

Community Relations

Communications with the Public

Access to Public Records

The various records authorities of the Watertown Unified School District shall maintain and provide access to public records in accordance with applicable laws and the policies and procedures of the District. In addition, all officials, employees, and authorized agents of the District shall safeguard the confidentiality of personally-identifiable information in their possession and in the records created or maintained by any school District authority. The District's public records notices, as adopted by the Board, shall be posted in the District's buildings, and the notice is also available to the public on the District's website.

Legal Custodian of the Records of the School District Authorities

The Superintendent shall serve as the legal custodian of records for the following school District records authorities:

1. The District, including the School Board as the governing body;
2. All committees which are subunits of the Board;
3. Other authorities created by rule or order of the Board;
4. The officers of the Board (President, Vice President, Clerk, and Treasurer)
5. Individual members of the Board, but only to the extent such records are maintained at any District-owned or District-controlled facility, or on any District-controlled computer system. Each individual member of the Board is the sole legal custodian of the records of his/her elected office to the extent such records are maintained at any facility, or on any computer system, that is not owned or controlled by the District.

The Director of Human Resources and the Director of Special Education/Student Services shall serve as a deputy custodian of records in the event that the District Administrator is absent or otherwise temporarily unavailable to perform the duties of the legal custodian of records. In addition, each principal employed by the District shall serve as a deputy custodian concerning the education records of the students presently attending school in their building(s) or programs, as well as those student records which are otherwise maintained at their respective building(s).

The legal custodian of records is vested with full legal power to render decisions and carry out the duties of each school District records authority designated above, as such duties are identified under the Wisconsin Public Records Law. For example, the legal custodian shall:

1. Receive, evaluate, and respond to requests to inspect or copy records;
2. Compel the prompt assistance of other District employees in responding to requests for access to public records, to the extent the custodian deems necessary.
3. Take an active role, either personally or via a designee or via written procedures, in supervising the proper maintenance and retention of records by District employees; and
4. Ensure that all employees who are entrusted with the records that are subject to the legal custodian's supervision are notified of the identity of the legal custodian and provided with a description of legal custodian's duties under applicable law.

The Superintendent, or his/her designee, working in conjunction with the individual school official who

has been assigned specific responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of all personally-identifiable data, information, and records collected or maintained by the District under the individuals Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, shall (1) develop rules of conduct for District employees who are involved in collecting, maintaining, using, providing access to, sharing or archiving personally-identifiable information; and (2) ensure that all such employees know their duties and responsibilities relating to protecting personal privacy, including applicable state and federal laws.

Authorized Fees under the Public Records Law

Fees may be charged for costs associated with locating and/or copying requested records and for related postage/shipping costs in accordance with the fee schedule adopted by the Board. The fee schedule shall be included in the public records notice posted in District buildings and on the District's website.

The legal custodian of records may provide copies of a record without charge or at a reduced charge where the custodian determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest. These situations include, but are not necessarily limited to, situations where the records custodian determines that the costs the District would be likely to incur in processing a payment would be likely to exceed the amount of the payment itself; or where the requestor is an elected official, the records in question are reasonably necessary for the proper performance of official duties, and the location costs associated with the request are negligible. The legal custodian shall apply any such waiver or reduction of fees with reasonable uniformity and without discrimination as to any status protected by law (e.g., race, sex, disability, etc.).

In a situation where any fees differing from the fees approved by the Board are established by law, or are authorized to be established by law, those other fees may be charged.

Assistance from Legal Counsel

When the legal custodian of records, or a deputy custodian in the absence of the legal custodian, determines that it is necessary or prudent to do so, he/she is authorized to seek specific legal advice from and engage the assistance of District legal counsel.

Local Public Offices

Several positions within the District constitute local public offices for purposes of the Wisconsin Public Records Law, including the following positions:

- Seats held by individual Board members
- Officers of the School Board
- Superintendent
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of Special Education/Student Services
- Director of Business Services
- Director of Human Resources
- High School Principal
- Middle School Principal
- Elementary Principal(s)

Legal Reference: **Sections 19.21–19.39 and Section 120.13(28) Wisconsin State Statutes
34 C.F.R. 300.623 Federal Laws**

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