

**Philosophy**

The Board believes student success is best achieved in a well-functioning, positive, nurturing, and collaborative community. Therefore, the District shall provide an equitable process for addressing community complaints that values individuals, fosters positive resolution, and preserves relationships.

**Guiding Principles**

The Board encourages members of the public to discuss concerns with an appropriate administrator who has the authority to address the concerns. Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.

Informal resolution shall be encouraged but shall not extend any deadlines in this policy, except by mutual written consent. [See GF(EXHIBIT)]

**Complaints**

In this policy, the terms “complaint” and “grievance” shall have the same meaning.

**Other Complaint Processes**

Complaints by residents of the District shall be filed in accordance with this policy, except as required by the policies listed below. Some of these policies require appeals to be submitted in accordance with GF after the relevant complaint process:

1. Complaints concerning instructional materials shall be filed in accordance with EF.
2. Complaints concerning a commissioned peace officer who is an employee of the District shall be filed in accordance with CKE.

Complaints regarding refusal of entry to or ejection from District property based on Education Code 37.105 shall be filed in accordance with this policy. The complainant shall be provided an opportunity to address the Board in person within 90 calendar days of filing the initial complaint, unless the complaint is resolved before the Board considers it. [See GKA(LEGAL)]

**Formal Process**

An individual may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint form.

Even after initiating the formal complaint process, individuals are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. An individual whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.

The process described in this policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Board policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or “mini-trial” at any level.

<b>Freedom from Retaliation</b>	Neither the Board nor any District employee shall unlawfully retaliate against any individual for bringing a concern or complaint.
<b>General Provisions</b> Filing	Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, by electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the appropriate administrator or designee by the close of business on the deadline. Filings submitted by electronic communication shall be timely filed if they are received by the close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the electronic communication. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are post-marked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate administrator or designated representative no more than three days after the deadline.
Scheduling Conferences	The District shall make reasonable attempts to schedule conferences at a mutually agreeable time. If the individual fails to appear at a scheduled conference, the District may hold the conference and issue a decision in the individual's absence.
Response	At Levels One and Two, "response" shall mean a written communication to the individual from the appropriate administrator. Responses may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communication to the individual's email address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the individual's mailing address of record. Mailed responses shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline.
Days	"Days" shall mean District business days, unless otherwise noted. In calculating timelines under this policy, the day a document is filed is "day zero." The following business day is "day one."
Representative	"Representative" shall mean any person who or organization that is designated by an individual to represent the individual in the complaint process.  The individual may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. If the individual designates a representative with fewer than three days' notice to the District before a scheduled conference or hearing, the District may reschedule the conference or hearing to a later date, if desired, in order to include the District's counsel. The District may be represented by counsel at any level of the process.
Consolidating Complaints	Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. An individual shall not file separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.

When two or more complaints are sufficiently similar to permit their resolution through one proceeding, the District, at its discretion, may consolidate the complaints.

Timely Filings

All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent.

If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the individual, at any point during the complaint process. The individual may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten days from the date of the written dismissal notice, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.

Costs Incurred

Each party shall pay its own costs incurred in the course of the complaint.

Complaint and Appeal Forms

Complaints and appeals under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the District. [See GF(EXHIBIT)]

Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the individual does not have copies of these documents, they may be presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted by the individual unless the individual did not know the documents existed before the Level One conference.

A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed but may be refiled with all the required information if the refiling is within the designated time for filing.

**Level One**

Complaint forms must be filed with the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) within ten days of the date the individual first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance.

A DSA employee shall note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the administrator who will hear the complaint at Level One. If the only administrator who has authority to remedy the alleged problem is the Superintendent or designee, the complaint may begin at Level Two following the procedure, including deadlines, for filing the complaint form at Level One.

The Level One administrator shall investigate as necessary and schedule a conference with the individual within ten days after receipt of the written complaint. The Level One administrator may set reasonable time limits for the conference and may make an audio recording of the conference.

Absent extenuating circumstances, the Level One administrator shall provide the individual a written response within ten days following the conference. The written response shall set forth the basis of the decision. In reaching a decision, the Level One administrator may consider information provided at the Level One conference and any other relevant documents or information the Level One administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

## **Level Two**

If the individual did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, he or she may file an appeal of the Level One decision.

The appeal notice must be filed in writing to the DSA, on a form provided by the District, within ten days of the date of the written Level One response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level One response deadline.

After receiving notice of the appeal, a DSA employee shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the Level Two administrator. The individual may request a copy of the Level One record.

The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. All other documents submitted by the individual at Level One.
3. The written response issued at Level One and any attachments.
4. All other documents relied upon by the Level One administrator in reaching the Level One decision.
5. The transcript of the Level One conference, if any.

The Level Two administrator shall schedule a conference within ten days after the appeal notice is filed. The conference shall be limited to the issues and documents considered at Level One. At the conference, the individual may provide information concerning any documents or information relied upon by the administration for the Level One decision. The Level Two administrator may set reasonable time limits for the conference.

The Level Two administrator shall provide the individual a written response within ten days following the conference. The written response shall set forth the basis of the decision. In reaching a decision, the Level Two administrator may consider the Level One record, information provided at the Level Two conference, and any other relevant documents or information the Level Two administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

The Level Two conference shall be recorded. Recordings shall be maintained with the Level One and Level Two records.

**Level Three**

If the individual did not receive the relief requested at Level Two or if the time for a response has expired, he or she may appeal the decision to the Board, or, at the Board's discretion, to a designated hearing officer who shall, in turn, make a written recommendation for disposition to the Board. [See If Hearing Officer Hears the Appeal, below]

The appeal notice must be filed in writing to the DSA, on a form provided by the District, within ten days of the date of the written Level Two response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level Two response deadline.

**If Board Hears the Appeal**

The Superintendent or designee shall inform the individual of the date, time, and place of the Board meeting at which the complaint will be on the agenda for presentation to the Board.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the Board the record of the Level Two appeal at least five days prior to the Level Three hearing. The individual may request a copy of the Level Two record.

The Level Two record shall include:

1. The Level One record.
2. The notice of appeal from Level One to Level Two.
3. Transcript of the Level Two conference.
4. The written response issued at Level Two and any attachments.
5. All other documents relied upon by the Level Two administrator in reaching the Level Two decision.

The appeal shall be limited to the issues and documents considered at Level Two, except that if at the Level Three hearing the administration or individual intends to rely on evidence not included in the Level Two record, the administration or individual shall provide the employee or individual notice of the nature of the evidence at least three days before the hearing.

The District shall determine whether the complaint will be presented in open or closed meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and other applicable law. [See BE]

The presiding officer may set reasonable time limits and guidelines for the presentation, including an opportunity for the individual and administration to each make a presentation and provide rebuttal

and an opportunity for questioning by the Board. The Board shall hear the complaint and may request that the administration provide an explanation for the decisions at the preceding levels.

In addition to any other record of the Board meeting required by law, the Board shall prepare a separate record of the Level Three presentation. The Level Three presentation, including the presentation by the individual or his or her representative, any presentation from the administration, and questions from the Board with responses, shall be recorded by audio recording, video/audio recording, or court reporter.

The Board shall then consider the complaint. It may give notice of its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If the Board does not make a decision regarding the complaint by the end of the next regularly scheduled meeting, the lack of a response by the Board upholds the administrative decision at Level Two.

If Hearing Officer  
Hears the Appeal

If the Board designates a hearing officer to hear the Level Three appeal, he or she shall follow the Level Three procedures and timelines described above and at the end of the process shall prepare a written recommendation for the Board's consideration. A copy of the hearing officer's recommendation shall be provided to the complainant and to the administration.

Hearing officers may be District employees who were not involved in the subject matter of the grievance or the grievance process. Hearing officers may also be impartial persons retained by the Board and not employed by the District.

*Board's Review*

The Board shall review the hearing officer's written recommendation at its first regular meeting following receipt of same. The complainant and the administration shall be given an opportunity at the meeting to respond to the hearing officer's recommendation either orally or in writing, at the Board's election.

*Board's Decision*

The Board shall then make and communicate its decision at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Board may decide to accept, reject, or modify the recommendation of the hearing officer.