



Office of the
Saskatchewan Information
and Privacy Commissioner

May 1, 2020 - Advisory from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Saskatchewan to Teachers, School Boards, Parents and Students

The pandemic has resulted in our classes being suspended indefinitely and students staying at home. School Boards and teachers are working on assisting parents and students with continuing education. I have no doubt that continuing education during this time has been very challenging. Of course, many of us have looked to the internet for solutions to our challenges.

Zoom and other video conference platforms have received a lot of publicity. I expect school boards have encouraged teachers to use video conferencing to facilitate continuing education virtually. Articles have been written regarding the privacy risks and I have issued an advisory on virtual meetings. I would ask that school boards and teachers think through the privacy risks for students in using video conferencing or virtual meeting platforms.

There are many educational offerings through the web that teachers and parents will be tempted to use to help instruct and fill the day. Again, school boards and individual teachers need to know the privacy protections afforded their students by *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, which should cause school boards to monitor closely what products are being used. This issue existed before the pandemic, but because of the current situation, the pressure to have online tools has increased.

Finally, before the pandemic, school boards may have had a list of authorized or approved apps, and educational products that the school board considered safe to use. I encourage school boards to revisit the tools they have approved in the past to double check on privacy protections. Teachers should ensure that they are checking with the division with regard to any guidelines or restrictions on products they might want to use. Teachers need to consider which products are safe for use.

Parents have become home teachers. The pressure is there to search for and use educational apps. My office has no jurisdiction over what parents do, but I would encourage parents to do some research on educational tools and the impact on their child's privacy. One would not want your student's profile, pictures, art work, and essays to show up in unexpected places.

Finally, students, you have some responsibility in this area too. As you work with various educational tools, you can check in to see how well your privacy is protected. Where you have concerns, you should let your parent, your teacher or your school board know.

I would recommend school boards, teachers and students to check the privacy policies, terms of use and privacy settings of every educational app that you are considering using.

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