

# **Association of Washington School Principals**

## **Professional Responsibilities and Rights**

### **Guidelines**

**It is the Mission of the Association of Washington School Principals to support principals and the principalship in the education of all students.**

### **Overview**

The purpose of the Professional Responsibilities and Rights Commission is to meet the needs of the membership of the Association of Washington School Principals in regard to personnel matters and professional responsibilities and rights. Further, it is to establish internal controls to a degree that AWSP functions as a highly professional group. Our Association believes that the needs of children will be our first priority. A closely related concern is that principal welfare matters will be administered in a professional manner.

There are, unfortunately, occasions when members of the Association become involved in conflicts relating to their employment responsibilities. At such a time, the individual has a right to expect the honest and responsible counsel of his/her professional colleagues. It should be clearly established that the Association of Washington School Principals is primarily concerned with what is right. It has much less interest in who is right.

### **Commission Duties**

The Professional Responsibilities and Rights Commission is the body responsible for providing professional assistance to the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) members. Within the framework of this general purpose, the Commission shall assume the following responsibilities:

1. Assist in the growth of the profession in the areas of ethics and welfare.
2. Inform AWSP members as to their responsibilities and rights and the assistance that staff members and the Professional Responsibilities and Rights Commission (PR&R) can provide. Review all PR&R brochures and articles for clarity, consistency, and service to members. Discuss PR&R policy and functions at regional and component board meetings.
3. Make professional advice and legal services available to all AWSP members within the limits established by the Executive Board under the advisement and coordination of the Executive Director and the AWSP Professional Responsibilities and Rights Commission. After reviewing caseloads, legal support limits, and trends, the Commission will make recommendations to the AWSP Board. The Commission will endeavor to position AWSP to assist individuals in need as well as protect the collective interests of members.

4. The technical nature of the laws, contracts, and individual circumstances involved in most PR&R cases requires knowledgeable assistance by the AWSP executive staff. AWSP staff members will also determine when legal assistance is needed and appropriate. In matters where there are differences in opinion between staff and AWSP members on extent of coverage, need for outside legal assistance, or other requests for assistance, appeals will be heard by the PR&R Commission. Their decision is final in the matter.
5. Act as a sounding board on trends and nature of cases. Recommend issues/cases which have great potential impact on principals/assistant principals to the AWSP Board for special consideration.

### **Commission Membership**

The Commission is composed of two representatives from each of the component organizations as well as a chairperson. At the middle and high school levels, one appointee shall be an assistant principal. If, over time, at least one member of the PR&R Commission is not an assistant principal, the AWSP Executive Committee may appoint one at-large assistant principal representative.

Appointments will be structured so members serve a three-year rotating term with the maximum service being two terms. Every effort will be made to select experienced and respected principals who bring experience and wisdom to these important professional matters.

### **Professional Responsibilities and Rights Chair**

The Commission chair shall:

1. Be appointed annually by the AWSP President.
2. Be responsible to the AWSP President and work closely with the Association Executive Director and Associate Executive Directors.
3. Submit a proposed budget for the operation of the Commission for the coming fiscal year.
4. Notify the Commission members of meeting dates and provide training for all members.
5. As needed, schedule meetings to hear appeals from members regarding coverage, support, or disposition of PR&R cases.
6. In consultation with the Executive Director, appoint investigative teams where appropriate.
7. Prepare an agenda for the Commission meetings.
8. Chair all meetings of the Commission. In absence of chair, the vice chair will assume this responsibility.
9. Report Commission activities to the AWSP Board meetings. The annual PR&R report will be given at the fall AWSP Board meeting.
10. Notify the AWSP President of vacancies on the Commission as they occur and request the positions be filled.

## **Professional Responsibilities and Rights Commission Members**

The Commission members shall:

1. Be responsible to the PR&R Commission chair.
2. Attend all Commission meetings.
3. Recognize the confidential nature of PR&R matters.
4. Make decisions based upon policy and facts of the situation when PR&R cases are appealed to the Commission.
5. Discuss PR&R process and policy with AWSP members and at regional/component meetings.
6. Encourage principals and assistant principals in a region/component to call AWSP when assistance is needed.
7. Alert AWSP to noteworthy local situations involving principals/assistant principals which are leading to conflict, tension, or public debate.

## **Referral and Investigation**

### **REFERRAL**

A member desiring services is to contact the AWSP Office. The professional staff will respond promptly to inquiries in a confidential manner.

All pertinent information from the member requesting assistance will be recorded on a report form and discussed with the Executive Director to determine alternatives and appropriate course of action. The AWSP Executive Director and executive staff will determine which cases to refer to an AWSP attorney for review of legal implications and disposition.

### **INVESTIGATION**

In the interest of the member and to solve the problem as quickly and professionally as possible, the following action(s) may occur:

1. The AWSP executive staff may provide the necessary advice and counsel.
2. The executive staff and/or another principal may be assigned to assist the member in communicating with school district personnel.
3. The member, with approval of the school district superintendent, may request the services of an on-site PR&R investigation team.
4. A third party (individual or team) may be necessary to conduct interviews, determine fact patterns, and in some cases, make recommendations. Code of Conduct cases are almost always handled through a third-party investigation. In less severe cases, a member, school district, and AWSP may agree to a third-party process for resolution.
5. The member's school board, with the approval of the superintendent, may request an investigative team made up of members from AWSP, WASA, and WSSDA.

## **Financial Obligations Incurred in Professional Responsibilities and Rights Matters**

1. The financial obligation incurred by the PR&R Commission members while attending meetings or processing PR&R matters shall be the responsibility of the Association of Washington School Principals. Payments will be made under the existing policies and guidelines as established by the governing board of the Association of Washington School Principals.
2. Fees for legal aid from Association attorneys will be paid by the Association when these services are authorized by the Executive Director. See guidelines for process and levels of support.

### **Summary**

It is the goal of the Association of Washington School Principals to support each member's responsibilities and rights as he/she fulfills the role of principal or assistant principal within expected district, state, and professional standards. Assistance may be informal or formal depending on the member's requests and/or needs. In all situations, AWSP's involvement will be professional, confidential, and respectful of all parties.