

Access⁴

March 2025

Reflections on the past decade

by Ben Silbergliitt, Co-Chair, Association Board of Directors

I can still remember my first A4L conference in 2016. Walking into the room, filled with people whose names I recognized from emails and phone conversations, the “old guard” of SIF. I had so much respect for that group that had founded not just a standard but a movement, a cause worth fighting for, to simplify the way education data was shared across the rapidly increasing number of software systems that schools, districts, and states were using to manage the operational and instructional business of education. And I also saw opportunities for change and modernization, as we looked to move forward and continue to ensure that our cause was relevant to the needs of our stakeholders. I found a like-minded group within the organization, and together we created exciting new possibilities at A4L.

And now, looking back, it’s incredible to see what the hard work of such a dedicated group of A4L staff and volunteers has been able to bring. The growth of the SDPC, the evolution of the NDPA and the Registry 2.0, the modernization of SIF with Unity, the birth of the PODs, the GESS work, so many new capabilities have been de-

veloped to help meet the needs of educators across the globe. It has been one of the more satisfying experiences of my career, to be a part of helping guide this organization through a period of significant change and upheaval, and land on the other side with a thriving organization that provides relevant, modern interoperability and privacy solutions to educators. We are continuing to realize the dream of those founding members, while continually transforming ourselves to stay both in step and a step ahead of the organizations we serve.

A key reason we are so successful at this is that we are a heavily volunteer-driven, participatory organization. Rather than being guided by a large staff or an opaque funding organization, A4L is membership-funded, lean, and the work we do is guided primarily by all of us. Does that make things messy sometimes, when lots of people are at the table who have different priorities and perspectives? Absolutely. Once we navigate that diversity of ideas, does that make for lasting, impactful change that directly meets the needs of the Community? As we say here in my home state of Minnesota, you betcha. And the success we are seeing is the proof: our Community model works.

A4L is a growing community with talented leadership, both on staff and in our volunteer membership. I want to personally recognize Steve Smith and

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Ben Silbergliitt,
Co-Chair,
Association
Board of
Directors

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Reflections on the past decade

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his leadership; his unassuming yet determined work ethic and broad vision have been instrumental to our rebirth. And I also want to thank my board co-chair, Ramah Hawley, who provides not just a fantastic counterpoint and balance to our shared leadership, but a wealth of ideas and a passion for making the lives of educators and students better. In addition to being inspiring, you both made this work a lot of fun.

As my career takes a new direction, I am stepping away from the A4L Board of Directors. I look forward to seeing new leadership and new ideas emerge from the many talented people that

are a part of our Community – the next “new guard”. I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to help lead this organization, and for your support as we worked together to navigate change. We have truly emerged stronger.

Yours in partnership,
Ben Silbergliitt



*Ramah Hawley
Co-Chair,
Association
Board of Directors*

As Ben Silbergliitt steps down from his role as Co-Chair of the A4L Board, we extend our deepest gratitude for his extraordinary leadership, dedication, and contributions to our community. His commitment to advancing data interoperability, data privacy, and supporting educators has made a lasting impact on the A4L mission.

Ben, thank you for your guidance, passion, and hard work. We wish you all the best in your next endeavors and know that your influence will continue to shape the future of education and technology.

A welcomed change of seasons

by Steve Smith, Executive Director

Whether you are looking forward to spring flowers in the US or the crisp fall mornings in AU and NZ, we are all welcoming a change of the seasons. Along with the change is a wave of excitement and momentum throughout the A4L Community.

For those of you that were able to attend this year's annual meeting you know what I'm talking about. For those that were not in attendance, this year's conference was one of the best in many years. The enthusiasm for the work and the overall excitement of the community was palatable. Please see the Annual Meeting Overview story on [page 4](#) for further details.

We are already beginning to plan next year's annual conference which will be bigger and better than ever. We hope to announce dates and a location in the coming months so everyone can plan ahead.

It is clear coming out of the annual meeting that some of our priorities for the coming months are; launching of the Registry 2.0, the next version of the NDPA, further adoption and support of SIF Unity, ongoing support of the SIF Infrastructure and supporting the larger CEDS community.

Besides these high level priorities there is a great deal of work going on in the project teams and Board committees. The level of member involvement and commitment is extremely high and the current success of the entire A4L Community is directly correlated to the commitment of our members. I sincerely appreciate the time and effort that all of our member volunteers put in.

Speaking of member service to A4L, As you will see in Ben Silbergliitt's update from the Board, Ben is making a career change which will cause him to

step down from the Association Board of Directors, and as an A4L Community member.

Ben's commitment to the A4L Community has been outstanding! Ben has served on the A4L Association Board of Directors for the past 5 years and has played a critical role in both stabilizing the organization during turbulent times as well as creating a solid foundation upon which the community's work will flourish.

I personally want to thank Ben for his leadership and guidance over the past few years as we worked to ensure A4L was positioned well to continue to serve our members in the areas of both privacy and interoperability.

Please join me in sending a large THANK YOU to Ben!

Welcome new members!

★ **NEW RECORD!** ★
24 new A4L Community members
in the 1st quarter of 2025!!



Agile Sports Technologies, Inc. dba
Hudl



Airia



Burns Science and Technology Char-
ter School, FL



Clarkston Community Schools, MI



Class Solver LLC



Detroit Country Day School, MI



Ereflect Inc



EssayGrader



Fit First Technologies US Inc.



Hopewell Valley Regional School
District, NJ



Itopia



Jasper County School District, SC



KC7 Foundation, Inc.



Louisville Public Schools, NE



NJETA (New Jersey Education and
Technology Associations)



Pitt County Schools, NC



Powhatan County Schools, VA



Pulaski Community School District,
WI



Readable English



Richland County School District One,
SC



Saratoga Union School District, CA



SP Applications Holdings LLC dba
SolidProfessor



SpedTree



Vertical Raise, LLC

Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

Global Community News

A4L Annual Meeting 2025: OVERVIEW

by Penny Murray, Community Director

What an amazing time we had at the A4L Annual Meeting 2025!

We were absolutely thrilled by the fantastic turnout this year, and we want to extend a huge round of applause to the phenomenal Planning Committee — Patrick Devanney (Classlink), Alex Jackl (Bardic Systems), Jill Pierce (TETA), and A4L Staff — along with our brilliant Presenters who made the event shine. But most importantly, a massive thank-you to YOU, our incredible attendees! Your guidance, expertise, and energy brought this event to life, and we couldn't have done it without you.

Day One: A Strong Start

The week launched with the Association Board of Directors meeting, setting the stage for collaboration and progress. This was followed by a joint session uniting members of the North American Leadership Group (NA-LG) and the International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG). Together, we reflected on strides made toward this year's Strategic Goals and brainstormed future directions.

Attendees then split into two action-packed workshops:



- **SDPC Resource Registry 2.0 Workshop:** Hosted by Learn21, this workshop offered an exclusive look at the upcoming Registry 2.0 system, set to debut in 2025. The interactive session allowed participants to get hands-on with the system and contribute valuable feedback.
- **Unity/Implementation Workshop:** This workshop revisited key points from the last in-person event and took a deeper dive into technical upgrades from the latest SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 and the forthcoming SIF Unity Specification 4.4 release.

We capped off the day in style with our much-loved 'Social Networking Reception,' a relaxed and lively opportunity for attendees to mingle, catch up, and forge new connections.

Day Two: Diving Deeper

We kicked things off with introductions and a fun 'get to know you' session, which set the tone for the day. The 'State of A4L' presentation followed, where Project Team leads impressed us with their progress updates and plans for the future.

After a quick refreshment break, we split into two highly-focused tracks:

- **Privacy Track:** This track explored fascinating and crucial topics, including AI & Privacy, enhancements to the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2.1, automating privacy with PODs in education, and navigating shifting policies. The track concluded with an impactful session led by SDPC Alliance Leads, moving from best practices to actionable compliance.

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A4L Annual Meeting 2025: OVERVIEW

(Continued from page 4)

- **Interoperability Track:** Attendees here delved into exciting collaborations with HR Open Standards, modernizing Unity to scale up state operations, and harnessing AI to improve interoperability. The track also showcased innovative projects like transforming special education data practices and the Data Standards United Ontology Project.

The evening was a free and flexible opportunity for attendees to make dinner plans, explore the local area, and enjoy Crystal City's charm.

Day Three: Wrapping Up with Inspiration

The final day began with an empowering general session led by Kathy Warren and Alexandra Cookson, who shared insights on 'Strengthening The Circle: The Interoperability of People.' From there, we continued with both privacy and interoperability tracks:

- **Privacy Track:** Sessions here tackled critical issues like managing

data breaches, privacy obligations, and an engaging session aptly titled 'Data Breach Apocalypse,' led by Ross Lemke of PTAC.

- **Interoperability Track:** Discussions focused on the migration to Unity and advancing the Special Education Data Model (SEDM) in CEDS.

For the grand finale, everyone came together for a highly informative general session moderated by Heather Mahoney, where a visionary panel dove into shaping and strengthening data ecosystems for the future. The esteemed panel included Ramah Hawley (TEC, MA SDPC Alliance), Eric Levy (Cambridge Public Schools, MA), David Sallay (A4L Community), Amelia Vance (Public Interest Privacy Center), Bill Fritz (Learn21), and Neal Richardson (Richardson Cyber Security).

Finally, we rounded out the afternoon with joint sessions hosted in partnership with PESC. Attendees engaged in thoughtful discussions on a draft NDPA for Higher Education and received a comprehensive update on the Data Standards United Digital Freeway Project.

The presentation slides are now available in the [Presentation Archive](#) on the A4L website.

We hope you're as excited about the future as we are, and we can't wait to see you all again soon!

ATTENDEES: Don't forget to submit your feedback by April 4, 2025!



Connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems.

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

A Call To Action For Education Technology Stakeholders

BLOG: <https://a4l.org/a-call-to-action-for-education-technology-stakeholders/>

The time has come for all stakeholders to unite and tackle the pressing security challenges in the Educational Technology (EdTech) sector. Data breaches are escalating in both frequency and severity, leaving student information vulnerable. A lack of coordination across the marketplace, driven by inconsistent controls and fragmented legal requirements, has only exacerbated the problem. However, there is hope. Through collaboration and a shared commitment to securing the educational ecosystem, we can create a safer environment for all EdTech products and services. Adopting and consistently adhering to standardized controls is essential. Many recent data breaches may have been avoided entirely if these measures had been in place.

Access 4 Learning (A4L), through the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), has a proven track record of facilitating the collaborative work required across the EdTech ecosystem. The SDPC's development of and implementation of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA), in use in over 6000 US districts addressing over 12,000 applications, is evidence of the potential of a Community driven effort to make a difference. I believe we can

build upon this success and leverage the Community to address the increasing security issues.

In such an effort to address the lack of common expectations around security controls in EdTech products, the SDPC developed the Global Education Security Standard (GESS). GESS is not a new set of controls, but rather a matrix, or crosswalk of existing security controls in cybersecurity frameworks that are appropriate and required for EdTech products. These are intended to be a single set of controls to be adopted across the ecosystem, meeting any jurisdictional requirements that may exist across all US States, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. At their core are the principles of 'Privacy by Design', 'Privacy by Default', 'Security by Design' and 'Security by Default'. If these controls had been adopted and adhered to by EdTech providers many of the recent data breaches may have been avoided.

I believe we all want the same thing; a secure and effective EdTech ecosystem for learners. The only way to accomplish this is to work together with a common goal. It is not easy work, but as the SDPC's success with the NDPA illustrates, it is possible. Thus, I'm calling for everyone associated with the EdTech ecosystem to join us in continuing to develop, adopt, build awareness of and create a certification program for GESS. Schools, districts, state educational agencies, education service agencies, and marketplace providers are all encouraged to join in this effort. Together we can create a secure learning environment for all learners.

Steve Smith
Executive Director, A4L Community

In Case You Missed It!

On January 22, 2025, the A4L Community hosted a webinar on **Navigating Data Privacy Challenges in AI-driven Edtech Tools**. The webinar focussed on the integration of AI in education and how it raises complex questions about student data privacy. A panel discussion convened experts from AI EdTech companies, student data privacy advocates, and the Future of Privacy Forum to explore the evolving landscape of data privacy in the age of AI.

The webinar recording can be found in the [Presentation Archive](#).

Navigating Data Privacy Challenges in AI-driven Edtech Tools



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.



A4L Community publish the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 (global) supporting greater compatibility, future-proofing, and streamlining integration

PRESS RELEASE: <https://a4l.org/a4l-community-publish-the-sif-infrastructure-specification-3-7-global-supporting-greater-compatibility-future-proofing-and-streamlining-integration/>

Washington, DC, 21 January 2025—The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to announce the release of the collaboratively developed global SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 (global) which is unique in the technical standards world in that it supports data movement via greater interoperability by standardizing 'data and privacy on the wire'.



The SIF Infrastructure Specification is an open standard, which is used globally to enable data exchange, and has been rigorously tested to ensure performance and scalability.

This latest release builds on the previous version, introducing technical advances and benefits as follows:

Move Zone, Context, and Last Message Indicators

Changing how we handle certain data in our system to make sure it works better with major cloud providers. Instead of using HTTP Matrix Parameters, we are moving to using HTTP Header and Path Parameters. This update will improve compatibility and help ensure our services are ready for the future.

Clarify Asynchronous Choreography Details

Making it easier to understand how the SIF Specification handles delayed responses by updating our documentation. These updates focus on areas like paging, service paths, tracking changes, and special queries. Additionally, for certain types of responses, we will no longer require the 'content-type' header for successful responses that don't have any content. These changes will make it easier to integrate systems and improve reliability.

Building on Our Previous Quality Release

Further refining documentation and enhancing error reporting to streamline the integration experience. These clarifications and improvements help implementers better understand and troubleshoot the specification, ultimately delivering a more robust and user-friendly standard. By providing clearer guidance on handling errors and documenting common integration scenarios, the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 empowers technology providers to diagnose and resolve issues more efficiently, ensuring smoother data exchange and greater interoperability in the global education marketplace.

New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education (Australia) engaged with the A4L Community on Matrix Parameters limitations within the SIF Infrastructure Specification. A4L Community members promptly responded and resolved this issue, enhancing the SIF

OpenAPI implementation. The Department greatly appreciates A4L's support and collaboration, and we look forward to continuing our productive partnership and the use of SIF Specification within the NSW Education integration eco-system.

Steve Setzer, CEO of Loop Data, said "The SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 (global) release marks a key success point for the first SIF project to use asynchronous providers. Student information system vendors serving around 100 Virginia school districts now use HTTP Headers and the delayed provider choreography in a two-way exchange to retrieve state testing identifiers reliably and quickly."

[VIEW AS PDF](#)



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 but not limited to: contract approvals, CEDS support via the Education Data Unlimited organization, approving new and updated policies, approving committee charters, and an honorary membership awarded to Mark Williams.

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

INTERNATIONAL

International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG): As you will read on [page 7](#), we have successfully published the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.7 (global)!

Data Privacy: This project team is continuing to oversee two sub projects; Development of Privacy Training & Certification curriculum for both vendors and educators; POD Proof of Concept project. Both of these projects are making positive movement forward.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: The GESS project team is focused on strategies to build awareness and promote adoption. In addition the project team released an RFI looking for providers interested in developing a program to certify or assure vendor alignment to the GESS controls. We are pleased with the response we received from this RFI. The project team is always looking for new members to contribute. If you have an interest in EdTech security benchmarks requirements please get in touch!

Infrastructure: The Infrastructure Project Team has started to look at feedback from the North American community surrounding their use of the Privacy Obligation Documents (POD) in both the 2nd POD pilot project and the 1st JEDx pilot.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Project Team: The AI Team is excited to help the North American effort to map SIF Unity to CEDS more fully and accurately using AI based tools. As a natural extension of this effort we will be pursuing making CEDS searchable from a supporting website.

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: the appointment of new NA-LG representatives to the Association Board, Registry 2.0 updates, vendor privacy training updates and the approval of the release of the NDPA v2.1.

North American Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC): NA-TAC's leadership was pleased to share the scope

of the upcoming Unity release at the recent A4L Annual Meeting ([link to slide deck](#)).

CEDS Alignment: Our CEDS alignment work is currently being done by our Artificial Intelligence (AI) Project Team with humans to provide oversight expected from the State Requests team. If you would like to be involved with this work, please contact our Technology Director [John W. Lovell](#).

State Requests: State Requests would like the Community to know that they are fielding multiple requests from states to relax some of the mandatory elements currently found in the Unity Specification. Concerns should be brought to the attention of Technology Director, [John W. Lovell](#).

Unity Adoption: Unity Adoption is focussing their efforts on bridging the gap between a strong Specification and real-world implementation. They are currently considering the needs of SISes in specific states that are adopting Unity.

NDPA: Having recently released NDPA v2.1, this group are now looking at edits for a NDPA v3 release.

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

A4L Community Announce North American Leadership for 2025–2026

PRESS RELEASE: <https://a4l.org/a4l-community-announce-north-american-leadership-for-2025-2026/>

Washington, DC, 20 March 2025—The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to announce the North American Leadership Group for 2025. The Leadership Group brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in education, data management, privacy, security, and business acumen. The Leadership Group will oversee management of the SIF Specification and the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) as well as contribute to the development of strategies for the global Community, and guiding development of the A4L Community in North America.

Community members elected to serve on the 2025 North American Leadership Group (NA-LG) for a two-year term are:

- Christopher Campbell, Idaho State Board of Education
- June Gerred, Oklahoma State Department of Education
- Eric Levy, Cambridge Public Schools
- Jim McGlynn, Public Consulting Group
- Jill Pierce, Tennessee Education Technology Association (TETA)
- Dawn Schiavone, Northern Buckeye Education Council, OH
- Kathy Warren, Maine Department of Education

In addition, the following A4L Community Member has been offered a 1-year term to serve on the 2025 North

American Leadership Group (NA-LG):

- Jennifer Sauro, Infinite Campus

"I am delighted by the high-level of interest in leadership roles within the A4L Community for this year's election cycle, and I'm pleased to welcome such a strong group of individuals with long-standing experience in education data management, privacy, and security" stated Steve Smith, Executive Director, A4L Community. "I have great confidence in their ability to contribute to the Community's vision of 'Connecting and Securing an Effective Learning Ecosystems'™ for the coming term."

These elected members join fellow A4L Community members who will serve the second of their 2-year term on the North American Leadership Group:

- Connie Coy, MOREnet
- Louise DeCandia, NY State Dept of Education
- Patrick Devanney, Classlink
- Ramah Hawley, The Education Cooperative
- Tim McIlvain, Learning Technology Center of Illinois
- Josh Olstad, Oyster River School District, NH
- Ben Silberglitt, Level Data
- Jeff Simons, WSIPC



[VIEW AS PDF](#)

SIF Unity Story: Oklahoma

USE CASE: <https://data.a4l.org/resources/#Use-Cases>

Started in 1997 by vendors and schools collaborating, the SIF Association – now the Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community – is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of more than 3,000 schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants who collectively address all aspects of information management and access to support learning. The A4L Community supports these educational stakeholders in establishing common expectations in the “connecting and securing effective learning ecosystems” regardless of the platform hosting those applications to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach.

The “SIF Unity Story” focusing on Oklahoma marks the first in a series of SIF Unity Stories. Initially developed over 25 years ago, the SIF Specification is now leveraged in more than a dozen states as a key component of their statewide data systems. SIF Unity represents the latest implementation approach, seamlessly integrating the global [SIF Infrastructure Specification](#) with the [North American SIF Data Model Specification](#) to ensure future-ready data interoperability.

For many years, the SIF Specification has served as the backbone of data collection and management systems in several states—Oklahoma being one of them.

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) has been utilizing SIF Specifications for over two decades. According to June Gerred, Program Director of Data and Information Systems: “SIF is the protocol for all student data collection from district vendors. 4.3 is used for API integration with inbound and outbound data for Special Education, API for inbound

data for EduSkills, and 4.3 API is currently in testing with district SIS vendors.” The OSDE is now in the process of transitioning all SIS vendors in the state to the latest SIF Unity specification.

Since 2007, the SIF Data Model and Infrastructure has enabled the State of Oklahoma to automate the assignment of State Testing Numbers (Unique IDs) to students, ensuring student privacy and de-identification for testing. As a robust data integration framework, the SIF model facilitates secure and private data sharing between applications, eliminating the challenges of managing and tracking student data stored in static files.

The OSDE works with CPSI to develop and support their data infrastructure. According to Aziz Elia, CTO of CPSI, Oklahoma’s move to Unity will leverage event-driven messaging, allowing real-time updates from districts. This transformation will enhance the state’s ability to collect attendance, enrollment, and assessment data with minimal latency.

“The SIF 3.6 infrastructure plays a pivotal role in our projects due to its modern features,” says Elia, highlighting key capabilities:

- Support for RESTful APIs – Enables seamless integration with cloud-based systems and modern SaaS applications.
- Multi-Tenant Support – Allows state and district systems to share infrastructure while ensuring data privacy and security.
- Enhanced Security – Built-in encryption, authentication, and access control ensure compliance



with regulations like FERPA.

- Cross-Model Mapping – Facilitates interoperability between different data models (Ed-Fi, CEDS, OneRoster), simplifying ecosystem management.

Elia also emphasizes the key benefits of leveraging SIF in Oklahoma’s data systems:

- Real-Time and Accurate Data Exchange – Supports both batch and real-time updates, improving data accuracy and timeliness.
- Cost Efficiency – Reduces custom integration costs through a standardized framework.
- Future-Ready Infrastructure – Ensures backward compatibility and scalability to support evolving educational data needs.

Currently, OSDE collects data from 542 districts and 1,779 schools, covering 697,358 students across four SIS vendors—a process that has relied on SIF Specifications for over 20 years. As Gerred affirms, the SIF Specification is “very robust, evolving to meet education data needs, dependable, and adaptable.”

For more information on the SIF Specifications, please visit: <https://data.A4L.org>

News from the Student Data Privacy Consortium

SDPC Resource Registry 1.0: Access Changes

BLOG: <https://a4l.org/sdpc-resource-registry-1-0-access-changes/>

We are all very excited at the prospect of the new SDPC Resource Registry 2.0 currently under development. The new user interface and enhanced functionality will further streamline the Data Privacy Agreement (DPA) execution process for both districts and vendors.

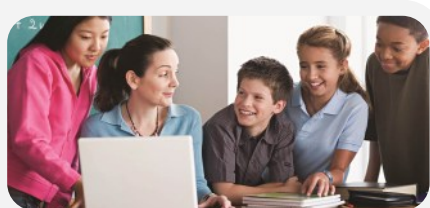
In the meantime, the A4L Community is making a few changes to public ac-

cess to the current SDPC Resource Registry (1.0). All publicly available searches are being removed. As of January 20, 2025 all searches will require a login. These changes are being made for both security and general access reasons. Reducing the surface area of the Registry that are potential targets for malicious activity has become critical to maintain the required stability.

As of January 20, 2025 you will all see a new SDPC Resource Registry landing page. All logged in users will continue to have the same access to searches as they had previously. Only non-logged in users will see any functional changes.

These changes will NOT impact the custom resource listing page (public listing of resources on a school district website).

SCHOOL DISTRICTS: To continue to provide transparency for your parents & teachers, please ensure that you are using the 'Customized Resource Listing URL' to provide information on your school district website. More information on how to obtain / use this URL can be found from the SDPC Resource Registry > Help > User Trainings.



Privacy Training for Vendors... coming soon!

by David Sallay, Director of Data Privacy

As multiple states have requirements for edtech vendor staff to receive training in privacy law, we have partnered with the Public Interest Privacy Center to develop a training course to help them meet these requirements.

The initial offering will cover the following subjects:

- **Privacy fundamentals**, which will include why privacy matters, how privacy is different from security, and a high level overview of federal privacy requirements for edtech vendors (COPPA, FERPA, PPRA)

- **Intro to the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA)**, which will walk through the requirements of the NDPA v2 in detail
- **New York state privacy law**, which will cover compliance with the law as well as lessons learned from enforcement actions against edtech companies

We are currently wrapping up creating the training videos and will make them available in an LMS in the coming weeks. We will also be releasing a one-pager that explains to vendors what the course is and how it differs from

security trainings they may currently be using. We also plan to introduce a badge that will appear in the registry for vendors who have completed the training. This, in addition to signing the NDPA, will be another signal to school districts that the vendor is taking steps to protect student data.

More information coming soon...!



Balancing Innovation and Privacy: Addressing The Challenges of Vetting EdTech Tools for Schools

BLOG: <https://a4l.org/balancing-innovation-and-privacy-addressing-the-challenges-of-vetting-edtech-tools-for-schools/>

When I was a child in school, educational technology (edtech) involved either catching cholera on the Oregon trail or answering geography questions to catch Carmen Sandiego, but technology changes quickly. Today, parents, students, and teachers have access to hundreds of edtech tools that help facilitate communication with parents, provide quicker and more personalized feedback to students, and assist teachers in discovering data-driven insights into what their students really need.

This last point has a dark side: personal data about children and teens are inherently sensitive, and there are privacy risks in collecting, using, and maintaining these records, including misuse by authorized individuals, over-surveillance, commercialization, and data breaches. The challenge is to balance this innovation against ensuring the responsible and safe use of student data. Though many edtech companies are taking this challenge seriously, it does not mean everyone is with the same rigor, and it can be hard for a school to tell the difference.

The fundamental privacy problem schools face is how to effectively vet new edtech tools to ensure they are safe. Several solutions to this problem have been proposed, but the best solution should address the following:

- **Scalability.** There are over 100,000 schools in the United States, and if an edtech tool is safe for one of them, it should be safe for all of them. Without standards and coordination, there will be a lot of duplicate effort. The best solution will minimize not just the number of duplicate reviews, but also the total amount of effort a school must

take to vet an edtech vendor while also reducing the costs for vendors to prove that they take privacy and safety seriously.

- **Accountability.** If a vendor violates the terms of their public privacy policy, they can be held accountable by a handful of agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission, but they are just one agency with limited resources and cannot get to everything. Furthermore, these policies are typically drafted without any input or negotiation from schools, and even good companies are likely to draft terms that limit their liability when a privacy problem occurs. The best solution is one that enables schools and companies to negotiate terms that balance the interests of both parties and provide more options to hold a company accountable than waiting for under resourced government agencies to act.
- **Evolution.** Because threats evolve, edtech tools considered safe a decade ago may no longer meet modern standards. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the FTC finalizing the new rule for the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act earlier this month, compliance requirements are going to change and expect more from technology providers. The best solution is one that will constantly evolve and improve to reflect current threats, compliance requirements, and the state of technology.

The Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), part of the Access 4 Learning community (A4L), scores highly on all of these criteria. It was originally designed to solve the scalability and ac-

countability problems with a standard set of contractual terms called a Data Privacy Agreement (DPA). The real power in this is how it scales: once an edtech company and school district agree to its terms, other schools may subscribe to it, getting the same favorable terms with less work, but we are still evolving. In the coming months, we will be releasing a new vendor registry, which will make the vetting and negotiation process even easier. We will also be working with partners to increase adoption of our Global Education Security Standard, GESS (for more on this, see this [recent call to action](#) from SDPC founder Steve Smith).

The more schools, districts, and vendors get involved with the standard, the lower the costs for everyone involved become. If you are in a school district not currently involved with SDPC, I invite you this Data Privacy Week to learn more about what we have to offer (and if your state is already involved with A4L, then you may immediately leverage benefits from it). Schedule a time to meet with us and see how we can help lower your costs while improving student privacy online.

For edtech vendors that are committed to privacy and have not been involved with SDPC, I also invite you to [learn more about the value of membership](#). We are actively investing in our student privacy program offerings for you, including a soon to be released asynchronous training that you can use to train your staff on privacy requirements (as required in New York's Ed Law 2-D). Moreover, we want you to have a seat at the table to help ensure that terms are fair as we continue iterating on the National Data Privacy Agreement.

National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2.1: NOW AVAILABLE!

We are pleased to announce that the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA) v2.1 has been published on the [SDPC website](#).

The latest release provides minor formatting and typo changes, as well as modifications to the following sections:

- **ARTICLE I: Purpose and Scope**
 - ◇ **1.2 Description of Products and Services.** The inclusion of a 30-day window for LEA's to review an Exhibit A Addendum has been incorporated. This reflects the same provisions as included with the Exhibit B Addendum.
- **EXHIBIT B: Schedule of Student Data**
 - ◇ Data elements must now be identified as Required or Optional for each product/resource listed.

- **EXHIBIT D: Special Instructions for Disposition of Data**

- ◇ All fillable fields have been removed from this Exhibit to try and ensure that it is not completed at the time of execution.

- **EXHIBIT E: General Offer of Terms**

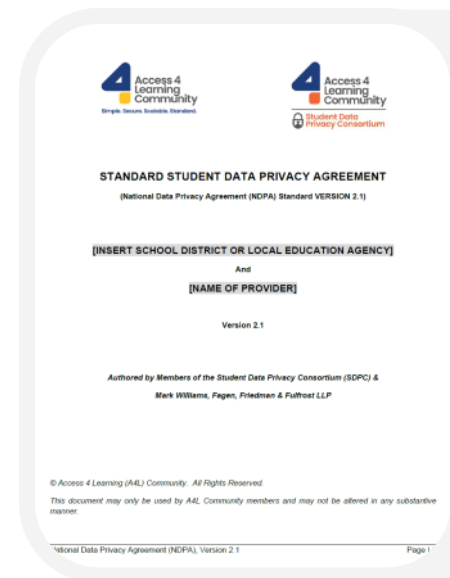
- ◇ The layout of Exhibit E has been increased to three pages to allow for multiple resources to be included.

SDPC Alliances are now in the process of reviewing these changes and making plans to migrate to the latest version.

At this stage, there is no definitive date at which all Alliances must move onto the latest version. Currently Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma and Oregon have either moved, or are moving to the NDPA v2, with Montana and Utah planning to move over in the coming months.

Don't forget to review the NDPA v2.1 Usage Guidance document for help completing your NDPA's!

[View NDPA v2.1 and NDPA v2.1 Usage Guidance >>](#)



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	Penny Murray
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)	Steve Smith
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
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	SDPC Alliance Leadership	Penny Murray
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	NA Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC)	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	NDPA 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
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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