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1440

COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL

The intent of this policy is to maintain dialogue among residents, the Board of Education and the administration while, at the same time, safeguarding employees from unfair criticism.

The Board believes that complaints and grievances are best handled and resolved as close to their origin as possible and that the staff should be given every opportunity to consider issues and attempt to resolve problems prior to Board involvement. Therefore, the proper channeling of complaints will be as follows:

1. Teacher or staff member
2. Principal/Supervisor/Director
3. Director of Elementary Education for PreK –Grade 6 issues and Director of Secondary Education for Grades 7-12 issues
4. Superintendent of Schools
5. Board of Education or Sub-Committee thereof

Exceptions will be made only when complaints concern Board action or Board operations. In addition, the Board will not act on complaints that have not been explored at the appropriate level.

Individual Board members will refer persons making complaints to the Superintendent. Board members will refrain from expressing any judgment until such complaint is submitted to the entire Board. The Superintendent shall refer complaints to other staff members when appropriate.

The Directors of Elementary Education and Secondary Education shall deal with complaints regarding instructional issues. The Superintendent or his designee may intervene in other complaints.

Cross-ref: 1400, Public Complaints

Approved: July 1, 2001

Revised and Approved: March 19, 2007; May 18, 2009; Oct. 25, 2012; March 28, 2013

COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCHOOL PERSONNEL REGULATION

It is the hope and expectation of this school district that positive, cooperative efforts among the various groups of people interested in the educational process will provide for the best possible educational opportunities for students. Through such efforts, the Board of Education, the school administration, teachers and other staff members, parents, and other community residents will develop mutual respect, confidence, and support for the benefit of the students.

A. Complaints against a particular teacher, administrator or staff member

It is recognized that periodically there are complaints* that parents or other residents may have about a particular teacher, administrator or other staff member. To deal with such complaints as quickly and effectively as possible and to prevent misunderstandings from escalating, a procedure is established for the parent or other residents to take the following steps in the order indicated:

1. The parent/resident must speak directly to the staff member involved by making an appointment to do so. As a result of a frank exchange, most problems should be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the participants. Other staff members or Board of Education members who are approached by an individual with a complaint should refer that individual to the provisions of this policy.
2. If there is no satisfactory conclusion reached between the parent/resident and the staff member, the parent/resident should then make an appointment and speak directly with the immediate supervisor or Principal of that staff member, who will arrange to meet with the staff member and parent/resident to make every effort to resolve the complaint. The staff member will be informed of any such meetings in sufficient time to prepare for dealing with the questions in the particular case.
3. If there is no satisfactory conclusion reached between the parent/resident, the staff member, and the immediate supervisor or Principal of that staff member, then the parent/resident should be referred to either the Director of Elementary Education or the Director of Secondary Education (depending on the grade level of the staff member involved). The appropriate Director will make every effort to have the complaint reviewed once more at the building level. If this is not successful, the appropriate Director will invite the staff member, the parent/resident, and the immediate supervisor or Principal involved to a joint meeting to try to mediate the situation.

4. In those cases where the Director is unable to resolve the situation, the matter will be referred to the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent will gather the background information from the Director, and may decide to speak directly to the parent/resident. In some situations, the Superintendent may also choose to appoint an individual (either a District employee or outside counsel) to investigate the matter and report to him. In such cases, the Superintendent will review the individual's findings as the basis for making a decision.
5. If the steps outlined above have not been successful, the Superintendent will hand down a decision that will be binding, since the Superintendent has the final administrative responsibility for the educational program and discipline in the schools.
6. If there is a formal written request by the parent/resident, the matter will be referred to the Board (or, at the discretion of the Board, a sub-committee thereof) for a final appeal based upon a review of the case materials. The Board shall render its final decision to the parent/resident within 10 business days of the review.

The Board shall receive a report of each complaint that reaches the Superintendent's level.

In all steps following the first meeting of the staff member and parent/resident, the staff member and the parent/resident may bring one representative each to the meeting for advice and assistance, if either finds this necessary. This is not intended to mean that a lawyer needs to be brought in to such sessions as they are informal meetings and not legal hearings.

*This Regulation deals with complaints that are regarding instructional issues. The Superintendent or his designee may intervene in other complaints.

Ref: Education Law §§701; 702; 704; 3020a

Approved by Administrative Council: September 14, 2006; February 9, 2007; Sept. 11, 2014