



GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

Michael Backo, Chair grievance@gft3977.org

Emilia Kata, Treasurer

Louis Russo, MS VP

Chris Picchierri, #4 Rep

Heather Cyrwus, #9 Rep



GRIEVANCE SUBMISSION FORM
Personnel vs. Administration

The following form is designed to be **procedural**, focusing on contract violations, policy breaches, or professional misconduct.

Confidentiality Note: This document is intended for the use of the Grievant, and authorized Garfield Federation of Teachers (GFT) / Legal Representatives.

1. GRIEVANT INFORMATION

- **Full Name:** _____
- **Position/Title:** _____
- **Department/School Site:** _____
- **Immediate Supervisor:** _____
- **Years of Service:** _____

2. GRIEVANCE CLASSIFICATION

Identify the basis of the grievance (check all that apply):

- **Contract Violation:** Breach of Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).
- **Policy Violation:** Failure to follow Board or District policy.
- **Working Conditions:** Safety, health, or workload concerns.
- **Professional Conduct:** Allegations of harassment, retaliation, or unfair treatment.
- **Other:** _____

3. INCIDENT DETAILS

- **Date of Incident/Discovery:** _____
- **Administrator(s) Involved:** _____
- **Relevant Contract Article/Policy Number:** _____

4. STATEMENT OF GRIEVANCE

Objective Summary:

Describe the specific act or omission that constitutes the grievance. Include what happened, where it happened, and who was present. Attach additional pages or evidence logs if necessary.



Garfield Federation of Teachers, Local 03977, AFT, AFTNJ, AFL-CIO

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Impact Statement:

Briefly describe how this action has affected your professional duties, working environment, or contractual rights.

5. INFORMAL RESOLUTION HISTORY:

- **Notice to Admin:**
 - Date: _____
 - Circle all that apply: Verbal notice / Letter (attach to form) / Email (attach to form) / Other (explain)
- **Informal Meeting with Admin: (YES / NO)**
 - If “YES”, list date(s) of meeting(s): _____
- **Result of Meeting:** _____
- **Reason why the informal resolution was unsatisfactory:**

6. PROPOSED REMEDY:

What specific action(s) would resolve this grievance? *Examples: Rescinding a letter of reprimand, adjustment of workload, formal apology, or strict adherence to a specific policy.*

7. AFFIRMATION AND REPRESENTATION:

I declare that the statements above are true and request that this grievance be processed in accordance with the established district procedures.

Grievant Name: _____

Grievant Signature: _____

Date: _____

GFT 3977 Rep Name (if applicable): _____

GFT 3977 Rep Signature (if applicable): _____

Date: _____



GUIDANCE FOR STAFF MEMBERS FILING A GRIEVANCE

- **Cite the Code:** Look up the specific "Article" in the contract that was violated. A grievance needs to point to a specific broken rule. Contract can be accessed [here](#)
- **The "Timeline" Rule:** We have a **strict 10-day window to file** after an incident occurs. Do not miss this deadline, or the grievance may be dismissed on a technicality.
- **Focus on Solutions:** Administrators are more likely to engage when a clear, reasonable "path forward" is provided in the Proposed Remedy section.

SAMPLE "STATEMENT OF GRIEVANCE" TEMPLATE:

Subject: Formal Grievance regarding [Specific Issue, e.g., Violation of Evaluation Procedures / Improper Workload Assignment / Breach of Professional Conduct]

I. Description of Incident

On [Date], at approximately [Time], [Administrator's Name] took the following action: **[Describe the specific action, e.g., issued a formal reprimand without a prior meeting / assigned additional duties that exceed the contractual limit / made disparaging remarks in a public staff meeting].**

This action took place at [Location/Platform, e.g., the Main Office or via Email]. Specifically, [Administrator's Name] stated/did the following: **"[Quote or describe the specific behavior accurately]"**.

II. Policy or Contract Violation This action is a direct violation of:

- [Contract Article # or Policy Name] which states that **[briefly summarize the rule, e.g., "all staff must be given 48 hours notice before a formal observation"]**.
- [District Policy #]: Regarding [e.g., Professionalism and Mutual Respect].

III. Impact on Professional Duties

The aforementioned action has resulted in **[describe the impact, e.g., a disruption of instructional time / an inequitable distribution of labor / an environment where I feel unable to perform my duties without fear of retaliation]**. This prevents me from meeting the standard of excellence expected in my role as [Your Job Title].

IV. Informal Resolution Efforts

On [Date], I attempted to resolve this informally by [e.g., sending an email/requesting a meeting] with [Administrator's Name]. During that interaction, the response was **[describe the outcome, e.g., "my concerns were dismissed" or "no resolution was offered"]**, necessitated the filing of this formal grievance.



V. Proposed Remedy (The "Solution")

To resolve this matter and restore a productive working environment, I am requesting the following:

1. [Remedy 1, e.g., Immediate removal of the undocumented letter from my personnel file.]
2. [Remedy 2, e.g., A formal adjustment of my schedule to align with the Collective Bargaining Agreement.]
3. [Remedy 3, e.g., A written commitment that future evaluations will strictly follow the procedural timeline outlined in the staff handbook.]

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE THIS SAMPLE TEMPLATE:

- **Be Specific with Dates:** Vague timelines (e.g., "a few weeks ago") weaken a grievance. Use exact dates.
- **Attach Evidence:** If you have an email that proves the violation, write "See Attachment A" in your statement and clip the email to the form.
- **Stay Objective:** Use "The administrator did not provide notice" instead of "The administrator was being sneaky."

To refine the **Statement of Grievance**, we need to move away from generalities and focus on the "Chain of Evidence." A strong grievance proves three things: a **standard** existed, the administrator **deviated** from it, and there was a **consequence**.

Below is the refined, high-impact version of the statement .

REFINED SAMPLE: Statement of Facts & Violation

I. Fact-Based Narrative On [Date], the following event occurred which serves as the basis for this grievance:

Example: "On October 12, I received a performance memo via email regarding my classroom management. This memo was issued without the contractually required pre-conference or a formal observation period."

II. Specific Policy/Contractual Breach The action described above constitutes a direct violation of:

- **CBA Article [Number], Section [Letter]:** This section mandates that [insert specific rule, e.g., 'disciplinary documentation must be preceded by a verbal warning']. By failing to provide this, the administration bypassed the agreed-upon due process.
- **District Administrative Regulation [Number]:** Regarding [e.g., Fair Labor Standards/Workload], which specifies that [insert rule].

III. Material Impact & Harm The failure to adhere to these established procedures has resulted in:

- **Procedural Injustice:** I have been denied the opportunity to respond to allegations or correct performance in a timely manner.



- **Professional Hardship:** This action has created an inequitable workload/environment that deviates from the standards applied to other staff members in my department.
-

REFINE SAMPLE of Proposed Remedy (The "Resolution")

Note: In staff vs. admin grievances, remedies should be "corrective" rather than "punitive." You are asking to be "made whole."

To resolve this grievance, I am seeking the following specific remedies:

1. **Rescission of Action:** That the [memo/reprimand/directive] dated [Date] be rescinded and removed from all personnel and school-site files.
 2. **Policy Adherence:** A formal acknowledgment of the procedural error and a commitment that future actions regarding [Subject] will strictly follow [Specific Policy/Article].
 3. **Restoration of Status:** That my [schedule/duties/standing] be restored to the state it was in prior to the violation on [Date].
-

How to Finalize This for Submission:

To make this section as strong as possible, consider these three "Stress Tests":

- **The "So What?" Test:** If an outsider read this, would they see a broken rule or just a personality clash? **Focus on the broken rule.**
- **The "Receipts" Test:** For every claim in the "Narrative," do you have a timestamped email, a witness, or a log entry?
- **The "Reasonableness" Test:** Is your remedy something the District has the power to grant? (e.g., HR can remove a letter, but they rarely fire an administrator immediately based on one grievance).



EXAMPLE 1

To provide the most effective language, I have drafted this based on one of the most common staff-vs-administration conflicts: **The "Hidden" Reprimand & Procedural Violation.**

In this scenario, an administrator places a negative note in your file or changes your working conditions without following the "Due Process" or "Advance Notice" clauses found in most employment contracts.

Scenario: Procedural Breach & Unfair Evaluation

The Situation: An administrator issued a formal "Letter of Concern" regarding your performance without holding a required preliminary meeting, and the claims in the letter contradict your previous evaluations.

Section 4: Statement of Grievance (Refined)

I. Statement of Facts On **January 15, 2026**, I was called into a meeting with Principal [Name] and handed a "Letter of Concern" regarding my [e.g., **classroom management/attendance/collaboration**]. Prior to this meeting, I received no written or verbal notice that my performance was considered sub-standard. Furthermore, the letter cites an incident from **November 2025** that was never discussed with me at the time of occurrence, depriving me of the opportunity to provide context or immediate correction.

II. Specific Policy/Contractual Breach This action violates **Article 8 (Evaluation Procedures)** of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which states:

- *"No material derogatory to an employee's conduct, service, or character shall be placed in the personnel file unless the employee has had an opportunity to review the material and submit a written response."*
- *"Teachers shall be notified of performance concerns within five (5) working days of the alleged occurrence."*

By waiting sixty days to notify me and failing to hold a pre-conference, the Administration has bypassed the procedural safeguards designed to ensure fair and transparent evaluation.

III. Material Impact The inclusion of this undocumented and delayed feedback in my permanent file creates an inaccurate record of my professional standing. It has created a hostile working environment where I am unable to gauge administrative expectations, as feedback is being "stockpiled" rather than shared in real-time as required by policy.

Section 5: Proposed Remedy (Refined)

To resolve this matter and ensure adherence to the contract, I request:

1. **Immediate Removal:** The "Letter of Concern" dated **January 15, 2026**, be retracted and destroyed, including any copies in the school-site "drop file."



2. **Procedural Correction:** Any future performance concerns must be addressed through the "Informal Warning" stage as outlined in the Staff Handbook before escalating to formal documentation.
 3. **Neutral Record:** A written confirmation from HR that my personnel file remains in "Good Standing" as of this date.
-

Why this works:

- **It uses "Contract Language":** Using terms like "*Procedural Safeguards*," "*Due Process*," and "*Material Derogatory*" and thus signals to HR that you know your legal rights.
- **It focuses on "The Process," not "The Person":** You aren't saying the Principal is a liar; you are saying the Principal *missed a deadline* or *skipped a step*. It is much harder for the Administration to argue against a missed deadline than an opinion.

EXAMPLE 2

Scenario A: Workload / Improper Direct Order

The Situation: You are being assigned duties (e.g., mandatory after-school supervision, excessive subbing during prep) that exceed the hours or responsibilities defined in your contract.

Section 4: Statement of Grievance

I. Statement of Facts On [Date], I was issued a direct order by [Administrator Name] to [describe duty, e.g., cover a third-period chemistry class during my designated planning period]. I have been required to perform this additional duty [Number] times over the last [Timeframe]. This directive was issued despite my verbal notification that it interfered with my primary instructional preparation duties.

II. Specific Policy/Contractual Breach This order violates Article [Number] (Work Year/Hours) of the CBA, which guarantees a minimum of [Number] minutes of uninterrupted preparation time per day. By mandating non-instructional duties during this block, the Administration is unilaterally extending my workday and violating the "Equity of Assignment" clause.

III. Material Impact The loss of preparation time has directly impacted my ability to provide timely feedback to students and has resulted in an uncompensated increase in workload. This creates a disparity in working conditions compared to other staff members in the [Department].

Section 5: Proposed Remedy

1. **Cease and Desist:** Immediate cessation of assignments that infringe upon contractually protected preparation time.
2. **Compensation:** Pro-rated hourly pay for the [Number] of hours already worked in excess of the contract.
3. **Schedule Audit:** A formal review of the building schedule to ensure equitable distribution of emergency coverages.



Scenario B: Safety / Harassment Concern

The Situation: An administrator has engaged in a pattern of behavior that feels retaliatory, or they have failed to address a documented safety hazard (e.g., a student making threats or a physical environment issue).

Section 4: Statement of Grievance

I. Statement of Facts Since [Date], I have been subjected to a pattern of behavior by [Administrator Name] that I believe constitutes [Harassment/Retaliation]. Specifically, on [Date], when I reported [Safety Concern, e.g., a student threat or broken door lock], the response was [describe response, e.g., a dismissive comment and a subsequent unannounced "punitive" observation]. This follows a sequence of [Number] incidents where my professional concerns were met with hostility rather than resolution.

II. Specific Policy/Contractual Breach

- **District Policy [Number] (Safe Schools):** Which requires administration to take immediate action on reported threats.
- **Board Policy [Number] (Anti-Harassment):** Which prohibits the creation of a hostile work environment and retaliation against employees who report safety violations.

III. Material Impact This environment has created significant professional distress and poses an ongoing risk to the physical safety of myself and my students. The failure to address the safety concern has compromised the "Duty of Care" the District owes to its employees.

Section 5: Proposed Remedy

1. **Immediate Remediation:** The physical safety concern [Specific Detail] must be repaired/addressed within 24 hours.
2. **Third-Party Investigation:** A formal review of the harassment claims by a District HR representative outside of this school site.
3. **No-Contact/No-Retaliation Agreement:** A directive ensuring that all further communication regarding my performance be documented and witnessed by a GFT 3977 Representative or neutral third party.

Understanding the Escalation Path

When filing these, it is helpful to know where your grievance sits in the overall process.

Key Differences to Remember:

- **Workload:** Is about **Time**. Keep a log of every minute stolen from your prep or added to your day.
- **Harassment:** Is about **Documentation**. Keep a "Shadow Log" (at home, **not** on a work computer) detailing dates, times, witnesses, and exactly what was said.

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A **Log of Incidents** (often called a "Shadow Log") is one of the most powerful attachments you can provide with a grievance. It transforms general complaints into a **concrete timeline** that is difficult for the Administration to dispute.

Important Note: Keep this log on a **personal device or in a physical notebook**, not on your work computer or school-issued OneDrive, to ensure you maintain access to it even if your account is restricted.

Evidence Log: Incidents & Policy Deviations

Employee Name: _____

Subject of Log: [e.g., Workload Violations / Patterns of Harassment]

Date & Time	Location	Description of Incident	Witnesses (if any)	Documented Evidence? (Email, Photo, Recording)	Policy/Contract Article Violated
01/10/26 8:15 AM	Main Office	Ordered to cover Gym class during my Prep. No emergency declared.	Jane Doe (Secretary)	Email sent at 8:17 AM confirming receipt of order.	Article 8.4 (Prep Time)

How to Record an Entry (The "3-Point Rule")

To ensure your log is "evidence-grade," every entry should follow these three rules:

1. Be "Value-Neutral"

Avoid emotional adjectives. Instead of "The Principal was aggressive and mean," write: "The Principal spoke in a raised volume, stood within 12 inches of my person, and stated, 'You will do this or there will be consequences.'"

2. Capture the "Response"

Always record how you reacted at the time.



- *Example:* "I informed the Administrator that this was my contractually protected lunch break. They responded by saying, 'I don't care, I need you in the hall.'"

3. Save the "Receipts"

If an incident happens via email, don't just log it—**print the email to PDF** and save it to a personal folder. In your log, label that email as "**Exhibit A**," "**Exhibit B**," etc.

Examples of Incident Descriptions

- **For Workload:** "Assigned 45 minutes of bus duty. This brings my total weekly supervision time to 150 minutes, exceeding the 120-minute cap in Article 12."
- **For Safety:** "Reported broken window in Room 202 to Admin. Was told 'we'll get to it eventually.' Window remains a laceration hazard for students as of [Date]."
- **For Harassment/Retaliation:** "During the staff meeting, Admin singled out my department's test scores while refusing to share the scores of other departments. When I asked for clarification, I was told to 'sit down and be quiet' in front of 40 peers."

Next Steps

Once your log has 3 or more entries showing a pattern, it is usually time to file the formal grievance.



An **Executive Summary** is a high-level cover page that sits on top of your grievance form and incident log. Its purpose is to give an HR Director or GFT Representative a "30-second snapshot" of your case. It frames the narrative before they even dive into the details.

Executive Summary of Grievance

To: [Name of HR Director or GFT Representative]

From: [Your Name], [Your Position]

Date: January 5, 2026

Subject: Formal Grievance regarding [Brief Title: e.g., Pattern of Procedural Non-Compliance / Safety Violations]

I. Purpose

This summary provides an overview of a formal grievance filed against the administration of [School Name] regarding [1-2 sentence summary of the core issue]. The intent of this filing is to address specific violations of [Contract/Policy Name] and to restore a professional, compliant working environment.

II. Core Allegations

The attached documentation demonstrates a persistent pattern of:

- **[Point 1]:** e.g., Systematic disregard for contractually mandated preparation periods.
- **[Point 2]:** e.g., Issuance of disciplinary measures without adherence to due process.
- **[Point 3]:** e.g., Failure to remediate documented safety hazards in a timely manner.

III. Summary of Evidence

As detailed in the attached **Evidence Log**, there are [Number] documented instances occurring between [Start Date] and [End Date]. Key evidence includes:

- **Digital Correspondence:** Emails dated [Dates] showing [specific directive/refusal].
- **Witness Testimony:** Statements or presence of staff members during incidents on [Dates].
- **Policy Comparison:** A direct contrast between [Administrator's Action] and [Specific Policy Article].

IV. Impact on the Educational Environment



The current trajectory of administrative actions has resulted in [**specific impact, e.g., diminished instructional quality, a climate of retaliation, or physical risk to students/staff**]. This grievance is filed not as a personal dispute, but as a necessary step to ensure the school operates within the legal and professional frameworks established by the District.

V. Requested Resolution

I am seeking a resolution that includes [**Primary Remedy, e.g., full rescission of the letter of reprimand and a return to the agreed-upon schedule**]. I am prepared to discuss these facts in a formal hearing or mediation.

How to use this Summary:

- **The "Lead" Paragraph:** If you are sending this to a GFT Rep, they are likely busy. This summary tells them exactly why your case is "winnable" (i.e., it points to specific contract violations).
- **Tone Check:** Notice the language is "institutional." It uses words like *non-compliance*, *remediate*, and *trajectory*. This signals that you are viewing this as a professional labor issue, which HR takes much more seriously than a "complaint."

Final Checklist Before You Hit "Submit":

1. **Duplicate Everything:** Keep one full digital and one full physical copy of the Form, this Summary, and the Log.
2. **Check Your Deadlines:** Ensure today's date is within your contract's filing window (usually within 10 days from the most recent incident).
3. **Delivery Confirmation:** If submitting via email, use "Request Read Receipt." If in person, have the recipient initial a "Received" copy for you.
4. **CC appropriate personnel.** All field grievances should be sent to the grievance committee first. Send to whichever member you feel comfortable working with and make sure to cc the Chair at grievance@gft3977.org. **DO NOT SEND YOUR GRIEVANCE DIRECTLY TO ADMINISTRATION. THAT IS OUR JOB.**



Preparing for a grievance hearing is about staying calm under pressure and refusing to let the conversation shift from **facts** to **feelings**. Administrators often use specific "pivot" phrases to deflect blame.

Below are common administrative defenses and the refined, objective responses you can use to stay on track.

1. The "Flexibility" Defense

Admin says: *"We're a team, and sometimes we all have to go above and beyond for the students. Why are you being so rigid about the contract?"*

- **Your Response:** "I agree that student success is our shared goal. However, the contract provides the necessary structure to ensure that staff are not spread so thin that instructional quality suffers. Following the contract isn't about a lack of flexibility; it's about maintaining the professional standards we all agreed to."

2. The "I Didn't Know" Defense

Admin says: *"I wasn't aware that you felt this way; you should have come to me personally before filing a formal grievance."*

- **Your Response:** "As noted in my Evidence Log, I did attempt to resolve this informally on [Date]. Because that conversation did not result in a change that aligned with District policy, I am using the formal grievance process to ensure we have a clear, documented path toward a resolution."

3. The "Management Prerogative" Defense

Admin says: *"As the Principal, I have the right to assign duties as I see fit to keep the school running."*

- **Your Response:** "While I respect your role in managing the site, that authority is exercised within the boundaries of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Article [Number] specifically limits that prerogative in this instance, and that is the discrepancy I am asking to have corrected."
-

Navigating the Hearing Process

A grievance hearing typically follows a set progression. Understanding this "ladder" helps you know what to expect at each stage.

Tips for the Hearing Room:

- **Bring a "Silent Partner":** If your contract allows, bring a union rep or a trusted colleague. Even if they don't speak, they are a witness to the tone and content of the meeting.
- **The "Pause" Technique:** If an administrator says something provocative, count to three before responding. It keeps you in control of the pace.



-
- **Stick to the "Remedy":** If the administrator starts talking about your past performance (which is irrelevant to a workload grievance, for example), say: *"I'm happy to discuss my performance at a scheduled evaluation meeting, but today we are here specifically to resolve the violation of Article [Number]."*
-

Final "Hearing Prep" Checklist

- [] **The Packet:** 3 copies of your packet (Executive Summary, Form, Log, and Exhibits)—one for you, one for Admin, one for the HR/Union rep.
- [] **The Highlighter:** Highlight the specific sentences in your contract that were violated.
- [] **The "Ask":** Be ready to state your requested remedy clearly at the end of the meeting.