



DOCK
MENNONITE ACADEMY

**EARLY CHILDHOOD
TO GRADE EIGHT**
420 Godshall Road
Souderton, PA 18964
TEL 215.723.1196

**GRADES NINE
TO TWELVE**
1000 Forty Foot Road
Lansdale, PA 19446
TEL 215.362.2675

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does Dock Mennonite Academy (Dock) respond to student concerns?

Dock Mennonite Academy takes all concerns seriously. Our primary focus is always the safety and well-being of our students. As a result, the Board and the leadership team adopt policies and protocols governing the responses of the administrative leadership as well as faculty and staff members. We are committed to continuous improvement, and this is reflected in the ongoing strengthening and updating of our policies and practices.

When a student or parent raises a concern regarding misconduct, it is immediately investigated and if there is a suspicion that the concern involves any criminal misconduct or inappropriate behavior, a report is made to state and local authorities. If necessary, Dock Mennonite Academy will take the additional step of placing a staff member on leave for the investigative period.

How does the Dock leadership determine if a staff member should be placed on leave?

When evaluating allegations, the priority is the safety of our students and providing a fair due process for staff. The decision to place staff members on leave is made after considering the seriousness of the allegations and in cooperation with our legal team. Placing an individual on leave is not an assumption of guilt or innocence. It is a means to ensure the well-being and safety of all parties involved and the integrity of the investigation.

When allegations arise, how is information shared with the school community?

We are committed to sharing important information with our community as appropriate within the boundaries of the law and the institutional policies that govern student and staff privacy. In addition, we are committed to sharing the systematic steps we will take in response to concerns presented. Our goal is to be as forthright as possible, without violating laws and policies that govern student and staff information.

When the outcomes of an investigation are identified, they will be summarized and released to the involved parties in an appropriate fashion. Typically, confidentiality is legally and institutionally necessary. In a few cases, when individuals have made public their concerns, a higher degree of information may be shared.

How long do these types of investigations normally take to conclude?

These types of systematic investigation can take from three months to over a year to conclude. Whenever a comprehensive process occurs that involves multiple people and external groups, the length of time needed is significant. We appreciate the community's patience as we sought to find and respond to the facts with integrity.



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With outside consulting and legal firms involved, it was important to respect their time frames and guidance around the investigation and the communication. At the outset, we took the time to broadly inform the community so that if others had concerns, they would have time to come forward. Again, thank you to our community and to our staff for your patience as we sought to move carefully, comprehensively, and in a fashion that respected both our policies and all parties involved.

What prompted Dock to engage an investigation by a private consulting firm (DSA) that specializes in abuse allegations and a law firm (Clark Hill) with expertise in Title IX investigations?

This past school year, concerns were raised about an administrator who was working at Dock Mennonite Academy. At that time, the Board and leadership team placed that individual on a leave of absence and launched an internal investigation by an experienced consulting firm that specializes in these types of issues. The Board also retained a law firm with expertise in Title IX to review the results of the investigation and determine next steps.

In keeping with our commitment to share important information with our community, the Board and leadership team at Dock released a summary of findings to preserve confidentiality and identify systematic steps that will occur institution-wide – at the Board, faculty, and staff levels, as well as involving our students and families. We are as forthright as possible, but some matters relating to student and personnel concerns cannot be shared due to privacy laws and policy concerns.

Were the findings of the internal investigation consistent with the findings of governmental agencies that investigated?

Yes, the findings between multiple groups and agencies were similar. In addition to the independent investigation conducted at the request of Dock, governmental agencies also investigated this matter. Law enforcement and the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office concluded that there was no evidence of criminal misconduct. Also, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services concluded that allegations of abuse and exploitation reported to it were determined to be “unfounded.” Dock’s independent investigation confirmed these findings. However, Dock’s priority does not stop with those determinations: our mission is to provide a Christ-centered learning environment of excellence that goes beyond the expectations found in our laws.

What did the internal investigation find?

The investigation found that four former male students reported experiencing unwelcome behaviors and contacts from the former administrator. The Board found them to be credible. During the time the students attended Dock, the concerns they had, which were confirmed by the investigation, were not presented to Dock leadership. In the spring of 2019, other specific student concerns were brought to Dock leadership’s attention and an investigation occurred.



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Following the investigation, Dock leadership did not notify the involved parties of the action it took to address the concerns; as a result, there was an appearance that nothing had been done, which is not accurate. No student concerns have been reported about interactions occurring after the spring of 2019.

It should also be noted that the investigation found many students who did not find the former administrator's behaviors to be objectionable, and who instead reported him to be a positive influence. Nonetheless, we are committed to helping our students feel safe and to ensure that professional boundaries are maintained for everyone.

How do Dock's values guide the response of the board and leadership in this situation?

Dock is a community of faith. When one in our body hurts, we all hurt. While brokenness is a part of our journey, we pray for shalom. Micah 6:8 reads, "And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

Out of this faith, Dock cares deeply about the well-being and safety of every student. We are dedicated to providing a learning environment free from unwelcome conduct between any two persons in the Dock community, whether students or adults. As a result, we are saddened that any former Dock student felt uncomfortable or unheard. Each of our Board members and leadership team members is also a parent of current or former students, an alumnus, a donor or a volunteer. We bring these perspectives to our roles in the Dock community. Like many of you, we have felt sadness, anger, disappointment, and pain through this experience. We apologize to any student or parent who has felt uncomfortable or unheard.

We strive for a healthy and welcoming school climate. We want students to feel heard and to know that we take their concerns seriously, addressing them in a manner consistent with the policies and values of our school.

From the investigation, there is evidence that a group of students felt uncomfortable due to the behaviors of our former administrator. These same students felt their concerns were not adequately addressed or heard. This is unacceptable to us. Therefore, we are preparing and prioritizing a series of steps forward.

What actions are being taken to continue to ensure the safety and well-being of students?

We are committed to taking immediate action and engaging in longer term systemic change. With the help of external advisors, we will ensure that our Title IX policy is compliant and published. We will also ensure adequate policies that define boundaries for staff interactions with students. We will make sure the Dock faculty and staff are aware of their reporting obligations under state law and our internal policies. We will periodically review our policies and when necessary, update or improve them.



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We are scheduling trainings for the Board, administration, faculty, and staff. We will inform and engage our Dock students regarding our policies and complaint procedures. We will also notify parents and guardians of these policies and procedures. Our administrative, faculty, and staff trainings will include a focus on investigating and documenting concerns reported. We are committed to consistently following our policies when concerns are raised.

The Board of Trustees will ensure these tasks are completed. Adhering to these policies will continue to be a priority of the Board into the future. We ask our community to support these efforts as we work to support our mission and values. Our partnership with parents and community members is important. If you have concerns or questions around behaviors occurring with one of our students or staff members, we ask that you share that information with Dock administration. You may hear things that we do not, so we welcome your feedback and support. Educational processes are made stronger through the mutual sharing of information.

The Board has given careful and considered thought as to what level of contact, if any, the former administrator should have with our school community. While the administrator is no longer employed by Dock, the Board and the former administrator have jointly decided that he would have no further contact with the students that raised the concerns and would also refrain from attending any of Dock's public events. Changes from this arrangement will be considered by the Board in the future if appropriate. We believe this is important for the new leadership team and for healing to take place.

What can I do as a community member to help with this process?

Our partnership with parents and community members is important. If you or someone that you know learn of concerns or questions around behaviors that are occurring with one of our students or staff members, we ask that you share that information with Superintendent Dr. Conrad Swartzentruber at cswartzentruber@dock.org or 215-362-2675.

If you feel that you have not been heard, please share that information with the Board. You may hear things that we do not, so we welcome your feedback and support.

Have additional steps been taken with the administrator in question?

The Board has given careful and considered thought as to what level of contact, if any, the former administrator should have with our school community. While the administrator is no longer employed by Dock, the Board and the former administrator have jointly decided that he would have no further contact with the students that raised the concerns and would also refrain from attending any of Dock's public events. Changes from this arrangement will be considered by the Board in the future if appropriate. We believe this is important for the new leadership team and for healing to take place.



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Is the DSA report being released?

Privacy laws and confidentiality policies preclude the release of the DSA report. Individuals who took part in the DSA process may not want their names or concerns identified. Personnel of Dock Mennonite Academy have legal rights related to privacy. As a result, the Board is highlighting those aspects of the report that are in keeping with personnel policies and legal boundaries, as well as identifying the response steps being taken.

Why is this an issue if no criminal misconduct occurred?

Dock Mennonite Academy wants every student and family member to feel safe. Teachers and administrative leaders will challenge students educationally to achieve their potential academically, in the arts, and in athletics. However, no student should experience unwelcome contact.

Dock has high expectations for its staff and teachers regarding professional behaviors and institutional standards. We appreciate the fact that these students came forward and raised concerns. This took courage. We are better today because they were willing to name concerns and the school was able to identify areas that could be strengthened. We appreciate these individuals and their willingness to raise questions and concerns.

Why is the former administrator no longer employed by Dock?

The former administrator began working at Dock in 1999. He had considered retiring at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, and remained for another school year due to COVID stresses and to provide time for a smooth transition to a new leadership team. He retired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year as he had planned to do.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions?

If you have other questions or concerns, please contact Superintendent Dr. Conrad Swartzentruber at cswartzentruber@dock.org.