



Access 4 Learning Community

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CONNECTING & SECURING EFFECTIVE LEARNING ECOSYSTEMS™

NEWSLETTER

June 2021

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Appreciating the Deserved...

by Larry Fruth II, PhD—Exec Director/ CEO, A4L Community & SDPC

We hope you can take a minute and take a breath – follow local guidance, if that's through a mask or not!

As our Northern Communities move toward warmer weather and our Southern data brethren slip into winter, we ideally all have one thing in common – a light at the end of this pandemic tunnel. “Back to normal” is an often-used term each day but we all know we will have to adjust to a “new normal”.

While the media has seemed to move back to spending time informing us about the lives of sports heroes, Hollywood stars and even government movers and shakers, I have to say I miss the “old normal” of seeing stories about pandemic heroes – indulge me here...

My recently graduated daughter (go Buckeyes!) worked throughout as a neonatal nurse practitioner front line worker while her fiancé is a surgical nurse at a large university hospital. My wife taught 7-12 French and was weekly switching between virtual, face to face and hybrid

learning. The last week of school was the first time she saw her student's faces without masks! I mention these two because I live with them each day and see what it has done to them physically and emotionally. Imagine a first-year teacher starting in 2020!?!?

These deserving media stories are great to hear but often not heard, are all the support structures and people surrounding them. State and school IT departments, marketplace partners, family members, and numerous others are also part of the “deserving”. While the pandemic impacts will be measured for years to come – we made it through!

As a continuously growing Community we have a lot to tell the world about as well. We hope that we have captured some of it in this newsletter edition.

YOU have been part of that support structure for getting us through and you too are deserving... and we appreciate you!

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Student Data Privacy Consortium

Global Community News



A4L Community announce SIF Fellow Award

NEWS: A4L Community announce SIF Fellow Award

Washington, DC, 28 April 2021 —The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to announce that Linda Marshall has been officially awarded the title of SIF Fellow.

She becomes only the second Fellow in the 25-year history of the A4L Community and is awarded this honor in recognition of her diligent and passionate contribution spanning 14 years to the development and adoption of interoperability standards, and in particular the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF). This work has contributed to the development of safe and effective learning infrastructure in schools in Australia and globally, and includes:

- A preliminary investigation identifying 237 core data elements mapped to the US SIF Data Model, supporting the feasibility of SIF as

an approach to systems interoperability for AU schools.

- The principal role in drafting a preliminary SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) that enabled the delivery of pilot projects used to build a business case for the national adoption of SIF.
- Managing the release of the SIF Specification (AU) 1.0. Following this, Ministers of Education established the National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP) promoting SIF as the preferred data exchange model across the Australian School Education Sector.
- Leadership in the release of 14 updates to SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) in response to evolving needs of Australian school education sector.

- Contributing to the advancement of the SIF Specification internationally through co-Chairing the A4L International Technical Board and influential involvement over many years in the Data Modelling, Mapping & Migration (D3M), Data Privacy, Infrastructure and the Open Source & SpecGen Project Teams.
- Supporting international work around a Global Data Dictionary and maturation of SIF Global Infrastructure.

For more than a decade, Linda has worked assiduously with education agencies and product suppliers in Australia as well as technical and governance bodies of the international Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community (previously the SIF Association), to ensure that the Specification is a well maintained, responsive and progressive interoperability standard that serves the ballooning demand from educators, parents and policy makers for access to high quality education data.

"We will miss Linda as she takes a well-earned break and look forward to her future contributions to the A4L Community where she is highly valued and respected."

Dave Burns,
Chair, A4L AU Management Board



Community Survey coming soon!

Back in March 2021, the North America Management Board approved the appointment of an external design & marketing Agency to help the Community 'create a marketing and communications plan promoting the current A4L/SDPC brands within the education software marketplace' on a short-term contract.

The Agency have conducted initial interviews with NA Boards members and are in the final stages of designing a

Community Survey which covers multiple areas including: membership satisfaction; website functionality and user-friendliness; communications; your engagement; and key priorities.

However you participate in the Community, we would strongly encourage you to respond and provide your thoughts at this critical stage, to ensure that we remain focussed on our Community and marketplace needs.

Look out for an invitation coming soon!



Welcome new members!

A4L Community Member



Class Solver

A4L & SDPC Community Members



Glenview Community Consolidated School District, IL



Paper



Tri-County Special Education, IL

SDPC Community Members



Approve iT



DrivingSchoolSoftware.com



Savvas Learning Co.

Come Join Us!

FIND OUT MORE ON PAGE 11 >>>

National pK20 Student Data Privacy Symposium

NOVEMBER 2-3, 2021
TAMPA, FL

Introducing Data Standards United – A Global Standards Collaborative

NEWS: Introducing Data Standards United - A Global Standards Collaborative

Washington, DC, 9 June, 2021 --- A new collaborative Data Standards United (DSU) has recently formed, led by some of the most prominent open data standards communities. With a vision of “collaboration and alignment of standards to support the global education and workforce digital ecosystem”. DSU is not a new organization, but a voluntary collaborative of some of the world’s most widely used data standards from education to workplace, engineering to health professions, all for lifelong learning.

“With data standards in use across many sectors and markets, coordinating and aligning them has been needed especially with the explosion of them in the past 20 years”, states Larry Fruth II, PhD, A4L’s Executive Director/CEO and DSU Chair. “DSU is focused on sharing success and promoting partnerships between these groups to support seamless, lifelong learning, provide a forum for emerging technologies, promote existing standards-based solutions and ideally foster an understanding of each community’s role across education, employment and training sectors.”

Early DSU “Signatory Members”, those communities openly developing consensus standards, include:

- Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community;
- Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI);
- Edspex;
- HR Open Standards Consortium;
- IMS Global Learning Consortium;

- MedBiquitous;
- Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC).

DSU “Affiliate Members”, organizations impacted by the development and usage of openly developed data standards and much needed in this marketplace collaborative, include:

- Common Education Data Standards (CEDS);
- Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) Initiative;
- Credential Engine;
- IEEE’s Learning Technology Standards Committee (LTSC).

Together, DSU establishes common ground mechanisms to coordinate and align disparate global data standards while respecting each organization’s independence across systems, platforms, networks, sectors, and industries.

“The current paradigm of many data standards being developed and supported independently from one another is an ongoing challenge for marketplace providers and end users. With a learner-centric focus and attention to user communities, the DSU collaborative looks to improve and simplify digital interoperability for all stakeholders across lifelong learning and employment.” states Michael D. Sessa, PESC President & CEO. “As an example of the benefits of DSU, all communities would benefit with a more coordinated, informed tactical approach to JSON and JSON-LD.”



To access the Data Standards United Charter and Signatory Member information, please visit: <https://datastandardsunited.org>

To view the overview slide deck, please [click here >>](#)

News from the Australian Community



SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.4.8 published

The A4L AU Community is pleased to announce that the [SIF Data Model Specification \(Australia\) 3.4.8](#) is now available!

The SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.4.8 includes:

- Australian Government - DESE Department of Education, Skills and Employment updates to support the collection of data from the Non-Government school sector
- Support for student travel and demographic updates (deceased flag)
- StudentSchoolEnrolment updates to reflect ongoing vs year by year enrolments (enrolments now supported to span many years)
- Additional gender codes

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



Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S)

The ST4S initiative is a standardised approach to evaluating digital products and services used by schools across Australia. The assessment consists of a number of criteria across the domains of security, privacy, safety and interoperability with assessment results shared across all sectors in Australia.

We are pleased to announce that the first stage of the Safer Technologies 4

Schools (ST4S) website is now live. The website can be found at st4s.edu.au

The website contains a link to the current ST4S vendor guide with all of the assessment criteria, possible and preferred responses (minimum standards) and links to relevant Australian standards.

Over the coming months the website

will continue to develop and evolve, including more information about the initiative and information for vendors and schools.

For more information about the ST4S initiative, please contact [NSIP](#).

News from the North American Community



The A4L Community NA announce 2021 Leadership

NEWS: North American A4L community announce 2021 Leadership

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community in North America is proud to announce the North American Management and Technical Boards for 2021. The Management Board brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in education, data management, technology and business acumen. The Board will oversee management of the SIF Specification and guide development of the A4L Community in North America as well as contribute to the development of strategies for the global Community.

Community members elected to serve on the 2021-2022 North American (NA) Management Board are:

- Jennifer Downey, Infinite Campus
- Jessica Kallin, Utah State Board of Education
- Jim McGlynn, Public Consulting Group
- Jay Pennington, Iowa Department of Education

These join fellow A4L Community members who will serve the second of their 2-year term on the NA Manage-

ment Board:

- Michelle Elia, CPSI Ltd
- Allen Miedema, Northshore School District
- Ben Silberglitt, CedarLabs

In addition, the Community is delighted to welcome back Ross Santy, NCES as the US Department of Education Liaison, and Steve Smith, CIO Cambridge Public Schools MA as a representative of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) Management Board.

Also held were elections for the North American Technical Board, who provide the technical oversight for the SIF Specifications (North America). The elected 2021 North American Technical Board At-Large seats were:

- Alex Jackl, Bardic Systems
- Eric Levy, Cambridge Public Schools
- Roger Petersen, Iowa Department of Education

"I am delighted to formally acknowledge this influential group of educational marketplace leaders who are actively involved in supporting education data management, movement and utilization, to the North American Management Board for this coming term", states Larry L Fruth II, PhD., Executive Director/CEO, A4L Community. "These Board members are prominent in developing our collective vision in 'Connecting and Securing an Effective Learning Ecosystems'™ across the country and the entire Community."



A4L Community (NA) Town Hall Meeting: Overview

Thank you to everyone who attended the A4L Community (North America) Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, May 4, 2021.

Special thanks go to the NA Management & Technical Board Leads, as well as the SDPC Management Board Leads, as they presented updates of Commu-

nity activities over the past year plus the focus on priorities for 12-18 months ahead. Staff also gave a brief update on operational and community activities moving forward.

The webinar recording and the presentation slides are available from the [Presentation Archive](#).



The latest Unity release strengthens Personal Privacy confirming its status as the only Technical Blueprint Addressing both Privacy and Interoperability

NEWS: The latest Unity Specification release strengthens Personal Privacy

Washington, DC, 4 May 2021 --- The Access 4 Learning® (A4L) Community is proud to announce the latest release of the new Unity Specification which provides standardization of learning data, ranging from everything from classroom rostering to federal data reporting, while addressing privacy issues throughout the education data continuum.

“Once again, the Community needs to be commended on their industrious work in producing this Unity Specification release in such a hectic and unprecedented time”, states Larry L Fruth II, PhD A4L’s Executive Director/CEO. “The Community has worked tirelessly to meet the increasing needs of the marketplace, incorporating and strengthening essential requirements such as privacy, remote online learning, instructional delivery mode and more, so that educational institutions can ensure they are all “connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems™”.

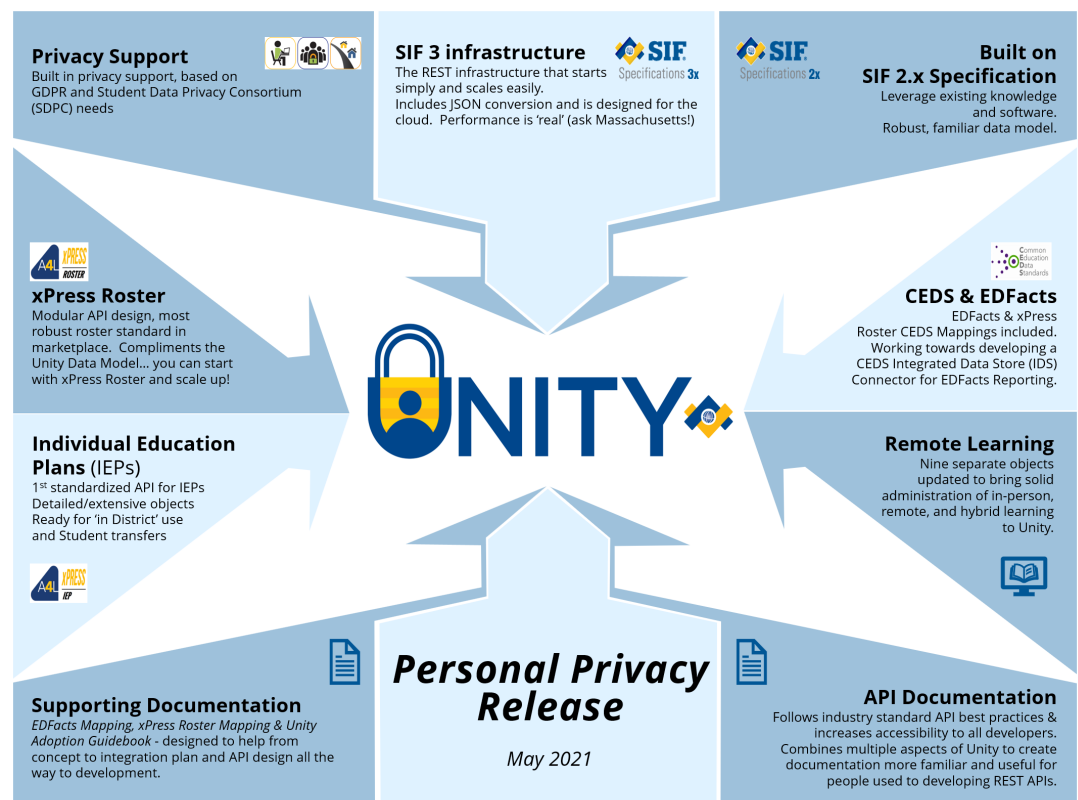
The release updates and provides resources support for: Online Learning Profile; Instructional Delivery Mode; Positive Attendance & Expectations Met; OpenAPI, JSON Schema, and API Documentation; JSON Examples & Conversion Tools; and a final key area, giving the release its name, is the inclusion of Personal Privacy Obligations Document (P-POD). The P-POD provides new objects to sup-

port the transfer of data regarding vendors, their products/services, assessments, and results of assessments. These assessment types could be security, privacy or interoperability related and the approach will help provide an on the wire capability to support emerging vendor catalogues, assessments of products and vendor onboarding processes. The P-POD seeks to create a place to communicate personal requirements around an individual learner.

The Unity Specification was built by our volunteer members developed using open, non-proprietary and transparent processes. It contains the most comprehensive K12 data model and modern, internationally used transport

technologies to securely move the data to provide it to the right person at the right time in the right way under local data privacy control per Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) guidance. The ‘Unity’ infrastructure has increased performance and security on the wire, ease of usage, and scales for the widest educational focused interoperability by any technical standard - with or without the need for middleware!

To find out more about the ‘Unity’ Specification, please go to: <https://www.A4L.org/page/Unity>



What A Review: The latest Unity release improves quality & incorporates new features!

In our last [newsletter](#) we highlighted the significant changes coming to Unity. In a time of reduced budgets and reduced volunteer time, could such momentous changes get a proper review? Between staff employing different review methods and dedicated volunteers, we did not just add features, we improved quality.

OpenAPI required a reorganization of much of the data model's input files, all with the intention of not changing the resulting structure of the data. While the reorganization was the work, knowing we didn't change anything seemed the more daunting of the two tasks. Fortunately, staff was able to produce full example structures of both and automatically filter the results to just the differences and double check that only intentional changes made the cut. We are happy to report, we corrected all the unexpected changes well before the release.

Making JSON a true first-class citizen in our specifications has been a multi-year international effort and the result of all this work is included in the [latest release of Unity](#). The search for clean and consistent JSON has led us to help create and adopt [PESC Compliant JSON](#) as our renewed JSON strategy. How could we be reasonably assured that the converted examples (generated from the provided conversion tools) are correct? As it turns out, if we



missed a detail, we tended to get examples that are invalid JSON. So, by simply validating that those JSON examples are in-fact JSON, we both caught specific errors and validated our overall process.

These comprehensive validation methods allowed the community to focus on the intentional changes to the data model. They span: Online Learning, Instructional Delivery, Attendance, and Personal Privacy. Fortunately, our tradition of many eyes greatly enhanced these areas and even improved additional parts.

Clearly there has never been a better time to dive into [Unity](#).

Find out more!

Connecting & Securing Effective Learning Ecosystems™ is important to all of us. Fortunately, doing so just got a lot easier with the latest release of the [Unity Specification](#).

We are already hearing great feedback from other players in the marketplace, and we would love the opportunity to chat with YOU (and your colleagues) to add your input to the mix. We pledge to be as brief as possible and be as willing to listen as we are to share.

We currently have selected 30 minute blocks available from June 14, 2021 between Noon and 5 PM Eastern. If you would like to find out more, please email [John Lovell](#), Technology Director to book your place!

**I'd like to find out more,
book my slot!**

Leadership Board Alignment



A new Sub-Committee has formed made up of leaders from the NA Management Board and the NA Technical Board labelled "MB-TB Alignment Sub-Committee". This group is being convened to ensure that the technical developments of the Community match the marketplace demands being heard.

The group began discussions on the possible focused areas for the next version of Unity including addressing Civil Rights Data Collections (CRDC), SIS-LMS-Gradebook pass back, continued CEDS alignment, Data Hub support, and Privacy Object Document generation.

News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium



SDPC Vendor Showcase: BSD Education

Address Online Student Privacy Through Digital Skills Education

Presented by: BSD Education
A member of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC)

Student Data Privacy Consortium

REGISTER

Address Online Student Privacy Through Digital Skills Education

June 17, 2021 at 2pm ET

The shift to remote learning during the pandemic has only exacerbated existing issues with student privacy online, leaving many vulnerable to the collection and potential use of students' personal information. BSD Education is working to equip students with the knowledge and power to identify potential pitfalls and avoid these increasing privacy concerns for educators. BSD's Director of Professional Development Mike Dixon during this webinar will outline the importance of addressing online student privacy and how BSD is empowering teachers to educate students of these issues so they remain safe while shifting to a more online-centric learning environment.

If you are a Vendor member of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) and are interested in co-hosting a webinar during 2021, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director for more information.

ADVANCE NOTICE: SDPC Elections coming soon!

The Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) has continued to have phenomenal leadership over the past year. The leadership, guidance and overall dedication to the Consortium prove critical to our collective successes... and it is hard to believe that it is nearly time for elections again! Further information will be published in the next month or so, with the conclusion of the Elections being in the fall, but we wanted to give you a heads up!

The SDPC Management Board is elected for two-year terms. This year there will be three (3) seats open for

the SDPC Management Board. To be eligible to run for the SDPC Management Board, the individuals shall be at least eighteen (18) years old and be A4L Community and/or Student Data Privacy Consortium Voting Participants or employed by or representing an A4L Community/SDPC Voting Participant and duly authorized to represent that A4L Community/SDPC Voting Participant, but need not be residents of the District of Columbia. An A4L Community/SDPC Voting Participant Member institution (including associated subsidiaries of an A4L Community Voting Participant) may have at most one representative

on the SDPC Management Board at one time.

Look out for more information coming your way soon!



Project Team Updates

Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): The RFQ for a possible redesign of the Resource Registry is out containing all the “asks” gathered from members over the past two months. While this is progress some additional functionality and technical tweaks to the Registry are being made including resource support from the Utah State Board of Education.

The R3 group wants to thank the Utah Board of Education for their continued resource support for SDPC Resource Registry changes. Their commitment to the success of SDPC has been a great model for all Alliances!

Vendor: The Project Team addresses various topics relating to vendors concerns and interest in protecting student privacy. McGraw-Hill led a productive last call and we have USED’s PTAC leaders coming to the July call to answer questions from marketplace providers.

NDPA Policy, Procedure and Usage: The Project Team meets every other week addressing various concerns with

NDPA usage, issues with particular vendor requests in DPAs and gathering resources and comments for possible next version of NDPA (no timeline yet). One change is that these meetings have been so productive they also now will be the convening of the **Alliance Leadership** calls.

Research DPA: The Project Team has reviewed the Research DPA in use in UT and edits are being made to ensure alignment with CEDS’s READS Project looking at all steps in researcher-school activities.

Legal: The Project Team is on “hold” until the next draft of the NDPA (no timeline yet) is up for development and discussion.

Legislative: The Project Team has been placed in “Inactive” state after the first deliverable completed and staff changes within Future of Privacy Forum, who had led the group.



Out and About

Delighted to confirm that we are finally getting ‘Out and About’ again....! We will be at the following conference(s), if you are attending, please make sure you drop by and say hello!

FAEDS 2021: Securing Data in a Hybrid Educational Environment

September 19-21, 2021

Getting Privacy to Work For You—the FL SDPC Alliance Tools for your District. All Florida schools are members of the global Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) – are you using the tools and community that can ease your privacy headaches and save you time? This session will show you how to get started like over 9,000 other school districts have in managing their privacy agreements with vendors and getting apps safely and securely into YOUR learning ecosystem. Come see how you can, like Escambia County Schools, incorporate the National Resource Registry into your normal workflow as part of your software review processes. Interested in saving time, money and protecting student data? This session is for you!

Presenters: Tom Ingram, Director of IT, Escambia County School District, FL
Larry Fruth II PhD, CEO/Exec Director, A4L Community/SDPC

More information, [click here >>](#)

Come Join us!



National pK20 Student Data Privacy Symposium

NOVEMBER 2-3, 2021

TAMPA, FLORIDA

Tampa Airport Marriott
Tampa International Airport,
4200 George J. Bean Pkwy,
Tampa, Florida 33607

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Find out more >>

Come and join the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) and Presenting Partners - CCSO, EdSPEX, FPF, PESC, USED's PTAC, and AU's NSIP - as we host a 2-day event supporting schools/districts, state agencies, universities and vendors as they address their various student data privacy obligations ranging from issues identification, stakeholder awareness building, privacy plan information, implementation or evaluation.

A mixture of submitted privacy sessions and expert talks will engage all stakeholders across the student privacy ecosystem. We encourage you to submit a presentation proposal on the student privacy work by you and your organization across the pK20 spectrum. We strongly encourage vendor-end user partner submissions across 4 tracks: schools/districts, state agencies, higher education and vendors.

ATTENDEE PROFILES:

Registrants and Presenting Partners made up of:

- ◆ **K12:** CIO, Curriculum Directors, Administrators & Educators;
- ◆ **SEAs:** Agency Administrators, Data Collection Coordinators, Privacy Officers;
- ◆ **HE:** CIO, Administrators, Privacy Officers;
- ◆ **Marketplace Providers:** CEO, Marketing Lead, Privacy Leads, Developers.

Registration closes: September 24, 2021

Session Submission closes: July 7, 2021

Thank you to our Sponsor:



Community Meetings Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Staff Liaison</u>
INTERNATIONAL			
			<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>
Tuesday	TBD	Association Board of Directors	Larry Fruth
Tuesday	2 nd Tues, monthly	Data Privacy	Penny Murray
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	D3M	John Lovell
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	Policy & Procedures	John Lovell
Wednesday	Bi-weekly	Infrastructure	John Lovell
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Open Source Developers Network	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 4 weeks	International Technical Board	John Lovell
NORTH AMERICA			
			<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>
Monday	Bi-weekly	State Requests	John Lovell
Tuesday	1 st & 3 rd Tues, monthly	Unity Adoption	John Lovell
Wednesday	4 th Weds, monthly	NA Management Board	Larry Fruth
Thursday	2 nd & 4 th Thurs, monthly	NA Technical Board	John Lovell
STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM			
			<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>
Tuesday	3 rd Tues, monthly	Research Data Sharing Agreement	Larry Fruth
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team	Larry Fruth
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	SDPC Management Board	Larry Fruth
Wednesday	1 st Weds, Qtrly (2 nd month)	Consortium Updates	Larry Fruth
Wednesday	2 nd Weds, Qtrly (2 nd month)	Alliance Leadership	Larry Fruth
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Alliance Leadership (NDPA Policy, Procedures & Usage)	Larry Fruth
Thursday	1 st Thurs, Qtrly (1 st month)	Vendor Project Team	Larry Fruth

Connect with us!

Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community



Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC)



About the Access 4 Learning Community

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, and its special interest group the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants. The Community is "Powered by SIF" as its major technical tool to help manage learning data simply, securely and in a scalable, standard way regardless of platform. The SDPC is designed to address the day-to-day, real-world multi-faceted issues faced when protecting learner information by setting common expectations between market providers and end users. The A4L Community has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort **"connect and secure effective learning ecosystems"** to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit <https://www.A4L.org> and <https://privacy.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

John Lovell
Technology Director

Technical liaison and resource for all things A4L, the Technology Director encompasses areas from IT to ensuring collaboration on local and international efforts. Lead software developer for the Community, supporting the ongoing use of the Test Harness by developers to assure quality.

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.

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NEWSLETTER

Issue 51

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