Hello Ms. Rado,

Please permit this email to serve as Rockford School District #205’s response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) received by the District on August 4, 2016. The District invoked an extension on August 10, 2016. Your individual request are set forth below along with the District’s responses.

**Request #1:**

The names/types of courses for which a placement process is used to enroll incoming freshmen, usually “core” courses such as English and math. Not all courses involve a placement process.


**Request #2:**

The names of any and all tests used in the placement process.

**Response to Request #2:** Please see response to request #1.

**Request #3:**

The precise cut off scores on each of the tests that determine the type/level of courses in which an incoming freshman will be placed, such as honors or general courses. For example, a student might need a 25 on the English subtest of the EXPLORE test to be placed in an honors English course.

**Response to Request #3:** Please see response to request #1.

**Request #4:**

A description of any specific, additional factors that go into the placement process, such as grades and teacher recommendations. If teacher recommendations are used, how often?
Response to Request #4: Please see response to request #1. See also Timeline Middle School Registration & Master Schedule.

Request #5: Any and all information given to parents that explains the level or rigor of the courses in which an incoming freshman is placed. If a school labels courses in a different way than the state’s categories – remedial, general, enriched, honors --please provide the names of those labels at the local level, and state whether parents are provided these labels. Please state whether a high school still offers remedial courses -- some districts have eliminated the remedial designation and combined it with the designation for general classes.

Response to Request #5: Please see response to request #1.

Request #6: Any forms used to allow parents to appeal and change a placement decision by the school. If appeals/waivers are not allowed, please state that. If the appeals/waivers are limited in any way, such as allowing a student to go up one level in course rigor, but not two or more, please state that. Please provide a blank waiver/appeal form.

Response to Request #6: The District does not have documents responsive to this request.

Request #7: The number of appeals/waivers requested by parents or guardians of incoming freshmen, by subject, for each of the following school years, 2014-15, 2015-2016 and 2016-17, and the number of appeals/waivers approved by each high school for each subject involved. Please provide this information for each high school in the district.

Response to Request #7: The District does not have documents responsive to this request.

Request #8: The number of appeals/waivers requested by parents or guardians of sophomores, juniors and seniors, by subject, for each of the following school years, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, and the number of appeals/waivers approved by each high school for each subject involved. Please provide any other information about how the placement process works for sophomore, junior and senior students. Please provide the appeal/waiver information for each high school in the district.

Response to Request #8: The District does not have documents responsive to this request.

To the extent you consider this response a denial of your request, you have a right to have this response reviewed by the Public Access Counselor (PAC) at the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). You can file your Request for Review with the PAC by writing to:
You also have the right to seek judicial review of your denial by filing a lawsuit in the State circuit court. 5 ILCS 140/11. If you choose to file a Request for Review with the PAC, you must do so within 60 calendar days of the date of this denial letter. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). Please note that you must include a copy of your original FOIA request and this denial letter when filing a Request for Review with the PAC.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 815-966-3109. Thank you.

Chris Euhus
Legal Department
Rockford School District #205
501 7th Street
Rockford, IL 61104
815-966-3109 (internal 16676)

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From: FOIA
Sent: Friday, August 12, 2016 3:23 PM
To: drado@chicagotribune.com
Cc: FOIA; Cathy Bayer
Subject: RE: Chicago Tribune FOIA, course placements

Hello Ms. Rado,

I just realized I included the incorrect date below. We will respond to your request by August 18, 2016. My apologies if this has created unnecessary confusion.

Chris Euhus
Legal Department
Rockford School District #205
501 7th Street
Rockford, IL 61104
815-966-3109 (internal 16676)

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From: FOIA
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2016 5:29 PM
To: Rado, Diane; FOIA
Cc: Cathy Bayer; Lori Hoadley; Earl Dotson
Subject: RE: Chicago Tribune FOIA, course placements

Hello Ms. Rado,
Rockford School District #205 received your request below on August 4, 2016. Under the Freedom of Information Act, a public body may extend the time to respond to a request up to 5 business days. We are extending the time to respond to your attached request for the following reason(s):

___ We store the requested records in whole or in part at another location(s).
_x_ Responding to the request requires that we collect a substantial number of specified records.
_x_ The request is couched in categorical terms and requires that we conduct an extensive search for the records responsive to it.
___ In order to determine whether the requested records are exempt under Section 7 of FOIA or must be redacted in part before they are disclosed, we must have the documents reviewed by _____.
_x_ We cannot comply with the request for records within the 5 business day time limit without unduly burdening or interfering with our operations.

We will respond to your request by August 11, 2016. Thank you.

Chris Euhus
Freedom of Information Act Officer
Legal Department
Rockford School District #205
501 7th Street
Rockford, IL 61104
815-966-3109 (internal 16676)

From: Rado, Diane [mailto:drado@chicagotribune.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 03, 2016 5:47 PM
To: FOIA
Cc: Cathy Bayer
Subject: Chicago Tribune FOIA, course placements

I am working on stories about the type and rigor of courses taken in high school. This is a FOIA related to the process of placing students into high school courses, particularly for incoming freshmen.

Using any documents, forms or paper or electronic records, please provide information about the placement process at each high school in your district. (If the process is exactly the same for all high schools, please provide information for one of the high schools, except for information requested in numbers 7 and 8 of this FOIA.)

Also, if something I’m requesting is already online, just point me to it. I have found some districts post a lot of information on the process, while others don’t.

1. The names/types of courses for which a placement process is used to enroll incoming freshmen, usually “core” courses such as English and math. Not all courses involve a placement process.

2. The names of any and all tests used in the placement process.
3. The precise cut off scores on each of the tests that determine the type/level of courses in which an incoming freshman will be placed, such as honors or general courses. For example, a student might need a 25 on the English subtest of the EXPLORE test to be placed in an honors English course.

4. A description of any specific, additional factors that go into the placement process, such as grades and teacher recommendations. If teacher recommendations are used, how often?

5. Any and all information given to parents that explains the level or rigor of the courses in which an incoming freshman is placed. If a school labels courses in a different way than the state’s categories -- remedial, general, enriched, honors -- please provide the names of those labels at the local level, and state whether parents are provided these labels. Please state whether a high school still offers remedial courses -- some districts have eliminated the remedial designation and combined it with the designation for general classes.

6. Any forms used to allow parents to appeal and change a placement decision by the school. If appeals/waivers are not allowed, please state that. If the appeals/waivers are limited in any way, such as allowing a student to go up one level in course rigor, but not two or more, please state that. Please provide a blank waiver/appeal form.

7. The number of appeals/waivers requested by parents or guardians of incoming freshmen, by subject, for each of the following school years, 2014-15, 2015-2016 and 2016-17, and the number of appeals/waivers approved by each high school for each subject involved. Please provide this information for each high school in the district.

8. The number of appeals/waivers requested by parents or guardians of sophomores, juniors and seniors, by subject, for each of the following school years, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17, and the number of appeals/waivers approved by each high school for each subject involved. Please provide any other information about how the placement process works for sophomore, junior and senior students. Please provide the appeal/waiver information for each high school in the district.

If you have questions, please contact me as soon as possible by phone or email.

As a member of the media, I request that no fees be charged, because this information is in the public interest.

Please send FOIA information electronically. If that can’t be done, the mailing address is:

Diane Rado, education reporter
Chicago Tribune
505 Northwest Ave.
Northlake, IL 60164

Thanks in advance for all your help,

Diane Rado
Education reporter
Chicago Tribune
708-498-4248 (Office)
312-823-3764 (Cell)
drado@chicagotribune.com

Ask a question, share a comment or make a suggestion on Let's Talk!