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Pittsfield School District

NON-EDUCATIONAL / NON-ACADEMIC QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS, AND RESEARCH

Separate federal and state laws require that written consent be obtained from a parent or guardian before a student participates in a non-educational survey or questionnaire that asks about information not directly related to a student's academics. While similar, the two laws are not co-extensive, with slightly different scope, procedures and exceptions.

A. General Provisions

1. For the purpose of this policy, "non-academic survey" shall include a survey, questionnaire, analysis, evaluation, or any other document which seeks any information in the categories listed in Sections B (as to state law) or C (as to federal law) below. However, non-academic surveys should not be deemed to include questions directed to an individual student by a school counselor, nurse, or appropriate personnel under circumstances indicating such questions are reasonably necessary for such person's compliance with applicable laws or regulations, and the discharge of his or her duties.
2. All non-academic surveys must have the prior approval of the superintendent of schools.
3. Non-academic surveys conducted for other agencies, organizations, or individuals must have both the recommendation of the superintendent and the approval of the School Board as to content and purpose. The results of such approved non-academic surveys must be shared with the School Board.
4. No non-academic survey requesting sexual information will be administered to any student in kindergarten through grade six unless required by federal or state law or regulation. School personnel administering any such questionnaire or survey will not disclose personally identifiable information.
5. As used below, the consent and notification provisions apply to a child's parent / legal guardian(s), unless the student is an adult or an emancipated minor who consents.

B. New Hampshire Law

Under the provisions of RSA 186:11, IX-d, prior notice and prior consent (opt-in) is required for any non-academic survey designed to elicit information about a student's:

1. Social behavior;

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2. Family life;
3. Religion;
4. Politics;
5. Sexual orientation;
6. Sexual activity;
7. Drug use;
8. Or any other information not related to a student's academics.

C. Federal Law

1. Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. Under the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, prior written consent is required only if the non-academic survey, analysis, or evaluation, or its administration is paid for or in any way uses federal funds from the federal Department of Education and reveals information concerning any of the following:
 - a. Political affiliations;
 - b. Mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student or the family;
 - c. Sexual behavior and attitudes;
 - d. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior;
 - e. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
 - f. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
 - g. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent / guardian(s); or
 - h. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).

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2. Federal Exception. Non-academic surveys do not require consent and notice under New Hampshire law (section B), but might otherwise require notice and consent under federal law (section C). However, the federal requirement exempts the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing educational products or services for, or to, students or educational institutions, such as the following:
 - a. College or post-secondary education recruitment or military recruitment;
 - b. Book clubs, magazines, and programs providing access to low-cost literary products;
 - c. Curriculum and instructional materials used by schools;
 - d. Tests and assessments used by schools to provide cognitive, evaluative, diagnostic, clinical, aptitude, or achievement information about students, or to generate other statistical data for educational purposes;
 - e. The sale of products or services to raise funds for school-related or education-related activities; and
 - f. Student recognition programs.

This exception only applies if the non-academic survey is otherwise exempt under New Hampshire law (section B).

D. Notification and Inspection.

When school personnel intend to administer a non-academic survey, the school shall provide a ten-day notice to parents/guardians. Included in the notice will be information regarding the purpose of the non-academic survey; how the survey will be administered; how the survey will be utilized; and the persons or entities that will have access to the results of the completed survey.

Parents or guardians wishing to inspect a non-academic survey will be able to do so in the school's administrative office. Parents / guardians may refuse to give consent for their student to participate, with or without first reviewing the non-academic survey. The school will not penalize students whose parents / guardians decline to provide written consent.

The school will take reasonable precautions to protect student privacy during their participation in any non-academic survey.

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E. Consent Exception for Youth Risk Behavior Survey Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Neither state nor federal law requires prior written consent for administration of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control, United States Department of Health and Human Services, concludes that federal law, including the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, also does not require prior written consent from parents or guardians because students are not required to participate, and the survey is not paid for by the United States Department of Education.

However, New Hampshire law nonetheless requires the district to provide parents / guardians with notice of at least ten days before the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is administered. Parents may inspect the Youth Risk Behavior Survey at the school's administrative office. Parents or guardians may opt their student out of participating in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey by providing the dean of operations with written notice. District staff administering the Youth Risk Behavior Survey shall insure that students understand that participation is voluntary and that students who opt-out will not be penalized.

Adopted: September 18, 2015
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