

Building A Trusted Learning Environment: Understanding the Classroom Practice



Everyone in a school system plays an important role in protecting student data privacy. However, classroom teachers have a particularly important responsibility in the work. This is not only because of their access to student personal information, but also to the special and trusting relationship they have with the students in their care as well as with the parent community.

Maintaining that trust requires always acting in the best interest of the students. That extends to following district policy and procedures on the protection of student personal information, being able to speak to parents about district privacy practices, and being empowered to act as data privacy role models for their students.

CoSN recognizes the importance of ensuring that educators understand how to act as student data privacy role models, and sets out classroom practices as one of the 5 core practice areas of the Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal Program. This guide provides a detailed explanation of the TLE Seal Program Classroom Practice requirements.

WHY THE CLASSROOM PRACTICES MATTER

Classroom teachers are the foundation of the education system. They are the educators, role models, and trusted caretakers for their students, and are often the face of the education system to parents. It's an immense responsibility, yet far too often, they are not provided with the tools they need to succeed in that role as it relates to protecting their students' privacy.

Training teachers about expectations for protecting student data privacy and ensuring that they understand not just the legal requirements, but how they are expected to act in order to uphold district student data privacy policies and procedures is critical. Training should be designed in part to ensure that teachers understand the significant impacts that classroom technologies can have on their students' privacy, and how to ensure that those technologies are properly assessed for privacy and security practices by qualified district leaders before they are used.

However, the work goes beyond that. When empowered with the knowledge about how they can best protect student data privacy, they can do what they do best: teach, model, and communicate.

The CoSN Trusted Learning Environment Seal Program recognizes the significant work involved in creating a school system program that enlists the help of all educators in protecting student data privacy, and that empowers educators to teach their students how to protect their own privacy in the future.

The TLE program includes 4 specific requirements for school system classroom practices. These are not all-inclusive, but are considered fundamental to any school system student data privacy program, and are required in order to qualify to receive the TLE Seal.

Here are the practice requirements:

1. CURRICULUM

Teachers implement a curriculum to promote student information literacy, digital citizenship and Internet safety.

Information literacy, digital citizenship, and Internet safety are just some of the topics that students should be actively learning about to support their safe and appropriate use of the Internet and their media consumption in general. Many districts meet this requirement via their compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Under CIPA, districts that receive funding under the Federal Communications Commission’s Universal Support Services (E-Rate) Funding program are required to “provide for educating minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking Web sites and in chat rooms and cyberbullying awareness and response.”

2. CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGIES

Teachers are aware of and regularly use the school system’s established process for vetting and procuring online services.

As part of the TLE Business Practice requirements, all employees who bring technology products into the school system must be provided with the training they need to understand why the process to assess privacy and security of those products is necessary, how the work helps the school system meet its obligations, and what is expected of employees in order to follow the process.

The Classroom Practice requirement works to ensure that particular attention is paid to free and low-cost educational apps, websites, and other products that would otherwise be easy for teachers to access without going through a formal procurement process. These technologies can present meaningful privacy and security risks for students.

As such, school system leadership must support creation and use of a process to ensure that before those products are introduced into the classroom, the privacy and security practices are assessed and contractual obligations are put in place to ensure student data remains protected. Educating teachers about the requirement to follow process – including why it is an important part of protecting their students – helps to support organization-wide efforts to operate in the best interests of the students.

3. PRIVACY ROLE MODELS

Teachers model appropriate use and protection of student data for their students.

Teachers are role models, and students notice almost everything their teachers do in the classroom. The more that teachers understand about how their behavior can impact their students' privacy and safety, the better equipped they will be to model the behaviors that will serve to help prepare their students to manage their own privacy in the future.

Keeping student grades out of sight of prying eyes, maintaining a safe (and private) place for their own passwords, following the district's technology vetting process, or locking their computer before stepping away from the classroom are all behaviors that serve to model good privacy practices. More overt behaviors, such as pointing out a privacy policy before using an app or website or actively engaging in a privacy curriculum as part of a larger Internet literacy curriculum, all serve to further support students and prepare them for the future.

4. COMMUNICATION

Teacher communications to parents include clear information about the collection, use and protection of student data.

Teachers are the face of the classroom for the parent community. They are the source of information about how each student is performing, what is happening in the classroom, and more. Given today's technology-enabled classrooms, teachers should be empowered to speak to parents about what student data the district collects, how it's used and how it's protected.

Teachers don't need to become technology experts or be required to cover the topics in great detail, but the more they are able to explain to parents about the importance of student data in furthering the student's education and how the district operates responsibly to protect each student's privacy, the stronger the trust will become.

GETTING STARTED

CoSN makes a variety of resources available to school system leaders to support their ongoing student data privacy education. Take the first step by taking the [Trusted Learning Environment Self-Assessment](#) or downloading information on [how to approach your application](#).

From CoSN

School System Privacy Stakeholders:

A snapshot of the many different roles across a school system that have an impact on student

Building a Trusted Learning Environment with Parents:

Quick tips on building trust with parents about your privacy practices.

Our Commitment to You: Clear Privacy Practices (infographic):

- [English Language Version](#)
- [Spanish Language Version](#)

From Our Partners

Future of Privacy Forum in Partnership with Connect Safely and PTA:
[A Parent's Guide to Student Data Privacy](#)

Data Quality Campaign:

[What is Student Data?](#)

[Who Uses Student Data?](#)

About the CoSN Trusted Learning Environment Seal Program

The Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal Program is the nation's only data privacy seal for school systems, focused on building a culture of trust and transparency. It was developed by CoSN (the Consortium for School Networking), in collaboration with a diverse group of 28 school system leaders nationwide and with support from AASA, The Superintendent's Association, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), and ASCD. The TLE Program requires school systems to have implemented high standards for student data privacy around five core practice areas: Leadership, Business, Data Security, Professional Development, and Classroom. School systems that meet the TLE Program requirements will earn the TLE Seal, signifying their commitment to student data privacy to their community. TLE Seal recipients commit to high standards and continuous examination and improvement of their privacy practices.

About CoSN

CoSN, the world-class professional association for K-12 EdTech leaders, stands at the forefront of education innovation. We are driven by a mission to equip current and aspiring K-12 education technology leaders, their teams, and school districts with the community, knowledge, and professional development they need to cultivate engaging learning environments. Our vision is rooted in a future where every learner reaches their unique potential, guided by our community. CoSN represents over 13 million students and continues to grow as a powerful and influential voice in K-12 education.