



COMPLAINT POLICY 2023-2024

OVERVIEW

The Board of Trustees (the “Board”) of the Cultural Arts Academy Charter School (“CAACS”) welcomes inquiries, suggestions and constructive criticism regarding the curriculum and instruction, programs, personnel, operations and facilities. Any parent/guardian, scholars, resident or community group shall have the right to present a request, suggestion or complaint. The CAACS Board of Trustees will be responsive to parents/guardians, scholars, or community groups by maintaining an open line of communication and responding promptly to any grievances.

There will be a variety of avenues to register complaints or concerns, and to ask questions about Cultural Arts Academy Charter School’s progress toward its goals. These avenues include talking with a teacher and/or administrator, sending a comment or concern via email or telephone communication to the administration. All grievances will be handled expeditiously and diplomatically, with the intention of creating a “win-win”, bringing those involved in the conflict to a consensus and satisfactory resolution.

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

Attempts to resolve public concerns and complaints of Cultural Arts Academy Charter School stakeholders shall begin with informal, direct discussions among the affected parties, following the established guidelines and the Cultural Arts Academy Charter School organizational structure. Only when informal meetings fail to resolve the issue shall more formal procedures be utilized. An informal complaint is a complaint that does not concern the alleged violation of law or charter (e.g., a concern about an academic grade, the school’s uniform policy, the school’s cell phone policy, or the bus schedule).

An individual who (or group that) has an informal complaint against a school policy or member of the school community is encouraged to contact the appropriate staff member at CAACS by telephone email. All staff members are committed to

responding promptly to informal complaints, either in person, by telephone, or in writing. If an informal complaint is not responded to and resolved promptly or satisfactorily, the group or individual should contact School Leadership (Director-in-Charge) to discuss the matter; the Director-in-Charge shall respond in person, by telephone, or in writing.

FORMAL COMPLAINT

A formal complaint is a complaint that concerns an alleged violation of law and/or charter. Education Law Section 2855(4)(2)(d) guides the complaint process. An individual or group (a complainant) may bring a complaint alleging a violation of the school's charter, the New York Charter Schools Act of 1998 (Charter Schools Act), or other applicable law relating to the management or operation of the charter school to the school's Board. Except as described below, any individual or group may bring a complaint to the Board of Trustees.

A complaint should include a detailed written statement of the nature of the complaint including the names of the individuals involved and the time, date, and place the incidents and/or actions at issue occurred; an allegation referring to the specific term of the charter or provision of law that the school has violated, what response, if any, was received from the school thus far, what relief the complainant is seeking, and the name, address, and phone number of the complainant.

If a complaint is made regarding a staff member at CAACS, it will first be the responsibility of the Principal-CEO to address the complaint to the satisfaction of the Board and the complainant. The Board will serve as the appeals body for any complaints not satisfactorily resolved or that involve the Principal-CEO directly in the complaint. Complaints must be submitted to the Board of Trustees at least one week prior to the next Board meeting. Complaints submitted less than one week before the next Board meeting will be addressed at the subsequent meeting of the Board. Emergency issues will be dealt with on an as-needed basis, with the Board responding at or prior to its next regular public meeting.

The Board of Trustees will act on the complaint and provide a final response to the complaint within thirty (30) days of receiving the formal written complaint or by the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board unless extenuating circumstances outlined in the complaint require an expedited review. The Board shall render a determination in writing if appropriate or required.

Consistent with Section 2855(4) of the Charter Schools Act, if the complainant determines that the Board of Trustees has not adequately addressed the complaint, the complainant has the right to present the complaint to the school's authorizing entity, which will review the complaint and investigate as appropriate. If after bringing the complaint to the authorizing entity, the complainant determines the authorizing entity has not adequately addressed the complaint, the complainant may

present the complaint to the State Board of Regents, which will review the complaint and investigate as appropriate. The determination of the Board of Regents shall be final.

SUMMARY

Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the school's guidelines and contact the school's leadership. Begin by contacting school leadership to try to resolve any violations, issues or complaints. Before doing so, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the school's policies, guidelines, and reference materials. Such items include, but are not limited to, parent handbooks, student discipline policies related to your concern, dress code pamphlets, and school-issued memorandums. Determine whether or not the school's actions related to your complaint fall within the school's policies.

Step 2: Appeal to the school's Board of Trustees. Each charter school has a Board of Trustees that is responsible for hiring and overseeing the school leader. If after contacting the school's leadership you are not satisfied with the outcome or decision pertaining to the complaint, you may appeal to the school's Board of Trustees. The Board meets publicly on a regular basis. Parents are encouraged to either contact the Board directly to schedule items on the meeting agenda or contact the school/parent committee that deals with such matters. Contact the CAACS Board of Trustees at caacs@caa-org.

Step 3: Appeal to the school's authorizer. If after your appeal you are not satisfied with the Board of Trustees' decision, and if your complaint involves a violation of either the school's policies or its charter, you may submit a formal complaint to the school's authorizer. For NYCDOE-authorized schools, the email contact information is: charteroversight@schools.nyc.gov.

Step 4: Appeal to the New York State Board of Regents If you are still not satisfied with the outcome after going through the first three levels of the complaint process, you may write to the New York State Board of Regents (New York State Education Department, Charter School Office, Room 465 EBA, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234), call them at (518) 474-1762, or send an email to: charterschools@mail.nysed.gov (subject line should include the name of the school and the word "Complaint").

NOTE: *It is very important that before you escalate your complaint to the school's authorizer level you determine it constitutes a formal complaint involving a violation of the school's charter or of state charter law. Informal complaints that do not violate either the school's charter or state charter law should be resolved between the parent and the school's leadership.*