

Policy #25

General Grievance Policy

adopted on March 22, 2012

Woods Charter School (the “School”) seeks to promote harmony among its employees, faculty, students and parents and to encourage equitable solutions to problems arising among them. The School believes that most concerns and differences are best addressed through open and honest communication conducted in an informal, respectful and civil manner and that effective resolution depends on direct, prompt and constructive dialogue.

The following procedures are adopted to meet these goals.

NOTE: For policies and procedures relating to any allegation of Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying, please see the Woods Charter School Handbook for previously adopted policies and procedures.

- Parent Grievances

- The Board recognizes that effective school governance requires that the primary responsibility for issues involving student discipline, curriculum, assessment and promotion and other day-to-day decisions regarding school management, lies with the faculty, staff and Principal of the School and these individuals are best suited to resolve conflicts that arise with respect to these issues. Pursuant to the Section 4(b) and Section 16 of the Bylaws of the School, the Board has the authority to appoint, employ and remove the Principal but primary responsibility and authority over faculty, staff and volunteer organizations of the School are vested in the Principal. The Board, therefore, will exercise any authority in this policy conservatively and narrowly so as not to usurp the authority granted to the Principal under the Bylaws.

- Informal Procedures: A parent should first attempt to resolve any grievance through discussion with the relevant teacher(s) or other involved person. If a parent’s concern has not been adequately addressed through an informal discussion with the teacher involved, the parent should next attempt to resolve the grievance with the appropriate Division Director. If a grievance cannot be resolved in such informal manners, the parent may initiate a formal grievance procedure.

- Formal Grievance Procedure: In instances, where informal means are ineffective or otherwise not feasible, the School offers these more formal grievance procedures. Grievance proceedings and information shall be kept confidential at all levels to the extent feasible and permitted by law. A parent grievance is a formal written claim by a parent or group of parents identifying the concern, identifying the individual or group’s resolution attempts, and identifying any law, policy or practice that is implicated by the concern. No one shall retaliate against a parent or student who files or whose parent files a grievance under this policy. Failure of a parent to comply with timelines listed below may result in denial of a grievance request.

- Level One – Division Director Request and Conference. A parent may, by written request, seek a conference with the Division Director to address an unresolved grievance.

- The request shall succinctly describe the specific grievance(s) and related details, and shall identify any specific policy, rule, regulation or law believed to have been violated,

and shall provide other relevant information to help the Division Director adequately understand the nature of the grievance.

- The grievance shall be filed within five days of the incident(s) or the last informal attempt to resolve the grievance, provided that such attempt was made within ten days of the last incident.
- Following receipt of the written request, the Division Director or supervisor shall, if feasible, conduct a conference with the aggrieved parent(s) within seven days of the written report. Within three to five working days following the conference, the supervisor will state in writing his position on the grievance and a copy will be given to the parent.
- Level Two - Appeal to the Principal. If the grievance is not resolved, the parent(s) may appeal the Division Director or supervisor's decision in writing to the Principal if the Principal was not involved in the Level One Conference.
 - The appeal must be made within five days following receipt of the Division Director or supervisor's written Level One response to the grievant. The Principal will review the grievance and conduct an informal hearing, when feasible, within seven working days following receipt of the written appeal.
 - Either party may, with approval by the Principal, present witnesses and other evidence to help resolve the matter. The parent shall have no right to have an attorney or other advocate present.
 - The Principal shall issue a written response to the grievant and the Level One Division Director or supervisor within five days following the hearing and create a written record of the evidence received and determination made.
 - Decisions of the Principal are final, not subject to further appeal, except in the following instances:
 - Decisions involving an alleged violation of a contractual right;
 - Decisions involving an alleged violation by the School of state or federal law; or
 - Decisions based on allegations of conduct by the Principal in violation of law or school policy.
 - The Board retains discretion to determine whether an alleged violation involves a "final" or "appealable" decision by the Principal. The Board may consider all available evidence in the record established at the time of the decision and any other evidence it deems necessary for consideration.
- Level Three - Appeal to the Board: Discretionary Appeals and Appeals of Right. If a parent is not satisfied with the disposition of his grievance at Level Two, the parent may, within five days of receiving notice of the decision or recommended action from the Principal, submit a written

request to the Board Chairperson to appeal the Principal's decision or recommendation and to request a formal hearing.

- Within seven days of receiving the written request for appeal, when feasible, the Board Chairperson or his designee shall issue a written notice to the grievant and the Principal indicating whether Principal's determination is "final" in nature or whether the Board shall, consequently, by discretion or by right of appeal, grant a hearing. The notice shall also specify, if a hearing is granted, the time and guidelines by which it will be conducted, including whether the hearing will be based strictly on a review of the existing record, whether the grievant will have the opportunity to be present at the hearing, the type of evidence to be considered by the Board, and other relevant procedural details.
- If a hearing is granted, a panel of the Board consisting of at least three members shall hear the grievance within seven days from the date the Board Chairperson's notice is issued to the grievant, except when the parties agree to extend the timeline. Any appeal to the board panel will normally be on the written record only, unless the panel determines that additional information should be presented, including an appearance and presentation of information by the grievant. The grievant and Principal shall be informed in writing of the panel's decision within seven days after the hearing, if feasible.
- Extensions in appeal timelines may be granted if the board panel determines there is a reasonable need for such extension. The board panel may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the Principal.
- The Principal or Board may develop a grievance form to assist in recording each step of the grievance process.

- Employee Grievances

- Informal Procedures: A faculty or staff member (the "employee") should first attempt to resolve any grievance through discussion with his/her Division Director, supervisor and/or other involved persons. If a grievance cannot be resolved in such informal manner, the employee may initiate a formal grievance procedure.
- Formal Grievance Procedure: In instances, where informal means are ineffective or otherwise not feasible, the School offers these more formal grievance procedures. Grievance proceedings and information shall be kept confidential at all levels to the extent feasible and permitted by law. An employee grievance is a formal written claim by an employee or group of employees stating that there has been an intrusion on an individual's or the group's rights or interests afforded by law, policy, or practice. No one shall retaliate against an employee who files a grievance under this policy. Failure of an employee to comply with timelines listed below may result in denial of a grievance request.
 - Level One – Supervisory Request and Conference. An employee may, by written request, seek a conference with an immediate supervisor to address an unresolved grievance. In the case of a faculty member, such grievance shall be first addressed to the faculty member's Division

Director; in the case of non-faculty employees, such grievance shall be first addressed to the employee's direct supervisor.

- The request shall succinctly describe the specific grievance(s) and related details, and shall identify any specific policy, rule, regulation or law believed to have been violated, and shall provide other relevant information to help the supervisor adequately understand the nature of the grievance.
- The grievance shall be filed within five days of the incident(s) or the last informal attempt to resolve the grievance, provided that such attempt was made within ten days of the last incident.
- Following receipt of the written request, the Division Director or supervisor shall, if feasible, conduct a conference with the aggrieved employee within seven days of the written report. Within three to five working days following the conference, the supervisor will state in writing his position on the grievance and a copy will be given to the employee.
- Level Two - Appeal to the Principal. If the grievance is not resolved, the employee may appeal the Division Director or supervisor's decision in writing to the Principal if the Principal was not involved in the Level One Conference.
 - The appeal must be made within five days following receipt of the Division Director or supervisor's written Level One response to the grievant. The Principal will review the grievance and conduct an informal hearing, when feasible, within seven working days following receipt of the written appeal.
 - Either party may, with approval by the Principal, present witnesses and other evidence to help resolve the matter. The employee shall have no right to have an attorney or other advocate present.
 - The Principal shall issue a written response to the grievant and the Level One Division Director or supervisor within five days following the hearing and create a written record of the evidence received and determination made.
 - Decisions of the Principal are final, not subject to further appeal, except in the following instances:
 - Decisions involving an alleged violation of a contractual right;
 - Decisions involving an alleged violation by the School of state or federal law;
 - Decisions based on allegations of conduct by the Principal in violation of law or school policy; or
 - Decisions involving loss of pay, suspension without pay, or dismissal of an employee during the term of his contract (i.e., not involving an at-will employee).
 - The Board retains discretion to determine whether an alleged violation involves a

“final” or “appealable” decision by the Principal. The Board may consider all available evidence in the record established at the time of the decision and any other evidence it deems necessary for consideration.

- Level Three - Appeal to the Board: Discretionary Appeals and Appeals of Right. If an employee is not satisfied with the disposition of his grievance at Level Two or is subject to disciplinary action or recommendation for disciplinary action by the Principal, the employee may, within five days of receiving notice of the decision or recommended action from the Principal, submit a written request to the Board Chairperson to appeal the Principal’s decision or recommendation and to request a formal hearing.
 - Within seven days of receiving the written request for appeal, when feasible, the Board Chairperson or his designee shall issue a written notice to the grievant and the Principal indicating whether Principal’s determination is “final” in nature or whether the Board shall, consequently, by discretion or by right of appeal, grant a hearing. The notice shall also specify, if a hearing is granted, the time and guidelines by which it will be conducted, including whether the hearing will be based strictly on a review of the existing record, whether the grievant will have the opportunity to be present at the hearing, the type of evidence to be considered by the Board, and other relevant procedural details.
 - If a hearing is granted, a panel of the Board consisting of at least three members shall hear the grievance within seven days from the date the Board Chairperson’s notice is issued to the grievant, except when the parties agree to extend the timeline. Any appeal to the board panel will normally be on the written record only, unless the panel determines that additional information should be presented, including an appearance and presentation of information by the grievant. The grievant and Principal shall be informed in writing of the panel’s decision within seven days after the hearing, if feasible.
 - Extensions in appeal timelines may be granted if the board panel determines there is a reasonable need for such extension. The board panel may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the Principal.
 - The Principal or Board may develop a grievance form to assist in recording each step of the grievance process.