CLASSROOM PRIVACY FOR PROFESSIONALS

Protecting the privacy rights of children, families, and staff requires vigilance!

Digital privacy priorities for early childhood professionals

Cameras

Cameras can be helpful classroom tools. Use can also increase privacy risks and complications in early childhood settings.[3,6]

- The use of streaming webcams or closed circuit televisions in classroom and care settings can raise levels of mistrust, decrease morale, and increase misunderstandings and tensions.
- The use of personal devices in classroom settings to record children or manage recordkeeping can violate child privacy standards and laws.
- Documentation can impede on the interactions and activities of young children, violate a child's sense of autonomy, or promote performative or extrinsic motivation.

Social Media

The use of social media for classroom communications or program promotion can create unintended consequences.[1,5]

- Educators who use personal social media to engage with families can struggle with maintaining professional boundaries and protecting personal privacy.
- Families may feel forced to create accounts to gain access to important program or classroom updates and information.
- When a program or practitioner uses social media, the choice can be interpreted as an endorsement of the social network or platform.

EdTech

While there is often no upfront expense for use of educational technology (EdTech), there can be costs, including significant privacy violations.[1,2,5]

- EdTech promotes the use of online games, apps, and platforms (such as ABCMouse and IXL) as replacements for hands-on and person-to-person teaching and learning.
- The EdTech business model is designed to collect and sell children's personal identifiable information (PII) to profiteers. PII can include name, location, date of birth, SSN, keyword searches, browser history, videos and audio recordings, and more.
- Early childhood programs have a legal responsibility to get parental permission before using any EdTech app or website that collects information from children.

Scan or click for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or click for research references and recommended reading!

An Early Childhood Work Group Project
LEAD AUTHORS: Mindy Holohan MA, CFLE and Lisa Cline

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Best practices for managing photos and videos

Limit documentation of children. While families enjoy seeing what their children are doing during the day, constant documentation is confusing and distracting for young children.

Consider the risks of live video streaming. While providing real-time access to families can seem beneficial, it also increases privacy risks and violations including hacking and misuse. It can lower morale for educators that feel under constant surveillance and increase conflict and misunderstanding. It can also alter children's behavior and play.

Create, communicate, and maintain policies for taking and sharing pictures and videos. Clear policies related to digital photos and videos are privacy essentials! Who can take them? What device(s) can be used? How much can they be used? How can they be shared? How are parental permissions secured and honored?

Best practices* for managing apps and online tools

Consider whether use is necessary. Many privacy issues can be avoided by simply not adopting online programs and applications.

Avoid using until vetted and approved by your program. Check to see if the app has received a passing grade in Common Sense Media's State of Children's Privacy Report and get detailed evaluation data on hundreds of commonly used products via their Privacy Direct service.

Provide notification and secure parental consent. Disclosure of personal student information to any persons, companies, or organizations outside of the school/program requires parental notification and consent.

Prepare alternative (e.g., hands-on) activities. Children whose parents choose to opt out of an online program deserve high quality alternatives.

Educate yourself on the principles of good digital citizenship and responsible technology practices. See resource recommendations below!

Resources for educators

Educator Toolkit for Teacher and Student Privacy by Parent Coalition for Student Privacy
U.S. Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office

Based on Parent Coalition for Student Privacy recommendations.

An Early Childhood Work Group Project
LEAD AUTHORS: Lauren Paer and Mindy Holohan MA, CFLE

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