

Access⁴

March 2023

Is it really Spring?

by Steve Smith—Interim A4L Leadership

For some of us it is spring. For our AU & NZ members it is the end of another summer. For those of us in the US some have had a mild winter and others very stormy. One thing we all have in common is that as a member of the A4L Community we are all entering a period of rebirth, excitement and renewed energy. The future of A4L is very bright.

The Community's work at the intersection of privacy & interoperability is positioning ourselves to again be a leader in this space. Our ability to insert privacy obligations into the movement of data makes the A4L Community a leader across the globe. The work on PODs (Privacy Obligation Documents) coupled with the soon to be released version 1.0 of the Global Education Security Standard (GESS) is addressing an international issue that no one else has dared to take on. As we have begun to publicly announce GESS, we often hear comments like, "you definitely like a challenge?" or "you really like to take on huge issues!".... Being a leader means taking on challenges that others shy away from. The Community has a history of doing just that. We

are at a precipice of leading the work of *'Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems'*TM across the globe.

Moving forward, the future is very bright with respect to the SIF Infrastructure Specification finally being recognized as the leading data transport mechanism in the PK-20 to Workforce environment.

There are so many great things going on in the A4L Community it is difficult to capture the excitement in a quarterly newsletter. Those of you that are actively involved in the many Project Teams understand the depth of work going on and feel the excitement. Those of you that may not be as involved we encourage you to get involved and be a part of making a positive impact on the education ecosystem.

We are excited to see most of you at our upcoming second annual [Privacy & Interoperability Symposium](#). Reserve your seat soon as space is limited!

IN THIS ISSUE

Global Community News

Welcome new members!; Scheduled Maintenance; Webinar: Data Standards 101; Come Join Us at the Privacy & Interoperability Symposium; The Community Needs YOU!; Support Portal available; The United State of Data Standards; Quality Assurance: Getting New Underpinnings; and Community Project Team updates.

[Page 2](#)

NA Community News

Worldwide Eye on Quality: North America Joins In...; Project Unicorn Rubric updated; CEDS v11 published; and an Announcement to Membership: North America 2023 Elections

[Page 7](#)

Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) News

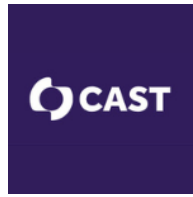
National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2 update; and GESS Project Team update

[Page 8](#)

Welcome new members!



Bellingham School District
No. 501, WA



CAST



Girls Who Code



IncidentIQ



Kids Read Now



PrismsVR



Sergeant Laboratories, Inc.

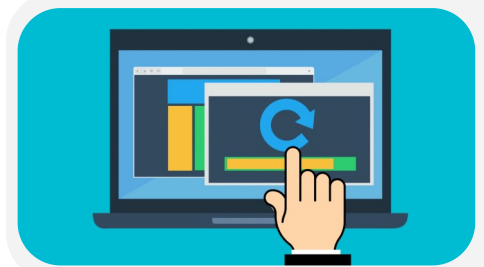
Scheduled Maintenance

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, March 24 until COB on Sunday, March 26, 2023.

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



WEBINAR: Data Standards 101

DATE: March 23, 2023

TIME: 1pm ET

Interested in how A4L Data Standards can be leveraged in your data ecosystem? Join Project Unicorn & A4L for the 3rd webinar in the Data Standards 101 Series on March 23rd at 1 pm ET.

Come away with resources that can help you get started with these standards!

REGISTER HERE: <https://rb.gy/zp6r6s>



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

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

Global Community News

Come Join Us...

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to host its 2nd Annual Privacy & Interoperability Symposium providing two days of “tactical” data privacy and interoperability conversations highlighting real-world work and successful, challenging case studies. Increased interoperability without the inclusion of privacy requirements equals increased RISK. Addressing both privacy & interoperability makes the A4L Community, and its partners, unique.

Audience: This event will be of interest to any/all school districts, State Leaders and marketplace providers committed to data privacy and data exchange.

Thank you to our Sponsors:

~ GOLD Sponsor ~



~ BRONZE Sponsor ~

Cedar Labs



Agenda

We are currently drafting the agenda, but sessions will be held addressing:

- Interoperability and privacy - complexities and dependencies
- Addressing school and vendor privacy concerns
- SDPC Registry review and training
- SDPC Alliance best practices
- Unity Specification Adoption
- Privacy Over the Wire
- Global Education Security Standard (GESS)
- National Data Privacy Agreement V2
- Strategies 101: Group reflection sessions
- Working with other standards: How they can all work together

To download a copy of the draft agenda, please [click here >>](#)

Session Proposal Submissions:

We encourage you to showcase your great work in supporting schools/districts, state agencies, universities

and vendors as they address their various student data privacy issues.

This event will be made up of a mixture of submitted privacy & interoperability sessions – like yours – and expert talks across the learning ecosystem. We encourage you to submit a presentation proposal on the privacy or interoperability work by you and your organization. We are looking for sessions addressing all areas across pK12, SEAs, HE, Marketplace Providers. We need you being “front and center”! We encourage collaboration between marketplace providers and end-users addressing real world privacy & interoperability challenges. Submissions close: March 24

Conference Package:

Member Rate: \$655 p/delegate

****Premium Members get 15% off registration costs.****

For more information, go to:

<https://home.a4l.org/symposium-2023/>

The Community Needs YOU!

by Penny Murray, Community Director

As you may have read in the opening piece 'Is it Really Spring?', the A4L Community is entering a new phase in its existence, which we are REALLY excited about!

As a membership organization, there are two key components to our 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 6](#).

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!



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!

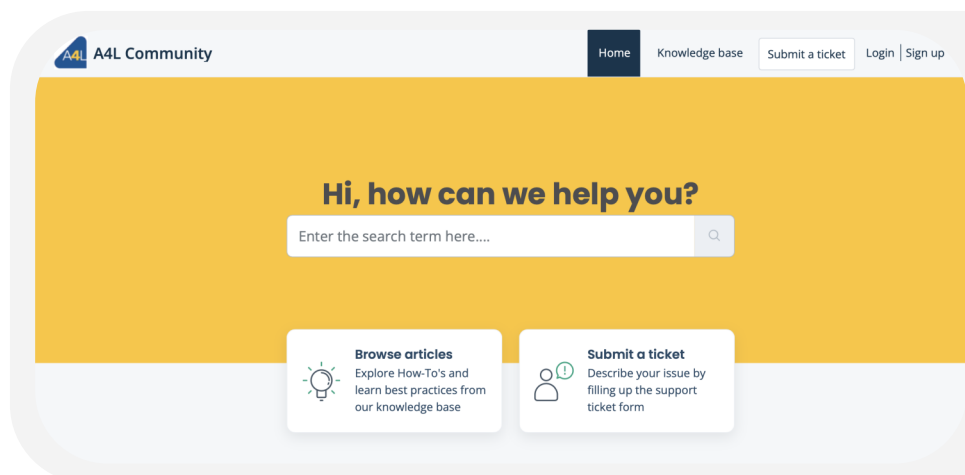
Staff members are on hand to answer your queries—whether they be general, membership, technical, SDPC issues or enhancements requests—and you can submit all your questions simply through the one channel.

You may have visited one of our web-sites 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!



The United State of Data Standards

For those not yet involved, Data Standards United (DSU) is a collaboration of standards bodies and organizations committed to open, accessible standards that move the whole data space forward across multiple vertical and horizontal segments. Direct signatories include Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, Medbiquitous, HR Open Standards (HROS), 1 Ed Tech (formerly IMS Global), Dublin Core, and the Post-secondary Education Standards Council (PESC). Affiliates / Supporting Organisations include the Advanced Distributed Learning initiative (ADL), Common Education Data Standards (CEDS), Credential Engine, the IEEE Learning Technology Standards Committee (IEEE LTSC), and the T3 Innovation Network.

DSU's mission is not to be ANOTHER organization in the cluttered data space but rather a voluntary partnership based on shared values. It is setting out to establish a sustainable collaborative of Data Standards Development Organizations (SDO) & their stakeholders across education, employment, and training sectors to support the global education & workforce digital ecosystem.

DSU's current core values are:

1. Free access to data standards
2. Transparent, voluntary, consensus-based standards development, approval & maintenance processes
3. Public support of the Data Standards United collaborative and of lifelong learning & employment standards

This has been attempted before and in different ways, but we are at a time in the development and use of standards bodies, the rapid evolution of technology, and the ways that data are being used, that this is now getting traction. After two years, the DSU is now starting to move to the next level of what it might mean to be united.

Being "United" can show up in many ways:

- shared principles and values
- coordinated focus on business use cases, processes, and technology
- coordinating and sharing organizational, management, and

possibly even financial infrastructure

Many of the signatories (PESC, A4L, HROS) will be showcasing DSU's current efforts in their spring meetings. We look forward to your feedback, input and suggestions as we move into a new era of partnership!

If you have any questions please reach out to [Alex Jackl](#), Bardic Systems.



Quality Assurance: Getting New Underpinnings

by John Lovell, Technology Director



As we were laying out a Quality Assurance program to enhance SIF Certification, we took on the task of updating the documentation to reflect the most recent changes.

In doing so, staff discovered that software updates had broken the testing

of applications. This is currently being rectified through the buildout of a new server.

We hope to share of our success while it is still early in the Spring!

Community Project Team Updates

GLOBAL

International Technical Board (ITB):

The ITB is prepared to help any other groups that are interested in adopting the global SIF Infrastructure to do so without complication.

Infrastructure: The infrastructure Project Team is in the process of creating a draft for the next release that includes the extension of our error structure and greater OpenAPI compatibility.

Data Model, Mapping & Migration (D3M): Now that CEDS 11 has been released, the D3M looking-forward-to adopting the refined definitions coming out of that communities' process.

A4L Data Privacy: The Data Privacy Team is currently looking for new leadership ahead of the flood of feedback that is expected from the CEDS Community. If you are interested in taking a more active role in Technical Privacy guidance, please contact [Penney Murray](#), Community Director.

Open Source Developers Network (OSDN): The OSDN is currently contributing its work around OpenAPI & JSON to the further refinement of the global SIF Infrastructure in its upcoming release.

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):

The NATB has adopted a strategic direction of quality and is considering seven areas of improvement for their next release. For more information see [page 7](#).

Unity Adoption: The Unity Adoption team's efforts to highlighting the new Grade Pass Back features in the latest release of SIF Unity continue with separate emphasis on the data and its optimum flow.

CEDS Alignment: The CEDS Alignment team is leading the quality charge in North America and reviewing and resolving currently invalid CEDS mappings within SIF Unity.

State Requests: While the State Requests team continues to coordinate requests from Iowa it is also taking a hard look at Student Record Exchange and Student Locator capabilities through our specifications.

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

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: See [page 9](#) 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 enhancement suggestions and plan the development pipeline for the Registry.

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



News from the North American Community

Worldwide eye on Quality: North America Joins In...

by John Lovell, Technology Director

It all started when the international Infrastructure Project Team decided it was time to enhance our ability to communicate specifics when encountering errors. We asked Community members for real-world user stories that could be improved by such an effort...

While successful in garnering the feedback we needed, an undercurrent started to form. "What else that we already do could be made better?"

So, we are taking a break from our pursuit of the next feature to focus on quality! Keeping in mind that none of this is yet final, here are the areas the North American Technical Board (NATB) is targeting for our next re-

lease of the SIF Unity Specification.

- Assessment
- CEDS Mappings
- JSON Documentation
- Open API
- Student Record Exchange

- Student Locator
- Clarity around Deprecation

Members interested in helping with one or more of these efforts should contact [John Lovell](#), Technology Director.



Project Unicorn Interoperability Rubric updated

Just updated, this free resource is an effort to create a shared language between school districts, states, and vendors to evaluate tools across four stages of interoperability implementation.



Encompassing data quality and import/export process, this rubric is a living document allowing stakeholders to evaluate their efforts and tools on their journey to interoperability. Districts can use it to evaluate vendors and implement language from the rubric into RFPs to ensure you are meeting your benchmarks on your way to reaching interoperability standards!

To find out more, [click here](#).

CEDS v11 now available

The National Center for Education Statistics is pleased to announce the release of Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) Version 11 at: <https://ceds.ed.gov>.

The version 11 standards include new data definitions and updated data models to support additional use cases across P20W.

This major version of CEDS includes:

- 23 new elements, and
- 167 updated elements

Announcement to Membership: North American Elections 2023

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community has continued to have phenomenal leadership over the past year. The leadership, guidance and overall dedication to the Community prove critical to our collective successes. With the upcoming Annual Meeting, it is hard to believe that it is time for elections again! Nominations for the North American Management Board and At-Large Technical Board will be available from March 30-April 20, 2023 (inclusive).

The Management Board is elected for two-year terms. This year there will be three (3) 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 A4L Community Voting Participants or employed by or representing an A4L Community Voting Participant and duly authorized to represent that A4L Community Voting Participant but need not be residents of the District of Columbia. An A4L Community Voting Participant Member institution (including associated subsidiaries of an A4L Community Voting Participant) may have at most one representative on the Management Board at one time.

The At-Large Technical Board is elected for a one-year term. There are four (4) seats open for the At-Large Tech-

nical Board members. At-Large Technical Board members must be A4L Community Voting Participants or employed by or represent an A4L Community Voting Participant and duly authorized to represent that A4L Community Voting Participant. You can download the policies and procedures for the Annual Elections as outlined by the Elections Committee on the A4L Community Site [here](#).

We will use a virtual election tool and all nominations must be submitted electronically. The Primary Business Contact will be the official vote for each A4L Community Voting Participant, unless a designee is provided. Please contact Penny Murray, pmurray@A4L.org, to confirm your Primary Business Contact, or organization 'designee' for the 2023 NA Elections.

We will send out information to submit your nomination beginning on March 30, 2023. Please consider nominating yourself, asking someone to nominate you or nominate someone else to run for one of these leadership positions within the A4L Community!

TIMELINE: NORTH AMERICA 2023 ELECTIONS

For the 2023 A4L Community North American Annual Election process, the following dates apply:

March 21, 2023

Announcement to membership that elections will occur

March 30, 2023

Nominations open

April 20, 2023

Nominations close

April 24, 2023

Elections Committee convenes to confirm ballot

April 26, 2023

Ballot released

May 10, 2023

Voting closes at 5:00 pm Eastern

May 12, 2023

Elections Committee convenes to confirm results

May 18, 2023

Elections results announced during the Privacy & Interoperability Symposium in Chicago, IL.



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	Steve Smith
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	Bi-weekly	NA Management Board	Steve Smith
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	Penny Murray
Tuesday	1 st Tues, Qrtly (3 rd month)	SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team	Penny Murray
Tuesday	4 th Tues, monthly	SDPC Management Board	Steve Smith
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Alliance Leadership	Penny Murray
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Global Education Security Standards (GESS)	Steve Smith
Thursday	Bi-weekly	Legal Project Team (NDPA v2 Sub-Committee)	Penny Murray
Thursday	1 st Thurs, Qrtly (2 nd month)	Vendor Project Team	Penny Murray

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
Interim A4L Leadership

✉ ssmith@A4L.org



Alex Jackl
Interim A4L Leadership



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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