Forum Opening Session
Tuesday, July 12, 2022

National Forum on Education Statistics

Forum Welcome

Forum Chair Marilyn King, Bozeman School District #7 (MT), welcomed Forum members to the Summer 2022 Forum virtual meeting; thanked them for their time, work, and commitment over the past year; and briefly reviewed the agenda for the week. She also introduced Steven Hernandez, U.S. Department of Education (ED).

Cybersecurity in State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs)

Steven provided best practices and recommendations for SEAs and LEAs when dealing with cybersecurity. With attacks targeting teleworking decreasing due to many people returning to in-person work or becoming more comfortable with the tools used for teleworking, ransomware has become the most popular and impactful cybersecurity threat facing the education sector. Attackers are persistent, sophisticated, and finding new ways to operate. Steven shared key findings from two recent cybersecurity reports. Ransomware attacks have notably increased across all sectors, including education. Although these attacks typically result in at least some data being permanently encrypted, even when the ransom is paid, the most common method used to restore encrypted data is backups. There also has been a rise in "triple extortion," in which attackers take the extra step of threatening parents with the release of data with the hope of forcing parents to encourage education agencies to negotiate and eventually pay the ransom.

Education agencies can take the following steps to protect themselves:

- Make sure the latest security patches are installed in any vulnerable, internet-facing systems.
- Only expose necessary ports and services.
- Train staff against phishing.
- Report any phishing incidents quickly.
- Keep encrypted backups on separate services.
- Test the backups often.
- Use phishing-resistant authenticators, with hardware authenticators recommended over software-based authenticators.
- Put staff into groups with smaller areas of access to limit situations in which an individual still has access to data they no longer need.

Cybersecurity also must be considered when dealing with vendors. The education sector has seen a large shift to cloud services in recent years. A study found that from 2016 to 2021, school district vendors were responsible for the majority of K–12 data breaches. Therefore, it is essential to work with trustworthy vendors and verify their cybersecurity procedures.

Best practices in this area include

- having an actionable plan and appropriate technology and services in place before an intrusion occurs;
- having appropriate authorization in place to permit network monitoring;

- ensuring legal counsel is familiar with technology and cyber incident management to reduce response time during an incident;
- ensuring organizational policies align with cyber incident response plans;
- engaging with law enforcement before an incident;
- establishing relationships with cyber information-sharing organizations;
- leveraging cloud software as a service (SaaS) as much as possible;
- leveraging Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP)[1] and StateRAMP[2] systems; and
- instituting zero trust security architecture, in which it is always assumed that the network is hostile; external and internal threats exist on the network; network locality is not sufficient for deciding trust in a network; every device, user, and network flow is authenticated and authorized; and policies must be dynamic and calculated from as many sources of data as possible.

Steven concluded by offering several federal resources from ED, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the National Security Agency (NSA):

- ED:
  - Student Privacy Policy Office: https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/
  - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center: https://rems.ed.gov
- FBI:
  - Internet Crime Complaint Center: https://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx
  - Local field offices: https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices
  - InfraGard: https://www.infragard.org
- Secret Service:
  - Field offices: https://www.secretservice.gov/contact/field-offices
  - Electronic crimes task forces: https://www.secretservice.gov/investigation/cyber
- DOJ's *Best Practices for Victim Response and Reporting of Cyber Incidents*: https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/speeches/attachments/2015/04/29/criminal_division_guidance_on_best_practices_for_victim_response_and_reporting_cyber_incidents.pdf
- *NSA's Top Ten Cybersecurity Mitigation Strategies*: https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/what-we-do/cybersecurity/professional-resources/csi-nsas-top10-cybersecurity-mitigation-strategies.pdf
- United States General Services Administration FedRAMP Program: https://www.fedramp.gov/training

[1] FedRAMP is a government-wide program that promotes the adoption of secure cloud services across the federal government by providing a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services.
[2] StateRAMP, modeled in part after FedRAMP, provides state and local governments a common method for verification of cloud security.

Forum members engaged Steven in a discussion that focused on the fine line between encouraging the use of data while keeping data secure and the practice of automated deletion when data are no longer needed.

Forum Closing Session

Thursday, July 14, 2022

Closing Session Presentation: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Updates

Marilyn began the session by introducing NCES commissioner Peggy Carr. Marilyn briefly discussed how the Forum has worked to address priority topics identified by Peggy during her presentation to the Forum in February:

- The Forum convened a new working group on Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) reporting to develop a new resource with best practices and case studies on how SEAs can support LEAs with CRDC reporting.
- The standing committees also have addressed the priorities Peggy identified:
    - The Technology (TECH) Committee discussed current and future uses of artificial intelligence and machine learning in education.
    - The Policies, Programs, and Implementation (PPI) Committee discussed integrating alternative methods of schooling into data collections and changes to the teaching profession.
    - The National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC) and PPI discussed state and local approaches to collecting gender identity data.
- The next version of the School Courses for the Exchange of Data (SCED) will include Data Science courses.

Peggy then provided an update on NCES work, starting with the *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety* (https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022092). This annual report summarizes the latest data on school crime and safety in the United States. Data from the 2021 report show increases over time in school shootings, cyber-bullying, and discipline problems and decreases in bullying and the percentage of schools reporting at least one violent incident.

Peggy discussed the School Pulse Panel (https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/), a study collecting information on issues concerning the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on education. Since the start of the pandemic, public schools have reported data on instructional mode offerings, virus spread mitigation strategies, enrollment counts of various subgroups of students using the various instructional modes, school reopening efforts, services offered for students and staff, and technology use.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 2022 results in Reading and Math for grades 4 and 8 will be released in the fall. The assessment will provide national scores, state scores, and scores for 26 urban school districts. Data will be broken down by demographics, including race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, type or location of school, and performance level.

Preliminary data gathered through the Common Core of Data (CCD) show that compared to the 2019–20 school year, K–12 enrollments were down 3 percent in 2020–21. The rates of decline were not consistent across all states and jurisdictions, and lower grade levels experienced a greater rate of decline than higher grade levels.

Peggy also discussed the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) report *A Vision and Roadmap for Education Statistics* (https://ies.ed.gov/nasem/), which included several recommendations for NCES:

- Develop a strategic plan for NCES.
- Support and empower NCES to set its own priorities.
- Maximize NCES's unique value for evidence building.
- Develop and leverage new sources of data.
- Expand mission impact through partnerships and outreach.
- Continue reform of internal structure and operations.

Recognition of Forum Officers

Peggy Carr, NCES commissioner, recognized the contributions of the Forum officers and commended the Forum on its work.

Recognition of Completed Projects

Marilyn and Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education, recognized the contributions of the members who developed *Feedback on EDFacts Modernization Plans* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pdf/EdFacts_Mod_Feedback.pdf), the *Forum Guide to Metadata* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021110.asp), the *Forum Guide to Digital Equity* (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2022098.asp), and SCED (https://nces.ed.gov/forum/sced.asp).

Standing Committee Progress Reports

Gunes Kaplan, Nevada Department of Education, reported on NESAC. Linda Jenkins, Arkansas Department of Education, reported on PPI. Dawn Gessel, Putnam County Schools (WV), reported on TECH.

Forum Election

Marilyn presented the slate of proposed 2022–23 officers for a vote. The slate was seconded, and then the Forum voted to approve the following members as 2022–23 officers:

- Chair: Georgia Hughes-Webb, West Virginia Department of Education
- Vice Chair: Cheryl L. VanNoy, Saint Louis Public Schools (MO)
- NESAC Chair: Laura Hansen, Metro Nashville Public Schools (TN)
- NESAC Vice Chair: Adrian L. Peoples, Delaware Department of Education
- PPI Chair: Stephen Gervais, San Bernardino City Unified School District (CA)
- PPI Vice Chair: Jonathan Wiens, Oregon Department of Education
- TECH Chair: Chandra Haislet, Maryland State Department of Education
- TECH Vice Chair: Andrew Swickheimer, Noblesville Schools (IN)

Closing Remarks

2022–23 Forum Chair Georgia thanked Marilyn for her leadership of the Forum. Georgia urged Forum members to remain engaged in the Forum throughout the year and reminded them to complete the meeting evaluation.