



ASPEN TECH
POLICY HUB

PROJECT



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Advancing Students' Digital Rights

Fostering inclusive data agency with learners, educators, developers, and caregivers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today, more students are online than ever, with [digital footprints being created for them as early as the prenatal stage of their lives](#). Without comprehensive student data protections, educational technology (edtech) [increasingly exposes students to data mining practices](#) that could limit their access to future opportunities. To redress these harms, this project recommends cross-sector engagement and collective capacity building in New Mexico to create more comprehensive student data protections. This includes establishing a state data protection office that oversees the implementation of student data protection agreements in school procurement, encouraging nonprofits to set industry standards for ethical edtech design, and encouraging the US Department of Education (DoEd) to fund impact assessments of educational technology.



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THE PROBLEM

The gaps in student data protection policies at the state and federal levels threaten students' digital bodies. Through widespread use of Google Chromebooks and Google for Education, [Google acts as a school official in over 85 percent of US classrooms](#), at the expense of students' digital rights and futures. In New Mexico, students experience some of the [highest rates of adverse childhood experiences in the nation](#), and Google extends these adversities into their digital learning environments. The state attorney general, Hector Balderas, has led lawsuits against Google from [2018 to 2021](#) for repeated violations of students' digital rights by collecting children's data without parental consent.

THE SOLUTION

To advance students' digital rights over commercial interests, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), DoEd, and EdTech Evidence Exchange need to engage in multi-stakeholder outreach and collective capacity building across federal, state, and school communities. More specifically:

1. NMPED should establish a state Student Data Protection Office (SDPO) that would enforce student data protection agreements in the edtech vendor procurement process and lead collective capacity building efforts to support students, caregivers, education personnel, and school partners.
2. The EdTech Evidence Exchange should develop industry standards for edtech developers.
3. DoEd should fund impact assessments of educational technologies to determine impacts on students' well-being, learning outcomes, and data protection.

These steps can create an ecosystem that fosters data agency and sovereignty for future generations.

For more information about this proposal, see: (1) a [policy brief to NMPED](#) further explaining the SDPO proposal; (2) an [operational plan](#) that explains how the SDPO should be structured; (3) a [sample student data protection agreement](#); (4) [school community capacity building materials](#) to implement the data protection agreement; (5) a [policy brief](#) for EdTech Evidence Exchange to establish edtech industry standards; and (6) a [policy brief](#) for the US DoEd to fund edtech research grants.

ABOUT THE HUB

The Aspen Tech Policy Hub is a Bay Area policy incubator, training a new generation of tech policy entrepreneurs. We take tech experts, teach them the policy process, and support them in creating outside-the-box solutions to society's problems.

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