

# Formal Public Complaints Annual Report

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020



# Introduction

This report satisfies the PPS Board Policy 4.50.032-P, which requires the district to provide an annual report on the formal complaint process at the culmination of each school year. The findings below represent data, trends and information related to the formal complaints process for the 2019-20 school year.

In classrooms, schools, and departments, our staff, parents and students work together frequently to solve issues and improve our processes with the goal of creating the best possible educational experience for students. The district encourages parties to work together to reach resolution at the school or department level whenever possible. If this approach does not resolve the concerns, the district provides a formal complaint process.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Portland Public Schools received 54 formal complaints. The district receives formal complaints through web form, email, mail and in person. During the 2019-2020 school year, a resource web page was created for parents/guardians to have all the necessary information in one location. The PPS Board Policy 4.50.032-P was also translated into the five major languages (Spanish, Somali, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese) and French.

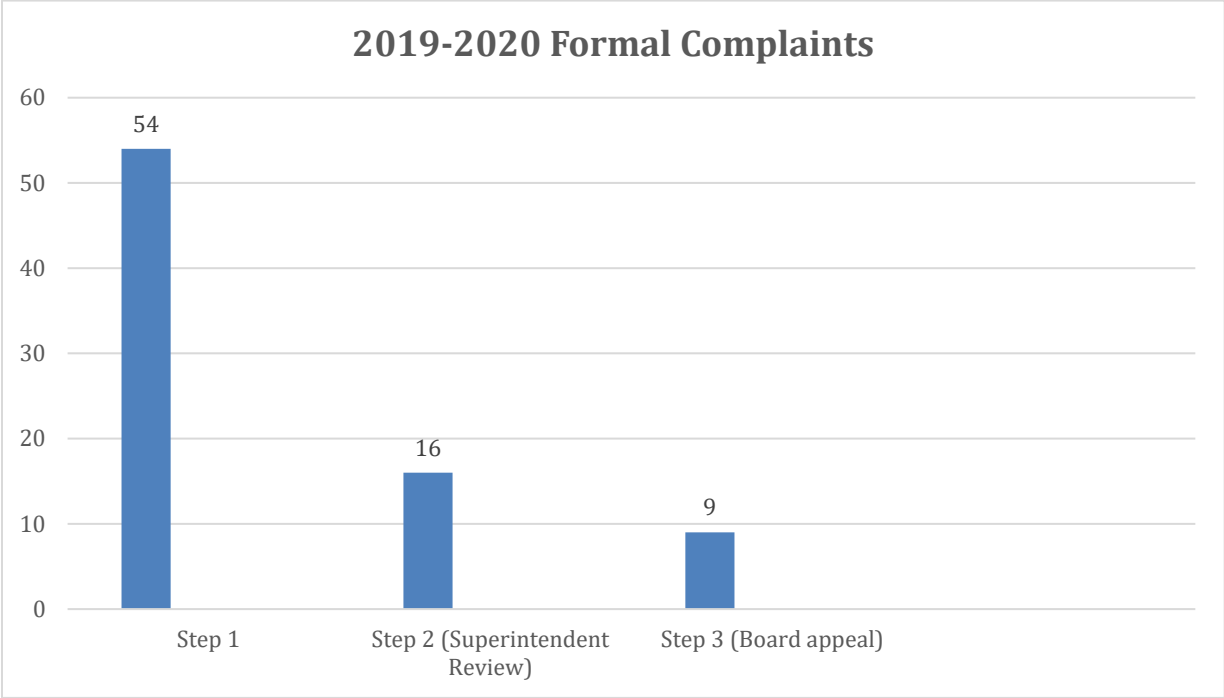
# Types of complaints

The Portland Public Schools Formal Public Complaints Policy 4.50.032-P provides a process for resolving complaints as required by Oregon Administrative Rule 581-022-2370, including, but not limited to complaints related to:

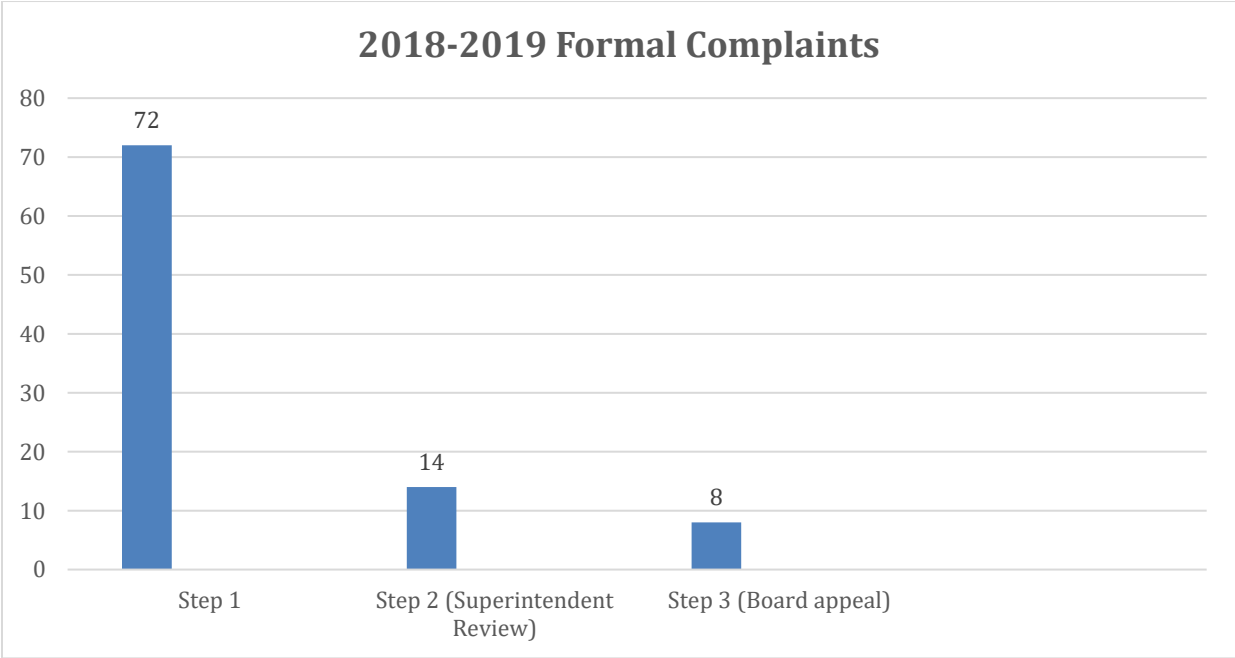
- a) Instructional standards and practices
  - (1) Curriculum
  - (2) Teaching strategies
  - (3) Testing
  - (4) Counseling
  - (5) Class size
  - (6) Alternative education programs
  - (7) Instructional materials
  - (8) Compliance with state standards
- b) Special education
- c) Health and safety
- d) Equitable education opportunities
- e) Sports safety
- f) Restraint and/or seclusion
- g) Discrimination in education
- h) Retaliation against a student or parent/guardian

# Complaint numbers

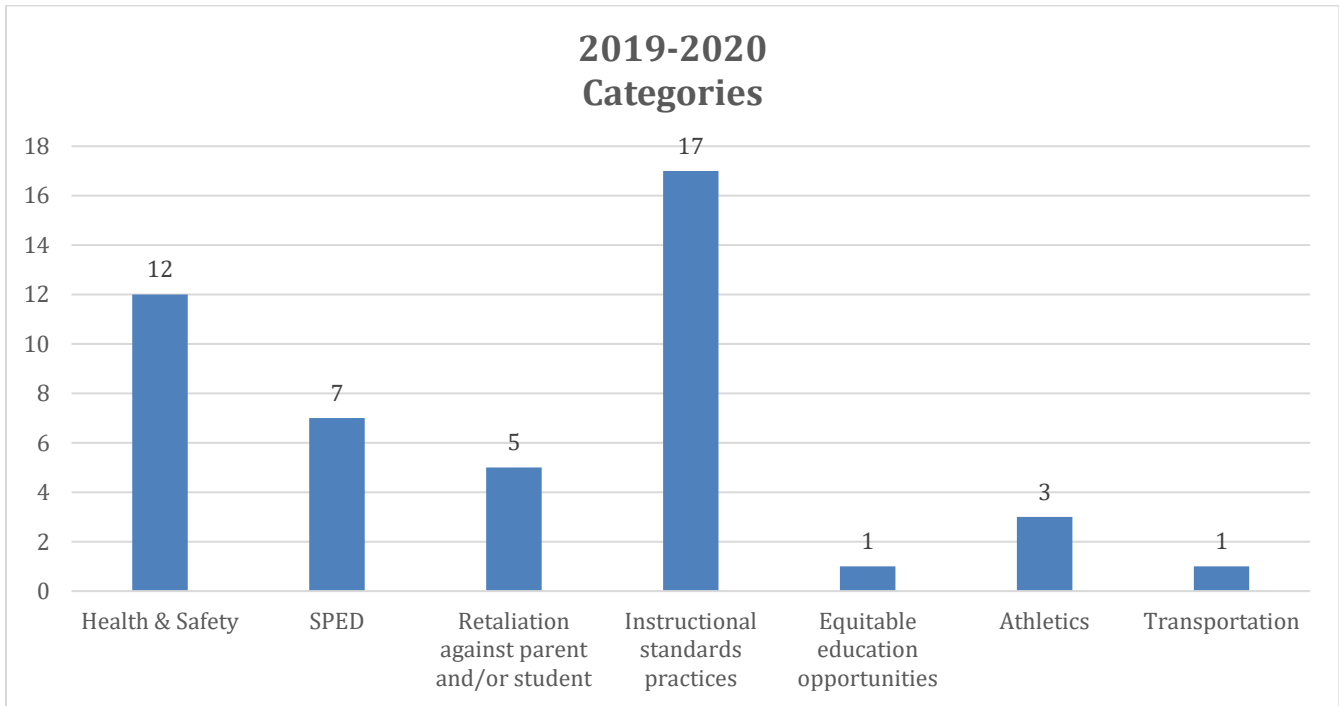
Portland Public Schools received 54 formal public complaints during the 2019-2020 school year. Sixteen of the 54 complaints were appealed to the Superintendent and 9 of those were further appealed to the Board of Education.



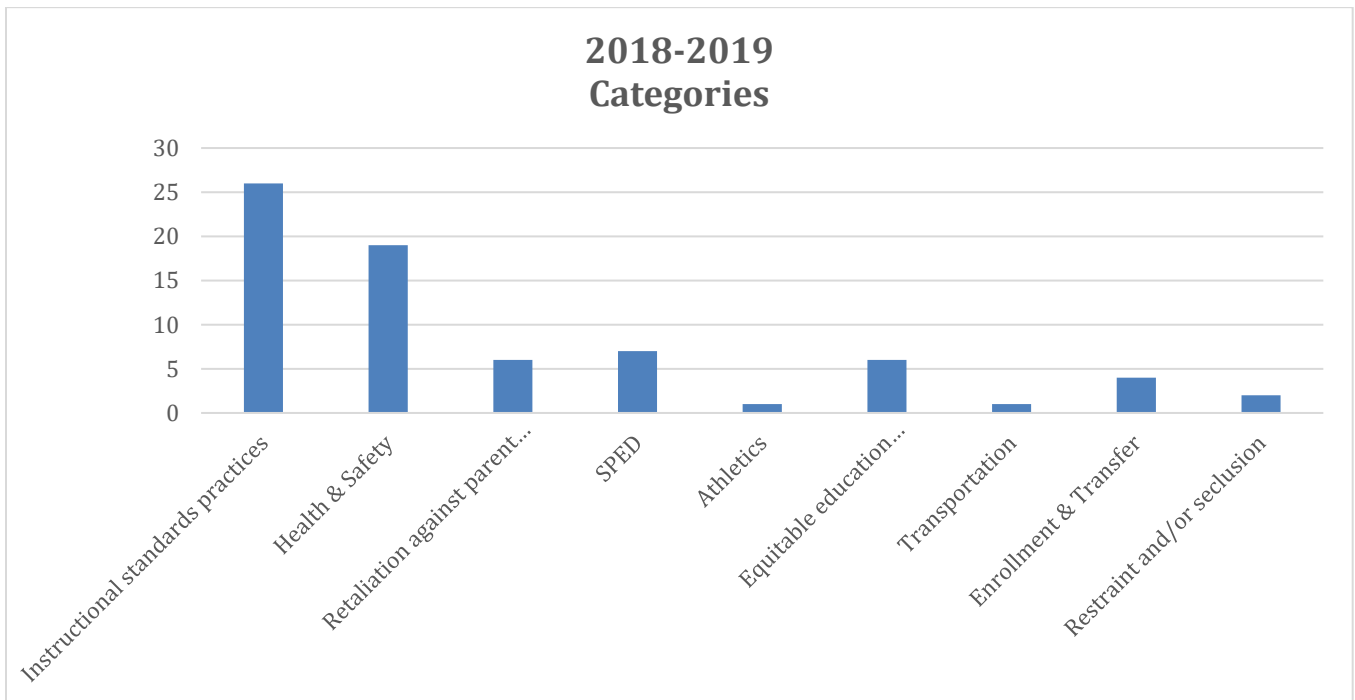
The following chart shows the number of complaints that were filed during the 2018-2019 school year.



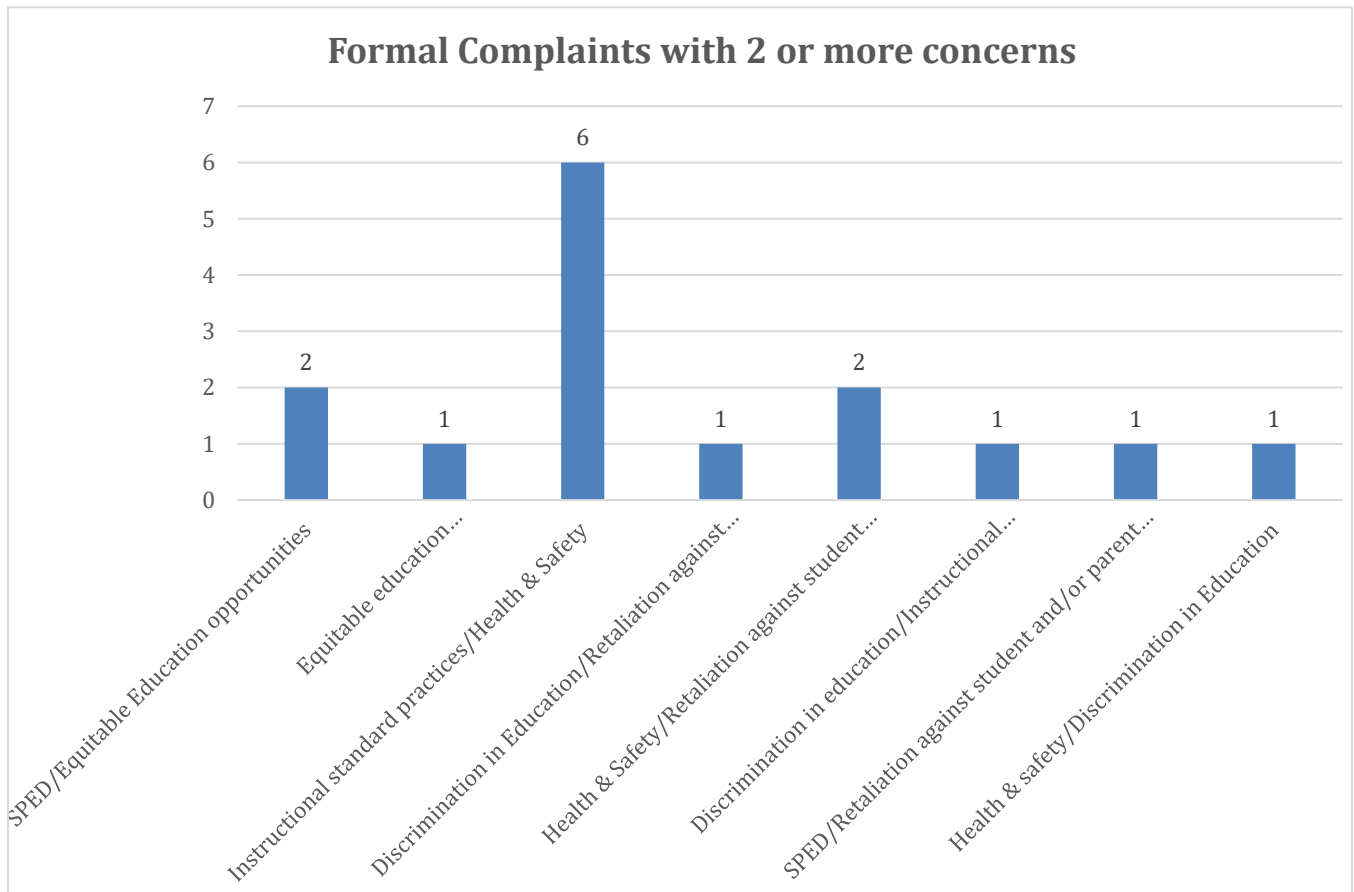
Below you will see the number and type of formal complaints Portland Public Schools received in each category.



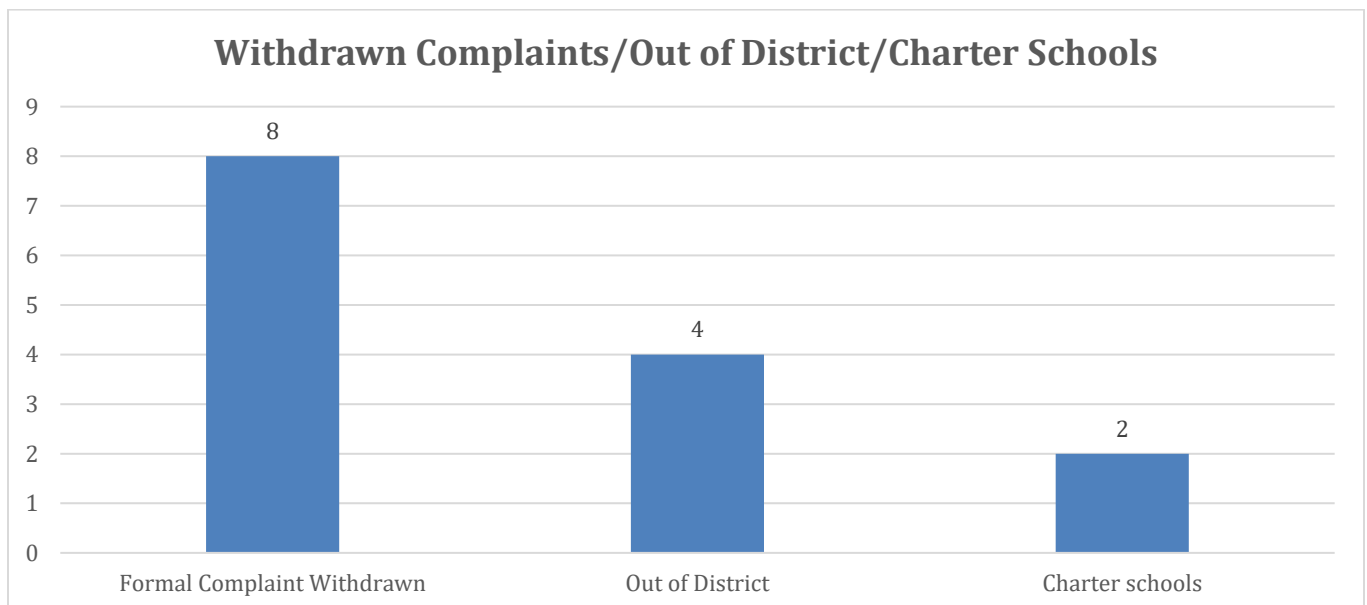
In comparison, the following chart shows the number of complaints received in each category in 2018-2019.



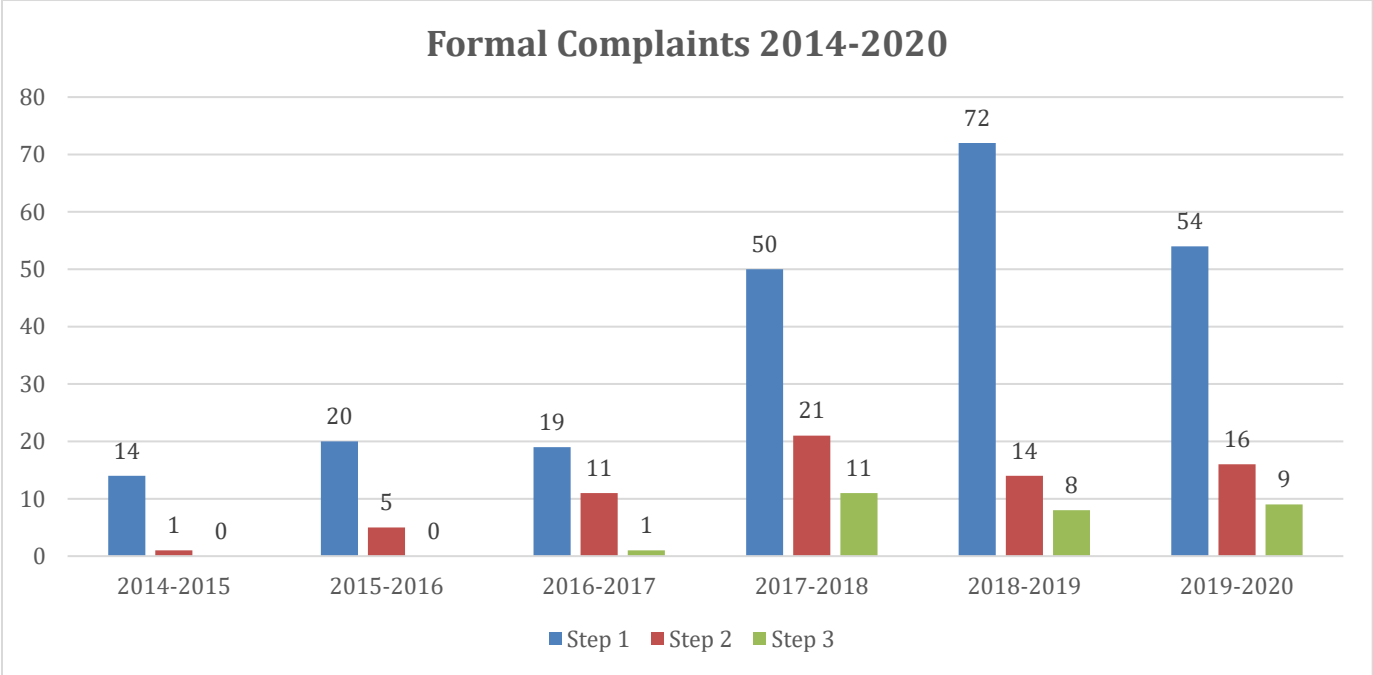
PPS received 15 complainants that expressed more than 1 concern within their formal complaint, which included:



Portland Public Schools received several formal complaints that were filed, but later withdrawn due to staff being able to resolve the concern. The chart below also includes the number of complaints that were out of PPS jurisdiction.



Since the Formal Complaint Policy’s inception, below you will see the number of formal complaints that have been filed each school year.



## Recommendations

Over this past year, several questions emerged as staff processed formal complaints that are not explicitly answered in PPS Board Policy 4.50.032-P or the associated administrative directive. In an effort to provide clarity it is recommended that the Board Policy and Governance Committee consider the following recommendations:

- I. The PPS Board Policy 4.50.032-P on page 4 section D #2 could be more clear as to what the District means by “assistance in preparing a written complaint” to complainants.
- II. The policy could be more specific as to who can file a formal complaint. For example, should someone who lives outside of the District and has concern(s) about Portland Public Schools be able to file a formal complaint?
- III. The District has received numerous formal complaints submitted by the same person that are duplicate and/or repeats of previously resolved complaints. It would be helpful to update the policy to specify that once the Board has ruled on a subject matter that the complainant cannot file a new formal complaint with the same concern(s).

## Conclusion

The District’s formal complaint policy and process continues to be an appropriate venue for PPS families to resolve school-based concerns and issues when other, informal processes are not successful. As complaints were

processed during the 2019-20 school year, staff identified three areas for the Board of Education to add specificity in Board Policy 4.50.032-P which are listed above. In addition, internal process improvements were identified that can improve the experience of families, most notably providing training for staff who respond to complaints so that communications are authentic and lead with empathy. A training module is currently under development to accomplish this. In addition, the District continues to search for ways to expand the ways students and families can resolve differences that occur at the school level. A status report of these improvements will be reported on in the 2020-21 annual report.