

Access 4

June 2025

Building a future where data works for learners...

by Jeff Simons, Co-Chair, Association Board of Directors

As we reach the midpoint of 2025, the A4L Community continues to demonstrate what's possible when interoperability and privacy are treated not as competing priorities—but as complementary pillars of a secure, learner-centered data ecosystem.

This year, the development of the Registry 2.0 initiative has taken center stage. When launched with a redesigned interface, enhanced metadata capabilities, and a growing library of shared agreements, the new SDPC Resource Registry will help districts and vendors streamline privacy workflows while improving transparency and trust. The Registry 2.0 pre-conference workshop at our Annual Meeting was a powerful reminder of how far we've come—and how much more we can do together.



Jeff Simons,
Co-Chair,
Association
Board of
Directors

We've seen Unity adoption expand across new states and systems, reinforcing the idea that "SIF just works." Whether it's powering statewide ID assignments or enabling agile data collection, Unity's flexibility is proving its value in real-world implementations.

On the privacy front, we've made significant strides. The addition of a Director of Data Privacy has brought new leadership and focus to our efforts, from the rollout of Privacy Obligation Documents (PODs) to the launch of vendor training and legal support services. These aren't just new offerings—they're part of a broader strategy to meet members where they are and help them go further.

Whether you're here for the standards, the support, or the sense of shared purpose, thank you for being part of this community. Together, we're building a future where data works for learners—securely, responsibly, and with integrity.

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Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

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

Welcome new members!



CheckForU, LLC



Diocese of Greensburg



Education Service Centers of Indiana (ESCI)



Henry County Public Schools, VA



Instructure



Khan Academy



Kiski Area School District, PA



LessonPix Inc.



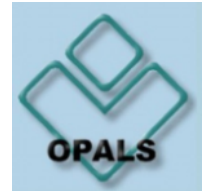
LuxAI Inc.



MagicSchool



MaiaLearning Inc



Media Flex Inc



REMC Association of Michigan



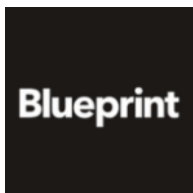
Rio School District, CA



Silver Creek School Corporation, IN



Southern Valley Schools, NE



Spotlight Series Holdings Inc dba blueprint



TrueMark Systems Corp



Valley View Local School District, OH



Westminster School District, CA

Global Community News

SIF Infrastructure powers Workforce data in partnership with US Chamber of Commerce

PRESS RELEASE: US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's JEDx Initiative Advances New Tool To Support Seamless Sharing Of Skills And Credentials

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was faced with a problem. State unemployment data reporting requirements are unique to every state, leaving employers and their Human Resource Information System (HRIS) and Payroll vendors to manage multiple idiosyncratic specifications for data. The U.S. Chamber, in partnership with organizations such as ADP, Workday, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Coleridge Initiative, and Brookings, among others, embarked on a mission. The goal was to create a single data model that standardizes all requirements across the U.S.

After considerable effort, they successfully developed JEDx, the Jobs and Employment Data exchange, which provides a single dictionary of data elements and data relationships. Upon reaching that achievement, however, they were left with another problem. They needed a similarly standard-

ized, easy to adopt, modern, scalable infrastructure. An API that was battle-tested, and could move hundreds of millions of records in a matter of minutes.

To solve their problem, they turned to A4L and the SIF Infrastructure specification. In use for many years, in many states across the United States and globally, the SIF Infrastructure provided an easy to use, flexible, RESTful API that was not tied to any specific data model. Simply put, the SIF Infrastructure was especially designed to move multiple data standards over a common infrastructure, making it the perfect solution for JEDx.

As an added bonus, it creates an environment where a single API can connect data across the spectrum of P-20W: from pre-Kindergarten, to K-12, to post-secondary, to the workforce. It's a perfect scenario for policymakers who are looking to build secure, connected data systems to glean insights across otherwise siloed information.

In a stage 1 pilot, conducted in January 2025, the JEDx team was able to move a set of synthetic JEDx-compliant data over the SIF Infrastructure, now re-branded for Workforce as the JEDx API Service, passing tests created by the official SIF test harness, used for cre-

denialing vendors. The use of synthetic data helps avoid the more time-consuming processes needed to ensure data privacy when working with real data, while still providing the authenticity that ensures your test is generalizable to real-world settings. The team is now underway with a stage 2 pilot, bringing together Bright Hive (<https://www.brighthive.io/>), the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS), and the states of Arkansas and South Carolina. The stage 2 pilot is using the JEDx API Service to move JEDx-compliant data and LER-RSs from a vendor data system into Arkansas and South Carolina workspaces, which provide repositories of data that also execute business rules, and then into a BLS workspace. This end-to-end test will be the final step before the group is ready to begin using live data, solving real problems in real time for employers, vendors, and state and federal governments. After such a rigorous and painstaking process, the team is thrilled to be at the cusp of meeting their ambitious vision.

[View the PRESS RELEASE >>](#)



Your Voice Matters...

Big things are happening behind the scenes!

Over the past few months, the Membership Committee has been hard at work, reimagining how we serve you. To help shape the future of our Community, we're thrilled to announce a new series of quick surveys, which are being sent individually over the coming months, designed with you in mind.

Why are these surveys so important?

We want to hear about your experiences, opinions, and what you value most about being part of the A4L Community. From membership benefits to events and communications—this is your chance to shape the future!

How long will each survey take?

No more than five minutes per survey! Every response makes a huge impact



and ensures that we're meeting your needs.

We have already sent out our first couple of surveys—MEMBERSHIP and EVENTS. The remaining two surveys—Communications & Community—will be sent out in July & August.

Take the **MEMBERSHIP SURVEY** today!

We have extended the cut-off for this survey, please provide your feedback here by **July 8, 2025**.

Take the **EVENTS SURVEY** today!

Please provide your responses by **July 18, 2025**.

(Surveys are open to A4L Community Members, and require a login).

We can't wait to hear your thoughts, together, let's take the A4L Community to exciting new heights!

Scheduled Maintenance



Our regular maintenance schedule is timetabled for the last Friday of each month from 8pm ET until COB on Sunday.

Scheduled maintenance will be taking place on the **SDPC Resource Registry, SIF Test Harness and operational databases.**

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

SAVE THE DATES!

**2026 Privacy & Interoperability Symposium
March 16-19, 2026 | Long Beach, CA**

More information coming soon—see Page 7!



Community Project Team Updates

ASSOCIATION

Association Board of Directors: The Board continues to meet monthly with a full agenda. In recent months the board has discussed and considered many issues including drafting and adopting the strategic targets for the 2024/25 year. In July, the Board will be attending a retreat where additional long term strategic discussions are expected to take place.

Policy & Procedures: This group are currently focused on updating policies for the Community.

INTERNATIONAL

International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG): In case you missed it, the ITP-LG approved a very important errata that supports systems (especially brokers) empowering asynchronous messaging patterns. It can be found [here](#).

Data Privacy: This group has been switching gears slightly to start and envision what the most impactful view of a Privacy Obligation Document (POD) is and how we should bring it to fruition.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: The GESS project team is working on an RFP for third-party cybersecurity auditors to develop and implement a GESS certification. We anticipate releasing the RFP later this summer. The project team is always looking for new members to contribute, so if you have an interest in edtech security benchmark requirements, please contact [David Sallay](#).

Infrastructure: We have been focusing our attention on supporting the North American use cases around

Privacy Obligation Documents (PODs) and updating our supporting documentation. Also please see the ITP-LG update!

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Project Team: A4L work around AI has found itself in the center of multiple interoperability projects from understanding CEDS in this time of limited resources and transition to helping the employment sector with the JEDx project. AI is here to help us do more with less.

Vendor: The group have reconvened their meeting (every 3 months), providing a forum for Vendors to get together and discuss any issues and/or questions.

AUSTRALIA

AU Leadership Group (AU-LG): The AU Management Board continue discussions on AU activities.

AU Technical Project Team: The AU Technical Board continue to discuss proposed updates to SIF Implementation Specification (AU).

NORTH AMERICA

North American Leadership Group (NA-LG): The NA-LG continues to meet monthly with a full agenda. In recent months the Leadership Group has discussed and considered many issues including but not limited to: Registry 2.0 updates, NDPA updates, vendor privacy training updates and GESS project status.

North American Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC): As Unity gains momentum NA-TAC is starting to consider what is needed most next. For instance, one area they are considering closely is how best to support

JSON-LD. We should no more when CEDS 13 is published this fall.

SEDM: The A4L SEDM project team has kicked off their work around the Special Education Data Model and are coordinating closely with CEDS.

State Requests: The recent accomplishment of this group was to lead the creation of the Discipline Project Team. Details around joining that group will be coming shortly!

Unity Adoption: This team has graciously taken on the role of providing feedback around Unity testing that will be used for SIF Certification.

NDPA: The NDPA project team is currently working on revisions to the NDPA. The revisions under consideration relate to adding requirements around artificial intelligence, adding the ability for a vendor to mark any cybersecurity assessments in Exhibit F, and clarifying that alliances can include best practices in Exhibit G. We anticipate that these revisions will go through Community Review soon and be available for SDPC members to use toward the end of this year.

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

SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): This group is currently working on developing a rubric for consistent evaluation of enhancement requests for Registry 2.0. The group would greatly benefit from Vendor involvement, so if you are interested, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director, for more information!

News from the North American Community

SIF Unity Certification Reaches Major Milestone

The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is pleased to announce a major milestone on the path to full SIF® Unity Certification: vendors can now generate **Conformance Statement Questionnaire (CSQ)** files that fully describe their implementations across the entire Unity Data Model. This marks a key step in enabling consistent, comprehensive certification for the next generation of interoperable solutions.

CSQs Now Cover the Entire Unity Data Model

The updated CSQ Editor allows vendors and developers to formally declare which objects, elements, and services they support—across the full Unity specification. While the technical framework for certification testing is still being finalized, this new capability ensures that **what needs to be tested can now be accurately and consistently described**.

Steve Setzer, CEO of Loop Data, shared his perspective on the tool's significance: *"I have personally reviewed the updated CSQ Editor in depth. It will definitely smooth the path for SIS vendors in the states where our company already provides SIF Unity integrations, and speed up Unity adoption in the other states that engage us."*

This milestone empowers implementers to take the next step toward certification readiness and lays the groundwork for clear, structured validation of their solutions.

Asynchronous Providers Now Supported

As part of ongoing Unity enhancements, support for **Asynchronous Providers** has been added. This capability allows providers to respond to requests after processing is complete—making it ideal for **long-running tasks**, including those that require **manual review or human interaction**. This change:

- Reduces strain on systems during peak demand
- Enables scalable, human-in-the-loop workflows
- Simplifies security in brokered environments by allowing multiple providers to operate behind a single endpoint—reducing infrastructure complexity and minimizing the overall attack surface

Together, these updates enable more scalable, secure implementations while maintaining alignment with the Unity standard.

What's Next

This progress is part of a larger, phased approach to supporting Unity Certification and adoption. As the community finalizes certification testing infrastructure, vendors are encouraged to begin preparing CSQs using the updated editor—positioning themselves for early participation once testing begins.



SAVE THE DATES!

Anchors Aweigh!

Save the Dates for the 2026 A4L Community Privacy & Interoperability Symposium.

We're setting sail for something big! Mark your calendars for **March 16–20, 2026**, as the Privacy & Interoperability Symposium drops anchor aboard the historic Queen Mary in **Long Beach, California**.



This four-day voyage will feature dynamic privacy and interoperability tracks, lively discussions across a range of hot-topic sessions, and unmatched networking opportunities with leaders and changemakers from across the community.

It's not just a symposium—it's an experience. Stay tuned for more details as we chart the course for 2026!

If you are interested in serving on the Planning Committee, please contact [Penny Murray](#), Community Director.

Browser Behaviors Are Changing: Here's What You Need to Know

by John Lovell, Technology Director

For those who remember the original “browser wars” of the early 2000s, the phrase may conjure memories of Internet Explorer battling Netscape Navigator over speed, standards, and feature sets. Today, we find ourselves in a new kind of browser rivalry—one that's quietly affecting users across the web, including within the Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community.

So, what's happening now?

Modern web browsers—Chrome, Firefox, Edge, Safari, and others—each come equipped with their own JavaScript engines, rendering engines, and performance optimizations. And while they generally play nicely with standardized code, subtle (and sometimes major) differences have begun to emerge:

- **JavaScript engines are showing radically different performance profiles depending on the task.**
- **Website features that were stable and dependable for years are suddenly creating roadblocks.**

This isn't a theoretical problem—it's one **impacting members of the A4L Community today**.

What we're seeing in the field:

- In the **Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) Registry**, large drop-down menus—especially those with built-in search—have started to behave unpredictably or load slowly in certain browsers. These are now being reworked for broader compatibility and improved performance.

- In **interoperability testing environments**, the **Conformance Statement Questionnaire (CSQ)** pages contain large tables that can become unwieldy under some browsers. These will be reengineered for better responsiveness and accessibility.

What should you do if you encounter issues?

If you experience problems while using an A4L-hosted system:

1. **Report the issue by opening a ticket** at <https://a4l.freshdesk.com/support/tickets/new>.
2. Include helpful details such as:
 - ◇ The URL where the issue occurred.
 - ◇ A screenshot or screen recording of the behavior.
 - ◇ A list of other locations where you've seen similar problems.
3. In the meantime, try switching to another browser. Often this can serve as a quick workaround while we investigate and implement fixes.

We're committed to ensuring a smooth, reliable experience across all browsers—and your feedback is critical in helping us stay ahead of the curve in this new phase of browser divergence.

Leveraging SIF Unity for Modern Statewide Data Integration: A CPSI Perspective with an Oklahoma Case Study

As an integration partner supporting state education agencies across the country, CPSI continues to rely on the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) to enable consistent, secure, and scalable data integration. The latest version, known as SIF Unity, brings together the SIF 3.x infrastructure and the North American Data Model, offering a modern approach to real-time, standards-based interoperability.

From an integrator's perspective, SIF Unity provides a number of practical advantages:

- **RESTful API support** for efficient, event-driven communication
- **Built-in authentication, encryption, and role-based access control** for data privacy and security
- **Cross-model mapping capabilities** that allow systems to interoperate with other standards such as Ed-Fi and CEDS
- **Support for multi-tenant architectures**, simplifying cloud deployments for large-scale environments

A current example of this implementation is the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), which is transitioning from SIF 2.7 to SIF Unity in July 2025. Oklahoma has utilized SIF for more than 20 years to support statewide data collections. The shift to Unity enhances the state's ability to manage real-time data flow, improve system flexibility, and reduce dependency on batch-based processes.

As part of this effort, CPSI:

- Upgraded Oklahoma's **production cloud environment** to support the SIF 3.6 infrastructure
- Released updated versions of CPSI software tools, including support for event-based messaging and RESTful APIs
- Collaborated with four SIS vendors—**Sylogist, School Insight, Infinite Campus, and PowerSchool**—to ensure interoperability and readiness for the Unity rollout

In addition, the OSDE is launching a new **Data Certification platform** that will be powered by SIF Unity. This platform is designed to improve data accuracy and transparency by enabling districts to review and certify their data submissions before they are used in reporting. Because SIF Unity serves as the underlying integration framework, the system can provide near real-time feedback and facilitate smoother reconciliation of data between local systems and the state.

The SIF infrastructure also continues to support long-standing processes in Oklahoma, such as the automated assignment of State Testing Numbers (Unique IDs). In place since 2007, this system ensures student privacy by enabling secure, de-identified testing data. With SIF Unity, that process gains additional flexibility and improved performance.



Looking ahead, SIF Unity will serve as the foundation for both state and federal reporting in Oklahoma, streamlining the flow of certified, validated data across the K-12 landscape. The integration of SIF into the state's certification and reporting processes reinforces its role not just as a transport mechanism, but as a central component of the education data system architecture.

The ongoing collaboration between OSDE, CPSI, and the SIS vendors illustrates how modern interoperability standards like SIF Unity can be applied in real-world environments to improve data quality, reduce administrative burden, and ensure the scalability of statewide systems.

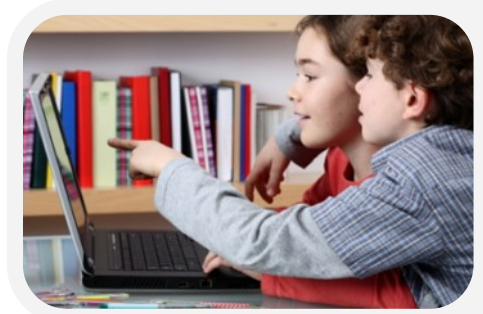
News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

SDPC Resource Registry 2.0: UPDATE

Progress continues on the development and launch of the SDPC Resource Registry 2.0.

The details of authentication and membership etc are being worked through for the initial Alliance to be migrated over. As the first Alliance is migrated both Learn 21 and A4L staff are working very closely together to

ensure both a smooth transition as well as a great user experience. We are all learning a great deal during this process. Subsequent Alliances to be moved over will experience shorter and shorter time frames as processes and configuration are refined. We are all very excited to have the first users in the new Registry!



Experiencing issues with the menus/your browser on the SDPC Resource Registry? Check out the [Browser Behaviors](#) article on [page 7](#)!

Introducing A4L's Vendor K-12 Education Privacy Awareness Training

by David Sallay, Director of Data Privacy

Privacy matters more than ever in K-12 education, and edtech companies need the right tools to stay compliant and protect sensitive data. When it comes to protecting data, the biggest bang for the buck is often training since it provides staff with a quick understanding of compliance requirements, privacy risks, and best practices. Most of the options currently available on the market for edtech companies either cover privacy too broadly with not enough specificity for the K-12 sector or focus mostly on security, an important but separate discipline. To address this gap, earlier this June, A4L released its vendor K-12 education privacy awareness course, making it initially available to A4L vendor members with plans to release it more broadly to edtech vendors later this summer.

The course consists of three asynchronous modules accessible via an LMS covering privacy fundamentals, a detailed walkthrough of the NDPA, and New York's state privacy laws. More details about the course's content and pricing can be found here. Once your company is ready to get started, you can start the enrollment process here. Edtech companies that are A4L members will receive a 20% discount for the training when they sign up using their A4L credentials.

We anticipate that in the future, completion of this training will serve alongside signing the

National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) as an additional signal to schools about the company's commitment to protecting student data. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the training course and figuring out who at your company would benefit the most from taking the training, please reach out to [David Sallay](#), Director of Data Privacy.



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

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
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	Artificial Intelligence Project Team	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 4 weeks	International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group	John Lovell
Thursday	4 th Thurs, monthly	Global Education Security Standards (GESS)	David Sallay
Thursday	2 nd Thurs, bi-monthly	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
Tuesday	1 st Tues, monthly	SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3) Project Team	Penny Murray
Wednesday	4 th Weds, monthly	NA Leadership Group	Steve Smith
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	SEDM Project Team	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	SDPC Alliance Leadership	Penny Murray
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	NA Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC)	John Lovell
Thursday	Every week	NDPA Project Team	David Sallay

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
Executive Director

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. ✉ 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. ✉ pmurray@A4L.org



David Sallay
Director of Data Privacy

Provides advice on the implications of student privacy regulations to schools and vendors, identifying emerging trends, and managing and expanding the SDPC’s data privacy agreements; contributes to the sustainability of the A4L community, building relationships with school districts, technology providers, and policymakers to strengthen and promote A4L and SDPC’s privacy initiatives. ✉ dsallay@A4L.org



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