



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 13, 2014

Nevada Tells Father: Over \$10K to Access Kids' School Records

A conscientious father in Nevada received shocking news when he requested to see the permanent records of his four children from state education officials: His request would cost \$10,194.

John Eppolito, the father, was concerned about a recent decision in Nevada to join a multi-state consortium that would share student data.

Fox News explains, "Nevada has spent an estimated \$10 million in its seven-year-old System of Accountability Information in Nevada, known as SAIN. Data from county school systems is uploaded nightly to a state database, and, under the new arrangement, potentially shared with other counties and states."

Eppolito was interested in accessing his children's records in order to learn what information had been compiled on his children. It was then that he learned that he would have to pay significant fees as well as special programming costs to run a report of that kind.

The total, Eppolito was told, would come to \$10,194.

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"The problem is that I can't stop them from collecting the data," said Eppolito. "I just wanted to know what it was. It almost seems impossible. Certainly \$10,000 is enough reason to prevent a parent from getting the data."

Department of Public Information officer Judy Osgood attempted to explain the reason for such a high price: "Please understand that the primary purpose of the Department of Education's database is to support required state and federal reporting, funding of local education agencies, education accountability, and public reporting," Osgood states. "The system currently is not capable of responding to the type of individual student data request you have presented."

Eppolito was not satisfied with the response. "This data is for everyone except the parents. It's wrong," he asserts.

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) allows parents to view their children's records and permits small fees to be issued in order to access those records. Ironically, under the act, the fees are not supposed to be so substantial that they ultimately prevent parents from obtaining them.

"Unless the imposition of a fee effectively prevents a parent or eligible student from exercising the right to inspect and review the student's education records, an educational agency or institution may charge a fee for a copy of an education record which is made for the parent or eligible student," reads a section





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of the act. “An educational agency or institution may not charge a fee to search for or to retrieve the education records of a student.”

According to the regulations, the above criteria apply to “any state educational agency and its components.”

The state, by requiring the fee of over \$10,000, appears to be acting in violation of FERPA.

“They are supposed to provide [parents] the opportunity to inspect and review [records] upon request,” explained one official at the Family Policy Compliance Office (FCPO), the federal agency over FERPA. “There shouldn’t be a fee for inspecting and reviewing the records.”

But Osgood does not view it that way. “NDE does provide free access to education records,” she said. “SAIN was not designed for student-level inspection. Our understanding of FERPA is that this level of inspection applies to the LEA [local education authority—i.e., school district] and school.”

The Nevada Department of Education is defending the astronomical cost for Eppolito’s request. In a response to Eppolito, the Nevada Department of Education wrote,

Because the SAIN system is not designed to create reports that display individual student data in a readable format, the parent was initially told that the requested reports do not exist and cannot be produced. Upon continued insistence from the parent, [Nevada Department of Education] staff assessed how much programming time would be required to write new queries and develop a data table to create readable reports for the parent. Staff determined that it would take at least 3 weeks (120 hours) of dedicated programming time to fulfill the parent’s request. At the applicable wage rate of \$84.95/hour, the requested work resulted in a \$10,194 price tag.

The ordeal has only served to fuel Eppolito’s suspicions about Nevada’s Department of Education. He currently leads the group Stop Common Core Nevada and is president of Americans for Better Schools. Eppolito is particularly concerned about the collection and sharing of data under Common Core.

Eppolito’s concerns regarding data collection are not unfounded. According to EAG News, the federal government is working to expand the amount of data collected on each student:

Beginning with the Obama administration, the federal government has sought to greatly expand the amount of individual student data collected, shared and analyzed, by expanding state educational database systems to track individuals from their pre-kindergarten years well into adulthood, into data systems now referred to as “Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems.”

For the past seven years, all Nevada public school students, including charter school students, have been “data-tracked” daily through school district “Student Information Systems.”

Over 800 data points are now collected and stored in SAIN. Under a 2012 federal grant for \$4 million, those data elements will “evolve” as Nevada, too, expands its pre-K-to-workforce longitudinal database system. Every night, says Osgood, the data points are automatically uploaded into SAIN.

Since 2009, SAIN-like systems have emerged and expanded across the country to store, connect, and share individual information across agencies, state lines with other states and outside groups.

According to Joy Pullman, an education research fellow with the Heartland Institute, the purpose of data collection systems should be a significant cause for concern, particularly when parents are unable to access the data being collected.



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Joy Pullmann, an education research fellow with the Heartland Institute, agreed. “We have witnessed a shift in thinking about government from one that serves at the pleasure of citizens and to do their bidding, to one that considers its role to manage the populace,” Pullmann told FoxNews.com. “That’s why states are constructing large data systems to collect information about children from birth. It is, obviously, impossible for parents to control what schools and government are doing with their children if they can’t even find out because it’s so costly.

“This is a danger spot that most parents and the public are unaware of, and the longer they are unaware, the more damage will be done to their family privacy and control over their kids’ education,” Pullman added.

For many parents, this latest encroachment on parental rights and freedom comes as no surprise, as the federal and many state governments are implementing the Common Core standards, along with associated data-mining of students, in public schools. In fact, the federal government has no constitutional authority to be involved in education in the first place. These facts are leading more and more families into homeschooling for their children, with programs such as [Freedom Project Education](#) being an option for a classical, Judeo-Christian education free from government involvement.





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