

PRIVACY, SECURITY, AND INTEROPERABILITY

WHY AN INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM MATTERS

Data interoperability* standards can help companies build and maintain flexible, secure, and scalable software. Implementing data interoperability standards can support improved development, privacy, and cybersecurity practices while also ensuring compliance with industry best practices.

Here are 5 ways interoperability, privacy, and security enhance each other.



Clarity - Interoperability standards add clarity to data collection and management.

Data standards are rules used to standardize the way that data are described, represented, and structured. They can include metadata, which is data that provides information about other data, making it easier to find, interpret, trust, and use. Data standards help companies clearly define the data they are collecting and for what purpose. They can ensure that data means the same thing when stored in different systems. This can also help guard against collecting more data than is needed to provide a service, known as data minimization, reducing privacy and security risk.



Ownership - Interoperability has the potential to support data portability and ownership.

Although edtech vendors collect and store student data, that data belongs to and legally must remain under the direct control of the school system according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**. Dozens of states have passed student privacy laws in the past decade and many of those provide a glimpse of evolving regulatory structures and consumer demands relative to data portability and security. Data stewardship and requirements for school system control, data return, and/or deletion have emerged as common clauses in contracts between vendors and schools. Compliance with a patchwork of state laws and differing district best practices is complicated. Because interoperability standards define commonly used and machine-readable formats, using an interoperability standard streamlines compliance with an evolving regulatory landscape.



Security - Interoperability standards can improve product usability and security.

Implementing interoperability standards early in the product development roadmap helps build scalability and flexibility into a product's data architecture and can minimize future technical debt. It demonstrates to customers that vendors prioritize making their products integrate with a customer's broader technology ecosystem. Interoperability standards can also make it both easier and more secure to transfer data between systems, by specifying a direct API connection that uses a set of shared, robust security practices.



Transparency - Supporting interoperability increases transparency around data practices.

Leveraging data standards helps simplify the process of documenting what information is collected, how this information is used, and how access to this information is controlled. It can also help simplify the process of data destruction and help vendors comply with customer contract requirements around data privacy.



Compliance - Interoperability standards can help simplify the process of privacy law compliance.

For example, in Colorado, the Student Data Transparency and Security Act went into effect in 2017. Vendors are required to provide education agencies with clear information about the student data they collect and agree to destroy data shared with them on request. While not all data that a vendor collects and processes may be exchanged through interoperability, data standards can make it easier for vendors to comply with education agency requests by simplifying the process of documenting some of the data that is collected and stored.

*Interoperability:

THE SEAMLESS, SECURE, AND CONTROLLED EXCHANGE OF DATA BETWEEN APPLICATIONS



**PROJECT
UNICORN**

Project Unicorn is an initiative to improve data interoperability within K-12 education. We aim to create a community of innovators who make the broader case for secure interoperability by determining shared priorities, working in partnership with school systems and vendors to understand its importance and benefits, creating a demand-side push for interoperability through partnerships, and educating buyers to consider the total cost of ownership through informed comparison of vendors. Project Unicorn does not endorse a specific product or data standard but instead is an educational initiative dedicated to the secure, controlled interchange of data.

**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records.



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