

Access⁴

September 2025

Welcome Back to School!

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

The new school year is well underway, and we want to recognize the incredible work our employees, volunteers, members, partners, and Alliances are doing to support students and protect their privacy. As classrooms come alive with learning, the Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community remains committed to providing the resources, collaboration, and community you need to navigate this important work.



Ramah Hawley,
Co-Chair,
Association Board of Directors

Welcome to Our Newest Alliances!

Please join us in welcoming South Carolina, Colorado, and Hawaii to the A4L Community! We are thrilled to have you on board and invite you to attend our biweekly Alliance Leads meetings. These meetings are a place to connect, learn, and share—because the A4L Community is always here waiting to support you. [See page 2.](#)

NDPA Version 2.2 – Coming Soon for Community Review

We are excited to announce that the next version of the National Data Privacy Agreement (NDPA), Version 2.2, will be released for Community Review in the coming months. This update reflects feedback from our members, and we look forward to your participation in reviewing and refining this important resource. [See page 14.](#)

SDPC Resource Registry 2.0 – Launch Update

Together with our partner, Learn21, we have been working diligently to launch the new SDPC Resource Registry 2.0, addressing key improvements and ensuring a smooth rollout. Alabama is already onboarding, with other Alliances to follow in the coming months. This enhanced registry will provide greater stability, improved reliability, and new features to better serve schools, vendors, and Alliances nationwide. [See page 13.](#)

Together, we continue to strengthen student data privacy protections and build tools that empower our Community.

“Connecting and Securing Effective Learning Ecosystems”®

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Welcome new members!



5-Star Students



Bizi Inc.



Cengage Learning, Inc.



Colegio Roosevelt,
The American School of Lima



Colleague AI



Colorado Association of School
Executives (CASE)



Greater Ohio Virtual Schools



Hawai'i State Department
of Education



Knoword Studio Ltd.



NAVER U.Hub Inc.



Origins AI (dba ForEDU AI)



Project Read AI



Saga Education



SchoolOpsAI



Sigur Solutions LLC
(dba ConnectAthlete)



SmartCampus Systems LLC



South Carolina Department
of Education



The News Literacy Project, Inc.



Wallwisher, Inc. (dba Padlet)

Global Community News

Come Join Us at the 2026 Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) & Unity Convening!

Charting The Future: Privacy, People & the Power of Unity

DATES: **March 16-19, 2026**

VENUE: **RMS Queen Mary,
Long Beach, California**



Set sail aboard The Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA for the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) & Unity Convening—an immersive experience where vision meets action in the evolving education data ecosystem.

This transformative gathering brings together educators, administrators, technologists, and policymakers committed to stewarding trust, inspiring leadership, and building a united education community. Through dedicated tracks on privacy, interoperability, policy, and collaboration, attendees will explore future-focused solutions that empower meaningful change and uphold shared values.

Whether you're anchoring data stewardship or navigating innovation, this convening offers a compass for progress and a collaborative platform to chart new pathways for transparency, unity, and impact.

**RESERVE YOUR PLACE
TODAY!**

What to expect?

The agenda is currently being drafted by the Planning Committee, but a summary of key focus areas are as follows:

- ◆ **Open Data Standards:** Explore the latest developments and advancements in open data standards within the education domain. Understand how these standards can enhance interoperability, streamline data sharing, and contribute to a more connected and efficient education ecosystem.
- ◆ **Privacy in Education:** Delve into the critical aspect of privacy within the education landscape. Discuss best practices, regulatory compliance, and ethical considerations in handling sensitive educational data. Learn how to strike the right balance between data-driven insights and safeguarding individual privacy.
- ◆ **Lifelong Learning Initiatives:** Showcase initiatives, programs, and technologies that promote

lifelong learning. Discuss strategies to support continuous education, skills development, and adaptability in an ever-changing world.

- ◆ **Collaboration and Networking:** Foster collaboration among attendees, including educators, technologists, policymakers, and industry representatives. Provide opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange to create a community dedicated to driving positive change in education through open data standards and privacy.

We are also seeking session proposals from the Community. **Interested in submitting a Session Proposal? [FIND OUT MORE >>](#)**

Who Should Attend?

Education Technology Professionals; Data Scientists and Analysts; Academic Administrators; Privacy and Compliance

(Continued on page 4)

2026 Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) & Unity Convening

(Continued from page 3)

ance Officers; Policy Makers in Education; Industry Stakeholders; Researchers and Scholars.

Why Attend?

- ⇒ Gain insights into the latest open data standards shaping the education landscape.
- ⇒ Understand the importance of privacy in educational data management.
- ⇒ Explore strategies for supporting lifelong learning in an interconnected world.
- ⇒ Network with like-minded professionals and contribute to the future of education.

Conference Package includes:

- ◇ Attendance at all conference sessions during the event, including several 'hands-on' Registry 2.0 workshops
- ◇ Day 1: Afternoon refreshments.
- ◇ Attendance at the 'Social' event on Monday (early) evening
- ◇ Day 2: Continental Breakfast, Morning/Afternoon refreshments and Buffet lunch
- ◇ Day 3: Continental Breakfast, Morning/Afternoon refreshments and Buffet lunch
- ◇ Day 4: Continental Breakfast, Morning refreshments & 'To-Go' Lunch Box
- ◇ Complimentary wireless internet in the meeting rooms

EARLY BIRD RATES are available until October 31, 2025—don't miss out!

RESERVE YOUR PLACE TODAY!

Registrations must be made online, in advance. On-site registrations are not permitted.

Sponsorship Opportunities available!

Is your organization ready to be "front and center" of the fastest growing global educational non-profit community?

2026 Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) & Unity Convening

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Is your organization ready to be "front and center" of the fastest growing global educational non-profit community?

The A4L Community and Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC) will be hosting a four day immersive experience where vision meets action in the evolving education data ecosystem. This transformative gathering will bring together educators, administrators, technologists, and policymakers committed to stewarding trust, inspiring leadership, and building a united education community. Through dedicated tracks on privacy, interoperability, policy, and collaboration, attendees will explore future-focused solutions that empower meaningful change and uphold shared values.

Audience: We are planning for 125 delegates in attendance. Based on previous years, we expect 75%+ of attendees to be from States (Africa, USA, school district and state reps).

LOGO — \$1,000

- Organization logo on event web page
- Organization logo promoted on slide deck during the event

BRONZE — \$1,500

- All the benefits of Logo PLUS
- Acknowledgment at Opening Session
- 4ft 'Vendor table' in the main conference room

SILVER — \$3,500

- All the benefits of Bronze PLUS
- Named as Sponsor (with logo) in A4L content before the event
- Brief introductory remarks at Opening Session
- One complimentary registration

GOLD — \$6,000

- All the benefits of Silver PLUS
- 5-minute Opening session welcome remarks
- Evening "networking event" named sponsor registration

Why Secure a Vendor Table? Visibility, Values, & Engagement. Position your organization at the heart of the conversation by reserving a 'vendor table'. Strategically placed around the perimeter of the main conference room, these tables offer high visibility and direct access to engaged attendees—making them the perfect space to showcase your commitment to student data privacy, interoperability, & community collaboration. Each reservation includes a 6ft clothed table and two chairs, providing a dedicated area to display materials, offer demos, and feature a pop-up stand. It's a streamlined setup designed for impact—not a booth, but a statement of presence and purpose. Let your organization be seen as a leader in shaping the future of education data.

Space is limited, and the A4L Community reserves the right to request the removal of any materials that obscure obstruction or interfere with the engagement or otherwise detract from Community values or mission.

FIND OUT MORE

We have several sponsorship opportunities available, from 'LOGO' which provides your organization's name & logo on the event page, all the way through to 'GOLD' which includes a Vendor Table, complimentary registration for 1 attendee, 5-minute opening remarks, and being a named sponsor at our evening social networking event...

Why secure a Vendor Table? Visibility, Values & Engagement.

Position your organization at the heart of the conversation by reserving a vendor table. Strategically placed around the perimeter of the main conference room, these tables offer high

visibility and direct access to engaged attendees— making them the perfect space to showcase your commitment to student data privacy, interoperability, & community collaboration. Each reservation includes a 6ft clothed table and two chairs, providing a dedicated area to display materials, offer demos, and feature a pop-up stand. It's a streamlined setup designed for impact—not a booth, but a statement of presence and purpose. Let your organization be seen as a leader in shaping the future of education data.

Spaces are limited—lock in your place today >>

THANK YOU to our first GOLD Sponsor!



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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 have been sent individually over the past few months, designed with you in mind.

Why are these surveys so important?

We want to hear about your experi-



ences, 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.

All surveys completed by September 30, 2025 will be entered into a prize draw...

Survey Draw: Any Community Member who completes a survey will be entered into a prize draw for a \$25 Amazon Gift Card (one per survey).

Grand Prize Draw: In addition, if you complete all four surveys you will also be entered into the grand prize draw for a 'Full Suite Upgrade' at our 2026 SDPC & Unity Convening!

[Take the MEMBERSHIP Survey>](#)

[Take the EVENTS Survey>](#)

[Take the COMMUNICATIONS Survey>](#)

[Take the COMMUNITY Survey>](#)

(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!

Global Education Security Standards (GESS): Request For Proposal (RFP)

On August 26, A4L published a [request for proposals \(RFP\)](#) to develop the framework for a third-party certifica-



tion as well as to perform the assessments. We invite proposals from all qualified cybersecurity firms. A4L members can forward this RFP to organizations who may be interested in responding.

Anyone interested in being more involved with the GESS project team can sign up to participate in our regular monthly meetings or reach out to [David Sallay](#) for more information.

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.



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Upcoming webinars

Hosted by the Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, this three-part series is designed to help privacy officers, IT professionals, and education leaders build a deeper understanding of how interoperability frameworks like SIF can support secure, policy-aligned data sharing in the age of automation.



OCTOBER 8, 2025

Data Breaches & Interoperability

What Privacy Leaders Need to Know

Explore how gaps in interoperability—not just hackers—contribute to data breaches. This session explains how frameworks like SIF Unity can help reduce risk and improve oversight of data movement across vendors and systems.

Key Takeaways:

- ◇ How poor interoperability design increases breach risk;
- ◇ What privacy leaders should ask about data flow and access control;
- ◇ How to align interoperability efforts with FERPA and state law

Recommended for: Privacy officers, compliance experts, and school leaders managing data governance and vendor relationships.



NOVEMBER 12, 2025

Interoperability Meets AI

Navigating Privacy in the Age of Automation

AI is revolutionizing education—but also creating new privacy challenges. This session unpacks how AI systems consume interoperable data, what risks this introduces, and how privacy frameworks must evolve in response.

Key Takeaways:

- ◇ How AI tools interact with interoperable educational data
- ◇ Risks related to AI training data and automated decision-making
- ◇ Legal and ethical considerations for privacy-minded professionals

Recommended for: Privacy professionals, IT/data officers, policy advisors, and anyone exploring or implementing AI in education.

In Case You Missed It!

SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

The first webinar in this series was titled **Interoperability 101**. The webinar was a privacy-focussed introduction to the Systems Interoperability Framework (SIF), and its impact on privacy,

exploring how it enables secure and structured data sharing in educational environments.

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

Association Board of Directors Update

Over the summer the Association Board participated in a retreat. This was an opportunity for the Board to take a step back and look at our community as a whole and both celebrate our accomplishments as well as identify challenges and opportunities for improvement. Two themes emerged as focus areas for improvement; the North American Leadership Structure and the A4L/SIF/SDPC marketing and messaging strategy.

To address the North American Leadership issues the Board has decided to split the North American Leadership Group into two separate groups focusing on privacy & interoperability. You can read more about this on [page 9](#).

To assist with the marketing and messaging strategy we have engaged Slalom Consulting. Slalom has been conducting with stakeholders, customers and the marketplace for the past 6 weeks or so. Slalom is currently developing new marketing and messaging recommendations for our community.

The Board remains excited about the positive momentum of A4L and continues to strive to make our community as effective and valuable for our members as possible.



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Community Project Team Updates

ASSOCIATION

Association Board of Directors: See [page 6](#) for more information.

Policy & Procedures: This group are continuing to focus on updating policies for the Community.

Marketing, Communications & Membership: Having recently combined the Marketing & Communications and the Membership Committee, this group have been revising their group Charter and focussing on the development and publication of the A4L Community Surveys (see [page 5](#)).

INTERNATIONAL

International Technical & Privacy Leadership Group (ITP-LG): The group advanced work on SIF Infrastructure 3.8 documentation, AI-based CEDS mapping (see [page 10](#)), and Privacy Obligations integration, while also launching Unity Certification and finalizing the GESS third-party assessment RFP.

Data Privacy: Discussion has centered on using future versions of the SDPC Registry to surface key privacy requirements through PODs.

Global Education Security Standards (GESS) Project Team: The GESS Project Team completed their work on an RFP for third-party cybersecurity auditors to develop and implement a GESS certification. For more information, see [page 5](#).

Infrastructure: Key progress included completing Event and Object Services sections, confirmed OAuth 2.0 client credentials as the preferred grant type, and settling on alternative practices for brokers and POD URLs.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Project Team: The team shared Claude workflows and code standards for large-

scale migration projects, explored memory consolidation tools, helped drive AI suggested CEDS mappings (see [page 10](#)), and learned about the difference between 3NF and 5NF in ontology design.

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): This group is currently transitioning into more focused leadership groups providing attention in the respected areas; privacy & interoperability, see [page 8](#).

North American Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC): The group focused heavily on preparing for Unity 4.4, approving targeted description updates and relaxations while managing state-driven requests and CEDS alignment changes.

***NEW* Discipline:** A solid mix of states and vendors worked through whether to split or clarify the DisciplineIncident object, weighing vendor practices, reporting needs, and schema flexibility; consensus leaned toward clarifying existing fields now, while leaving open the option to split in the future.

SEDM: We expanded our Special Education focus to include refining the

CEDS Conceptual and Ontological Models, introducing updated definitions for fundamental classes and adding an Event class with detailed SEDM milestones (e.g., evaluations, IEP consent, manifestation determination).

State Requests: The participating states reviewed and advanced CEDS proposals impacting Unity, including adding Long Term Status, English Learner Exited Status, and EDFacts Cohort Graduation elements, while recommending the deprecation of duplicative Unity fields in favor of StudentParticipation.

Unity Adoption: The team centered on preparing and refining the Unity Test Harness and Baseline Profiles, with states like VA and OK playing a leading role in testing and certification, and Infinite Campus shaping early requirements.

NDPA: The NDPA Project Team has expanded its membership to include an additional alliance and an additional vendor member. We are currently working on revisions for NDPA v2.2 and will soon be opening up a community review for feedback. For more information, see [page 13](#).

SDPC Alliance Leadership: The Project Team has gotten to welcome several new states over the past quarter and has been connecting them with mentors and resources. If you haven't been for awhile, we meet bi-weekly, and will be covering issues and questions that you can either learn from or help with.

SDPC Resource Registry Roadmap (R3): This group is continuing to review enhancement requests and developing a rubric for consistent evaluation of enhancement requests for Registry 2.0.

News from the Australian Community

SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) 3.6.4 coming soon...

The proposal of update 3.6.4 to the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) has been circulated to the Australian Technical Project Team (also known as the Data Standards Working Group) for discussion on September 18, 2025, with the aim to publish the updated data model in November 2025.

The main focus of the update are proposals to address the use of the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) to support Early Childhood education, particularly in the representation of

care providers through SchoolInfo. In addition, there has been a major update to the Australian Standard Classification of Languages, which the SIF Data Model Specification (Australia) uses to represent languages, and which requires consensus on adoption.

For more information on the SIF Specification (Australia), please contact info@nsip.edu.au



News from the North American Community

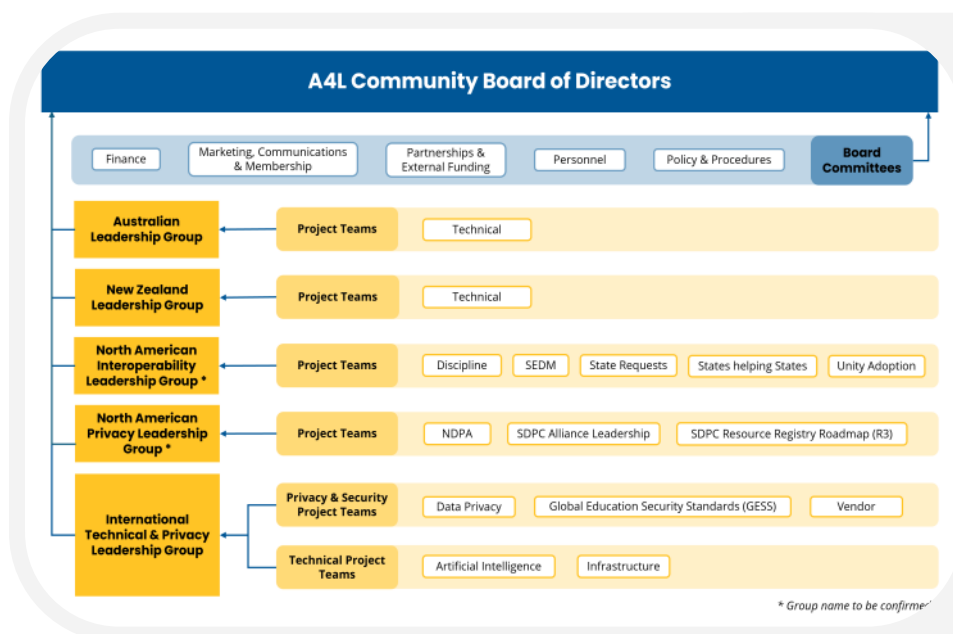
North American Leadership Group changes

Over the summer the A4L Association Board participated in a retreat. During the retreat the Board discussed a number of challenges and opportunities for improvement. One of the areas identified as in need of improvement was the leadership structure, specifically in North America. With so much activity in both SIF and SDPC it has become apparent that there is a need for more focused leadership and Board accountability in both areas. To address this the Board has decided to split the North American Leadership Group (NA-LG) into two separate groups.

The new structure will replace the NA-LG with a NA Privacy Leadership Group and a NA Interoperability Leadership Group. This change will provide the opportunity for more focused leadership attention in the respected areas; privacy & interoperability. The new structure will also provide a more direct path from both the privacy & interoperability leadership to the Association Board.

The exact names of the two new leadership groups are yet to be formalized via the drafting and adoption of new by-laws. The existing North American Technical Advisory Committee (NA-TAC) will be elevated to become the new NA Interoperability Leadership Group. Also, the official re-election to

these new leadership groups will take place in the spring and be coordinated with the planned virtual "Annual Meeting", which is now separate from the Convening in March. In the meantime, these groups will start functioning as independent leadership groups.



SEDM Project Team update

The SEDM Project Team made 4 recommendations to CEDS OSC Jun 2. First among them was an update to the CEDS ontological model. Ed3/ SEDM leaders met with Nathan and Duane from AEM 4 times over the summer and aligned on new definitions to fundamental classes.

At the last meeting, Aug 28, there was agreement for AEM to:

1. Update the CEDS Conceptual Model and Ontological Models
2. Explain the fundamental classes and at least one level sub-class "folders" and the complex relationships between classes, attributes,

and sub-types

3. Use the revised CEDS Conceptual Model to provide navigation to CEDS Ontological Model classes
4. Add an Event fundamental class with sub-classes that include:
5. Add SEDM Standard Event Milestone

AI-Driven CEDS Mapping Revitalizes Data Interoperability in Education

by John Lovell, Technology Director

New AI enhancements deliver stronger semantic matching for SIF Unity to CEDS mappings, paving the way for better data clarity, interoperability, and integrity in the next Unity release.

From Spreadsheets to Smarter Mapping

For years, aligning the **SIF Unity** data model with the **Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)** relied on painstaking manual efforts. Education data teams often used static mapping documents and spreadsheets provided by A4L, which required frequent updates as standards evolved. These traditional mappings, while useful, lacked the granularity to capture nuanced definitions—many data elements carried *multiple semantic meanings* that a simple one-to-one mapping couldn't fully address. Early experiments with AI offered a glimmer of hope, but the initial approach was too simplistic: it generated only **one vector point in idea space to match against**. This was inadequate because it collapsed the nuance of the sentence definition into one idea. This might have worked if the definitions, on both sides, were more carefully written but the community process resulted in definitions that were more complicated. Imagine a low resolution picture showing the shirt but missing the buttons. As a consequence, the AI would miss correct alignments whenever a definition described more than one concept or context. It became clear that a more sophisticated solution was needed to bring mapping efforts to the next level of precision.

Recent Breakthroughs in AI Mapping Techniques

Fast-forward to 2025, and the landscape of **AI-driven CEDS mapping** has dramatically improved. TQ White II, the project lead, took A4L Community's AI

Project Team back to the drawing board and introduced several key enhancements to the mapping algorithm. First, **vector handling** was overhauled. Instead of encoding an entire definition into a single vector, the updated approach can capture multiple *semantic facets of a definition*. Think, adding a separate element that lists the number of buttons missing from the lowers. In practice, this means the AI can distinguish different ideas within one element's description—ensuring that, for example, a field that involves both a date and an event type is recognized in both contexts. This multi-faceted embedding approach directly tackles the earlier one-vector limitation, echoing a broader realization in the AI semantic analysis community toward multi-sense representations.

Alongside this, the **scoring method** for potential matches was fixed and refined. Previously, some genuine matches were scored too low (or false matches too high) due to quirks in the similarity calculations. The revised scoring algorithm now more accurately reflects semantic closeness, giving education data experts confidence that a top-ranked suggestion truly is a strong candidate. Moreover, the team implemented a smarter use of **definition paths**. Both Unity and CEDS provide a hierarchical context for each element (for instance, a "Student->Enrollment->ExitDate" has the context of student enrollment data). The AI now takes such context into account when comparing against CEDS definitions. By including an element's full path or category as part of its semantic signature, the system can disambiguate terms that are identical in wording but different in

domain. In short, the AI "knows" whether a given **definition is about a student, a staff member, or a school** based on where it resides in the model. This improved context awareness was another game-changer for accuracy.



Better Matches: xStudents Domain Results

The impact of these technical upgrades is evident in recent testing. **Education professionals have observed a quantum leap in mapping accuracy.** Recent tests show how these enhancements translate into tangible results. In a focused trial involving the **xStudents** domain (the set of student-related data elements in Unity), the AI-driven mapping successfully identified 72 matching CEDS definitions out of 140 Unity elements. This represents a significant leap in accuracy compared to previous attempts. Such improved hit rates instill confidence that AI can shoulder much of the heavy lifting in aligning data elements across standards, reducing the

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AI-Driven CEDS Mapping Revitalizes Data Interoperability in Education

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need for tedious manual crosswalks.

xStudents Total Elements: 140 CEDS AI Matches: 72

Beyond the numbers, the quality of matches has greatly improved. For example, the Unity field **"contactSequence"** – defined as *"the numeric order in the preferred sequence and priority for contacting a person related to the learner"* – was accurately matched to the corresponding CEDS element **"Person Relationship to Learner Contact Priority Number,"** which shares the same definition. This kind of precise semantic alignment, despite differences in element naming, was often missed in earlier attempts. Now it is readily achieved thanks to the refined AI approach. Education data managers can increasingly trust that when the AI suggests a match, it's homing in on true meaning, not just superficial keyword overlaps.

contactSequence: The numeric order in the preferred sequence and priority for contacting a person related to the learner.

Person Relationship to Learner Contact Priority Number: The numeric order in the preferred sequence and priority for contacting a person related to the learner. (001423)

Practical Benefits for Education Data Management

These advancements in AI-driven CEDS mapping aren't just theoretical – they promise **practical, day-to-day benefits** for schools, districts, and state education agencies working on data interoperability. Some key advantages include:

- **Enhanced Clarity:** The improved system brings out clearer one-to-one correspondences between Unity elements and CEDS definitions. Ambiguities are reduced be-

cause the AI distinguishes subtle differences in meaning. Stakeholders no longer have to guess which CEDS definition fits best; the suggestions are much more on-target.

- **Better Semantic Matching:** By leveraging multi-vector embeddings, context-aware analysis and improved scoring, the AI finds matches based on *meaning*, not just identical terminology. This semantic intelligence means that even if a Unity data element and a CEDS element use different words, they can be matched if their underlying concept is the same – as demonstrated with the "contactSequence" example.
- **More Accurate Data Interoperability:** Higher fidelity mappings lead to more consistent data when integrating systems. When Unity-aligned applications automatically map to CEDS, the data exchanged is more likely to be apples-to-apples. This improved alignment *enhances data quality and integrity across systems*, as consistent standards reduce errors and misunderstandings. In turn, educational organizations can trust their data exchanges and reports to be accurate reflections of the underlying information.
- **Simplified Alignment with CEDS:** The process of aligning local data models to the national CEDS standard becomes easier and faster. Instead of combing through reference documents or spreadsheets, administrators can use the AI suggestions as a reliable starting point. This streamlines onboarding of new systems and aids compliance efforts. By mapping Unity elements through CEDS, institutions can

avoid redundant data entry, simplify federal reporting compliance, and harmonize their data standards with national norms. Ultimately, it saves time and effort for data teams who can focus on analysis rather than manual mapping.

A New Era: What's Next for Unity

With these AI-driven improvements, the stage is set for significantly **improved workflows and data integrity** in the next release of the SIF Unity specification. The alignment work spearheaded by A4L's AI Project Team is ensuring that the Unity data model and CEDS will sync more seamlessly than ever. In practical terms, this means future Unity-enabled applications are likely to come pre-equipped with better "understanding" of CEDS, reducing the burden on schools and vendors to perform custom mappings. Data administrators can look forward to more out-of-the-box interoperability – *an ecosystem where data flows from local systems to state and federal reports with minimal friction.*

Education professionals in roles ranging from data governance to privacy compliance will all feel the impact. Clearer definitions and standardized mappings translate to fewer miscommunications about what a data element means, which is crucial for maintaining privacy rules and ensuring accurate reporting. Likewise, state education agencies can more easily align their collections to CEDS and generate EDFacts-compliant reports without reinventing the wheel each time. "By mapping Unity elements to EDFacts through CEDS, educational institutions can streamline data reporting for fed-

(Continued on page 12)

AI-Driven CEDS Mapping Revitalizes Data Interoperability in Education

(Continued from page 11)

eral compliance... simplifying compliance while improving data quality" – a promise now closer to reality with AI doing the heavy lifting.

For those interested in exploring these AI mapping capabilities first-hand, an **early preview** of the experimental AI-driven mapping interface is available at unityceds.tqwhite.com/namodel. This prototype site allows highly engaged users to test-drive the semantic search and matching features with Unity and CEDS elements. (Be warned: it's a cutting-edge tool still under active

development, best suited for the adventurous and detail-oriented!)

In summary, the A4L Community's push into AI-driven CEDS mapping represents a major step forward in educational data interoperability. What once required laborious spreadsheet updates and guesswork is evolving into an intelligent, assistive process. By embracing advanced AI techniques – from multi-sense vectors to context-aware scoring – the community has achieved more reliable and granular mappings than ever before. These improvements are not only academic; they are poised to directly ben-

efit day-to-day operations by providing enhanced clarity, better semantic matching, and greater confidence in data alignment. As the next Unity release approaches with these capabilities on board, education data professionals can anticipate a new era of smoother workflows and stronger data integrity across their systems. The journey from static maps to smart maps is well underway, and it's lighting the path to a more unified and efficient education data ecosystem.

UPDATE: Jobs and Employment Data Exchange (JEDx)

The Jobs and Employment Data Exchange (JEDx) team achieved a major milestone on August 13 with a 2-hour live JEDx pilot project demonstration. The demonstration was conducted with other U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation JEDx team members and pilot partners such as representatives from Arkansas, South Carolina, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The data package, tools, and processes successfully demonstrated in August all contribute to the overall JEDx goal of "developing a public-private approach for collecting and using standards-based jobs and employment data that will enhance government reporting, workforce analytics, and empower people to use their own records to pursue opportunities and advancement."

The JEDx infrastructure uses the HR

Open Standards JEDx data objects that support Worker's demographic and job information as well as their hours and compensation. The JEDx tools and standard uses the SIF Infrastructure as its Transport mechanism and was built in deep partnership with A4L staff and members. The JEDx objects are also designed to carry Privacy Obligation Document (POD) links with their payloads!

This demonstration used simulated data to successfully test:

- how the JEDx application programming interface (API) can be used to transmit a standardized data package from an employer (or a company that serves as a third-party agent or data integrator) to Arkansas and South Carolina workspace instances in the JEDx test pilot sandbox; and

- how data can be transmitted to a multistate workspace instance that can then be used to distribute data to multiple state workspace instances. This setup may benefit employers or other agencies with locations in multiple states.

The demonstration further showed:

- how data flow from state workspace instances to a workspace instance for BLS; and
- how codes such as standard occupational codes can be applied before or after submission of jobs and employment data.

The QIP team, Bardic Systems, and A4L staff are finalizing documentation from the demonstration and compiling information to inform future JEDx development.

UPDATE: National Data Privacy Agreement

The NDPA Project Team will soon be completing proposed edits for community review. Upon the completion of the Community Review process, we anticipate that these will be released as part of a NDPA v2.2. The Community Review is the ultimate quality control check, so we will want all of the members of the Community to consider what the changes mean for them and their stakeholders and provide feedback.

We will be releasing more information about the Community Review shortly, including key dates and how you can access the proposed changes and provide feedback. In the meantime, here is a summary of the proposed changes we anticipate being included in Community Review.

- ◇ Updating the vendor amendment process to say that a school must *accept* rather than *object* to amendments to Exhibits A and B

after the agreement has been executed.

- ◇ Clarifications to the targeted advertising language that vendors may only use student data for legitimate educational purposes allowed by FERPA and described in the agreement; explicitly bans targeted advertising; clarifies that certain activities are not targeted advertising, consistent with SOPIPA-style state laws.
- ◇ Explanation in Exhibit B as to what makes a data element “required.”
- ◇ Addition of a table in Exhibit F where a vendor can indicate any security assessments they’ve received (e.g., SOC2)
- ◇ Clarification in Exhibit G that states may include privacy best practices (in addition to requirements in state law/rule) so long as they don’t include commercial terms.

- ◇ Clarification in Exhibit H that vendors should not include commercial terms to the agreement.
- ◇ Addition of a definition of commercial terms and a section on COPPA requirements needed to provide context to the above changes.



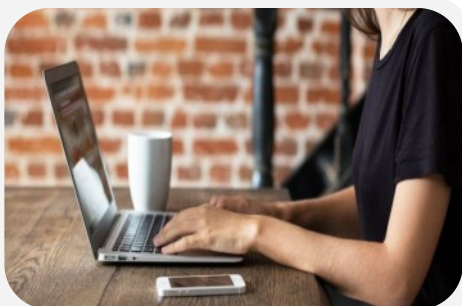
Vendor K–12 Education Privacy Awareness Training

In case you missed it, at the start of the summer, we released our vendor privacy training, which is a course of three modules (fundamentals, using the NDPA, and New York privacy law) designed specifically for edtech vendors in mind, which is especially rele-

vant since laws like New York’s Ed Law 2-D require edtech vendor staff to receive privacy training.

As part of its initial release, we published this [flyer](#) and [website](#) to highlight what we thought would be some of the big questions vendors would have in signing up, including how it differs from security training and costs (as an important side note: A4L members will receive a 20% discount on registration). Now that the training has been available for a few months, we want to know if this information is enough. For instance, have you brought the availability of this training up to your leadership? What questions did they have?

We are also interested in developing a badging program for vendors that complete the training (which will accompany our existing [NDPA badge program](#)). The challenge on our end is figuring out what the threshold for completion should be at a company in order to award them the badge. How many people should complete it? Should certain roles complete it? If you are working at a company that has taken or is planning to take the training, we want your input on how to build this program. To share your thoughts and perhaps set up a meeting to discuss more, please reach out to David Sallay, Director of Data Privacy, at dsallay@a4l.org



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, quarterly	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 Privacy Leadership Group	David Sallay
Wednesday	Every 2 weeks	SEDM Project Team	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	SDPC Alliance Leadership	David Sallay
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	Discipline	John Lovell
Thursday	Every 2 weeks	NA Interoperability Leadership Group (formerly 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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