

Official 2023-2024 SPOA Digital Guidelines & Standards for School & Organizational Software

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Introduction

The school photography industry has been serving schools, districts, and students since the early 1900s with a variety of products and services that range from school memories that last a lifetime to valued school safety and administrative services.

Over time, the advancement of technology has radically changed what schools and districts consider to be a “normal” service from the industry. Traditionally, school photographers provided schools and districts with permanent-record prints, free of charge. Administrators used these prints to identify and track a student’s well-being and in larger schools, to place a name with a face.

Today, schools and districts rely on technology-driven management tools that have made providing normal services more complicated and costly. Additionally, the use of this type of technology has pushed or crossed the boundaries of the school photography provider’s copyright protections. For example, some web-based portal services have allowed parents to download their student’s digital images without purchasing the image from the school photographer provider. Another example evolved from a response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, where schools purchased stand-alone kiosk systems that used copyrighted images and facial recognition technology to check students’ temperatures and check them in. These types of violations of copyright law must be addressed and corrected so that the partnership between schools, districts, and the school photography industry can continue to benefit one another for another 125 years. This document will help guide schools, districts, and software companies regarding the use of protected images. This includes royalty-free use, use with a release and compensation, and what to do when there is a question about specific use.

Moreover, regulatory requirements for the handling and usage of student data and images have evolved and continue to change at the federal and state level. It is ever more important for school service providers to be transparent about their use of student information and to make public their commitment to responsible data practices. While allowable usage of student images may vary depending on applicable laws and regulations, school board policy, the photographer’s licensing terms, and the photo subject’s authorization, the photo subject’s privacy interest is best served by a common image usage guideline that serves as an industry default.

It must be noted that technology continues to change. Any guideline promoting a coordinated system needs flexibility for the future. The goal is to satisfy the customer - the school and or district. It is believed that satisfaction can be increased by creating common readable files for the transmission of digital images and associated data from the school photographer to the school or district software provider in a format that is as efficient and consistent as possible, as well as common image usage parameters that may be deviated from but only with all appropriate authorizations and in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and school board policies.

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For School & Organizational Software
for all US Schools



These guidelines do not prescribe specific data security practices, procedures, or standards, since legal requirements and technical options are evolving rapidly in this area, school requirements vary, and data security industry associations are better equipped to set standards in this area. All parties charged with creating, storing, handling, and distributing files containing personally identifiable student information – photographers, software providers, labs, and other subcontractors – must determine and implement those physical, administrative, and technical measures necessary to protect such information in accordance with applicable law, school requirements and current data security best practices.

These Guidelines and Standards represent an effort, organized by School Photographers of America, of school administrative software industry leaders and school photography leaders across the country to facilitate the continued production of school software exports while maintaining the protected copyrights of the photographers. While no business practice or pricing model is dictated by these Guidelines and Standards, the almost universal practice has been school photographers not charging school administrative software companies for the use of their protected images, and instead, school photography companies simply require this single standard of data and digital format in which their images are used and profited from by the school administrative software industry. If a school software or administrative software provider requires a different type of export or file size, then that software provider should contact the school's contracted photography provider to pay for any specialized export and any expediting fees associated with their available options.

School Usage

Use of the images contained within the data set(s) is restricted by copyright or license and remains restricted even after the transfer to the school or software provider is complete. The use of this export has been restricted to approved district and school administrative software providers, and unless otherwise specifically allowed by the license, copyright, or prior written consent, all other uses are strictly prohibited. If your school or district believes that the use is in question, they should contact their contracted photographer for written permission.

Licensing of Images: Fees, Ownership, Uses, and Protections

Unless otherwise provided in a license agreement between the school photographer and the school or school district, this document will define the proper uses by the school of images provided by the school photographer.

Images are licensed to the schools for a fair licensing fee agreed to by the school photography provider and the school.

The images are the property of the school photography provider, and the copyright belongs to the school photography provider. The images are licensed to the school for limited use, solely for necessary school safety and administrative purposes, including use by the software vendor providing the school's Student Information System and associated software. Any other use is prohibited. Prohibited use includes, but is not limited to, publishing, printing, selling, licensing, or otherwise making the images available to third parties, including students and their families. The software employed by schools to process original-resolution images must include security and other protections against unauthorized access, copying, and downloading by any person other than designated school officials. Software that provides a portal or other means of a

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parent or family access must protect against copying, printing, downloading original-resolution images, and similar functions regarding the original-resolution images.

The following standards and guidelines have been developed to help simplify services and protect schools, districts, students, parents or guardians, and school photography providers. These new standards define a single, standard format from the school photography provider to all school and organizational-related software systems. These standards and guidelines do not address all data security practices and standards set by FERPA or other state laws; however, we encourage all companies, organizations, schools, and districts to ensure they are in compliance with FERPA laws and other state and federal related requirements as it relates to these images and the data that belongs to them.

School & District Administrative Software Processes Prior to Picture Day

The data file and its contents are provided to fulfill the standard request of image export for school administrative usage and safety and therefore should be excluded from any FERPA consent requirements under the FERPA School Official Exception.

The data file should be sent securely by the associated school/district to its contracted photographer(s) a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the associated school's or district's scheduled picture day.

It is recommended for the efficiency of complying with these guidelines, that school administrative software companies create a single-click export function for school use. This will assure consistency of data exports across the industry and will ease the import of images after picture day.

Data Format & Structure

Data files are text files in a standard UTF-8 or ASCII format. Text format is to be specified in the README.TXT.

Data files will contain the fields as described below with header columns and only listing one row per student or faculty/staff member.

Names shall be in proper capitalization (i.e., Smith, not SMITH).

The fields, contained within the data files, are to be Tab-delimited (fields separated by a tab character). If the data set producer chooses to omit any of the fields, then that should be identified with a NULL VALUE (two tabs together).

Line termination must be indicated by CR-LF (carriage return, line feed).

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Data Provided by the School to the Photographer Before Picture Day

The data file (FromSchoolIndex.txt) will contain the following data fields.

1. Unique Record Identifier Used by the School Administrative Software
2. Student/Staff ID Number
3. Alternate Student/Staff ID Number
4. Salutation
5. First name
6. Last name
7. Suffix (RN, PhD)
8. Title
9. Homeroom Teacher Name
10. Homeroom Number / #
11. Track
12. Period
13. Department
14. Teacher Name
15. Grade
16. Lunch Number /#
17. If Faculty/Staff - Designations
18. Primary Guardian Email Address 1
19. Secondary Guardian Email Address 2
20. [Any additional fields, should trail the required fields and be identified in the README.TXT by the labels in the first record.]

*If it is determined that school staff are to be identified separately from students, use the “Faculty/Staff” field to indicate staff definitions. If used, at a minimum “STA” should be used to identify staff members. More detailed definitions of staff should be included in the “read me” file to identify staff code usage.

Data & Images Provided by Photographer to the School/District After Picture Day

The following will be included in a flat zip file.

Example: School Name. ZIP

- FromPhotographerIndex.txt (aka Data File)
- Copywrite.txt
- Image Files

Data File

The data file (FromPhotographerIndex.txt) will contain the following data fields.

1. Unique Record Identifier Used by the School Administrative Software
2. Unique Record Identifier Used by the Photographer or Lab Mgt Software
3. Image File Name
4. Gallery Link

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Image Files

- **Cropped: .8 (8x10 ratio)**
- **Pixel dimensions (180x225)**
- **96dpi (this will display on-screen at 1.875 inches by 2.344 inches)**
- **Image name should be a unique reference ID (in the data file as well)**
- **Example 456987.jpg (referenceId.jpg)**

COPYRIGHT.TXT

The generally accepted language of the COPYRIGHT.TXT file and the license that shall be deemed to apply to yearbook companies in the event that the copyright.txt file is not included or is left blank is as follows:

The images provided are the property of the school photographer, and the copyright belongs to the school photographer. The images are licensed to the school on a limited basis solely for necessary school safety and administrative purposes, including use by the software vendor providing the school's Student Information System and associated software. Any other use is prohibited, publishing, printing, selling, licensing, otherwise making the images available to third parties, including students and their families.

The statement suggestion above may be modified to the copyright holders' requirements. This wording claims ownership of the material (image(s) specifically) but leaves each copyright holder free to determine its own licensing policy.

REFERENCES AND QUESTIONS:

U. S. Copyright Office

<https://www.copyright.gov>

U. S. Department of Education - FERPA

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

School Photographers of America

<https://www.schoolphotographersofamerica.com>