

DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSION, AND DISMISSAL OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS

Categories of Misconduct

Certificated staff members may be disciplined for infractions that include, but are not limited to, the following categories:

- Engaging in unprofessional conduct.
- Committing fraud in securing appointment.
- Exhibiting incompetency in their work.
- Neglecting their duties.
- Engaging in acts of insubordination.
- Engaging in acts of child abuse or child molestation.
- Engaging in acts of dishonesty.
- Being under the influence of alcohol while on duty.
- Engaging in the use of narcotics or habit-forming drugs.
- Being absent without leave.
- Engaging in illegal political activity.
- Being involved in misuse or unauthorized use of school property.
- Carrying or possessing a weapon on school grounds unless they are peace officers or have obtained specific authorization from the appropriate school administrator.

Statutory Requirements

Certificated staff members disciplined under A.R.S. 15-341, A.R.S. 15-539, or other applicable statutes:

- May not be suspended with or without pay for a period exceeding ten (10) school days under A.R.S. 15-341.
- May be suspended without pay for a period of time greater than ten (10) school days or dismissed under A.R.S. 15-539.

- Shall be disciplined under procedures that provide for notice, hearing, and appeal, subject to the requirements of A.R.S. 15-341 or A.R.S. 15-539, whichever is appropriate.
- Shall, if disciplined under A.R.S. 15-539 or other applicable statutes, excluding A.R.S. 15-341, receive notice in writing served upon the certificated staff member personally or by United States registered or certified mail addressed to the employee's last-known address. A copy of charges, together with a copy of all applicable statutes, shall be attached to the notice.
- Shall have the right to a hearing in accordance with the following:
 - *Suspension under A.R.S. 15-341.* The supervising administrator will schedule a meeting not less than two (2) days nor more than ten (10) days after the date the certificated staff member receives the notice.
 - *Dismissal or dismissal with suspension included under A.R.S. 15-539.* A written request for a hearing shall be filed with the Board within thirty (30) days after service of notice. The filing of a timely request shall suspend the imposition of a suspension without pay or a dismissal pending completion of the hearing.

General Provisions for Discipline Under A.R.S. 15-341

General provisions for discipline are as follows:

- *Informal consultation.* Nothing contained herein will limit a supervising administrator's prerogative to engage in informal consultation with a certificated employee to discuss matters of concern related to the employee's performance, conduct, etc.; however, when it is apparent that disciplinary action toward a certificated employee is likely to become a part of the certificated staff member's personnel record as permitted by A.R.S. 15-341, the procedures outlined herein shall be followed.
- *Persons authorized to impose discipline.* Any supervising administrator who is the immediate or primary supervisor of a certificated staff member is authorized to impose a penalty or penalties, short of dismissal. Only the Board may dismiss a certificated staff member.
- *Notice.* Any person who is required by this policy to give written notice to any other person affected by this policy may do so by any means reasonably calculated to give the recipient actual knowledge of the notice within a reasonable amount of time. When time is calculated from the date a notice is received, the notice is deemed to be received on the date it is hand delivered or three (3) calendar days after it is placed in the mail.
- *Administrative discretion.* In adopting these policies/procedures, it is the intention of the District that they be interpreted and applied in a reasonable fashion. The policies are not intended to restrict or eliminate the discretion traditionally afforded to supervising administrators to determine whether discipline is appropriate. Supervising administrators

are therefore directed to continue to use reasonable discretion in determining whether a particular alleged violation merits discipline.

- *Right not to impose discipline.* The District reserves the right not to discipline a certificated staff member for conduct that violates this policy.
- *Definition of work days.* For the purposes of this policy, a work day is any day that the District's central administrative office is open for business.
- *Additional reasons for discipline.* A certificated staff member may be disciplined for conduct that has occurred but that, at or near the time of misconduct, was not the subject of or identified as a reason for a specific proceeding under this policy.
- *Amendments.* The District reserves the right to amend this policy in any way at any time. Any amendment shall have prospective application only.
- *Severability.* If any provision of this policy is held to be invalid for any reason, such action shall not invalidate the remainder of this policy. If any provision of this policy conflicts with any provisions in any other policies adopted by the District, the provisions of this policy shall prevail.

Procedure for Discipline Under A.R.S. 15-341

The following procedures will be used to impose any discipline that (1) shall become a part of the certificated staff member's personnel record and (2) is permitted under A.R.S. 15-341:

Step 1 - Notice:

- Upon the supervising administrator's determination of the existence of cause to impose discipline, the supervising administrator shall notify the certificated staff member of intent to impose discipline. The notice shall be in writing and shall be delivered in person or by first-class mail. The notice shall include the following:
 - The conduct or omission on the part of the certificated staff member that constitutes the reason for discipline.
 - A scheduled meeting time between the supervising administrator and the certificated staff member. Such meeting shall be scheduled not more than ten (10) working days after the date the certificated staff member receives the notice.
 - A statement of the disciplinary action the supervising administrator intends to impose, including, if applicable, the number of days of suspension with or without pay.
 - Copies of any available relevant documentation, at the discretion of the supervising administrator.

Step 2 - Hearing:

- At the hearing, the supervising administrator shall discuss with the certificated staff member the conduct that warrants disciplinary action and shall provide the certificated staff member with any appropriate evidence and a copy of relevant documentation if not previously provided.
- The supervising administrator shall conduct the hearing in an informal manner, without adherence to the rules of evidence and procedure required in judicial proceedings.

Step 3 - Decision (in writing):

- At the hearing, or within ten (10) working days following the hearing, the supervising administrator shall, in writing, inform the certificated staff member of the decision. If the decision is to impose discipline, written notice of the discipline shall be enclosed. The written notice of the decision shall state that a copy of the notice, decision, and a record of the disciplinary action shall be placed in the certificated staff member's personnel file and shall specify the date the discipline shall be imposed unless the certificated staff member files a written request for appeal within five (5) working days after the decision is delivered to the certificated staff member. If the certificated staff member requests an appeal of the decision, the imposition of any discipline shall be suspended pending the outcome of the appeal.

Step 4 - Appeal:

- Discipline imposed may be appealed at the next organizational level, in writing, to the appropriate assistant superintendent or the Superintendent. Only when the discipline is determined by the Superintendent shall the appeal be to the Board, which, at its discretion, may appoint a hearing officer. The appeal shall contain a brief statement of the reasons why the certificated staff member believes the administrator's decision is incorrect. Appeal is limited to one (1) organizational level above the level of the supervising administrator who imposed the discipline.

The appeal shall specifically describe the part of the determination with which the certificated staff member disagrees:

- Determination was founded upon error of construction or application of any pertinent regulations or policies.
- Determination was unsupported by any evidence as disclosed by the entire record.
- Determination was materially affected by unlawful procedure.
- Determination was based on violation of any statutory or constitutional right.
- Determination was arbitrary and capricious.
- The penalty was excessive.

The supervising administrator, the Superintendent, or, when appropriate, the Board or the Board-appointed hearing officer may, at the conclusion of the appeal, uphold the discipline, modify the decision, or refer the matter back to the level from which it was appealed for rehearing and additional information. Such decision, along with specific direction as to the effective date of any discipline, shall be communicated to the certificated staff member within a reasonable amount of time following the appeal, not to exceed seven (7) working days.

Additional Provisions and Conditions

During the pendency of the hearing, neither the certificated staff member nor the supervising administrator shall contact the Superintendent or a Board member to discuss the merits of the supervising administrator's recommendation or charges and proposed discipline except as provided by this policy. No attempt shall be made during such period to discuss the merits of the charges with the person designated to act as hearing officer.

The assigned hearing officer shall, by use of a mechanical device, make a record of the appeal hearing.

This policy, under A.R.S. 15-341, does not apply to dismissal of a certificated staff member except to the extent that the Board may find, subsequent to dismissal proceedings, that a lesser form of discipline as set forth in this policy should be imposed.

Not all administrative actions regarding a certificated staff member are considered "discipline," even though they may involve alleged or possible violations by the certificated staff member. This policy addresses only discipline and has no application to any of the following:

- The certificated staff member evaluation procedure or the resulting evaluations as they pertain to the adequacy of the certificated staff member's classroom performance.
- Letters or memorandums directed to a certificated staff member containing directives or instructions for future conduct.
- Counseling of a certificated staff member concerning expectations of future conduct.
- Nonrenewal of a contract of a certificated staff member employed by the District for less than the major portion of three (3) consecutive school years (noncontinuing certificated staff member).

In the case of dismissal or dismissal with suspension under A.R.S. 15-539, hearing and appeal procedures shall follow those provided for in the appropriate statutes.

If charges presented to the Board for dismissal of a certificated person allege immoral conduct, the charge or a resignation involving such charges shall be reported to the Department of Education.

As used in this policy, immoral conduct means any conduct that is contrary to the moral standards of the community and that reflects an unfitness to perform the duties assigned to the certificated staff member.

Adopted: date of manual adoption

LEGAL REF.:	A.R.S.	13-2911	15-508	15-541
		15-203	15-514	15-542
		15-341	15-536	15-543
		15-342	15-538	15-549
		15-350	15-538.01	15-551
		15-503	15-539	41-770
		15-507	15-540	

CROSS REF.: DKA - Payroll Procedures/Schedules
GCJ - Professional Staff Noncontinuing and Continuing Status