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MSBA/MASA Model Policy 206

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**206 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS/COMPLAINTS ABOUT PERSONS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS AND DATA PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS**

**I. PURPOSE**

- A. The school board recognizes the value of participation by the public in deliberations and decisions on school district matters. At the same time, the school board recognizes the importance of conducting orderly and efficient proceedings, with opportunity for expression of all participants' respective views.
- B. The purpose of this policy is to provide procedures to assure open and orderly public discussion as well as to protect the due process and privacy rights of individuals under the law.

**II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. The policy of the school board is to encourage discussion by persons of subjects related to the management of the school district at school board meetings. The school board may adopt reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on public expression in order to facilitate free discussion by all interested parties.
- B. The school board shall, as a matter of policy, protect the legal rights to privacy and due process of employees and students.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. "Personnel data" means government data on individuals maintained because the individual is or was an employee or applicant for employment. For purposes of this policy, "employee" includes a volunteer or an independent contractor.
- B. Personnel data on current and former employees that is "public" includes:  
  
Name; employee identification number, which must not be the employee's social security number; actual gross salary; salary range; terms and conditions of employment relationship; contract fees; actual gross pension; the value and nature of employer paid fringe benefits; the basis for and the amount of any added remuneration, including expense reimbursement, in addition to salary; bargaining unit; job title; job description; education and training background; previous work experience; date of first and last employment; the existence and status of any complaints or charges against the employee, regardless of whether the complaint or charge resulted in a disciplinary action; the final disposition of any disciplinary action as defined in Minn. Stat. § 13.43, Subd. 2(b), together with the specific reasons for the action and data documenting the basis of the action, excluding data that would identify confidential sources who are employees of the public body; the complete terms of any agreement settling any dispute arising out of the employment relationship, including a buyout agreement as defined in Minn. Stat. § 123B.143, Subd. 2, except that the agreement must include specific reasons for the agreement if it involves the payment of more than \$10,000 of public money; work location; work telephone number; badge number; work-related continuing education; honors and awards received; and payroll time sheets or other comparable data that are only used

to account for employee's work time for payroll purposes, except to the extent that release of time sheet data would reveal the employee's reasons for the use of sick or other medical leave or other not public data.

- C. Personnel data on current and former applicants for employment that is "public" includes:  
Veteran status; relevant test scores; rank on eligible list; job history; education and training; and work availability. Names of applicants shall be private data except when certified as eligible for appointment to a vacancy or when applicants are considered by the appointing authority to be finalists for a position in public employment. For purposes of this subdivision, "finalist" means an individual who is selected to be interviewed by the appointing authority prior to selection.
- D. "Educational data" means data maintained by the school district which relates to a student.
- E. "Student" means an individual currently or formerly enrolled or registered in the school district, or applicants for enrollment, or individuals who receive shared time services.
- F. Data about applicants for appointments to a public body, including a school board, collected by the school district as a result of the applicant's application for appointment to the public body are private data on individuals, except that the following are public: name; city of residence, except where the appointment has a residency requirement that requires the entire address to be public; education and training; employment history; volunteer work; awards and honors; prior government service; any data required to be provided or that is voluntarily provided in an application to a multimember agency pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 15.0597; and veteran status. Once an individual has been appointed to a public body, the following additional items of data are public: residential address; either a telephone number or electronic mail address where the appointee can be reached, or both at the request of the appointee; the first and last dates of service on the public body; the existence and status of any complaints or charges against an appointee; and, upon completion of an investigation of a complaint or charge against an appointee, the final investigative report unless access to the data would jeopardize an active investigation. Any electronic mail address or telephone number provided by a public body for use by an appointee shall be public. An appointee may use an electronic mail address or telephone number provided by the public body as the designated electronic mail address or telephone number at which the appointee can be reached.

#### **IV. RIGHTS TO PRIVACY**

- A. School district employees have a legal right to privacy related to matters which may come before the school board, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - 1. right to a private hearing for teachers, pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 122A.40, Subd. 14 (Teachers Discharge Hearing);
  - 2. right to privacy of personnel data as provided by Minn. Stat. § 13.43 (Personnel Data);
  - 3. right to consideration by the school board of certain data treated as not public as provided in Minn. Stat. § 13D.05 (Not Public Data);
  - 4. right to a private hearing for licensed or nonlicensed head varsity coaches to discuss reasons for nonrenewal of a coaching contract pursuant to Minn. Stat.

§ 122A.33, Subd. 3.

- B. School district students have a legal right to privacy related to matters which may come before the school board, including, but not limited to, the following:
1. right to a private hearing, Minn. Stat. § 121A.47, Subd. 5 (Student Dismissal Hearing);
  2. right to privacy of educational data, Minn. Stat. § 13.32 (Educational Data); 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (FERPA);
  3. right to privacy of complaints as provided by child abuse reporting and discrimination laws, Minn. Stat. Ch. 260E (Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors) and Minn. Stat. Ch. 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act).

**V. THE PUBLIC'S OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD**

The school board will strive to give all persons an opportunity to be heard and to have complaints considered and evaluated, within the limits of the law and this policy and subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. Among the rights available to the public is the right to access public data as provided by Minn. Stat. § 13.43, Subd. 2 (Public Data).

While Minnesota's Open Meeting Law does not require a public comment period during a school board meeting, the school board has elected to provide a public comment period during a regular board meeting when persons may address the school board subject to the limitations of this procedure. In addition to the public comment period, individuals may share their views with the school district and the school board in other ways including written correspondence, email, telephone calls, and individual meetings.

The school board may decide to hold certain types of public meetings during which the public will not be allowed to address the school board on matters of school district operations or interest. Possible examples are work sessions and board retreats. The public will receive notice of these meetings and will be allowed to attend, but a public comment period will not be provided.

**VI. PROCEDURES**

1. Public Comment Period –
  - a. The school board establishes a public comment period that will occur during a regular board meeting and such period will be designated on the agenda for said meeting.
  - b. The school board reserves the right to approve changes to the agenda as part of its regular board meeting procedures.
2. Public Comment Time Rules –
  - a. The school board will allocate up to 30 minutes of meeting time for the public comment period. Individual speakers will be allowed up to 5 minutes to address the school board with their public comment. These limitations allow as many individuals as reasonably possible while still providing adequate time for the school board to conduct its regular business.
  - b. The school board chair may ask individuals exceeding their designated time allotment to end their speech and/or presentation as deemed appropriate to facilitate the meeting.
  - c. The school board reserves the right to grant additional time to individual speakers as deemed appropriate.

3. Public Comment Participants –
  - a. Persons who wish to address the school board during the period of public comment must contact the district office by 4:00pm on the day of the scheduled school board meeting.
  - b. The person must provide his or her name, relationship with the district (district student or parent/guardian, district resident, district taxpayer, district staff), the name of any group represented (if any), and the item to be addressed.
  - c. If a group or organization seeks to address the school board, the school board reserves the right to require designation of one or more representatives or spokespersons to speak on behalf of the group or organization.
  - d. The school board reserves the right to deny additional public comment participants when the designated allotment of minutes for public comment has been filled. The participant may elect to address the school board in an alternative method (noted above) or contact the district office prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting.
  - e. The school board may prioritize speakers who wish to address items on the meeting agenda or who did not address the school board during the previous meeting.
  
4. Agenda Items & Expectations
  - a. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 609.72, no school board meeting attendee may engage in offensive, obscene, abusive, boisterous, or noisy conduct or in offensive, obscene, or abusive language tending reasonably to arouse alarm, anger, or resentment in others.
  - b. The school board chair will recognize one speaker at a time, and will rule out of order other speakers who are not recognized. Only those speakers recognized by the chair will be allowed to speak. Comments by others are out of order. Individuals who interfere with or interrupt speakers, the school board, or the proceedings may be directed to leave.
  - c. The school board chair shall promptly rule out of order any discussion by any person, including school board members, that would violate the provisions of state or federal law, this policy, or the statutory rights of privacy of an individual.
  - d. The school board will listen carefully to each speaker but will not engage in discussion during the public comment period.
  - e. Matters proposed for placement on the agenda which may involve data privacy concerns, which may involve preliminary allegations, or which may be potentially libelous or slanderous in nature shall not be considered in public but shall be processed as determined by the school board in accordance with governing law.
  - f. Personal attacks by anyone address the school board are unacceptable. Persistence in such remarks by an individual shall terminate that person's privilege to address the school board.
  - g. The school board reserves the right to impose such other limitations and restrictions as necessary in order to provide an orderly, efficient, and fair opportunity for those present to be heard

5. No Board Action at Same Meeting – Except as determined by the school board to be necessary or in an emergency, the school board will not take action at the same meeting on an item raised for the first time by the public.
6. Complaints - The school board recognizes that public comment may include criticism of school district or school board operation. The school board welcomes such comments that comply with the public comment procedures in this policy.
  - a. To comply with federal and state laws, the school board must confine the public comment period to subjects that may be discussed in a public meeting. For this reason, comments that pertain to specific individuals cannot be raised during the public comment period.
  - b. Routine complaints about a teacher or other employee should first be directed to that teacher or employee or to the employee’s immediate supervisor.
  - c. If the complaint is against an employee relating to child abuse, discrimination, racial, religious, or sexual harassment, or other activities involving an intimidating atmosphere, the complaint should be directed to the employee’s supervisor or other official designated in the school district policy governing that kind of complaint. In the absence of a designated person, the matter should be referred to the superintendent’s office.
  - d. Unresolved complaints from paragraph b. of this section or problems concerning the school district should be directed to the superintendent’s office.
  - e. Complaints which are unresolved at the superintendent’s level may be brought before the school board by notifying the school board in writing.

**VII. PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF DATA PRIVACY**

- A. The school district is liable for damages, costs and attorneys’ fees, and, in the event of a willful violation, punitive damages for violation of state data privacy laws. (Minn. Stat. § 13.08, Subd. 1)
- B. A person who willfully violates data privacy or whose conduct constitutes the knowing unauthorized acquisition of not public data is guilty of a misdemeanor. (Minn. Stat. § 13.09)
- C. In the case of an employee, willful violation of the Minnesota data practices law, Chapter 13, and any rules adopted thereunder, including any action subject to a criminal penalty, constitutes just cause for suspension without pay or dismissal. (Minn. Stat. § 13.09)

**Legal References:** Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)  
 Minn. Stat. § 13.43 (Personnel Data)  
 Minn. Stat. § 13.601, Subd. 3 (Applicants for Appointment)  
 Minn. Stat. § 13D.05 (Meetings Having Data Classified as Public)  
 Minn. Stat. § 121A.47, Subd. 5 (Exclusion and Expulsion Procedures; Closed or Open Meeting)  
 Minn. Stat. § 122A.33, Subd. 3 (License and Degree Exemption for Head Coach; Notice of Nonrenewal; Opportunity to Respond)  
 Minn. Stat. § 122A.40, Subd. 14 (Employment; Contracts; Termination; Hearing Procedures)  
 Minn. Stat. § 122A.44 (Contracting with Teachers; Substitute Teachers)  
 Minn. Stat. § 123B.02, Subd. 14 (General Powers of Independent School

Districts; Employees; Contracts for Services)  
Minn. Stat. § 123B.143, Subd. 2 (Superintendents; Disclose Past Buyouts or  
Contract is Void)  
Minn. Stat. Ch. 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act)  
Minn. Stat. Ch. 260E (Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors)  
20 U.S.C. § 1232g (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)  
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 852 (July 14, 2006)

**Cross References:** MSBA/MASA Model Policy 205 (Open Meetings and Closed Meetings)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 207 (Public Hearings)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 406 (Public and Private Personnel Data)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)  
MSBA School Law Bulletin "C" (Minnesota's Open Meeting Law)  
MSBA School Law Bulletin "I" (School Records – Privacy – Access to Data)