

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE - RULE

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide for the exclusive internal method for resolving grievances concerning discipline, termination and workplace safety pursuant to the provisions and exceptions set forth in Board Policy 527. A determined effort shall be made to settle any grievance at the lowest possible level in the grievance procedure.

Definitions

- Grievance: A "grievance" is defined as any complaint that concerns discipline, termination, or workplace safety.
- Grievant: A "grievant" may be any employee or group of employees.
- Days: The term "days" as used in this procedure shall mean regularly scheduled workdays, unless otherwise indicated.
- Discipline: Discipline is defined as a suspension [unpaid or paid], or a written reprimand.
- Termination: Termination is defined as an involuntary discharge involving the dismissal of an employee, usually for some infraction of the rules or policies of the District, abandonment of the position, incompetence or other reason deemed sufficient by the Board and/or its designee. Termination results in involuntary separation and with prejudice to the employee. A termination will result in the loss of length of service and other employment benefits. For the purposes of this rule, "termination" shall not include voluntary retirement, voluntary resignation, layoff or a nonrenewal of contract under § 118.22, Wis. Stats, § 118.24, Wis. Stats. or a non-reappointment of an extra-curricular assignment.
- Workplace Safety: For purposes of this procedure, the following guidelines shall apply:
1. A grievance can be filed over workplace safety only if the safety of at least one employee is involved (as opposed to the safety of students or visitors).
 2. The issue must concern the safety of a person (e.g., not the "safety" of one's vehicle or other personal possessions).
 3. The grievance must be filed by the affected employee(s) (i.e., one employee may not file on behalf of another).
 4. The individual(s) filing the grievance must propose a specific remedy.
 5. The issue and proposed remedy must be under the reasonable control of the District.

Time Limits

The time limits set forth herein shall be considered as substantive, and failure of the grievant to file and process the grievance within the time limits set forth in this procedure shall be deemed a waiver and a settlement of the

grievance. The number of days indicated at each level should be considered a maximum. The time limits specified may, however, be extended by the mutual consent of the District and the grievant. The parties may, through mutual consent, agree to start the grievance at a higher step if the grievance involves termination and is initially filed in a timely manner pursuant to the timelines set forth below.

Grievance Processing Procedure

Grievances shall be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

Step One - Informal Resolution

An earnest effort shall first be made to settle the matter informally between the employee and the immediate supervisor. A grievance may be initiated through an informal meeting and discussion with the immediate supervisor, the employee and the employee's designated representative. The informal meeting and discussion shall occur within thirty (30) days after the facts upon which the grievance is based first occurred. The immediate supervisor will give an answer to the grievance. The grievant(s) shall be required to state the purpose of the discussions and event(s) upon which the discussions are based. The immediate supervisor shall notify the grievant (and if applicable and appropriate) the representative of his/her answer within ten (10) days. If the matter cannot be resolved or if no answer is provided in the above timeframe, the grievant(s) may file a written grievance.

Step Two - Written Grievance

If the grievance is not resolved at Step One, the grievant(s) shall file a written grievance with the immediate supervisor within ten (10) days of the response in Step One above or if no response is provided within ten (10) days of the deadline for the response. The written grievance shall include the facts upon which the grievance is based, the issues involved, the *Handbook* and policy provisions relevant to the grievance, and the relief sought. The grievant may cite only those *Handbook* and policy provisions that were allegedly violated that triggered the discipline, termination or workplace safety issue. The grievance shall be signed and dated by the grievant. The immediate supervisor shall respond to the grievance in writing within ten (10) days. However, if there is an ongoing investigation related to the subject matter of the grievance, the immediate supervisor shall have until ten (10) days after completion of the investigation to respond to the grievance. If the matter cannot be resolved or if no answer is provided in the above timeframe, the grievant(s) may file an appeal to the District Administrator.

If the grievant's immediate supervisor is the District Administrator, the grievant shall skip Step Three and proceed directly to Step Four if he/she is not satisfied with the response of his/her immediate supervisor at Step Two (or if no answer is provided in the above timeframe).

Step Three - Appeal to District Administrator

If the grievance is not resolved at Step Two, the grievant may appeal the written grievance with the District Administrator within ten (10) days after the response at Step Two or if no response is provided within ten (10) days of the deadline for the response. The District Administrator shall

meet with the grievant(s) and/or the employee's designated representative and the principal or immediate supervisor within ten (10) days after receiving the written grievance. The District Administrator shall respond to the written grievance within ten (10) days of the meeting or at a later date as determined by the District Administrator if further investigation is warranted. The District Administrator shall indicate in writing the disposition of the grievance and forward it to the grievant and (if applicable and appropriate) the grievant's representative. If the matter cannot be resolved or if no answer is provided in the above timeframe, the grievant(s) may file an appeal to the impartial hearing officer.

Step Four - Appeal to Impartial Hearing Officer

If the grievance is not resolved in Step Three, the employee must notify the District Administrator, within ten (10) days after receipt of the District Administrator's answer or if no response is provided within ten (10) days of the deadline for the response, if he or she intends to process the grievance to the designated impartial hearing officer.

If there is a dispute over the timeliness or the grievability of a grievance, the District shall have the discretion to bifurcate the hearing for the purpose of deciding those issues (e.g., address whether the grievance was filed in a timely manner before hearing the merits of the grievance).

The hearing officer shall meet with the parties at a mutually-agreeable date to review the evidence and hear testimony relating to the grievance. The hearing officer shall not be required to abide by the rules of evidence that would apply in civil or criminal court cases. For instance, he/she may choose to admit hearsay evidence and accord it such weight that it may be due. Upon completion of this review and hearing, the hearing officer shall render a written decision to the administration, the grievant, and (if applicable and appropriate) the grievant's representative.

A decision of the hearing officer shall be limited to the subject matter of the grievance and shall be restricted solely to interpretation of the policy or *Handbook* in the area where the alleged breach occurred. The hearing officer shall not modify, add to, or delete from the express terms of the policy or handbook. The hearing officer may deny the grievance or conclude that the grievance should be sustained in whole or in part and recommend a remedy. The decision of the hearing officer and any recommendations contained therein are subject to review by the Board via appeal, as described below.

Step Five - Appeal to School Board

If the grievance is not resolved at Step Four, the grievance may be appealed to the School Board within ten (10) days after the decision at the prior step. Either the administration or the grievant may appeal an impartial hearing officer's decision to the Board.

The Board shall meet with the parties to review the evidence and hear testimony relating to the grievance. At the hearing, each party may cross-examine any witness of the other party. If either party presents an exhibit that was not presented at a prior step of the grievance process, the exhibit must be provided to the other party at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the hearing.

On appeal from Step Four, the hearing officer's factual findings and conclusions of law shall have distinct standards of review. The Board shall accord some deference to the hearing officer's findings of fact but (1) may modify any such findings if after consulting with the hearing officer the Board concludes that the most reasonable view of the record calls for modification of one or more of the findings; or (2) may remand the case to the hearing officer for further factual development and (if necessary) revised conclusions of law. In terms of conclusions of law and mixed questions of fact and law, the Board shall apply a de novo standard of review, meaning that the hearing officer's findings shall be accorded no deference.

The Board shall render a written decision that affirms, reverses, or modifies the decision of the hearing officer (or, if applicable, of the District Administrator). Such decision shall be rendered in a timely manner and shall be sent to the administration, the grievant, and (if applicable and appropriate) the grievant's representative. The Board's decision is final and may not be appealed. All Board actions throughout this process shall comply with requirements of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law.

Grievant's Right to Representation

Any grievant may be represented at all stages of the grievance procedure by a representative(s) of his/her own choosing.

Consolidation of Grievances

Grievances of the same type, and with similar fact situations, may be consolidated at the discretion of the Administration.

Group Grievances

Group grievances are those that involve more than one employee and any of the following:

- A. More than one work site;
- B. More than one supervisor; or
- C. An administrator other than the immediate supervisor.

Such grievances may be initially filed at Step Three; however, such grievance shall follow the initial timelines for filing the grievance at Steps One and Two above.