

Keep student information private

Much of the information you will deal with is private educational data on students and is protected by both state and federal privacy laws. Sharing information when there is no valid educational reason for doing so may subject you to discipline by the district and to civil liability.

When discussing students with colleagues, ask yourself whether the discussion is really necessary to provide educational services to the student. Try to do so without revealing identifying information. Do not discuss individual students outside the school setting. Be sure volunteers in your classroom know they must keep information on students private.

- Most student information is private and should not be released to anyone but the student, his or her parents, or staff with a legitimate educational interest.
- Privacy laws cover all forms of data. If you can't release something in written form, you can't release it orally.
- Redacting names does not make releasing or sharing the data permissible. The data itself, rather than just the identity of the student who created it, is private.
- Review your classroom practices to make sure you aren't unnecessarily sharing information about students in class. Don't publicly list the names of top scorers or students who need to turn in work. Do not permit students to grade each other's work.
- Do not post students' work or photos on your class website unless you have their parents' permission.
- Ask if your district allows you to display photos of students or send home videos of students. This will probably require a permission form, and many districts do have "media release" forms for this purpose.
- If in doubt, when anyone asks you for information, withhold the requested information until you check with your principal to determine whether it can be released.
- If anyone questions you about a student, whether it be the media, law enforcement or a parent of another student, respond simply that the information is private student data and you cannot discuss it (unless your supervisor allows it).

