

Achievement First Complaint Policy

(Excerpted from the 2020-21 Family Handbook Addendum)

Addressing Family Concerns

Achievement First is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, our scholars, and their families. If parents, guardians or others have a concern about a school policy, academic grade, discipline decision, or anything else, we welcome your input and encourage you to contact the appropriate staff member at the school.

Procedures for Addressing Concerns

Step 1: Contact Staff Member Involved: If a parent has an issue or concern, the first step towards resolving the issue will be to contact the staff member involved by phone or email. The parent should call the school's front desk to obtain contact information. The staff member and the parent will then set up a meeting to discuss the issue either on the phone or in-person and work to reach a resolution that satisfies both parties. (Note: if the concern is about special education, the staff member should be the Special Services Leader.)

Step 2: Contact the Principal: If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, the parent's next step is to reach out to the principal via phone or email or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue in writing. Even if the issue is a problem with the principal directly, the parent should go through this step. It is important to work to resolve the issue directly first. The parent should contact the school's front desk to obtain contact information for the principal. The principal will reply within three business days, at least acknowledging the complaint has been received, and the principal may take up to five additional business days to investigate and reach a decision.

Step 3: Written Complaint sent to Principal's Supervisor: If the parent is unsatisfied with the principal's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the regional superintendent who supports the school or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter/completed form, and the office staff will ensure that the communication gets to the regional superintendent. In some instances, it may be appropriate to schedule a meeting in person or via phone. If the parent would like to reach out to the regional superintendent directly, the parent should contact the front desk of the school to get his/her contact information. The regional superintendent will reply within three business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The regional superintendent will send a written decision to the parent within 10 business days of receiving the letter or form unless the parent and the regional superintendent agree to hold a meeting instead or the original concern is shared in a meeting. Please note that the regional superintendent will not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-2. A member of the front office staff member will put a copy of the complaint form and the regional

Achievement First Complaint Policy

(Excerpted from the 2020-21 Family Handbook Addendum)

superintendent's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system.

Step 4: Written Complaint to the School's Board of Trustees: If the parent is unsatisfied with the regional superintendent's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the school's Board of Trustees or use the "Family Concern Form" (see Appendix F) to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter, and the communication will go to the Board's chairperson. The parent/guardian should call the school's front desk to obtain contact information. Please note that the Board or its designee will generally refer complaints that have not gone through steps 1-3 back to the school. The Board or its designee will reply within three business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The Board or its designee will send a written decision to the parent. Additionally, some issues may require more time to resolve than the above timeline – in such instances, the Board or its designee will inform the parent and discuss the expected timeline for a response. A member of the front office staff will put a copy of the complaint form and Board's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system. If an individual or group voices a complaint at a public meeting of the School's Board of Trustees or to individual trustees, trustees shall not respond to the substance of the complaint, but instead shall thank the individual or group for their time and direct them to this complaint procedure or, as appropriate, take note of the complaint and respond based on the above timeline.

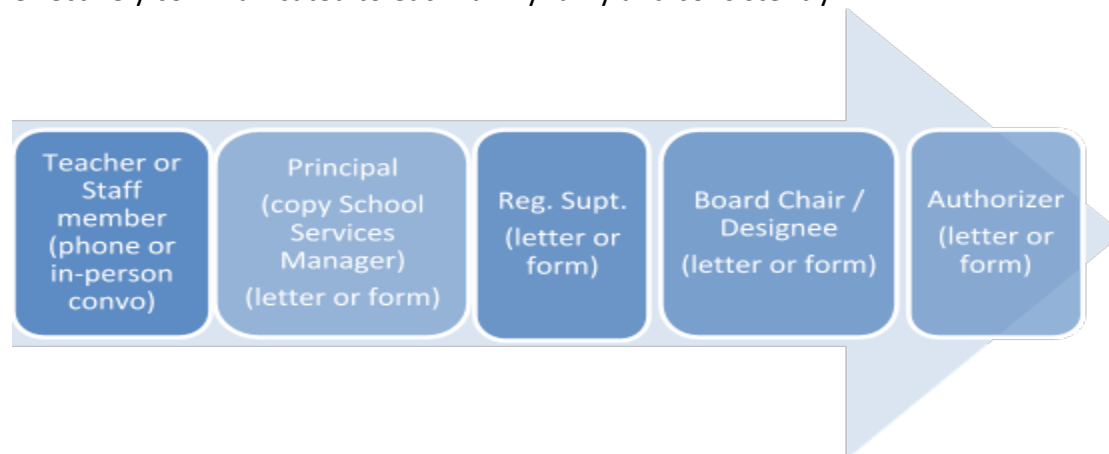
Step 5: Written Complaint to the Authorizer: If the parent is not satisfied with the Board's decision, the parent may present their concern to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. The parent will be provided with contact information for the authorizer with the Board's response in step 4. (Please note that the school will ask the authorizer not to respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-4.)

Please note that if the school gets multiple complaints on the same or a similar subject, the school may elect to consider all of the complaints in one process to ensure the process is clearly and

Achievement First Complaint Policy

(Excerpted from the 2020-21 Family Handbook Addendum)

effectively communicated to each family fairly and consistently.



The process described above is designed so that families can speak with the staff members who are most directly involved with the situation. Usually, this is the best way to resolve a concern or complaint because staff members can more quickly and efficiently address family concerns. *Parents do have the right, however, to submit concerns directly to the Board or to the authorizer. In this case, the Board will determine whether the complaint alleges a violation of the law or of the charter. If it does not, the Board will generally direct the parent back to the school level.*

Grievances Related to Discrimination Issues

Achievement First does not condone or tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability in admission or access to, or treatment, or employment in its programs or activities. Families have the right, therefore, to file a formal grievance if they believe that AF has violated a discrimination law (including Section 504, Title IX, and Title VI). The grievance procedure for discrimination issues is included in **Appendix D – How to File a Grievance about Discrimination** – please review it carefully. As noted in Appendix D, the Special Services Coordinator, is the Title VII, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator and may be contacted via their school email address and main office phone. The purpose of this formal grievance procedure is to provide a simple and accessible process to address problems and claims of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability. The Special Services Coordinator may designate the resolution of certain grievances to other appropriate school staff members.