PROJECT UNICORN
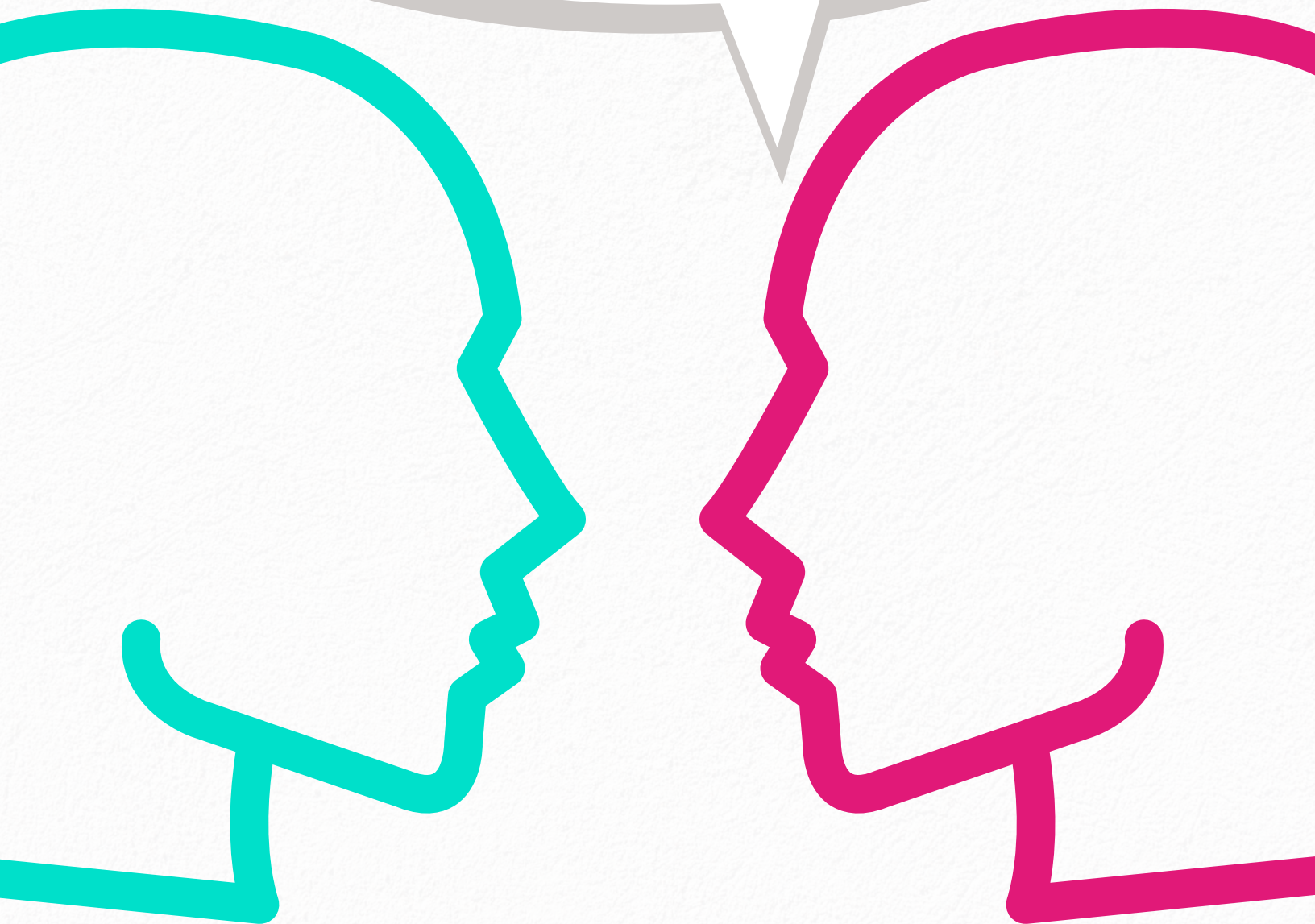
INTEROPERABILITY CONVERSATION GUIDE

school systems & edtech service providers

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

This short guide was developed to help school system leaders and edtech service providers engage in productive conversations about data interoperability. This guide is meant to be part of a structured dialogue with the intention to solicit feedback and promote candor. The goal of these conversations is to help facilitate a broader understanding of the challenges and needs of varying stakeholders in the data interoperability space. By helping different stakeholders understand each other's perspectives, we hope to encourage school system leaders and edtech service providers to work together as partners on their interoperability journeys.

SETTING THE STAGE

Consider using community agreements to help frame the conversation:

STAY ENGAGED

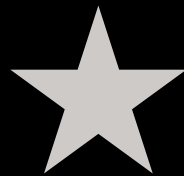EXPERIENCE DISCOMFORT

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

ESTABLISH EQUITY OF VOICE

EXPECT & ACCEPT A LACK OF CLOSURE

- Courageous Conversations About Race, Glenn Singleton

DATA INTEROPERABILITY RESOURCES

It is essential to ensure a common understanding of data interoperability before beginning these conversations. The following Project Unicorn Resources may be helpful:

[*What is Data Interoperability in Education?*](#)

[*Why Data Interoperability Matters for Schools*](#)

[*Why Data Interoperability Matters for Vendors*](#)

For internal or more technically focused conversations, review the Interoperability Standards for Education and the Project Unicorn Standards Glossary.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Although originally developed to facilitate small group conversations (6-8 individuals), these questions may be adapted for use in different settings, such as panel discussions. Some questions may even be used within individual organizations to frame internal stakeholder conversations. For example, a school system might adapt the questions to facilitate an internal discussion between the IT, curriculum and instruction, and data/accountability teams, while an edtech service provider might engage representatives from sales, operations, and engineering.

In preparing for dialogue, considerations may include:
- Edtech service provider type (SIS, LMS, curriculum provider, assessment provider)
- District size/type (Large, small, urban, suburban rural, etc.)
- Data interoperability maturity (Are stakeholders just beginning their journey, or are they more mature in their implementations?)
- Interoperability use cases
- Discussion environment

Regardless of the discussion format and specific focus, the goal of these conversations should be to build mutual understanding, encourage collaboration, and surface concerns that pave the way for both cross-sector and inter-organization partnerships.

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS:

Why is data interoperability important to your school district?

What are the biggest challenges you encounter when implementing data interoperability?

What do you want edtech service providers to know about your interoperability goals and challenges?

How can service providers build trust and foster collaboration with school systems on interoperability projects?

What do you want to learn from edtech service providers regarding interoperability projects?

What do you think edtech service providers tend to overlook or under plan for in interoperability projects?

Can you describe a specific interoperability use case where you would value collaborating with an edtech service provider, and what that might look like?

What are the biggest challenges you encounter when implementing data interoperability?

What do you want edtech service providers to know about your interoperability goals and challenges?

QUESTIONS FOR EDTECH SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Why is data interoperability important to you as an edtech service provider?

What are the biggest challenges you encounter when working with school districts to implement data interoperability?

What do you want school systems to know about your interoperability goals and challenges?

What do you worry about the most with regard to data interoperability projects?

How can school systems build trust and foster collaboration with vendors on interoperability projects?

What do you want to learn from school systems regarding interoperability projects?

What do you think school systems tend to overlook or under plan for in interoperability projects?

Can you describe a specific interoperability use case where you would value collaborating with a school system, and what that might look like?

Are there ways for school systems to leverage inter-district partnerships, standards, or large-scale cooperatives to make the implementation of interoperability standards - or at the very least, direct access to data - a more attractive option for edtech service providers to support?

What do you need most from school systems with regard to data interoperability?

How might school systems think differently about the opportunities or challenges in data projects?

The First Three Steps for Superintendents

I'm a District. Where Do I Start?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR
SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Benefits of Signing the Project Unicorn Pledge

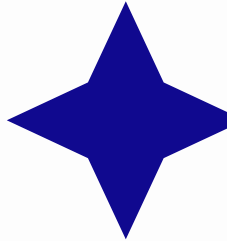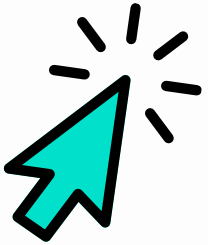**Because They Were Ready: Stories From the Field on K12 Readiness During Covid-19**

The First Three Steps for Edtech CEOs/ Product Leaders

The First Three Steps for Edtech CIOs/CTOs

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR
EDTECH SERVICE PROVIDERS

The First Three Steps for Edtech Software Architects

The First Three Steps for Edtech Sales Reps

Why Vendors Should Prioritize Interoperability