



Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Seal Frequently Asked Questions

What is the TLE Seal Program?

The TLE Seal Program is an initiative of CoSN (the Consortium for School Networking), in association with AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), and ASCD. The program requires schools to have implemented student data privacy protections that meet a set of high standards around 5 core practice areas. Schools that demonstrate that they have met the Program requirements will be able to display the TLE Seal, signifying their commitment to student data privacy.

What is the TLE Seal?

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

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 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.

What are the practices?

The 5 core practice areas are: Leadership, Business, Data Security, Professional Development and Classroom. Within each area are a number of specific practices that schools must have implemented in order to be eligible for the Seal. Given resource and other constraints that schools face, some of the practices may be aspirational. However, the TLE Seal Program position is that all practices are achievable, and necessary to meet the requirements of the program.

Who is eligible to earn the Seal?

The TLE Seal is open to all K-12 schools. By “school” we are referring to school organizations of all governance structures, including public school districts, private schools, parochial schools, charter schools, etc. At this time, education service agencies 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.

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.

How was the TLE Seal Program developed?

CoSN worked with representatives of 28 school systems over a period of several months to define the TLE Seal standards and to develop the process by which schools can earn a seal. These school systems represent a wide range of demographics and types. The complete listing of the participating school districts/systems, can be found in the press release [here](#).

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

Compliance with applicable privacy laws should be considered a minimum standard and compliance is the responsibility of schools and service providers. School systems applying for the TLE Seal are expected to be in and maintain compliance with applicable laws. The TLE Seal considers practices that may not be required by law, but that are important to protect student data. For information about understanding federal privacy laws, see the [CoSN Protecting Privacy Toolkit](#).

Are other organizations involved?

Yes, CoSN has 3 lead partners in this effort. They are AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), and ASCD.

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, and to the extent possible, we work with technology leaders and other subject matter experts to validate the information provided. 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.

If you have any other questions, please contact info@trustedlearning.org. For media inquiries, please contact Michael Kaplun at mkaplun@fratelli.com.