

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
STUDENT AND PARENT COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES

FNG  
(LOCAL)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	The Board encourages students and parents to discuss their concerns and complaints through informal conferences with the appropriate teacher, principal, or other campus administrator.
INFORMAL PROCESS	Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.
FORMAL PROCESS	<p>If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the student or parent, the student or parent may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint form.</p> <p>Even after initiating the formal complaint process, students and parents are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A student or parent whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.</p> <p>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.</p>
FREEDOM FROM RETALIATION	Neither the Board nor any District employee shall unlawfully retaliate against any student or parent for bringing a concern or complaint.
NOTICE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS	The District shall inform students and parents of this policy.
COMPLAINTS	In this policy, the terms "complaint" and "grievance" shall have the same meaning. This policy shall apply to all student and parent complaints, except as provided below.
EXCEPTIONS	<p>This policy shall not apply to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on race, color, gender, national origin, disability, or religion. [See FFH]</li><li>2. Complaints concerning dating violence. [See FFH]</li><li>3. Complaints concerning retaliation related to discrimination and harassment. [See FFH]</li><li>4. Complaints concerning bullying. [See FFI]</li><li>5. Complaints concerning loss of credit on the basis of attendance. [See FEC]</li><li>6. Complaints concerning removal to a disciplinary alternative education program. [See FOC]</li></ol>

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7. Complaints concerning expulsion. [See FOD and the Student Code of Conduct]
8. Complaints concerning identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student with a disability within the scope of Section 504. [See FB]
9. Complaints concerning identification, evaluation, educational placement, or discipline of a student with a disability within the scope of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. [See EHBA, FOF, and the parents' rights handbook provided to parents of all students referred to special education]
10. Complaints concerning instructional materials. [See EFA]
11. Complaints concerning a commissioned peace officer who is an employee of the District. [See CKE]
12. Complaints concerning intradistrict transfers or campus assignments. [See FDB]

GENERAL  
PROVISIONS

FILING

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, fax, or 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. Fax filings shall be timely filed if they are received on or before the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the fax copy. 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 days after the deadline.

RESPONSE

At Levels One and Two, "response" shall mean a written communication to the student or parent from the appropriate administrator. Responses may be hand-delivered or sent by U.S. Mail to the student's or parent'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. In calculating time lines 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 the student or parent to represent the student or parent in the complaint process. A student may be represented by an adult at any level of the complaint.

The student or parent may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. If the student or parent designates a representative with fewer than three days'

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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. A student or parent shall not bring separate or serial complaints arising from any 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 student or parent, at any point during the complaint process. The student or parent 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 FORM

Complaints 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 attached to the complaint form. If the student or parent does not have copies of these documents, copies may be presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted by the student or parent unless the student or parent did not know the documents existed before the Level One conference.

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

LEVEL ONE

Complaint forms must be filed:

1. Within 15 days of the date the student or parent 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.

In most circumstances, students and parents shall file Level One complaints with the campus principal.

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 hold a conference with the student or parent within ten days after receipt of the written complaint. The administrator may set reasonable time limits for the conference.

The administrator shall provide the student or parent 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 relevant documents or information the administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

#### LEVEL TWO

If the student or parent did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, the student or parent may request a conference with the Superintendent or designee to appeal the Level One decision.

The appeal notice must be filed in writing, 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, the Level One administrator shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the Level Two administrator. The student or parent 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 student or parent 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.

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The Superintendent or designee shall hold a conference within ten days after the appeal notice is filed. The conference shall be limited to the issues presented by the student or parent at Level One and identified in the Level Two appeal notice. At the conference, the student or parent may provide information concerning any documents or information relied on by the administration for the Level One decision. The Superintendent or designee may set reasonable time limits for the conference.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the student or parent 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 Superintendent or designee may consider the Level One record, information provided at the Level Two conference, and any other relevant documents or information the Superintendent or designee believes will help resolve the complaint.

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

LEVEL THREE

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

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

The Superintendent or designee shall inform the student or parent 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 complaint. The student or parent may request a copy of the Level Two record.

The Level Two record shall include:

1. The Level One record.
2. The written response issued at Level Two and any attachments.
3. All other documents relied upon by the administration in reaching the Level Two decision.

If, at the Level Three hearing, the administration intends to rely on evidence not included in the records, the administration shall provide the student or parent notice of the nature of the evidence at least three days before the hearing.

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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 student or parent 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 student or parent or the student's 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.

BOARD MEETINGS  
CLOSED MEETINGS

BEC  
(LEGAL)

EXCEPTIONS FOR  
CLOSED MEETINGS

The Board may conduct a closed meeting for the purposes described in the following provisions:

ATTORNEY  
CONSULTATION

1. The Board may conduct a private consultation with its attorney only when it seeks the attorney's advice about pending or contemplated litigation or a settlement offer or on a matter in which the duty of the attorney to the Board under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas clearly conflicts with the requirement for open meetings. *Gov't Code 551.071* [See BE for permissible methods of communication for attorney consultations]

REAL PROPERTY

2. The Board may conduct a closed meeting to deliberate the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property if deliberation in an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the Board's position in negotiations with a third person. *Gov't Code 551.072*

PROSPECTIVE GIFT

3. The Board may conduct a closed meeting to deliberate a negotiated contract for a prospective gift or donation to the District if deliberation in an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the Board's position in negotiations with a third person. *Gov't Code 551.073*

PERSONNEL  
MATTERS

4. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee or to hear a complaint or charge against an officer or employee. However, the Board may not conduct a closed meeting for these purposes if the officer or employee who is the subject of the deliberation or hearing requests a public hearing. *Gov't Code 551.074*

The closed meeting exception for personnel matters does not apply when the Board discusses an independent contractor who is not a school employee, such as an engineering, architectural, or consultant firm, or when the Board discusses a class or group of employees, not a particular employee. *Atty. Gen. Op. MW-129 (1980), Atty. Gen. Op. H-496 (1975)*

EMPLOYEE-  
EMPLOYEE  
COMPLAINTS

The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate in a case in which a complaint or charge is brought against a District employee by another employee and the complaint or charge directly results in the need for a hearing. However, the Board may not conduct a closed meeting for this purpose if the employee against whom the complaint or charge is brought makes a written request for an open hearing. *Gov't Code 551.082*

BOARD MEETINGS  
CLOSED MEETINGS

BEC  
(LEGAL)

STUDENT  
DISCIPLINE

5. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate in a case involving discipline of a public school child. However, the Board may not conduct a closed meeting for this purpose if the child's parent or guardian makes a written request for an open hearing. *Gov't Code 551.082*

PERSONALLY  
IDENTIFIABLE  
STUDENT  
INFORMATION

6. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate a matter regarding a student if personally identifiable information about the student will necessarily be revealed by the deliberation.

Directory information about a public school student is considered to be personally identifiable information about the student for this purpose only if a parent or guardian of the student, or the student if the student has attained 18 years of age, has informed the District that the directory information should not be released without prior consent. [See FL]

This exception does not apply if an open meeting about the matter is requested in writing by a parent or guardian of the student or by the student if the student has attained 18 years of age.

*Gov't Code 551.0821*

MEDICAL OR  
PSYCHIATRIC  
RECORDS

7. A board that administers a public insurance, health, or retirement plan is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate:
- a. The medical records or psychiatric records of an individual applicant for a benefit from the plan; or
  - b. A matter that includes a consideration of information in the medical or psychiatric records of an individual applicant for a benefit from the plan.

*Gov't Code 551.0785*

SECURITY

8. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate:
- a. The deployment, or specific occasions for implementation, of security personnel or devices; or
  - b. A security audit.

*Gov't Code 551.076*

ASSESSMENT  
INSTRUMENTS

9. The Board shall conduct a closed meeting to discuss or adopt individual assessment instruments or assessment instrument items. *Education Code 39.030(a)*



BOARD MEETINGS  
CLOSED MEETINGS

BEC  
(LEGAL)

EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT

10. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting to deliberate information confidential under Government Code 418.175–418.182, relating to Homeland Security. However, the Board must make a tape recording of the proceedings of a closed meeting held to deliberate the information. *Gov't Code 418.183(f)*

ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT  
NEGOTIATIONS

11. The Board is not required to conduct an open meeting:
- a. To discuss or deliberate regarding commercial or financial information that the Board has received from a business prospect that the Board seeks to have locate, stay, or expand in or near the District and with which the Board is conducting economic development negotiations; or
  - b. To deliberate the offer of a financial or other incentive to such a business prospect.

*Gov't Code 551.087*

PROCEDURES FOR  
CLOSED MEETINGS

If a closed meeting is allowed, the Board shall not conduct the closed meeting unless a quorum of the Board first convenes in an open meeting for which proper notice has been given [see BE] and the presiding officer has publicly announced that a closed meeting will be held and has identified the section or sections of the Open Meetings Act or other applicable law under which the closed meeting is held. *Gov't Code 551.101*

VOTE OR FINAL  
ACTION

A final action, decision, or vote on a matter deliberated in a closed meeting shall be made only in an open meeting for which proper notice has been given. *Gov't Code 551.102* [See BE]

CERTIFIED AGENDA  
OR TAPE RECORDING

The Board shall either keep a certified agenda or make a tape recording of the proceedings of each closed meeting, except for private consultation with the District's attorney. The certified agenda must include a statement of the subject matter of each deliberation, a record of any further action taken, and an announcement by the presiding officer at the beginning and end of the closed meeting indicating the date and time. A presiding officer shall certify that a certified agenda is a true and correct record of the proceedings. If a tape recording is made, it must include announcements by the presiding officer at the beginning and end of the meeting indicating the date and time. *Gov't Code 551.103*

Closed meetings may not be recorded by an individual trustee against the wishes of a majority of the Board. *Zamora v. Edgewood ISD*, 592 S.W.2d 649 (Tex. App.—San Antonio, 1979, writ *ref'd n.r.e.*)

BOARD MEETINGS  
CLOSED MEETINGS

BEC  
(LEGAL)

PRESERVATION	The Board shall preserve the certified agenda or tape recording of a closed meeting for at least two years after the date of the meeting. If a legal action involving the meeting is brought within that period, the Board shall preserve the certified agenda or tape recording while the action is pending. <i>Gov't Code 551.104(a)</i>
PUBLIC ACCESS	A certified agenda or tape recording of a closed meeting is available for public inspection and copying only under a court order issued as a result of litigation involving an alleged violation of the Open Meetings Act. <i>Gov't Code 551.104(b), (c)</i>
PROHIBITIONS	<p>No Board member shall participate in a closed meeting knowing that neither a certified agenda nor a tape recording of the closed meeting is being made. <i>Gov't Code 551.145</i></p> <p>No individual, corporation, or partnership shall without lawful authority disclose to a member of the public the certified agenda or tape recording of a meeting that was lawfully closed to the public. <i>Gov't Code 551.146</i></p> <p>No Board member shall knowingly call or aid in calling or organizing a closed meeting that is not permitted under the Open Meetings Act, close or aid in closing a regular meeting to the public except as permitted under the Open Meetings Act, or participate in a closed meeting that is not permitted under the Open Meetings Act. <i>Gov't Code 551.144(a)</i></p>
AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE	It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under Subsection 551.144(a) that a Board member acted in reasonable reliance on a court order or a written interpretation of the open meetings law contained in an opinion of a court of record, the attorney general, or the Board's attorney. <i>Gov't Code 551.144(c)</i>