

Access⁴

December 2022

Much to celebrate as we close out the year...

As we close out the 2022 calendar year we have much to celebrate as a Community...

- Our membership is growing faster than it has in many years, the unified approach of "Connecting and Securing Effective Learning EcosystemsTM" is resonating with many around the world;
- We held our first annual "Interoperability & Privacy Symposium";
- Version 2 of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) is well on its way to completion; and

- The work of the Global Education Security Standard (GESS) Project Team is being applauded across the globe.

All of us at A4L are excited about the momentum of the organization and the positive impacts we are all having on the education ecosystem.

We hope that you all take time this holiday season to reflect on our joint accomplishments and join us all in celebrating our work.

We all look forward to an even more productive year in 2023!



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Connecting and **securing** effective learning ecosystems.

Welcome new members!



Billings Catholic Schools, MT



Building 21



CK-12 Foundation



*Fort Thomas Independent
Schools, KY*



*Jefferson County Public
Schools, KY*



*Oklahoma Society of Technology
in Education (OKSTE)*

awaiting
logo

St. Louis Federal Reserve



TalkingPoints

Holiday Season Office Closures

To ensure our Staff get time to spend with their families, the following office closures will be in operation:

North America: The A4L Offices will be closed on Dec 23-26 and Dec 29-Jan 2, with reduced staff availability on Dec 27-28.

United Kingdom: The A4L Office will be closed from Dec 23—Jan 2 (inclusive).

Australia: The A4L Office will be closed from Dec 23—Jan 8 (inclusive).

Scheduled Maintenance

Please be aware of the following scheduled maintenance that will be taking place over the coming weeks:

SDPC Resource Registry: The SDPC Resource Registry maintenance will take place from 8pm ET on Friday, December 16 until COB on Sunday, December 18, 2022.

SIF Test Harness: The SIF Test Harness maintenance will continue as previously planned, and Community members may experience significant outages between Friday, December 16 - Monday, January 2, 2023.

We are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause and advise you to plan your work accordingly.

Global Community News

International Cooperation quietly ties the A4L Community together

by John Lovell, Technology Director, A4L Community

As I reflect on the last year, I am struck by the fact that nothing has brought our Community together like the Privacy Obligation Document (POD).

This innocuous object officially lives amongst the standardized infrastructure's utility services which have proven otherwise easy to ignore. Yet this object, which grew out of the Data Model, Migration & Mapping Project Team's (D3M's) global efforts, keeps being worked on around the world. Pretty amazing considering those global data model efforts we have tried and tried over the years never came to fruition! So, I have had to accept its duality, both tucked away in

a forgotten corner of the [SIF Infrastructure Specification](#) and seemingly touching every Community meeting I go to.

Why are we discussing the POD from Infrastructure calls to SDPC Registry meetings?

Why are we piloting the POD with a key vendor while refining it with the CEDS Community?

The bottom line is we all join forces around privacy! At the same time, privacy is a huge topic, and a POD brings it all together. It is designed to communicate contracts, it is meant to

hold plain language, it is designed to reference related technical requirements, and it endeavors to make related technical controls machine readable. It is huge, complex, imperfect, and it is beautiful how we all rally around the challenge of privacy. If it is not too American of me, let me leave you with the United States original motto "E Pluribus Unum" – Out of Many, One.

For front row seats to watch the POD grow, contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director about membership or me—[John W. Lovell](#), Technology Director—for help identifying how you can get involved.

A New Year's Resolution



The most vibrant part of the A4L Community is its volunteers! These unsung heroes set aside their work and their deadlines to tackle everything from contracts to encryption protocols.

As we head into the holidays, the staff at A4L wants each volunteer to know that they are appreciated and thank every member organization for their support. **We couldn't do this without you!**

Those of you looking to become more involved in your Community in 2023 you need look no further!

We have: project teams that are open to all member representatives, a process for chartering new project teams, and many leadership opportunities! Some of those leadership opportunities you can step right into and others you can seek through election.

Don't fret over what New Year's resolution to make. **Join us!**

Let the Project Team Updates on [page 5](#) be your guide, then reach out to [staff](#) and we will help you narrow it down.

New Support Portal available!

We are pleased to announce that we have recently upgraded the way you can reach out to us directly... through our FreshDesk Support Portal!

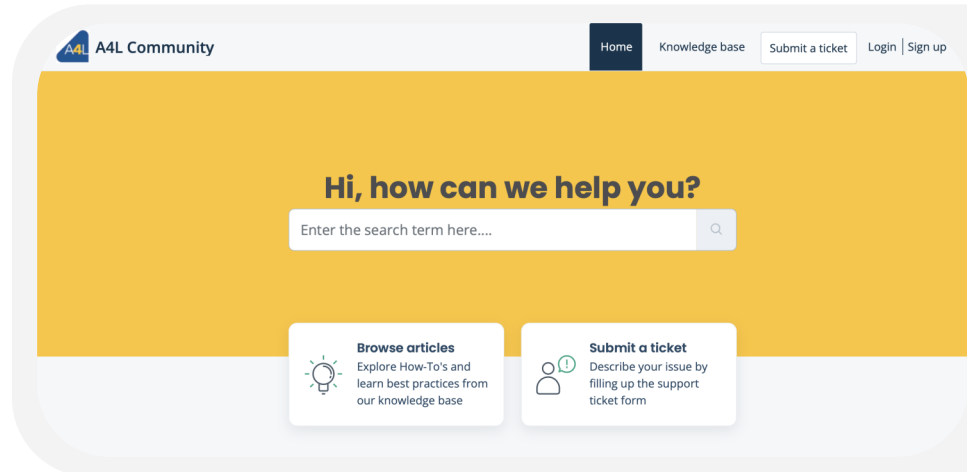
Staff members are on hand to answer your queries—whether they be general, membership, technical, SDPC issues or enhancements requests—and you can submit all your questions simply through the one channel.

You may have visited one of our websites recently, and noticed a 'Contact Us' button in the bottom right-hand corner... this is the most direct route.

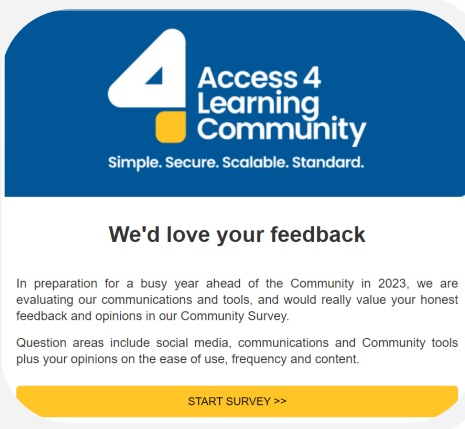
 **Contact Us**

Alternatively, you can go to the portal - A4L.freshdesk.com—and start with the knowledgebase articles... If they don't answer your questions, just click

on 'Submit a Ticket' in the top right-hand corner and ask your question!



Community Survey 2022



We recently sent out an email to all Community Members, asking them to participate in our Community Survey 2022.

In preparation for a busy year ahead of the Community in 2023, we are evaluating our communications and tools, and would really value your honest feedback and opinions in our Community Survey.

Question areas include social media,

communications and Community tools plus your opinions on the ease of use, frequency and content. We recognize how busy this time of year can be, but we would really appreciate 5 minutes of your time to help us better serve you and bring additional value to your membership!

If you did not receive the email, please contact Penny Murray, Community Director for the survey link.

SAVE THE DATES!

We are finalizing our plans for the A4L Community 2023 Annual Meeting.

Please hold **May 17-19, 2023** in your calendars for a meeting in CHICAGO, IL. Further information will be published as soon as the final details have been confirmed.



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

A4L.org | data.A4L.org | privacy.A4L.org

Community Project Team Updates

GLOBAL

International Technical Board (ITB):

The ITB is aware that in order to facilitate broader adoption of the standardized infrastructure, John Lovell, Technology Director, may need to take a more active role in helping to determine the wisdom of proposed changes to the SIF Infrastructure. Particularly when it comes to common use of REST and first-class support of JSON-LD. More to come...

Infrastructure: The infrastructure Project Team has collected three distinct use cases necessitating the extension of our error structure. A formal proposal is being drafted that should address each through one or more methods. Additionally, the Infrastructure Project Team is working to facilitate out-of-band POD acknowledgement without necessitating a change to the specification itself.

Data Model, Mapping & Migration (D3M): The D3M is monitoring the privacy work with CEDS around the POD and has committed to take up the refined definitions coming out of that communities' process.

A4L Data Privacy: While the Data Privacy Project Team is always working to bridge the upfront technical and contract work with the ability to audit what is on the ground, they have taken an active role in identifying fields of interest to optionally include in the out-of-band acknowledgment of PODs through the auditor's lens.

Open Source Developers Network (OSDN): The OSDN has been focusing its work efforts of late around the inclusion of all HTTP Headers in our Open-API & ReDoc documentation and are about to help further the correct representation of PESC JSON for our specifications around the world.

resentation of PESC JSON for our specifications around the world.

AUSTRALIA

AU Management Board (AUMB/SIFAAMB): The AU Management Board are discussing updates on AU activities.

AU Technical Board (AUTB/DSWG): The AU Technical Board recently met to discuss proposed updates to SIF Implementation Specification (AU).

NORTH AMERICA

North American (NA) Management Board (NAMB): The current focus for the NA Board is on strategic direction setting for the continued development and delivery of a marketing plan. This includes organizational mission/vision statements and the development of a proposal that will streamline and simplify member rates and value adds.

North American (NA) Technical Board (NATB): At their last meeting the NATB reflected on the strength that has been built up over the last year with SIF Unity, the standardized infrastructure, and CEDS alignment. They project even greater opportunities in 2023.

Unity Adoption: The Unity Adoption team has wrapped up their supplemental documentation and assistance in marketing our latest 100% EDFacts mapping and is turning its sights to highlighting the new Grade Pass Back features in the latest release of SIF Unity.

CEDS Alignment: The CEDS Alignment team is currently keeping an eye

on the next cycle of EDFacts and the upcoming release of CEDS v11.

State Requests: The state requests team is currently accepting topics to further the adoption of SIF Unity. To contribute please contact Technology Director, [John W. Lovell](#).

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY CONSORTIUM

SDPC Management Board: This group is addressing ongoing conversations around Alliance support and greater marketplace engagement including potential partner projects.

SDPC Alliance Leadership: Group members have submitted their proposed changes for the NDPA v2 review and are focusing on redline discussions and Alliance needs.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: See [page 11](#) for update.

NDPA Policy, Procedures & Usage (PPU): The NDPA PPU group is currently on hold while changes/revisions are proposed for the NDPA v2.

Legislative Activity & Research Data Sharing Agreement: These groups are currently placed on 'pause'.

Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): This group continues to review SDPC Resource Registry performance and enhancement issues.

SDPC Vendor: Group members have submitted their proposed changes for the NDPA v2 and are back on their quarterly meeting schedule.

News from the Australian Community

NSIP A4L AU Community Day: Overview

NSIP's A4L AU Community Day was held on 30 November and featured a diverse range of speakers representing a range of organisations and initiatives including the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), the EdSafe AI Alliance, Safer Technologies for Schools (ST4S), Education Services Australia (ESA) and the Student Data Transfer Exchange.

Insights were gained on the various ways education data can be curated and analysed and State and Territory authorities shared news regarding upcoming integration projects using the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) and global SIF infrastructure.

In addition to discussions regarding the challenges faced by education organisations collecting and making meaning from data (both for business purposes but also given the very real security and privacy threats), the NSIP team announced the formation of two new groups to assist in these challenges in 2023: a new supplier reference group for ST4S (focussing on security and privacy issues) and a new engagement group that will incorporate aspects of the existing SIFAAMB (AU Management Board).

Stakeholders interested in either of these groups are advised to [contact NSIP](#) to register their interest.



SIF Specification (AU) published enabling transfer of student information across state boundaries

PRESS RELEASE: Australian A4L Community publish SIF Data Model Specification enabling transfer of student information across state boundaries

Washington, DC, 14 December 2022--- The National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP) on behalf of the Australian A4L Community is proud to publish the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.5 to the marketplace. This represents the first major release of the Australian SIF Data Model Specification since October 2016.

Breaking changes in the Specification have been minimized to avoid disruption, and involve:

- Removal of objects no longer in use in the Australian community

(ResourceUsage, SystemRole);

- Treating fixed decimal fields as text rather than numerals, to avoid floating point issues under JSON (XML is unaffected);
- Rationalizing and trimming down the SIF_Metadata container, removing a large number of unused complex elements.

The major addition to this version of the Specification has been a Student-DataTransferNote object, to be used to enable transfer of student information

across state boundaries in the new national Student Data Transfer Exchange, which uses the standardized global SIF infrastructure as its transport. Several minor additions have also been made at the request of the Queensland and Victorian education departments.

The SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.5 is available from the A4L website [here](#).

To find out more about the global SIF Infrastructure Specification, please [click here](#).

News from the North American Community

The A4L North American Community Releases Unity Specification Supporting Grading, CEDS Implementation And State EDFacts Reporting

PRESS RELEASE: The A4L North American Community Releases Unity Specification Supporting Grading, CEDS Implementation And State EDFacts Reporting

Washington, DC, 27 October 2022— The Access 4 Learning® (A4L) Community is proud to announce the latest release of the Unity Specification which has enhanced and optimized many features including Grade Passback, standards-based grading, and EDFacts reporting.

The A4L Community undertook two different initiatives to enhance Grade Passback within the latest release of the Unity Specification. The first was updating the data model to support both partial and missing scores. These required two straight forward changes to the GradingAssignmentScore object, one of which is already aligned to CEDS Standards. The second initiative was to simplify choreographies by supporting asynchronous requests all the way through the recently released standardized global SIF Infrastructure. This enables a meaningful return path for the resulting acceptance of scores.

In the past, supporting Standards Based Grading in a SIF integration required the addition of the LearningStandardAssociation object to make the fundamental linkages between scores and standards. To simplify this, the Community added the capability of GradingAssignment and GradingAssignmentScore objects to reference their related LearningStand-

ardItems or LearningStandardDocuments directly in this release.

To ensure that the Community fulfils its promise to align with CEDS Standards, Community members from Wyoming Department of Education helped identify fifteen gaps on our previous EDFacts mapping and Generate's (a CEDS tool for federal reporting) staging tables. All of these are included (added or aligned) in this release in an updated mapping document.

To find out more about the SIF Data Model Specification (North America) 4.3 – also known as the Unity Specification – please visit: <https://data.a4l.org/sif-specifications-north-america/>

"The Unity Specification's 100% alignment with Generate's K12 requirements makes EDFacts reporting much easier for our office. The data is always ready at hand thanks to our automated reporting infrastructure and the Unity data model"

John Paul,
Wyoming Department of Education



Interested in getting more involved in the Community?

The NA Community Elections Committee needs YOU!

We are starting our planning for the 2023 North American A4L Community Elections.

A formal announcement will be made in February 2023 outlining key dates and the Policy & Procedures for the

elections process, but we would like to open the door to any Community Member interested in serving on the Elections Committee. If you are interested, please contact [Penny Murray](#) by **Thursday, January 5, 2023.**

We aim to keep the process as simple as possible... there are usually three (3) meetings for Elections Committee members—once per month in January, February & March.

- JAN meeting: Review Policy & Procedures
- FEB meeting: Election Committee convenes to confirm the ballot
- MAR meeting: Elections Committee convenes to confirm the results.

Unfortunately, if you are considering putting yourself forward in the coming election cycle, you would not be able to participate in the Elections Committee.

Everyone else is free to apply—email [Penny Murray](#), Community Director to get involved!!



UPDATE: EDFacts Reporting

This article should be the last time you hear about EDFacts from us for a while. We have already shared our press release, flyer, and the mapping itself. We have covered the high level and the low, so here is the story that lives in between...

We set out to not only update our existing mapping document, but completely cover this mandatory federal reporting for all states through SIF Unity. It all started when the state of

Wyoming discovered fifteen gaps between our mapping and Generate's (a CEDS tool for federal reporting) staging tables. We couldn't let that stand, so we set out to not only update the mapping, but with a commitment to judiciously make needed changes to Unity as well. This wound up impacting ten different objects and furthering our alignment to CEDS, all while maintaining backwards compatibility. Once the work was done the NATB contrib-

uted great scrutiny, refining the work further before it was released. The 100% scope of the project took some representatives by surprise, with Member Emeritus TQ White II exclaiming, "This is the best thing to happen to the data model in years!"

If you are involved in EDFacts reporting, checkout the links on the following page...

CEDS JSON On The Wire: SIF Unity and EDFacts

FACT SHEET: CEDS JSON On The Wire: SIF Unity and EDFacts

CEDS and SIF Unity

For over twelve years the A4L Community has developed the SIF Specification in parallel with the Common Education Data Standard (CEDS). Close alignment between these two data standards has always been a natural result. Today the A4L Community announces an even closer alignment with real-world impact for state agencies.

CEDS On The Wire

"SIF Unity's 100% alignment with Generate's K12 requirements makes ED-Facts reporting much easier for our office. The data is always ready at hand thanks to our automated reporting infrastructure and the Unity data model."

John Paul, WY Department of Education

CEDS EDFacts JSON over REST: 100%



The newest release of the SIF Specification Data Model (North America) 4.3 - also known as Unity - has an element-to-element mapping to CEDS (v9 & v10) that covers every single one of the 133 elements needed to populate the EDFacts Generate tool. The combination of SIF Unity's CEDS mapping and JSON payloads with the powerful SIF infrastructure make "CEDS JSON solutions over REST" a reality.

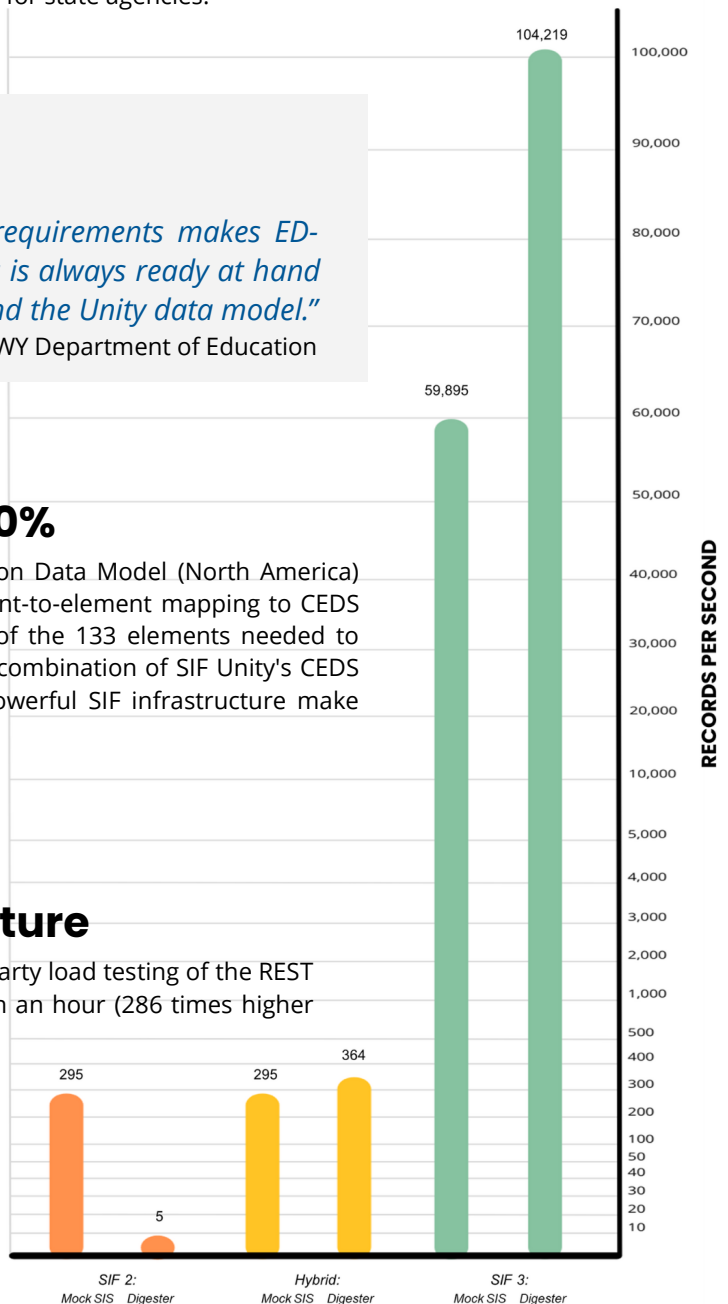
THE High Performance Infrastructure

Performance is critical for state and federal reporting. In third party load testing of the REST-based SIF Infrastructure, over 200 million records were sent in an hour (286 times higher throughput than older infrastructure types).

Find out more:

Data Management Performance Testing:
<https://bit.ly/A4LEdDataTesting>

Infrastructure Specification:
<https://bit.ly/A4LSIFSpecInfra>



News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

SDPC 2022 Elections: Results

Washington, DC, 5 October 2022— The Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), a Special Interest Group of the non-profit Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, is proud to announce the Management Board for 2022-2023.

The SDPC Management Board oversees strategic and day-to-day activities of this still growing Community consisting of end users and marketplace provider stakeholders. These leaders approve projects and tools that help support “connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems” by addressing tactical and real-world education data privacy issues as well as contributing to the development of strategies for the global Community.

Community members elected to serve on the SDPC Management Board for a two-year term are:

- Ramah Hawley, The Education Co-operative (TEC)
- Libbi Nelson, California IT in Education (CITE)
- Steve Setzer, Loop Data
- Jim Siegl, Future of Privacy Forum
- Ben Silbergliitt, CedarLabs
- Steve Smith, Cambridge Public Schools

These newly elected members join the following SDPC Management Board members starting their second-year term:

- Andy Bloom, McGraw-Hill Education
- Tom Ingram, Escambia County School District
- Josh Olstad, New Hampshire CTO Council

We are also pleased to be inviting Anthony Yaremenko, National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP), Australia, back as an ‘Appointed Representative’ for the coming term.

“I am thrilled to depend on these experienced leaders, who are already actively involved in supporting student privacy practices, being part of the SDPC Management Board for this coming term”, states Larry L Fruth II, Ph.D., Executive Director/CEO, A4L Community. “Their leadership, guidance and overall dedication to the Community will prove critical to our

collective successes as the SDPC Resource Registry matures providing real world solutions for data privacy for schools and state data stewards as well as marketplace providers globally.”

The SDPC Resource Registry was designed to provide an “on the ground and real world” set of privacy tools allowing schools to manage and communicate on the software solutions impacting learning. The Registry allows schools, districts, divisions, states, territories, and vendors to find resources, adapt them to their unique context and implement needed protections. We are delighted that the marketplace has found that the Registry is a great resource for them, and with 70,000+ signed Agreements, 10,000+ School Districts and 34 State Alliances using it, there is still plenty of room for growth!



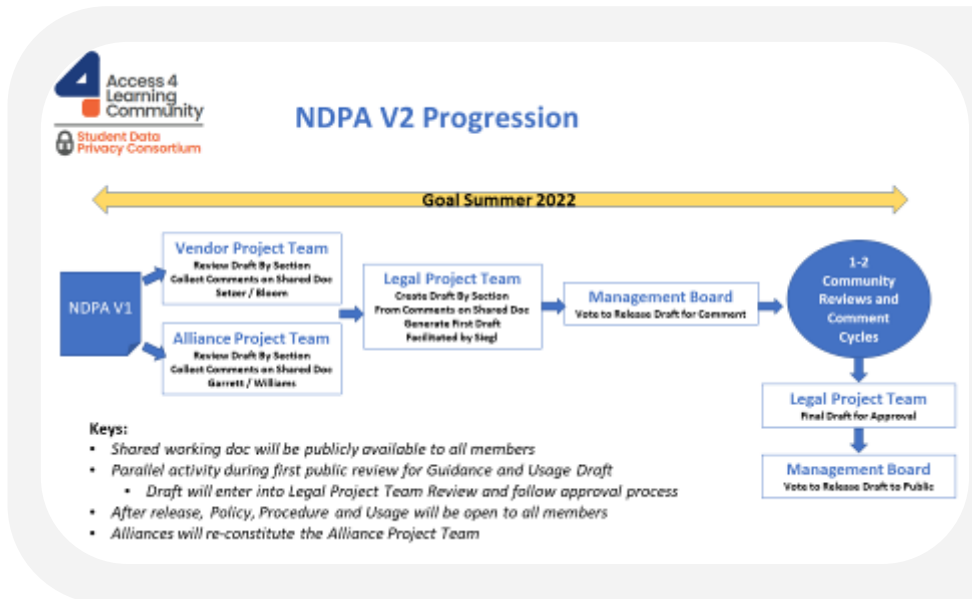
UPDATE: National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2

The Alliance Leadership and Vendor Project Teams have submitted their proposed edits to the successful first version of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA).

Each group has gone clause by clause suggesting changes that will be combined, and they have now been submitted to the Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee) for further discussion and approval.

We are hoping that the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) V2 will be ready for Community Review and comment early next year.

Stay tuned!

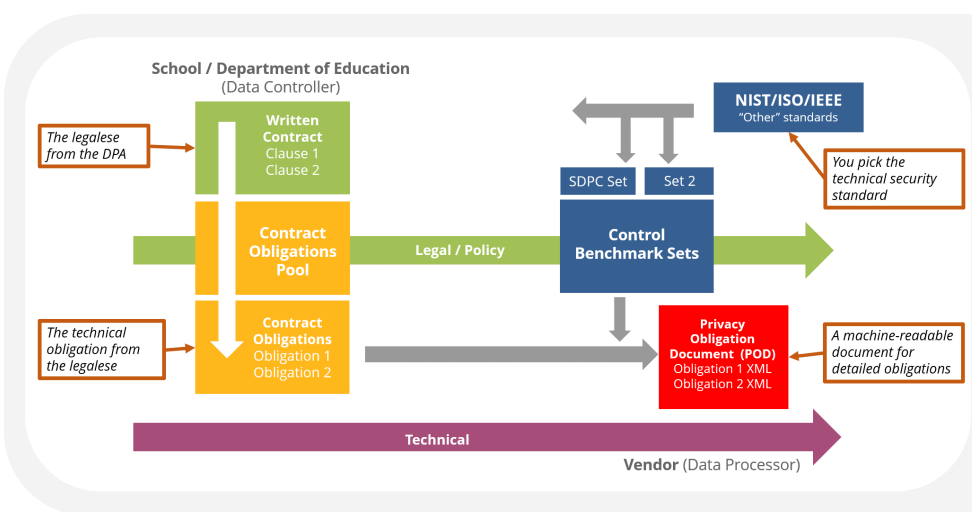


SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE ON SDPC RESOURCE REGISTRY: DEC 16-18, 2022 — see page 2

UPDATE: Global Education Security Standard (GESS) Project Team update

The Global Education Security Standard (GESS) Project Team is nearing the completion of the first draft, v1.0 of GESS. With input from our partners in AU, NZ & the UK, the GESS includes controls from most existing cybersecurity frameworks in use today.

In February, members of the GESS working group will be participating in an event entitled *The state of cybersecurity in K-12 education: the need for a global privacy and cybersecurity standard for education technologies*, hosted by the London School of Economics. This event should coincide with the announcement and release of the initial draft of GESS.



<https://privacy.a4l.org/geps/>

Community Meetings Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Staff Liaison</u>
GLOBAL			
<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	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	1 st & 3 rd Thurs, monthly	CEDS Alignment	John Lovell
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	1 st Tues, Qrtly (3rd month)	SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team	Larry Fruth
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	SDPC Management Board	Larry Fruth
Wednesday	1 st Weds, Qrtly (2 nd month)	Consortium Updates	Larry Fruth
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Alliance Leadership	Larry Fruth
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Global Education Security Standards (GESS)	Larry Fruth
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee)	Penny Murray
Thursday	Every 3 weeks	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 to **“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>

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

Provides technical leadership and as the primary resource for all things technical – from internal IT support to driving the global community efforts state-wide, nationally and internationally focused on both technical specification development and privacy support.

✉ jlovell@A4L.org



Penny Murray
Community Director

Provides leadership and ownership over providing “value-add” for members and potential members of the Association. This position gauges all aspects of member services including communications, marketing, support member working activities, organizational meetings and strategic partnerships to ensure initiative success.

✉ pmurray@A4L.org



📍 P O Box 1024, New Albany, OH 43054

✉ staff@A4L.org

☎ +1.202.621.0547

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