



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 7, 2004

Ms. Marquette Maresh
Walsh, Anderson, Brown, Schulze & Aldridge, P.C.
P.O. Box 2156
Austin, Texas 78768

OR2004-5541

Dear Ms. Maresh:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 207381.

The Lockhart Independent School District (the "school district") received a request for various information about a school district employee. You inform us that the school district released to the requestor documents that are public. You claim that a portion of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.102 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. You raise section 21.355 for the documents you submitted as exhibit 2.

Section 21.355 of the Education Code provides, "A document evaluating the performance of a teacher or administrator is confidential." This office interpreted this section to apply to any document that evaluates, as that term is commonly understood, the performance of a teacher or administrator. Open Records Decision No. 643 (1996). In that opinion, this office also concluded that a teacher is someone who is required to hold and does hold a certificate or permit required under chapter 21 of the Education Code and is teaching at the time of his or her evaluation. *Id.* Similarly, an administrator is someone who is required to hold and does hold a certificate required under chapter 21 of the Education Code and is administering

at the time of his or her evaluation. *Id.* Based on the reasoning set out in Open Records Decision No. 643, we conclude that the documents submitted to this office are confidential under section 21.355 of the Education Code. Therefore, pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code, the school district must withhold the documents in exhibit 2.

You raise section 552.102(b) for exhibit 4. Section 552.102(b) reads as follows:

Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is a transcript from an institution of higher education maintained in the personnel file of a professional public school employee, except that this section does not exempt from disclosure the degree obtained or the curriculum on a transcript in the personnel file of the employee.

Gov't Code § 552.102(b). This office has interpreted this provision to mean that governmental bodies must edit from professional public school employees' transcripts information other than the employee's name, the degree obtained, and the courses taken. For example, grades must be deleted as well as any extraneous information, such as religious preference, appearing on the transcripts. *See* Open Records Decision No. 526 (1989). Thus, in this situation, under section 552.102(b), the school district must withhold information in the transcript in exhibit 4, with the exception of the employee's name, the degree obtained, and the courses taken.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the

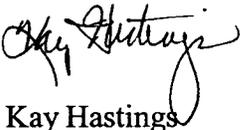
governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Kay Hastings
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KH/seg

Ref: ID# 207381

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. John Storbakken
P.O. Box 401
Lockhart, Texas 78644
(w/o enclosures)