

EASIER

Electronic Access System for Iowa Education
Records

Vendor Certification Process 2009

Iowa Department of Education

August 2009

Introduction

This document outlines Iowa's process for certifying vendor student information systems (SIS) and the extracts created for all state reporting: Iowa Department of Education's Electronic Access System for Iowa Education Records (EASIER) system, State ID, and bar code file for Iowa Testing Program.

History

Project EASIER began in 1996 when six school districts submitted electronic student level records to the Iowa Department of Education (IDE). The goal of the project was to reduce the data reporting burden districts were experiencing by utilizing the student information system used within each district. Electronic records replaced paper and web-based reporting requirements for the state's fall and spring data collections. Project EASIER was Iowa's first attempt to re-engineer the collection and reporting of information from school districts through the use of individual student records.

The project remained voluntary until the 2004-2005 school year, when all K-12 public schools were required to provide electronic records for all students. In preparation for this requirement, representatives from the 14 SIS's with an active client-base among Iowa's public school districts attended an October 2003 meeting in Des Moines. Expansion of the project was not possible without the active involvement of the vendors to assist with the standardization in data element definitions, data coding, data element location in the various extracts, and increased customer service and training.

Since the 2004-2005 expansion of EASIER, other changes have occurred in EASIER. Data elements have been added and deleted to conform to state and federal reporting requirements.

Examples of the more notable changes are:

- Summer 2004 – Schools initiated the assignment of state IDs to all K-12 public school students.
- 2005-2006 – Enrollment records were added to the EASIER extract to document all changes in student enrollments during the school year.
- 2005-2006 – Student demographic data and student courses were inserted into a related application for the completion of federal reporting requirements for Career and Technical Education.
- 2008-2009 – The enrollment record was restructured to represent a time period (entry to exit) with essential data elements relocated from the demographic record to the enrollment record to allow for attendance calculations at the building level.
- 2009-2010 – Additional data elements and changes to pre-existing data elements are needed to increase the capacity of EASIER to become the official data collection for generating school funding for the 2010-2011 school year.
- Future years will see continued data element refinements, additions, and deletions as needed to meet state and federal reporting mandates.

Purpose of Certification

As a service to both Iowa school districts and SIS vendors, IDE will certify the vendor extracts that support EASIER. The certification process provides quality assurance to vendors in knowing their product meets Iowa's requirements. The process provides quality assurance for districts as well. When districts follow the standards provided by the vendor of a SIS and the SIS has been certified, then the results in EASIER can be both reliable and predictable. Unexpected results are then traceable to coding issues in the local SIS. Because the EASIER Fall 2009 data collection will be used to calculate school district funding for the first time, confidence in a district's SIS will be an increasingly important component to maintaining vendor/district relations.

Certification Criteria

Certification indicates that a specific version of the vendor's SIS software supports IDE's requirements:

1. EASIER extract for fall, winter, and spring submissions. This file will:
 - a. successfully upload to the EASIER web application
 - b. contain the required formatted data elements
 - c. correctly calculate any vendor calculated fields (e.g., attendance, enrollment record sequence, record type)
 - d. allow for two file creation options -
 - i. all students
 - ii. selected students

2. State ID files will:
 - a. successfully upload to the State ID application
 - b. contain the required data elements
 - c. correctly calculate vendor-generated fields (e.g., race/ethnicity, attending district, school year)
 - d. allow for three file creation options -
 - i. all active students
 - ii. active students missing State IDs
 - iii. inactive students missing State IDs

3. Bar code extract to be sent to Iowa Testing Program (ITP) will:
 - a. successfully upload to ITP website
 - b. contain the required data elements
 - c. correctly calculate the vendor calculated fields (e.g., migrant, free/reduced lunch, entry code)
 - d. allow for two file creation options -
 - i. all active students in user selected grades

- ii. user selected students
4. Documentation will be available to districts and the IDE detailing:
 - a. state reporting data elements and locations
 - b. necessary criteria per data element as required by the vendor's SIS to assist the local user (i.e., mapping information, table creations)
 - c. directions for creating the three types of extracts

Certification Process

The certification process will contain the following steps with some steps being repeated until the final step is obtained:

1. A vendor representative will participate in a spring vendor call scheduled by the Iowa Department of Education to discuss requirements and changes for the upcoming school year.
2. The vendor representative will be provided the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of an EASIER contact person assigned to oversee the certification process.
3. The vendor representative will contact the EASIER consultant to identify the district or districts that will assist in the generation of test extracts. The EASIER consultant can assist with the identification and/or district communication to secure approval for participation in the certification process. Either a school will directly serve as the test site and provide the EASIER consultant with access to their software or a school will agree to allow their school or district data to serve as test data with the vendor providing direct access to a site containing the test data.
4. Vendor representatives may contact their EASIER consultant or the EASIER manager for clarification at any time.
5. Once a vendor is ready to test an extract or series of extracts, the vendor representative will contact the school/district and/or EASIER consultant as needed.
6. School test sites will install software updates or the EASIER consultant will secure access to the vendor's test site.

7. Changes to data will be required in order to test correct extraction values from new fields or modification to data element selections.
8. Test files will be created and uploaded to the EASIER test environment.
9. Files will be examined for consistency with file specifications and reports examined for expected values.
10. The EASIER consultant will provide feedback to the vendor on the results. If updates are necessary, the process will continue from Step 4 of the Certification Process.
11. Results of the certification process will be posted to the EASIER website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=1261
Extracts by type will be identified as *Approved to Upload* and date status earned noted.
Once all extracts have been approved to upload, then a SIS will earn the status of Certified.

| | Fall EASIER (2) | Winter EASIER | Spring EASIER | State ID (3) | Bar Code (2) | Certification Date |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Administrators Plus | | | | | | |
| CIMS | | | | | | |
| e-SIS | | | | | | |
| Infinite Campus | | | | | | |
| JMC | | | | | | |
| Pentamation | | | | | | |
| PowerSchool | | | | | | |
| School MATRIX | | | | | | |
| Schoolmaster | | | | | | |

Timeline

1. Vendors may release updates according to 2009-2010 file specifications as early as July 1, 2009.
2. Files may be submitted to confirm file layout on or after July 1, 2009.
3. Files may be tested in EASIER on or after July 1, 2009.
4. Vendors must release updates according to 2009-2010 file specifications no later than August 1, 2009.
5. The Fall EASIER extract must be *Approved to Upload* no later than September 1, 2009.
Recommendation: provide users with the new race/ethnicity fields as soon as possible while preserving the current race/ethnicity field for EASIER spring 2009 and State ID extracts.

Failure to provide an EASIER *Approved for Upload* extract during September 2009 will limit a district's ability to test data and prepare for the October 1 submission.

Districts are expected to submit practice files during September 2009 in order to facilitate the October collection period. Districts may begin submitting final data on October 1. Districts must certify their data on October 15. Because of the interdependency of this collection, a failure on the part of any one district to submit data prior to October 15 will prevent all districts from completing the process as required by Iowa law.

District Submission Calendar for 2009-2010

Modifications to the following dates may occur over the course of the year. Dates are provided to assist the software vendors. Districts will have access to these dates and any changes to the dates on the IDE Calendar located at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/calendar/calendar.html>)

September 3, 2009 –EASIER test site opens

September 25, 2009 –EASIER test site closes

October 1, 2009 –EASIER/Certified Enrollment collection site opens (Certified Enrollment count date)

October 15, 2009 –EASIER/Certified Enrollment collection site closes

December 14, 2009 –Winter EASIER test site opens
January 6, 2010–Winter EASIER test site closes
January 11, 2010 –Winter EASIER collection site opens
January 29, 2010 –Winter EASIER collection site closes

April 19, 2010 – Spring EASIER test site opens
May 12, 2010 – Spring EASIER test site closes
May 17, 2010 – Spring EASIER collection site opens
June 21, 2010 – Spring EASIER collection site closes