



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 26, 2007

Ms. J. LeAnne Bram Lundy
Henslee, Fowler, Hepworth & Schwartz, LLP
for Galveston Independent School District
3200 S. W. Freeway, Suite 1200
Houston, Texas 77027

OR2007-03265

Dear Ms. Lundy:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 278143.

The Galveston Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specific district employee. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential, such as section 21.355 of the Education Code. Section 21.355 provides that "[a] document evaluating the performance of a teacher or administrator is confidential." Educ. Code § 21.355. This office has 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 determined 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 the evaluations. *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 serving as an administrator at the time of the evaluation. *Id.*

You contend that the submitted documents are evaluations of a teacher that are confidential under section 21.355. You indicate that the individual was required to hold and did hold a teacher certificate and was teaching at the time of the evaluation. Having considered your arguments and reviewed the information at issue, we agree that the submitted documents evaluate the performance of a teacher for the purposes of section 21.355. Thus, the district must withhold the submitted documents under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 21.355 of the Education Code. *See Abbott v. North East Indep. Sch. Dist.*, No. 03-04-00744-CV (Tex. App.—Austin 2006, no pet.) (concluding that written reprimand constitutes an evaluation for purposes of Educ. Code § 21.355).

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Paige Savoie
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PS/krl

Ref: ID# 278143

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Robin Lashway
10304 Cloud Lane
Galveston, Texas 77554
(w/o enclosures)