

Access⁴

December 2023

An eventful year...

Foreword by Ramah Hawley & Ben Silbergliitt, Co-Chairs of the Association Board of Directors

To say it has been an eventful year at A4L in 2023 would be an understatement. This year, we experienced one of the most significant years in the history of the organization. Despite the turmoil that happens with change, the A4L Community has emerged as an even stronger force for interoperability and privacy in education.

Consider this list of many of the highlights of what we have accomplished (with links included, for more information about each):

- ◇ Began [partnership discussions](#) with the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC), kicked off by a joint symposium in November on privacy and interoperability. Our joint mission of continuity of standards, supported by privacy, across K-12 and Higher Education creates tremendous possibilities for data sharing, privacy and standards alignment, and PK-20W+ data systems. It also represents a first step and a model for further standards collaboration, and we are seeing significant progress in discussions with other standards bodies through the work of Data Standards United.
- ◇ Developed (and will soon be launching) version 2 of the [National Data Privacy Agreement](#), a continued cooperative effort of districts and vendors to maintain a

strong, meaningful, and viable set of privacy obligations to simplify contract management and procurement. To date, the work of the DPAs have saved districts and education technology vendors over \$40 million dollars in legal fees.

- ◇ Published the first ever [Global Education Security Standard \(GESS\)](#) to provide guidance to the education community around cybersecurity, and establishing a shared set of controls to school districts and education technology vendors. We are especially grateful to our partners in Australia for their leadership in this work, yet another demonstration of the value of being a global community.
- ◇ Initiated a process to overhaul the [SDPC Resource Registry](#), to ensure our work is supported by a modern, scalable software system that will last well into the future. This work is continuing through the R3 group, a project team that meets regularly and is open to new members.
- ◇ Continued to maintain alignment with the Common Education Data Standard and the related work of the Open Source Community, including supporting the develop-

(Continued on page 2)



IN THIS ISSUE

Global Community News

An Eventful Year...; SAVE THE DATES: Spring 2024; A4L appoint Executive Director; Note from Executive Director's Desk; Welcome New Members!; Association Bylaws; Revised Organization Structure; pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit Overview; The World We Find Ourselves In; Bridging the Gap: AI's Role in Mapping and Unifying pK20W+ Education Data Models; Staff availability during holiday break; Check those email addresses!; Weekly Office Hours; Scheduled Maintenance; The Community Needs YOU!; and Community Project Team updates. [Page 3](#)

AU Community News

SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1 Release Highlights Enhanced OpenAPI Integration [Page 12](#)

NA Community News

A4L Community releases whitepaper for Complete Confidence in Grade Pass Back [Page 13](#)

Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) News

UPDATE: Global Education Security Standards (GESS); COMMUNITY REVIEW: National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2. [Page 14](#)

An eventful year...

(Continued from page 1)

- ment of the Community of Innovation's (COI) [Enterprise Reference Architecture](#).
- ◇ Successfully implemented a pilot exchange of the [Privacy Obligation Document](#) (POD), proving the concept of privacy and interoperability working hand-in-hand, supporting the exchange of any data standard.
- ◇ Saw continued strong membership growth, with 36 new [members](#) over the past year.
- ◇ Established a new [Association Board of Directors](#), representative of the breadth of our organization: geographically, across SEA/LEA/Vendor, and across privacy and interoperability interests.
- ◇ Developed a new [organization structure](#) to reflect that same breadth, along with a revised set of [bylaws](#). Our structure simplifies the roles of our project teams, leadership groups, and committees, and provides greater clarity around opportunities for you to contribute to our shared mission. For more information or to find

out more about how to participate, please contact Penny Murray.

- ◇ And, last but definitely not least, we [hired Steve Smith](#), the founder and catalyst of the Student Data Privacy Consortium, as our new Executive Director. Steve brings a wealth of experience and expertise through his development of the SDPC, his interim leadership of A4L, and his many years in leadership roles at the state and district level. He starts full time February 1 and we are so excited for our future under his leadership.

All of this has been possible because of you. Over the course of this year, we have been heartened to see the outpouring of support amongst our membership, with the strongest engagement we have seen in our years working with this organization. As an

organization, we continue to prove that volunteer-led, grassroots action on interoperability and privacy yields sustainable solutions that solve real-world problems.

On a final note, we also want to acknowledge the indefatigable Penny Murray, Community Director, and John Lovell, Technology Director, who maintained a steady course through all of this change, continuing to both provide support to our membership and drive meaningful advancement of our goals. They are a fantastic team!

We look forward to our continued success together in 2024. Happy new year to you all!

In partnership,

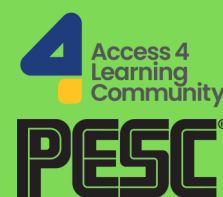
*Ramah Hawley and Ben Silbergliitt, Ph.D.,
Association Board of Directors, Co-Chairs*

Ramah Hawley & Ben Silbergliitt
Association Board of Directors,
Co-Chairs



SAVE THE DATES: April 29—May 2, 2024

We are in the process of confirming details for our Spring 2024 meeting.
More information coming soon!



Global Community News

A4L Community announce Executive Director appointment

PRESS RELEASE: A4L Community announce Executive Director appointment

Washington, DC, 9 November 2023 — The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is excited to announce the appointment of Steve Smith as their new Executive Director. Mr. Smith brings a wealth of interoperability and privacy leadership expertise to the A4L Community, both as a leader of district and state-level technology projects, and as the Founder of the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC).

Mr. Smith has nearly 28 years of both rural and urban district leadership. He is currently employed as the Chief Information Officer of Cambridge Public Schools, Cambridge, MA, where he has overseen the transformation of IT services for the past 17 years. Prior to that Mr. Smith was the CTO of Waterville Public Schools, Waterville ME.

Through this work, Mr. Smith brings an incredible breadth of experience: representing both Maine and currently Massachusetts on the National Forum on Education Statistics, and contributing to the Forum's Education Data Privacy, Civil Rights Data Reporting, Longitudinal Data Systems, School Course Code Working Group, Virtual Education, Facilities Data Management, Technology Suite, Crisis Data Management, Cyber Security, Metadata and Digital Equity working groups.

Mr. Smith has also been extensively involved in the A4L Community, where he has served as the North American Management Board Co-Chair, member of the Association Board of Direc-

tors and SDPC Management Board. He has also been instrumental in many project teams over the years.

"I'm very excited to serve as the Executive Director of the A4L Community," commented Mr. Smith. "I'm looking forward to building upon the great work the Community has accomplished at the intersection of privacy and interoperability by continuing to evolve the SIF/Unity Standard, data privacy resources and services, and provider security obligations. As a PK20W ecosystem we are on the precipice of meaningful impact on the entire marketplace to address all users' needs."

Reports Dr. Benjamin Silberglitt, Association Board of Directors Co-Chair "It isn't often that the perfect candidate comes along at the perfect time for your organization. Steve's leadership acumen, understanding of the needs of districts, states, and vendors, and his passion for this work makes him ideally suited to guide our organization into a bright future. The A4L Community is ready to deliver the next generation of privacy, security, and interoperability standards with Steve at the helm."

Mr Smith's appointment as Executive Director will be effective 1 February 2024.

Note from the Executive Director's desk

Actually this is a note from the "Incoming" Executive Director. I find it difficult to express how excited I am to transition to the Executive Director's position after nearly 28 years of district level leadership. As most of you know, my passion over the past 20+ years has been both privacy and interoperability. I have been a strong proponent of both at the district, state and national levels while still managing district level issues. To be able to focus full time on these areas is the perfect opportunity to have a global impact on the PK20W ecosystem.

The work done in 2023 by A4L Board members, project teams and the Community as a whole has positioned the organization to soar in the years to come. So many great opportunities exist for A4L in 2024 and beyond. I look forward to working with the Board and all Community members to lead A4L in this great work! I encourage you all to reach out to me at any time with ideas, questions, concerns, comments etc. The power of our community is all of YOU and I want you to know I'm available to each and every one of you!

In the meantime, I wish you all a happy and safe holiday season!

Sincerely
Steve Smith,
Incoming Executive Director

Welcome new members!



95 Percent Group



ADP



BrightShift



Dysart Unified School District, AZ



Escambia County Public Schools, FL



Grader Than Technology



identMetrics, Inc.



Lincoln Library Press Inc. (FactCite)



Plymouth Public Schools, MA



Portsmouth Public Schools, VA



Richardson Cybersecurity



SmartPass Inc.



Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, MA

Association Bylaws 2023

As you will have read in our opening article, and from the recent Community Member Announcement mailer, the Association Board of Directors recently approved the [Association Bylaws 2023](#), which have now been published to the Community.

A summary of changes includes:

- Nomenclature changes to reflect the approved revised Governance Structure;
- Reorganized structure of Leadership Groups, Committees and Project Teams to reflect the changes in the approved Governance Structure;
- Additional controls and measures introduced around financial aspects relating to the management of the A4L Community; and the
- Introduction of 'permanent' Committees under the Association Board of Directors.

These changes come into immediate affect, and you will notice some of them on the Community Site next time you log in.

We would like to thank everyone who submitted feedback during the Community Review, and thank the entire Community for their continued support and leadership.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director.

Revised Organization Structure

As mentioned in the previous article, the A4L Community has revised its organizational structure to reflect the changes in the 2023 Association Bylaws.

Participation on the Association Board of Directors, Leadership Groups, and Committees, will not change until the next cycle of locale Community or international Community elections. The international Community elections will take place in Spring 2024, alongside the North American Community elections. At this time, seats on the International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group and North American Leadership Group will be elected. This may then result in changes to the Association Board of Directors participation.

Changes to elections/Leadership Group participation

The International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG) shall be

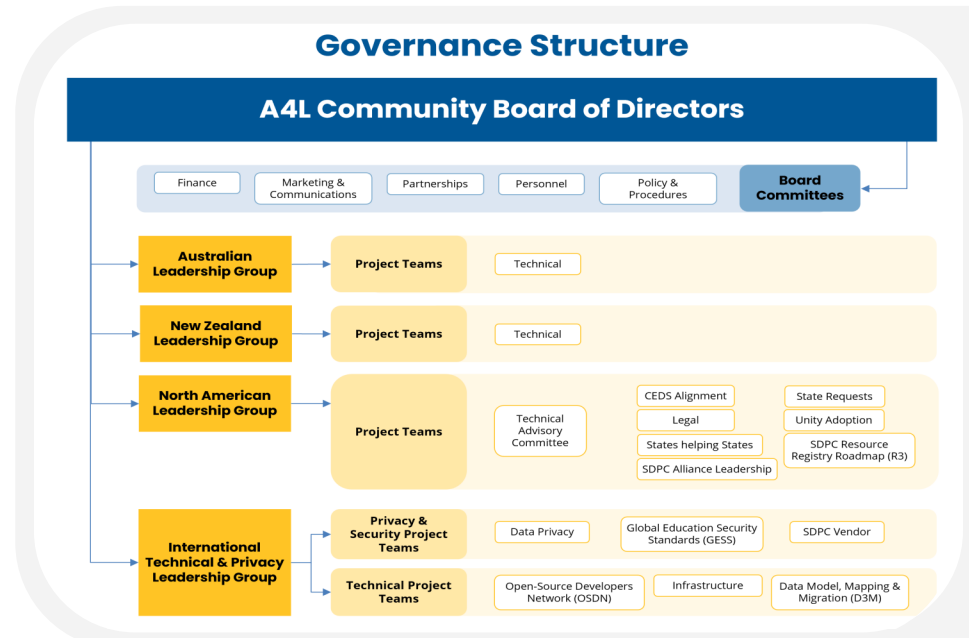
comprised of one Association Participant Lead from each International Project Teams, one (1) to two (2) representatives from each Locale Leadership Group, and up to a maximum of four (4) elected 'At-Large' seats.

Locale Leadership Groups shall be made up of representatives of each of the approved Association communities shall be any number not less than three (3) nor more than twenty (20) as determined by the Leadership Group.

Association Board of Directors shall be made up of nine (9) representatives consisting of voting member representatives from each of the approved Leadership Groups.

More information can be found in the [Association Bylaws](#).

To view the organization structure, please go to: <https://home.a4l.org/organization-structure/>



OVERVIEW: pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit

A4L and PESC held their first joint convening focused on Privacy and Interoperability in Crystal City, November 7-9th 2023.

"As an outgrowth of DSU (Data Standards United), 2023 is a pivotal year" said David Moldoff, the chair of PESC. "A4L and PESC leadership decided to collaborate and begin a journey seeking to combine efforts for the greater good" expressed Ben Silbergliitt, the Co-Chair, A4L Board of Directors.

One attendee said it clearly – ***"what took us so long to come together to address how we can serve learners and education's stakeholders?"***

As Chairs of our respective organizations, we want to thank all our speakers and panelists for taking the time and giving us their insights as we consider how best to serve the P20W+ community. The joint meeting brought together IT stakeholders, governance organizations, business representatives, funders, government, academic, administrative, financial, management and operations spanning K12 and Postsecondary education. One new attendee from a University said, she loved the meeting, sessions and opportunity participating in a conference not overwhelmed with tracks and

break out rooms because she could attend all the sessions. An IT School District attendee expressed "It is important to me (and us) we avoid reinventing the wheel, duplicating efforts or diverting resources to competing proprietary alternatives. Privacy and Interoperability can't be stove piped and segregated. We need to harmonize efforts – and that begins with disclosure and discussions."

"Our meeting allowed us to be reflective historically while looking ahead toward the horizon. That has helped us stimulate anticipation of what is to come as we bring together our organizations and envision how we can better serve our stakeholders..." expressed Steve Smith, the newly appointed Executive Director of A4L. This meeting allowed us to share views, questions and responses influenced by our varied roles and perceptions. We dissected short and long term challenges facing the education and work force development objectives that underpins student success focus. *"The positive feedback has been coming from all corners"*, said Ruth Blades, the Program Chair. The



session content focused on the span of P20W+, how our efforts are aligned with initiatives across the space. We highlighted the benefits of sharing resources and best practices captured in our work products and initiatives.

Our reflections on how standards bodies across the EdTech can unite us to foster greater clarity, coordination, harmonization and unity can't be understated. Stakeholders represented their concerns and affinities, giving feedback and suggestions. Our mutual efforts were celebrated by our separate boards approving to host next year's spring meeting together and initiate a three month envisioning project seeking to identify where we head next.

Check out photos from the event [here](#).

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The World We Find Ourselves In

by Alex Jackl, Interim A4L Technical Leadership

The A4L and PESC's fall Summit was amazing. We got an incredible amount done, there were incredible conversations, and we truly achieved something I didn't think we would be able to achieve.

Before the conference we discussed the trends we are dealing with in the learning ecosystem. These trends included breaking up the horizontal and vertical segmentation that have traditionally been separated by organizational, financial, historical, legislative, and regulatory barriers. Pre-Kindergarten lived in their own world, and K-12th grade was separated by a hard line from the PostSecondary world of Community Colleges and Universities, and them separated by a vast gulf from the Military, Workforce training, Apprenticeships, Employers, and Adult Continuing Education or Reskilling.

Over time there are growing needs and expectations of students, educators and employers to have learner and learning data follow students through the learner lifecycles as they move through all these spaces all the way to retirement and beyond.

A4L and PESC both agreed the time has come to address this directly and universally. There was almost universal alignment at the conference that the time had come for us to act together to move to the next level. Many of our partners in [Data Standards United](#) (DSU) were present and the strains of "It is about time" and "Why didn't we do this earlier" came up again and again. Representatives from DSU co-signers [1EdTech](#) and [CEDS](#) chimed in their hearty agreement.

So... now what?

There are a few results that came out of the conference:

1. We will address privacy concerns both at the PK-12 but also at the Higher Education and Postsecondary, and eventually Workforce level. We will start with PostSecondary with an eye to supporting any phase of the learner lifecycle and ensure privacy be streamlined throughout PK20W+.
2. PESC and A4L will explicitly work together and create a plan to see how they can work together more tightly. Both boards voted unanimously to work more closely together and create an actionable plan to do so, the first version of which will be completed by February 01.
3. We will engage our partner standards in DSU to have them ready to engage and participate in these conversations to create how they want to participate once we publish the initial plan. We will be actively reaching out once we have the plan in place after February 01, 2024.

What does it mean?

We are at the beginning of a conversation that we have been building to

for some time. Whatever market forces and organizational history got us here, we have affirmed our belief that standards bodies have an obligation to be looking forward to addressing the needs of the education ecosystem and not focus on our individual interests. Technology has evolved to allow for the collection and securing of previously segmented data into one long learner lifecycle journey - and so should the standards bodies.

This convergence of activity is an opportunity to serve the PK20W+ ecosystem in a more powerful, effective and more pervasive way. The combined PESC and A4L fall Summit on November 7 exceeded my hopes and expectations. This conference was a beginning of a conversation to alter the way people think about standards in education that they are not a competition or vendors trying to outdo each other but rather a structure to support learners at every phase of their development.

We don't know exactly what it's going to look like, but I think it will be remarkable! I'm really looking forward to what we create and what we put together and create together in our spring conference.

PLEASE reach out and participate if you, like we are, are inspired to forge this new future with us!



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Bridging the Gap: AI's Role in Mapping and Unifying pK20W+ Education Data Models [OPINION]

by John W. Lovell, Technology Director & ChatGPT 3.5

(The A4L Community is solely responsible for this content.)

At the pK20W+ Privacy & Interoperability Summit we held with PESC in November, one question with no clear answers came up: **How does AI change how we approach Data Models?**

Being responsible for A4L strategic technical direction I asked around and did some internet searches. I came up very empty, so I went to the source and asked an AI about the topic. What follows is what ChatGPT 3.5 had to say on the matter.

Overview

In the expansive landscape of PK-20W+ education, the challenge of interoperability often arises from the diverse data models employed across early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions. This article explores how artificial intelligence (AI) is addressing the critical issue of mapping data between different models, fostering unity and efficiency in the holistic education journey.

I. Precision in Harmony: AI-Facilitated Data Mapping for Holistic Student Performance Analysis

AI emerges as a powerful tool for mapping data between disparate student performance models spanning the entirety of the educational journey. By employing machine learning algorithms, AI can intelligently align

and translate data from various sources, providing educators with a unified view of student progress. This precision in data mapping enhances the accuracy of predictive analytics, enabling timely interventions to support individual learning journeys.

Example: Cross-Model Student Performance Insights

AI-driven data mapping algorithms seamlessly integrate academic records, behavioral data, and other performance metrics from diverse models across early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. This unified perspective allows educators to identify cross-model patterns, fostering a deeper understanding of each student's holistic academic journey and enabling personalized interventions based on comprehensive insights.

II. Efficiency Amplified: AI-Enabled Cross-Model Curriculum Integration

The challenge of aligning diverse curricular models across the PK-20W+ spectrum is met with efficiency through AI-driven data mapping. By automating the translation of curriculum structures and content, AI streamlines the integration of varied models, allowing educators to focus on refining instructional strategies rather than navigating disparate curricular frameworks.

Example: Harmonized Learning Resources

AI facilitates the mapping of content

from different curricular models spanning early childhood education to higher education, creating a harmonized repository of learning resources. Educators can access and deploy materials seamlessly, ensuring a cohesive and efficient educational experience. This interoperability promotes re-



source sharing and collaborative curriculum development across the entire education continuum.

III. Adaptability for Dynamic Learning Environments: AI in Cross-Model Classroom Insights

AI-driven data mapping excels in providing adaptability for diverse classroom models across the PK-20W+ spectrum. By translating and aligning data related to student behavior, engagement levels, and social dynamics, AI fosters a comprehensive understanding of classroom environments, allowing educators to make informed decisions that cater to varied learning styles.

Example: Interconnected Classroom Analytics

(Continued on page 9)

Bridging the Gap: AI's Role in Mapping and Unifying pK20W+ Education Data Models

(Continued from page 8)

AI facilitates the mapping of data from different classroom models, offering educators a multi-dimensional view of classroom dynamics from early childhood settings to higher education lecture halls. This interconnected analysis empowers educators to adapt their teaching strategies to the unique needs of each class, fostering inclusivity and responsiveness throughout the entire educational journey.

IV. Ethical Considerations in Cross-Model AI for Education:

While AI-enabled data mapping brings about significant benefits, ethical considerations are paramount. Ensuring privacy, security, and transparency in the translation and sharing of data between models across the PK-20W+

spectrum is essential to maintain trust and uphold ethical standards in the holistic education ecosystem.

Conclusion:

AI's role in mapping and unifying PK-20W+ education data models addresses the longstanding challenge of interoperability across early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. By fostering precision, efficiency, and adaptability in data translation, AI-driven mapping ensures educators can navigate seamlessly between different models throughout the holistic education journey. As we embrace this transformative approach, ethical considerations must guide our efforts to create a unified educational landscape that empowers students, educators, and stakeholders across the entire educational continuum.

Back to my own thoughts

I believe the work we are doing at A4L, PESC, and our other partners can help us achieve this vision that ChatGPT has.

AI's own belief in its capabilities to map data to standards and standards to other standards gives me hope that standards won't just drive AI but that AI can help drive the use of standards.

By continuing our work creating privacy metadata that can be applied to this data in the PK-20W+ universe, we will be on the forefront of creating an ethical structure for when AI meets our data.

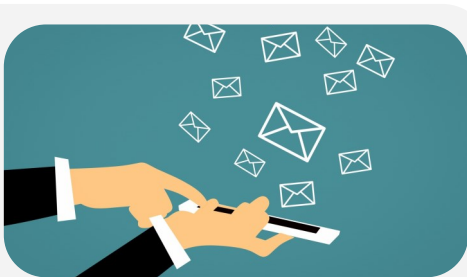
Staff availability during the holiday break

It has been a busy year, so to allow Staff to rest and recharge the batteries, there will be limited Staff availability between December 20, 2023—January 1, 2024.

If you have any issues, please submit a [Support Ticket](#) and we will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.



Check those email addresses!



We ask that those of you who remember when the Access 4 Learning Community was known by a different name, to please check the email addresses you are using to communicate with us.

From September 2023, we are winding down our usage of [sifassociation.org](#),

so please make sure that if you are emailing Penny, Lisa, Steve, or John that the address ends in [A4L.org](#).

Please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director, if you have any questions.

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Weekly Live Office Hour

by Penny Murray, Community Director

We are delighted to announce that we will be holding a weekly 'Office Hour' for our Community Members, on **Tuesdays at 12noon (US Eastern)**.

Office Hour: 12noon ET, Tuesdays

This is an opportunity for Community members to drop-in and ask questions, share ideas and discuss any issues they may be facing.

John Lovell, Technology Director and Penny Murray, Community Director will be available to answer your questions and provide guidance.

PLEASE NOTE: Should you have any issues or enhancement suggestions relating to the SDPC Resource Registry, we advise you to submit them as a [support ticket](#) as we will not be able to resolve these during the Office Hour.



Weekly, Tuesdays at 12noon (US Eastern)

Live Office Hour

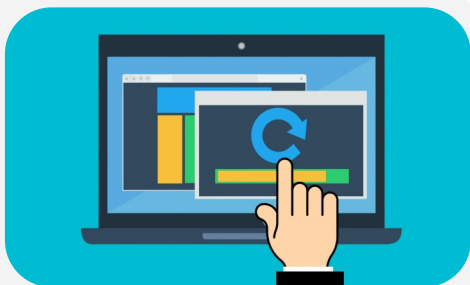
<https://www.A4L.org/group/office-hours>

John Lovell
Technology Director

Penny Murray
Community Director

Scheduled Maintenance reminder

Our regular maintenance schedule is timetabled for the last Friday of each month, but due to the holiday season this is changing for December...



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

SDPC Resource Registry, SIF Test Harness and operational databases: Maintenance will take place from 8pm ET on Friday, January 5 until COB on Sunday, January 7, 2024.

You may experience outages of these services during this time.

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

YOUR Community Needs YOU!

As a membership organization, there are two key components to our continued survival ...

- the **income** generated by membership dues (our only source of funding) which enable us to develop our Specifications, enhance the SDPC Resource Registry, and provide additional tools and resources for our members

PLUS, and most important...

- our league of **volunteers!** Without member engagement and participation in our locale & global Project Teams, Management Boards and Technical Boards we would not function.

So, as we enter this new phase, please assess your participation and consider joining one of the many Project Teams **that need YOU!** Further details of current group activities can be found on [page 5](#).

If you are not sure where to get 'plugged in', feel free to drop our Community Director, [Penny Murray](#) an email—we'd be happy to help!



Community Project Team Updates

ASSOCIATION

Association Board of Directors: The Association Board of Directors recently approved the publication of the Association Bylaws (see [page 5](#)) and continued discussions around the strategic direction of the Community.

INTERNATIONAL

International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG): The ITP-LG is glad to have the A4L Privacy Project Team Lead George Gatsis joining the group and pushing forward the Privacy Obligation Document (POD).

Infrastructure: Upon further investigation into Matrix Parameters support across industry leading cloud solutions, the Infrastructure Project Team is considering using HTTP Headers instead for future releases.

Data Model, Mapping & Migration (D3M): The D3M is encouraged that OpenAPI is increasing some of the limits on their AI services. They are investigating if this will result in better examples for documentation and testing.

A4L Data Privacy: A4L is pleased to have Learn21, the 95 Percent Group, and CedarLabs exploring our next Privacy Obligation Document pilot.

Open Source Developers Network (OSDN): The OSDN has been busy helping everyone use the shared global resources developed previous and ensuring consistent licensing across our releases.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: See [page 14](#) for update.

SDPC Vendor: Group members have

submitted their proposed changes for the NDPA v2 and are back on their quarterly meeting schedule.

AUSTRALIA

AU Leadership Group (AU-LG): The AU Management Board are discussing updates on AU activities.

AU Technical Project Team (AU-Tech): The AU Technical Project Team recently met to approve the next release of the SIF Data Model Implementation Specification (AU). See [page 12](#).

NORTH AMERICA

North American (NA) Leadership Group (NA-LG): The current focus for the NA Board is on strategic direction setting for the continued development of the SDPC Resource Registry and SIF Specifications. They have agreed to hold joint calls with the SDPC Management Board for the remainder of the year.

North American (NA) Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC): Adoption of SIF Unity is upon us and the NA-TAC will be pivotal in ensuring proper support while still working to move interoperability forward.

Unity Adoption: The Unity Adoption Team is thrilled to have released Modern Grade Pass Back for more information please see [page 13](#).

CEDS Alignment: A4L's CEDS Team is back in the swing of things with the new EDFacts requirements hitting the federal register and changes coming out of CEDS to meet this need.

State Requests: Changed to EDFacts

have also started to dominate this teams conversations, if your state is ready to join the conversation please contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.

SDPC Alliance Leadership: The Alliance Leadership group continues to meet bi-weekly to discuss any issues and questions that arise for Alliance Admins.

Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): This group continues to review SDPC Resource Registry performance enhancement suggestions and plan the development pipeline for the Registry.

SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee): The Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee) has just completed a review of the feedback received during the first Community Review for NDPA v2 and published the NDPA v2 for a second Community Review. For more information, please see [page 14](#).

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'.



News from the Australian Community

SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1 Release Highlights Enhanced OpenAPI Integration

PRESS RELEASE: A4L Community announce Executive Director appointment

Washington, DC, 21 November 2023—Following the success of the May release, The A4L Community Australian Data Standards Working Group is proud to announce the launch of the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1. This release builds on the foundation laid in May, where critical steps were taken to affirm individuals' identities within the education technology landscape. Now, with version 3.6.1, the Specification continues its commitment to advancing standards and interoperability, with a particular focus on the enhancement of the OpenAPI presentation.

Support for OpenAPI, a JSON-native standard for online API documentation originally incorporated in the SIF Data Model Specification (New Zealand), has undergone substantial updates in version 3.6.1. The enhancements include a meticulous expansion and testing process, ensuring seamless alignment with the intricate data models of both the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) and the SIF Infrastructure Specification (Global).

Key efforts during this update involved the thorough mapping of SIF/XML to PESC JSON convention, reinforcing the clarity of representation, and the precise depiction of SIF/JSON structures in JSON Schema. The result is a more robust and user-friendly documenta-

tion experience for developers and stakeholders alike.

SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1 not only incorporates the latest developments in the SIF Infrastructure Specification (Global) but also aligns seamlessly with the OpenAPI representation for both infrastructure and data models. This integration ensures a harmonious and standardized approach to API documentation, facilitating interoperability and ease of implementation.

This achievement is the outcome of collaborative efforts between the NSIP team in Education Services Australia and the A4L International Technical Board. Their joint work laid the groundwork for future releases, with the added capability of enabling the SIF Data Model Specification (North America) to express its data model to OpenAPI and JSON Schema.

"We are thrilled to unveil the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1, a

testament to our commitment to advancing standards and facilitating a seamless experience for our user community," said John W. Lovell, Technology Director, A4L Community. "The collaborative efforts between Education Services Australia and the A4L International Technical Board underscore the importance of community-driven development, paving the way for future innovations and enhancements."

To view the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.1, please visit: <https://data.a4l.org/sif-specifications-australia/>

To find out more about the SIF Infrastructure Specification (Global), please visit: <https://data.a4l.org/sif-infrastructure/>



SIF Specifications

News from the North American Community

A4L Community releases whitepaper for Complete Confidence in Grade Pass Back

PRESS RELEASE: The A4L Community releases Whitepaper For Complete Confidence in Grade Pass Back

Washington, DC, 24 October 2023 — The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, a leading authority in education technology, is proud to announce the release of a groundbreaking whitepaper designed to enhance the seamless sharing of grades between Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Student Information Systems (SIS). This initiative not only introduces a revolutionary data model but also a reimagined infrastructure to cater to the evolving needs of grade pass back within the educational ecosystem.

In a progressive stride toward facilitating comprehensive grade sharing, the A4L Community introduces a fully asynchronous choreography, the backbone of this innovative whitepaper. This choreography offers several distinct advantages, ensuring the utmost confidence in the process:

Certainty of Proper Grade Recording: The A4L Community's approach guarantees that grades are accurately and completely recorded, eliminating any uncertainty in the transfer process.

Empowered SIS & LMS Management: With this new system, both the Student Information System and Learning Management System gain the ability to independently manage workloads, streamlining operations for educational institutions.

Streamlined Endpoint Security Management: The A4L Community's whitepaper simplifies endpoint security management, making the entire grade pass back process more secure and efficient.

Complementing this revolutionary choreography is the A4L Community's robust data model, which further reinforces the integrity of the grade pass back system. This model offers the following advantages:

Support for Additional Outcome Types: In addition to standard grading, this model supports the inclusion of late and excused outcomes, providing a more comprehensive view of student performance.

Sharing of Competency and Objective-Based Assignment Results: The Community developed data model enables the sharing of competency and objective-based assignment results, promoting a more holistic understanding of student progress.

Empowering the Use of Alternative Grading Scales: The model allows for the utilization of alternative grading scales, catering to diverse teaching methodologies and educational philosophies.

The market impacts of the A4L Community's whitepaper for grade pass back are significant, including:

Elevating Teaching Practices: The A4L Community's innovation raises the sophistication of current teaching practices, enabling educators to provide a more tailored and insightful learning experience.

Timely Information: This whitepaper ensures that administrators, students, and guardians receive timely and accurate information, enhancing their understanding of student progress.

Enhanced Data Quality: Final grades are marked by greater data quality, reducing errors and discrepancies in reporting.

Eric Levy, Sr. Database Administrator, Cambridge Public Schools, commented, "This is a gigantic leap forward for data quality and accuracy in the high-stakes realm of student grades. My hope is that everyone will join me in insisting that those responsible adopt modern grade pass back."

The A4L Community whitepaper for complete confidence in grade pass back represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of education technology, setting new standards for efficiency, accuracy, and flexibility in the realm of grade sharing. This initiative is a testament to the A4L Community's commitment to advancing the educational experience for all stakeholders.

For more information, please [CLICK HERE](#).

News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

UPDATE: Global Education Security Standards (GESS)

The Global Education Security Standard (GESS) is gaining much attention.

The GESS Project Team is currently working on a few minor edits to the standard with a goal of releasing V1.2 in early 2024.

The updates will include; slight changes to the control sets and questions to

ensure the CISA Guidance for K12 Technology Acquisitions is embedded as well as a reorganization or grouping of the GESS controls to better align with NIST.

In addition the GESS Project Team is beginning to investigate options for developing and offering GESS assessments and certifications.

If anyone is interested in this work, please reach out to [Steve Smith](#) to be added to the project team.

COMMUNITY REVIEW: National Data Privacy Agreement (version 2)

On November 28, 2023, the North American Leadership Group (NA-LG) approved the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA), version 2, for a second A4L Community Member Review.

This is a ***RED-FLAG REVIEW*** for Community Members to identify inaccuracies, show-stoppers and errors on version 2, draft 2. We would kindly ask that you review previously submitted feedback and the associated comments (in the NOTES document) prior to submitting further feedback.

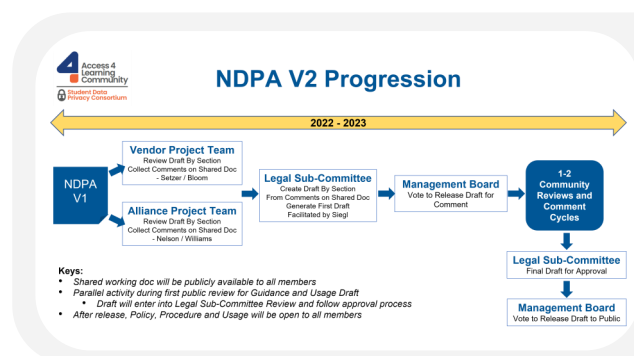
An email has been sent to all active, participating A4L Community Members and everyone is encouraged to participate in the Community Review. Only feedback from a member

organization will be accepted. All feedback must be received through the designated feedback form.

The SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee) have provided a 'Notes' document to accompany the NDPA v2 draft, which explains the rationale behind the proposed changes to this draft version. As this is a Community Review, you will be required to login to the A4L website to review the documentation.

Should you have any queries, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director.

Community Review period is open to A4L Community Members from Tuesday, December, 2023 until 5pm ET on Weds, December 20, 2023 (inclusive).



Community Meetings Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Staff Liaison</u>
ASSOCIATION			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Wednesday	2 nd Weds, monthly	Association Board of Directors	Steve Smith
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	Policy & Procedures	Penny Murray
INTERNATIONAL			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Tuesday	2 nd Tues, monthly	Data Privacy	John Lovell
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	Infrastructure	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	Open Source Developers Network	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 4 weeks	International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group	John Lovell
Thursday	4 th Thurs, monthly	Global Education Security Standards (GESS)	Steve Smith
Thursday	1 st Thurs, Qrtly (2 nd month)	Vendor Project Team	Penny Murray
NORTH AMERICA			
<i>meetings are based on US Eastern time zone</i>			
Monday	Every 2 weeks	State Requests	John Lovell
Tuesday	1 st & 3 rd Tues, monthly	Unity Adoption	John Lovell
SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team			
Tuesday	1 st Tues, Qrtly (3 rd month)	Enhancements	Penny Murray
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	Developments	Penny Murray
Wednesday	3 rd Weds, monthly	NA Leadership Group	Steve Smith
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	Alliance Leadership	Penny Murray
Thursday	(as needed)	SDPC Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee)	Penny Murray
Thursday	1 st & 3 rd Thurs, monthly	CEDS Alignment	John Lovell
Thursday	2 nd & 4 th Thurs, monthly	NA Technical Advisory Committee	John Lovell

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



Steve Smith
Incoming Executive Director

✉ ssmith@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.

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Alex Jackl
Interim A4L Leadership



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🌐 [A4L.org](https://www.A4L.org) | data.A4L.org | privacy.A4L.org

Connecting and **securing** effective learning ecosystems.

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