

PUBLIC ACCESS TO DISTRICT RECORDS

Full access to information concerning the administration and operations of the district shall be afforded to the public as provided by the Public Disclosure Law, mindful of the right of individuals to privacy and of the desirability of efficient administration of the district. Public access to district records shall be afforded according to the procedures developed by the superintendent and periodically reviewed by the board.

"School district records" include any writing, printing, photocopying, photographing, etc., containing information relating to the conduct of operations and functions of the district which is prepared, owned, used, or retained by the district.

"Writing" means handwriting, typewriting, printing, photocopying, photographing, and every other means of recording any form of communication on representation, including letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combination thereof, and all papers, maps, magnetic or paper tapes, photographic films and prints, motion picture, film and video recordings, magnetic or punched cards, discs, drums, diskettes, sound recordings and other documents including existing data compilations from which information may be obtained or translated.

"School district records" do not include the personal notes and memoranda of staff which remain in the sole possession of the maker and which are not generally accessible or revealed to other persons.

The superintendent or designee shall serve as "public records coordinator" with responsibility and authority for ensuring compliance with the display, indexing, availability, inspection, and copying requirements of state law and this policy. As coordinator he/she shall authorize the inspection and copying of the district's records only in accordance with the criteria set forth in this policy.

In accordance with RCW Chapter 42.17, the district shall make available for public inspection and copying all district records, or portions, except those which contain the following information:

- A. Personal information from any file maintained for students RCW 42.17.310(l)(a). Information from student records shall be disclosed only in accordance with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and adopted district policy;
- B. Personal information in files maintained for staff to the extent that disclosure would violate their right to privacy (Requests for verification of employment are not public records and will not be disclosed. Performance evaluations that do not discuss specific instances of misconduct are private and not of legitimate public concern. They will not be disclosed.) RCW 42.17.310(l)(b);
- C. Test questions, scoring keys, or other examination data used to administer academic tests RCW 42.17.310(l)(f);

- D. The contents of real estate appraisals, made for or by the district relative to the acquisition of property, until the project is abandoned or until such time as all of the property has been acquired, but in no event shall disclosure be denied for more than three years after the appraisal RCW 42.17.310(l)(g).
- E. Preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, and intra-district memoranda in which opinions are expressed or policies formulated or recommended except that a specific record shall not be exempt when publicly cited by the district in connection with any district action RCW 42.17.310(l)(i);
- F. Records which are relevant to a controversy in which the district is a party but which records would not be available to another party under the rules of pretrial discovery for cases pending in the superior courts -- RCW 42.17.310(l)(j);
- G. Records or portions of records the disclosure of which would violate personal rights of privacy--RCW 42.17.260(1) and RCW 42.17.310(2);
- H. Records or portions of records the disclosure of which would violate governmental interests--RCW 42.17.310(2);
- I. The residence addresses and telephone numbers of staff members and volunteers held in personnel records, rosters, and mailing lists—RCW 42.17.310 (i)(u).
- J. Personally identifiable information for special education students — WAC 392-172-422.

If the district denies any request, in whole or in part, for inspection and copying of records, the district shall provide the requesting party with a written statement of the reason for the denial setting forth the specific exemption (and statutory section) which applies.

If the record which is requested for inspection and/or copying contains both information exempted from disclosure and nonexempt information, the district shall, to the extent practicable, produce the record with the exempt portion deleted and shall provide a written explanation for the deletion.

The district may inquire into the purpose for which a record is requested and may use the answer to aid in determining whether the public has a legitimate interest in obtaining the information, but the district may not decline to furnish the records for public inspection and copying solely because the requester refuses to furnish a reason for the request.

The district may condition access to a public record containing a list of individuals on the requester's promise that the record will not be used for a commercial purpose, but may not require the requester to enter into a hold harmless agreement to that effect.

The public records coordinator is authorized to seek an injunction to prevent the disclosure of records otherwise disclosable when he/she determines that there is reasonable cause to believe that the disclosure would clearly not be in the public interest and would substantially and irreparably damage any person or would substantially or irreparably damage vital governmental functions.

The coordinator shall inform any employee and appropriate collective bargaining unit representative when a record naming the employee has been requested. The employee and representative shall be informed of the district's intended response to the request.

Cross Reference: Board Policy 3231 Student Records

Legal Reference: Ch. 42.17 RCW Disclosure - Campaign - Finances - Lobbying -- Records

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Orcas Island School District #137

Public Access to District Records

The following procedures shall be used to carry out the district's policy regarding public access to district records:

Public Records Custodian

At each facility where district records are kept, the superintendent's designee shall serve as public records custodian who shall be responsible for the maintenance of district records in accordance with district policy. The custodian shall permit access to, and copying of, district records by the public with authorization from the superintendent who is the public records coordinator.

Display of Descriptions, Policies and Procedures

The public records coordinator shall compile, prominently display and make available the following for inspection and copying by the public at the district's central office:

- A. Descriptions of the district's organizational structure;
- B. Descriptions or statements of the general course and method by which the district operates;
- C. Descriptions of how, where and from which employees and the public can obtain information and copies of public records (this policy and procedure);
- D. Descriptions or statements of all formal and informal district procedures;
- F. All district rules of procedure;
- G. All substantive rules of general applicability;
- H. All statements of general policy; and
- I. All interpretations of general applicability developed or utilized by the district.

The public records coordinator shall update the displayed materials identified above whenever an item is amended, revised or repealed.

Index of Certain Records

The coordinator shall be responsible for the preparation and maintenance and availability for inspection and copying by the public of current indexes of the following records:

- A. Statements and interpretations of district policies; and
- B. Administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that may affect a member of the public;

- C. Planning policies and goals and interim and final planning decisions;
- D. Factual staff reports, factual consultant's reports and studies, scientific reports and studies, and any other factual information derived from tests, studies, reports or surveys, whether conducted by district staff or others.

The indexes described above shall be kept at the district's central office.

If the coordinator determines that the indexing of one or more of the categories of records described above or one or more of the subcategories within such categories would be unduly burdensome or interfere with district operations, he/she shall request that the board adopt a formal resolution exempting such categories or subcategories from the indexing required by this section. The resolution shall specify the reasons and the extent to which indexing would unduly burden or interfere with district operations.

Requests for Inspection and Copying. Upon written request, the district shall make available to any person for inspection and copying any record or records not exempted by district policy.

A written request for inspection and/or copying of records may include:

- A. Name, address, and signature of the party requesting disclosure and the date of request;
- B. Specification of the records or types of records requested; and
- C. A statement of the intended use of requested documents if lists of individuals are included. The district shall not deny a request solely due to refusal to furnish a reason for the request.

Written requests for inspection and/or copying of records shall be made to the coordinator at the district's central office or to the student record's custodian at the place where the requested records are kept.

Written requests shall be made and records shall be available for inspection and copying during the customary business hours of the district's central office and/or the facility where the requested records are kept.

With respect to those records which the coordinator has designated in writing as "open to inspection," the student record's custodian at the facility where the record is kept shall have authority to grant a request for inspection and copying. With respect to all other records, a request for inspection and copying shall be granted only after review and approval of the request by the coordinator.

A response to each written request for inspection and copying of district records shall be provided within five business days. The district may respond by providing the requested record denying the request, or acknowledging receipt of the request and providing a reasonable estimate of the time the district will require to respond. Any denial of a request shall contain an explanation of the statutory basis of the denial. If a record contains disclosable information, the district shall disclose the record with the nondisclosable portion deleted and provide a written explanation of the statutory basis for the deletion.

If a requested record contains personally identifiable information about a person, prior to release the person and appropriate bargaining unit, if any, shall be notified of the request and the district's intended response.

If the public record's coordinator concludes that disclosure of a requested record that is not exempt from disclosure is not in the public interest and would substantially and irreparably damage any person or vital governmental function, the coordinator shall seek a court injunction to prevent disclosure.

Staff shall provide full assistance to members of the public making inquiries or requests related to district records. Staff shall locate and produce for inspection requested records which are not exempt from disclosure and which have been sufficiently identified in a request for inspection. Staff may request a clarification of any request that is unclear and need not respond if the request is not clarified. On request, the district shall make copies of public records for a per-page fee of fifteen cents and the actual cost of postage and an envelope, if any. Determining the actual cost of copying is excessively burdensome therefore the district is using the statutory fifteen cents per page charge.

A staff member may condition access to a public record containing a list of individuals on the requester's promise that the record will not be used for a commercial purpose, but may not require the requester to enter into a hold harmless agreement to that effect.

The coordinator and student record's custodian shall have authority to impose reasonable conditions on the manner of inspection of records so as to minimize the risks of damage or disorganization of the records and to prevent excessive interference with other essential operations of the district.