Protecting the safety of children and their school records online, while ensuring access to high quality digital educational opportunities, is critical in the 21st century. Meaningful education data can provide positive benefits to students’ academic growth and can assist teachers and families in creating more personalized learning plans to meet the needs of every child. Despite the advantages of educational information and technology, parents are concerned about the protection of their child’s personal information. National PTA supports policies that ensure children’s identities are protected online, and families and students have reasonable control over the collection, storage and use of relevant personal education information.

National PTA also recognizes that much of learning today takes place online, and it is essential for every student to be able to continue their education at home. Unfortunately, there are still far too many children in the U.S. who lack access to adequate internet services when they leave school. According to a 2018 report from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), nearly 39% of households in the U.S. with school-age children lack access to the internet \[^{1}\]. National PTA will continue to support policies that shrink the digital divide and expand student access to broadband services at home and outside of the school building.

### THE DATA

- **93%** of parents say they need more education data so they can help their children do their best \[^{2}\].

- Only **62%** of parents say they understand how their child’s school collects and uses information about students \[^{3}\].

- As many as **7 out of 10** teachers assign homework online. However, not every student has access to broadband services at home \[^{4}\].

- **91%** of parents who do not have information about whether their child is on track to graduate wish they did \[^{5}\].

### WE ADVOCATE TO

- Ensure parents and families have access to educational information and can interpret and use this data to support and improve their child’s education

- Provide teachers and school officials with the training they need to ensure data is meaningfully used for educational purposes while keeping it protected and secured

- Improve transparency on the use of student information—parents should know their rights under the law to protect their child’s personal and educational information

- Update current laws to improve protection of student educational records and the collection of information gathered online

- Strengthen students’ access to the high-capacity broadband services required for learning today
VOICE FROM THE FIELD

When Virginia PTA President Sarah Gross learned about the new provisions under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that would require states to report data about school environment, academic achievement and spending per student, she was determined to take action. Sarah knew that parents wanted and needed accurate information about their schools, but also knew that data had to be presented in a way that would be clear and useful to parents.

When the Virginia Department of Education started working on their state report card, they had over 2,000 data points to include on the report card. Sarah knew that parents would be overwhelmed if they saw that much data on the state report card, so she decided to survey Virginia PTA members to see what data parents actually wanted.

After the survey was complete, Sarah found that parents only really needed data on student growth, school funding and school-quality measures (such as school nurse and guidance counselor ratios and the level of access to rigorous courses).

Thanks to Sarah and Virginia PTA, the Virginia Department of Education and State Board of Education were able to use parent feedback to create a state report card that clearly communicated data that was important to parents and families.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY LAWS

Student data privacy laws help maintain the confidentiality of sensitive data that students and families provide to educational institutions. The Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), passed in 1974, has provided students and parents with the right to review their educational records and exercise significant control over the disclosure of their information. In 1998, Congress passed the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) to protect the privacy of children under age 13 when using commercial websites and online services. Current federal laws do not contemplate electronic records, online service provider rights and responsibilities or individual electronic student profiles. Therefore, federal laws such as FERPA and COPPA must be modernized to better protect student data.