

Board Working Session
Wednesday, April 29, 2026 6:00 PM Central

Deer River High School Media Center
101 1st Avenue
Deer River, MN 56636

Kyle Fairbanks: Present
George Goggleye: Present
Lloyd Kongsjord: Present
LuAnn Robinson: Present
Pam Thompson: Present
Jon White: Present

Present: 6.

Jon White is joining remotely

1. Call to Order

Attendance: Jennifer Lind, Crystal Purdie, Jodi Grose, Caitlin Grossell, Lael Storlie, Erin Bastian, North Homes staff, Ara Anderson, Jan Reindl, Karen Lind, Carrie Johnson, Josie Wasson, Bree Erickson, Nathan Erickson, Stacy Olson, Heidi Erickson, Stephanie Blundell, Seth Peterson

2. Agenda Approval

Motion to approve agenda. This motion, made by LuAnn Robinson and seconded by Kyle Fairbanks, Carried.

George Goggleye: Nay, Kyle Fairbanks: Yea, Lloyd Kongsjord: Yea, LuAnn Robinson: Yea, Pam Thompson: Yea, Jon White: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 1

George Goggleye: Nay

Kristi will be speaking first, Gary is running late.

3. Gary Lee, Minnesota School Boards Association

Presentation to the Board Regarding: Member Roles and Responsibilities

Gary Lee spoke to the Board regarding Member Roles and Responsibilities

4. Kristi Hastings, Pemberton Law

Presentation to the Board Regarding: Open Meeting Law and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act

Kristi Hastings spoke to the Board regarding Open Meeting Law

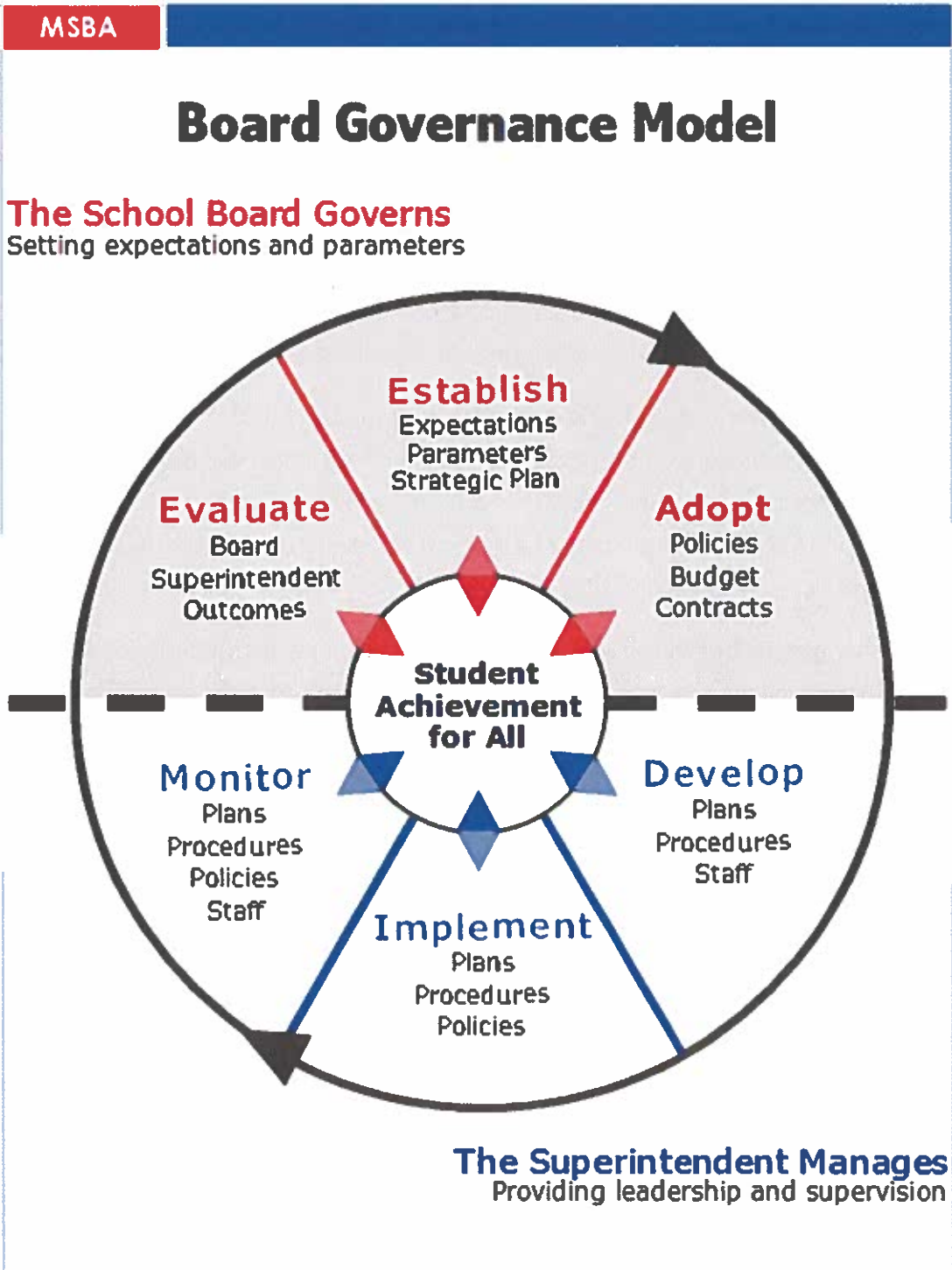
5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn. This motion, made by George Goggleye and seconded by Kyle Fairbanks, Carried.

Kyle Fairbanks: Yea, George Goggleye: Yea, Lloyd Kongsjord: Yea, LuAnn Robinson: Yea, Pam Thompson: Yea, Jon White: Yea

Yea: 6, Nay: 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm



School Board Member's Approach to the Job

The fifteen items below serve as an informal job description for school board members. They outline the responsibilities and duties of a school board member whose job is to serve in trust for the community.

1. **Show up prepared.** Do your homework, come prepared to work, remember that sometimes the work is to listen, agree, and disagree as your values dictate, and accept that the group decision is legitimate even if it's not your personal choice. It is not acceptable to have opinions and not express them.

2. **Remember that your identity is with the community, not the staff.** It's easy to identify with staff as you probably will have more discussions with them about issues. But you must remember that your job is to serve in trust for the overall community.

3. **Represent the community, not a single constituency.** You will understand and/or identify with certain constituencies (parents, neighborhoods, or communities, special ed, etc.), but remember that being a board member means serving in trust for the entire community. There is no way six or seven people can provide a spokesperson for every constituency or legitimate interest, so in a moral sense you must stand for them all.

4. **Be responsible for group behavior and productivity.** You are responsible for not only yourself, but the board team. If the board does not do its job, meddles in administration, or breaks its own rules, you personally share that responsibility.

5. **Honor divergent opinions without being intimidated by them.** You are obligated to express your honest opinions on issues, and so are each of the other board members. Encourage your colleagues to speak their opinions and listen to them carefully and respectfully. But do not allow yourself to be intimidated by louder or more insistent board members.

6. **Use your special expertise to inform your colleagues' wisdom.** If you have special expertise (law, accounting, construction, etc.) remember that you are not personally responsible for decisions relating to that area. Use your expertise to help inform your colleagues, but do not assume sole responsibility for those decisions. Remember that you are not on the board to help the staff or even advise them with your special expertise. Your job as a board member is to govern. If you wish to offer your help as an expert, make sure that all parties know you are acting as a volunteer, not a board member, and remember that asking for or accepting your help is a staff choice, not yours.

7. **Be aware of community and staff perceptions of the board.** If the board is perceived as being unethical, dishonest, secretive, or self-serving, whether justified or not, that will become reality for the community and staff. Consider how stakeholders might interpret your behaviors and decisions. Then act accordingly.

8. **Think upward and outward more than downward and inward.** There is a great temptation to focus on what goes on with management and staff instead of what difference the district should make in the larger world. This requires ignoring the minutiae or details in order to examine, question, and define the big picture. The latter is a daunting and an awesome task, but it is board work — governance!

9. **Do not tolerate putting off the big issues forever.** As daunting as the big decisions are, they are the board's to make. (What are our core values and beliefs about education in our community? Based on those, where do we put our resources?) If you do not, you are abdicating your authority. Your inaction is a decision of sorts and if you do not make it, someone else will by default.

10. **Support the board's final choice.** No matter which way you vote, you are obligated to support the board in its decision. This does not mean you have to pretend to agree with it. You may maintain the integrity of your dissent. What you support is the legitimacy of the choice even though you do not agree.

11. **Do not mistake form for substance.** Do not confuse having financial reports with sound finances or having a public relations committee for having good public relations. Beware of the trap of having procedures rather than substance.

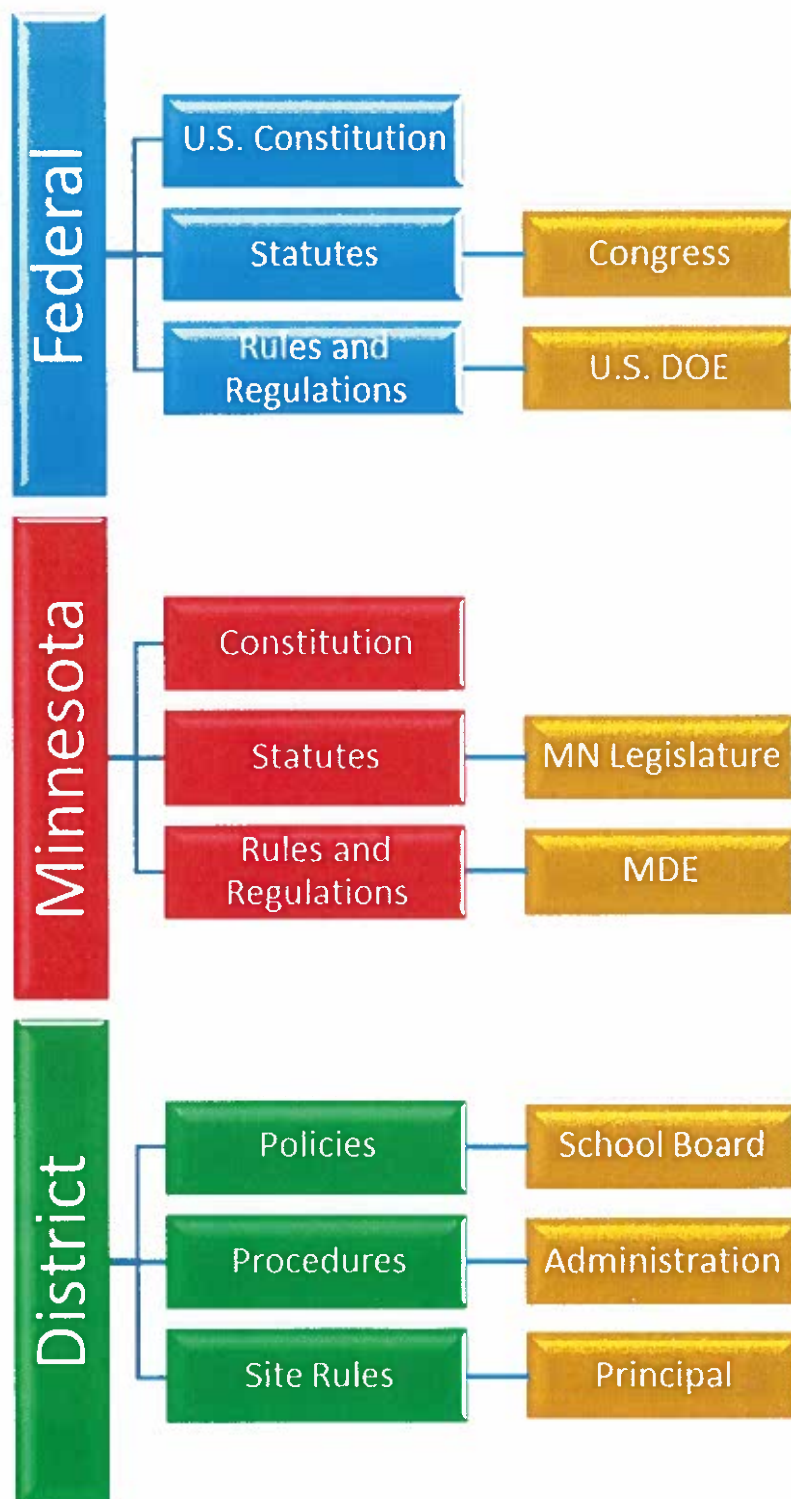
12. **Do not expect agendas to be built on your interests.** The board's agenda should not be a laundry list of individual members' interests, but a plan for taking care of the governance of the district. Being a community trustee is vastly different from seeing the school district as your personal possession. The board's job must be designed to ensure that the values of the entire community are faithfully served in the determination of what the district should accomplish.

13. **Check your individual opinion vs. the set criteria.** Your own values count when the board is creating policies. But when you monitor the performance of the superintendent or the success of programs, you must refer to the criteria the whole board decided, not what your opinion was about those criteria. And as you review the criteria, your monitoring should not be based on whether things were done the way you would have done them, but whether they were a reasonable interpretation of the policy.

14. **Focus on the results.** Keep the conversation focused on values, mission, vision, and goals. Talk with other board members, staff, and the public about these matters first and foremost.

15. **Continuously ask of yourself and the board, “Is this board work?”** The deliberations of the board must add value. The board must deal with fundamental, long-term issues that require the wisdom and decision-making of a group of six or seven people who look at the whole — not just at pieces or the issue of the day.

Laws Governing Public Schools



School Board Operations

200 Series – MSBA Model Policies

201	Legal Status of the School Board
202	School Board Officers
203	Operation of the School Board—Governing Rules
203.1	School Board Procedures; Rules of Order
203.2	Order of the Regular School Board Meeting
203.5	School Board Meeting Agenda
203.6	Consent Agendas
204	School Board Meeting Minutes
205	Open Meetings and Closed Meetings
206	Public Participation in School Board Meetings/Complaints about Persons at School Board Meetings and Data Privacy Considerations
207	Public Hearings
208	Development, Adoption, and Implementation of Policies
209	Code of Ethics
210	Conflict of Interest—School Board Members
211	Criminal or Civil Action Against School District, School Board Member, Employee, or Student
212	School Board Member Development
213	School Board Committees
214	Out-of-State Travel by School Board Members

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 209

209 CODE OF ETHICS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assist the individual school board member in understanding his or her role as part of a school board and in recognizing the contribution that each member must make to develop an effective and responsible school board.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Each school board member shall follow the code of ethics stated in this policy.

A. AS A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, I WILL:

1. Attend school board meetings.
2. Come to the meetings prepared for discussion of the agenda items.
3. Listen to the opinions and views of others (including, but not limited to, other school board members, administration, staff, students, and community members).
4. Vote my conscience after informed discussion, unless I abstain because a conflict of interest exists.
5. Support the decision of the school board, even if my position concerning the issue was different.
6. Recognize the integrity of my predecessors and associates and appreciate their work.
7. Be primarily motivated by a desire to provide the best possible education for the students of my school district.
8. Inform myself about the proper duties and functions of a school board member.

B. IN PERFORMING THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, I WILL:

1. Focus on education policy as much as possible.
2. Remember my responsibility is to set policy – not to implement policy.
3. Consider myself a trustee of public education and do my best to protect, conserve, and advance its progress.
4. Recognize that my responsibility, exercised through the actions of the school board as a whole, is to see that the schools are properly run – not to run them myself.
5. Work through the superintendent – not over or around the superintendent.
6. Delegate the implementation of school board decisions to the superintendent.

C. TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, I WILL:

1. Respect the rights of others to have and express opinions.

2. Recognize that authority rests with the school board in legal session – not with the individual members of the school board except as authorized by law.
3. Make no disparaging remarks, in or out of school board meetings, about other members of the school board or their opinions.
4. Keep an open mind about how I will vote on any proposition until the board has met and fully discussed the issue.
5. Make decisions by voting in school board meetings after all sides of debatable questions have been presented.
6. Insist that committees be appointed to serve only in an advisory capacity to the school board.

D. IN MEETING MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO MY COMMUNITY, I WILL:

1. Attempt to appraise and plan for both the present and future educational needs of the school district and community.
2. Attempt to obtain adequate financial support for the school district's programs.
3. Insist that business transactions of the school district be ethical and open.
4. Strive to uphold my responsibilities and accountability to the taxpayers in my school district.

E. IN WORKING WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND STAFF, I WILL:

1. Hold the superintendent responsible for the administration of the school district.
2. Give the superintendent authority commensurate with his or her responsibilities.
3. Assure that the school district will be administered by the best professional personnel available.
4. Consider the recommendation of the superintendent in hiring all employees.
5. Participate in school board action after considering the recommendation of the superintendent and only after the superintendent has furnished adequate information supporting the recommendation.
6. Insist the superintendent keep the school board adequately informed at all times.
7. Offer the superintendent counsel and advice.
8. Recognize the status of the superintendent as the chief executive officer and a non-voting, ex officio member of the school board.
9. Refer all complaints to the proper administrative officer or insist that they be presented in writing to the whole school board for proper referral according to the chain of command.
10. Present any personal criticisms of employees to the superintendent.
11. Provide support for the superintendent and employees of the school district so they may perform their proper functions on a professional level.

F. IN FULFILLING MY LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AS A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, I WILL:

1. Comply with all federal, state, and local laws relating to my work as a school board member.
2. Comply with all school district policies as adopted by the school board.
3. Abide by all rules and regulations as promulgated by the Minnesota Department of Education and other state and federal agencies with jurisdiction over school districts.
4. Recognize that school district business may be legally transacted only in an open meeting of the school board.
5. Avoid conflicts of interest and refrain from using my school board position for personal gain.
6. Take no private action that will compromise the school board or administration.
7. Guard the confidentiality of information that is protected under applicable law.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.02, Subd. 1 (School District Powers)

Minn. Stat. § 123B.09 (School Board Powers)

Minn. Stat. § 123B.143, Subd. 1 (Superintendent)

Cross References: MSBA Service Manual, Chapter 1, School Board Member
Code of Ethics

Chain of Communication Worksheet

_____ District Name _____

_____ Scenario _____

_____ Scenario _____

School Board



Superintendent

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Student Achievement for All

**Student, Parent, Guardian,
Community Member**

**Student, Parent, Guardian,
Community Member**



1. **Set Clear Expectations.** When conveying expectations to the superintendent, present your message in as few words as possible. Vagueness and rambling only leads to confusion and frustration, while delivering clear, achievable goals lead to trust and confidence.
2. **Keep everyone in the loop.** If you want effective communication to run throughout the entire school board, make sure that the lines of communication are kept open at all times. When asking for extra or clarifying information from the superintendent, be sure that all other school board members are given the same information.
3. **Communication is a Two-way Process.** Effective communication requires developing a mutual understanding of the information being transmitted. When speaking to the superintendent, check for his or her understanding and clarify when needed. When listening to the superintendent, asks questions to ensure everyone is on the same page.
4. **Choose the appropriate medium.** While face-to-face communication is generally the most effective way to communicate, it isn't always an option. Take time to decide if an email, telephone call, text, or video conversation is the best alternative option.
5. **Be mindful of your body language.** A laid-back stance with a welcoming tone shows the superintendent you are approachable and open to listen. Keeping eye contact will show you are listening and focused on the conversation.
6. **Foster openness and transparency.** Promote open communication by always showing respect toward your superintendent and never resorting to demeaning tones and language. In situations where you disagree with the superintendent, it is important to see things from his or her point of view. Transparency is imperative, especially in the public sector. The board and superintendent should demand transparent communication and hold one another accountable when this standard is not upheld.

High Conflict

Purpose

To help school boards recognize when conflict has become destructive, understand why it escalates, and apply practical governance strategies to keep disagreement productive and decisions student-focused.

What Is “High Conflict”?

High conflict is not normal disagreement. It occurs when issues harden into **us-vs-them moral battles** where the conflict itself becomes the goal. In high conflict:

- People grow more certain they are right and more confused by the “other side.”
- Opponents are dehumanized and reduced to labels.
- Attempts to win, persuade, or correct usually intensify the conflict rather than resolve it.

Unlike healthy conflict, high conflict **prevents learning, problem-solving, and compromise.**

Why High Conflict Is Especially Dangerous for School Boards

School boards are uniquely vulnerable because they combine:

- High-stakes identity issues (children, safety, values)
- Public forums with limited time and emotional testimony
- Outside groups that may benefit from escalation
- Legal and governance constraints that limit response options

Unmanaged high conflict can damage board functioning, staff morale, superintendent retention, community trust, and long-term district stability.

Key Accelerators of High Conflict

Boards should be alert for these warning signs:

- **Binary framing** (“for kids or against kids”)
- **Humiliation or moral shaming**
- **Group identity pressure** (political, cultural, ideological)
- **Conflict entrepreneurs** who gain attention or power from outrage
- **Urgency without reflection**

When these are present, facts alone will not resolve the issue.

Core Governance Takeaways for School Boards

1. Name the Dynamic

Calling out “high conflict” early can interrupt escalation and refocus the board on outcomes rather than sides.

2. Slow the System, Not the Mission

Time and space help people disengage identity from the issue. Tabling decisions, separating listening from action, and avoiding rushed votes can reduce polarization.

3. Avoid Binary Language

Boards should intentionally frame issues as **value tensions**, not moral absolutes, and acknowledge complexity in motions and discussion.

4. Listen to De-escalate

Using “looping” (summarizing a speaker’s concern before responding) reduces defensiveness and signals respect—even without agreement.

5. Do Not Try to ‘Win’ Public Comment

Public testimony often reflects identity and fear, not persuasion. Immediate rebuttals tend to entrench conflict.

6. Protect Off-Ramps

People need ways to change positions without humiliation. Boards should normalize reassessment as responsible governance, not weakness.

7. Build Relationships Outside Formal Meetings

Structured dialogue and relationship-building reduce conflict more effectively than rules or facts alone.

Bottom Line for School Boards

The goal is not consensus. The goal is to keep conflict productive.

Boards cannot eliminate disagreement—but they **can prevent conflict from hijacking governance**. When boards focus on reducing escalation, protecting dignity, and maintaining institutional function, they preserve their ability to serve students and the community effectively.

Open Meeting Law

Instructions for Completion: Each section of these written materials includes a checkbox for you to check off after you have finished reading the section.

These written materials are meant to provide you with guidance on open meeting laws in Minnesota. As an elected official, you are subject to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. This handout is meant to give you some of the basic requirements under the law, and nothing in this handout is intended to be relied upon as legal advice. If you have any questions, please contact the Deer River School District labor attorney, Kristi Hastings.

Purpose of the Open Meeting Law

The purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to promote transparency and accountability in government by prohibiting secret meetings. It ensures that the public is fully informed about school board decisions and actions. The law also provides opportunities for public input, allowing outside people to voice their opinions and concerns. Additionally, it enables the public to observe discussions and detect any improper influences, fostering trust in the decision-making process.

What Constitutes a Meeting

- Any gathering of a quorum or more of board members discussing official matters
- A quorum = majority of board members
- Social or chance gatherings that result in a quorum should be posted

Two Main Types of Meetings

Regular Meetings:

- Deer River School Board has an established schedule for its regular meetings
- Regular meetings always occur on established schedule
- No notice is required for a regular meeting unless it is rescheduled due to holiday or event
- If rescheduled, an alternate date must be posted 3 days in advance

Special Meetings:

- Special meetings are held at a time and place outside the regular schedule
- These meetings must be posted at least 3 days in advance of the meeting
- The notice must include date, time, place, and purpose
- These meetings are scheduled to deal with specific issues that need to be addressed before a regular meeting. No other topic, beside the items included on the agenda, can be discussed.

Open vs. Closed Meetings

Open Meetings:

- The public may attend all open meetings
- Only public information is discussed during these meetings
- The Board should refrain from discussing any matters that are not for public discussion at the time of these meetings

Closed Meetings:

- The public is excluded from closed meetings
- Closed meetings should contain only information contained on the agenda for discussion
- It can only be closed for a legitimate reason according to the law
 - i.e. performance reviews, preliminary consideration of charges or allegations, discussion of nonpublic data, attorney-client privileged discussion, etc.
- Must follow same notice rules as open meetings
- Most closed meetings must be audio-recorded, recordings of some types of closed meetings will become public at a later date. It is best to assume that all closed discussions will someday become public and conduct yourself accordingly.

Reasons to Close a Meeting

A meeting may be closed:

- When expressly authorized by statute.
- Pursuant to the attorney-client privilege under certain circumstances (your attorney must also attend or appear by phone/video conference).
- For labor negotiations. Remember, however that the meeting must be recorded, and the recording preserved for two years.
- To determine the asking price for real or personal property to be sold by the school.
- To review confidential or nonpublic appraisal data or to develop offers or counteroffers for the purchase of real or personal property.
- To evaluate the performance of an employee.
- To receive security briefings and reports, security systems, emergency-response procedures, and/or security deficiencies or recommendations.

A meeting must be closed:

- When data would identify alleged victims or reporters of criminal sexual conduct, abuse or maltreatment of minors, or vulnerable adults.
- When educational data, health data, medical data, welfare data, or mental health data that is not public will be discussed.
- For preliminary consideration of allegations or charges against an individual subject to its authority. If the Board concludes that discipline of any nature may be warranted as a result, further hearings or meetings held after that conclusion is reached must be open. A meeting must also be open at the request of the individual who is the subject of the meeting.
- When discussing certain medical records.
- When discussing active investigative or internal affairs data.

Dangers Involving Email, Text Messages, and Social Media

Technology makes navigating the Open Meeting Law difficult at times. The Open Meeting Law technically does not apply when there is less than a quorum discussing a school issue, or while scheduling or distributing information. However, if multiple, called "serial," meetings are conducted without a quorum, in order to avoid Open Meeting Law requirements; this is a violation of the law. This can be an issue when the meetings are in-person; however, they can easily arise in email and text message conversations. As Board members, you need to take care when utilizing technology to avoid this type of violation.

For example, when the school district labor attorney, Kristi Hastings, emails the Board to notify them of an issue, you must refrain from using "Reply All" to respond to the email, and may not continue any further discussion over email except between you and the school district labor attorney one-on-one.

Avoiding the risk of liability to a "Reply All" situation should be done for all email and/or text message communications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge that I received and read a copy of the Data Privacy and Practices – General Guidelines and understand that it is my responsibility to be familiar with and abide by its contents.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Data Privacy and Practices – General Guidelines

Instructions for Completion: Each section of these written materials includes a checkbox for you to check off after you have finished reading the section.

These written materials are meant to provide you with guidance on data practices and data privacy laws in Minnesota. Data practices describe how government agencies handle data or information. As a Deer River Public School board member or employee, you have legal duties regarding government information, records, and release.

This handout is meant to give you some of the basic requirements under the law, and nothing in this handout is intended to be relied upon as legal advice. If you have any questions, please contact the Deer River School District labor attorney, Abbie Thurmes.

What is the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act?

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (“MGDPA” or “data practices act”) can be found in Minn. Stat. Chapter 13 (§§ 13.01-99). The data practices act governs the maintenance and dissemination of all records kept by government entities, including joint powers entities. Data practices assure the public access to government records while protecting private and confidential data, such as private personnel data, medical information, and other types of data.

Data Classifications and Obligations

Data will be presumed to be public unless they are classified as something other than public. The law places an obligation on government agencies to protect data that is not public.

Below are the possible types of classifications with examples:

Data on Individuals Classification	Meaning of Classification	Data Not on Individuals Classification	Examples of data
Public	Available to anyone for any reason.	Public	A board member’s board-related emails.
Private	Available only to the data subject and to anyone authorized by the data or by law.	Nonpublic	The specific medical reason an employee uses sick leave.
Confidential	Not available to the public or the data subject	Protected Nonpublic	Civil Legal Investigations.

Employee Personnel Data & Privacy

Personnel data is defined as government data on individuals maintained because the individual is or was:

- ✓ A Deer River Public School employee.
- ✓ An applicant for Deer River Public School employment.
- ✓ An independent contractor working with or for Deer River Public School

The law very clearly sets forth what information about a public employee is available to the general public and what information is not and can be found in Minn. Stat. § 13.43. Quite a bit of information about public employees is public data, including:

- Name
- Actual gross salary
- Salary range
- Job title
- Bargaining unit
- Job description
- Previous work experience
- Education and training background
- First and last date of employment
- Work location
- Work telephone number
- Honors and awards received
- The value and nature of employer paid fringe benefits
- Terms and conditions of employment relationship

Also public: The existence and status of a complaint or charge against the public employee, regardless of whether the complaint or charge resulted in discipline.



Private Personnel Data = Any data not specifically designated as public is considered private data on employees. Release of private personnel data requires the written consent of the employee unless there is a specific provision in law that allows for the release.



- Example: Personnel data may be released to law enforcement for the purpose of reporting a crime alleged to have been committed by the employee.

Common Categories of Private Personnel Data:

- ✓ Employee health and medical data (this includes but is not limited to data about injuries while at work, and medical reasons for leave, and/or accommodations).
- ✓ Written employee evaluations of the former employee conducted while the employee worked for Deer River Public School.
- ✓ The employee's written response to the evaluation contained in the employee's personnel record.
- ✓ The written reasons for the employee's separation from employment.



REMEMBER: These are just "common categories" of private data and are not exhaustive. Any data not specifically designated as public is considered private data on employees.

Data Breaches

Deer River Public School has an obligation to take certain actions in the event of a data breach or unauthorized acquisition of private or confidential data on individuals. Under data practices, a data breach occurs when:

- A person views or takes private or confidential data;
- Without permission or statutory authority; and

- With the intent to use the private or confidential data for nongovernmental purposes



When a data breach occurs, the affected individuals who are the subjects of the compromised confidential or private data must be notified, and the following notice requirements apply:

- The notice must be in writing;
- Must inform individual that a report will be prepared about the breach investigation;
- State that an individual may request a copy of the report by mail or email; and
- Be sent without unreasonable delay

How to Avoid a Data Breach:

- ✓ Private and confidential information should be stored in files or databases which are not readily accessible to individuals who do not have authorized access, and which will be secured during the hours when the offices are closed.
- ✓ Only those employees whose job responsibilities require them to have access will be allowed access to files and records that contain private or confidential information.
- ✓ Employees and board members shall:
 - Not discuss, disclose, or otherwise release private or confidential data to employees whose job responsibilities do not require access to the data,
 - Not discuss, disclose, or otherwise release private or confidential data to members of the public, or discuss this data amongst themselves,
 - Not leave private or confidential data where non-authorized individuals might see it, and
 - Shred private or confidential data before discarding.
- ✓ If there are questions about whether data is private or confidential, treat it as such until you know for certain.



Red Flags:

- ✗ Board members discussing employee matters and private personnel data amongst each other.
- ✗ Individual board members meeting one-on-one with staff.
- ✗ Individual board members requesting private data on employees.

Penalties for Data Breaches

The penalties for violation of data privacy rights can be steep! They include:

- Civil claims
- Damages up to \$15,000 per violation
- Attorney fees awards
- Individuals who willfully violate the law may be guilty of a criminal misdemeanor and may face employment disciplinary action or termination.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I acknowledge that I received and read a copy of the Data Privacy and Practices – General Guidelines and understand that it is my responsibility to be familiar with and abide by its contents.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____