



RHODE ISLAND SOCIETY
OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATORS



144 Bignall St. 401-262-9002
Warwick, RI 02888 www.ri-iste.org

Hello Rhode Island Schools and Districts,

Are you ensuring that you are protecting our students' data? This is of particular importance as districts move heavily into online resources and databases. You do *not* want to be unprepared in the event of a breach! But can you be certain your vendors are equally privacy-conscious?

RISTE is proud to announce, in partnership with [The Education Cooperative \(TEC\)](#) of MA, the Rhode Island Student Privacy Alliance! RISPA's services will be:

1. Providing schools and districts with shared access to Student (and staff) Data Privacy training, administrative support and expert legal counsel;
2. Leveraging our collective influence with vendors to protect student data;
3. Accelerating and expanding the adoption of a statewide Data Privacy Agreement (DPA) that will cover all schools in RI.

What is Student Data Privacy (SDP) and why is it important?

SDP refers to any personally identifiable information (PII) about a student, including name, address, birth date, demographics, student ID, and login information. It also includes the student's academic, health, and disciplinary records. A variety of laws, including [FERPA](#) and [COPPA](#), provide legal and ethical limitations on the collection and handling of student PII.

At the same time schools are collecting and sharing vast quantities of student data, often without knowing where it goes once it's been shared. The risk of losing control of our students' PII has never been greater, and while enforcement of SDP violations has historically been weak, the legal landscape is changing rapidly, and none of us want to be the RI FERPA test case! We *all* need to strengthen our protection of student data, and RISPA, with the support of RISTE and TEC, is here to help. The protections of a statewide Data Privacy Agreement (DPA) will shift control of our students' privacy back where they belong - within schools.

Who is TEC?

TEC is a non-profit that has been providing support to MA districts since 1968. In 2016 TEC partnered with maverick Steve Smith of Cambridge Public Schools to support the Student Data Privacy Alliance, which he began in 2015. After tremendous success in Massachusetts, they launched the New Hampshire Student Privacy Alliance (NHSPA) in summer 2019, joining a fast growing movement across the U.S. to protect student data privacy. Now TEC is joining forces with RISTE to launch RISPA, expanding this valuable service to southern New England.



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We are confident that this partnership will provide both the processes to handle Rhode Island's schools and the contacts and resources to onboard new members efficiently. TEC and the SDPA work with a legal firm with experts in the field of Education Law for contract negotiations, and they have also hired a dedicated, experienced contract administrator. The availability of their turnkey services will be critical to RISPA's success.

What are the benefits of RISPA?

The Alliance will provide these key services:

- 1) It will work on behalf of members to get requested vendors to agree to the RI DPA. TEC will do the time-consuming legal work around negotiating the agreements, allowing members to spend their resources on choosing the highest quality academic partners for their students and staff, not on time and legal fees.
- 2) It will host a RISPA member portal. Once a vendor has signed on to the DPA, even at the request of just one member, it will be declared safe for *all* members and listed as such on the portal. Just as importantly, vendors who do not sign on will also be listed. In this way, RI will build a stable of education vendors who have agreed to cooperate with all of us to keep our students' PII safe and secure.
- 3) They will provide training and support around SDP for all members and their staff. It is vitally important that all members raise awareness within our schools about the importance of protecting data privacy.

How to join RISPA:

You can get the details in the [RISPA Membership Guide document](#), but essentially there will be 2 steps to participating in RISPA:

1. Membership in RISTE;
2. A \$1.10/student/yr (maximum \$5,000) fee payable to TEC.

To protect districts' investments in the process, we will be setting up a separate RISTE-hosted email list for RI data privacy alliance members to discuss specific vendors and applications.

We are working on scheduling onboarding webinars for late October/early November - stay tuned for dates/times. We'll cover the process of registering for RISPA and clarify our priorities for the remainder of our 2019-20 school year. We hope you can join us for one of these calls!

If you're impatient to get started, you're also welcome to follow the instructions in the attached

[RISPA Membership Guide](#) to create an account and become a RISPA member. TEC and RISTE look forward to working with you!