

Winterberry Charter School
Anchorage, Alaska
POLICY MANUAL

Disagreement Resolution Process

Purpose

This policy serves as a general guideline for all students, parents, staff, and employees (referred to as “community members” throughout this document) of Winterberry Charter School (WCS). The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and directions for the informal, early, efficient, and complete resolution of disagreements between members of the school community. The objective is to perpetuate a climate of collegiality and mutual trust by facilitating the resolution of differences in a direct, timely, objective, and respectful manner.

Background

Disagreement may arise in any community. Such differences are an inevitable consequence of human interaction. In a majority of these situations, the parties involved can resolve the issue through direct personal communication. In our school community, complete resolution without lingering negative feelings is important for maintaining healthy relationships between the adults in our community and to insulate our students from the effects of negative adult interactions. The following procedure is designed to assist in the resolution of disagreements in a manner that recognizes the dignity of all persons involved.

Scope

This procedure deals with disagreements that are not covered by other established school policies, employee negotiated agreements, or established Anchorage School District (ASD) procedures for exempt employees. In cases where it is unclear whether this policy or another policy should apply, the Principal/Administrator shall make the determination.

This policy is not applicable to:

1. Matters of discipline of specific students;
2. Personnel matters related to specific employees, other than the school Administrator;
3. Allegations of criminal activity;
4. Acts or conditions tending to create immediate risk of serious harm to health or safety of others; and/or
5. Issues involving established school policy that should be referred to and handled by the school Principal/Administrator and/or the appropriate school committee.

Initiation of Process

In the event of a disagreement that merits further discussion for a complete resolution and in order to initiate the procedures of this policy, any involved party shall complete a “Concern Form” available at the school office or on the school website. The form will be delivered to the Principal/Administrator. If a disagreement is brought to any body or individual without a Concern Form, the body or individual may insist that such a form be completed. This is consistent with the practice of open and direct communication taken up by our community.

WCS is dedicated to the use of nonviolent communication (NVC) techniques. To this end, either party in a dispute may request the aide of a trained NVC facilitator to assist at any of the resolution levels. A list of trained facilitators is kept at the WCS office and is available to either party upon their request. WCS staff will coordinate with the facilitators to ensure their availability to work with the parties to reach resolution.

Levels of Resolution

Level 1: Direct Resolution

The Direct Resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved without others in attendance. Unless there is a bona fide safety concern, an attempt at direct resolution must be made prior to moving to Supportive Resolution. The date of the meeting, the parties involved, and whether or not the parties came to a resolution will be recorded. If the parties did not find resolution, the office staff will pass the request for further community support on to the Faculty Chair. Note: If one party involved in the dispute is the Faculty Chair and resolution is not found at this level, the parties will be referred to Level 3 to seek possible resolution.

Level 2: Supportive Resolution

The Supportive Resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved and includes non-biased support from the Faculty Chair. The Faculty Chair will provide guidance on the process of working through the issue. After providing such support, the Faculty Chair will record the date of the meeting and all those in attendance. Also recorded will be whether or not the parties came to resolution. If the parties did not find resolution, the Faculty Chair will pass the request for further community support on to the Administrator. Note: If one party involved in the dispute is the Administrator and resolution is not found at this level, the parties will be referred to Level 4 to seek possible resolution.

Level 3: Administrative Resolution

The Administrative Resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved and includes non-biased support from the Administrator. The Administrator will provide guidance on the process of working through the issue. After providing such support, the Administrator will record the date of the meeting and all those in attendance. Also recorded will be whether or not the parties came to resolution. If the parties did not find resolution, the Administrator will

pass the request for further community support on to a mediator in level four. Please refer to a list of mediators available at the front office.

Level 4: Mediated Resolution

The Mediated Resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved and includes non-biased support from a mediator. The mediator will provide guidance on the process of working through the issue. After providing such support, the mediator will record the date of the meeting and all those in attendance. Also recorded will be whether or not the parties came to resolution. If the parties did not find resolution, the mediator will pass the request for further community support on to the Chair of the Winterberry Charter Council (WCC).

Level 5: WCC Resolution

Prior to WCC review, the requesting party must provide documentation that all prior levels of the process have been attempted. The WCC's policy is to hear unresolved disagreements of community members promptly and fairly. Any community member who has followed this process and who still believes that no resolution has been reached is entitled to bring the unresolved issue to the WCC.

In order for the WCC to hear the unresolved issue, the party bringing the issue must submit a written request for a hearing to the WCC Chair within 20 days of the meeting and review by the mediator. The written request must include a clear and concise account of the complaint including a description of previous steps taken and particular outcomes from those steps. The desired outcome and/or action by the WCC must be clearly stated in writing. The party requesting hearing from the WCC may attend the scheduled WCC meeting and voice the grievance during community comments. The written account may be submitted at this time.

The WCC will review the complaint and determine to do one or more of the following:

1. Assign an administrative committee to investigate;
2. Determine immediate action and written response to the parties;
3. If confidentiality is necessary, as in the case of a personnel issue concerning the Administrator, matters will be taken up in a closed session. Such session must be announced and posted with advance notice, so issues of this nature should be brought to the attention of the WCC Chair no less than seven days in advance of a regularly scheduled WCC meeting in order to notify the public and all other involved parties. The Administrator must be invited and can bring representation. When the WCC comes out of closed session, a statement of "Action" or "No Action" must be made in the open session. The action, if taken, is confidential. A written statement must be submitted to the person bringing the complaint no later than the next scheduled WCC meeting.

Level 6: ASD Review

If resolution is still not found, the complaint may be appealed to the ASD Superintendent for processing. The request for appeal must be in writing, signed by the person bringing the appeal.

And include a clear concise statement of the complaint or dispute, a statement of the steps of the complaint process followed or reasons it was not followed, and a proposed remedy or solution.

Level 7: School Board Review

A party to the dispute or complaint may request that the School Board review the Superintendent's decision. The decision will be presented as a Board Memorandum for approval, modification, or rejection, and the Board will take such action as it deems appropriate.

Level 8: Municipal Ombudsman

A party to the dispute or complaint may request that the Municipal Ombudsman review the School Board's decision.

Exceptions

These provisions for administrative review of a complaint do not preclude an employee's right to a judicial review of the actions of the WCC and/or the Administrator on a writ of a certiorari.

**Winterberry Charter School
Resolution Request Form**

Date:

Name and your affiliation to WCS:

Other parties and their affiliation(s) with WCS:

Request NVC facilitator: Yes No

Brief explanation of issue:

Level 1: Direct Resolution:

Date: _____

Attendance: _____ Resolution:

Y N Further Action _____

Level 2: Supportive Resolution:

Date: _____

Attendance: _____ Resolution:

Y N Further Action _____

Level 3: Administrative Resolution:

Date: _____

Attendance: _____ Resolution:

Y N Further Action _____

Level 4: Mediated Resolution:

Date: _____

Attendance: _____ Resolution:

Y N Further Action _____

Level 5: WCC Resolution:

Date: _____

Attendance: _____ Resolution:

Y N Further Action _____

Received/Filed Date: _____ By

Approved by Winterberry Charter Council:

Initial Release: March 15, 2013
Revision A: January 21, 2016

