Getting Started with Privacy Leadership

District superintendents and the board are ultimately responsible for the data privacy and security practices of the district. While they are not typically operating the day-to-day privacy and security programs, and don't need to have a deep, technical understanding of the work, they play a critical role in developing policies and championing the work.

Without district policies articulating privacy requirements, a privacy program will not succeed. In addition, policies that are not consistently implemented are just words on paper. It is in the written procedures, typically developed by the district technology team, and in the agreement across all employees to follow those procedures, that privacy happens.

This is where leadership makes the difference. Superintendents not only develop policies, but also set the tone for the institution and require that all employees follow policies, procedures, and guidance from the technology team, which leads development and implementation of privacy and security programs.

> **This resource is fundamental to being able to meet the requirements of the TLE Leadership Practice**
> The first leadership practice requires that the deliberations and decisions of school system leaders at the governing board level reflect an understanding of data privacy and security. In order to get there, you must first have a deep understanding of data privacy and security to build the foundation for a functioning privacy program. This resource is designed to help you get there.

However, one can't develop policies or procedures, have thoughtful discussions and deliberations about privacy issues, and champion the work with employees without first getting educated about privacy and security. In addition, one can't develop privacy and security programs, and make a case to leadership about privacy and security needs, without also being fluent in the requirements.

When it comes to building your privacy leadership expertise, here are 10 steps to consider:

1. **Get Educated**. The first step to becoming a privacy leader is learning about privacy. Take the time to immerse yourself in what privacy is, what it means, and what the laws require. Remember that privacy is not the same thing as security. Privacy is a personal right that your district is exercising on behalf of your students. As with security, it's important to get it right.

   Read the laws, read your district policies, and then check out CoSN's Student Data Privacy Toolkit to help you better understand how the laws work together. Also see the additional resources below.

2. **Begin at the Beginning.** If you've done a deep dive into privacy training, you might be feeling a bit overwhelmed by all of the requirements and all that you have to do. To make privacy start to feel manageable, you need to start by breaking it down into projects, prioritized by risk. If you haven't already done so, gather up your district's policies and procedures on privacy. Review those, and note when they were last put through a formal review. Leverage CoSN's "Trusted Learning from the Ground Up: Fundamental Data Governance Policies and Procedures" to help identify what may be missing.

Next, take the CoSN Trusted Learning Environment Self-Assessment. This will help you to quickly identify certain areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

3. **Consider the "How."** Now that you have a general idea of what privacy practices might need some attention, take some time to consider *how* you will develop and implement privacy and security programs, and what you need from others to be successful. Remember, you may be the technology leader, but you can't build and implement a privacy or security program on your own. Get specific about what supports you may need to do the work well.

4. **Make it a Team Sport**. Now that you've identified what you need to be successful, consider *who* can help you make that happen. Remember that privacy work sometimes involves making hundreds of decisions about what data to collect, how it will be used, who it may be shared with both within and outside of the institution, where it may be stored, how it will be secured, how you will be transparent with your community about your data privacy program, and more. Everyone in the district will have data and technology needs, so who should be at the table in a leadership role in helping inform those decisions? You'll need colleagues from different departments to bring their perspectives, expertise, and influence to support the work. Start by identifying leaders in different teams who would be valuable partners in understanding and participating in privacy decisions, and make your case for them to join you. This might include representatives from:
   - Technology
   - Building Principals
   - Curriculum
   - Procurement
   - Teaching staff

5. **Set Meeting Goals**. No one enjoys being in a meeting for the sake of being in a meeting, and that includes your new partners in privacy. Develop a charter for your privacy team. Work together to identify the purposes and objectives of the group and set a schedule for meetings. Then stick to it and ensure that everyone is similarly committed to the work.

6. **Start With Another Self-Assessment.** A good starting point for discussion is to ask everyone on the committee to list what they believe are the district's top 5 strengths and weaknesses when it comes to protecting privacy. Next, ask all members of your new committee to take the CoSN Trusted Learning Environment Self-Assessment and compare results. Where is there alignment? What needs additional discussion? Is there a gap between what committee members believe is in place compared with the reality? This can be an eye-opening exercise, and it can help to build the needed buy-in and commitment to the work. It can also help your committee members to better understand how the work they do on a day-to-day basis contributes to the privacy program.

7. **Prioritize**. You will not be able to do all the work at once. It's critically important to triage. Look at the potential risk associated with each gap. How large is the risk? What is the likelihood of the risk coming to fruition? What can you address easily, and what will take a larger investment in terms of time, manpower, finances, or other resources? Consider all of these factors and leverage them to come up with specific goals for the year. If you can,

build that into a 3-5 year strategic plan for privacy.

8. **Identify Needs for the Year**. Now that you've identified the privacy program goals for the year, what do you need to accomplish those goals? Does a new policy need to be developed? Is there a new procedure you need to implement? Do you need support from an outside vendor to provide security tooling or audit support? Do you need to identify training resources? Secure time with teachers to deliver privacy training? Break each project into manageable action steps with timelines associated with each.

9. **Make Your Case.** Put together your findings from the self-assessments, key risks, your annual goals, your 3-5 year plan if you've got it, and what you need to be successful, into a presentation for your superintendent. It's time to make the case to leadership. Be sure you include clear asks of your superintendent if needed. Remember that what you need from your superintendent may be complex, such as a budget increase or a new policy to be developed, or simple, such as email from your superintendent to all employees prioritizing the privacy work and reminding all employees of their responsibilities to following privacy policies and procedures. Whatever is needed, ask for it. Pay particular attention to places where your superintended might need to empower you in areas such as an ability to enforce policy. Encourage your superintendent to be a model with you on privacy and security behaviors.

10. **Take it One Step at a Time.** Privacy work is never done. It is all about mitigating risk, and making the size of the risks facing your district smaller over time. Try not to get overwhelmed by the work that may be in front of you, and remember to look back every once in awhile and celebrate all that you've accomplished so far. Finally, continue to educate yourself and your team on privacy requirements. Grab the learnings from inside and outside of the sector to build a more well-rounded education on how privacy works in practice, and how to implement privacy programs in complex organizations. Then keep going.

Additional Resources:
Learn more about student data privacy with these free resources:
- [US Department of Education Privacy Technical Assistance Center](#)
  - [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)](#)
  - [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)](#)
  - [Training](#)
  - [Issued Letters](#)
- [CoSN Student Data Privacy Toolkit Parts 1-3](#)