

Daily Report: Educational Software Gets Attention from State Politicians

Children throughout the United States are heading back to school and many of them — some for the first time — will be using a range of online learning tools. Unfortunately, it is not always clear what the companies providing those tools are allowed to do with the information they glean from students.

In just the last year, [182 bills intended to protect student information](#) have been introduced in 46 states, according to a report from Data Quality Campaign, a nonprofit group that supports the use of student data in education. Fifteen of those states have produced 28 laws. It is a significant change from just two years ago, when only Oklahoma had such laws on the books.

So why the shift? The overall market for educational software intended for prekindergarten through 12th grade was estimated to be about \$8.4 billion last year, and that number should increase substantially this year. But much of this software collects data about individual students to customize what they are learning.

Many companies realize that is a concern. About 170 firms, including Google, Apple and Microsoft, have signed a pledge not to use the student data collected by their education apps and sites for personalized advertising. Still, that's not likely to dissuade legislatures from enacting laws that could vary a great deal from one state to another.

It is, potentially, a recipe for confusion. But at least most big tech companies and politicians can agree that amassing data about students raises troubling questions.