

Freedom of Information Act worksheet:

To be used with:

“Think FOIA Is a Paper Tiger? The New York Times Gives It Some Bite”

New York Times

By David McCraw

1. The article defines the Freedom of Information Act as a form of reporting. Below identify three different reasons why you should consider it a form of a reporting.

a.

b.

c.

2. Visit the [Open Government Guide](#) and become familiar with your state’s open records laws.

a. Identify two types of data that are not available under the Open Records Law,

1.

2.

b. Detail how you would begin the process?

c. How long do you wait and what is the procedure if it is denied?

d. Click on the meetings category tabs. Identify two types of meetings in your district that would be legally closed to reporters and the public?

a.

b.

3. The New York Times has lawyers and financial support to dedicate to suing agencies when their requests aren't met. Detail, in paragraph form, what your plan would be should you make a request to a school or local government that is denied. Specifically identify the resources you could access or channels you would pursue.

4. A teacher in your building was replaced by a substitute in the middle of the year. After looking through your state's Open Records laws, identify at least two pieces of information the district could legally release to you in regards to this situation.

5. The information your district and state maintains about your school is a treasure trove of potential stories. Hopefully it's posted online and easy to access. This may take some digging through school board minutes and agenda items, but see if you can find at least three of the following pieces of information. For each one, detail some potential story ideas/angles you could pursue from the information you gather.

a. Your superintendent's contract.

Information you gather	Questions or angle to pursue

b. Your school's state test scores.

Information you gather	Questions or angle to pursue

c. Your school's demographics in regards to race and socioeconomic status.

Information you gather	Questions or angle to pursue

d. Your district's annual budget .

Information you gather	Questions or angle to pursue

e. Recent school board meeting agendas or minutes.

Information you gather	Questions or angle to pursue

6. Based on the information you found and your previous experiences in gathering information how much transparency would you say your school offers. Below, rank your district on a scale of 1-10 (with one being the least transparent and 10 being the most transparent).