



GRIEVANCES

I. Rationale

University Heights Charter School recognizes and respects the integral roles that both parents and teachers play in the education of its students. Thus, the Board’s primary objective is to strengthen that partnership and foster an open and productive line of communication between not only parents and teachers, but also the Executive Director, administrative staff, and the Board of Trustees. To that end, the Board wishes to institute a fair and efficient process by which internal grievances can be resolved amicably and consistent with law. If a Board employee, trustee, or parent/guardian has a complaint or dispute with any Board policy or the actions of a School Employee or Board Trustee (“grievance”), it should be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution proceedings set forth in this Policy, or as otherwise mandated by law.

II. Procedure

A. Informal Grievances.

1. Any person who has a grievance shall discuss it first with the Executive Director in an attempt to resolve the matter informally, within ten (10) business days from the time when the person knew or would have known of its occurrence.
2. However, should a complaint or concern arise between a parent and a teacher or staff member, parents are encouraged to first attempt to resolve said complaint or concern directly with the teacher or staff member by scheduling a conference to discuss the issue. The Executive Director reserves the right to redirect parents to the involved teacher or staff member if that step has not been taken. If after meeting in conference with the immediate source, the parent deems the initial response/course of action as insufficient, or in the event that a meeting with the immediate source is not practicable or reasonable because of the nature or subject matter of the grievance, an informal meeting with the Executive Director may be requested in an attempt to resolve the concern or complaint.
3. If the complainant is satisfied with the response of the Executive Director, no further action will be required and the grievance will be considered to be resolved.

B. Formal Grievances. If the grievance is not resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction through informal discussion with the Executive Director, the complainant must submit a formal, written grievance to both the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson within five (5) business days after meeting with the Executive Director or his/her designee. The written grievance must recite the matter that was originally submitted informally to the Executive Director and must explain the basis for the complainant’s dissatisfaction with the decision previously rendered.

- C. Referral to Committee. The Board Chairperson shall determine, upon consultation with counsel if necessary, whether the nature of the grievance requires that it be considered by the Board Grievance Committee, or by the Advisory Grievance Committee pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-15*. The jurisdictional limits of each committee are described below in their applicable sections.
- D. Committee Meetings. Within fifteen (15) business days of its receipt of the written grievance, the applicable committee will meet with all concerned parties. The Board will provide an opportunity to the complainant to present his or her grievance and to persons responding to the grievance (“respondents”). These presentations will be informal as no sworn testimony will be given. There will be no right to cross examine witnesses. Whether the presentation is in public or private session of a Board meeting will depend on the subject matter of the grievance.
- E. Resolution. Soon thereafter, the applicable committee shall present a non-binding recommendation to the Board concerning the disposition of the grievance. The Board will review the applicable committee’s recommendation at its next regularly scheduled meeting and make a decision within thirty (30) days of its receipt of the applicable committee’s recommendation.

III. Advisory Grievance Committee

- A. Jurisdiction. Any grievance that alleges a violation of the provisions of the New Jersey Charter School Programs Act shall be directed to the Advisory Grievance Committee, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-15*.
- B. Composition. The Advisory Grievance Committee shall consist of one (1) parent/guardian, one (1) teaching staff member and one (1) Board trustee. Each year, by no later than December 31st, parents/guardians, teaching staff members and trustees will select from their membership persons to serve on the Advisory Grievance Committee. The terms of service for each member of the Advisory Grievance Committee will be one (1) year. The persons receiving the most votes from their constituent members will be selected. For the 2012 – 2013 school year, and in the event that the teaching staff members and/or parents/guardians are unable to appoint members, the Board shall accept nominations and shall make the necessary appointments to constitute the Advisory Grievance Committee. The Chair of the Advisory Grievance Committee will be selected by the other Advisory Grievance Committee members. If an Advisory Grievance Committee member has a conflict of interest pertaining to a grievance, that member shall recuse himself or herself from serving on the Advisory Grievance Committee regarding said grievance.

IV. Board Grievance Committee

- A. Jurisdiction. The Board Grievance Committee shall consider grievances related to all other matters. Grievances arising specifically under the school laws may be subject to review and consideration by the Commissioner of Education only.
- B. Composition. The Board Grievance Committee shall consist of the Board Chairperson and two (2) other trustees selected by the Board. The term of service for the trustee shall be one (1) year. If a Board trustee has a conflict of interest pertaining to a grievance, that trustee shall recuse himself or herself from serving on the Board Grievance Committee regarding said grievance. The conflict of interest should be reported to the Board Chairperson as soon as it is discovered.

V. Other General Guidelines for Grievances

- A. A complainant or respondent may represent himself/herself at all stages of the grievance proceeding or may be represented by the person of his or her choosing.
- B. There shall be no retaliation against any person for initiating a grievance proceeding.
- C. The information gathered in a grievance proceeding shall be kept confidential as much as reasonably possible, and as mandated by law.
- D. This grievance process shall not be applied to change the allocation of responsibilities between the Executive Director (to administer the school) and the Board (to set policy and oversee the administration of the school.)

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