



## How to File a Complaint

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#### **Informal Complaints**

In the case of an informal complaint, families are encouraged to take their grievances to the staff person who is directly involved in the incident or situation. If the conflict is not successfully resolved, families should bring the complaint to that person's supervisor. If still not adequately resolved, families may take their grievances to the Superintendent for resolution with the involved parties. Examples of informal complaints include: homework is too difficult, another student is copying my student's work, I want to change my child's class.

#### **The Nature of a Formal Complaint (to the school, charter management organization, or board of trustees)**

In the event that an individual feels Paterson Prep has committed a violation of the school's charter or of the law, they may choose to file a formal complaint against the school. Examples of such violations include:

- An IDEA violation involving the discipline of a special education student
- A state law violation such as inflicting corporal punishment on a student
- A Charter Schools Act violation including failure to follow the stated admission policy

#### **Filing a Formal Complaint (to the school, charter management organization, or board of trustees)**

Please note that formal complaints must be presented in writing. You may use the Formal Complaint Form attached here if you wish. Alternatively, you may directly email the grievance committee at

[GrievanceCommittee@PatersonPaterson.org](mailto:GrievanceCommittee@PatersonPaterson.org). The complaint must include:

1. The nature of the violation
2. The facts on which the complaint is based
3. The signature and contact information of the person filing the complaint
4. If alleging a complaint about a specific child
  - a. The name and address of the child on which the complaint is based
  - b. Statement about the nature of the child's problem
5. A proposed resolution to the problem

#### **Complaint forms should be sent to the attention of:**

Grievance Committee

Paterson Prep

190 Oliver ST

Paterson, NJ 07505

[GrievanceCommittee@Patersonprep.org](mailto:GrievanceCommittee@Patersonprep.org)



## FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

**Describe the nature of the violation:**

**State the facts on which the complaint is based:**



**If alleging a complaint about a specific child, please state:**

The name and address of the child on which the complaint is based:

The nature of the child's problem:

A potential resolution of the problem:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone:

Email:

Signature:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Additional Formal Complaints**

### **Complaint Procedure Overview**

When misunderstandings or disputes arise in the school community, it is important that they be resolved before serious problems develop. Faculty, staff, and other members of the school community should always try to resolve their difficulties among themselves first. Informal consultation with the Head of Schools or other school leaders is encouraged if efforts among the parties involved are not fruitful. When this is not sufficient to resolve an issue, Paterson Prep has adopted the following policy for informal and formal complaints that need to be escalated to school or board leadership. Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to interfere with a person's right to file a formal complaint under NJ Education Law(s) alleging a violation of law or charter.

### **Informal Complaints**

Complaints that do not involve violations of law or the charter are defined as informal complaints. Paterson Prep has a multi-step process for resolving informal complaints. If a member of the Paterson Prep community believes that an issue has not been resolved through discussion with involved parties and/or school leaders, the following additional procedures are available.

1. The complainant submits an informal complaint in writing to the grievance committee and/or the Head of Schools. Complaint forms are available at the main office and included in staff and family handbooks. The complaint should state the date of the complaint, a detailed statement of the circumstances, and the requested remedy. A complainant shall not be limited as to the amount of text he/she feels is necessary to explain the complaint. The complainant shall be provided a copy of their complaint form and this complaint policy and procedure if the complainant has not already received one.
2. The grievance committee and/or the Head of Schools or a delegate from the Leadership Team will make all reasonable efforts to investigate the complaint. The investigation shall include, but not be limited to, interviews with the complainant and/or complaint's representative and any other person(s) believed to have relevant knowledge concerning the complaint.
3. The grievance committee and/or the Head of Schools and/or appropriate Leadership Team member(s) shall respond to and, if necessary, remedy a valid complaint within ten (10) working days from the date the complaint was received. The grievance committee and/or the Head of Schools or appropriate Leadership Team member shall complete a written response/report within fifteen (15) working days of the initial filing and provide a copy to the complainant (if a response is requested by the complainant) as well as place a copy in the appropriate teacher/student file, if applicable. The reported decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or required by law. The response will inform the complainant of the right to appeal to Paterson Prep's Head of Schools.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and remedy provided by school leadership, the complainant may appeal to The Head of Schools within fifteen (15) days of

receiving a written response/report from school leadership. The grievance committee and/or Head of Schools shall provide a copy of the disposition to the Head of Schools if and when a complaint resolution/decision has not satisfied the complainant and an appeal process has been initiated. All complaints must be submitted to the Head of Schools in writing, who will acknowledge receipt of said complaint within five business days.

5. The Head Schools or a delegate from the School Board will make all reasonable efforts to investigate the complaint. The investigation shall include, but not be limited to: interviews with the complainant and/or complaint's representative and any other person(s) believed to have relevant knowledge concerning the complaint.
6. The Head of Schools and/or appropriate CMO member(s) shall respond to and, if necessary, remedy a valid complaint within ten (10) working days from the date the complaint was received. The Head of Schools or appropriate Board member shall complete a written response/report within fifteen (15) working days of the initial filing and provide a copy to the complainant (if a response is requested by the complainant) as well as place a copy in the appropriate teacher/student file, if applicable. The reported decision shall be written in English and in the language of the complainant whenever feasible or required by law. The response will inform the complainant of the right to appeal to Paterson Prep's Board of Trustees.
7. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and remedy provided by the Head of Schools and/or Paterson Prep member(s), the complainant may appeal to the school's Board of Trustees within fifteen (15) days of receiving a written response/report from school leadership. The Head of Schools shall provide a copy of the disposition to the Board of Trustees if and when a complaint resolution/decision has not satisfied the complainant and an appeals process has been initiated. All complaints must be submitted to the Board in writing, which will acknowledge receipt of said complaint within five business days.
8. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will appoint a Grievance Committee composed solely of board members to investigate the complaint. The Grievance Committee will complete its work within 30 business days of the Board receiving the complaint and present its findings and recommendations to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The Board will affirm or amend the Grievance Committee recommendation and shall, as necessary, direct the Superintendent and/or other responsible party to act upon the complaint and report to the Board. The Board shall render a determination in writing, as necessary. The decision of the Board regarding informal complaints is final.

### **Formal Complaints**

In accordance with NJ Education Law, any individual or group may bring a complaint directly to the Paterson Prep Board of Trustees alleging a violation of the charter, or any other provision of law relating to the management or operation of the school. This is defined as a formal complaint.

Paterson Prep prefers that complainants voluntarily first use the informal complaint process described above to attempt to resolve their concerns with school management before bringing it to the attention of the Paterson Prep Board of Trustees. However, nothing in this policy should be interpreted as preventing the submission of a formal complaint directly to the Paterson Prep Board of Trustees. The for

complaint process should follow these steps:

1. The complainant submits a formal complaint to the Chair of the Paterson Prep Board of Trustees. Complaints should be addressed to:

Paterson Prep Board Chair  
190 Oliver Street  
Paterson, NJ 07505

Complaint forms are available at the main office and included in staff and family handbooks. The complaint should state the date of the complaint, a detailed statement of the circumstances, and the requested remedy. A complainant shall not be limited as to the amount of text he/she feels is necessary to explain the complaint. The complainant shall be provided a copy of a complaint form and this complaint policy and procedure if the complainant has not already received one. All complaints must be submitted to the Board in writing, which will acknowledge receipt of said complaint within five (5) business days.

2. The Chair of the Board will appoint the Sr. Director of Human Resources and Risk Assessment, as a designee to investigate the complaint. The designee will complete their work within 30 business days of the Board receiving the complaint and present their findings and recommendations to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
3. The Board will affirm or amend the designee's recommendation and shall, as necessary, direct the Head of Schools and/or other responsible party to act upon the complaint and report to the Board. The Board shall render a determination in writing and clearly set forth the reasoning of the Board's decision and any remedial actions to be taken. The complainant will also be informed of the right to appeal the Paterson Prep's Board's decision. If you have been unable to resolve issues by navigating the four local levels, there are several ways to bring issues to the attention of the Department of Education. Every county has an office with personnel who can help resolve issues if you have exhausted all avenues in the district. The directory of county offices can be found at <https://www.nj.gov/education/about/counties/>. A complete listing of matters that may be brought to the department can be found at: <https://www.state.nj.us/education/legal/lawandpolicy/>
4. Any individual dissatisfied with the response of the Paterson Prep Board of Trustees may bring a further complaint that alleges a violation of the charter, charter law, or any other provision of law relating to the management or operation of Paterson Prep to the Commissioner of Education.
  - Petitions of appeal may be filed electronically by emailing the petition to [ControversiesDisputesFilings@doe.nj.gov](mailto:ControversiesDisputesFilings@doe.nj.gov), or
  - Papers may be mailed to the following address:

Commissioner of Education  
c/o Director of Office of Controversies and Disputes  
New Jersey Department of Education  
P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625.
  - With prior permission of the Office of Controversies and Disputes, a petition of 10 pages or less may also be faxed to (609) 292-4333; however, a hard copy must follow by mail.

- If documents are filed electronically, a hard copy does not need to be mailed to the Office of Controversies and Disputes

The complainant's right to a prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint will not be affected by the complainant's pursuit of other remedies, such as the filing of a complaint with any outside entity.