

## MODEL POLICY #37

# SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER VISITATION OF DISTRICT SCHOOLS

## Why Adopt This Policy?

School visits by individual school board members serve as a vital connection between governance and the day-to-day realities of school operations. These visits, when conducted thoughtfully, provide meaningful insights into the implementation of district policies, showcase successes, highlight areas for improvement, and support sound decision-making. This policy outlines expectations and procedures for visitation of district schools in order to encourage a positive and productive experience.

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## Policy

### Access to District Schools

#### 1. Right to Access:

School Board Members have the right to request access to any District school as part of their oversight responsibilities.

There is no limit on how many times a Board Member requests access to the school, and Board Members shall not be treated differently based on the frequency of their requests to visit.

#### 2. Request Process:

Requests to visit a school should be directed to the building principal whenever possible. If the principal is unavailable, the request may be made to the appropriate school administrator.

Schools are expected to respond to visitation requests as promptly as possible, and no later than two days after receiving the request.

All requests for visitation by a Board Member shall be granted unless there is a valid reason to delay or limit the scope of the visit. If the visit is delayed or limited, the school shall provide the Board Member with one of the valid reasons listed below:

- a. There is a safety or security concern, such as the request to visit is during an emergency drill or there is a safety emergency;
- b. There are classroom activities that require minimal disruptions or distractions, such as during examinations; or

- c. There is pre-scheduled event or activity requiring full staff attention and coordination, such as parent-teacher conferences.

If the school denies or delays the scope of a visit for one of the above reasons, the school must provide the Board Member with an alternative date and time for the visit.

### **3. Notification Protocol:**

School administrators are neither required nor prohibited from informing staff or students of an upcoming visit. This decision is left to the discretion of the school administration.

### **4. Behavior During Visits:**

Board Members shall not intentionally or willfully create disturbances in classrooms.

A Board Member may not inspect personal or private areas within classrooms, such as cabinets or teacher's desks. Any request for such access should first be directed to the building principal for approval and facilitation.

Visits must align with district policies and state and federal law, such as laws governing student privacy rights.

School administration may not ban Board Members from accessing schools in the District.

Access to a school may only be limited if:

- a. The school administration has concerns that the individual's presence on the property would unnecessarily expose students to potentially dangerous behavior and those concerns have been brought to the rest of the Board;
- b. The Board has taken a vote on whether those concerns are reasonable such that the individual Board Member should not have access; and
- c. Another Board Member is designated to access that particular school.

### **Guidelines for School Board Member Visits**

School Board Members will plan, to the extent possible, to have guidelines and goals in mind for their visits. No written notice or approval of these goals and guidelines may be required by a school's administration. Rather, these goals and guidelines are to help Board Members to approach each visit with a clear purpose.

#### **1. Accompaniment:**

When possible, Board Members should conduct their walk-throughs with a teacher, administrator, or staff member.

#### **2. Goals of the Visit:**

Each Board Member when visiting should, time permitting, do all of the following:

**Policy Implementation:** Observe whether district policies are being implemented effectively in classrooms and school buildings.

**Curriculum Usage:** Assess alignment between approved curriculum and classroom instruction. Specific observations may include (but are not limited to):

- Whether approved textbooks and materials are actively utilized;
- Whether tests align with approved curricular content;
- Ensuring prohibited instructional methods are not being used.

**Student Behavior:** Observe student behavior and its management to ensure compliance with classroom management and discipline policies.

**Teacher Support:** Determine whether teachers are receiving adequate support in their roles.

**Safety and Security:** Evaluate compliance with school safety plans and policies. Specific considerations include observations related to visitor protocols, locked doors, and emergency signage.

**Technology and Facilities:** Observe the use of technology in classrooms. Assess the condition and maintenance of buildings, playgrounds, and sports facilities. Review library and media center organization and content.

**Classroom and Staff Dynamics:** Observe teacher-student interactions and classroom management. Look for evidence of staff collaboration and professional teamwork.

**Parent Engagement and Community Partnerships:** Inquire about parent engagement efforts and partnerships with local organizations that support district educational goals.

This policy is designed to promote Board Member oversight and encourage an optimal educational environment and effective operations of district schools. All school board member visits must adhere to these guidelines.



## Legal Analysis — National

Local school boards have broad discretion in the management of school affairs. *Epperson v. State of Ark.*, 393 U.S. 97 (1968); *Bd. of Educ., Island Trees Union Free Sch. Dist. No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982); *Meyer v. Nebraska*, 262 U.S. 390 (1923); *Pierce v. Society of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary*, 268 U.S. 510 (1925). Public education in our Nation is committed to the control of state and local authorities. *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 507 (1969).



## Legal Analysis — Wisconsin

A school board shall have the possession, care, control and management of all property and affairs of the school district. Wis. Stat. § 120.12(1). School boards shall “visit and examine the schools of a school district, advise the school teachers and administrative staff regarding the instruction, government, and progress of pupils and exercise general supervision over such schools.” Wis. Stat. § 120.12(2). A “school board may adopt rules applicable to persons who enter or remain in a building operated by the school board,” including specified portions of the building and time periods upon which a person may enter or remain. Wis. Stat. § 120.33(35)(a).

Wisconsin courts have found it reasonable to deny an individual access to school property if access would “unnecessarily expose students to dangerous behavior” and the denial is designed to keep students safe while on school property. *Klosterman v. Sch. Dist. of Omro*, 404 Wis. 2d 688, 706. No criminal conviction or license revocation is required for a school board to ban an individual to protect the children under its care. *Id.* at 706. However, it is not clear whether or not an “absolute ban” would be legal, as a determination was made that the individual in this case needed to request permission. *Id.* at 711.



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