



**POLICY REGARDING RETENTION OF  
ELECTRONIC RECORDS AND INFORMATION**

**I. POLICY**

The Watertown Board of Education (the “Board”) complies with all state and federal laws and regulations regarding the retention, storage and destruction of electronic information and records. The Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for developing and implementing administrative regulations concerning the retention, storage, and destruction of electronic information and the dissemination of such administrative regulations to all school officials, employees, and individuals granted access to the computer systems and/or networks of the Watertown Public Schools (the “District”) and/or who send electronic messages as part of their work for the District. Collectively, all individuals granted access to the District’s computer systems are referred to as the “Users”.

**II. USE OF E-MAIL AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

The Board provides computers, computer network(s), including Internet access and an e-mail system, as well as any electronic devices that access the network(s) such as wireless and/or portable electronic hand-held equipment that can be used for word processing, wireless Internet access, image capture and recording, sound recording, information transmitting and/or receiving, storing, etc. (including but not limited to personal laptops, Smartphones, network access devices, Kindles, Nooks, cellular telephones, radios, walkmen, CD players, I-Pads or other tablet computers, walkie-talkies, Blackberries, personal data assistants, I-Phones, Androids and other electronic signaling devices), (referred to collectively as "the computer systems"), in order to enhance both the educational opportunities for our students and the business operations of the District.

Electronic messages sent by Users as part of their work and/or by using the District’s computer systems and/or network(s) are not private communications and are potentially subject to disclosure. Users must understand that the Board has reserved the right to conduct monitoring of these computer systems and may do so *despite* the assignment to individual Users of passwords for system security. Any password systems implemented by the District are designed solely to provide system security from unauthorized users, not to provide privacy to the individual system User.

*The system's security aspects, message delete function and personal passwords may be bypassed for monitoring purposes. Therefore, Users must be aware that they should not have any expectation of personal privacy in the use of these computer systems.* This provision applies to any and all uses of the District's computer systems, including any incidental personal use permitted in accordance with the Board's policy and regulations regarding computer use by Users.

Any retained messages may be retrieved as part of routine monitoring by the Board, an employee investigation or a formal discovery process as part of litigation. Users should bear in mind that e-mail messages may be retained at different locations within the computer network and that these messages are subject to retrieval. Consequently, Users should use discretion when using computers or other electronic technology to send, record or retain electronic communications and information.

### **III. RETENTION OF ELECTRONICALLY STORED INFORMATION**

Electronic communications on District computers or electronic communication systems shall be retained only as long as necessary. The same record retention policy that applies to paper records applies to electronically stored information, including e-mail communications. Therefore, like paper records, the content and function of an electronic record, including e-mail communications, determines the retention period for that document. The District will comply with all of the minimum standards set forth in the Municipal Records Retention Schedules, as issued by the Office of the Public Records Administrator for the State of Connecticut.

In addition to the retention guidelines established by the Board and used by school district officials and employees, all school officials and employees have a duty to preserve all records and electronic information, including records and electronic information that might otherwise be deleted or destroyed, that relate to any matter that is currently in litigation or may be anticipated to involve future litigation.

#### **Legal References:**

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 1-200(5); 1-211; 1-213(b)(3)  
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-109  
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 11-8 et seq.  
General Letters 96-2 and 2009-2 of the Public Records Administrator  
Public Records Policy 01, *Digital Imaging*, of the Public Records Administrator  
(Aug. 2014)  
Record Retention Schedules Towns, Municipalities and Boards of Education  
  
Frequently Asked Questions about E-mail, CT Public Records Administrator,  
available at <https://ctstatelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/EmailGuidelines.pdf> .

ADOPTED BOE: 3.28.2022

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7/30/2021



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## Administration

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### ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING THE RETENTION OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS AND INFORMATION

#### I. RECORDS CUSTODIAN

These regulations are designed to assist in implementation of Board Policy 2020 regarding the retention of electronic records and information. These regulations supplement and do not replace District policy relating to education records.

The Superintendent of Schools shall designate a Records Custodian who will be responsible for implementation of District policies and regulations for the retention of records, including e-mails and electronically stored information.

#### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. E-mail is a means of sending messages between computers using a computer network or over a modem connected to a telephone line. This information consists primarily of messages, but may also include attachments such as calendars, directories, distribution lists, sound recordings, photographs, images, word-processing documents, spreadsheets, and other electronic documents. E-mail is stored in a digital format rather than on paper and is retrievable at a future date.
- B. Electronically stored information is information that is fixed in a tangible form and is stored in a medium from which it can be retrieved and examined. It can consist of writings, drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, sound recordings, images, and other data or data compilations stored in any medium from which information can be obtained into useable form.
- C. Public Records are any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, or received by a public agency, whether such data or information is handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, videotaped, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any method.

- D. Digital Imaging is the process of converting original records on paper or film into electronic images. The process typically requires a document scanner or digital camera, a computer and software to capture the image, and indexing of the digitized images.
- E. Transitory Correspondence consists of communication that does not relate to an individual's job responsibilities or has a short term administrative value.
- F. Routine Correspondence consists of any communication that is part of or relates to commonplace tasks or duties within an office and is done at regular or specified intervals.

### **III. E-MAIL CLASSIFICATION**

The same record retention policy that applies to paper records applies to electronically stored information, including e-mail communications. Therefore, like paper records, the content and function of an electronic record, including e-mail communications, determines the retention period for that document. The District will comply with all of the minimum standards set forth in the Municipal Records Retention Schedules, as issued by the Office of the Public Records Administrator for the State of Connecticut.

Users shall use the following steps in determining whether to maintain e-mail messages and, if so, for how long:

Step 1: Determine whether the message is a public record or a non-record.

Step 2: If the message is a non-record, destroy at will (e.g., spam and unsolicited advertisements).

Step 3: If the message is a record, determine which records series the message belongs to, for example:

1. If the message is Transitory Correspondence, delete at will.
2. If the message is Routine Correspondence, retain for 2 years.
3. If the message is All Other Correspondence, retain for the equivalent records series.

Step 4: Maintain the messages for the required retention period under the equivalent records series.

### **IV. DIGITAL IMAGING OF PAPER/HARD COPY RECORDS**

Paper records may be digitized and maintained as electronic records; however, in doing so, the District must ensure the authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability of the reformatted records. If the District uses a vendor for digital imaging services, the District remains responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

In its use of digital imaging, the District shall:

1. Establish and maintain a quality assurance process to ensure the creation of accurate and authentic digital images and accurate indexes and production metadata.
2. Create and maintain accurate and authentic digital images in accordance with accepted standards and best practices.
3. Create and maintain accurate indexes and production metadata to properly identify and retrieve digital images.
4. Store and protect digital images against file corruption, alteration, or deletion throughout the designated retention period.
5. Perform periodic backups of all digital images, associated indices, and production metadata and maintain a geographically remote offsite backup copy to enable recovery and access in the event of a wide-spread disaster or emergency.
6. Perform and certify annual tests of backup media to ensure all files have been backed up and are readable.
7. Migrate digital images, associated indexes, and production metadata to a newer media platform or file format as needed to ensure the content remains accessible.
8. Define and document the normal operations and use of the imaging technology and electronic content management system to ensure system trustworthiness.

If paper public records have been converted to digital images, the District shall retain and/or dispose of the original paper records pursuant to the following guidelines.

- |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Permanent | If records are to be retained permanently or have been designated as archival, they may be digitally scanned and retained in an electronic format, but security copies of the records must be retained in a “human-readable” format, such as paper or microfilm. The Records Custodian must first verify with the Office of the Public Records Administrator for approval of the security copy storage format. |
| Less than | These records may be transferred to a digital imaging format with                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

Permanent disposal of the original, paper records. To dispose of the original records following their digital imaging, the Records Custodian must first obtain prior authorization from the Public Records Administrator and State Archivist (using Form RC-075, available from the Office of the Public Records Administrator). Following destruction of the original records, the Records Custodian must document that the paper records were destroyed lawfully.

To dispose of digital images once the minimum retention period has expired, the Records Custodian shall obtain prior authorization from the Public Records Administrator and State Archivist. The District must document that the digital images were destroyed lawfully under the appropriate disposition authority. The District shall follow a destruction process by which content is systematically deleted with an audit trail that is legally admissible in court. Destruction should be documented by recording the date of destruction on the form "Records Disposition Authorization" and attaching any supporting documentation, or by following the District's process for documenting document destruction.

## **V. RETENTION OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

E-mail and electronically stored information will be archived by the District for their required retention period using method(s) approved by the Records Custodian, which may include the following:

1. Print message or record and store in appropriate hard copy file.
2. Place in computer folders and save on hard drive.
3. Save to a removable disk which is then stored in an appropriate location.
4. Transfer to an automated records management software application.
5. Manage at the server by an automated classification system.

The Records Custodian will be responsible for working with the District Systems Administrator to implement a schedule and system for reviewing electronically stored information. This review shall occur at least annually. No system wide process for automatic deletion of electronic information will be implemented without notice to any individual who may have such information and each such individual will verify that they have reviewed and archived information that must be retained. Following this review, all e-mails and/or electronically stored information that have not been archived according to District policies and procedures shall be designated for deletion or archiving, and the affected District Users will be notified about the procedures to be followed to implement this process. The Records Custodian or designee shall follow up with notified Users to ensure compliance.

Additionally, the Records Custodian, working with the District Systems Administrator, shall ensure than any process for automatic deletion of electronic information from the

system will not delete information stored in folders and/or system locations that have been designated as appropriate for archiving electronically stored information.

Legal References:

June Special Session, Public Act No. 21-2, Sec. 147  
Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 1-200(5); 1-211; 1-213(b)(3)  
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-109  
Conn. Gen. Stat. § 11-8 et seq.  
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