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## BOARD POLICY

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### CODE 701: PUBLIC PURPOSE

The Board recognizes that all school district funds are public funds and authorizes the expenditure of district funds only for legitimate public purposes and the overall educational mission of the school community and not for private, personal gain for which services of comparable value have not been rendered to the district.

All purchases and requests for reimbursement shall comply with applicable laws, policies, and procedures. Prior to making a purchase with public funds, an individual should be comfortable defending the purchase/reimbursement to the taxpayers in the district.

Under no circumstances shall District funds be used to pay the cost of any alcoholic beverage and nor shall alcoholic beverage be available on school grounds.

The Board directs the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee to develop and implement procedures regarding expenditures of district funds for district officers, directors, employees, contractors, volunteers, and students for certain purposes that are commonly granted benefits inclusive of the following areas: food for adults and students, staff (volunteer) appreciation and wellness, uniforms and apparel. This includes benefits which aid in recruitment of personnel, promote improvement of staff morale and cooperation, assist in building a commitment to the district, and increase participation with district activities.

Additionally, the Board directs the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee to develop and implement appropriate procedures and guidance regarding the misuse of public funds.

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## DISTRICT PROCEDURES

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### USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

#### I. Public Purpose

As a public organization, all purchases made using district funds must have a *legitimate public purpose*. A legitimate public purpose means a purpose or use which falls clearly within the statutory charge or mandates of the district. Accordingly, district funds are to be expended only for legitimate public purposes and not for private personal gain for which services of comparable value have not been rendered to the district.

Consequently, the use of district funds, no matter the source, must primarily benefit and promote the welfare of the district and its students and support the educational mission of the district. To test whether an expenditure is appropriate is called the "public scrutiny test." Simply ask if the tax-paying public would view the expenditure as necessary to support public education.

NOTE: Funds held in Trust and Agency status for another entity, qualified group, or individual are exempted from this requirement. For example, scholarships for students.

## **2. Allowable Commonly Granted Benefits**

Expenditures of district funds for district officers, directors, employees, contractors, and volunteers for the purposes outlined below are commonly granted benefits which aid in recruitment of personnel, promote improvement of staff morale and cooperation, and assist in building a commitment to the district, thus assisting in creating a more productive learning environment and are allowable within the delineated limitations.

### **a. Food Purchases**

Meals during out-of-district travel are allowed under circumstances described in **Employee Travel**.

Prior approval to use district funds on food purchases can be requested by completing the **Food Request** Qualtrics form. Submit the form a minimum of 3 days prior to the event; response will be timely.

Alternatively, appropriate Custodial funds may be used for staff meals and refreshments and do not require prior approval (*See Custodial Funds*).

Whenever possible, meetings during a regular mealtime should be avoided.

### **Under no circumstances will the district pay for alcohol.**

Reasonable meals and/or refreshments for meetings of the district's Board of Directors and Board Committees are allowable, as they are made up of individuals who volunteer a large amount of their personal time to serve the needs of the school community. These meetings are scheduled at a time that is most convenient for the public and often span normal meal hours. See below for established cost limits.

Food cannot be purchased using federal grant funding (e.g., Title programs), unless related to a parent involvement event. At such events, only light refreshments are allowable. Reach out to a Grant Accountant with specific grant questions.

Is it NOT an appropriate use of public funds to use Student Activity or General Funds to pay for student activity/athletic banquets.

## Allowable Food Purchases:

<b>Public Purpose</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Allowed Benefit</b>	<b>Limit (if applicable)</b>
<i>To show hospitality and promote a welcoming environment in <b>Public Reception Areas</b></i>	Welcoming visitors in public reception areas, including but not limited to the Welcome Center, Administrative buildings, and school Main Offices.	Coffee (including filters and cups) or water (Buildings/Departments)	N/A – cost must be reasonable (NOTE: Keurig-type coffee pods are not considered reasonable)
<i>To provide for greater efficiency and increased productivity during <b>Meetings with the Public</b></i>	Meetings spanning a customary mealtime AND the public is invited to and involved with the meeting	Reasonable meals and/or light refreshments (Buildings/Departments)	\$20 per person
<i>To provide for greater efficiency and increased productivity during <b>Meetings with the Board</b></i>	Regular Board meetings	Reasonable light refreshments (District)	\$250 annually
	Board development meetings, Board meetings which occur over weekends, and Board meetings/ work sessions that extend longer than five hours	Reasonable meals and/or light refreshments (District)	\$15 per person (breakfast/lunch) or \$30 per person (dinner)
<i>To aid in the <b>Recruitment of Administrative Personnel</b></i>	The Board conducting an administrative search where the interview occurs over a normal mealtime hour	Reasonable meals for the candidates and interview team (District)	\$30 per person
<i>To provide greater efficiency and increased productivity and support a positive work environment during <b>Staff Orientation/ Conferences/ Professional Learning</b></i>	Required, in-person orientation/professional learning events lasting 3-5 hours	Reasonable light refreshments (Buildings/Departments)	\$5 per person
	Required, in-person conferences/professional learning events scheduled by the district that extend longer than five (5) hours	If a standard mealtime break is not viable, reasonable meals are allowed (Buildings/Departments)	\$20 per person
<i>To promote a positive work environment and recognize exemplary <b>Staff Efforts</b></i>	Staff appreciation	Reasonable meals (Buildings/Departments)	\$20 per person annually
<i>To provide for hydration and nutrition for <b>Students Engaged in Activities / Athletics</b></i>	Regular district co-curricular and extracurricular activities	Reasonable meals (Buildings)	\$15 per student
	Overnight regular district co-curricular and extracurricular activities	Reasonable meals (Buildings)	\$30 per student per day

### **b. Staff (Volunteer) Appreciation / Wellness**

The use of public funds for the recognition of staff and volunteers for years of service is to be conducted at the district-level only. The funds for staff wellness activities are allocated on a per-building basis.

<b>Public Purpose</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Allowed Benefit</b>	<b>Limit</b>
<b>To show <i>Appreciation of Staff and Longevity of Service</i></b>	Annual, district-wide commemoration of bona fide retirees, defined as a minimum age of 55 AND 10 years of service	Tokens of appreciation, including cake, a gift, etc. (District – Office of Talent & Personnel)	\$50 per retiree
	Annual, district-wide commemoration of defined service milestones (5-year increments)	Tokens of appreciation, including a certificate, a gift, etc. (District – Office of Talent & Personnel)	\$15 per person  NOTE: The cost of the gift may increase modestly with years of service
<b>To show <i>Appreciation of Volunteer Service</i></b>	Commemoration and recognition of service at end-of-service for Board members	Tokens of appreciation, including a gift (District)	\$75 per Board member; \$150 if served as the Board Chair
<b>To promote <i>Staff Health and Well-being</i></b>	Group-setting wellness events promoting improved staff health and well-being to meet the goals established by the district (physical, social, emotional, financial, community, and career)	Varies; Note: The proposed wellness event must be pre-approved by the Wellness Coordinator (Buildings/Departments)	\$500 per building Wellness Fund

### **c. Uniforms / Apparel**

Public funds may be used to purchase apparel to foster school safety (staff identification), promote unity and belonging, and provide consistent branding.

<b>Public Purpose</b>	<b>Allowed Benefit</b>	<b>Limit</b>
<b>To foster school safety (staff identification), promote unity and belonging, and provide consistent branding</b>	Buildings may provide school-specific apparel (collared shirt or t-shirt) for each coach, assistant coach, or sponsor per sport/activity to be paid for with building general funds or from the student activity fund (if explicitly identified in fundraising marketing).	2 shirts annually
	Any customization is a personal expense and must be removable. The apparel remains property of the district and must be returned when leaving employment or the position.	
	The district will provide staff in identified employee groups (custodial, trades/crafts, food service, transportation, and public safety) uniforms.	As outlined in bargained agreement
	Buildings/Departments may provide branded apparel (e.g., t-shirts, baseball hats, State Championship t-shirts) to students and/or staff in connection with district/school-sponsored events.	\$15 per person annually

### **3. Misuse of Public Funds**

All funds received by the district are considered public funds and must be used to support the educational mission of the district. It is unprofessional, unethical, and unallowable for any school district employee to misuse public funds. Misuse of public funds includes:

- a. Failing to account properly for funds collected that were entrusted to the employee in an official context.
- b. Converting public property or funds to personal use.
- c. Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or pay.
- d. Combining public or school-related funds with personal funds.
- e. Failing to use time or funds granted for the purpose for which they were intended.

Violation of federal, state, or local laws in the fulfillment of professional obligations constitutes unprofessional and unethical conduct which can result in disciplinary action. If there is a question, contact the Business Office.

See below for examples.

#### ***a. Examples of Misuse of Public Funds, with no exceptions:***

1. Using district funds to buy gift cards or certificates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Per the State of Iowa, school districts cannot purchase gift cards or certificates.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ This restriction includes movie passes, coupons for free merchandise, etc.</li></ul></li><li>• The restriction applies to <b>all</b> district funds, including the General Fund (10 fund), Student Activity funds (21 funds), and Custodial Funds (e.g., Agency Funds, 91 funds).</li></ul>
2. Using cash to pay volunteers, referees, judges, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Per the State of Iowa, school districts cannot compensate volunteers, referees, judges, etc. with cash.</li></ul>
3. Using district funds to purchase alcohol.
4. Using district money in a vending machine.
5. Using district funds to purchase gas for a personal vehicle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employees may submit for mileage reimbursement for authorized official travel expenses.</li></ul>
6. Using district funds for staff activities that do not have a legitimate public purpose such as escape rooms, mini golf, bowling, etc., unless already otherwise approved through the district Wellness Program.
7. Using district property (e.g., snowblower, tables, chairs) for personal use.
8. Using rebate money earned from district spending for personal reasons.
9. Donating district funds to other organizations or individuals (including DMPS students, employees, and families).
10. Conducting fundraisers for specific students or families using district accounts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The district encourages these types of collections to be managed by a person/organization outside of the district.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Work with a business partner, PTA, Booster Club, or other outside organization to manage the fundraiser and any monies collected and distributed.</li></ul></li></ul>

**b. Examples of Misuse of Public Funds, with limited exceptions**

<p>1. Buying meals and/or refreshments for staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exception 1: If a meeting spans a customary mealtime and the public is invited and involved with the meeting, reasonable meals and/or refreshments are allowed with prior approval. Meetings spanning mealtimes should be avoided when possible</li><li>• Exception 2: Required, in-person orientation/professional learning events lasting 3-5 hours, reasonable refreshments are allowed with prior approval</li><li>• Exception 3: Required in-person conferences/trainings scheduled for more than five (5) hours, reasonable meals are allowed with prior approval.</li><li>• Exception 4: A building/department annual reasonable staff appreciation meal is allowed with prior approval</li></ul>
<p>2. Using district funds to purchase sympathy flowers or a gift for an individual or for receptions, celebrations, parties, or gifts for individual employees including site-based retirement celebrations, baby showers, wedding showers, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exception: If approved by the staff committee, an appropriate 91 fund account may be used to purchase these items.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ NOTE: 91 funds may not be used to make a donation in lieu of flowers, buy gift cards, or for cash payments.</li></ul></li><li>• NOTE: Voluntary collections from staff can be deposited in a 91 fund.</li></ul>
<p>3. Using district funds to purchase staff tokens of appreciation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exception 1: Approved tokens for specific milestones distributed by DMPS Talent &amp; Personnel.</li><li>• Exception 2: Personal clothing distributed as part of an employee's clothing allowance, as defined by official employee agreements.</li><li>• Exception 3: Personal clothing distributed to students/staff in connection with district/school-sponsored events.</li><li>• Exception 4: If approved by the staff committee, appropriate 91 funds may be used to purchase tokens of appreciation (such as coffee mug, pen, etc.)</li></ul>
<p>4. Using district money for personal expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exception: Allowable expenses while traveling out-of-district on official district business</li></ul>
<p>5. Using district funds to purchase employee break rooms supplies (such as coffee, coffee filters, plates, cups, spoons, napkins, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exception: If approved by the staff committee, appropriate 91 funds may be used to purchase break room supplies</li></ul>