



Book	Policy Manual
Section	900 Community
Title	Public Complaint Procedures
Code	906
Status	Active

Legal

1. 20 U.S.C. 7844
2. 24 P.S. 510.2

24 P.S. 510

Pol. 103

Pol. 103.1

Pol. 104

Pol. 105.1

Pol. 108

Pol. 109

Pol. 116

Pol. 127

Pol. 137

Pol. 150

Pol. 202

Pol. 206

Pol. 247

Pol. 249

Pol. 251

Pol. 252

Pol. 255

Pol. 610

Pol. 621

Pol. 626

Pol. 718

Pol. 801

Pol. 808

Pol. 815

Pol. 824

Pol. 827

Pol. 828

Adopted May 21, 2018

### **Purpose**

The Board welcomes inquiries, suggestions, and constructive criticism regarding the district's programs, personnel, operations and facilities. Any parent/guardian, student, employee, resident or community group shall have the right to present a request, suggestion or complaint. The Board intends to provide a fair and impartial method for seeking appropriate resolution.

### **Authority**

Attempts to resolve public concerns and complaints of district residents shall begin with informal, direct discussions among the affected parties, following the established guidelines and district organizational structure on "How to Communicate a Question or Concern" administrative regulation. Only when informal meetings fail to resolve the issue shall more formal procedures be utilized.

The Board directs parents/guardians, other individuals and organizations alleging violations of law in the district's administration of federally-funded programs to submit complaints in accordance with the separate federal program complaint procedure established in this policy.[1]

The Board shall ensure that this policy is posted on the district's publicly accessible website in accordance with law.[2]

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The district shall annually notify parents/guardians, employees and the public of this policy and established complaint procedures via the district website, newsletters, posted notices and/or other efficient communication methods.

### **Guidelines**

#### **General Complaint Procedure**

It is the intent of the Board that complaints, concerns and suggestions be addressed and/or resolved at the lowest appropriate level.

At all levels of this procedure, district employees shall make a determination as to whether the complaint should proceed as outlined in this policy or if the complaint should be submitted through a specialized complaint process addressed in a separate Board policy, collective bargaining agreement, district procedure or administrative regulation that is directly related to the nature of the complaint.

General complaints about Board policy and district procedures, programs, personnel, operations and facilities shall begin with an informal, direct discussion between the complainant and district employee who is most directly involved.

The employee shall attempt to provide a reasonable explanation or take appropriate action within the employee's authority. The employee shall report the matter and the resolution to the building principal or immediate supervisor.

When an informal discussion fails to resolve the complaint, the established procedure shall be used.

### **Guidelines**

Whenever issues identified by the participant are subject to remediation under policies and procedures of the Board, they shall be dealt with in accordance with those policies and procedures and the organizational structure of the district. Administrative remediation shall occur before one addresses the Board in accordance with this policy and the established administrative regulation, "How to Communicate a Question or Concern".

#### **How to Communicate a Question or Concern**

There are times when a parent, resident, taxpayer, volunteer, or employee may have a question, concern, complaint, suggestion or request and is uncertain as to the procedure to follow in contacting the school district. Many parental questions are easily and completely answered by communicating directly with the educator in charge of the class or program. The single most important point to remember is when you have a concern, you should always take a moment to think through the process, be proactive, state the facts and not opinions or feelings. Most importantly use a "cool down" period before contacting someone in anger. Cooler heads always prevail.

Attached to this policy is an Administrative Regulation entitled "How to Communicate a Question or Concern - Parent and Community Communications Process Flow Chart/Chain of Command" that should be of assistance when addressing each situation. Each situation should first be addressed at whatever level the initial action was taken with appeals moving on to the next level on the chain of command. Contact information for staff members is available on the district website at [www.richlandsd.com](http://www.richlandsd.com).

Occasionally a parent/guardian, resident, employee, or taxpayer will call School Board Directors in an attempt to obtain an answer to their questions or concerns. Upon receiving such a call, the Board director calls the Superintendent. The district Superintendent must then call the building principal to inform him/her of the problem or concern. The principal will then research the concern and communicate with the parent/guardian. Therefore, it is wise that you first call the teacher, counselor or principal so that s/he can respond without any undue delay. It is important to note that the Board of Directors only have authority at legally convened and advertised meetings and direct the school administration to handle matters. Board members have no individual authority.

The Board, after reviewing all information relative to the complaint, shall provide the complainant with its written response. The Board may, at its discretion, grant a hearing before the Board or a committee of the Board. If a hearing is granted, the complainant shall be advised of the Board's response, in writing, no more than twenty (20) days following the hearing.

Any requests, suggestions or complaints first directed to individual Board members and/or the Board shall be referred to the Superintendent for consideration, investigation and action. If further action is warranted, based on the initial investigation, such action shall be in accordance with the established procedures.

Nothing in this policy shall diminish the current bargaining agreement grievance procedures.

#### Complaint Procedure for Federal Programs

Complaints alleging violations of law in the district's administration of federally-funded programs shall be processed in accordance with the following procedure.[1]

The complainant shall submit a written, signed statement to the district's administration office that includes:

1. Contact information of the individual or organization filing the complaint.
2. Alleged federal program violation.
3. Facts supporting the alleged violation.
4. Supporting documentation, such as information on discussions, correspondence or meetings with district staff regarding the complaint.

District staff shall forward complaints to the district administrator responsible for federal programs, who will notify the Superintendent and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing.

The district administrator responsible for federal programs shall conduct an independent investigation, which may include, but not be limited to:

1. On-site visit to the building that is the subject of the complaint.
2. Opportunity to present evidence by all individuals and/or organizations involved.
3. Opportunity for participants to ask questions of each other and witnesses.

When the investigation is completed, the district administrator responsible for federal programs shall prepare a written report with a recommendation for resolving the complaint. The report shall include:

1. Name of the individual or organization filing the complaint.

2. Nature of the complaint.
3. Summary of the investigation.
4. Recommended resolution.
5. Reasons for the recommended resolution.

The district administrator responsible for federal programs shall submit the written report to the Superintendent, who will determine whether further investigation is required and/or the district's final response.

All individuals and/or organizations making the complaint or that are the subject of the complaint shall be notified of the resolution of the complaint by the Superintendent or designee.

The district administrator responsible for federal programs shall ensure that the resolution of the complaint is implemented.

The time period between receipt and resolution of a complaint shall not exceed sixty (60) calendar days, unless circumstances require additional time.

The complainant may appeal the final resolution to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Division Chief  
Division of Federal Programs  
PA Department of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

[How to communicate a question or concern-Chain of Command-2018.pdf \(97 KB\)](#)

Last Modified by Dianne Kniss on May 22, 2018

## **Guidelines on How to Communicate a Question or Concern**

### ***In accordance with Board Policies 903 and 906~***

There are times when a parent, resident, taxpayer, volunteer, or employee may have a question, concern, complaint, suggestion or request and is uncertain as to the procedure to follow in contacting the school district. Many questions are easily and completely answered by communicating directly with the educator in charge of the class or program. ***The single most important thing to remember is when you have a concern, you should always take a moment to think through the process, be proactive, state the facts and not opinions or feelings. Most importantly use a “cool down” period before contacting someone in anger. Cooler heads always prevail.***

*It is the intent of the Board through Board Policy 906, Public Complaint Procedures, that complaints, concerns and suggestions be addressed and/or resolved at the lowest appropriate level.*

Listed below is a Parent and Community Communication Process Flow Chart/ Chain of Command that should be of assistance when addressing each situation. Each situation should first be addressed at whatever level the initial action was taken with appeals moving on to the next level on the chain of command. While this Flow Chart/Chain Command Procedure is not all inclusive to every concern or issue that may come to light, it serves as a guide to carry out the Board's intent and is not designed to be restrictive or limit appeals if one disagrees with the decision at any one level. Contact information for staff members is available on the district website at [www.richlandsd.com](http://www.richlandsd.com)

Occasionally, a parent, resident, or taxpayers will call school board directors in an attempt to obtain an answer to their questions or concerns. Upon receiving such a call, the board director calls the district superintendent. The district superintendent must then call the building principal to inform him or her of the problem or concern. The principal will then research the concern and communicate with the parent. Therefore, it is wise that you first call the teacher, counselor, principal, etc., so that he or she can respond without any undue delay. It is important to note that the board directors only have authority at legally convened meetings and direct the school administration to handle matters on their behalf.

Revised: January 31, 2019 (updated from January 24, 2018).

**PARENT AND COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION PROCESS FLOW CHART  
CHAIN OF COMMAND**

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>First Level</b>	<b>Second Level</b>	<b>Third Level</b>	<b>Fourth Level</b>	<b>Fifth Level</b>	<b>Sixth Level</b>
Child Abuse	Childline 1 800-932-0313 (TDD: 866-872-1677)					
Athletics/Extra-Curricular	Coach	Athletic Director	Principal	Superintendent	Board	
Athletic Facilities	Athletic Director	Principal	Superintendent	Board		
Athletic Injuries	Coach	Athletic Trainer	School Nurse	Athletic Director/Principal	Superintendent	Board
Business Office	Business Administrator	Superintendent	Board			
Curriculum/Academic Instruction	Teacher	Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board	
Discipline	Teacher	Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board	
		Assistant Principal (Jr-Sr High School Only)	Principal	Superintendent	Board	
Facilities	Building Maintenance	Maintenance Supervisor	Building Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board
Guidance	Counselor	Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board	
Special Education	Teacher	Special Education Supervisor	Superintendent	Board		
Student Concern	Teacher	Assistant Principal	Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board
Computer/Hardware/Software Problem	Teacher	Technology Department	Principal	Superintendent	Board	
Policy	Teacher/Staff member	Principal	Director of Education	Superintendent	Board	
Taxes (School levied)	Tax Collector	Business Manager	Superintendent	Board		
Transportation	Building Principal	Business Manager	Superintendent	Board		

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