

November 3, 2014

Matt Ehling, President
Public Record Media
2375 University Avenue West
Suite 200
Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55114

Dear Mr. Ehling,

This letter is in response to your June 19, 2014, data request, follow-up inquiry, and phone conversation to clarify your request. In your request, you sought several different types of data. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)'s response to each of these individual requests is provided below. You requested:

A. Data involving "correspondence between the Commissioner of MDE and any assistant commissioners of MDE, as well as personnel of any agency of the federal government, from January 1, 2013 to June 19, 2014 regarding" . . . :

"The types of Minnesota student data shared with agencies of the federal government and/or private contractors as part of Minnesota's participation in elements of the 'Common Core' curricular program;"

"The types of Minnesota student data shared with agencies of the federal government as part of Minnesota's receipt of federal grant monies;"

"The uses to which agencies of the federal government and/or private contractors put – or intend to put – Minnesota student data collected through Minnesota's participation in the above listed programs or activities."

MDE generally does not create or maintain correspondence from the Commissioner, assistant commissioners, or personnel regarding the types of data shared with federal agencies as described above. MDE does engage in data sharing with federal agencies, but this is typically handled through electronic reporting systems and required reports. Please refer to our response to the second portion of your data request for more explanation about this data sharing.

B. Data involving "public data produced and/or maintained by the Commissioner of MDE and any assistant commissioners of MDE from January 1, 2013 to June 19, 2014" including:

"Any and all data that documents the types of Minnesota student data shared with agencies of the federal government and/or private contractors as part of Minnesota's participation in elements of the 'Common Core' curricular program;"

For clarification, Common Core is a set of academic standards, not a curriculum. States and/or schools develop curriculum based on the standards. States also do not participate per se in the Common Core, but they can choose whether to adopt the Common Core standards. Minnesota has adopted the Common Core language arts standards, along with its own supplementary standards. It has not adopted the Common Core mathematics standards. Minnesota also is not a member of either of the two national testing consortia related to Common Core standards.

MDE does not report student data to agencies of the federal government and/or private contractors as part of its adoption of elements of the Common Core standards. Therefore, MDE does not have data that responds to this portion of your request.

“Any and all data that documents the types of Minnesota student data shared with agencies of the federal government as part of Minnesota’s receipt of federal grant monies;”

Note that MDE does not report any data about students at the individual student level to the US DOE; all reporting involves data aggregated at the school level or higher (district or state level). MDE reports aggregate data in many program areas associated with the receipt of federal funds via grants and similar programs, including:

- Related to funds received under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

MDE reports this information to the federal government through ED Facts, using the electronic EDEN submission system developed by the US Department of Education (DOE). The US DOE maintains a list of data files that states submit through ED Facts at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/index.html> (titled SY 2013-14 File Due Dates). I have also attached a copy of the list, which includes files to be reported for ESEA as well as other federal reporting requirements.

Information about the data Minnesota has reported is also available in the Minnesota Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR). The most recent CSPRs submitted by states and published by the federal government are from school year 2012-13. You can find the latest information published by the federal government on this website: <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html#sy12-13>. I have also attached MDE’s 2012-13 CSPR Parts I and II.

- Related to funds received under Parts B and C Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

MDE reports aggregate student information through ED Facts as well as through Annual Performance Reports. Data reported through ED Facts includes aggregate information about student discipline; removals to alternative settings; students exiting special education services; and performance on assessments. MDE’s most recent reports are available at <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SpecEdComp/> for Part B and at <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Welcome/Legis/LegisRep/> for Part C (titled Part C Annual Performance Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2012).

- Related to School Improvement grants.

Minnesota schools that receive School Improvement grants report some aggregate information about students to MDE, which MDE collects and submits to the US DOE via EDFacts. A file containing the information reported to MDE in the most recent reporting year, which was subsequently uploaded to EDFacts, is attached.

- Related to Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education grants.

MDE reports aggregate student information to the federal government through EDFacts. Information about the data Minnesota has reported is available in the Reports to Congress that the US DOE prepares and which are available on its website, <http://cte.ed.gov/accountability/reports/reportstocongress.cfm>. Additional information can be found on the DOE website at <http://cte.ed.gov/stategrants/index.cfm>.

- Related to Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants.

MDE received a federal grant to support early learning, and submits a performance reports to the US DOE related to that grant which includes some early learning aggregate student information. The most recent performance report is attached.

- Related 21st Century Community Learning Center grants.

At the schools and organizations that receive grants under this program, participating teachers survey students about their experiences at the end of the school year and report this information to MDE in aggregate form. This information is reported in the 21st Century Community Learning Center Performance Report. The most recent report is on MDE's website at <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/AftSch/CenturyComm/>, and contains information about the purposes for the grant as well as aggregate information from student survey responses.

“Any and all data that documents the uses to which agencies of the federal government and/or private contractors put – or intend to put – Minnesota student data collected through Minnesota’s participation in the above listed programs or activities.”

MDE does not maintain data that documents the intent of external entities regarding student data it reports. However, for many programs, the US DOE posts information to its websites regarding the purpose for collecting data. For example, it publishes information about its use of ESEA-related data at <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/index.html#info>; IDEA Part B data at <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partbspap/allyears.html#mn>; and IDEA Part C data <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/data/report/idea/partcspap/allyears.html#mn>.

Since most educational data reported by states to the US DOE is submitted through EDFacts, the EDFacts Overview page may be a useful resource to you. It is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/index.html>.

C. Data created, received, disseminated, or maintained “by the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and any assistant commissioners of MDE from January 1, 2013 to June 19, 2014” including:

Plans, proposals, and/or memoranda that would describe any current participation of the state of Minnesota and/or Minnesota educational institutions in the “Common Core” curriculum program;

As stated above, Minnesota is not considered a full “Common Core state,” and is not a member of the two national testing consortia related to the Common Core standards, so there is no data that responds to this portion of your data request. Minnesota has developed our own assessments aligned to the standards. In 2010, Minnesota did adopt the Common Core English language arts standards and added supplementary content. Public schools in Minnesota were required to implement the 2010 standards no later than the 2012-2013 school year. The standards are known as the 2010 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards - English Language Arts. The 2007 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Mathematics were written prior to the development of the Common Core mathematics standards, and are not up for revision until 2015. Academic standards are revised according to a schedule specified in state statute.

MDE recently completed a FAQ about our Academic Standards and it is attached. See the questions 6 and 7 in the FAQ for more information about Minnesota’s relationship to the Common Core standards.

Plans, proposals, and/or memoranda that would describe any future participation of the state of Minnesota and/or Minnesota educational institutions in the “Common Core” curriculum program.

MDE currently does not have plans to be involved in the full Common Core standards or consortia in the future, does not have data that responds to this portion of your request. Minnesota mathematics academic standards are scheduled for review in 2015.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Olson
Data Practices Compliance Official