

May Privacy Talk – Privacy Breaches

In the education context, privacy breaches occur when personal information is stolen, lost, or used/disclosed without authority. The [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario \(IPC\)](#) oversees access and privacy laws, and school boards must have policies and practices to protect student information, including notifying the IPC of breaches.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

What constitutes a privacy breach in education?

- **Loss or theft of personal information:**
This includes lost or stolen devices or documentation containing student or staff data (i.e. lost OSR, stolen board laptop).
- **Unauthorized access or disclosure:**
This could involve sending correspondence to the wrong person (IEP sent to parent of another student), or sharing information without consent or legal authority. This includes disclosure of personal information about students'/staff through discussion and conversation.
- **Failure to comply with privacy laws:**
This includes collecting more information than necessary, disclosing information without proper justification, or using identifiable photos or information on social media without consent.
- **Use of online educational services without proper safeguards, can result in a breach:**
Schools should follow school board policies/processes to evaluate, approve, and support the use of online educational services, and ensure that educators and students understand the privacy implications.

What to do if a privacy breach occurs:

- **Immediately notify your supervisor:**
Inform your supervisor, manager, or principal if you become aware of a privacy breach.
- **Take immediate steps to contain the breach:**
Change security passwords, retrieve copies of documents shared in error, etc.
- **Cooperate with any resulting investigation:**
Participate in any investigation into the breach.

Please refer to the [Privacy Breach Protocol](#) for more specific details if a breach does occur.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact John Forte – Privacy and Risk Advisor at john.forte@ncdsb.com or Andrea Penney – Coordinator of Information Management at andrea.penney@ncdsb.com