

## **Superintendent Procedure 3210SP**

**Series:** 3000 – Students

**Approved By:** Fred Podesta, Superintendent



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## **3210SP Discrimination Complaint Process**

### **I. Introduction**

The District is committed to nondiscrimination in all of its education activities. Discrimination has no place in District schools or the workplace. The Superintendent, in compliance with federal and state regulations and Board Policy No. 3210, Nondiscrimination, Acts of Hostility and Defamation, has established this procedure for resolving discrimination complaints pertaining to discrimination against a student or parent/guardian.

Any individual may use this procedure to file a complaint on behalf of a student or parent/guardian (hereinafter "parent") pertaining to discrimination on the basis of sex; race; ethnicity; creed; religion; color; national origin; age; honorably discharged veteran or military status; sexual orientation; gender expression; gender identity; homelessness; immigration or citizenship status; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; neurodivergence; or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability.

### **II. Responsible Department and Notices**

Complaints of discrimination are serious and will be resolved as described in this procedure.

- **Compliance Coordinator**

The Superintendent designates the Office of Student Civil Rights as the District department responsible for monitoring and coordinating the District's compliance with chapter 392-190 WAC, guidelines adopted by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction under WAC 392-190-005, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

#### **Office of Student Civil Rights**

Seattle Public Schools  
MS 33-157, P.O. Box 34165  
Seattle, WA 98124-1166  
206-252-0306  
[OSCR@seattleschools.org](mailto:OSCR@seattleschools.org)

- **Designated Investigator**

For all complaints brought under this procedure, the Superintendent has designated the Office of Student Civil Rights (OSCR), which is located within the District's Human Resources Division (HR), as the office responsible for the complaint resolution process.

If the complaint is against an OSCR and/or HR staff member with responsibilities regarding discrimination complaint resolution, that individual will be recused from having any involvement in processing the complaint and those tasks will be assigned to that person's immediate supervisor or an impartial internal or external investigator.

- **Annual Notice**

The District shall, at a minimum, publish an annual notice in a manner that is reasonably calculated to inform all students, parents, and employees of the department name, address, and telephone number of the office designated to receive and resolve formal complaints under this procedure.

- **Model Student Handbook Language**

The District adopts the model student handbook language required under RCW 28A.300.286 and will include required language in any student, parent, employee, and volunteer handbook it or its schools publish and on its and its schools' websites.

### **III. Complaints and Complaint Resolution**

Complaints may be in the form of an **informal complaint**, where a person submits an oral complaint or the District receives an anonymous complaint; or a **formal complaint**, where an identified person submits a complaint in writing.

All complaints must be filed within one (1) year after the act, condition, or circumstance that is the subject matter of the complaint. Exceptions to the one (1) year filing requirement will be granted if the complainant was prevented from filing a complaint due to: (a) specific misrepresentation by the District that it had resolved the problem forming the basis of the complaint; or (b) withholding of information by the District that was required to be provided under state law related to elimination of unlawful discrimination in public schools or state guidelines under WAC 392-190-005.

Complainants shall be informed that due process requirements may require that the District release all information regarding the complaint to the accused, thus the identity of the complainant may not remain confidential. The District will, however, fully implement the anti-retaliation provisions contained within this procedure and District policy to protect both complainants and witnesses.

Upon receipt of the complaint, OSCR will effect a timely resolution of the complaint, which may include a full investigation. The District reserves the right to hire external investigators or mediators at its sole discretion as the necessity arises.

As the District strongly supports Alternative Dispute Resolution ("ADR") processes, the complainant and the District may agree to resolve a formal complaint through ADR in lieu of an investigation. The District will establish a fair and neutral process for ADR

resolutions to take place, with the goal being a prompt resolution through an impartial facilitator, which can be a District staff member or an external individual hired by the District. It is the District's position that allegations of sexual harassment (including sexual assault), a form of sex/gender discrimination, and discriminatory harassment (i.e. harassment based on a person's membership in a protected class) shall not be subject to an option to mediate.

#### **A. Informal Complaint Process**

Anyone may use these informal procedures to report and resolve complaints of discrimination. Informal complaints are those made orally or anonymously. Complainants should understand that an anonymous complaint might not be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction because of due process limitations on actions that can be taken based on anonymity of the complainant. All attempts will be made to keep the identity of the complainant confidential, although confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

The District may use a variety of approaches to address informal complaints, including but not limited to ADR and/or supervisor intervention. The District shall timely inform the complainant to the extent permitted by law of what corrective measures it took to eliminate any alleged discriminatory behavior that is substantiated through an investigation.

Using this informal process does not limit the complainant's right to file a formal complaint. Further, as part of this informal process, the District will notify the complainant in writing about their right to file a formal complaint. The notice will be in a language the complainant can understand, which may require language assistance in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for complainants with limited English proficiency.

#### **B. Formal Complaint Process**

Anyone may initiate a formal complaint of discrimination even if the informal complaint process was initially used. All formal complaints shall be in writing and shall describe the specific acts, conditions, or circumstances alleged to have occurred that constitute discrimination.

Complaint resolution can consist of either an investigation or alternative dispute resolution (e.g., mediation). If the complaint resolution process includes an investigation, when the investigation is completed the full written report of the complaint and the results of the investigation will be submitted as follows:

- When the complaint alleges discrimination and/or retaliation against one or more District staff members, the full written report and results of the investigation will be submitted to the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee within Human Resources, generally the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, for the outcome letter.
- When the complaint alleges discrimination against a District program, service, or activity, the full written report and results of the investigation will be submitted to

the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee, generally the Associate Superintendent, for the outcome letter.

The Superintendent or Superintendent's designee will respond in writing with a summary of the results of the investigation of a formal complaint no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the District's receipt of the complaint, unless otherwise agreed to by the complainant or if exceptional circumstances related to the complaint require an extension of the time limit. If an extension of time is needed, the District will notify the complainant in writing of the reason for the extension and the anticipated response date. Such notice shall be provided in a language the complainant can understand and may require language assistance for complainants with limited English proficiency, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The written response shall include a summary of the results of the investigation and clearly state whether the District:

- Denies the allegations contained in the complaint; or
- Confirms the allegations and lists, to the extent permissible by law, the corrective measures that the District intends to take to eliminate substantiated discriminatory conduct.

The written response shall also include notice of the complainant's right to appeal as set forth in state law and this procedure, including an identification of where and to whom the appeal shall be filed. A copy of an outcome letter sent to the complainant shall also be sent to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction ("OSPI").

Corrective measures deemed necessary by the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee, in consultation with other appropriate District staff, will be instituted as quickly as possible, but in no event later than thirty (30) calendar days after the written response, unless the accused is appealing the imposition of discipline and the District is prevented by due process considerations or a lawful order from imposing the discipline until the appeal process is concluded.

### **C. Bargaining Agreements**

Nothing in the complaint procedure prohibits the processing of grievances by an employee's bargaining representative and/or a member of a bargaining unit pursuant to grievance procedures established at the District level or by a local bargaining agreement.

## **IV. Discipline / Remedial Action**

The District will take prompt, equitable, and remedial action within its authority on formal and informal complaints where discrimination has been substantiated by the District. Engaging in discrimination will result in appropriate discipline or other sanctions against offending staff. Others who engage in discrimination on District property or while at District activities may have access to District property and activities restricted or contracts cancelled, as appropriate. The District affirms its commitment that persons found to have been subjected to discrimination will have appropriate District services made reasonably available to them and adverse consequences of the discrimination shall be reviewed and remedied as appropriate.

## **V. Appeal Process**

### **A. Level One**

If a complainant disagrees with the written decision of the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee, the complainant may appeal to the School Board by filing a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent as the secretary of the Board on or before the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) calendar day following the date upon which the complainant received the written response. In the event the Superintendent or designee does not respond to a complaint within 30 days or provide written notification of an extension, the complainant may appeal this inaction to the School Board by filing a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent as the secretary of the Board on or before the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) calendar day following the expiration of the thirty (30<sup>th</sup>) calendar day response period specified above. Upon receipt of a timely appeal, the Superintendent shall appoint a neutral hearing examiner hired by the District to hear the matter and issue findings of fact and a recommended decision.

The appeal shall be based on the facts previously raised by the complainant and/or investigated by the District. The complainant, District staff, and the person or persons alleged to have violated this procedure shall have the right to present such witnesses and testimony to the Hearing Examiner as the Hearing Examiner deems relevant and material. This hearing shall be recorded.

The Hearing Examiner's findings of fact and recommended decision will be transmitted to the School Board for a closed record review. The Board shall not accept new information, written or oral, regarding the appeal, and will confine its review to the Hearing Examiner's decision and record from the hearing. Upon such review, the School Board may either adopt the decision or issue a different decision based on the facts found by the Hearing Examiner. The Board's decision will be communicated to the complainant and other parties on or before the thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) calendar day from the date the District received the appeal. The appeal decision must be provided in a language the complainant can understand, which may require language assistance for complainants with limited-English proficiency, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The written decision shall include notice of the complainant's right to file a complaint with OSPI as set forth below. The appeal decision must also be sent to OSPI.

If the Board has not conducted its review of the Hearing Examiner's decision and issued the Board's final decision within 30 days of the date the appeal was filed, the Hearing Examiner's decision will be considered the final decision of the District. The District will notify the appellant in writing that the Hearing Examiner's decision is the final decision of the District and shall include notice of the complainant's right to file a complaint with OSPI as set forth below.

### **B. Level Two**

If a complainant remains aggrieved as a result of the final decision under a Level One appeal in resolving a complaint, the complainant may file a complaint with OSPI by the twentieth (20<sup>th</sup>) calendar day following the date upon which the complainant received

written final decision unless OSPI grants an extension for good cause. Such appeal shall be in writing and include a concise statement of the parts of the final decision that are being appealed and the relief requested.

## **VI. Training and Prevention / Intervention**

All District orientation sessions for employees and volunteers shall address responsibilities under this procedure, the accompanying policy, and chapter 392-190 WAC. District employees and volunteers will be provided information on recognizing and preventing discrimination and shall be fully informed of the formal and informal complaint processes and their roles and responsibilities under this procedure.

## **VII. Retaliation / False Reporting**

No employee or volunteer may engage in reprisal or retaliation against a victim, witness, or other person who brings forward information about an act of discrimination. Reprisal or retaliation is prohibited and will result in appropriate discipline.

It is a violation of this procedure to knowingly report false allegations of discrimination. Staff members found to knowingly report or corroborate false allegations will be subject to appropriate discipline.

## **VIII. Other Laws**

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prohibit any complainant from exercising their rights under any complaint procedure in federal or state laws.

## **IX. Other District Policies and Procedures**

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prohibit discipline or remedial action for inappropriate behaviors that do not rise to the level of discrimination as defined herein, but which are or may be prohibited by other District rules.

## **X. Notice**

Any notice required under this procedure must be provided in a language understood by the complainant.

## **XI. Resources**

- **District Contact**

### **Office of Student Civil Rights**

Seattle Public Schools  
MS 33-157, P.O. Box 34165  
Seattle, WA 98124-1166  
206-252-0306  
OSCR@seattleschools.org

- **State Contacts**

**Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Equity and Civil Rights Office

P.O. Box 47200

Olympia, WA 98504-7200

360-725-6162

**Washington State Human Rights Commission**

711 South Capitol Way, Suite 402

P.O. Box 42490

Olympia, WA 98504-2490

360-753-6770

- **Federal Contact**

**Office for Civil Rights**

U.S. Department of Education

915 Second Avenue, Room 3310

Seattle, WA 98174

206-607-1600

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**Policy Cross References:**

- 2030 – Service Animals in Schools
- 2140 – Advising and School Counseling
- 2150 – Co-Curricular Program
- 2170 – Career and Technical Education
- 3207 – Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying of Students
- 3208 – Sexual Harassment of Students Prohibited
- 3210 – Nondiscrimination
- 3211 – Gender-Inclusive Schools: Transgender and Gender-Expansive Student Rights and Supports
- 3240 – Student Behavior and Disciplinary Responses
- 4218 – Language Access
- 5010 – Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action
- 5245 – Anti-Retaliation
- 5281 – Staff Disciplinary Action and Discharge
- 5630 – Volunteers

**Revisions:**

- November 24, 2025 (Revised and Renumbered)
- May 21, 2024 (As 3210SP.B)
- April 7, 2023 (As 3210SP.B)
- October 6, 2020 (As 3210SP.B)
- March 8, 2018 (As 3210SP.B)

**Adopted:**

- May 9, 2016 (As 3210SP.B)