



September 2022

Back to School

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

I love taking inventory on how people view this yearly life benchmark. One of my sons in K12 was so ready to go back and stop his summer job while the other wanted his summer and work to go on forever. I don't even need to tell you how my teaching wife was not ready to go back yet! Being virtual, it means more productive work for me.

Being born and genetically linked into an education family, our get togethers often turn to discussions and even arguments over current ed trends and policies. Many years ago, when I was still in the high school classroom, I was involved in writing numerous pieces on the future of teaching and the tsunami coming, on lack of passionate practitioners for classrooms across the county. It took a longer than I thought, and I did not have the crystal ball to predict COVID, but all indicators point to this becoming a growing crisis.

When SIF was formed as a non-profit, we even worked with the DC Administration in outlining a "Race to the Top" for the teaching profession. In doing research for

those conversations, surveys clearly indicated that money was not the driver in keeping qualified teachers – a common misconception. The REAL frustration point then and even today from practitioners, is a lack of time. We continuously add more responsibilities and expectations to classroom teachers and don't provide them the time to do the work.

So, what does that mean for this Community? I try to always have us think about "are we really changing the way kids learn" in all we do. The BEST way as a standards organization we can make that claim is to streamline and simplify how teachers and learners' access and utilize technology safely and securely every day.

This is why we need you and your organization involved in the work. Our successes will allow teachers to do what they do best – teach!

Now back to packing the kids to get on the bus – like it or not!

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Welcome new members!



Advanced Education Research & Development Fund (AERDF)

awaiting
logo

Breyben, Inc.



GoGuardian



inquirED

awaiting
logo

Marcia Brenner Associates LLC

mobileserve

MobileServe



Mountain View Los Altos High School District, CA



Neuron Fuel Inc.
dba Tynker



ParentSquare

ParentSquare



Panorama Education



Participate Learning



RTI Scheduler

awaiting
logo

Russell County Schools, AL



Spring Valley CCSD99, IL



ZipGrade LLC

As reported in our [December newsletter](#), our new membership structure is now in place. While the new structure went into effect from January 1, 2022, membership dues will not increase until a member's next renewal date.

For some members, dues will decrease – such as if they hold dual memberships for both A4L and SDPC. For others, dues may increase – for instance, if they choose value-added subscription services for a premium membership. New membership levels and associated benefits for each can be found [here](#).

Global Community News

A4L Community releases the global SIF Infrastructure Specification supporting lightweight providers of data

PRESS RELEASE: A4L Community releases the global SIF Infrastructure Specification supporting lightweight Providers of Data

Washington, DC, 21 September 2022--- The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to announce the release of the collaboratively developed global SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.5 which is unique in the technical standards world in that it supports data movement via greater interoperability by standardizing 'data and privacy on the wire'.

The SIF Infrastructure Specification is an open standard, which is used globally to enable data exchange, and has been rigorously tested to ensure performance and scalability. This latest release builds on the previous version, introducing technical advances ranging from detailed API documentation, OpenAPI files, as well as inclusion of additional data controls for messaging and privacy. This version provides the marketplace with several benefits:

- **Transition from synchronous ecosystems to asynchronous or hybrid integrations without interruption.** Regardless of the asynchronous benefit you seek, upgrading one system at a time while never losing compatibility is priceless in today's always-on world.
- **Scalable for both instant and long-running processes to work**

in harmony. With this release, the SIF Infrastructure architecture allows for both lightweight and larger applications to work well together. SIF Enabled cloud powered apps no longer need to be bogged down by other systems that are synchronizing data.

- **Lightweight.** Providers of Data no longer need to deliver a server component to any SIF ecosystems which are powered by a SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.5 capable Broker.
- **Meaningful feedback.** With the latest functionality, end-to-end transport status and error codes provide important feedback for users.
- **Conformity to more educational institutions firewall policies.** If you strive for data interoperability, but struggle with allowing access through your firewall, then this release provides a solution.

"This latest version is the most important release of the SIF infrastructure since the initial publication of 3.0. The marquee feature is a newly introduced messaging pattern called Asynchronous Provider. Asynchronous Provider sounds like an "in the weeds"

technical detail...it's not. It allows implementers much more control over how and when to process incoming requests to prevent volume spikes. Perhaps more importantly, service providers no longer have the added security burden of bolting down exposed endpoints" states Mike Reynolds, Co-Lead of the International Technical Board (ITB).

"This new release of the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.5 is a great step forward for the marketplace" states John Lovell, Technology Director, A4L Community. "With the introduction of these new features, the marketplace is empowered to modernize their current ecosystems without breaking existing linkages, allowing them to make incremental changes to best suit their needs, as and when they are able. The global Community has worked incredibly hard to guarantee that this latest release provides privacy and security to the marketplace ensuring that it is meeting the demands of the workplace and our international Community."

The SIF Infrastructure Specification has been extensively load tested in the real world to ensure high performance

(Continued on page 4)

A4L Community releases the global SIF Infrastructure Specification supporting lightweight providers of data

(Continued from page 3)

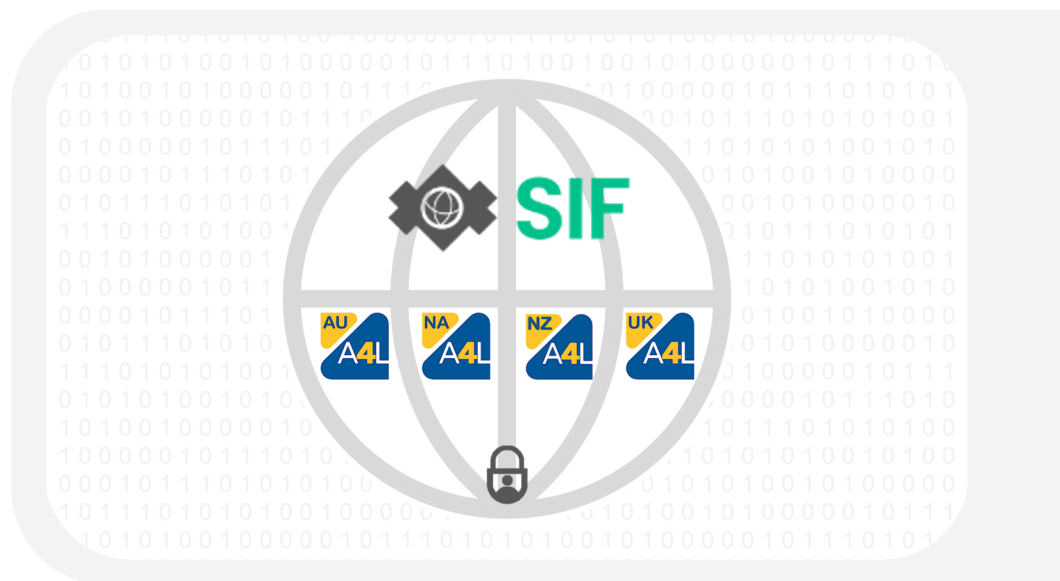
for the marketplace. Using the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.x created a 20,000 times increase in throughput performance when compared to previous SIF 2.x Infrastructure Specification releases. The “hybrid” approach model, using existing SIF Infrastructure 2.x plus SIF Infrastructure 3.4 versions for those ecosystems who want to scale-up technologies, also showed improvements. By upgrading the receiving system, the result was a 286 times increase in throughput performance than the traditional SIF integration. These results quantify “on the ground” implementation stories where states have updated their systems and discovered the increase in performance. These performance improvements enable greater data efficiency and opens the door to new use cases that require timely access to even more data. To find out more, please review the ‘Real World Education Data Management Performance Testing’ white paper: <https://bit.ly/A4LEdDataTesting>

Designed to be decoupled from any specific data model, it has proven to seamlessly move comma separated value files (CSVs), pictures, and end-to-end encrypted payloads in order to meet the needs of demanding integrations. It has created a rich ecosystem for anyone to leverage, and people are starting to apply that to other standards. The state of Iowa is actively working to move PESD High School transcripts electronically to the state

colleges to reduce the human workload and inconsistencies on both sides of this transaction, and the Jobs and Employment Data Exchange (JEDx) is planning to build upon the SIF Infrastructure.

To find out more about the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.5, please visit: <https://data.a4l.org/sif-infrastructure-specification-3-5/>

[DOWNLOAD the press release >>](#)



Quality Assurance Program

In North America, the SIF 'Unity' Specification is starting to enjoy the adoption that comes from its use of the thoroughly modern SIF Infrastructure and updated data model. This adoption is naturally driving the need to identify and secure quality software and cloud services. Enter both our long-standing SIF Certification Program and the essential question, **"What can we do better?"**

We have already set the stage by tying Certification to premium membership. This will primarily impact members next year, as their new tier of membership entitles them to Certification without additional fees. A natural extension of this is to streamline the renewal process such that changes can be automatically tested as they happen, rather than culminating in a once a year high-stakes assessment.

To that end the Quality Assurance team has one eye on our promise to bring an automated testing API to the Test Harness. Paving the way for on-going Quality Assurance for developers and up-to-date product information for educators and administrators.

One additional area of Quality Assurance the A4L Community is investigating is Load Testing. This primarily follows reports from the field that old message-based systems like SIF 2.x and many modern APIs fail to scale and meet the operational needs of medium sized educational institutions and larger. Fortunately, the standardized SIF Infrastructure has many built in methods and advanced features to address users' needs of both greater throughput and the timely delivery of data. This was recently shown to be

true by CedarLabs and the findings have been [published](#) by the A4L Community..

However, we recognize there is a difference between knowing what a standard is capable of and knowing how well a production system can scale. Naturally we are considering if the tools developed to test the standard, can be applied to individual systems with a high degree of validity. Assuming this can reasonably be accomplished, load tested products will give the biggest institutions confidence that their systems can realize the scalability that the SIF Infrastructure provides.

For more information, please contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.

Where is A4L?

We have a busy few months ahead. Here is where you will find A4L Staff & Community Members. If you are attending any of these events, please find us to say 'hi'!

September 22

(WEBINAR) Project Unicorn 'Great Data States': Oklahoma
[More information](#)

October 18-19

MOREnet Annual Conference
[More information](#)

November 2-3

Learn21 Ohio CoSN / ISTE Conference
[More information](#)

September 27

(WEBINAR) Project Unicorn: Risk & Rewards
More information coming soon...

October 26-28

PESC Data Summit, Vancouver
[More information](#)

October 17-19

MedBiquitous 2022 Annual Meeting
[More information](#)

October 27-29

AIM Conference, North Carolina
[More information](#)



A4L Community Response To Federal Register Request For Information On Advancing Privacy-Enhancing Technologies (PETs)

BLOG: A4L Community Response To Federal Register Request For Information On Advancing Privacy-Enhancing Technologies (PETs)

Data access today is critical as major decisions on policy development, funding, program impact, and an array of other “data driven, time sensitive decisions”. This is all dependent on having access to the right data at the right time. Layer on top of this is the need for control by the appropriate data stewards in the sectors the data is held within – privacy and security layers!

The Access 4 Learning Community (A4L) is proud to respond to Advancing Privacy-Enhancing Technologies request for Information. We hope that this feedback and details of our successful data management and privacy work over the past 25 years will inform the agency's understanding of how to accelerate the responsible development and adoption of PETs in a manner that promotes trust in data processing and information technologies.

The 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 expect-

tations 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.

The education sector is still struggling today with privacy enforcement in general. There is a great deal of data sharing that occurs in the education environment. This included not only internal data sharing but external data sharing between local education agencies and community partners, higher education agencies, edtech vendors and researchers. A4L & SDPC are on the verge of implementing privacy enforcement technologies through the Global Education Privacy Standard (GEPS) which includes Privacy Obligation Documents (PODs). PODs are the first iteration of what we call “privacy over the wire”.

A4L has had great success in assisting both schools and providers to navigate privacy issues while providing effective and secure online tools. One of SDPC's cornerstone work has been the creation of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) that is in use now in 34 states. This NDPA has successfully bridged the gap between school and provider expectations around protecting student data. The SDPC Registry currently contains over 67,000 Data Privacy Agreements between schools and vendors for close

to 8,000 applications impacting 34 million students. Through all of this work, the SDPC's success can be attributed to the focus on bringing all sides together to find common ground and build from there.

The Access 4 Learning Community (A4L), linked to the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), has “moved the needle” on the marketplace addressing both interoperability and privacy controls of student data – the two must be taken collectively. These activities are global in nature but local in impact which has added to its success. Below are the areas of focus of A4L & SDPC related to data privacy:

- Resource Registry
- National Data Privacy Agreement
- Global Education Privacy Standard (GEPS)
- Privacy Obligation Document (POD)
- Data Hub Project
- Standardized Infrastructure

To view the full blog article, please [click here](#)

To download the PDF version, please [click here](#)

We Have an API for that...

BLOG: We Have an API for that...

This is what more and more marketplace providers are promoting for 'ease of use' of their products. In contrast, more and more school CIO-types are stating that the bevy of APIs they must utilize (plus the constant changes made to them), have become a data management nightmare. Since the A4L Community supports vendors and end users, it makes sense for us to look for ways to standardize and simplify. The idea: standardize an infrastructure for data transport that can carry any data model 'on the wire'.

In 2011, the A4L Community – led by the Management Board – separated the SIF Data Model from the SIF Infrastructure to allow it to carry ANY data model. The globally used SIF Infra-

structure defines the transport and messaging functionality over the 'wire' where data are securely exchanged – no matter the payload/data model. The standardized Infrastructure has been [third-party 'load tested'](#) and results show no 'data bottlenecks'. Without over-stressing a performance load test, over 200 million data messages were sent in an hour!

Now the A4L Community is reaching out to other standards groups that have well-developed data models but no suggested transport. This work is being done under the auspices of the Data Standards United (DSU) collaborative. The 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. DSU's vision is to collaborate and align standards to support the global education and workforce digital ecosystem.

The use cases for utilizing the standard infrastructure are piling up: A PESC Transcript data model on the infrastructure, the continued alignment with CEDS in data modeling and transport, and exploration with other partners including medical, HR, employment, etc. organizations – so stay tuned!

If interested drop a line to Dr. Larry Fruth II, PhD at lfruth@a4l.org

Project Unicorn and A4L Partnership

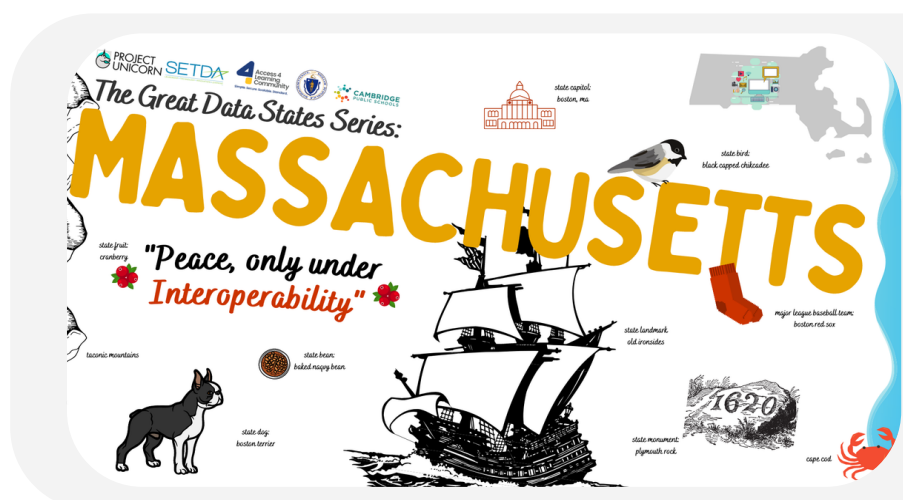
With our partners at Project Unicorn and SETDA, the A4L Community was proud to have MA hold a "Great Data States" session on September 7, 2022. Massachusetts Department for Elementary and Secondary Education, Cambridge Public Schools and Cedar Labs outlined their impressive work in modernizing the state data systems – supporting schools and the state ed agency.

This session highlighted their data interoperability work via the Unity Specification to the SDPC privacy work via the Privacy Object Document (POD) pilot. A great on the ground and operational model of connecting and securing for effective learning ecosystems.

Watch the session [HERE >>](#)

Look out for the next 'Great Data States' webinar on Sept 22 at 2pm. Join Project Unicorn, A4L, the Oklahoma State Department of Education, and Abbott Advising Group for a virtu-

al tour of Oklahoma's history of data modernization plans, its current work in the areas of privacy, security, and governance, and advice for other states. Register [here >>](#)



Community Project Team Updates

GLOBAL

International Technical Board (ITB):

The ITB is going through a time of transition and is reorganizing itself, ITB Representatives are encouraged to let Technology Director John Lovell know if they would like to serve as a co-lead over the next year. Additionally, the ITB would like to thank Stuart McGrigor for his significant contributions to the A4L Community and wish him well in his future endeavors. The ITB hopes to seat a new representative from New Zealand soon!

Infrastructure: The Project Team is excited to have published version 3.5 featuring Asynchronous Providers with a bevy of benefits you can read about on [page 2](#). They are now focusing on fuller error messages and are starting to discuss out of band POD acknowledgement for non-REST transports.

Data Model, Mapping & Migration (D3M):

The D3M has started meeting with the Open Source Developers Network (OSDN) because the large overlap of international participants, commonalities (global data model and the tool that generates our data models globally), and both groups being highly efficient with their time. If you are an A4L Member and have been looking to join an international project team, consider joining us!

A4L Data Privacy: The Project Team was pleased to receive an example of a Privacy Obligations Document drafted for use in the field. It was very interesting and helped inform other privacy efforts such as Australia's Saffer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) initiative.

Open Source Developers Network

(OSDN): The OSDN is already weighing how to best add Asynchronous Providers to the SIF 3 Open Frameworks. To see our currently supported features have a look at <https://data.a4l.org/open-source/>.

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). See [page 8](#) for more.

NORTH AMERICA

North American (NA) Management Board:

The current focus for the NA Board is on strategic direction setting for the continued development and delivery of 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:

The NA Technical Board has been bringing great stewardship and review to SIF Unity to add to their great work start with "Unity Spec release in Community Review" on [page 9](#).

Unity Adoption:

The Project Team is providing much needed follow through to the releases of SIF Unity for SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (NA) 4.3 they intend to bring EDFacts Reporting, Standard Based Grading, and Grade Passback to the attention of those beyond our community.

CEDS Alignment: This team is hoping to do for CRDC what it has done for EDFacts within the A4L Community. Find out more on [page 10](#) under "CEDS Alignment Team turns its attention to the Civil Rights Data Collection."

State Requests: While this group has been meeting with the CEDS Alignment group to help with the updated and complete EDFacts mapping, North Carolina has had success getting some of their needed elements added to CEDS. Due to this we are looking to resume the separate State Requests meetings, our first topic being an update to our support of military connected students.

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 are currently finalizing their proposed changes to the NDPA v2. See [page 12](#) for more details.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team:

See [page 12](#) 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 are currently finalizing their proposed changes to the NDPA v2. See [page 12](#) for more details.

News from the Australian Community

Wishing Bruce Rigby all the best!

After many years of service to the national and global education sector, Bruce Rigby has retired.

Bruce co-founded the National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP) over 12 years ago and has been a champion of interoperability and data standards ever since.

Bruce initially trained as a scientist and worked in the field of ecological research before pursuing a career in education. As part of his Churchill Fellowship, Bruce travelled to the US, Britain and France, and on returning to Victoria Australia, established the first major school education website in 1995.

Bruce, as the Director of NSIP and long-time member of the Access 4 Learning Community, has been responsible for the success of this rare and rewarding national initiative, a testament to his leadership, vision and collaborative skills.

We wish Bruce all the best as he leaves NSIP and spends more time with his ever growing family, his music, camera, astronomy and bush-walking.



AU Technical Board / DSWG: Update

The AU Technical Board met on the 6th September to discuss proposed updates to SIF Implementation Specification (Australia).

These include possible breaking changes to the specification, which if approved would be the first major version change since 2017 (version 3.5.0).

The proposed changes include:

- Streamlining of SIF Metadata

container

- Conversion of fixed decimal point values to strings, in order to preserve fixed decimal point in JSON
- Removal of deprecated objects (SystemRole, ResourceUsage)
- Support for the Student Data Transfer Project initiative

The meeting also invited departments and agencies to participate in the Na-

tional Education Data Dictionary pilot. This will involve subject matter experts agreeing on nationally applicable concepts recurring in data exchange, with a particular emphasis at this stage on national and state data collections from schools.

News from the North American Community

Unity Specification in Community Review

The SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (North America) 4.3—also known as Unity—now in Community Review!

The SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (NA) 4.3—also known as Unity—will be a significant release addressing the areas of Grade Passback, Standard Based Grading, ED-Facts Reporting, and State Requests. This release is currently undergoing Community Review until September 28, 2022, and all North American Community Members are encouraged to review and provide feedback. Once our members have appreciated the impacts, each organization is encouraged to vote! This means they already have access to these key changes for evaluation and planning.

Grade Passback Enhanced:

The A4L Community undertook two different initiatives to enhance Grade Passback within Unity. The first is updating the data model to support both partial and missing scores. The second initiative was to simplify choreographies by requesting the Infrastructure Team support asynchronous requests all the way through the standardized infrastructure. This enables a meaningful return path for the resulting acceptance of scores. Both of these initiatives have been completed.

Standards Based Grading Optimized:

In the past, supporting Standards Based Grading in a SIF integration re-

quired the use of an additional object to make the fundamental linkages between scores and standards. While possible, this object is set up to link one standard to many objects, meaning as scores come in, each of these objects must either grow without bound or multiply such that many duplicates exist for the same standard. Clearly these objects are best left for unforeseen use cases rather than one as common as Standards Based Grading. To that end we have added the capability to create these references directly.

EDFacts Reporting Updated:

The state of Wyoming discovered fifteen gaps between our latest EDFacts mapping and Generate's (a CEDS tool for federal reporting) staging tables. All of these that were also missing from Unity have been included (added or aligned) in this release. As a result a full mapping document will be included with the release!

State Requests Honored:

North Carolina has been working with

the A4L and CEDS communities to determine which of their needs exist in other states and add solutions to our standards. This release of Unity will include seven such solutions.

The draft timeline for this Specification release is as follows:

- Sept 14-28, 2022: Community Review and feedback
- Oct 3-10, 2022: NA Technical Board review feedback and make edits if necessary
- Oct 11-17, 2022: NA Technical Board recommendation to NA Management to publish Specification
- Oct 19-24, 2022: NA Management Board approval to publish Specification
- Oct 27, 2022: SIF Data Model Specification 4.3 (North America) published

Any questions regarding this release, please contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.



CEDS Alignment Team turns its attention to the Civil Rights Data Collection

Long have we desired to help districts simplify their Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) process. There is a lot going on here and we have been stopped so far by paralysis through analysis, and a greater sense of being overwhelmed. The North American Technical Board (NATB) was tasked with figuring out how to make progress. In the true NATB spirit they rejected allowing perfect to become the enemy of good, asking the CEDS Alignment Team to investigate, starting with the Common Education Data Standard (CEDS). What they found brought a new appreciation for all the work done by the CEDS Community!

Based on the 2020 CEDS work, the SIF 'Unity' Specification supports CRDC well. It covers all the concepts and

could reduce the requirements down to the needed CEDS elements, which would facilitate working to close any gaps in mapping or missing fields. Additional good news, these connections include calculation guidance (under Analysis Recommendations) that we wouldn't have to recreate.

With this as a basis, our CEDS Alignment Team will tackle a CRDC baseline next.

A4L members who wish to contribute to this effort should contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.



CRDC

Civil Rights Data Collection

News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

SDPC 2022 Elections: Voting now open!

The Consortium has had phenomenal leadership over the past few years. The leadership, guidance and overall dedication to the Consortium prove critical to our collective successes, but now it is your chance to get involved and nominate yourself, or a colleague, to be part of this great leadership team!

Nominations for the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) Management Board have closed, but you can still cast your vote on who you would like to see elected to the SDPC Management Board!

The Management Board is elected for two-year terms. This year there will be six (6) seats open for the Management Board. To be eligible to run for the Management Board, the individuals shall be at least eighteen (18) years old and be an SDPC Voting Participant or employed by/representing an SDPC Voting Participant and duly authorized to represent that SDPC Voting Participant, but need not be residents of the District of Columbia.

An SDPC Voting Participant Member institution (including associated subsidiaries of an SDPC Voting Participant) may have at most one representative on the Management Board at one time.

For the 2022 SDPC Election process, the following dates apply:

- Jul 26, 2022: Announcement to membership
- Aug 16, 2022: Nominations open
- Sept 9, 2022: Nominations close
- Sept 14, 2022: Ballot released
- Sept 28, 2022: Voting closes
- Oct 5, 2022: Elections results announced

We are using a virtual election tool and all votes must be submitted electronically. The Primary Business Contact will be the official vote for each SDPC Voting Participant.

You can download the policies and procedures for the SDPC Elections [here](#). To view the current SDPC Management Board members, please click [here](#).

Information has been sent out to all eligible organizations Primary Business Contact to submit your vote, which is open until September 28, 2022.



National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2 update

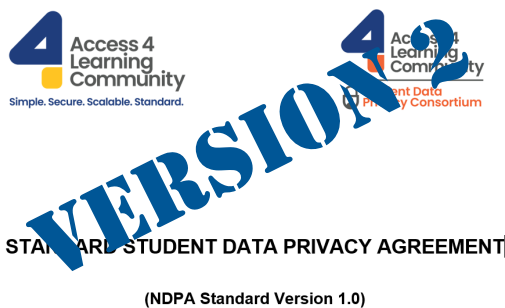
The Alliance Leadership and Vendor Project Teams are engaged in the last stages of making edits to the successful first version of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA).

Each group has gone clause by clause suggesting changes that will be com-

bined and discussed by the Legal Project Team in the coming weeks.

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

Stay tuned!



GESS Project Team update

The SDPC is helping address the issue of there being no easily referenced, education context aware security framework, not only in the U.S. but across the globe.

The goal is to identify and document a security framework that could become **The Global Education Security Standard (GESS)**.

The Project Team has placed the numerous security benchmarks in the market in a crosswalk and identifying those stipulations that are relevant and reachable to schools and their vendor partners. Watch for more information from this globally driven group.

If you are a member of the A4L Community and would like to get involved in these discussions, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director, for more information.

How Are Schools and Learners Using Technology?

Our Member, Lightspeed Systems, released its first [Edtech App Report](#) to help us understand the national trends in student data privacy, app use, and tech-related risks.

The report is based on anonymized data from 108 school districts using Lightspeed Analytics-CatchOn Edition to analyze their technology. The top findings included that:

- Most districts have more than 2,000 apps in use with 300 apps accounting for 99% of use.

- Almost all (91%) of the apps students used had changes to their privacy policy. The median number of changes per policy was three.
- 56% of students are actively engaged in digital learning for more than two hours per day.
- Each student engages with a median 72 distinct apps.

Great info for you to throw out to your stakeholders on how critical that pri-

vacancy and interoperability are addressed together!



An Open Letter In Response To The FTC Policy Statement On Education Technology And The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

BLOG: An Open Letter In Response To The FTC Policy Statement On Education Technology And The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

15 June, 2022: Over the past seven years the SDPC has worked very closely with both schools and providers to address data privacy issues. The intersection of COPPA and FERPA with classroom educational technology usage continues to be a strong topic of interest, and in many cases a "pain point", for all stakeholders. With this in mind, the SDPC feels obligated to respond to the FTC's recent statement on educational technology and COPPA.

The SDPC applauds the FTC for this policy statement and reinforcing the need to apply COPPA in the educational setting to ensure data is not overly or inappropriately being collected on students. In the past, the FTC has been instrumental in supporting parents and school personnel in their student data privacy stewardship roles. The SDPC also can tout that our vendor members appreciate any and all clarity they can obtain to ensure they are doing their part as well in protecting student privacy.

Having said that, the SDPC feels the statement and FTC actions do not go far enough to both clarify the overlap of COPPA and FERPA, nor provide operational assistance to schools and vendors who are both trying to provide valuable online tools to support teaching and learning while staying within both legal and ethical guidelines.

Specifically, the SDPC suggests:

- The Commission should use a

different example in the prohibition against mandatory collection. In both education technology systems and the larger general technology market, the email address string has become the de facto login identifier even if the system vendor will never email the user.

- Both Edtech providers and schools need common guidance from the federal government on how COPPA and FERPA interact. SDPC applauds the long-time collaboration between the FTC and the US Department of Education and urges the continuance and expansion of those joint efforts.

The Student Data Privacy Consortium has had great success in assisting both schools and providers to navigate privacy issues while providing effective and secure online tools. The SDPC's cornerstone work has been the creation of a National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) that is being implemented in 31 states. This DPA has successfully bridged the gap between school and provider expectations around protecting student data. The SDPC Registry currently contains over 67,000 Data Privacy Agreements between schools and vendors for close to 8,000 applications impacting 34 million students.

Building off the success of the NDPA, the consortium is now implementing a proof-of-concept project demonstrat-

ing the use of the Global Education Privacy Standard (GEPS) to convey all privacy obligations "over the wire". With regards to the statement "...COPPA-covered ed tech providers violate COPPA if they lack reasonable security", the SDPC is working with all relevant stakeholder groups to provide clarity on the definition of 'reasonable security'. To achieve this, the SDPC is facilitating a global working group to develop an Education Data Security Standard that all stakeholders can adhere to.

Through all of this work, the SDPC's success can be attributed to the focus on bringing all sides together to find common ground and build from there. Similarly, we encourage the FTC to bring all stakeholders together to clarify expectations and develop operational standards to ensure both COPPA and FERPA are adhered to by our vendor community.

The SDPC is happy to work with the FTC to ensure schools, vendors, government entities, and even parents are successful in supporting the various student data privacy measures underway. Please consider us a resource for your continuing work.

Signed, SDPC Management Board

To view the Open Letter (PDF), please [click here >>](#)

The Student Data Privacy Consortium Applauds The Work In The MA House In H. 127

BLOG: The SDPC Applauds The Work In The MA House In H. 127

The Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) applauds the work in the MA House in H. 127 which will assist with compliance as well as strengthen the privacy protections for learners.

The SDPC Management Board has released an official support letter for this great work on data stewardship.



6.13.22

Dear Chairman Michlewitz,

On behalf of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), a non-profit community made up of over 10,000 schools, 100 educational technology vendors, government agencies and privacy stakeholders across 4 countries, we applaud your work on H. 127 which will assist with compliance as well as strengthen the privacy protections for learners.

The timeliness of H.127 could not be more critical. As we recover from the pandemic, most schools are continuing to leverage many online tools that were not in use in 2019. Issues around the protection of Massachusetts students' privacy should be a priority for all schools. Unfortunately many schools in Massachusetts's lack the resources, knowledge or guidance to do this effectively on their own. This means many Massachusetts students' privacy is at risk simply for attending school.

The SDPC actually started in MA, through the work of Steve Smith, CIO, Cambridge Public Schools. The success of the SDPC in other states across the country often has to do with the fact that these other states have student data privacy laws in effect similar to H.127. H.127 would have a huge impact on protecting all Massachusetts Students' privacy by; taking some of the burden off of districts to control vendors by placing clear obligations upon vendors, provide resources, guidance and support to all districts via DESE, and perhaps most importantly provide the incentive needed for all districts to build awareness of the importance of protecting student data.

Consider the SDPC a resource in supporting your work in maintaining the required controls over learner information. The Community has had great success in assisting both schools and providers to navigate privacy issues while providing effective and secure online tools. One of SDPC's cornerstone work has been the creation of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) that is in use now in 31 states. This NDPA has successfully bridged the gap between school and provider expectations around protecting student data. The SDPC Registry currently contains over 67,000 Data Privacy Agreements between schools and vendors for close to 8,000 applications impacting 34 million students. Through all of this work, the SDPC's success can be attributed to the focus on bringing all sides together to find common ground and build from there.

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	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.

✉ lf ruth@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

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

Connecting and **securing** effective learning ecosystems.

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