



The Public's Guide to Requesting Information from South Washington County Schools

Right to Access Public Data

The Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13) presumes that all government data are public unless a state or federal law says the data are not public. Government data is a term that means all recorded information a government entity has, including paper and electronic media.

The Data Practices Act also provides that South Washington County Schools (District 833) must keep all government data in a way that makes it easy for you, as a member of the public, to access public data. You have the right to look at (inspect), free of charge, all public data that we keep. You also have the right to get copies of public data. The Data Practices Act allows us to charge for copies. You have the right to look at data, free of charge, before deciding to request copies.

How to Make a Data Request

To look at data or request copies of data that South Washington County Schools keeps, you will need to make a written request. Make your written request for data to the Data Practices Designee listed in the Data Practices Contacts on page 2. You may make your written request for data by US mail, fax, or email, using the data request form on page 3.

If you choose not to use the data request form, your written request should include:

- That you, as a member of the public, are making a request for data under the Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13;
- Whether you would like to look at the data, get copies of the data, or both; and
- A clear description of the data you would like to inspect or have copied.

South Washington County Schools cannot require you, as a member of the public, to identify yourself or explain the reason for your data request. However, depending on how you want us to process your request (if, for example, you want us to mail you copies of data), we may need some information about you. If you choose not to give us any identifying information, we will provide you with contact information so you may check on the status of your request. In addition, please keep in mind that if we do not understand your request and have no way to contact you, we will not be able to begin processing your request.

How We Respond to a Data Request

Upon receiving your written request, we will work to process it.

- If we do not have the data, we will notify you in writing as soon as reasonably possible.
- If we have the data, but the data are not public, we will notify you in writing as soon as reasonably possible and state which specific law says the data are not public.
- If we have the data, and the data are public, we will respond to your request appropriately and promptly, within a reasonable amount of time (usually within 30 days) by doing one of the following:
 - Arrange a date, time, and place to inspect data, for free, if your request is to look at the data, or
 - Provide you with copies of the data as soon as reasonably possible. You may choose to pick up your copies, or we will mail or fax them to you. If you want us to send you the copies, you will need to provide us with an address or fax number. We will provide electronic copies (such as email or CD-ROM) upon request if we keep the data in electronic format. Information about copy charges is on page 4. We may require pre-payment for copies of data.

The District will explain the data in an understandable way upon request.

The Data Practices Act does not require us to create or collect new data in response to a data request if we do not already have the data. The Act does not require us to provide data in a specific form or arrangement if we do not keep the data in that form or arrangement. (For example, if the data you request are on paper only, we are not required to create electronic documents to respond to your request.) If we agree to create data in response to your request, we will work with you on the details of your request, including cost and response time.

In addition, the Data Practices Act does not require us to answer questions that are not requests for data.

In the following example, the first statement is a question about data that does not require a response under Chapter 13. The second statement is a request for data requiring a response.

- Why did the school board approve a student field trip to a wildlife center?
- I would like copies of all documents provided to the school board as it was considering approval of a student field trip to a wildlife center on January 13, 2004.

Requests for Summary Data

Summary data are statistical records or reports that are prepared by removing all identifiers from private or confidential data on individuals. The preparation of summary data is not a means to gain access to private or confidential data. South Washington County Schools will prepare summary data if you make your request in writing and pay for the cost of creating the data (prepayment may be required). Upon receiving your written request (you may use the form on page 3), we will respond within ten business days with the data or details of when the data will be ready and how much we will charge.

This document is based on model materials prepared by the Information and Policy Analysis Division of the Minnesota Department of Administration.

Data Practices Contacts South Washington County Schools

Responsible Authority

Superintendent Keith Jacobus
Kjacobus@sowashco.org

Data Practices Compliance Official

Barbara Brown
Director of Communications
Bbrown6@sowashco.org

■ District Service Center, 7362 E. Pt. Douglas Road S., Cottage Grove, MN 55016 ■
■ 651-425-6300 ■ Fax: 651-425-6318 ■

Attachment A

Data Request Form – Members of the Public South Washington County Schools – District 833

Date of request: _____

I am requesting access to data in the following way:

(Note: inspection is free but South Washington County Schools charges for copies; see Attachment B.)

Inspection Copies Both inspection and copies

These are the data I am requesting:

Describe the data you are requesting as specifically as possible. If you need more space, please use the back of this form.

Contact Information

Name [PLEASE PRINT]: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

You do not have to provide any of the above contact information. However, if you want us to mail you copies of data, we will need some type of contact information. In addition, if we do not understand your request and need to get clarification from you, without contact information we will not be able to begin processing your request until you contact us.

South Washington County Schools will respond to your request as soon as reasonably possible (usually within 30 days).

Please complete and return this form to:

■ **Communications Department** ■
■ **District Service Center, 7362 E. Pt. Douglas Road S., Cottage Grove, MN 55016** ■
■ **651-425-6300** ■ **Fax: 651-425-6318** ■
■ bbrown6@sowashco.org ■



Attachment B

Copy Costs – Members of the Public South Washington County Schools

South Washington County Schools charges members of the public for copies of government data. These charges are authorized under Minnesota Statutes, section 13.03, subdivision 3(c).

If the cost of the copies is \$10 or more, we require payment before we provide the copies to you.

For 100 or Fewer Paper Copies – 25¢ per page

For copies of 100 or fewer pages of black and white, letter or legal size paper, the district charges a fee of 25¢ for each page copied, or 50¢ for each two-sided copy. If the district provides a copy by making a computer printout, the charge is 25 cents for each page. Color copies are 50¢ per page copied.

Most Other Copies – Actual Cost

The charge for most other types of copies, when a charge is not set by statute or rule, is the actual cost of searching for and retrieving the data, and making the copies or electronically transmitting the data (e.g., sending the data by email).

In determining the actual cost of making copies, we factor in employee time, the cost of materials onto which we are copying the data (paper, CD, DVD, etc.) and mailing costs (if any). If your request is for copies of data that we cannot reproduce ourselves, such as photographs, we will charge you the actual cost we must pay an outside vendor for the copies.

The cost of employee time to search for data, retrieve data, and make copies is dependent upon the wage rate of the lowest paid employee who can perform the work given the data privacy issues related to searching for the records.



Attachment C

SAMPLE Completed Data Request Form – Members of the Public South Washington County Schools

Date of request: July 17, xxxx

I am requesting access to data in the following way:

(Note: inspection is free but South Washington County Schools charges for copies; see Attachment B.)

Inspection Copies Both inspection and copies

These are the data I am requesting:

Describe the data you are requesting as specifically as possible. If you need more space, please use the back of this form.

I am making a request for access to public data under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13. I would like copies of all documents provided to the District 833 School Board as it considered action to approve a student field trip to a wildlife center on January 13, xxxx.

Contact Information

Name [PLEASE PRINT]: Joseph Doe

Address: 555 Any Street, City, Minnesota 55555

Phone number: 555-5555

Email address: josephdoe@yahoo.com

You do not have to provide any of the above contact information. However, if you want us to mail you copies of data, we will need some type of contact information. In addition, if we do not understand your request and need to get clarification from you, without contact information we will not be able to begin processing your request until you contact us.

South Washington County Schools will respond to your request as soon as reasonably possible (usually within 30 days).

Please complete and return this form to:

- **Communications Department** ■
- **District Service Center, 7362 E. Pt. Douglas Road S., Cottage Grove, MN 55016** ■
- **651-425-6300** ■ **Fax: 651-425-6318** ■
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