

Everett Public Schools ECEAP **BIRTHDAY POLICY**

This policy meets the District memo of instruction re: FERPA “directory” information while trying to accommodate the value of using birthdays as an instructional tool with young children.

See attached memo from September 2, 2010.

In order to follow the guidelines to use an “abundance of caution to avoid birthday information being available to someone not authorized to have it”, the following guidelines are being adopted:

Displays

- “If teachers have birthday displays in classrooms, those should not be visible during open house events or when the classroom is being used or visited by outside groups or during curriculum nights when people might rotate through classrooms.”
- Birthday displays in classroom should be limited to the month and student first names. Dates should not be included.
- Try to be discreet and instead of having a “Birthday Wall” with cakes/candles, etc. that would cue someone that it was obviously related to the child’s birthday, have, for example, a chart that shows the birthdays as a graph.

Celebrations

- All birthday celebrations should be parent initiated.
- Birthday information or photos of birthday celebrations should not be included in classroom communications to families, PAC, or the public.

The birthday policy and district memo should be included in the Policies and Procedures Notebook.

The birthday policy is included in the parent handbook.

Information parents receive in the annually updated Parent Handbook:

Birthdays

- Your child’s birthday is special.
- If you’d like your child’s birthday celebrated at ECEAP, you are welcome to send a non-food item such as stickers or pencils. Due to allergies and school district policy, food snacks or treats cannot be brought to ECEAP.
- For summer birthdays please contact your teacher to arrange a special date for your child’s birthday within the school year.
- Please do not send birthday party invitations to school with your child unless you are inviting each ECEAP student in your child’s classroom.
- If you don’t celebrate birthdays please talk to your ECEAP staff.

Information Only

To: All Principals; of special interest to elementary principals
From: Mary Waggoner
Re: FERPA "directory" info and impact on:
1. birthday announcements, and
2. PTA yearbooks with sample form
Date: Sept. 2, 2010

Background:

The term "directory information" as used in connection with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act means information about students that we WILL disclose when asked UNLESS parents return the FERPA form they receive each year as part of the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook.

Last year, because of identity theft and privacy concerns and because a student's birthday is part of the login parents and students use to view student grades, we REMOVED birthday information from the list of "directory information." This means we CANNOT disclose students' birthdays.

Resulting unintentional consequences and questions:

What does this mean when ...

- ... celebrating birthdays is part of a school or classroom culture to create a warm, friendly, caring place for students?
- ... some classrooms, especially at the elementary school use birthdate information for math lessons?

Suggestion – use an abundance of caution to avoid birthday information being available to someone not authorized to have it. For example:

- Avoid birthday displays in hallways visible to the public, or cover those displays up when the public is visiting.
- If teachers have birthday displays in classrooms, those should not be visible during open house events or when the classroom is being used or visited by outside groups or during curriculum nights when people might rotate through classrooms.
- Be sure your volunteers understand their responsibility for confidentiality – that includes ALL information about students they might learn when working in your school.
- Be sure PTA and other parent groups wanting to recognize birthdays do not have student birthday information. To make birthday recognition possible by those support groups, teachers might let the groups know how many birthdays are in a particular month (if small tokens or gifts are part of the recognition). The teacher could then make those recognitions during the month without disclosing specific birthdates about specific students.
- Some high school PTA groups traditionally mail voter registration information to students turning 18. That is a great practice which supports civic involvement. If your PTA does this, the letters and materials should be handled by your office with the PTA helping to pay postage – in other words, a system that protects specific birthday information while supporting the effort to register new student voters.

Approved for Distribution: _____

Mary Waggoner

10/6/11 8:55 AM

Can PTA groups produce a student yearbook with photos?

Yes, a PTA can do this IF they get permission from parents or guardians of each student who has said "no" to such depictions on the FERPA form.

This creates a Catch 22 because we are also never to disclose to someone outside of authorized school staff which families have said "no" to what on the FERPA form. Therefore, giving your PTA a list of "no" families so they can ask for permission from just those families is not allowed.

To deal with this Catch 22, many office managers have created thoughtful and legal permission forms for PTAs to secure permission for every student to be depicted in a yearbook – not just the FERPA "no" families. (We've attached a sample you may use or revise.) Getting permission from each family is more work for the PTA, and it may seem obstructive to PTA members who don't understand the law and simply want you to give them a list of families to contact.

However, usually when PTA members understand the restriction's intent is to protect identity, they agree with the rationale and work through the process of contacting each family to secure permission for yearbook depictions. Ultimately, it puts the PTA in touch with each family, which is good for their organizations.

REMEMBER, every yearbook or printed material created using student information must be approved in advance by a principal. If you have questions about a publication (or website) an outside group is making, give the communications department a call. We'll work through the laws and requirements together – to maintain privacy while building relationships.

Approved for Distribution: _____

Mary Waggoner

10/6/11 8:55 AM