

Public Comments on the Updated PESC NSLDS Specification

Reply-to: James Farmer jxf@immagic.com 8:41 PM August 31, 2012
To: Michael Sessa <michael.sessa@pesc.org>

Public Comments on the Updated NSLDS Specification

1. Full name and appropriate contact information: James Farmer, instructional media + magic Inc., jxf@immagic.com
2. Comments are individual
3. The specification contains data and definitions that are common to other higher education administrative systems.
4. The elements are listed below
5. Changes suggested are included:

Number of Student Entries

TotalCount in NSLDSEnrollmentRecord from core

Type "core:TotalCountType" has a maximum value="999999999." In an earlier specification for FELP loans the FSA system failed to process a file with 46,000 applications; the file could not exceed 5,000. To prevent this TotalCount should be limited to that of the processing program.

Student Identifier

SchoolAssignedPersonIDType from core

The maximum length is 20 characters. This data element is also used in the High School transcript at a time SIF compliant installations are beginning to use UUIDs.

There are some discussions of UUID to prevent duplication. The SIF standard for K-12 permits the use of ITU-T Rec. X667compliant Universally Unique Identifier (UUID). In its canonical form, a UUID is represented by 32 hexadecimal digits display in five groups with hyphens, in the form 8-4-4-4-12 for a total of 36 characters. Others use the UUID or GUID without hyphens.

"The SIF specification [for] RefID SIF requires the use of a globally unique identifier (GUID) that MUST be generated per published algorithms [RFC 4122] whenever a RefId is used. GUIDs in SIF have their own format; they MUST be 32 characters long and contain only valid upper-case hexadecimal characters (0-9, A-F) with no spaces or punctuation." See SIF Global Intrastructure Implementation Specification 2.6, July 23, 2012.

Extending the school student identifiers to 32 characters may better integrate with SIF compliant systems than limiting it to 20 characters. Annotating the specification the identifier may later support UUID specifications would provide guidance to software developers for the possible change.

Elements with xs:string; use of xs:normalizedString

To assure identical interpretation of a string, the use of `normalizedString` may be preferable. Here is the Definition:

"3.4.1 `normalizedString`

[Definition:] `normalizedString` represents white space normalized strings. The value space of `normalizedString` is the set of strings that do not contain the carriage return (`#xD`), line feed (`#xA`) nor tab (`#x9`) characters." The specification continues: "After the processing implied by `replace`, contiguous sequences of `#x20`'s are collapsed to a single `#x20`, and any `#x20` at the start or end of the string is then removed." From W3C XML Schema Definition Language (XSD) 1.1 Part 2: Datatypes W3C Recommendation 5 April 2012.

`MiddleName` from core

The `MiddleName` is `Optional xs:string` with occurs zero or one time.

The question is the difference between `No Middle Name` and `Middle Name Not Known`. One Federal agency uses the characters `NMI` if there is no middle name or initial. Others use the presence or absence of tags to differentiate between not knowing and no value (though the specification would always include the tags).

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12:48 PM, Septmeber 1. 2012

The Updated NSLDS Specification

Because of its importance, my colleagues and I have carefully read the NSLDS specification documents. I found them excellent--well written, anticipated and answered questions, consistent with related specifications, and exceptionally high quality document layouts. This effort must have taken hundreds of hours.

We appreciated the effort that has been made. It certainly reflects well on PESC and your community processes. Congratulations on this very important contribution.

jim

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