



PTAC Teacher Training Focus Groups Report

Executive Summary

The Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) conducted a series of focus groups to gain insight into teachers' needs for training on student privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Twenty-four focus groups were conducted between September and December of 2016. The 77 participants included teachers, instructional technologists, and other school personnel from 17 states.

The findings of the focus groups suggest that, *in general, teachers would benefit from more training on FERPA and student privacy.* Participants agreed that familiarity with student privacy issues varies widely across districts and within schools, and it would be helpful to have at least *a baseline knowledge level for all teachers.* Participants also noted that the information requirements differ by role. At the same time, teachers have limited time for pursuing student privacy training in addition to everything else they do, so offering training that can be completed independently, in self-paced online modules, reinforced by instructor-led courses, is desirable.

Participants voiced interest in receiving training that is engaging and based on real-world scenarios that they might encounter. Across all focus groups, participants noted that as technology use expands in schools, the privacy issues increase dramatically. They feel that most school districts are not fully equipped to deal with the rapidly changing policy demands that arise as a result of student and teacher use of widely available software and mobile applications. They noted that they are constantly encountering new scenarios that challenge schools and teachers to remain compliant with federal student privacy requirements.

The key recommendation from the focus groups is to develop new student privacy and FERPA training for teachers. The training should be

- modular;
- scenario-based; and
- designed to accommodate the schedule demands and work styles of teachers.

Training should

- be available in multiple modalities;
- provide opportunities for differentiated learning, so that participants can focus on the most relevant information when needed; and
- be kept current, with regular updates to reflect changing privacy practices, policies, and laws.



Purpose

The U.S. Department of Education established the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) as a one-stop resource for education stakeholders to learn about data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices related to student-level longitudinal data systems and other uses of student data. PTAC provides timely information and updated guidance on privacy, confidentiality, and security practices.

PTAC is expanding its service offering with a new series of resources that will provide teacher training about student privacy issues. To inform the format, content, and medium for this training series, PTAC conducted a series of focus groups with educators across the country. These were designed to gain a better understanding of how teachers are currently trained on student privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, also called FERPA, and learn more about teacher preferences for training on this topic. The overarching theme explored was “If teachers were to receive more training on student privacy and FERPA compliance, what is the best way to deliver this training?” Specific research questions included:

- What’s the best way to train teachers on student privacy issues?
- How do teachers typically get trained on student privacy issues?
- How long should training on student privacy issues be?
- In what medium do teachers prefer to receive professional development training – for example, online, with print resources, or in train-the-trainer sessions?
- What are typical scenarios involving student privacy issues that teachers/administrators think should be addressed?
- What level of detail should be included in training on student privacy issues?
- What would motivate teachers to participate in voluntary training, especially on student privacy issues?

The focus group guide and script are available in appendices A and B. These provide details on the approach and methodology used to solicit focus group participants, conduct the focus groups, and analyze the results.

Approach

Between September and December of 2016, PTAC conducted 24 focus groups on teacher training for student privacy issues, each lasting approximately 60 to 75 minutes. Focus group participants were volunteers, uncompensated for their time. Where possible, focus groups were held in person, but the majority were conducted virtually, via conference call. The virtual focus groups proved to be more efficient with respect to the time constraints of participants. As the project’s budget did not permit travel by participants to a central location, the in-person focus groups were piggy-backed on existing meetings involving teachers, and the researchers traveled to them. These meetings included the EdTechTeam Summits in Kansas City, MO (October 29, 2016), and in Falls Church, VA (November 5, 2016), and the Maryland State Department of Education’s Maryland Assessment Group Conference in Ocean City, MD (November 17, 2016).

At the EdTechTeam Summits, the focus group facilitator gave a short presentation during the opening session, inviting attendees to participate in the focus group meeting during the lunch break. Meeting attendees were also approached individually by the research staff and invited to participate in the focus groups.



At the Maryland Assessment Group Conference, the focus group was included in the meeting agenda, with dedicated meeting space throughout the day. In addition, PTAC staff promoted the focus group during their conference session, and meeting participants were recruited on-site.

The rest of the focus groups were conducted virtually via a conference call. Twenty-one virtual focus groups were conducted during the 13-week data collection period. Participants were recruited by PTAC staff at site visits and through announcements in the PTAC and SLDS listservs, as well as through newsletters/announcements from the state departments of education of Virginia and Colorado. Recipients were recruited directly, and they were asked to recruit additional teachers, if possible.

Methodology

The data analysis methodology focused on identifying emerging themes through information present in the demographics data, as well as in the patterns of responses that occurred both within and across focus group sessions. Themes were determined via

- the frequency or prevalence of a comment or opinion;
- the emphasis or emotion of the speaker; and
- the urgency, in terms of the importance placed on a comment by the speaker.

The analytical process was primarily data driven, in that responses were analyzed and categories of responses were created after all of the focus group data was reviewed. Due to the sample size, variances in answers to questions cannot be directly attributed to differences in demographic information.

Demographics Themes

Participants were asked to fill out a demographic information sheet before their focus group, either on paper for the in-person groups, or online for the virtual focus groups. An example is in appendix C. Completion of the demographic information was voluntary. Demographic information was collected from 79 percent of the participants. Since a response to each question was not mandatory, some questions did not receive a response from every responder. Summary results from the questionnaire are in appendix D.

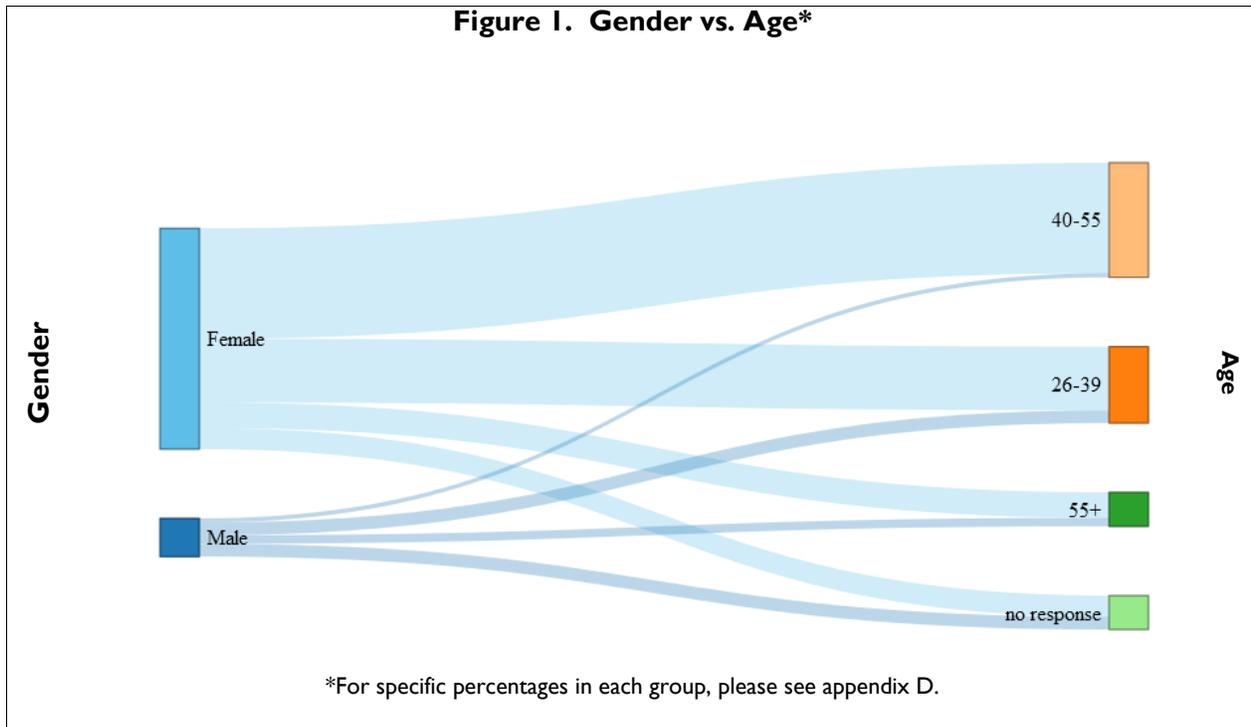
The participants included more females than males. The age of participants ranged from 26 to over 55, and females between 40 and 55 was the largest group represented (see figure 1). Some respondents declined to answer the age question on the demographic questionnaire.

The participants represented several different roles, including teachers, instructional technologists, district staff, and school administrators. Of the respondents who completed the demographic questionnaire, the representation by occupation was as follows:

- Teachers: 44%
- Other School Personnel: 23%
- Instructional Technologists: 16%
- School Administrators: 8%
- District IT Staff: 8%

Amongst the participants who designated themselves as “Other” were librarians, curriculum specialists, test coordinators, behavioral specialists, and data administrators.

The goal of the focus groups was to gather feedback from elementary, middle, and high school staff, as well as staff from schools in varying geographic regions and representing rural, suburban, and urban areas across the United States.

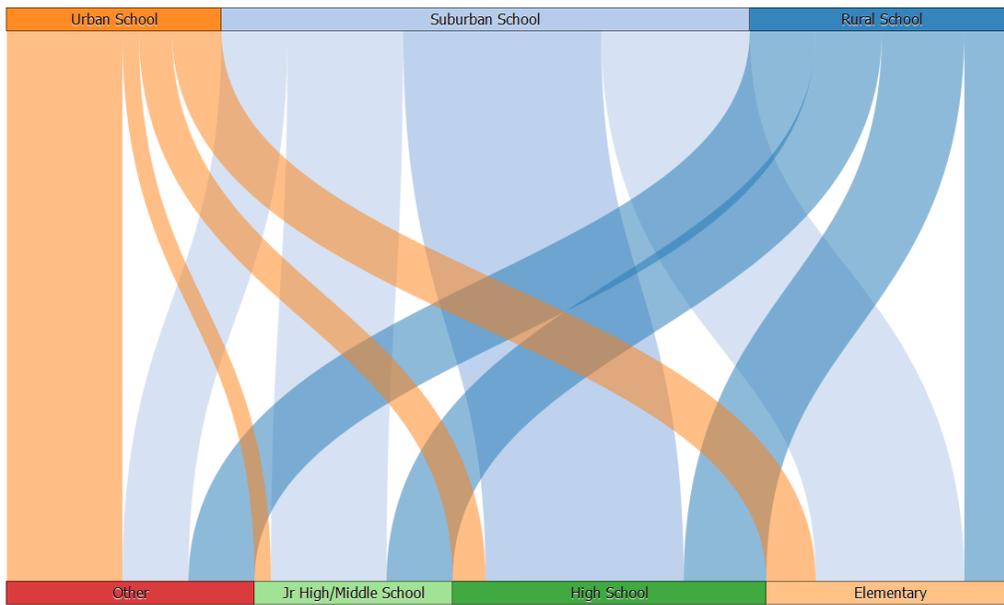


Focus group attendees represented the primary target populations, with participants from all three desired school levels, and in urban, suburban, and rural districts, as shown in figure 2.

Participants represented school districts of varying sizes, from small districts to very large districts with more than 100,000 students.



Figure 2. Type and Grade Level of School*

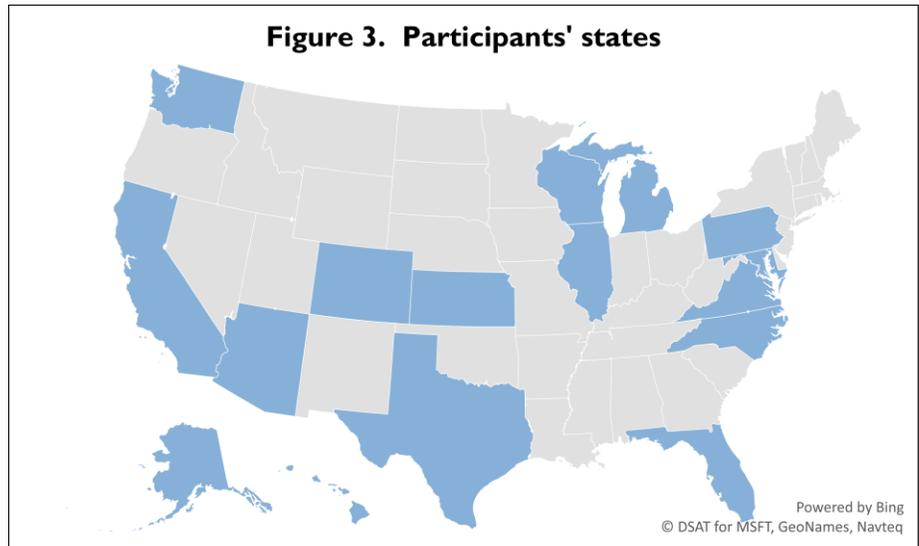


*For specific percentages in each group, please see appendix D.

The focus groups included representation from the following states (see figure 3):

- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Kansas
- Maryland
- Michigan
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- Virginia
- Washington
- Wisconsin
- Texas

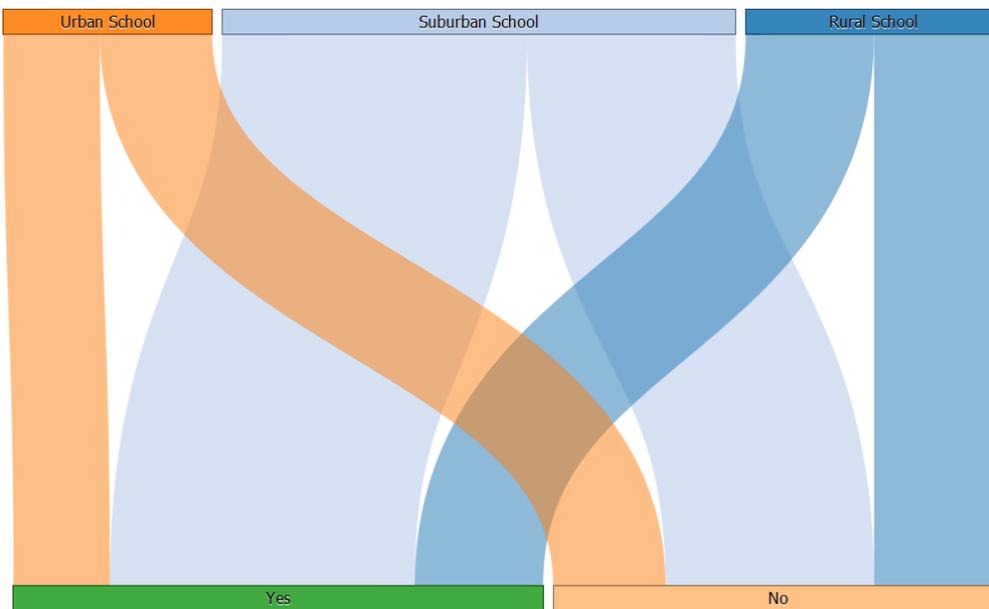
Figure 3. Participants' states





Several trends were identified in the differences in student privacy training experience of participants. For example, findings showed that a larger percentage of participants from suburban schools had previous privacy training than participants from rural or urban schools (see figure 4).

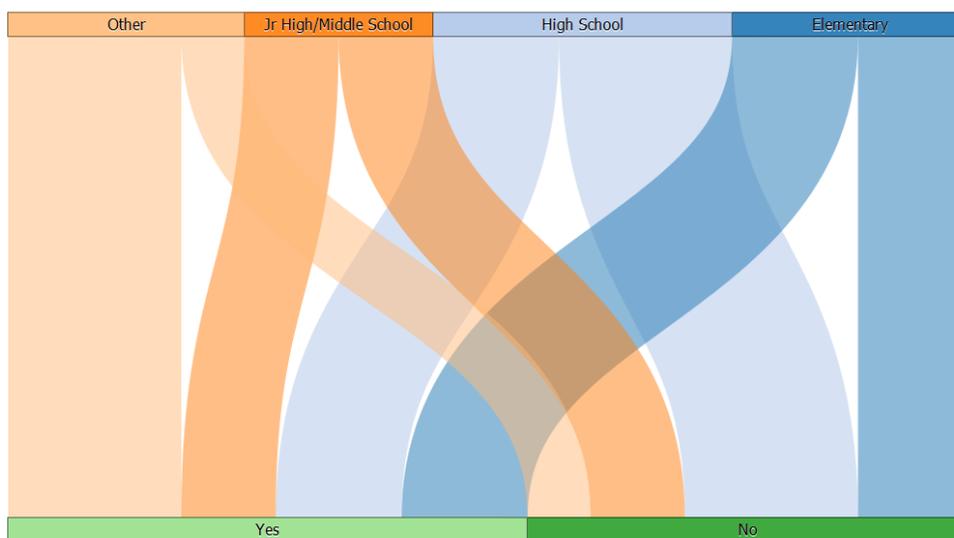
Figure 4. Type of School vs. Previous Privacy Training



*For specific percentages in each group, please see appendix D.

Responses on previous privacy training were mixed. Respondents were almost equally split for both elementary and middle schools (see figure 5). About 57 percent of participants from high schools indicated no previous privacy training. Based on the pre-focus group questionnaires, almost half of all participants reported no previous training on student privacy.

Figure 5. School Grade Range vs. Previous Privacy Training



*For specific percentages in each group, please see appendix D.

Focus Group Themes

The focus group questions, available in appendix B, were grouped by professional development, previous student privacy training, training preferences, previous training by topic, motivators, and educational technology. As with the demographic information, themes emerged in participants' responses via response frequency, speaker's emphasis, or the urgency and importance placed on the comment by the speaker. The responses provided more insight on why participants had or had not received prior training, as well as participants' views on training effectiveness.

Professional development

More than 80 percent of participants indicated that they spend 24 hours or more per year on professional development. Some of the participants indicated that professional development is mandatory to maintain teaching certifications, for instance, and many start each school year with at least two days of school- or district-wide professional development activities. The requirements for professional development varied by district and state.

Participants indicated that professional development training was delivered through a variety of methods, including in-person instructor-led training, online training, webinars, conferences, and other methods such as by video.

The timing of the training also varied. Participants listed options such as during the school day, on in-service days, after school, before school, on the weekends, and during the summer (see figure 6). In general, instructional technologists had more flexibility to take courses during the school day because they are not engaged in teaching students directly.

When asked to provide examples of *good or memorable courses*, the most frequently cited examples included

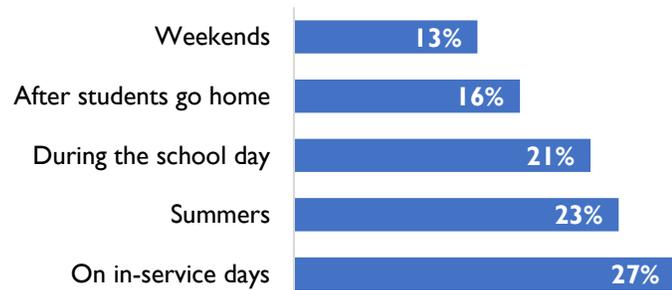
- hands-on interactive activities;
- training that was directly applicable to the job;
- information that could be used immediately;
- training that incorporated relevant scenarios; and
- training that provided opportunities for collaboration.

For teachers, the best training was cited as that which could be applied right away in the classroom. Participants in other roles echoed that theme.

Less favorable examples of courses included

- content that was not relevant; and
- passive courses with little opportunity for engagement.

Figure 6. When Do Teachers Have Student Privacy or FERPA Training?



“Teachers need to leave with something they can use right away. The ‘fire hose’ or preaching to the choir approaches aren’t successful.”

—Focus group participant



Also, participants voiced a preference for differentiated learning, so that the content presented is at the appropriate depth for the learner.

In general, most participants felt that they would benefit from more professional development training on student privacy issues, provided the training is relevant to their jobs. Several participants emphasized the need for course content to include the appropriate depth of information to their role. They did not want to have to learn the minutiae of the law if they didn't need to know it.

The most frequently cited areas for more training on were around

- data privacy;
- the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA); and
- FERPA.

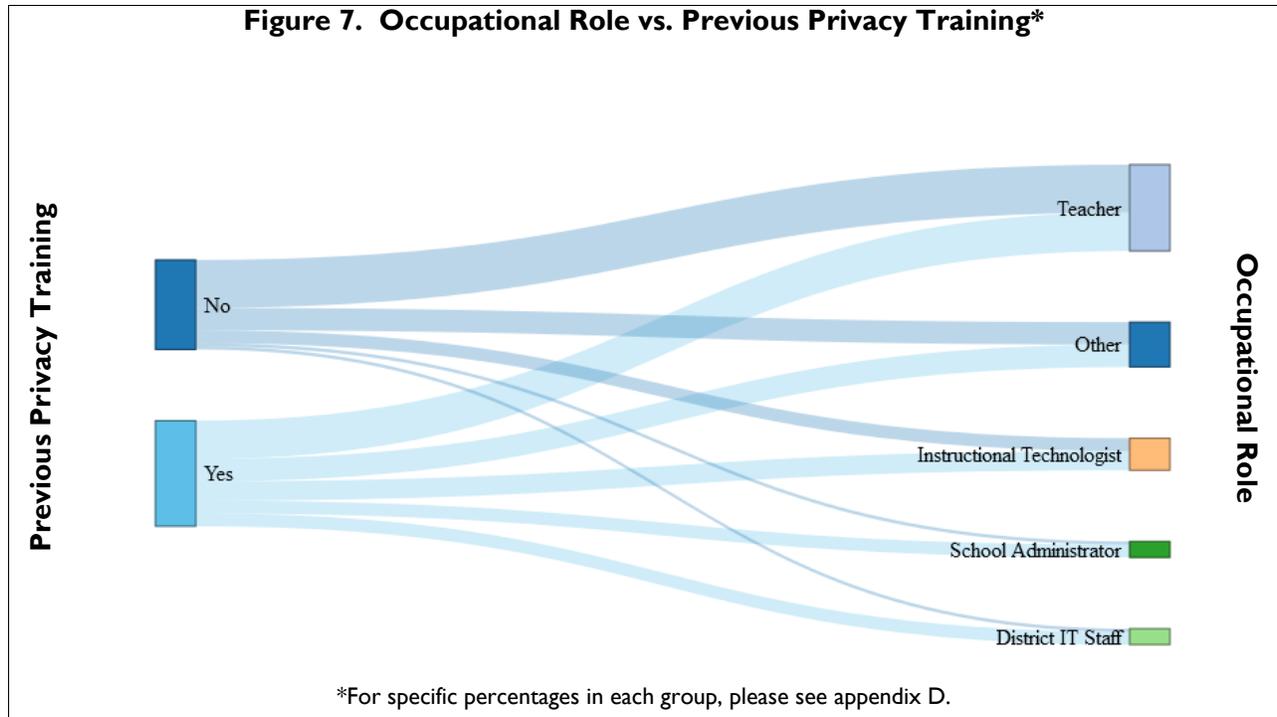
Another key sentiment that was voiced is that teachers “don't know what they don't know.” The landscape is continually changing, and teachers need to be guided to the information that is important for them.

Previous student privacy training

A portion of the focus group questions focused on learning more about the previous privacy training of participants. The focus group findings confirmed what participants reported in the pre-focus group questionnaire, that **almost half of the participants across all focus groups indicated they had never had any formal student privacy or FERPA training.**

When looking at prior training by occupational role, however, a higher proportion of teachers reported having no student privacy training, relative to those in other school roles, such as district IT staff (see figure 7). About 61 percent of teacher participants who responded to the question on previous student privacy training indicated no previous privacy training.

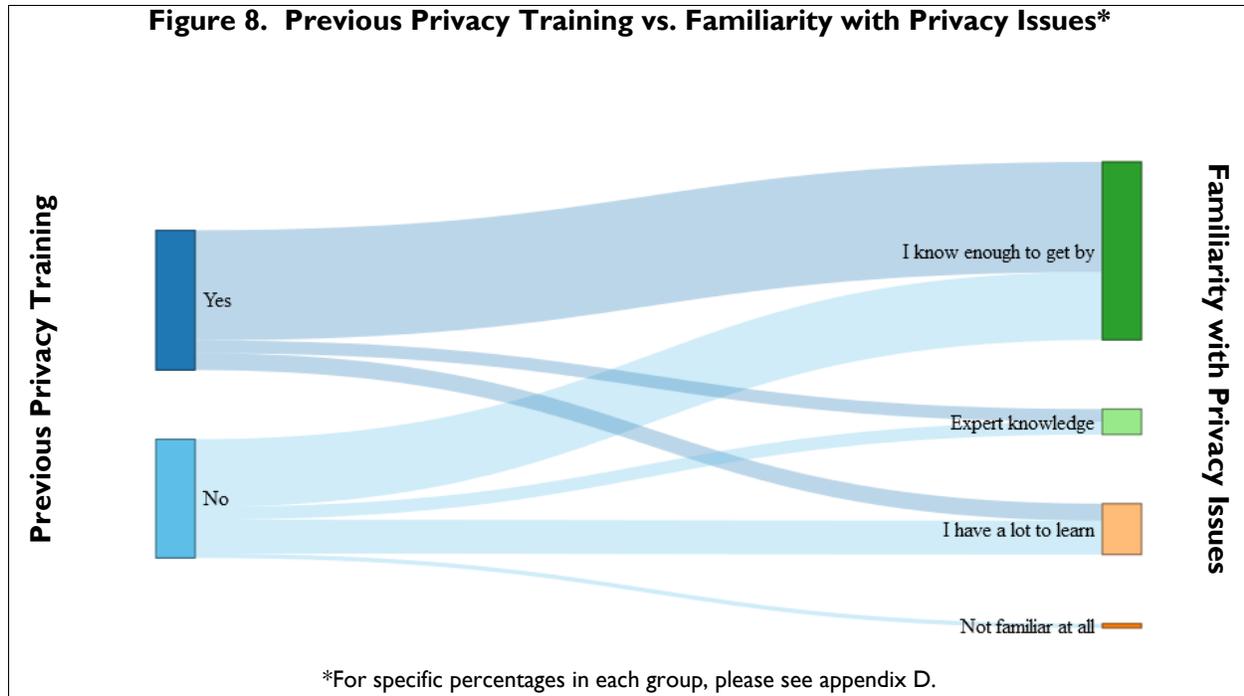
Figure 7. Occupational Role vs. Previous Privacy Training*



Throughout the focus groups, instructional technologists reported having more time than teachers for training on privacy issues. Since instructional technologists receive more training than teachers regarding student privacy, it may not be surprising that they report having a greater familiarity with privacy issues. In general, instructional technologists were more likely to have received student privacy or FERPA training because of the role that they play in the schools, which usually includes educating teachers on student privacy issues. Of those who had not received formal training on student privacy, several instructional technologists reported doing their own research to find out answers to questions.

Participants who reported having student privacy and FERPA training were more likely to report that they “know enough to get by” with respect to student privacy (see figure 8). About 78 percent of those who said they received previous privacy training reported that they “know enough to get by,” indicating that training does help increase the general knowledge base. Several respondents indicated, however, that it is difficult to get enough training to cover everything that a person needs to know with respect to student privacy.

Figure 8. Previous Privacy Training vs. Familiarity with Privacy Issues*



For approximately half of those participants who received previous privacy training, the training was mandatory. For some, the privacy training was given at the beginning of each school year. For others, the training was a one-time experience. Most of the time, a resource external to the school delivered the training. Several teachers indicated that they took the training because it was mandatory to maintain their teaching credentials in their state or district.

The respondents indicated that they took the student privacy or FERPA training via a variety of methods, most frequently in-person instructor-led and online training, including through short videos. Other methods of training delivery included state and national conferences. In some cases, training was delivered via a hybrid or blended approach incorporating multiple learning modalities.

The length of student privacy or FERPA training varied from short (less than one hour) to a few hours, and even to, in one case, a six-week course meeting once a week.

Opinions differed on the appropriate duration for a privacy course: many participants stated that the length of time needed varies based on the role of the person. Teachers, for

“I need to know what to do if there is a data breach. I need to know more about what is in the agreements for all those online applications.”

—Focus group participant

instance, indicated that they don’t need as much in-depth instruction as school administrators or instructional technologists.

On an individual basis, **many of the participants had very specific scenarios or questions that were not addressed in the training they received**, reflecting the continual emergence of student privacy issues that require further training and education. Representative unanswered questions that participants had after training included

- what to do in the event of a data breach;
- how to sort through vendor compliance regulations; and
- how to handle social media in the classroom.

Training preferences

When asked about their preferences for receiving professional development training, the answers varied. Most participants indicated that their preference depends on the topic. For some topics, instructor-led is preferred, especially when the content is complex and requires detailed explanation. For complex information, participants liked the ability to ask questions, collaborate with other participants, and learn from interactive scenarios. Many respondents mentioned a preference for differentiated learning content specific to the role of the participants.

“I prefer a blended model where there's some face-to-face time combined with online and individually paced learning.”

—Focus group participant

Opinions on the optimal length of time for a course on student privacy varied as well:

- The most frequent response was approximately a one-hour course on the basics of student privacy for most teachers, if only to ensure that all teachers have some foundation of knowledge.
- Some respondents felt that more training would be required to cover all the pertinent topics, but most agreed that teachers are overwhelmed with everything else they need to do, so course sessions need to be kept short.
- Respondents also suggested that training needs differ depending on the person's role. Instructional technologists, for example, need different training on student privacy than classroom teachers.

“Teachers are overwhelmed with everything else they need to do, so course sessions need to be kept short.”

—Focus group participant

To help with retention of the information learned, most respondents indicated that refreshers were necessary. When receiving refreshers, however, participants' preferences were as follows:

- Participants wanted to get relevant new information, not just a passive repeat of the same information.
- Most respondents said that incorporating real scenarios and hands-on interaction into the training would foster greater retention of information and greater understanding of the issues.
- Other suggestions for improving retention of learning included use of
 - text or on-screen reminders;
 - templates;
 - guides; and
 - resources for teachers.

“Refreshers could be scenario-based or role playing to enable attendees to practice what they've learned with real scenarios.”

—Focus group participant

The point was also made that teachers need to understand

- the urgency of the information; and
- why it is important to follow the policies and guidance on student privacy.



Overall, participants conveyed that, for teachers, the primary focus tends to be on the educational needs of students, not student privacy issues.

Previous student privacy training by topic

In addition to looking at participant exposure to general privacy training, the focus group discussions explored prior training on specific aspects of privacy such as student records, use of email, social media, and student special accommodations. When asked about previous training on these four sample scenarios, the responses were split. Many participants *had not* previously received training on

- granting access to education records to a noncustodial parent;
- how to email information to parents; or
- using social media, either by students or for educational purposes.

Most participants *had* received prior training on dealing with privacy issues with respect to an IEP or accommodations for students with disabilities.

Participants referenced many topics and challenging scenarios that could be included in additional education related to student privacy, including the following:

- Understanding COPPA and FERPA
- Student privacy concerns when teachers communicate with one another
- Understanding when you can and can't post a student's work or information in a classroom
- Understanding policies on photographing students and posting students' photos on social media or in the classroom
- Setting up online student accounts
- Use of student-owned devices in the classrooms
- Student sharing of passwords
- Unattended student information left at a printer or discarded in the trash
- Digital citizenship
- Data protection
- Parental consent
- Noncustodial access

The list demonstrates that participants experience a wide variety of scenarios in their day-to-day work that present challenges with respect to student privacy. Since many scenarios were cited, it was difficult to prioritize these scenarios in a meaningful way. As participants discussed scenarios, many noted that new scenarios emerge all the time, presenting new challenges that have not been dealt with previously.

"A lot of data has to go between people. It is difficult to do that securely."

—Focus group participant

Motivators

In the focus groups, participants commented on potential motivators for teachers choosing to take training courses on student privacy on their own time. The most frequently cited motivators were

- compensation;

- applicability of content; and
- continuing education credit.

Other potential motivators included

- a mandate or sense of urgency or priority from the district;
- other forms of recognition through badges or certificates;
- high-quality presenters.

Teachers indicated that, due to so many demands on their time, it is difficult to set aside more time for optional training. Instructional technologists stated that they have more motivation to take courses on privacy because of the direct relationship to their job. Instructional technologists who train teachers on privacy reiterated that teachers need recognition or compensation in order to do optional training on their own time.

“I’m motivated. It’s a matter of competing priorities and what I can find time to do. The most attractive professional development to me would have built in flexibility.”

—Focus group participant

Educational Technology

Most participants responded that the use of educational resources is encouraged in the district, and that increasing numbers of technology devices and applications are being used throughout the schools.

When it comes to approval processes for online educational resources, the responses varied, including examples of formal and informal processes.

- In some cases, schools and districts have pre-approved lists that teachers can select from, with choices that have already been vetted.
- In other instances, the district only vets apps that charge for services, requiring no specific approval process for free online applications.

“Teachers never look at the data privacy agreements. I need to know more about how to teach the teachers.”

—Focus group participant

With respect to reading the Terms of Service or privacy policies, the responses tended to differ by role.

- Instructional technologists most often responded that they read the Terms of Service or privacy policy.
- Teachers, generally, reported not reading these policies.

Most respondents felt that their district or school does not have clear guidelines on how and when to use online resources in the classroom.

Recommendations

The focus groups on teachers’ professional development experiences and preferences for student privacy and FERPA training were conducted to inform the development of PTAC’s new teacher training series. Based on the input from the focus groups, this section details the recommended format, content, and medium for the new training.



Develop new training on student privacy.

Overall, the focus groups indicated that more training is needed to educate school personnel on student privacy rights and responsibilities. Focus group respondents felt that the field is so vast, it is often difficult to know what information to focus on with respect to student privacy and FERPA. Numerous teachers commented that it would be helpful to have guidance on what it is important to know. The new training should be role based, to reflect the different needs of teachers, administrators, and instructional technologists.

The information that teachers receive varies widely, ranging from a five-minute video on FERPA and student privacy to an annual hour-long training session. If PTAC offers a series of courses on student privacy and FERPA, it will help school districts provide teachers with at least a common baseline of understanding on the essentials of student privacy, with opportunities for more in-depth learning.

Develop differentiated course content with engaging and/or interactive delivery.

Focus group participants pointed out that even the best training is ineffective if no one takes the course, so any new training needs to be relevant and engaging. Most focus group respondents agreed that training needs to be made available in a variety of formats to meet the varied needs and schedule demands of teachers. Our recommendation based on the focus group feedback is to develop a modular training program, with different options for content delivery.

We recommend using the ADDIE model to develop the training, described in more detail below. The ADDIE model is a five-phase instructional design methodology with the following steps: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation.¹

Analysis

The results from the focus groups provide initial data on what teachers know and what they feel they need to know. In addition, it tells us that teachers have different needs for training topics than other school personnel, such as instructional technologists and administrators.

- Many of **the focus group participants indicated that they would like the training content to be differentiated** so they do not have to “waste time” learning content that does not apply to them. By targeting the content to specific user populations, such as teachers or instructional technologists, the participants will likely find the courses more engaging and relevant.
- **Most of the participants voiced the desire to have interactive, scenario-based training that would improve learning retention.** We envision developing a program that uses a blended approach to learning that combines instructor-led collaborative sessions with online self-study modules that are delivered in short segments around specific topics.

¹ The ADDIE model is a common training framework used across industries and government. Additional information on the method can be found in *Instructional Design: The ADDIE Approach* (2014) by Robert Maribe Branch, in addition to many training guides and manuals.



These data from the focus groups form the foundation for building the new training program, informing decisions on how to prioritize instructional content and deliver the training to meet user needs and learning objectives. In the Analysis phase, the needs that have been identified can be used to further specify the key elements of student privacy and FERPA content that teachers, instructional technologists, and other school personnel need to know.

Design

The next step, Design, details the learning objectives for each module, defining the competencies that each module's target audience will need to master. A course design based on clear objectives and outcomes will allow the state and district users, as well as PTAC, to measure training effectiveness and determine future changes to curriculum and courseware.

Development

An example of a blended approach for course development might include a self-study module, followed by a live session with an instructor who has gone through a train-the-trainer course on FERPA and student privacy. Either in person or via a real-time virtual discussion group, teachers would have the chance to ask questions about specific scenarios and discuss answers with their colleagues. By having everyone in the course take a basic self-study module first, all participants would acquire the same basic level of knowledge.

Following the same model, participants could take additional modules, choosing from a range of scenarios and topics, and individualized for specific roles. Over time, a library of scenarios can be developed that would be accessible from the desktop or mobile device. In this example, the learner would advance from basic knowledge acquisition, to application of knowledge, to specific scenarios through these online interactions. This technique would allow teachers to quickly find information based on challenges they encounter in the classroom. The online scenarios would help them learn how to appropriately achieve compliance or find information from another source when the answer is not apparent.

Since school personnel in different roles have different needs, some training may be best given in person, while other content may be more suitable to video or online interactive courseware.

Implementation and Evaluation

Once the courses are developed, they can be released to states and districts for use with teachers. They could be designed to include options for state or district customization, ranging from inserting logos to adding sections on state law or district policy. Because each module is developed around clear learning objectives, the users and PTAC will be able to measure the effectiveness of the training modules, and modify them as needed to ensure that the learning objectives are achieved. Teachers' learning can be ongoing as new technologies and new practices in the classroom evolve.



Develop a culture of continuous learning.

The technology landscape is changing rapidly, and thus regularly presents new challenges for maintaining students' privacy. PTAC can keep teachers abreast of what they need to know to comply with student privacy policies and guidelines, even as they are developed.

Further, since the modules can be developed to apply to specific scenarios, the information can be broken down into smaller chunks, fostering teachers' deeper understanding of the various topics as they go. Focus group participants recognized that student privacy and FERPA information is too complex to absorb in one sitting.

Develop new student privacy checklists and tools, and expand access to resources.

In addition to new training on student privacy and FERPA, teachers would benefit from having training on increasing awareness of the resources that are already available to them, especially for commonly occurring situations. PTAC has a library of resources that were not familiar to most focus group participants, which points to the need to circulate them more widely. These resources can be tied to the online training modules, thus providing additional resources to enhance learning.

Additional written resources should be developed to meet the expanding needs. Teachers listed a wide variety of challenging scenarios. Some, such as sharing passwords, would be easy to address with a brochure or poster reminding teachers (and students) of the potential dangers. Others concerns, such as procedures for safe participation in social media, might be better suited to a checklist or decision tree. Some of these new tools could be developed as mobile apps that teachers could have readily accessible to help them comply with privacy rules when situations arise.

Leverage existing resources.

Collaboration with other providers of privacy resources can help reinforce critical messages and broaden outreach efforts to increase awareness of student privacy issues. Other Department of Education resources could be leveraged to inform the tools, such as the scenarios developed for PTAC and Family Policy Compliance Office resources, those created in guidance documents, and others like the National Forum on Educational Statistics resource *Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy*.

Conclusion

The feedback from the focus groups revealed a need for more education for teachers and school personnel on FERPA and student privacy. The focus groups emphasized that teachers' time is limited, so training needs to be targeted and immediately applicable. As the landscape continues to evolve, with frequent changes in technologies and policies, school personnel need guidance on what they need to know to avoid pitfalls and compliance issues. At the same time, however, school districts need to incentivize teachers to take the time to seek out more training on student privacy.

Participants would benefit from access to training that includes a series of short scenario-based modules that could be taken via different methods such as online self-study, or video supplemented by instructor-led collaborative sessions that allow participants to ask questions and share information with peers and colleagues.



The focus groups pointed to numerous topic areas that would be of interest to teachers, ranging from FERPA basics to specific scenarios such as how to manage student online accounts and use social media in the classroom. Because new topics are always emerging, PTAC could adopt a continuous learning model that focuses on generating new courses on an ongoing basis.



Appendix A: Focus Group Guide

Teacher Professional Development

Focus groups are an excellent way to gather feedback on the best way to train teachers on student privacy. This guide details our proposed approach and methodology for soliciting focus group participants, conducting the focus groups, and analyzing the results.

PHASE I: PRE- FOCUS GROUP

1. **Develop the focus group objectives.** Before beginning the process of identifying participants for the focus group, define clear objectives or goals for the focus groups, and also identify any existing theories or assumptions regarding current teacher training.
2. **Identify the target participant criteria.** The target participants should be defined based on the objectives of the focus group to ensure that members of the desired populations are represented.
 - a. Determine the desired criteria such as participant demographic information. The sample size of participants, for example, should include representation of both male and female teachers, young and older teachers, teachers with varying levels of technical proficiency, elementary, middle school, and high school teachers, and special resource teachers and regular classroom teachers.
 - b. To identify the key characteristics of individuals to ensure they fall into the desired participant categories, a survey instrument can be used to invite and screen candidate participants. The survey can also measure existing knowledge levels of participants with respect to student privacy. Our team proposes to use lists of registered attendees for conferences and statewide meetings to recruit potential participants.
3. **Determine the number of focus group participants required and how many separate focus groups need to be scheduled.**
 - a. Conducting multiple focus groups will enable a comparison of themes which emerge from each discussion. The goal will be to have a diverse group of participants at each focus group discussion.
 - b. Each focus group should have between six and ten participants. Fewer than six participants may limit discussion input, while more than ten participants can be difficult to facilitate.
 - c. Focus groups should run between 60 and 90 minutes.
4. **Generate specific topic areas and questions.**
 - a. The primary purpose of the focus groups will be to gain insight on how teachers prefer to receive training (e.g., in person, online, video, or print). The questions will also explore topics such as what motivates teachers to do voluntary training.
 - b. In addition to specific questions about teacher preferences for training styles, other questions may focus on relevant issues related to current levels of knowledge and



experience regarding student privacy and desired frequency of training for retention of information. For instance, periodic refresher training may help to ensure that important or new information is reinforced.

5. Develop focus group protocol or script.

- a. A standard protocol or script will be developed for use during the focus group administration. This script will include instructions for participants that the facilitator will read.
- b. *Section I:* The first section of the script will welcome participants and explain the purpose and context of the focus group. The focus group facilitators will also be introduced. In this section, any additional information will be disclosed to the participants such as if the session is being recorded and that names of individual participant comments will remain confidential.
- c. *Section II:* Once the information in Section I is covered, the focus group questions will be asked.
- d. *Section III:* The last section of the script is essentially the closing remarks. Thank participants, give them contact information for further follow up if requested, and explain how the data will be analyzed and used.

6. Choose the location.

- a. Choose a location which is comfortable, easily accessible, and where participants can see one another. Budget may also be a consideration when selecting a location.
- b. Choose a setting which does not bias the information gathered.
- c. Ideally, the focus groups can be conducted in conjunction with statewide meetings or conferences that teachers attend.

PHASE 2: CONDUCT THE FOCUS GROUP

1. The facilitator should bring the following materials to support the focus group:

- a. Notebook/computer to record proceedings
- b. Focus group list of participants
- c. Focus group protocol/script
- d. Facilitator and participant name tags

Participant questionnaires (to determine participant demographics etc.)

2. The facilitator should ask the questions following the script and probe for more complete answers, but should not participate in the dialogue or correct participants. The facilitator should also make sure everyone is heard and make an effort to draw out quieter group members. Ideally, a note taker will also be present to assist in documenting the focus group.



PHASE 3: INTERPRETING AND REPORTING THE RESULTS

Focus group results produce large amounts of qualitative data. Qualitative analysis is a multi-step process which includes summarizing the data, analyzing the summaries, grouping the data, documenting the findings, and ultimately interpreting the data to identify trends and implications.

1. Summarize each focus group

- a. Immediately after the focus group, the facilitator should write up a quick summary of impressions.
- b. Later, transcribe the notes or audio recording of the focus group. Transcriptions are the word-for-word written interview conversations. Transcriptions are the starting point for analysis.

2. Analyze the summaries

- a. **Data Grouping** - The analysis begins by reviewing the transcripts and grouping the respondent data. Group answers from all focus group sessions to each question. For each question, how do participants respond? Context and tone are just as important as words. If comments are phrased negatively or triggered an emotional response, this should be noted in the analysis.
 - b. **Label the Information** - Once the answers have been grouped, organize and classify answers into categories. Label each group of answers.
 - c. **Interpret the results** – Determine how the information answers the research objectives.
 - What are the major findings?
 - Is the knowledge new or something that was already known?
 - Does the knowledge serve to confirm a previous theory or assumption?
 - How does the knowledge change the existing perspective?
 - What new theories develop?
 - Are there major themes that emerge?
 - d. **Major Themes** – Developing the major themes requires looking back over all of the notes and findings. Read the notes and also look for themes/trends. Write down any themes which occur more than once. Also consider if certain themes or trends seem to be attributable to a particular participant demographic.
- ### 3. Final report
- All of the findings will be documented in a final report that summarizes the findings. This report will also include descriptive statistics about the participants. The raw transcripts from the focus groups will also be delivered.



Appendix B: PTAC Focus Group Script

Paperwork Reduction Act Burden Statement

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1880-0542. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 75 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is voluntary. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this form, application or survey, please contact: Family Policy Compliance Office, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-8520 directly.

Section I: Introduction

Welcome to the focus group on teacher training for student privacy. My name is _____, and I will be facilitating today's focus group. I have here with me today _____ who will be taking notes. Both of us are with a firm called Quality Information Partners. We are conducting this focus group on behalf of the US Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). The U.S. Department of Education established PTAC as a "one-stop" resource for education stakeholders to learn about data privacy, confidentiality, and security practices related to student-level longitudinal data systems and other uses of student data. PTAC provides timely information and updated guidance on privacy, confidentiality, and security practices. The primary purpose of this focus group is to gain a better understanding on how teachers currently get trained on student privacy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, also called FERPA, and learn more about teacher preferences for training on this topic. We'd like to explore the question of "If teachers were to receive more training on student privacy and FERPA compliance, what is the best way to do so?" We will be conducting multiple focus groups with teachers to ensure that we get feedback from a diverse range of participants.

Today's session will take approximately 60 to 75 minutes. I will be moderating the session to ensure that each person has a chance to provide input, but please don't hesitate to ask questions as they arise. During today's session, we ask that you answer each question with as much descriptive detail as possible. Please provide specific examples as appropriate to illustrate your opinion or position. While we are going to be recording the information expressed today, the comments that are made will be used in aggregate. The identities of the participants will be kept confidential. We have asked each of you to complete a questionnaire so that we can better understand your background and level of experience. Again, I want to emphasize that this information will not be used to identify you as an individual.

We will prepare a final written report summarizing our findings across all of the focus group sessions, including summary information that can be used to make decisions on how to best meet teacher needs for training on student privacy issues and FERPA.

If there is a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, you do not have to answer or comment. Remember, your participation is voluntary. Are there any questions before we begin?



Before we start with the questions, I would like to spend a few minutes on introductions. Please just state your first name, what you teach, and how long you have been teaching.

Section II: Focus Group Questions

Topic: Professional Development

1. How many hours per year do you usually spend on professional development?
2. Does your state or district require this training? What is the state requirement, if you know? What is the district requirement, if you know?
3. In what form does that training come (i.e., in person training, webinars, etc.)?
4. When do you take training? During the school day? On in-service days? After the students go home? Summers?
5. Are there some courses that are particularly memorable because they are more or less helpful? Any examples of a really good or really bad course you have taken?
6. Do you feel that you would benefit from taking more professional development courses to supplement what you are currently taking?
7. In what areas would you like to receive more training? Are there areas in which you receive more training than you feel is necessary to perform your job?
8. When you are selecting professional development courses, which training topics are most important to you? _____ (if you select topics, that is)

Topic: Previous Student Privacy Training

1. Have you had student privacy or FERPA training? If you have had student privacy or FERPA training before, how was it delivered (e.g., in person, online, video, etc.)? Did you receive this training individually? Or in a group setting? Was the training you received optional or mandatory?
2. Did you receive this training more than once? If so, how often was it repeated?
3. How long was the course? Did you feel that the length of the training was appropriate?
4. Who delivered the training (e.g., a fellow teacher, external source)?
5. When did you take the training (e.g., during school/working hours vs. on your own time)?
6. Was the training effective? Did you learn what you expected to learn? Has the information been useful to you in your daily work?
7. Were there things you wanted to know that were not included in the training? Have issues come up in your work day that you wish you had learned more about in the privacy training?
8. Do you have a resource to turn to for follow-up answers? Have you used the follow-up resources that are available to you?

Topic: Training Preferences

1. When you take professional development training, what is your preferred method of receiving the training (e.g., instructor led/classroom, live online webinar, self-study)?

- 
2. What do you think is the optimal length of time for a course on student privacy and FERPA? Or, how long do you think a course would need to be to cover the topics related to student privacy that you encounter most frequently?
 3. What can be done to help you with retention of the information learned? Would you benefit from periodic refresher courses?
 4. Can you identify typical or common situations related to student privacy or FERPA that you encounter on a frequent basis? Are you currently trained to ensure that you handle these scenarios appropriately? Let me ask you about a couple of scenarios in particular. For each of these scenarios, please comment on whether you have received specific training covering the scenario:
 - a. Granting access to education records to a noncustodial parent
 - b. How to email information to parents
 - c. Social media for students and educational purposes
 - d. An IEP or accommodations for a student with disabilities
 5. Have you experienced challenging scenarios related to student privacy for which you feel you need additional education or information?
 6. What would motivate you to take professional development courses on student privacy on your own personal time?

Topic: Educational Technology

1. Do you use online educational resources in your classroom? Does your district encourage that?
2. Do you need to seek approval to use or download online educational resources? If you had to seek approval, what was the approval process?
3. Before you used the online educational resource or downloaded the application, did you read the Terms of Service or privacy policy?
4. Do you feel your district or school has clear guidelines on how and when to use online resources in your classroom?

Section III: Closing Remarks

Thank you for taking the time to participate in today's focus group. Several additional focus groups are being conducted with different groups of educators. Once all of the focus groups have been completed, the data collected from all groups will be analyzed, and the findings will be summarized. The results will be provided to the Department of Education to guide future efforts to develop teacher education on student privacy. If you have any questions about student privacy or FERPA, we can provide you with additional information.



Appendix C: PTAC Focus Group Participant Screening Questionnaire

Paperwork Reduction Act Burden Statement

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Email Address:

Gender:

Age:

- 18-25
- 26-39
- 40-55
- 55+

Occupation/Role (choose one):

- Teacher
 - What do you teach? _____
 - How long have you been teaching? _____
- School Administrator
- District IT Staff
- Other _____

Familiarity with Student Privacy Issues:

- Expert knowledge
- I know enough to get by
- I have a lot to learn
- Not familiar at all

Previous Student Privacy or FERPA Training:

Have you had student privacy or FERPA training before?

- No
- Yes

If Yes, please answer for your most recent training:

Type of training course: _____(e.g. online, in person)

Length of course: _____

Who provided the training or taught the class? _____

When did you most recently receive training on this topic?: _____

Have you taken training multiple times for Student Privacy or FERPA? _____

Please indicate your school type:

Part I

Is your school a public school? _____

Part II

- Elementary
- Middle School/Junior High School
- High School
- Other (please indicate grade range) _____

School Location Characteristics:

School zip code _____

- Rural School
- Urban School
- Suburban School

School District Size:

- Less than 10,000 students
- 10,000-20,000 students
- 20,000-50,000 students
- More than 100,000 students

Appendix D: PTAC Focus Group Participant Summary Data

Total Participants	77				
Total Demographic Questionnaires	61				
Gender	Females	Males			
	52 (85%)	9 (15%)			
Age	26-39	40-55	55+	No Response	
	18 (30%)	27 (44%)	8 (13%)	8 (13%)	
Occupation	Teacher	Instructional Technologist	School Administrator	District IT Staff	Other
	27 (44%)	10 (16%)	5 (8%)	5 (8%)	14 (23%)
School	Elementary	Jr High/Middle	High School	Other	
	15 (25%)	12 (20%)	19 (31%)	15 (25%)	
School Type	Urban	Suburban	Rural		
	12 (21%)	32 (52%)	16 (26%)		

This table shows the number of responses received in each category and the percentage. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent.



Appendix E: Acknowledgements

The U.S. Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center and the authors wish to thank the EdTechTeam and the Maryland Assessment Group for facilitating access to their meeting participants in order to hold focus groups.

We also thank the focus group participants for taking the time to share their thoughts.