

## Addressing Family Concerns

RISE Prep is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, our scholars, and their families. If you 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:** If a parent has an issue or concern, the first step towards gaining clarity or resolving the issue will be to contact the staff member directly. The parent should allow a minimum of 24 hours for the staff member to respond to any requests. A conference will be set up to discuss concerns and resolve any issues.

**Step 2: Contact the Grade Level Chairperson:** 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 "parent concern process form" 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.

**Step 3: Contact the Assistant Principal/ Dean of Students (DOS) or Dean of Academics (DOA):** The parent should contact the school's front desk to obtain contact information for the DOS and/or DOA. The DOS and/or DOA will reply within **three business days**, at least acknowledging the complaint has been received, and may take up to five additional business days to investigate and reach a decision.

**Step 4: Contact the Principal:** 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 may take up to five additional business days to investigate and reach a decision.

**Step 4: 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 Executive Director who supports the school or use the "parent concern process form" 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 Executive Director. If the parent would like to reach out to the Executive Director directly, the parent should contact the front desk of the school to get his/her contact information. The Executive Director will reply within 3 business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The Executive Director will send a written decision via regular mail to the parent within 10 business days of receiving the letter or form. Please note that the Executive Director 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 Executive Director'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 5: Written Complaint to the School's Board of Directors:** If the parent is unsatisfied with the Executive Director's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the school's Board of Directors or use the "parent concern process form" to explain the issue. The parent can fax, email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter. 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 Directors or to individual Directors, Directors 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 response based on the above timeline. The Board will only address parent issues involving health or safety concerns, federal or civil rights compliance issues, and evidence of criminal wrongdoing

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 effectively communicated to each family fairly and consistently.

**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 Fulton County School District. While Fulton County Schools retains the ultimate authority over its approved charter schools, it is a Fulton County Schools practice that parents work through the process identified by the charter school to resolve parent concerns. Fulton County Schools respects the autonomy of charter schools and will not become involved in school-level matters unless there is a serious issue such as a health or safety concern, federal or civil rights compliance issues, or evidence of criminal wrongdoing. The parent can get contact information for the authorizer from the school's front desk.

**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.***

## **Appendix D: How to File a Grievance about Discrimination, Non-Discrimination**

RISE Prep does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs, or activities, on the basis of race, color or national origin, in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII); on the basis of sex, in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 194 (ADEA). In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to RISE Prep on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. No person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges, or access to the courses of scholar offered by the school on the basis or race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Finally, pregnant scholars are allowed to remain in regular education classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant scholars throughout their pregnancy, and after giving birth are permitted to return to the same academic and extracurricular program as before the leave (Title IX).

RISE Prep 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. 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. RISE Prep will keep these proceedings as informal and confidential as may be appropriate at any level of the procedure. These policies do not limit the right of the complainant having a problem to discuss the matter informally with any appropriate member of the administration. Additionally, parents have the right to deliver the formal grievance directly to the Board.

Since it is important that grievances be processed as rapidly as possible, the number of days indicated at each level should be considered as a maximum, and every effort should be made to expedite the process. The time limits specified may, however, be extended by mutual agreement in writing.

If a complainant does not file a grievance in writing as provided herein within 30 days after the aggrieved person knew or should have known of the act or condition on which the grievance is based, then the grievance shall be considered waived. RISE Prep reserves the right to extend the 60-day limitation to file a grievance for just cause. A RISE Prep staff member will, if requested, assist in preparing any written documents described within this grievance procedure.

### **Internal Resolution Process (Grievance Process):**

Any student or parent who feels that he/she has been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability, or that the school has violated its charter shall contact the Family Engagement Coordinator within 60 calendar days of the date on which he/she knew or should have known of the alleged occurrence to discuss the nature of the complaint.

The Family Engagement Coordinator shall maintain a written record which shall contain the following:

1. The name and address of the Complainant;
2. The full name and position of person(s) who allegedly discriminated against the complainant, if applicable;
3. A concise statement of the facts constituting the alleged discrimination; and
4. Dates of the alleged discrimination.

At the time the alleged discrimination complaint is filed, the Family Engagement Coordinator shall review and explain the grievance procedures with the complainant and answer any questions. An investigation of the

complaint shall begin as soon as practical, but in no case, more than 10 school days from the time the complaint was received. Within this time limit, the Family Engagement Coordinator shall meet separately with the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. The Family Engagement Coordinator and/or his or her designee shall conduct a prompt, adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of the complaint. The Family Engagement Coordinator shall provide confidential counseling where advisable and shall seek an informal agreement between the parties concerned, where appropriate. Every attempt shall be made to seek a solution and resolve the alleged discrimination complaint at this level. It is important to note, however, that the informal process can be ended, by the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged or by the Family Engagement Coordinator, at any time in order to begin a formal stage of the complaint process. If the complainant is not satisfied with these initial informal procedures, within 20 school days from the date of the original discussion with the Family Engagement Coordinator, more formal procedures may be initiated by the complainant to further explore and resolve the problem

### **Formal Procedure:**

**Level One – School Principal:** If a complainant is not satisfied with the disposition of the problem through informal procedures, he/she may seek review of his/her claim as a formal grievance or appeal in writing to the principal. Level One Grievances shall be submitted to the principal on the Parent Grievance Process Form (“Grievance Form”) or by letter.

The principal shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. The principal shall review the Coordinator’s investigation and information submitted by the complainant and may conduct additional investigation as necessary. Within 10 school days the principal will render a decision and the reasons therefore in writing to the complainant and the person who allegedly discriminated against the complainant, with a copy to the Executive Director.

**Level Two – Executive Director:** If the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant, if applicable, is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level One, or if no decision has been rendered within 10 school days after presentation of the grievance in writing, the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant may file a written appeal for a hearing by the Executive Director within 10 school days. The Executive Director shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. (Please note that the Executive Directors will not respond to complaints that have not, without good cause, first been addressed by the Family Engagement Coordinator and/ or the principal).

Within 10 school days after receipt of the written appeal for a hearing by the Executive Director, he/she shall conduct a hearing with the complainant and the person alleged to have committed the discrimination for the purpose of resolving the grievance. The Executive Director shall provide the parties an opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence. A full record of such hearing shall be kept by the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall within 10 school days of the hearing render the decision and the reasons therefore in writing to the complainant and the person who allegedly discriminated against the complainant.

**Level Three – Board of Directors Hearing** If the complainant or the person alleged to have discriminated against the complainant, if applicable, is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, or if no decision has been rendered within 10 school days after first meeting with the Executive Director, the person may file a grievance with the Board of Directors within 10 school days. The Board shall reply in writing within three school days acknowledging receipt of the Grievance to the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged.

Within 15 school days after receiving the written appeal, the Board or an Impartial Hearing Officer designated by the Board shall meet with the complainant for the purpose of resolving the grievance. The Board or Impartial Hearing Officer shall provide an opportunity for the parties to present witnesses and

other evidence. A full record of such hearing shall be kept by the Board. The decision of the Board shall be rendered in writing within 10 school days.

## **General Provisions**

Title VI, Title IX and Section 504 protect complainants from retaliation for reporting allegations of discrimination and participating in an investigation. The administration will take steps to prevent retaliation and will take strong responsive action should retaliation occur.

In the event that there is a finding of discrimination, the administration will take steps that are reasonably calculated to end discrimination; to prevent recurrence of any discrimination; and to correct discriminatory effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate.

The administration will contact the person raising alleged violations within a reasonable period of time following conclusion of the investigation and grievance process to assess whether there has been ongoing discrimination or retaliation, and to determine whether additional supportive measures are needed.

## **Additional procedures for Claims Alleging Harassment or Hostile Educational Environment**

The administration, when evaluating whether there is a hostile environment for a student, will consider the effects of harassment that occurred in school and those incidents that occurred outside of school that may affect the school environment.

Alleged victims of harassment will not be required to work out the problem directly with alleged perpetrators without appropriate involvement by administration. Any informal process can be ended by an alleged victim at any time in order to begin a formal stage of the complaint process.

The administration will consider providing interim measures to an alleged victim pending the outcome of the recipient's investigation, when appropriate (such as prohibiting the alleged perpetrator to contact the alleged victim; changing the alleged perpetrator class and bus schedule to minimize contact with the alleged victim, etc.).

The administration will maintain ongoing contact with the alleged victim throughout the investigation.

The administration will provide counseling and academic services, as appropriate, to the alleged victim.

Any person may also file a complaint of illegal discrimination with the Office for Civil Rights at the same time he/she files the grievance during or after use of the grievance process, or without using the grievance process at all. If a complaint is filed with the Office for Civil Rights, it must be filed in writing no later than 180 days after the occurrence of the possible discrimination.

Complaints may be filed at <https://wdcrobcop01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm>.

## Appendix E: Parent Concern Form

RISE Preps committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between our teachers, staff, scholars, and families. If you 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. Please use this form to describe an incident/issue and submit the form to the school's principal, dean, or director of operations.

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Scholar's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Scholar: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed this issue with anyone at the school yet?       Yes     No

If yes, who were you in touch with?:

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the result?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the Incident / Issue in the space below. Be sure to include the DATE of the incident and the NAMES of any people who were involved. (Please attach extra pages if you need more space).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_