



## School Data, Student Privacy, and Child Safety During COVID-19

It is hard to believe that teachers who are working so hard to fight a deadly virus while still providing an excellent education to students through a completely new delivery system are now having to battle a vicious army on another front. Those are the hackers, scammers, data thieves, and those who would harm our children online. Most of our schools are ill-equipped to stop them. Schools have grabbed new websites and applications that seem to be serving students' educational needs only to find out that those same programs have opened them up to negative influences in terms of child safety. Each school will need to develop policies that fit their school, students, equipment, and specific uses of web-based technologies. However, ACSI can provide some thought provoking questions and general guidelines to promote the development of those policies.

- 1) Have you looked at the websites, applications, and platforms your school has decided to use during this time? Each one should publish information on how they handle student data. If you see the symbol to the right, you should feel confident that the site is striving to meet privacy standards. The issues that should be addressed are explained on a website entitled *Student Privacy Pledge*. The issues could be grouped in three major categories:
  - a. Transparency
  - b. Parent and Student Data Rights
  - c. Limitations on Commercial Use of Data



The *Student Privacy Pledge* website is listed below. It succinctly lists the safety concerns for students as it pertains to educational sites on the Internet. It is a voluntary pledge but it should give you a way to quickly assess if the application is committed to the safety of your students. Khan Academy is a good example of being very transparent in how they handle data and child protection on their site. (<https://www.khanacademy.org/about/privacy-policy#our-approach-to-data-security>)

- 2) Are you aware of the limitations of the versions of the various applications, and what safeguards each of those offer? At the bottom of this document, you will find two articles regarding Zoom. Some versions of Zoom have safeguards built-in and some do not. Often, the **free versions of programs do not have data security built-in** as they are geared more for one individual to use. Zoom as a company has been making recent changes since their product is being used by educators. For example, they have removed the login through Facebook once they realized that it was collecting unnecessary information. They have also updated their product to provide greater security settings. (See links below.) During this crisis, the professional or school-level versions may be available for free and those may have the needed security features. Be sure to check!
- 3) Are you operating with your school's Acceptable Use Policy (for teachers and students) in place? Have you applied it to the online learning environment? It may need an update.

- a. A related ACSI resource posted with this article, “Virtual Classroom School Policy Updates” is an example of an update for an Acceptable Use Policy that reflects the recording of virtual meetings.

While it may be beneficial for the administrator to be able to view/listen to those recordings as a way to supervise, recording students and archiving those recordings may pose its own problem. If you do record and review those recordings, you might want to think about:

- i. Written permission from parents and students prior to those sessions.
- ii. Who is being recorded? (just the teacher or student & teacher interactions)
- iii. Clear information about who can view the recordings and who has access. (Absent students? Administrators? Parents?) What will the school’s response be for a parent who wishes to view a video and under what circumstances would you honor this request?
- iv. Do you have a policy stating that those recordings cannot be reposted or shared?
- v. Location of the recordings, security of those, and length of time they exist before deletion.
- vi. The process by which they are deleted.

Again, we are not suggesting one policy is better than another, but you might want to address concerns about recordings, if you make them. Most schools are making recordings of sessions so that students who are absent can watch them.

- b. For example, if you do not allow one-on-one meetings in the brick and mortar building between teachers and students, but you are allowing them now in the virtual classroom, what is different? Perhaps you should consider inviting the student’s parent, a school administrator, and/or a teacher aide to be “in the classroom” whenever there will be a one-on-one virtual meeting. At a minimum, you should consider a policy where the parent and/or administrator is made aware of each scheduled meeting beforehand. Guidelines on when those meetings can take place should also be considered, something akin to virtual office hours. You do not want teachers meeting with students at 11pm at night. You might be looking for ways to keep your TAs employed. Perhaps a teacher could keep a log of who they are speaking with in a one-on-one situation, how long those meetings run, and submit those weekly to their administrator. You might want to create guidelines for staff on how frequent they can meet with students one-on-one. Accountability can prevent bad habits from ever starting.
  - c. Have you trained your staff on what is appropriate to share and not share? Teachers may be trying to develop rapport and when sharing from their homes they may tend to be too informal and “overshare.” Are teachers broadcasting from their bedrooms? Teachers may be dressed too informally. All of these might be completely new situations and not addressed in your AUP. Have you set some parameters about what is appropriate?
- 4) Finally, what is your school doing to protect students online proactively?
- a. We suggest starting with a permission slip that addresses that students may be subject to seeing advertising or websites that they access beyond your control, and that the parent is ultimately responsible for student supervision at home (including assessments, at times).

- b. Also mention that scams abound, and while you can make parents aware of this, you cannot suggest a particular product (filter) that will be foolproof to stop these.
- c. Include that students need to follow the Acceptable Use Policy that was in place at the brick and mortar school like not sharing passwords, using only your own account, etc. There may be some additional aspects needed for the new environment.
- d. It is important that parents are aware that their filters and safeguards may not protect mobile devices like phones.
- e. It is important that parents give the school a password protected e-mail address so that confidential information about assessments or a question about online behavior can be sent to the parents.

**Resources:**

**Student Privacy Pledge** <https://studentprivacypledge.org/privacy-pledge/>

**Two articles regarding security for Zoom**

- A Message from Eric Yuan, Zoom CEO & Founder  
<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/04/01/a-message-to-our-users/>
- Zoom has rich security controls to stop this from happening:  
<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-the-party-crashers-from-crashing-your-zoom-event/>

**Student Privacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Resources**

- <https://ferpasherpa.org/covid19resources/>

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