

### 521.00.1 Student Surveys

Occasionally Saint Paul Public Schools (“District”) utilizes surveys to obtain student opinions and information about students. The District’s Student Surveys policy (521.00) and procedure establish parameters for information that may be sought in student surveys and establish processes for notifying parents and guardians of their rights.

A survey is a method for collecting data, information, and opinions as reported by students about specific topics. Surveys can include, but are not limited to, paper and digital questionnaires, interviews, evaluations, and focus groups. For the purpose of this procedure, surveys that are administered as a means of assessing student understanding of academic topics as part of classroom instruction are considered assessments, and therefore, are not subject to the following procedure.

#### 1. Notification of student surveys

- a. Minnesota state statute requires that parents and guardians are given notice before a survey is administered to their student.
- b. Such notification may be given through direct mail, electronic mail, letters home to parents via students, automated phone calls (“robo-calls”), or other means of direct communication.
- c. School staff expectations:
  - i. Where possible, notify parents and guardians at least 5 school days prior to the scheduled administration of the student survey.
  - ii. In the notification, inform the parent of the scheduled day of the survey administration, the purpose of the survey, and notify them of their right to review materials or opt-out their student from participation. See sample notification attached to this procedure.

#### 2. Parent and guardian requests to view surveys and related materials

- a. Parent/guardian rights
  - i. Parents and guardians have the right to view all instructional materials, including teacher’s manuals, multimedia, or other supplementary material, which will be used in connection with any survey or evaluation.
  - ii. Parents and guardians have the right to review any survey prior to it being administered to their student.

- b. School/staff expectations
  - i. The principal or principal's designee must honor a parent's right to review materials or surveys upon the request of a parent or guardian.
  - ii. The principal or designee will allow the parent or guardian to review materials, within 10 business days upon receiving a request. If the request to review cannot be granted prior to the scheduled administration of the survey, then the student will not be administered the survey.
  - iii. The requestor may be asked to view the materials in a designated space in the school, as it is not required that duplicate copies of the materials be provided in order for the requestor to remove the materials from the school.
  - iv. If the requestor finds materials objectionable, then the principal or designee will provide the requestor with applicable forms to opt-out their student from participation in the student survey.

### 3. Protected Information surveys

- a. Special care must be taken regarding surveys that ask about protected information. Protected information surveys ask questions that reveal information concerning the topics below:
  - i. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
  - ii. Mental and psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
  - iii. Sex behavior or attitudes;
  - iv. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning acts of the student or the student's family;
  - v. Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has close family relationships;
  - vi. Legally recognized privileged or similar relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
  - vii. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent; or
  - viii. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).
- b. School or District staff must notify parents of any surveys that include any information about the topics listed above. The notification must explicitly state what protected information is being sought in the survey. Example statement to include in the notification: "The survey will ask questions about religious beliefs of the student."
- c. A parent must give written consent for any *mandatory* survey that includes protected information about the topics listed above, before the

survey is administered to their student. Please note: a mandatory survey of this type is rare. This type of survey may not be administered without written consent from a parent or guardian.

#### 4. **Opting-out of Student Surveys**

- a. Parent/guardian rights
  - i. Parents and guardians have the right to opt-out their student from participation in any student survey. Opt-out forms are available online and at the school's main office. No reason has to be provided for opting out a student.
  - ii. Parents and guardians must complete an opt-out form if they do not want their student to participate in a survey.
  - iii. Completed opt-out forms should be submitted to the clerk in the school's main office.
  
- b. School/staff expectations
  - i. For each survey that is being administered to students, fill in the blanks on the district template opt-out form. See attachment for template form and sample completion. The template form is also available online in the procedure manual.
  - ii. Have the opt-out form available in main office for parents and guardians to complete as requested. The form can also be emailed or sent home to parents and guardians upon their request.
  - iii. Staff in the main office or the staff person conducting the survey may receive opt-out forms. The staff person conducting the survey should keep a copy of completed forms for at least 30 days.

#### **LEGAL REFERENCES:**

Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)

20 U.S.C. 1232g (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

20 U.S.C. 1232h (Protection of Pupil Rights)

34 C.F.R. Part 99 (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.065 (District Surveys to Collect student Information)

#### **CROSS REFERENCES TO DISTRICT POLICIES:**

Policy 521.00 – Student Surveys

Policy 618.00 – Research

**ATTACHMENT A: SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY NOTIFICATION**

Minnesota state statute requires that parents and guardians are notified prior to surveys being administered to students. The following can be used for an email message or script for a robo-call. Please note that some sort of direct messaging must be sent home to parents/guardians who do not have a current phone number or email address on file. If the survey contains questions about protected information, then the notification must explicitly call out that fact; (see section 3 in the attached procedure.)

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To: Parents  
Subject: Notification of Upcoming student survey

Dear Parent/Guardian,

On or about October 7, 2013, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students will receive an anonymous survey that will ask questions about their preferences for afterschool activities. The survey also asks questions about services in their neighborhood and family demographics.

You have the right to review the survey if you would like. You also have the right to opt-out your child from participating. Please contact the school's main office at 651-555-1234 if you have questions or concerns.

**ATTACHMENT B: SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY OPT-OUT FORM**

Parents and guardians have the right to opt-out their students from participation in optional surveys. Develop an opt-out form for every survey that is going to be administered to students. Have copies of the form available in the main office for parents and guardians to sign if they decide to opt-out their student. A blank template form is available in the online policy/procedure manual.

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**STUDENT SURVEY OPT-OUT FORM**

<b>Date:</b>	On or about October 7, 2013
<b>Activity:</b>	Student survey on afterschool activities
<b>Summary:</b>	This is an optional anonymous survey that will ask questions about their preferences for afterschool activities. The survey also asks questions about services in their neighborhood and family demographics.

**To opt-out:**

I am opting-out my student from participation in the student survey as detailed above.

PLEASE PRINT

<b>Name of Student:</b>			
<b>Student ID # (if known):</b>		<b>Grade:</b>	
<b>School:</b>			
<b>Parent/Guardian Name:</b>			
<b>Parent/Guardian Signature:</b>			
<b>Date:</b>			