



SCHOOLS
INTEROPERABILITY
FRAMEWORK

For Immediate Release

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**The Schools Interoperability Framework Association®
Launches SIFA University**

November 15, 2006—The Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA®) officially launched its new online learning program, SIFA University, on November 1, 2006. As the official site for educational data utilization issues and SIF training, SIFA University was developed in conjunction with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) using its learning management system—eSchool Builder. The courses will help administrators, data managers and IT personnel gain the up-to-date, accurate, and concise information they need to understand the SIF Specification and to implement SIF in their districts. SIFA University will also be a useful tool for educational software technology companies to learn about SIF and use it to educate their clients about data issues. As the course offerings expand, SIFA U will become the home of many additional data-related professional development opportunities.

The first SIFA U course available is “Basic SIF Theory,” which describes the basics of the SIF Specification, the purpose of the Zone Integration Server, SIF agents, messages, the SIF data model, SIF data objects, and how they work together to create an interoperable environment. Students in that course learn the advantages of implementing SIF horizontally and vertically to other entities.

In January 2007, SIFA U will offer “SIF Project Planning and Implementation,” which will explore how to create a SIF project scope of work and establish a project timeline. Designed to help administrators and IT personnel, who are implementing or considering implementing SIF, the course will discuss hardware and network considerations, SIF architecture planning, and staff impact and training—along with the phases and scalability of the project and the importance of RFP's and working with vendors. Basics for installation, testing, monitoring, troubleshooting and the establishment of business practices and rules in the implementation will be covered.

“These two courses are the first steps in providing a broader set of SIF training tools” says Laurie Collins, SIFA Project Strategist. “Our goal, as the University expands, is to put together a comprehensive set of professional development offerings addressing data interoperability at all levels.”

In late Spring, SIFA U plans to launch a third course, “Advanced SIF Theory,” which will explore in greater technical depth the differences between implementation specification versions, the infrastructure and architecture of the specification, vertical reporting, report manifests, the student locator framework, SIF queries and how to use web services to interact in a SIF Implementation.

All courses are delivered online and can be either self-paced or instructor led. The courses are accessible 24 hours a day from any location. “Data Interoperability via SIF Specification utilization is growing at such a tremendous rate that SIFA U will fill a need for end users and vendors to understand SIF and SIF implementation quickly and easily,” said Larry Fruth, Ph.D., SIFA Executive Director. “Our vision is that the educational community as well as SIFA members and partners will use this new and exciting tool to have conversations around educational data identification, movement and utilization.”

Members of the association receive seats to SIFA U courses as part of their membership benefits. Non-members of the association are invited to take the courses for \$200.00 per seat, per course.

SIFA University can be accessed from the SIFA homepage at www.sifinfo.org.

About The Schools Interoperability Framework Association (SIFA)

SIFA is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 400 schools, districts, states, the U.S. and international government agencies, software vendors and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software data interoperability. The SIF 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.