

Understanding the Student Education Record

Student Education Record

Each public school student has a record of his or her attendance, grades and other information about their school performance. Sometimes, the term student's cumulative folder or cumulative record is used to reference the student education record.

Information Contained in Student Education Record

NC General Statute §115C-402 states that, at a minimum, the student education record should contain "adequate identification data including date of birth, attendance data, grading and promotion data, and such other factual information as may be deemed appropriate by the local board of education."

In addition, each student's official record shall include "notice of any long-term suspension or expulsion, and the conduct for which the student was suspended or expelled." The statute does provide for the local superintendent or his or her designee to expunge from the student's education record the notice of suspension or expulsion provided that certain criteria are met.

Access to Student Education Record

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) outlines access to a student's education record.

Under FERPA, "a school must provide parents/legal guardian or students who have reached the age of 18 with an opportunity to inspect and review his or her education records within 45 days following its receipt of a request. A school is required to provide copies of education records, or make other arrangements, if a failure to do so would effectively prevent the student from obtaining access to the records (e.g., student has moved to another state). Under FERPA, a school is not required to provide information that is not maintained or to create education records in response to an eligible student's request."

A student wanting a copy of his or her transcript or high school diploma would need to contact the school from which he or she graduated or the school district's central office. Also, please contact the school district's central office if the school has closed or been consolidated.

Protection of Information in Student Education Record

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects the privacy of the student education record. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personally identifiable information from an eligible student's education record to a third party unless the parent/legal guardian or eligible student has provided written consent. However, there are a number of exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records. These exceptions include the release of education records to school officials, including teachers who have a legitimate educational reason; to another school in which the student seeks to enroll; and as required for financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received.

On a side note, the [Identity Theft Protection Act of 2005](#) passed by the NC General Assembly imposes certain obligations on state agencies concerning the collection, use and dissemination of Social Security Numbers (SSNs) and other Personally Identifiable Information. As a result, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction staff no longer use student SSNs and instead use a Unique ID (UID) for students for data cross-referencing between information systems.

Retention of Student Education Record

NC General Statute §115C-402 requires that "the official record of each student enrolled in North Carolina public schools be permanently maintained in the files of the appropriate school after the student graduates, or should have graduated, from high school unless the local board determines that such files may be filed in the central office or other location designated by the local board for that purpose."

The North Carolina Division of Archives and History Records Retention and Disposition [Schedule](#) (page 40, North Carolina Cumulative Records File) for Local Education Agencies echoes the requirement that a student's cumulative record of his or her elementary and secondary educational career be retained permanently.

The cumulative record file includes personal and family data; health and immunization information; attendance reports; standardized test dates and results; elementary, middle, and high school inserts or grade sheets; copies of birth certificates; driver education certificates; and references to dates of separation due to graduation, withdrawal or expulsion.

The file also may include photographs, correspondence to and from parents and/or guardians and school personnel, and court order documents such as birth date and name change verification.

The local education agency may however destroy student suspension or expulsion notices in accordance with North Carolina General Statute §115C-402.

Permanent records may be microfilmed two years after the student graduates or otherwise leaves the school system. Only when student records are microfilmed to state standards established by the Division of Archives and History may paper records be destroyed.