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Virginia Receives National Recognition for Electronic Student Record Exchange and Transcript Program

The expanding capacity of Virginia schools and school divisions to exchange student records electronically and forward electronic transcripts to colleges and universities is receiving national recognition.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) was first runner up for the Outstanding State Education Agency Implementation award from the SIF Association, which was announced yesterday in New Orleans. SIF stands for “schools interoperability framework.” The adoption and implementation of SIF allows diverse data-management applications to interact and share information securely and efficiently.

“Electronic data sharing eliminates opportunities for error and enhances the ability of schools to meet the needs of individual students,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “Virginia’s achievement in creating a framework for secure data sharing is the result of a collaborative effort involving VDOE, school divisions, higher education and our private-sector partners.”

SIF implementation in Virginia began in 2004 with the signing of a partnership between VDOE and the SIF Association. The commonwealth received a \$6 million federal grant in 2007 to support improvements in the state’s student data system — including the development of electronic transcript and record exchange capabilities.

These improvements include the 2008 launch of the Virginia Transcript Center, a secure, electronic-records exchange hub connecting school divisions and colleges and universities.

Since 2007, 120 of the commonwealth’s 132 school divisions have adopted the necessary data-sharing framework, and students and school counselors in 16 divisions are now sending electronic transcripts to colleges and universities through the Virginia Transcript Center.

“Counselors in these divisions are able to spend more time with students and less time with paperwork and processing,” Bethann Canada, VDOE director of information management, said. “Students and parents are assured of accuracy — and they can track transcripts electronically.”

VDOE provides the software, installation and training required for SIF adoption at no cost. Adoption of SIF improves data quality and reduces administrative burdens associated with data management. Adoption of the data-sharing framework in Virginia is voluntary. In Oklahoma, which won the SIF award, adoption is mandated by state law.

The commonwealth’s pending 2010 application for a \$17 million longitudinal data system grant from the U.S. Department of Education includes requested funding to create full electronic transcript capability in Virginia’s community college system and three public four-year colleges and universities.

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