

Complaints Concerning Staff and Programs

Program; Policy and Procedures; Actions and Decision Complaints

The Bellevue School District (“the district”) promotes a culture that is welcoming and open, defined by mutual respect and shared responsibility, and treats students, staff, parents, and community members with respect and dignity. As such, the district encourages communication at the lowest level possible to directly solve concerns or complaints. The district is committed to resolving concerns and complaints about school and district programs, policies, procedures, actions, and decisions of employees in an effective, efficient, and timely manner. Teachers, staff, or administrators charged with responsibility for programs, policies and/or procedures, and/or supervision of employees expect that complainants (parents, staff, students, or community members) will first bring their complaints to them for informal resolution before making a formal complaint.

At any time in the process described below, the Bellevue School District may address the complaint for review under another process defined in other Bellevue School District policies, including but not limited to Policy 3207 (Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying), Policy 3210 (Nondiscrimination), Policy 3241 (Classroom Management, Corrective Actions and Punishment), Policy 2151 (Interscholastic Athletics), Policy 5010 (Non-Discrimination and Affirmative Action), Policy 5011 (Sexual Harassment) and grievance procedures outlined in collective bargaining agreements which more appropriately address the issues involved.

Failure by the complainant to file a timely appeal of a response at any step of the process will end the complaint. A failure by the district to provide a timely response at any step shall entitle the complainant to file an appeal at the next step in the process.

For complainants whose first language is not English, the district will make every effort to provide an interpreter to assist the complainant in resolving their concerns and complaints.

This procedure is not to be used for disciplinary matters related to students covered by WAC 392-400.

STEP 1: INFORMAL COMPLAINT AND RESOLUTION PROCESS

Complainants are strongly encouraged to share their complaints either orally or in writing by scheduling a meeting or communicating directly with the person responsible for the program, event, action, or decision.

When addressing such an informal complaint, the involved parties should:

- A. Begin the conversation with the acknowledgement that each is operating with the best of intentions;
- B. Work collaboratively to understand the other’s point of view; and
- C. Work to resolve the concern through conversation before initiating a formal complaint.

STEP 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS – BUILDING LEVEL

If a complaint has not been resolved at Step 1, the complainant may initiate a formal complaint at Step 2. In some instances, an informal attempt to resolve a complaint may not occur.

Complaints related to or about a building administrator (principal or assistant principal) that were not resolved at Step 1 will bypass Step 2 and shall proceed directly to Step 3 of this process.

A formal complaint received at Step 2 may be referred back to Step 1 for informal resolution if Step 1 had not previously been attempted for the complaint.

Notice Requirement

Formal complaints are NOT CONFIDENTIAL. If the formal complaint concerns a staff member, that person shall be notified of the complaint and provided with a copy of the written complaint as soon as is reasonably possible. The staff member will be afforded all rights of due process as an employee, including rights delineated in applicable collective bargaining agreements.

How to Submit a Formal Complaint

The formal complaint must be:

- A. In writing;
- B. Submitted within thirty (30) calendar days of the alleged incident or condition causing the complaint; or
- C. Within thirty (30) days of the last attempt to resolve the issue at the informal (Step 1) level.
- D. Directed to the person responsible for the program, policy and/or procedure, and/or supervision of personnel and shall include:
 - a. Detailed statement of the complaint;
 - b. Steps taken to address the complaint; and
 - c. Suggested resolution(s) to be considered.

See Procedure 4220P Exhibit A for a Complaint Reporting Form.

Investigation and Resolution Process

The person responsible for the program, policy and/or procedure, and/or supervision of personnel shall meet with the complainant for the purpose of understanding the complaint, what resolutions have already been considered, and other remedies which may be considered. Should additional investigation be required after this initial meeting, including a review of relevant materials and interviews with witnesses and any accused persons, the complainant shall be notified as soon as possible to ensure completion of the investigation.

Wherever possible, the person responsible for the program, policy and/or procedure, and/or supervision of personnel will provide a written decision addressing the complaint within thirty (30) calendar days upon receipt of the complaint. Should the investigation go beyond thirty (30)

calendar days, the individual responsible for the investigation shall notify the complainant(s), and provide an estimate of time needed to complete the investigation.

STEP 3: FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS – DISTRICT LEVEL

If the formal complaint at Step 2 is not resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction, the complainant may appeal the resolution of the complaint in writing within five (5) calendar days of receiving the written response:

- If the original complaint was sent to a principal or assistant principal, and was not resolved at the school level, the appeal should be directed to the appropriate Chief of Schools.
- If the original complaint was sent to any other employee, the appeal should be directed to that employee’s direct supervisor.

Notice Requirement

Formal complaints are NOT CONFIDENTIAL. If the formal complaint concerns a staff member, that person shall be notified of the complaint and provided with a copy of the written complaint as soon as is reasonably possible. The staff member will be afforded all rights of due process as an employee, including rights delineated in applicable collective bargaining agreements.

A decision at Step 3 shall be final except for appeals to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, other agencies, or the courts, as provided by law.

Date: 5.14, 10.15, 6.16, 8.22, 4.24