



Book	POLICY MANUAL
Section	800 SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS
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The School Board believes that the School Board and school staff should welcome and respond to concerns and complaints from the public. A concern is defined as “a cause of anxiety or worry.” A complaint is defined as “a statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.” For the purposes of this policy, the terms are used interchangeably and the process for resolving concerns or complaints is identical.

The School Board relies on its teachers, staff, and administrators to resolve such concerns or complaints of the public. It is the policy of the District to provide for such resolutions first at the level most directly involved and in an informal manner, whenever possible. Further, if such resolution cannot be accomplished, procedures shall be available for review at the highest administrative level with an ultimate opportunity for appeal to the School Board.

Nothing in this policy or its implementing procedures is intended to supersede timelines or procedures specified in other policies of the District or in other applicable legally-mandated timelines or processes.

While staff members are expected to respond to verbally-presented complaints and concerns in a respectful, timely, and otherwise appropriate manner, the primary purpose of this rule is to provide procedures for the handling of public complaints that have been submitted in writing. These procedures are not intended to address complaints of misconduct by the Superintendent, which should instead be submitted to the School Board President via written letter or email. If the complaint is regarding a School Board member, please refer to Policy 167 Public Complaints Regarding School Board Members.

1. **Submitting a Complaint** – To ensure that District staff will respond to the issue as a formal complaint under these procedures and to avoid miscommunication, the District strongly encourages all complaints under these procedures to be submitted in writing. Complaints should be first made to the school employee most closely involved in the situation or issue. In particular:
 - a. Complaints about matters relating to individual employees, if they have not been resolved informally via direct communication with the employee, should be made to the employee’s immediate supervisor.
 - b. Complaints about a school-level matter should be made to the building principal.
 - c. Complaints about a support service (such as transportation), District finances or policies, or other District-level matters should be made to the building principal, the Superintendent, or another supervisor or administrator who is responsible for the function in question.
 - d. Complainants not sure whom to contact should contact the office of the Superintendent to obtain further direction. If the School Board President receives a complaint, it will be forwarded to the office of the Superintendent.

Staff have discretion to notify a complainant that a verbal complaint is being treated and processed in the same manner as a formal, written complaint under these procedures.

This policy will not apply to anonymous complaints. If an anonymous complaint is received, it will be reviewed; however, it will not be considered a formal complaint and the process within the policy will not be applied.

There is no absolute deadline for the filing of a complaint. However, the District can usually respond most effectively when the complaint is filed shortly after the occurrence of the event(s) giving rise to the complaint. Timeliness may be considered in the response to any complaint or appeal.

2. **District Response to a Public Complaint** – Upon receipt of a complaint under these procedures, District staff will first determine how to route and process the complaint. In particular, District staff are expected to choose the most appropriate of the following options:

- a. Staff will refer the complaint to the school employee most closely involved in the situation or issue. Within two business days, the immediate supervisor, principal, or designee will contact the complainant to coordinate a mutually agreed upon date and time to meet. Unless additional time is needed to gather information, in which case, the complainant will be given a timeline, a response should be expected within ten business days.
- b. If the District staff determines that a general complaint brought forward under these procedures should be processed under another District policy or procedure, staff will inform the complainant of that assessment and route the complaint to that more-applicable process.
- c. In relatively rare circumstances, staff may determine that a complaint is not amenable to processing under any District-established procedure, or that it should be rejected or dismissed for some other reason. If the Superintendent agrees with this assessment, the Superintendent or his/her designee will notify the complainant of the determination and offer the complainant an opportunity to request reconsideration of the dismissal/rejection from the Superintendent.
- d. Staff may determine that the complaint will be further processed under these procedures. If the School Board President receives a complaint, the complaint will be shared with the Superintendent.

Staff and administration have primary responsibility for responding to public complaints. School Board members receiving public complaints should refer the complainant to the Superintendent or other appropriate staff person. This is not intended to prevent the School Board from discussing the subjects of public complaints or overseeing the proper management of the complaints, but rather to allow the most appropriate “source” for answers or resolution to the complaints to be able to investigate them and respond to them first.

3. **Appeals and Requests for Reconsideration**– Complaints not resolved following communication with the employee(s) most closely involved in the situation or issue may be appealed or brought forward for reconsideration using the following procedure:

- a. The complainant shall notify (as he/she determines is most appropriate in light of the specific issue or after consulting with the office of the Superintendent) either the building principal, a support service supervisor or director, or the office of the Superintendent, of his/her desire to appeal an unresolved complaint. Where an administrative employee provided the initial response to the complaint, such notification will automatically be treated as a request for reconsideration.
- b. The District will assign an administrative employee to further investigate the complaint and to issue an administrative response to the complainant.
- c. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the administrative response on appeal/reconsideration, the complainant may request a final administrative review/reconsideration of the complaint from the Superintendent. The Superintendent will then provide the final administrative response to the complaint.

Complaints not resolved with the Superintendent may be appealed to the School Board. Appeals to the School Board shall be made in writing and presented to the School Board President. The Superintendent shall in conjunction with other staff prepare a report with information about the complaint, the District’s response(s) and recommendations to the School Board. The School Board shall base its decision on this report unless it desires to meet with the complainant, meet with any staff member, order further investigation, or otherwise supplement the record. The School Board reserves the right to summarily affirm or reverse the final administrative response with or without further comment or explanation. The timeline for resolving appeals reviewed by the School Board will be provided to the complainant.