

Policies

Westerly Public Schools

No. 2005

Freedom of Information- Public Records Policy

I. Purpose

As stated in WPS Policy 1100 School Committee Public Records, the people's right to know the process of government decision making and the documents and statistics leading to determinations is basic to our society. Access to such information should not be thwarted by shrouding it with the cloak of secrecy or confidentiality.

In accordance with RIGL 38-2-1, Westerly Public Schools acknowledges that the public's right to access public records and the individual's right to dignity and privacy are both principles of the utmost importance in a free society. In compliance with the purpose of RIGL 38-2, Westerly Public Schools will both facilitate public access to public records and also protect from disclosure information about particular individuals maintained in the files of public bodies when disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

II. Compliance

It is Westerly Public Schools policy to comply with all federal and state laws concerning access to public records, notably RIGL 38-2 Access to Public Records and the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

III. Procedures for Access

In accordance with RIGL 38-2-3(d), Westerly Public Schools has established a written procedure regarding access to public records. The procedure is available on the Westerly Public Schools website under the District Information tab, under the sub heading "FOIA Requests".

- a. The Superintendent of Schools has designated the Westerly Public Schools Superintendent of Schools or designee as the public records officer for the Westerly Public Schools. The contact for obtaining public records is the Superintendent of Schools or designee located at 23 Highland Avenue, Westerly, RI 02891.
- b. In order to request to inspect and/or to obtain copies of documents maintained by the Westerly Public Schools, members of the public must complete a Request for Information Form available on the district website or otherwise provide a written request for records that (1) clearly identifies the records requested and (2) states that the request is made pursuant to the Access to Public Records Act. A written request for public records need not be made on the form if the request is otherwise readily identifiable as a request for public records. A written request is not necessary for documents available pursuant to RI General Law 42-35-2 or other documents prepared for or readily available to the public.

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- c. Requests to inspect public records can be mailed, faxed or dropped off at Westerly Public Schools, 23 Highland Avenue, Westerly, RI 02891 and directed to the Superintendent or designee or requests with an original signature may be scanned and emailed to the Superintendent or designee. E-mail requests in which the request is written in the body of the text cannot be accepted. To make a public records request by fax, please contact the Superintendent or designee office before faxing the request.
- d. There are times when public records are not available at the time of the request. The Access to Public Records Act allows a public body ten (10) business days to respond and, with "good cause," may extend the time to respond by twenty (20) business days (thirty (30) business days total).
- e. If after review of a request, Westerly Public Schools determines that the requested records are exempt from disclosure for a reason set forth in RI General Laws 38-2-2(4), the school district reserves its right to claim such exemption and will provide the reason for exemption in writing to the requestor pursuant to RIGL 38-2-7.
- f. Members of the public who feel that they have been unlawfully denied access to public records have the right to file an appeal with the Attorney General. In cases where the complaint is not resolved with the Attorney General, members of the public may file a lawsuit in Rhode Island Superior Court per RIGL 38-2-8.
- g. Westerly Public Schools is committed to providing access to public records in an expeditious and courteous manner.

See also WPS POLICY #1100 School Committee Public Records.

Adopted: May 4, 2016

Revised: June 28, 2017