PROPOSED REVISIONS

Complaints

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

Other Complaint Processes

Complaints by members of the public 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 resources shall be submitted in accordance with the EF series.
2. Complaints concerning a commissioned peace officer who is an employee of the District shall be submitted in accordance with the CKE series.

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. However, the timelines shall be adjusted as necessary to permit the complainant 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)]

Informal Process

The Board encourages 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.

Filing Deadlines

If a member of the public has engaged in the informal process in an attempt to resolve the complaint with the District and has not reached a resolution during the process, the individual must file a complaint within 15 business 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.

Deadline Extensions

All deadlines shall be strictly followed unless otherwise required by law or modified by mutual written consent.

Formal Process

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

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.

The complaint form shall be filed with the lowest level administrator who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem. In most circumstances, the individual shall file a Level One complaint with the campus principal for any complaint on a matter related to a campus. For a complaint that arises on a matter that is unrelated to a campus, the complaint shall be filed with the appropriate District-level administrator.

If the subject matter of the complaint requires a Board decision, is a complaint about a Board member, or is a complaint about the Superintendent, the complaint shall be initiated at the Board level. A preliminary hearing to develop a record or recommendation for the Board may be conducted by an appropriate administrator.

A Board member shall be permitted to file a complaint under this policy, but, if the complaint is considered by the Board or Board committee, the Board member shall be prohibited from voting on the Board's or Board committee's decision.

If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate administrator, the receiving administrator must note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the appropriate administrator.

Option to Continue Informal Process

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

Notice of Complaint

A District employee against whom a complaint has been filed shall be provided notice of the complaint in accordance with administrative regulations. The employee shall have sufficient opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint that shall be included in the record of the complaint.

Freedom from Retaliation

Neither the Board nor any District employee shall unlawfully retaliate against any individual for bringing a concern or complaint.

General Provisions

Filing

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, by electronic communication, 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 postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate administrator or designated representative no more than three business days after the deadline.

Scheduling Hearings	The District shall make reasonable attempts to schedule hearings at a mutually agreeable time. If the complainant fails to appear at a scheduled hearing, the District may hold the hearing and issue a decision in the complainant's absence.
Decision	A "decision" shall mean a written communication to the complainant from the appropriate administrator that provides an explanation of the basis of the decision, an indication of each document that supports the decision, and any relief or redress to be provided. A decision shall be issued on the merits of the concern raised in the complaint notwithstanding any procedural errors or the type of relief or redress requested. The decision shall also include information regarding the filing of an appeal in accordance with this policy. After a hearing at Level Three, the decision shall include information on submitting an appeal to the commissioner. A decision may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communication to the complainant's email address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the complainant's mailing address of record. Mailed decisions shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline.
Representative	"Representative" shall mean any person who or organization that is designated by a complainant to represent the complainant in the complaint process. The complainant may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. The representative may participate in person or by telephone conference call. If the complainant designates a representative with fewer than three business days' notice to the District before a scheduled hearing, the District may reschedule the 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	To promote efficiency in addressing complaints, the appropriate administrator shall determine if separate or serial complaints arising from an event or series of related events shall be consolidated.
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 on a form provided by the District. Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be included with the complaint form. If the complainant does not have copies of these documents, copies may be presented at the Level

	One hearing. After the Level One hearing, the complainant may supplement the record with additional documents or include additional claims.
Record	A record of each complaint hearing shall be created and retained in accordance with this policy. The record shall include documents submitted by the complainant, documents determined relevant by District personnel, and the decision.
Remand	A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect shall be refiled, if at Level One, and remanded at all other levels in order to develop an adequate record of the complaint. If an adequate record has not been developed, the appropriate administrator may remand the complaint to a lower level. The Board or Board committee may remand a complaint to a lower level if at the Board level of review an adequate record has not been developed.
Assignment of Hearing Officer	When a District employee is the subject of a complaint, the hearing shall be conducted by an administrator who is in a supervisory or higher organizational role. The District employee who is the subject of the complaint shall recuse themselves from reviewing the complaint at any level in the process.
Investigation	The District may conduct an investigation at any level in the complaint process. If the District and the complainant mutually agree, all deadlines shall be suspended during an investigation.
Complaint Levels	
Level One	At Level One, the appropriate hearing officer shall hold a hearing with the complainant within 10 calendar days after receipt of the written complaint. The hearing officer may set reasonable time limits for the hearing. The hearing officer shall provide the complainant a decision within 20 calendar days following the hearing. In reaching a decision, the hearing officer may consider information provided with the complaint form and any other relevant documents or information the hearing officer believes will help resolve the complaint.
Level Two	If the complainant did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a decision has expired, the complainant may request a hearing at Level Two to appeal the Level One decision. The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the District, within 20 calendar days of the date of the Level One decision or, if no decision has been communicated to the complainant, within 20 calendar days of the Level One decision deadline.

After receiving notice of the appeal, the Level One hearing officer shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the Level Two hearing officer ~~and provide a copy of the Level One record to the complainant.~~ The complainant may request a copy of the Level One record.

The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. Any other documents submitted by the complainant at Level One.
3. If the complaint is against a District employee, the written response of the District employee, if any.
4. The decision issued at Level One and any attachments.
5. All other documents relied upon by the Level One hearing officer in reaching the Level One decision.

The hearing officer shall hold a hearing within 10 calendar days after the appeal notice is filed. The hearing officer may set reasonable time limits for the hearing.

The hearing officer shall provide the complainant a decision within 20 calendar days following the hearing. In reaching a decision, the hearing officer may consider the Level One record, any additional information provided prior to the Level Two hearing, and any other relevant documents or information the hearing officer believes will help resolve the complaint.

Recordings of the Level One and Level Two hearings, if any, shall be maintained with the Level One and Level Two records.

Level Three

If the complainant did not receive the relief requested at Level Two or if the time for a decision has expired, he or she may appeal the decision to the Board.

The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the District, within 20 calendar days of the date of the Level Two decision or, if no decision has been communicated to the complainant, within 20 calendar days of the Level Two decision deadline.

Unless the Board delegates a committee in accordance with law, the Board shall hear the appeal of the Level Two decision.

After receiving notice of the appeal, the Board or Board committee shall hold a meeting to discuss the complaint no later than 60 calendar days after the date on which the Level Two decision was made.

The Superintendent shall inform the complainant whether the Board or a Board committee will hear the appeal and of the date, time, and place of the meeting at which the complaint will be on the agenda for presentation to the Board or Board committee.

At least five business days before the Board or Board committee meeting, the Superintendent shall provide the complainant a description of any information the Board intends to rely on that is not contained in the record created at the previous hearing levels, including any preliminary hearing.

The Superintendent shall provide the Board the record of the Level Two appeal. The complainant 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. Any other documents submitted by the complainant at Level Two.
4. The decision issued at Level Two and any attachments.
5. All other documents relied upon by the administration in reaching the Level Two decision.

The complainant may request that the complaint be heard in open or closed meeting. The District shall honor that request unless the Texas Open Meetings Act or other applicable law requires otherwise. [See BE]

At the meeting, the presiding officer may set reasonable time limits and guidelines for the presentation, including an opportunity for the complainant and administration to each make a presentation and provide rebuttal and an opportunity for questioning by Board members.

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

The Board or Board committee shall then consider the complaint. It shall make a decision no later than 30 calendar days after the date of the Board or Board committee meeting at which the complaint

was presented. The complainant shall be provided a decision in accordance with this policy and state law.