

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 filed submitted in accordance with the EF series.
2. Complaints concerning a commissioned peace officer who is an employee of the District shall be filed 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)]

~~Guiding Principles~~ 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.

~~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.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.
<u>Option to Continue Informal Process</u>	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.
<u>Notice of Complaint</u>	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	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
Filing	

	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 <u>business</u> days after the deadline.
Scheduling Conferences<u>Hearin</u> <u>gs</u>	The District shall make reasonable attempts to schedule confer- ences<u>hearings</u> at a mutually agreeable time. If the individual<u>com- plainant</u> fails to appear at a scheduled conference<u>hearing</u>, the Dis- trict may hold the conference<u>hearing</u> and issue a decision in the individual's<u>complainant's</u> absence.
Response At Levels One and Two, "response"<u>Decision</u>	A "<u>decision</u>" shall mean a written communication to the individual<u>complainant</u> from the appropriate administrator. Responses may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communication to the individ- ual's email address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the individ- ual's mailing address of record. Mailed responses that provides an explanation of the basis of the decision, an indication of each docu- ment 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. <u>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 ap- peal to the commissioner.</u> <u>A decision may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communica- tion to the complainant's email address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the complainant's mailing address of record. Mailed deci- sions shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or be- fore the deadline.</u>
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<u>a complainant</u> to represent the individu- al<u>complainant</u> in the complaint process. The individual<u>complainant</u> may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. If the indi- vidual<u>The representative may participate in person or by telephone conference call. If the complainant</u> designates a representative with fewer than three <u>business</u> 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.

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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 To promote efficiency in addressing complaints, the appropriate administrator shall determine if separate or serial complaints arising from anyan event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.~~

Untimely 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 timelinessrelated 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 ~~in writing~~ on a form provided by the District.

Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be ~~at-
tached to~~included with the complaint form. If the ~~individualcom-
plainant~~ does not have copies of these documents, ~~they~~copies may be presented at the Level One ~~conference~~hearing. After the Level One ~~conference~~, ~~no new documents may be submitted by the indi-
vidual unless the individual did not know the documents existed
before the Level One conference~~hearing, the complainant may
supplement the record with additional documents or include addi-
tional 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 as-
pect mayshall be dismissed but may be refiled with all the required
information if the refiling is within the designated time for filing re-
filed, 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 ad-
ministrator 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 devel-
oped.

**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.

Level One

Complaint forms must be filed:

1. Within 15 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; and
2. With the lowest level administrator who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem.

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.

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.

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

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~~Absent extenuating circumstances, the 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 administrator may consider information provided at the Level One conference and any other relevant documents or information the administrator investigates.~~

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.

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.

If the individual complainant did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response decision has expired, he or she the complainant may request a conference with the Superintendent or designee 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 ten 20 calendar days of the date of the written Level One response decision or, if no response was received, within ten decision has been communicated to the complainant, within 20 calendar days of the Level One response decision deadline.

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

The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. ~~All~~Any other documents submitted by the individual complainant at Level One.
3. ~~The~~If the complaint is against a District employee, the written response of the District employee, if any.
- ~~3.4.~~4. The decision issued at Level One and any attachments.
- ~~4.5.~~5. All other documents relied upon by the Level One administrator hearing officer in reaching the Level One decision.

The Superintendent or designee shall schedule a conference within ten hearing officer shall hold a hearing within 10 calendar days after the appeal notice is filed. The conference shall be limited

Level Three

~~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 Superintendent or designee may set reasonable time limits for the conference.~~hearing officer may set reasonable time limits for the hearing.

~~The Superintendent or designee~~hearing officer shall provide the ~~individual a written response within ten~~complainant a decision within 20 calendar days following the ~~conference.~~The written response shall set forth the basis of the decisionhearing. In reaching a decision, the ~~Superintendent or designee~~hearing officer may consider the Level One record, any additional information provided ~~at~~prior to the Level Two ~~conference~~hearing, and any other relevant documents or information the ~~Superintendent or designee~~hearing officer believes will help resolve the complaint.

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

If the ~~individual~~complainant did not receive the relief requested at Level Two or if the time for a ~~response~~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 ~~ten~~20 calendar days of the date of the ~~written~~ Level Two ~~response~~decision or, if no ~~response was received, within~~ ~~tendecision has been communicated to the complainant, within 20~~ calendar days of the Level Two ~~response~~decision deadline.

~~The Superintendent or designee shall inform the individual of the date, time, and place of the Board~~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 Boardor Board committee.

~~The Superintendent or designee shall provide the Board the record of the Level Two appeal. The individual~~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. The written responseAny other documents submitted by the complainant at Level Two.
- 3.4. The decision issued at Level Two and any attachments.
- 4.5. All other documents relied upon by the administration 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 intends to rely on evidence not included in the Level Two record, the administration shall provide the 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 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 individual complainant 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.~~ members.

In addition to any other record of the ~~Board~~ 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 individual complainant or ~~his or her~~ the complainant's representative, any presentation from the administration, and questions from ~~the 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 ~~may give notice of its~~shall make a 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~~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.