A4L Community release ‘performance tested’ SIF Infrastructure Specification to standardize data and privacy on the wire

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, March 29, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community is proud to announce the release of the SIF Infrastructure Specification (global) 3.4 which is unique in the technical standards world in that it supports data movement via greater interoperability by standardizing ‘data and privacy on the wire’. This Specification takes on a different form from previous releases and introduces a list of the technical ‘advances’ in the new release ranging from detailed API documentation, OpenAPI files, as well as inclusion of additional data controls for messaging and privacy.

“This infrastructure release is aimed at the ever-present goal of modernization of technical systems”, states Roger Petersen, EdInsight Team Lead, Iowa Department of Education. “Highlighting the astounding performance improvements of a modern SIF implementation, we are reassured that our efforts to greatly expand the use of education data in Iowa will be supported by fast and reliable data delivery. The new API documentation will be immediately familiar to the modern software developer, lowering barriers to new integrations into your enterprise architecture.”

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>
> *Dr. Ben Silberglitt, Chief Strategy Officer, Cedar Labs*

Performance Tested

Besides being unique as one of the only K12 standardized infrastructure blueprint and the fact that it can carry any data model, not just SIF, this draft supports the Community’s focus on ‘connecting and securing

effective learning ecosystems' for learners. This release also has been third-party 'performance tested evaluated' for speed and load data movement presented in a white paper release. The evaluation demonstrates the capabilities of SIF for handling this high-volume data exchange, and to showcase how SIF was designed for the increasing demands of data now and into the future.

Using the SIF Infrastructure Specification 3.4 created 20,000 times increase in throughput performance when compared to previous SIF 2.x Infrastructure Specification releases. Even a 'hybrid' approach model, using existing SIF Infrastructure 2.x plus SIF Infrastructure 3.4 versions, also showed improvements and allows users to scale up slowly. By upgrading the receiving application, the result was 286 times increase in throughput performance than the traditional SIF integration. These results document the 'on the ground' implementation stories where states have updated their systems and discovered the increase in performance in greater data efficiency and opens the door to new use cases that require timely access to even more data.

These performance improvements provided for in SIF have a wide range of implications for those education agencies:

- Takes advantage of the existing hardware and can scale up or down to meet the needs of the moment,
- Efficiency gains mean you can do more work with less resources, saving money on implementations while providing a sizeable performance improvement,
- Existing implementation can immediately start to take advantage of this powerful new architecture without embarking on a huge multi-year implementation or rip up existing tooling and processes that are vital to operations.

"The demand for data in education continues to skyrocket and while 'data' was once just a synonym for standardized test scores, education systems now require high volumes of data to be communicated in real or near-real time across multiple software systems" states Dr. Ben Silberglitt, Chief Strategy Officer, Cedar Labs. "The performance improvements provided for in SIF have a wide range of implications for those education agencies with existing implementations as well as those with new data sharing initiatives - no longer limited by infrastructure".

To view the SIF Infrastructure Specification, please go to: https://data.a4l.org/sif-infrastructure/

To review the white paper, please go to: http://data.a4l.org/resources/#Use-Cases

Privacy on the Wire

Besides the list of technical 'advances', the Global SIF Infrastructure has risen to growing privacy challenges by including a Privacy Obligation Document (POD) service. These PODs describe laws, contract clauses, obligations, benchmarks, retainment rules, and key contacts in required data privacy agreements. The Global SIF Infrastructure makes FERPA and GDPR compliance affirmable

with every exchange and key parts of it enforceable through its Data Protection Enforcer Service model.

"PODs are a critical element of creating a secure & effective learning ecosystem" touts Steve Smith, CIO Cambridge Public Schools, MA. "PODs allow for the conveyance of all privacy metadata or privacy obligations over the wire in an industry standard format. PODs can then be ingested by the recipients of student data, vendors, and acknowledged or certified, such that they can meet all the requirements prior to any data being exchanged. PODs are the future of secure data exchange in education."

Standardizing data on the wire is key as the learning technology and need for up to date, secure data is needed in decision making. "This release continues the global usage of the SIF technical blueprints by our Australian, New Zealand, North American, and United Kingdom communities and marketplace providers," states Larry Fruth II, Ph.D., CEO/Executive Director, A4L Community. "The increased speed and load performance, support for 'privacy on the wire', and possible usage with any technical specifications from standards organization proves the Community wants to make learning ecosystem development simple, secure, scalable and standard."

About the Access 4 Learning Community
The Access 4 Learning (A4L) Community, and its special interest group the Student Data Privacy Consortium (SDPC), is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software vendors and consultants. The Community is "Powered by SIF" as its major technical tool to help manage learning data simply, securely and in a scalable, standard way regardless of platform. The SDPC is designed to address the day-to-day, real-world multi- faceted issues faced when protecting learner information by setting common expectations between market providers and end users. The A4L Community has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to 'connect and secure effective learning ecosystems' to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach. For further information, visit https://www.A4L.org.

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