

# Souhegan High School Community Review Board

## *What is the 'Community Review Board'?*

The Community Review Board is a small body of community members that will hear grievances brought to it by students and staff members. It will determine the fairness of any disciplinary action taken on a student. The Community Review Board is another way to give students a voice in administrative decisions and ensure the integrity of those decisions. Because it is made up of a cross section of community members, the point of view of the parties involved may be better understood.

The Community Review Board can take the following actions:

- 1) Uphold the decision of the administration,
- 2) Set a new consequence that better fits the situation, or
- 3) Nullify the consequence set by the administration.

## *Why does Souhegan need a Community Review Board?*

Souhegan is built upon a trust—a trust that community members will be responsible. Unfortunately, sometimes that trust will be broken and disciplinary action will need to take place. Each situation that requires disciplinary action is unique. No one likes a bunch of rules. Therefore, many decisions concerning consequences are left up to the administration. In order to ensure that those decisions are fair, a Community Review Board will be able to review any disciplinary actions taken.

Because there is some latitude in the rules, repeat offenders and first time offenders can be treated differently. The Community Review Board will also encourage punishments that "fit the situation."

## *Who would be on the Community Review Board?*

The Community Review Board will consist of:

- One elected student from each grade,
- One student randomly selected by a voluntary lottery from each grade,
- Two elected faculty, and
- One elected Community Council member.

The elected students will serve for an entire year, while the lottery members will serve on a trimester basis. The elected faculty will serve for a half a year. The lottery and elections will be run by the Community Council.

There are therefore a total of 9 students on the Board. In addition, 2 faculty members will be elected by the community, for a total of 11 members. For a session of the Board to be held, a minimum of 5 members (including 1 teacher) must be present. All members are expected to attend each meeting.

## *If I am disciplined, what action can I take?*

As soon as you are assigned a consequence, the Administration will ask you if you would like to submit the matter to the Community Review Board for review. At that point you will have two choices: 1) agree to the consequence decided upon by the Administration or 2) say you would like to bring the issue before the Community Review Board.

If you feel that the consequence is unfair or would like an alternate consequence, you should write ½ to 1 page explaining why you feel the consequence doesn't fit (the crime, or why you think you shouldn't be

punished at all. This writing should explain the situation, your grievance, and your suggestion for a remedy. This paper must be given to the Board by the end of the school day following the Administration's disciplinary decision.

Upon deciding to appeal, the student will be given a date and time for his/her hearing by the Administration. On that date, the CRB will decide whether or not to hear the case. Depending on their decision, the student will either go ahead with the hearing or not. Of the members sitting on the CRB on any given day, a majority is required to want to hear the case in order for it to be heard.

If they elect to hear the case, the consequence assigned by the Administration will be stayed and you will be granted a 5 minute block of time in which to plead your case, at which point the Community Review Board will decide on your case. If the Board elects not to hear the case, the decision of the Administration stands.

### ***What format will a Community Review Board meeting take?***

At the time of your hearing, the Board members will have all read your submitted paper, so this is a time for you to add any details, emotions, and explanations. Keep this part brief; you will be given less than 5 minutes to speak. After you, the Administration will be given 5 minutes to explain their side of the case. They may do this either in person or by a representative, or in a writing that will be read by the Board to you.

Anytime during the meeting the Board may ask questions of you, your witnesses, or the Administration (or their representative). The Board will then render its decision after a reasonable amount of discussion.

These proceedings will be open to be attended by all community members, unless the student requests them to be closed. In cases involving students legally coded their case manager must be present.

### ***Is there anything else I should know about the Community Review Board?***

The Community Review Board is for you. Its sole purpose for existing is to ensure that you are treated fairly. The Community Council expects that this system will not be abused. Before submitting a request for a hearing to the Community Review Board you should honestly consider whether or not you are in the right. A lot of people's times will be taken up should you decide to request a hearing. This shouldn't deter you from exercising your right, but it should make you think twice. If unnecessary requests get out of hand, the Community Review Board may be discontinued by the Community Council.

Please note that the Community Review Board is not the forum in which to argue with standing policy. If any community member wishes to change a standing policy, they should speak to the Community Council.

The Community Review Board will not become involved when outside government agencies (such as the police) are brought in.

*Passed unanimously by the Community Council on May 6, 1996.*

#### **Notes:**

1. These by-laws may be changed only by the Community Council.
2. Previous decisions of the CRB will be used as guidelines for deciding current cases. A complete and accurate record must be kept by a member of the Community Review Board.
3. The CRB will meet twice a week between 2:15 and 3:00.
4. The above two pages must be made reasonably available to all members of the community (students, faculty, administration) either by their inclusion in the Student Handbook or by other means. They must be distributed intact, with only necessary, superficial format changes.
5. Each CRB member will receive some training and direction.