

## **PUBLIC RECORDS – RETENTION, RELEASE, AND DISPOSITION**

*Policy Code:* **5070/7350**

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The board is committed to providing access to public records and public information. All employees will comply with the public records law and this policy.

### **A. PUBLIC RECORD DEFINED**

Any record, in any form, that is made or received by the board or its employees in connection with the transaction of public business is a public record that must be made available to the public, unless such record is protected from disclosure by federal or state law or is otherwise exempted from the public records law, G.S. 132-1 through 132-9. (See policy 5071/7351, Electronically Stored Information Retention, for specific information regarding public records in electronic form.)

Though the school improvement plan is a public record, the school safety components of the plan are not public records subject to public records law. Schematic diagrams, as described in G.S. 115C-105.53 and -105.54, and emergency response information, as described in G.S. 115C-105.54, are also not considered public records subject to public records law.

The official records of students are not public records subject to inspection and examination. (For additional information regarding the release of information about students, see policy 4700, Student Records.) Further, any written material containing the identifiable scores of individual students on any test taken pursuant to the state testing program described in Chapter 115C, Article 10A of the North Carolina General Statutes is not a public record. Any test that is developed, adopted, or provided as part of the state testing program is not a public record until the State Board of Education designates that the test is released.

Information in school system employee personnel files is protected from disclosure in accordance with G.S. 115C-319, except that the following employee information is public record:

1. Name;
2. Age;
3. The date of original employment or appointment;
4. The terms of any past or current contract by which the employee is employed, whether written or oral, to the extent that the board has the written contract or a record of the oral contract in its possession;
5. Current position;
6. Title;
7. Current salary (includes pay, benefits, incentives, bonuses, deferred compensation and all other forms of compensation paid to the employee);

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8. The date and amount of each increase or decrease in salary with the board;
9. The date and type of each promotion, demotion, transfer, suspension, separation or other change in position classification with the board;
10. The date and general description of the reasons for each promotion with the board;
11. The date and type of each dismissal, suspension or demotion for disciplinary reasons taken by the board. If the disciplinary action was a dismissal, a copy of the written notice of the final decision of the board setting forth the specific acts or omissions that are the basis of the dismissal;
12. The office or station to which the employee is currently assigned.

The name of a participant in the North Carolina Address Confidentiality Program is not a public record and must be redacted from any records released. As necessary, school personnel may combine public and confidential records to meet the business needs of the system. However, if a record contains confidential information as well as public information, school officials must provide the requested public record with the confidential information removed or redacted.

### **B. DESIGNATION OF RECORDS OFFICER**

The superintendent or his designee will ensure: that the duties of a records officer are met.

#### 1. Duties of Records Officer

- a) determining whether records are public or confidential by law, with assistance from the local board attorney, as necessary;
- b) determining the most cost-effective means of storing and retrieving public records that are related to confidential information;
- c) providing training, consultation and guidelines to school officials who respond to or are otherwise involved in public records requests;
- d) determining the actual cost of providing copies of public records in the various forms, such as paper or diskette, in which the school district is capable of providing the records;
- e) determining the cost of a request for copies of public records when a special service charge is applicable or when the school district is voluntarily creating or compiling a record as a service to the requester; and
- f) reviewing appeals of any denial of a request for public records.

#### 2. Other duties

A designated electronic records officer, or by other employee(s) as determined by the superintendent, shall review all electronic data-processing systems created by the

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school system or being considered for acquisition through lease, purchase, or other means, to ensure they are designed and maintained in a manner that:

- a) will not impede the school district’s ability to permit public inspection and examination of public records; and
- b) provides a means of obtaining copies of such records.

### **C. REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC RECORDS**

All requests for examining or obtaining copies of public records should be in writing or recorded by school district personnel. Any denial of a public records request will be made in writing with the basis for the denial. Information will be made available to the requester concerning the cost of producing records and how to appeal a denial of a public records request. The superintendent or designee may issue additional guidelines consistent with this policy to further clarify the process for requesting public records.

Public records must be released in accordance with the law. Any denial of a public records request must be made in writing and must include the basis for the denial. The superintendent or designee may issue additional guidelines consistent with this policy to further clarify the process for requesting public records.

### **D. FEES FOR COPIES OF PUBLIC RECORDS**

Person requesting copies of public records will be charged any applicable fees as determined by the records officer (see subsections B.1.d and B.1.e above).

The superintendent or designee is to determine the actual cost of providing copies of public records in the various forms in which the school district is capable of providing them. The school system shall not charge any fees for separating confidential information that is commingled with public records. This policy, administrative guidelines, information on the actual cost for producing public records, information on how to reach the records officer and any computer database indexes should be made available to employees and individuals requesting public records.

### **E. ELECTRONIC MAIL LISTS**

A school employee may be authorized by the superintendent or designee to maintain an electronic mail list of individual subscribers. Such a list may be used only: (1) for the purpose for which the subscribers subscribed to it; (2) to notify subscribers of an emergency to public health or public safety; or (3) in the event of deletion of the list, to notify

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subscribers of the existence of any similar lists. Although such electronic mail lists of individual subscribers shall be available for public inspection in either printed or electronic format to the extent permitted by law, school officials shall not provide anyone with copies of such lists. Release for public inspection of any subscriber list must be consistent with the Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) if the list contains personally identifiable information from student education records. See policy 4700, Student Records.

### **F. DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS**

To the extent required by law, school personnel shall maintain public records in accordance with the applicable records retention and disposition schedule(s) issued by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The superintendent may establish regulations for the destruction of records in accordance with the approved schedule.

### **G. EMAIL**

School personnel email shall be archived for a period of 1 year. Records older than one year will be removed from archival systems. The Records Officer shall bring such requests to the CTO/Technology Director to determine the cost of providing requested emails depending on the form (paper or electronic) agreed to by the Records Officer

Legal References: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; G.S. 14-113.8(6); 115C-47(40), -105.27(a2), -105.53, -105.54, -109.3, -174.13,-319 to -321, -402; 132-1 to -9; *Program Records Schedule: Local Public School Units*, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History (2021), available at:

<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/documents/local-education-agencies-schedule>

*General Records Schedule Local Government Agencies*, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (2021), available at:

<https://archives.ncdcr.gov/government/retention-schedules/local-government-schedules/general-records-schedule-local-government>

Cross References: Use of Personal Technology to Conduct School Business (policy 3228/7373) North Carolina Address Confidentiality Program (policy 4250/5075/7316), Student Records (policy 4700), Confidentiality of Personal Identifying Information (policy 4705/7825), News Media Relations (policy 5040), Electronically Stored Information Retention (policy 5071/7351), Personnel Files (policy 7820)

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