

# Ask Professor FERPA: Do attendance sheets raise privacy concerns?

Posted on September 3 2013



Dear FERPA Professor,

I have a faculty member who would like to send a sign-in sheet around class for his attendance record. Something in the back of my mind says this might have potential FERPA issues. We enforce a school-wide policy that students will suffer grade penalties should they have more than three unexcused absences. While it is an outside possibility, a student could keep note of attendance and determine how well his or her peers are doing. Is this a legitimate concern, or should I relax?

Curious Registrar

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Dear Curious Registrar,

There is no problem with this practice so long as only the names are on the sheet, with no numbers or dates, and it is only used in the classroom; it cannot be posted outside the classroom, physically or online, for students to sign or look at. Additionally, past sign-in history should not be available on any daily sign-in sheet. In the *2012 AACRAO FERPA Guide*, you can reference §99.37(c)(1) on page 166. The regulations specifically provide that a student, even if he or she opts out from directory information disclosures, cannot prevent an institution from displaying the student name, institutional email address, or electronic identifier *in class*.

Hope that helps,

Professor FERPA

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