



For Immediate Release

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The Schools Interoperability Framework Association Releases a New Major Version of its Implementation Specification and a New Web Service Reporting Specification

October 20, 2006---The Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA®) today released a new major version of its SIF Implementation Specification and the first Web Services Reporting Specification. Both of these releases have been developed to support greater out-of-the-box interoperability for school software products and to reduce the data reporting demands placed on schools and states today.

The 2.0 Implementation Specification is the fourth (4th) official release of the specification and builds upon the previous specification release, 1.5r1, adding improvements to its infrastructure and expanding the current SIF data model. There are now 118 SIF data objects defined for exchange and interoperability between educational software applications.

Highlighted changes and additions to the SIF Implementation Specification include:

- a new online presentation format;
- leveraging XML Schema for definition and data typing;
- removal of deprecated code sets and elements, and more consistent design across all objects;
- the introduction of SIF_ExtendedQuery to support queries spanning multiple SIF objects;
- a redesigned set of assessment-related objects;
- grade book integration and student period attendance;
- student record exchange objects to support the exchange of demographic, academic, special education-related and other records between schools and districts, including eTranscripts;
- calendar objects;
- discipline incident data; and
- the new SIF Metadata common elements available in all SIF data objects.

Even with new features and functionalities, the Association wants to assure existing SIF users that the Association will continue to support, utilize and certify the previous versions of the SIF Implementation Specification. "SIFA has a new Implementation Specification version, but many states and districts are successfully implementing now with version 1.5r1," said Laurie Collins, SIFA Project Strategist. "We want to assure them that our vendor members will continue to write applications for 1.5r1 and SIFA will continue to support it – and certify applications for it."

SIFA has also released its first version of the SIF Web Service Reporting Specification, version 1.0. It leverages SIF's reporting infrastructure to open up the wealth of educational data in SIF Zones to applications over popular Web Services technologies. With the capability of this specification, state agencies, districts, schools and other entities have an industry-standard method for sharing report data from SIF Implementations.

"These Specifications represent a significant achievement for the SIF Association and the educational community as a whole" says Dr. Larry Fruth, SIFA Executive Director. "It is a great advance for schools, state departments of education and US and International federal governments in terms of managing, transporting and utilizing the data they need."

Both specifications are accessible at <http://www.sifinfo.org/sif-specification.asp> Comments on the specifications may be e-mailed directly to technical@sifinfo.org.

About The Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA)

SIFA is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 400 schools, districts, states, US and International Departments of Education, software vendors and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software data interoperability. The SIF Implementation Specification enables diverse applications to interact and share data efficiently, reliably, and securely regardless of the platform hosting those applications. SIFA has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit <http://www.sifinfo.org>.