



GRIEVANCE POLICY

(Approved by the Board 2016.11.09)

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and directions for the resolution of grievances.

In this regard, the objective is to perpetuate a climate of collegiality, mutual trust and respect by resolving differences in a timely, objective and equitable manner.

Scope

This procedure deals with grievances which are not covered by other established school policies. Such conflicts are often interpersonal in nature and usually fall into one of the following categories:

Parent conflicts with another parent, a teacher, a student, or a staff member

Teacher conflicts with another teacher, a parent, a student, or a staff member

Student conflicts with another student, a parent, a teacher, or a staff member

Staff member conflicts with another staff member, a parent, or a teacher

Note that grievances involving established school policy are routinely referred to and handled by the school principal and/or the appropriate school committee. This grievance policy is intended to apply to situations which are not to be addressed pursuant to other established policies. In cases where it is unclear whether this grievance policy should apply or another policy should apply, the principal shall make the determination.

Background

Disagreement may arise in any community. Such differences are an inevitable consequence of human interaction. In a majority of these situations, the parties involved resolve the problems. This procedure is designed to assist in the resolution of disagreements in those instances where the parties are unable to settle their differences.

Responsibility for Grievance Procedure

The Board of Trustees (Board) ultimately is responsible for ensuring that the process for resolution of grievances is followed. Authority for the process is routinely delegated as described below.



Basic Principle

There are five levels of conflict resolution, each to be followed in the order listed below. Ideally, grievances should be resolved at the lowest level possible. The school principal/supervisor, at his/her election, may elect to be present during any level of the resolution process after Level 1, as may the executive director, or Chairperson of the Board of Trustees or another member of the Board of Trustees designated by him/her.

Levels of Resolution

Level 1: Direct Resolution

The direct resolution process consists of a meeting or meetings between the parties involved without others in attendance. Unless there is a bona fide safety concern, an attempt at direct resolution is to be made prior to requesting administrative resolution.

Level 2: Administrative Resolution

The administrative resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved with the school principal/supervisor in attendance. At least one of the involved parties must request administrative resolution in writing and state explicitly that it is being requested under Level 2 of the school grievance policy.

An attempt at administrative resolution is to be made prior to requesting mediated resolution. Should the conflict involve the school principal/supervisor as an interested party, this level should be skipped and level 3 below should be initiated.

Level 3: Mediated Resolution

The mediated resolution process consists of a meeting or meetings between the parties involved with the executive director. At least one of the involved parties must request mediated resolution in writing and state explicitly that it is being requested under Level 3 of the school grievance policy.

In those cases, in which the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved, an appeal may be made to the conflict resolution committee. The appeal must be in writing and must be submitted to the school principal and executive director within ten (10) business days after conclusion of the mediation.

An attempt at mediated resolution is to be made prior to requesting resolution through the conflict resolution committee. Should the conflict involve the executive director as an interested party, this level should be skipped and level 4 should be initiated.

Level 4: Conflict Resolution Committee

Formal resolution consists of the submission of the particulars of the matter to the conflict resolution committee. The submission consists of a written narrative by all the parties, including the principal/supervisor and the executive director.



The conflict resolution committee is an advisory committee to the Board of Trustees. It consists of three members, one each from the Board of Trustees (who serves as chair), a faculty member appointed by the Board, and a parent appointed by the Board. The members are appointed by the Board of Trustees and serve a two-year term.

Ideally, the committee members will either be experienced in conflict resolution training or encouraged to participate in conflict resolution training.

If any party feels a member of the committee cannot serve due to a conflict of interest, their concern may be submitted to the Board of Trustees and an alternate will be appointed if determined by the Board to be beneficial or necessary.

The committee will review the written submissions. In addition, it may request interviews with any or all of the parties.

The decision of the conflict resolution committee is final unless the matter is appealed to the Board of Trustees and the Board agrees to hear the matter.

Level 5 Board of Trustees

Within fourteen (14) business days after final action is taken by the conflict resolution committee, any involved party may file a written appeal to the Board. The Board shall decide at its next regular meeting whether to hear the matter and set a date for hearing. If it chooses not to hear the matter, the decision of the conflict resolution committee shall be final. If the Board hears and decides the matter, the decision of the Board shall constitute the final decision of the school.

A dissatisfied party may have the right to seek a hearing before the body governing the school and/or may have other avenues of legal redress.

Exceptions

This procedure is designed to moderate the effects of and to assist in the resolution of all of the types of conflicts listed above. An exception will normally be made in the case of student conflicts with other persons and student conflicts with students. In those cases, every effort will be made to resolve the conflict at levels 1 or 2, with deference to the expertise and opinion of the teacher and principal and/or the matter may be subject to one or more other policies of the school. In such cases, the executive director is authorized to determine whether the matter should be resolved through the further levels of this grievance policy.

This policy supersedes all previous policies related to grievances.