



Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal Frequently Asked Questions for Schools

What is the TLE Seal?

The TLE Seal is a mark of distinction for school systems, signaling that they have taken measurable steps to ensure the privacy of student data.

CoSN leads the program, which was developed through the input of 28 school systems nationwide and AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) and ASCD.

Why was the TLE Seal Program developed?

Schools must manage complex processes and practices to meet regulatory requirements and protect the privacy and security of student data. The TLE Seal Program provides school systems with a set of concrete practices to evolve their student data protections beyond the legal requirements. It encourages schools to continuously examine and improve their policies and practices, and requires that they measure their work in this area against a set of high standards developed by their peers.

What are the top priorities or practices of the program?

The TLE Seal Program focuses on five core practice areas: Leadership, Business, Data Security, Professional Development and Classroom. Within each area are a number of specific practices that school systems must have implemented to be eligible for the Seal.

Given resource and other unique constraints that schools face, some of the practices may be challenging to put in place. However, the TLE Seal Program position is that all practices are achievable and necessary to earn the designation.

Does earning the TLE Seal ensure a school system has complied with federal and/or state privacy laws?

School system and service provider compliance with applicable privacy laws is a minimum standard for earning the Seal. The TLE Seal accounts for school system practices that go above and beyond required laws.

How was the Seal developed?

The Seal was developed by CoSN leadership in collaboration with a diverse representation of national and district-level experts across 28 school systems. The work was also supported by lead partners AASA, The School Superintendents Association, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) and ASCD.

Who is eligible to earn the Seal?

School systems or school organizations of all governance structures, including public school districts, private schools, parochial schools and charter schools are eligible to earn the TLE Seal.

The TLE Seal only applies to school systems – vendors and online education service providers are not eligible.

Will the TLE Seal apply to online education service providers, websites or apps?

No, the TLE Seal only applies to school organizations.

How can school systems qualify to earn the Seal?

To earn the TLE Seal, school systems must have concrete policies and practices in place that provide appropriate protections for student data. When earned, the Seal is applicable for two years and provides school systems the vehicle to communicate those practices clearly to parents to gain their trust.

Why is the TLE Seal Program important?

Technology is a critical part of the 21st century classroom, and data is vital to efforts to provide a more personalized education for all students. Research shows that a large majority of parents are concerned about the privacy and security of student data. Schools must have concrete policies and practices in place to provide appropriate protections for student data, and they need to communicate those practices clearly to parents in order to earn their trust. The TLE Seal Program indicates that school systems have demonstrated adherence to a set of publicly available standards focused on the protection of student data privacy.

Why is student data privacy such an important issue?

Technology is a critical part of 21st century learning environments, and data are key to providing a more personalized education for all students.

Parents and other members of school communities are growing increasingly concerned about the collection, use and protection of student data. For example, 79 percent of parents say privacy of student records is their top concern around technology use in schools, and 76 percent express concerns about how student information is collected and used. As a result, school systems are regularly faced with questions about how they manage their compliance obligations around technology use.

Policymakers are also concerned, and they're taking action. In the past three years, more than 500 student data privacy bills have been drafted across the states, producing nearly 100 new laws.

How does the TLE Seal Program help address these challenges?

Much of the privacy conversation has landed at the feet of school leaders. They are challenged to modernize learning environments that meet legal privacy and security requirements, while articulating to their communities about the safeguards in place.

The TLE Seal Program provides schools with a set of concrete practices to evolve their student data protections beyond the legal requirements. It encourages schools to continuously examine and improve their policies and practices, and requires that they measure their work in this area against a set of high standards developed by their peers.

How does the TLE Seal Program differ from existing privacy programs?

The TLE Seal is the ONLY privacy designation for school systems.

The TLE Seal Program helps school systems focus on building a culture of trust and transparency. Schools that earn the Seal have implemented student data privacy protections

that meet high standards around five core practice areas: Leadership, Business, Data Security, Professional Development and Classroom. The TLE Seal Program indicates that school systems have demonstrated adherence to a set of publicly available standards focused on the protection of student data privacy.

What happens if a school system application is denied?

School system leaders apply for the TLE Program by submitting detailed information about specific practices for review by CoSN. The TLE requirements are publicly available, so education leaders have sufficient guidance about TLE requirements in advance of submitting an application. However, in the event that CoSN determines that a Seal should not be awarded, the school system will be able to appeal the decision to a peer group led by CoSN. There will be one appeal allowed per application. Should an appeal be denied, the school system will be eligible to reapply in the next cohort. We expect there to be two cohorts per year.

How will CoSN handle complaints about a school system that displays the TLE Seal?

CoSN provides school systems with specific information regarding expectations for participation in the TLE program. We review all applications, however, school system leaders bear the sole responsibility for submitting complete and accurate information in the application process and for continuing to meet the TLE requirements while they display the Seal, and answering questions that come up from their community.

Where can school system leaders learn more and apply for the Seal?

School system leaders can learn more and apply for the Seal at trustedlearning.org.

If you have any other questions, please contact info@trustedlearning.org.

For media inquiries, please contact Michael Kaplun at mkaplun@fratelli.com.