

Idaho Parents, on September 12, 2013 our Idaho legislative education committee is meeting to discuss data collection in Idaho schools. Since 2009 Idaho has been receiving federal grants to build an extensive and intrusive data collection system.

What does this mean for Idaho's children?

Idaho's system will now track each child on a personal level from the moment they enroll in school through the workforce. It will also warehouse this data for use by researchers. Each child is assigned a unique student ID. This ID will be tied to any information that is collected on the child. Idaho collects personal identifiable information, including: test scores, disciplinary records, counseling received, achievement level, the full list is a spreadsheet of 13 pages.

Prior to 2010, this information was used only within the district and state as prescribed by policy and privacy laws. A student's personal information could not be released without written consent by a parent or guardian. Reports were provided to the Federal Government, but they were aggregate reports and were not broken down to the student level. This provided a level of protection for students.

This all changed in 2010. The Department of Education, without congressional approval, altered extensively the parental consent portions of the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA). The department also re-defined some key terms allowing the release of student-level records for non-academic research purposes.

Idaho is currently finishing the last portion of the statewide data system. Currently we are linking with the Department of Transportation to obtain social security numbers, the records are then sent to the Idaho Department of Labor and each student is assigned a unique labor Id. This ID will take over and track data throughout the individual's career. All of these points of data can be used without parental consent. A child has no protection or voice to protect them from abuses or leaks in this extensive system. There are no legal protections if an entity applies for access to information, and then sells or misuses the information.

Idaho children need your voices. The agenda of this meeting includes several voices from individuals who are in favor of this open data model. Including, a national advocacy group Data Quality Campaign that is funded by several special interests that would profit from the open model. They have encouraged states to go even further by linking to social services and health and human services. We need to let our legislators know that Idaho parents want the right to protect our child's information. Please contact the members of the education committee and tell them to pass legislation that restores parental consent, and blocks researchers and the Federal Government from any access to personally identifiable information.