



Equip your messengers

GET SMART ABOUT COMMUNICATING KEY TOPICS

# Student Data Privacy

Data is necessary to meet your education goals, but parents and the public are not always familiar with how data is collected, safeguarded, and used. They have legitimate concerns about the safety of their child’s information. Whether or not those concerns are voiced, people are looking to you to demonstrate your commitment to protecting student information.

**It is important to be proactive and transparent about how your state is safeguarding students’ information.** State and district education leaders need to talk about why data is valuable and how it is safeguarded to prevent confusion and mistrust.

To get started, keep in mind:

- Any time you talk about strategies to meet education goals—especially if they involve data or technology—talk about how important the data will be to teachers and parents and emphasize the importance of safeguarding that information. Don’t wait to be asked!
- State and district officials aren’t always the best messengers to communicate the value of data. Teachers and school leaders, for example, talk to parents and can communicate how data is supporting individual students’ learning. (See “You Don’t Have to Go It Alone in Communicating about Data” in this toolkit.)



## Talking about Student Data Privacy

Here are some major messages to include when talking to the public about student data privacy.

### Student safety is always a priority.

- Using student information and keeping it safe go hand in hand—we take our responsibility to protect students’ information seriously.

**TIP** Not everyone has the same understanding of what data is or how it is used. Provide specific examples to make clear what you mean by *data* and *data use*.

**TIP** Remember that talking about the law is important but not sufficient for demonstrating your commitment to protecting student information.

**TIP** Consider creating FAQs for parents about education data laws (like FERPA) to explain their scope and limitations.

### Student data is firmly protected under the law.

- Our state/district has strong policies and practices in place to protect student information.
- Federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment, and the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Rule, protect student information in classrooms and online.
- We are focused on continuously improving data collection practices, and our methods go beyond mere compliance with the law.

### Student data should be used to support students’ success.

- We view data primarily as a tool that informs teachers and parents in supporting their own child.
- We are committed to ensuring that data foremost informs practices to help every child in our state be successful.

**TIP** Never talk about privacy and security in a vacuum—always include context about how student data is used to support students.