

SECTION VI.

Advocating for student privacy in schools, districts, and beyond

If you're dissatisfied with your school's response to your questions and concerns outlined in Section V, it may be time to advocate for better privacy practices and policies. You can do this! It helps to connect with other parents in your school community who are similarly concerned. You may also find allies and experts in other organizations who can provide you with valuable information and support.



Important first steps

- **TALK TO OTHER PARENTS** in your child's class and/or parent-teacher organization members to share your concerns.
- **PREPARE REMARKS** and speak before your school board; ask a friend to videotape your presentation and consider posting it online.
- **TOGETHER WITH OTHER PARENTS**, post an online petition or collect signatures on a petition outside the school; be sure to collect emails and other contact information. For a sample petition asking a local school board for public hearings to address student privacy issues, see Appendix E.
- **IF YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA**, post your concerns on your personal account, or a relevant account from your local community. You can also set up your own social media account specifically concerned with the issue. Social media can be a powerful tool!
- **FOLLOW UP** with your district administrators or school board members, and/or local elected officials who represent you, and seek a meeting that includes other parents who share your concerns.

Try these three conversation starters:

1. "My child seems to be taught more and more by computer programs rather than the teacher. Have you noticed this?"
2. "I can't keep track of all the accounts and logins my child must remember to complete her homework. Is your family also overwhelmed?"
3. "I remember the old days when we spoke to our children's teachers face to face rather than thorough notifications on our phone. Do you find this kind of impersonal too?"



Organize, engage, and empower

- **ONCE YOU'VE IDENTIFIED** a small group of active parents with the same concerns, hold a meeting at a community center, library, church, or other gathering space.
- **INVITE EXPERTS** sympathetic and knowledgeable on the issue, such as members of your local American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), local elected officials, or Information Technology (IT) specialists, to speak on the topic of student privacy and answer questions. Parents can describe how lax student privacy practices may have affected their own children or put their privacy at risk.
- **INVITE MEMBERS** of the school community through social media, email, and flyers. Be sure to invite parents who signed your petition.

When preparing remarks, a good place to start is by using or modifying our suggestions in Section IV.

- **DECIDE** if you want to ask local media to publicize the meeting, and/or invite reporters to attend who can help spread the word. More on how to do this below.
- **PRESENT INFORMATION** from our toolkit, including Section IV.
- **AFTER A QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD**, discuss collectively or in smaller groups what your next steps will be. Be sure to pass out information about your petition along with your contact information.

If you have a meeting or presentation, you can copy and include any section or handout from this toolkit – use whichever is most relevant to what you are trying to achieve.



Expand your reach

- **ARRANGE** a follow up meeting with district administrators, school board members, or local elected officials to discuss your concerns and present your petition.
- **ASK ADMINISTRATORS** to consider adopting best practices to secure and protect student information. You can use our recommendations in Section IV as a starting point.
- **URGE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS** to sponsor a resolution to adopt these suggestions.
- **ASK LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS** to write a letter of support.

Reach out to helpful groups¹ who are concerned about student privacy:

*Parent Coalition for Student Privacy
Campaign for a Commercial-Free
Childhood
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Network for Public Education
Electronic Privacy Information Center
Parents Across America
American Civil Liberties Union*

DON'T FORGET!

Be sure to follow-up any meeting with a letter thanking officials for their time and holding them accountable for any promises they may have made. If they are not prepared to support improvements in protecting student privacy, ask them to justify why not. Share any responses, whether positive or negative, more broadly with concerned parents and with reporters.



Get media attention

If you're organizing a town hall meeting, rally, or protest, or simply advocating on an issue, gaining media attention is extremely useful to achieving your goal.

- **IF YOU'RE HOLDING** an event, send a brief press advisory in the body of an email to reporters a week before and a reminder again the day before the event, no later than 2 PM. Include the date of the event in the subject line, telling where, when, and what. Be sure to add a contact person with email and phone number for more information. See Appendix F for a sample with helpful hints that you can use to write your own advisory.

Do not overuse your press email list or reporters will start treating your messages as spam.

Email the press advisory (with no attachments) to the Associated Press at info@ap.org, and contact the appropriate regional desks listed here to find out where you should send it through email or fax: <http://www.ap.org/contact-us/bureaus>

- **AT THE EVENT**, ask a friend to take photos and/or video, and post them online to your social media accounts and to YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, etc. Make it clear to participants ahead of time that you are recording and may be sharing this event more widely with members of the public, and allow speakers to opt out of being recorded if they prefer.

Pick quotes and soundbites that are clear, simple, catchy, powerful, emotional, and add value to the story.

■ **DISTRIBUTE A PRESS RELEASE** after the event to reporters. The release should be a one- or two-page document that briefly describes the event, the participants, and the issue discussed. If you can, include quotes and soundbites. See Appendix F for a sample with helpful hints that you can use to write your own release.

■ **SEND THE PRESS RELEASE** after the event to reporters, parents, officials, and others who could not attend.

■ **IN GENERAL**, it's important get to know your local reporters so you can piggyback on any breaking news that relates to student privacy. Jumping on a news story is the best way to draw more attention to the issue and your point of view. Prepare a good soundbite in advance that sums up your perspective in a few words or sentences. Once a reporter knows you're interested in the subject, they may contact you looking for a relevant quote the next time the issue arises.

■ **WRITE LETTERS** to the editor; do not forget community papers.

TIPS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

1. Most published letters to the editor are in response to a topic recently covered in the publication, so keep an eye out for stories related to student privacy, including breaches.
2. When you find a story, research the submission rules of the specific publication. Many limit the number of words to 200-250 so keep the letter short.
3. Introduce yourself and explain why the issue concerns you. Follow with a compelling statement including facts or details. Letters with local relevance may have a better chance at getting published.
4. Make your point by including information important to readers of the publication and conclude with a call to action (e.g., sign my petition).
5. Don't forget to sign your letter with your first and last name, and provide your email address and telephone number.

For more tips, see the International Society for Technology in Education advocacy toolkit at http://bit.ly/SPTK_OpEds ²

And be sure to contact the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy at info@studentprivacymatters.org. We may be able to help!

Questions? Visit www.studentprivacymatters.org/toolkit for more information, including free webinars on how to use the resources in this toolkit.

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.studentprivacymatters.org/>
<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/>
<https://www.eff.org/>
<http://networkforpubliceducation.org/>
<https://epic.org/>
<http://parentsacrossamerica.org/>
<https://www.aclu.org/>
2. <http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/iste-advocacy-toolkit---letter-to-the-editor.pdf>