



Louisiana: Protecting Privacy and Supporting Longitudinal Data Analysis with a Unique Person ID

Mishan Ho-Rezvani mhorezvani@escholar.com

A Privacy Law that Changed All Practices

In 2014, a new privacy law was enacted in Louisiana. Act 837 was one of the strictest student privacy laws in the U.S. and required the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) to create a system of unique student identification numbers not based on social security numbers. The law stipulated that students must retain their unique identifiers throughout their tenure in Louisiana public schools. It also required local education agencies (LEAs) to assign these unique student identifiers to all their enrolled students.¹

The law prohibited LEAs from submitting student personally identifiable information (PII) to the LDOE data systems. This new restriction presented a significant challenge, as PII is imperative to matching records and certifying data. Overcoming this challenge while complying with the law required a new solution.

A New Unique Identifier, a New Normal

Complying with the new law to ensure the privacy, security, and confidentiality of student information required LDOE and its LEAs to work together and assume new responsibilities. After an open and

LDOE has created over 2.4 million unique identifiers for students and staff members from birth-12 using eScholar Uniq-ID.

Number of student IDs assigned: **1,956,360**

Number of staff IDs assigned: **456,931**

competitive procurement process, LDOE contracted with eScholar to deliver and implement the new statewide unique identifier system. Within three months, the new system, the eScholar Uniq-ID® solution, was available for use. eScholar trained LEAs on how to use eScholar Uniq-ID, modified all processes that require PII to comply with the legislation, assisted LEAs in resolving data submission and reporting issues as allowed by law, as well as conducted audits as needed.

With the new law, LEAs are still required to submit student-level information to LDOE; however, the submissions and reports no longer contain students' PII. Instead, LEAs assign unique statewide IDs, known as the Louisiana Secure ID (LASID), to students using the eScholar Uniq-ID solution. LEAs then report data using the LASID and other non-PII data (LEA, School, Local ID, student initials, etc.), which are validated against the data stored in eScholar.

Not only does the eScholar Uniq-ID solution assign IDs, but it also acts as a central matching and validation hub for LDOE data systems.

All LASIDs are composed of a single, 10-digit unique identifier, which are randomly generated and never duplicated or reused. The LASID remains unchanged across time, location, and source. eScholar Uniq-ID provides the additional benefit of auditing user actions and allows for secure transmission of information to external LDOE vendors for state assessments. Matching students with assessments is required after assessments are scored to provide LDOE a non-PII version of the assessment.

External agencies and vendors must submit various data files that do not have LASIDs. These files include data such as ACT results and eligibility data related to Medicaid. For these files, eScholar matches student information within the file to a LASID using sophisticated matching algorithms. After a match is found, the LASID is added to the original file and PII is removed. By using eScholar Uniq-ID, close to 2,000,000 unique student identifiers have been assigned, and close to 500,000 unique staff identifiers have been assigned in Louisiana.

By expanding the implementation of eScholar Uniq-ID to early childhood participants and staff, LDOE can conduct longitudinal analysis on:

- Kindergarten retention
- Students with improving test scores
- Special education placement of early childhood program participants²

Expanding LASID to Staff, Early Childhood, and Beyond

LDOE has since embarked on leveraging the power of eScholar Uniq-ID to link data from birth to early childhood to K12 to postsecondary. To do this, LDOE's data warehouse and LASID were utilized together to create, match, and manage early childhood and staff unique IDs. eScholar Uniq-ID provided these unique identifiers so that they would be consumed by 12 early childhood and K-12 source systems that could be configured to resolve source system IDs to the Louisiana Secure IDs. These source systems were originally designed to fulfill their own specific and unique purposes making much-needed analysis difficult and time-consuming for LDOE.

With eScholar Uniq-ID as the common denominator and solution ensuring that all systems are connected, Louisiana is advancing a bold and ambitious early childhood care and education agenda to prepare children from birth to kindergarten and beyond, and to support our working families. Longitudinal research on Louisiana's PreK students so far showed a decreased number of students repeating kindergarten, improving test scores, and reducing the need for special education placements.³

About the eScholar Uniq-ID Solution

As the most widely implemented identifier solution available, eScholar Uniq-ID enables state agencies to accurately assign, link, and manage non-personally identifiable unique identifiers to all persons. eScholar Uniq-ID is a powerful solution that assigns unique identification numbers to individuals and can be used to track individual records across time, geography, and source systems.

References:

- 1: Louisiana Department of Education. (2018). LOUISIANA'S DATA GOVERNANCE STUDENT PRIVACY GUIDEBOOK. Louisiana Believes.
- 2: Louisiana Department of Education. Early Childhood Care and Education Commission, Executive Summary. Louisiana Believes.
- 3: The Early Childhood Data Collaborative. (2011). 10 Fundamentals of Coordinated State Early Care and Education Data Systems. Child Trends.

LEARN MORE

For more information on how LDOE is leveraging eScholar Uniq-ID, visit www.escholar.com or contact Mishan Ho-Rezvani at mhorezvani@escholar.com.