtesy to my husband and me.

Originally, I worked with the administration on clarifying the expectation of notifying parents when a child engages in an aggressive act in the Expectations to Consider for Prekindergarten Through Grade 2, section of the code of conduct. The decision was made to change the expectation to, "*may* be contacted." Therefore, I am additionally requesting for the term 'buddy classroom' be more clearly defined in the code of conduct to include that the use of a buddy classroom is also used for the class as a whole in the event the class requires an evacuation. The current wording of the code of conduct does not lead parents to anticipate that the entire class may at some point also use a buddy classroom. Currently the term, "Buddy Teacher" elementary classroom, is defined under Procedures in the Disciplinary Penalties, Procedures and Referrals section of the Code of Conduct, as an option for the removal of a disruptive student. I suggest expanding this definition to state that the buddy teacher classroom is also intended for use by a whole class in the event an evacuation is required, not just for individual disciplinary purposes. This clarification will ensure all parents are aware that this is an option for the entire class. For example:

A class may participate in grade appropriate curriculum in a neighboring class of the same grade in the event the class requires evacuation.

It has been brought to my attention that classrooms today experience behavioral issues that have not commonly been experienced in previous years. I appreciate that these issues require flexibility in the procedures used by teachers and administrators for effective classroom behavior management. Given the current unique demands in the classroom I formally request a commensurate degree of flexibility be applied to the procedures governing communication with the parents of all students in the classroom. Notifying parents through ParentSquare and updating the definition of "Buddy Teacher" elementary classroom in the Code of Conduct will ensure greater transparency in the communication between the school and parents.

I sincerely thank you for the time and attention this matter has been provided so far.

I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the board members and administration to reach a satisfactory and definitive outcome.