

# For the record, what's in the records?

Student cumulative files provide important information, remain accessible into future

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*Feature Editor*

As a student passes through each grade, they are greeted with new things: new teachers, new classes, and for some even new schools, but one thing remains throughout the changes – a student's cumulative record.

Students' cumulative records are on file and available for use in each school district.

"One way we use them for is if a student has had any education above and beyond the classroom, like maybe extended day, or tutorials, or something to help them, and they are still not understanding concepts, we can look back and see what all services they've had to see if they need a different type of help," high school counselor Danielle Real said.

The files contain important information that is helpful when it comes to determining a student's path of education.

"If a student is referred to our dyslexia services or even a special education referral, we could go back because there are papers in there called TPRI [Texas Primary Reading Inventory] papers and we can look at some of the scores they made," Real said. "That can give us information to see if they do have some dyslexia tendencies and if they were caught earlier."

The records are required to contain a number of items.

"There are some things that have to be in there," Real said. "A copy of the birth certificate, a copy of the social security card, and the very first page has to be a home language survey."

Though the reasoning behind it is not known, the filing of the home language survey is one of the most important aspects of each file.

"We want to know a student's home language so we can make sure we are educating them properly," Real said.

Real recalls the placement of the survey as one of the most stressed items as she began her career as a counselor.

"If we were ever audited the survey would be one of the first things they would look for," Real said. "I'm sure they would just correct us if we were audited and it was wrong."

The state regulates schools' record keeping to maintain consistency

from one school to another to make it easier for office personnel when students move in.

"If you move, the new school will give you a new home language survey to fill out, then they will request records from us and we will send them your whole file," Real said. "You will have a home language survey from kindergarten in there so they will throw out the one that was just filled out and keep the kindergarten one. You're only supposed to

have one home language survey in there and it is supposed to be the very oldest one that you can find."

Wall uniquely keeps information that is helpful to students in the files.

"We also file report cards and a testing card in students' files," Real said. "We keep a card for everybody that has scores from any standardized test, like ACT, TAKS, and STAAR."

Though it is not commonly seen, a student's cumulative record can contain non-school related documents.

"I'm from a divorced family so if my mom had custody and let's say my dad could only pick me up at our home, for example, that might be written in there," Real said. "It could also say if your mom has a different last name and that you can contact mom or dad in an emergency."

The size of each folder grows quickly as more and more is filed each year.

"Now sometimes we keep too much in there," Real said. "A student that has moved a lot or is military, their files tend to get thicker because it is the same paperwork over and over."

Student files are kept for two years at the school, then transferred to Angelo Archives, where they are converted to digital format and stored.

"Before we send them to archives we may clean them up a little," Real said. "We'll pick out the copy that we can read the clearest and then we will shred the others."

Preparing the files for the transition and the next school year can be quite a task.

"In the summer [Angelo Archives] comes and we do a big

switch," Real said. "Each campus counselor moves everybody into the next grade that they are going to be in or on to the next campus, then we pack up all of our stuff and send it to archives."

Angelo Archives offers an easy way to help Real when it comes to finding dated transcripts.

"I'll get calls from people that graduated in 1982 asking for a copy of their transcript but we don't have those folders anymore," Real said. "They [Angelo Archives]

have an online system where I can plug in a name or birthdate and have an inventory search and it will pull up their transcript and I can send it to them either electronically, or by mail."

Transcripts are needed for numerous reasons, and Real says she frequently receives calls requesting them.

"I'll get people asking for one maybe if they are going back to college and a high school degree is their last formal degree, or even for job verification," Real said. "The older transcripts are fun to find because they are handwritten."

The files that do stay at the school remain under lock and key, and the supervision of office per-

sonnel.

"We have [the files] in a locked closet, which I consider Mrs. [Nancy] Book's since she is our registrar," Real said. "I'll tell her if I ever get one of them out in case she is looking for it."

Due to the files' significance, there are a limited number

## Items needed to register a new student:

1. Birth certificate
2. Social security card
3. Shot records
4. Proof of residence
5. Copy of report card, or grades from previous school
6. Information on last school attended
7. Must live in district or have been approved for a transfer

of people that can see them.

"It's the people that need to know, that can see the files," Real said. "A teacher can pull a file, but only for appropriate reasons."

Cumulative permanent records are not accessed often but the information is important when determining what is best for a student.

"It's just a record of their education at whatever school a student attended," Real said. "It makes it easier to help a student."

Even though the files are just paperwork, they represent much more.

"There is a little nostalgia to sending records to archives," Real said. "It's a reminder of how quickly students grow up."



*Real*