



# Access 4 Learning Community

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Simple. Secure. Scalable. Standard.

## NEWSLETTER

## June 2020

IT'S TIME TO FOCUS ON USING DATA TO IMPACT LEARNING...

IN THIS ISSUE

## 'Reinvention'...

by Larry Fruth II, PhD – Executive Director / CEO

Albert Einstein famously stated, "In the midst of every difficulty lies opportunity." While I am quite sure he did not intend this for a global pandemic, this restricted time has given many individuals, families and even organizations time to review 'how they work'. Recently, the North American Management Board of the Association held conversations around how to communicate our collective work more effectively, addressing the realities of interoperability and privacy.

There is a plethora of organizations, both established but many new ones, attempting to address *interoperability* and *privacy* – no matter how you define those terms. While these are major pain points for schools, getting them to define what success looks like is being communicated differently from these organizations, and in most cases no 'roadmap' is provided to reach a successful end. **The A4L Community is the ONLY organization addressing both privacy and interoperability in a tactical manner.** We believe that increased interoperability without the inclusion of privacy requirements equals increased RISK. Both data sharing and privacy parameters must be identified and communicated.

So how do we emphasize, and yet simplify, how we communicate the work we do as a Community? Simple. We do not focus just on the terms and activities surrounding interoperability and privacy but focus on what school and state CIOs are trying to accomplish every day in their roles – **'Connecting and Securing the K12 Ecosystem'**. You will be seeing this phrase numerous times in the future as we ensure the alignment of SIF/Unity work with the work of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC).

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that we globally educate by shifting learner's 'bricks and mortar' setting to an online delivery model, putting huge new demands on school personnel, parents, technology providers and the learners themselves. Whatever fall looks like for schools, the Community's focus will continue to be helping schools and states accomplish their goals.

Much more to come.... stay safe!



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# Global Community News



## Connecting and Securing the K12 Ecosystem

**Access** (a means of entering), **4, Learning** (an acquisition of knowledge or skills)

As mentioned in the Welcome section, many organizations are looking at what and how they do what they do. Is our Community really delivering on our Community brand in the complicated work we juggle?

While the work is complicated, the message to the marketplace should not be. No fights about which interoperable standard should be used or conversations around who owns what when it comes to student data privacy.

*As many in our Community state repeatedly, "I just want it all to work!"*

That is the driving force behind the North American Community rolling out the "Connecting and Securing the K12 Ecosystem". The initial conversations focused on what we are doing now to enable a simplified ecosystem being put in place and what activities could / should we be doing to make this process easier. That includes everything from initial application identification through usage with learners.

Much more to come but again as the ONLY organization addressing both the connecting and securing the ecosystem we are in a "sweet spot" for messaging.



## Welcome new members!

### STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM (SDPC) MEMBERS:



Aecern LLC



Electude USA



HeartMath Institute



Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion  
Charter School, MA



Stock-Trak, Inc.



Tools4ever

### A4L COMMUNITY & SDPC MEMBER:



Oldham County Schools, KY

# News from the Australian Community



## Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S)

Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) is an Australian assessment which evaluates an online service's compliance with a set of nationally consistent security, privacy, online safety and interoperability criteria.

Through the assessment, services are categorised as either Tier 1 (those that store data with greater sensitivity or include higher risk functionality) through to Tier 3 (no sensitive data, static/limited functionality), and are assessed against the criteria that apply for their respective tier.

Key objectives of ST4S are to improve the educational technology market's understanding of security, privacy and safety requirements and lift vendor compliance to the ST4S standards. Additionally, the ST4S school focused assessment reports are designed to inform the decision making of education departments, schools and teachers when determining if an online service is suitable for staff or student use and appropriate for the storing of organisational and/or personal information. The assessment reports provide product information, data asset and storage information, consent requirements and clearly outline service

risks and actionable risk treatments to mitigate security, privacy and safety risks for education users.

Of key benefit to vendors is the recognition that ST4S is a national Australian assessment process over agreed national criteria, resulting in one only assessment of an online service and one final school report, which is shared across multiple educational jurisdictions nationally.

For more information, please contact the [National Schools Interoperability Program \(NSIP\)](#)



# News from the New Zealand Community



## A4L Community delighted to welcome New Zealand and publish the inaugural SIF Specification (New Zealand)

*NEWS: A4L Community delighted to welcome New Zealand and publish the inaugural SIF Specification (New Zealand)*

Washington, DC, 17 June 2020---The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is delighted to announce New Zealand as our newest global community member. The official recognition of this new Community comes after three years hard work developing the SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (New Zealand) 3.0, by a team of data architects from New Zealand's government education agencies: The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, and NZ Qualifications Authority, working in support of The Ministry's Te Rito information sharing project.

The **Te Rito project** is intended to save schools and teachers time and improve accuracy and efficiency, by enabling effective, secure sharing of information between schools, and providing a way for important learner information to travel with the learner throughout their education. As a new A4L locale, the New Zealand collaborative's new SIF Data Model Specification breaks ground in a number of areas:

- It is the first local SIF Data Model Specification that has been built from the ground-up with a focus on "all of life learning" and its data objects are tailored to support Early Childhood Education (ECE), K-12 Schooling, and Tertiary Education.
- It is the first local SIF Data Model Specification where the code set enumeration values and descriptions are recorded in two languages: English and Te Reo Māori. This provides support for

application providers whose products are used by schools that teach entirely in Te Reo Māori.

- It is the first local SIF Data Model Specification where JSON is a first-class citizen, including JSON Schemas alongside the usual set of XML Schemas. In addition, the SIF NZ Data Model also includes a sample OpenAPI specification, defining GET, POST and PUT operations on each data object, with request and response bodies and examples in both XML and JSON.

"Stuart McGrigor's contribution to the ITB and other global groups has proven an amazing resource" states A4L Community Technology Director, John W. Lovell. "Stuart brings a lifetime's experience with computers and a commitment to practical solutions yet is open to current trends in technology and demands from the marketplace. These attributes make Stuart that rare technical person who can work on the details, while keeping the big picture and larger goals in mind. It is no wonder he is New Zealand's choice to lead its key interoperability and reporting efforts for its education system."

During 2020, the Ministry of Education will be working with their community of Student Management System (SMS) vendors who will be implementing SIF API calls to exchange data with The Ministry's Te Rito platform "powered by SIF".

"We hope you will join us in welcoming our New Zealand friends into the Community" states Larry L Fruth II PhD, CEO/Exec Director, A4L Community. "We are excited to support and help the Ministry of Education, NZ, grow our newest A4L Community."

To review the SIF Data Model Specification (New Zealand), please go to: <https://www.a4l.org/page/DataModelNZ>



## UPDATE: Interoperability & Privacy Symposium – see [Page 9](#)



## Partner Update

### Data Standards United

Today digital ecosystem stakeholders must overcome disparate systems, technologies, and other obstacles or risk inefficiencies and disruption. We know that any successful digital ecosystem demands seamless, reliable systems and business processes enabled by openly developed, linked and freely

accessible data standards essential for clear. That is where **Data Standards United** comes into play.

This informal collaboration of standards organizations and their supporting partners has the vision collaboration and alignment of their work to ensure

the interoperability of data standards across education, training and employment sectors. With originating partners, A4L, PESC and Open HR this open invitation to any and all standards groups is designed to establish a sustainable collaborative which now includes CEDS via NCES and EdSPEX.

### COVID-19 Education Coalition

The A4L Executive Director was the co-lead for Privacy, Security and Digital Citizenship for the [ISTE Learning Keeps Going Project](#). The massive project is designed to support educators and parents during extended school closures with a curated list of free tools and resources as well as an Educator Help Desk where experts will answer online learning questions. The task

force has convened over the past months to help generate supporting materials addressing these critical areas both pre and post CoVID. Stay tuned as the numerous working groups are releasing their supporting materials and resources covering a huge number of educational issues impacted but the massive shift to digital learning.



### Project Unicorn

As the initiative now moves from interoperability advocacy to interoperability usage support, the A4L Community continues to be represented on the Steering Committee and helping in the conversations in linking

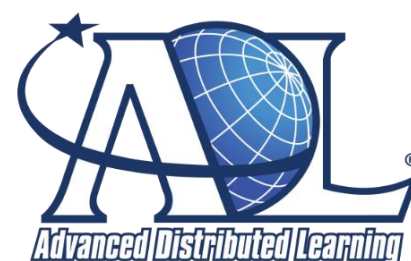
interoperability with privacy concerns as more use case pilots are being developed by the Unicorn staff. A very strong group of organizations trying to move the needle on interoperability.



### A4L and ADL

Another partner we are working with more closely is ADL and their Experience API (xAPI). Their ability to capture data from a wide range of experience has the potential to allow for greater classroom and student awareness, without overly burdening the instructor. Naturally, we are interested and glad that the National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP), Australia, is building a proof of concept

around using this standard in parallel with SIF. While xAPI has its own separate transport requirements, once the data is collected using both standards, then it is merged to achieve new insights for teachers.



# News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium



## UPDATE: National Data Privacy Agreement (DPA)

The [SDPC National DPA](#) draft has just wrapped its Membership Review cycle – we hope if you are a SDPC Member organization you took a look and provided feedback. If you are not a member, you missed something that WILL impact your work!

This excellent work product has been tediously developed over the past year under the leadership of the Legal Project Team, a subset of the Alliance leadership, and other legal

representatives of the Consortium. All SDPC members were invited to send legal representation to these calls to ensure open and transparent Community development. We collectively understand that while all feedback was heard and noted, not all changes could be put in this draft as we attempted to thread the needle on “musts” versus “wants” to address the most common needs.

All comments and suggestions have now been collected and will be summarized to the SDPC Management Board in an attempt to approve a final public draft for release and promotion very soon.

We are expecting more than a dozen Alliances and thousands of schools will be using this clause set soon to help in “Connecting and Securing their K12 Ecosystem”.

## SDPC announce Vendor Signatory Badge Program

**BLOG:** [SDPC announce Vendor Signatory Badge Program](#)

The Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), a special interest group of the non-profit Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, continues their support for the pandemic-driven shift to virtual education by announcing the SDPC Vendor Signatory Badge Program.

The 28 State SDPC Alliances, representing over 32 million students in approximately 9,000 districts, are proud to partner with marketplace providers to set common expectations in their attempts to build ‘*connected and secure K12 ecosystems*’ for learners. The SDPC Vendor Signatory Badge Program is a visible representation for those schools and the vendors who have signed standard Data Privacy Agreements (DPAs) establishing those expectations.

“The SDPC Vendor Signatory Badge is a great way to show current and potential customers that your company is dedicated to student data privacy” states Andrea Bennett, Executive Director, CITE. “Earning the badge is easy and

automatic once you have signed a standard agreement with a customer in that state. Then all new customers in that state will have the confidence and peace of mind of knowing that their data is safe and private with your company.”

There are no additional work requirements for vendors outside of their normal contracting processes with customers to receive the SDPC Signatory Badge specific to their signed state Alliance DPA. Current SDPC Vendor Members who have signed standard Alliance agreements will be receiving their badges soon while new Member Vendors signing standard DPA agreements will access their badges automatically through the Resource Registry.

Steve Setzer, Director - Business Development (& Chief Privacy Officer), Kimono commented “The standard DPAs are the fastest way for vendors to close the contracting loop and get to work. SDPC’s vendor members have

done tremendous work speaking up for their legal needs in Alliance DPAs. Most market providers should be able to sign the standard alliance DPAs unchanged, and the badge program will build that momentum. More use of standard DPAs means less time and money spent on negotiations.”

To search those vendors committed to student data privacy check out the SDPC Resource Registry and the larger set of projects the community is working on – addressing both interoperability and privacy – at <https://privacy.A4L.org>



## SDPC Update, May 2020



As we stated in our recent [Student Privacy and COVID-19](#) print piece, “The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that we educate kids by shifting their majority ‘brick and mortar’ setting to an online delivery model. This shift has put huge new demands on school personnel, parents, technology providers and the learners themselves. Even before the outbreak, schools have

been challenged managing hundreds of software applications in their ‘bricks and mortar’ digital ecosystem.

Be safe and good luck on the sprint to the end of this school year – the Year of COVID-19!

[Check out the SDPC Update, May 2020 >>](#)

## UPDATE: Interoperability & Privacy Symposium

After our survey responses, member organization budget and travel restrictions, and upon advice of medical professionals we can now confirm that there will not be a 2020 face to face meeting for the A4L/SDPC Community – we are disappointed and miss the engagement! After chatting with numerous members and community leaders, we will be organizing a set of ‘virtual touch base’ sessions in Q1 2021 for you to drop in, showcase your great work and find out what is the latest and greatest in ‘securing and connecting K12 ecosystems’. We are planning a face to face set of meetings in DC in the summer of 2021 – because we miss you all!

After interviewing many of you who have attended other all day virtual meetings by other organizations, we have decided

to divide up the virtual sessions so they don’t take your entire day and can be accessed at the same time over the course of the meetings.

As stated, virtual dates are yet to be finalised, but the draft agenda currently includes 90-minute sessions (see below). As soon as the details have been finalized and registration is open, we will send out a further notification.

Anyone who has registered (and paid) to attend the 2020 Symposium has a couple of options: 1) Keep your place secured for our next face-to-face meeting TBD (once dates have been announced, if you are not able to attend, we will be able to offer name changes or refunds at the Board’s discretion), or 2) Request a full refund and re-book once the dates have been

announced. Anyone who has registered but not yet paid for registration, will have their invoices cancelled with no charge, but will not be entitled to a complimentary seat at our virtual event.

More information coming soon... but if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [Penny Murray, Community Director](#).

### VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM: DRAFT AGENDA

#### SESSION 1: Interoperability and Privacy Complexities - Setting the Stage

*Data Access is Easier Than Ever – Is That A Good Thing?; The Never-ending “More with Less” Tactical Challenges; State Leadership On A Local Control Issue*

#### SESSION 2: Foundations of Interoperability in the Real World

*Two Years of Homework Setting the Course; From a Data Dictionary Maturing to Reporting Tools; Multiple Standards Addressing Multiple Needs*

#### SESSION 3: Foundations of Student Privacy

*Education Privacy 101; Legislation Intentional and Un-intentional Consequences; Student Privacy – The Vendor Lens*

#### SESSION 4: They are NOT Mutually Exclusive in the Real World

*The MA Data Hub Solution*

#### SESSION 5: Strategies 101 – Current Pain Points & Approaches

*Identification of the Hurdles & Discussion on Varied Approaches to Address Hurdles*  
**Actionable Take-Away Summary**

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#### ‘Advocate’ Sponsors





## In the News

A4L Community delighted to welcome New Zealand and publish the inaugural SIF Specification (NZ) – [click here](#)

Student Data Privacy Consortium announce Vendor Signatory Badge Program – [click here](#)

Student Privacy and COVID-19 – [click here](#)

## A4L Community Functional Group Meeting Schedule

| <u>Day</u>                             | <u>Frequency</u>                                    | <u>Group</u>                          | <u>Staff Liaison</u>                                    |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>INTERNATIONAL</b>                   |                                                     |                                       | <i>meetings are shown/based on US Eastern time zone</i> |
| Tuesday                                | 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues, quarterly                     | <b>Association Board of Directors</b> | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Tuesday                                | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues, monthly                       | <b>Data Privacy</b>                   | Penny Murray                                            |
| Tuesday                                | Every 4 weeks                                       | <b>D3M</b>                            | John Lovell                                             |
| Wednesday                              | Bi-weekly                                           | <b>Infrastructure</b>                 | John Lovell                                             |
| Wednesday                              | Bi-weekly                                           | <b>Open Source Developers Network</b> | John Lovell                                             |
| Tuesday                                | 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues, monthly                       | <b>Policy &amp; Procedures</b>        | John Lovell                                             |
| Thursday                               | Every 4 weeks                                       | <b>International Technical Board</b>  | John Lovell                                             |
| <b>NORTH AMERICA</b>                   |                                                     |                                       | <i>meetings are shown/based on US Eastern time zone</i> |
| Wednesday                              | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Weds, quarterly                     | <b>NA Management Board</b>            | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Wednesday                              | Bi-weekly                                           | <b>NA Technical Board</b>             | John Lovell                                             |
| <b>STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM</b> |                                                     |                                       | <i>meetings are shown/based on US Eastern time zone</i> |
| Monday                                 | 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon, monthly                        | <b>SDPC Vendor Project Team</b>       | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Thursday                               | Bi-Weekly                                           | <b>SDPC Legal Project Team</b>        | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Wednesday                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> Weds, Qtrly (1 <sup>st</sup> month) | <b>SDPC Governance</b>                | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Wednesday                              | 1 <sup>st</sup> Weds, Qtrly (2 <sup>nd</sup> month) | <b>Consortium Updates</b>             | Larry Fruth                                             |
| Wednesday                              | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Weds, Qtrly (2 <sup>nd</sup> month) | <b>SDPC Alliance Updates</b>          | Larry Fruth                                             |

A4L Community Members can find further information on each group on the collaboration area / A4L Community Site here.  
(member log in required)



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Twitter (UK)



Twitter (AU)

## About the Access 4 Learning Community

There is no other global community made up of educational policymakers, marketplace product and service providers and the customers they serve, collaborating daily to address real word learning information and resource issues.

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, previously the SIF Association, is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants who collectively address all aspects of learning information management and access to support learning. The A4L Community is "Powered by SIF" Specifications as its major technical tool to allow for this management and access simply, securely and in a scalable, standard way regardless of the platform hosting those applications. The Access 4 Learning Community has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit <https://www.A4L.org>

## Contact Us

### Larry Fruth II, PhD Executive Director/CEO

Provides direction and leadership toward the achievement of the organization's philosophy, mission, strategy, and its annual goals and objectives. Support includes; Board Administration and Support, Program and Service Delivery, Financial and Human Resource Management, Community Relations and Fundraising.

[lfruth@A4L.org](mailto:lfruth@A4L.org)

### John Lovell Technology Director

Responsible for the support and the extension of functionality for the SIF Test Harness. He is the lead software developer for the Association and supports the on-going use of the Test Harness by developers of agents, adapters, ZISes and middleware.

[jlovell@A4L.org](mailto:jlovell@A4L.org)

### Penny Murray Community Director

Provides membership services, develops communications, supports member working activities including particular SIF implementations, organizational meetings and strategic partnerships to ensure initiative success.

[pmurray@A4L.org](mailto:pmurray@A4L.org)

## NEWSLETTER Issue 47

PO Box 1024, New Albany, Ohio,  
USA

☎ 202-621-0547

✉ [staff@A4L.org](mailto:staff@A4L.org)

[www.A4L.org](http://www.A4L.org)

