



# POLICY

**Haddonfield  
Board of Education**

**COMMUNITY**

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Public Complaints and Grievances

## **9130 PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

Any person or group having a legitimate interest in the schools of this district may present a request, suggestion, or complaint concerning district personnel, the educational program, instructional or resource materials, or the operations of the district. The Board directs the establishment of procedures for the hearing and settlement of requests and complaints that provide a means for resolving them fairly and impartially, permit appropriate redress, and protect district personnel from unnecessary harassment.

When a Board member is confronted with an issue, he/she refer the complaint or inquiry to the Superintendent, who shall review the complaint according to established procedures.

Only in those cases where satisfactory adjustment cannot be made by the Superintendent and the staff shall communications and complaints be referred to the Board for resolution.

Any misunderstandings or disputes between the public and school district staff should, whenever possible, be settled by direct, informal discussions among the interested parties. It is only when such informal meetings fail to resolve differences that more formal procedures shall be employed. A complaint about a school program or personnel should be addressed to the Building Principal; a complaint about instructional or resource materials should be addressed to the Assistant Superintendent.

The Assistant Superintendent shall establish procedures for the hearing of requests and complaints regarding district personnel, the educational program, instructional and resource materials, and the operation of the school district. Procedures will be governed by the following guidelines:

1. The matter will be resolved initially, wherever possible, by informal discussions between or among the interested parties.
2. A matter that cannot be resolved informally may be appealed at successive levels of authority, up to and including the Board of Education.
3. The complaint and its immediate resolution will be reduced to writing at the first and at each successive level of appeal.
4. A reasonable period of time, not to exceed five working days, will be permitted for the filing of an appeal in writing at each successive level. A decision at each level of appeal must be rendered in writing no later than ten working days after the appeal is filed, except that the Board shall have thirty calendar days to make its decision.



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5. In the case of complaints about instructional or resource materials, the initial complaint must set forth in writing the author, title, and publisher of the materials as well as those specific portions of the material or the work to which objection is taken; the complainant's familiarity with the work; the reasons for the objection; and the use of the work in the schools. The Assistant Superintendent shall appoint a committee of professional staff members and community representatives to review the challenged material against the standards for the selection of resource materials established by Board policy. The committee will report its findings to the Board. No challenged material may be removed from the curriculum or from a collection of resource materials except by action of the Board of Education, and no challenged material may be removed solely because it presents ideas that may be unpopular or offensive to some. Any Board action to remove material will be accompanied by the Board's statement of its reasons for the removal.
  
6. A complainant shall be notified that a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.



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## **R 9130 PUBLIC COMPLAINTS**

All complaints addressed to the Board of Education, Board members individually, school officials, or district staff members shall be referred to the Superintendent for consideration in accordance with the following procedures.

A. Complaints Regarding a Teaching Staff Member Other Than an Administrator or Supervisor

1. First Level

- a. The complainant will be directed to address the complaint to the teaching staff member.
- b. The teaching staff member will make every reasonable effort to address the complaint and take appropriate action, if necessary, in accordance with district policies and regulations and within the teaching staff member's authority.
- c. The teaching staff member will report the complaint in writing and whatever action that may have been taken to resolve the complaint to the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor.

2. Second Level

- a. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.1. above the complainant may appeal the teaching staff member's resolution to the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor.
- b. The Principal or supervisor will take all reasonable and prudent steps to resolve the complaint and meet with the complainant to discuss the Principal or supervisor's resolution to the complaint.

3. Third Level

- a. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.2. above the complainant may, within five working days of their meeting with the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor, submit a written request for a conference to the Superintendent. The written request shall, at a minimum, include the specific nature of the complaint and a statement of the facts giving rise to it.
- b. A copy of the complainant's written request for a conference will be submitted to the Board by the Superintendent.



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- b. Within seven working days of the Superintendent's receipt of the written request for a conference, the Superintendent shall conduct the conference, at a time convenient to the complainant and the Superintendent, and attempt to resolve the complaint informally.
  - d. The Superintendent shall record in writing their disposition of the complaint and shall, within ten working days of the conference, submit a copy of their written disposition to the complainant and the Board.
4. Fourth Level
- a. A complaint that is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by a conference with the Superintendent at A.3.c. above or that seeks a remedy beyond the Superintendent's authority may be appealed by the complainant to the Board.
    - (1) The complainant shall, within three working days of their receipt of the Superintendent's written disposition, submit a written request with supporting documentation to the Superintendent for an informal hearing before the Board. The complainant's request, along with the Superintendent's disposition at A.3.d. above, shall be provide to the Board.
  - c. The Board shall, within forty-five calendar days (see Policy No. 9130) of the receipt of the request, conduct an informal hearing before a committee of Board members, in which the complainant will present his/her complaint. The Board may on the petition of the complainant, permit the examination of witnesses. The Board may permit the teaching staff member complained of to testify in his/her own behalf.
    - (1) If the Board denies the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision on the appeal and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days.
    - (2) If the Board grants the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall schedule the informal hearing within forty-five working days upon receiving the request for an informal hearing. At the conclusion of the informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days at the conclusion of the informal hearing.
      - (a) The Board may designate a committee of the Board to conduct an informal hearing with the complainant.





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should be addressed, initially, to the Superintendent who will refer the complaint to the appropriate administrator or supervisor.

2. A complaint that cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at D.1. above may be appealed to the Superintendent and, thereafter, the Board of Education in accordance with the procedures set forth in A.3. and A.4.

#### E. Complaints Regarding Textbooks, Instructional Supplies, and Resource Materials

1. Complaints regarding textbooks, instructional supplies, and resource materials used in the district shall be submitted in writing by the complainant to the Superintendent.
2. The written complaint shall, at a minimum, include:
  - a. The title, author, and publisher of the material at issue;
  - b. Sections of the material to which the complainant objects (by page(s) and item(s));
  - c. An explanation of the reason(s) for the objection;;
  - d. The students or class for whom the material is intended; and
  - e. The way in which the material is used or presented to students.
3. Within seven working days of the receipt of the written complaint the Superintendent shall appoint a review committee consisting of:
  - a. The head of the department in which the material is being used;
  - b. A teaching staff member in the subject area of the material;
  - c. A Board of Education member;
  - d. The Principal of the school in which the material is used or presented; and
  - e. Any other staff member designated by the Superintendent.
4. The review committee will meet to evaluate the complaint and review the material at issue.
  - a. The standards used by the review committee to review textbooks will be those set forth in Regulation 2510.



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- b. The standards used by the review committee to review instructional supplies will be those set forth in Regulation 2520.
    - c. The standards used by the review committee to review resource materials will be those set forth in Regulation 2530.
  5. The review committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Superintendent within fifteen working days upon the appointment of the review committee.
  6. The Superintendent will submit the review committee's findings and recommendations to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
  7. If the Board acts to remove the material at issue or to limit access to the material at issue. Its action will be accompanied by a statement of reasons for the removal or limitation.
    - a. The Board shall render its decision within forty-five working days of receipt of the review committee's findings and recommendations.
  8. A copy of the review committee's findings and recommendations and the Board's action, if any, will be given to the complainant within five working days of the Board's action.
  9. The complainant will be informed, in writing, that a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education as permitted by law.