

SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOOL

Social Justice School (SJS) Grievance Policy

Purpose

The Social Justice School (SJS) believes that all employees, students, parents, and visitors have the right to advocate for their needs and voice their concerns or grievances about matters pertaining to the school. We recognize the value of open dialogue, transparency, and restorative communication in resolving misunderstandings and maintaining positive relationships within our school community.

Guiding Principles

SJS is committed to:

- Providing a safe, respectful environment where all community members can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.
 - Resolving disputes promptly, fairly, and confidentially.
 - Ensuring compliance with all applicable **federal and state education laws**, including the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**.
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1. Scope of the Grievance Process

What May Be Grieved

This grievance process may be used to address:

1. Concerns about the educational environment, employment arrangements, or interpersonal conflicts.
2. Allegations of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on **race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or other protected characteristics**.
3. Violations of ESEA-related rights, including issues regarding **Title I parent and family engagement**, or the **administration of ESEA-funded programs**.

Who May File a Grievance

- **Students, parents/guardians, employees, or visitors** may submit a grievance.
- Parents or guardians may file on behalf of a student.

Other Remedies

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This grievance process does not limit a person's right to pursue claims through other forums permitted under **District of Columbia or federal law**, including filing directly with the **Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)**.

2. Grievance Procedures

A. Informal Grievance

Because most concerns can be resolved through communication, SJS encourages community members to begin with an informal process whenever appropriate:

1. Discuss the concern promptly and respectfully with the **teacher, supervisor, or staff member** directly involved.
2. If unresolved, request a meeting with the **Principal**.
3. If the concern remains unresolved, the matter may move to a **formal grievance**.

Note: A grievant is **not required** to speak with the alleged harasser or person involved prior to filing a formal grievance.

B. Formal Grievance

Filing a Complaint

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- A formal grievance must be filed **within 90 days** of the incident.
- Complaints should be submitted **in writing** to the **Principal** or **Executive Director** using the SJS Grievance Form, available on the school's website or from the front office.
- The grievance must include:
 - A description of the issue or event.
 - The date(s) of occurrence.
 - The desired resolution.
 - The name and signature of the grievant (and parent/guardian if applicable).

Investigation

- The **Principal or Executive Director** will promptly initiate a **neutral and thorough investigation**, which may include interviews, document review, and witness statements.
- All proceedings and documentation are treated as **strictly confidential**, shared only with those directly involved in resolving the complaint or as required by law.

Response

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- Within **30 business days**, the Principal or Executive Director will provide a **written response** summarizing:
 - Steps taken in the investigation.
 - Findings and conclusions.
 - Any corrective or remedial action to be taken.

If harassment, discrimination, or other valid grievances are substantiated, SJS will take appropriate corrective and preventive measures.

C. Appeals

If a grievant disagrees with the decision:

1. They may **appeal in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees** within **30 days** of the written response.
2. The appeal should include:
 - The original grievance and response.
 - The reason for appeal and desired outcome.

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3. The Board Chair (or designee) will review the appeal and issue a **written decision within 21 days**.
4. The Board's decision is **final within the school's grievance process**.

D. External Complaint Option (OSSE)

If the grievance relates to an **ESEA-funded program** (e.g., Title I), families or employees may also file a **formal complaint with OSSE** under its **ESEA Complaint Procedures**.

To File an ESEA-Related Complaint:

Complaints may be emailed, mailed, or delivered to:

Kirstin Hansen

State Complaints Manager
Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
1050 First Street NE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

 Kirstin.Hansen@dc.gov

 (202) 741-0274

OSSE will issue a **Letter of Acknowledgment** within 10 days of receipt and will issue a **Letter of Decision** within **90 days** (or **45 days** for equitable services complaints).

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3. Prohibition Against Retaliation

SJS strictly prohibits retaliation against any person who:

- Files a grievance or complaint.
- Participates in an investigation or hearing.
- Acts in good faith to report concerns or misconduct.

Any person found to have engaged in retaliatory behavior will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

4. Policy Modification

SJS reserves the right to modify this policy on a case-by-case basis for good cause, provided that no modification violates due process rights or applicable laws.

Contact Information

SOCIAL JUSTICE SCHOOL

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Parents may also file a formal complaint directly with OSSE following the ESEA Complaint Procedures (July 2021), available at osse.dc.gov.