Vendor Frequently Asked Questions

1. Once the specifications for the creation of the XML file are available, we feel confident about producing the needed XML file. However, the import of the data into the receiving district's student information system (SIS) is a bit more complicated. When looking at importing the XML file, the receiving campus will not normally want information in a student record (created prior to receiving the data through TREx) to be overwritten by the data from the exiting districts. Districts/campuses may want a comparison screen to verify that the information they currently have matches the data from the sending school.

    Answer: Yes, the key to implementation will be how the data is imported and how the receiving district will be able to select the data that is imported. This is the responsibility of each local student information system (SIS).

    Some design examples discussed by vendors have included a comparison option within the SIS that once an extract file is downloaded and accepted in TREx, the user can compare the student record data from TREx to any data currently existing in the SIS for the student. After comparing the data, the campus/district could then decide whether to import the extract file into the SIS, save it to their local drive, or use the student record data as needed.

2. Will a test site be made available for vendors when they are testing the export/import function for TREx?

    Answer: A TREx test site will not be available but as a temporary workaround, a vendor can work with a district and submit a student record in production to verify accuracy through the Validation Tool, which is available on the TREx home page. In Phase I, this tool validates the XSD schema.   The Validation Tool will be enhanced to provide further validation functionality, which will be available in Phase II. Additionally, direct vendor access to the Validation Tool is slated for Phase II. More information on if, how, and when this tool will be made to vendors will be forthcoming.

3. When the data is sent back to a client, can they print out a PDF file of the records or is it only going to be in the XML format:?

    Answer: TREx provides viewable and printable PDFs of the student record and high school transcript being sent or received. Once the Validation tool is available in Phase II of TREx, a campus/district will be able to view the XML schema of an extract file.

4. In the final format, can the required fields be designated versus those that might be optional?

    Answer: You may reference a list of the required data elements in TREx in Appendix A of the *2007-2008 TREx Data Standards*, page A.1. For the XML schema, all other data elements are optional in TREx however, by TEA policy many are required to be sent in some manner. For example, because many SIS applications do not store immunization data, the TREx schema allows the immunization data to be optional for the extract file but TEA policy requires the data be transferred with a student record. If the immunization data are not part of the extract file, then the data should be sent as an attachment with the student record.

    In the case of documents that are too large to scan in a reasonable amount of time, such as some ARD documents, the district/campus may continue to send those via their current manual process as a follow-up to the student record being sent through TREx.

5. Please clarify the way the schema handles optional fields.

    Answer: If a field is optional, the entire tag should be omitted in the XML. The XSD does not allow for empty values in any tag. The minimum length of all fields is 1.

6. Why is the teacher name needed for coursework on the student records or transcripts?

    Answer: The teacher name, which was one of the data elements approved by the original focus group that determined the initial requirements for the TREx application, is an optional data element in TREx. While TEA policy does not yet require the teacher name be part of the coursework data, it is anticipated that this will become a statewide requirement in the near future.

7. What is the reason for including data, such as Promoted to Grade, Placed in Grade, and Grade of Retention, that are no longer collected for PEIMS? Are TREx data elements, such as IEP and PGP flags, going to be added to PEIMS?

    Answer: Remember that PEIMS and TREx are separate applications with different purposes for the data that are collected or transferred. Approximately half of the data elements included in Phase I of TREx are gathered in PEIMS. The other fifty percent of the TREx data elements are required by TEA Curriculum Division, TEA Student Assessment Division, or law to be part of a student record/transcript or were included based on focus group recommendation.

    TREx Phase II, as well as future enhancement phases, will include additional data elements based on new recommendations from various focus groups and new legal requirements.

8. Will more of the TREx data elements be standardized in the future?

    Answer: TEA is currently documenting suggestions for enhancements to the TREx application that can be implemented after Phase II. Among the current suggestions for standardized data are Immunization Name, Immunization Dose, and Homeless codes.

    Some recommended new data elements for TREx include Cycle Grade, Local Special Explanation (open text field), SAT Score, ACT Score, and additional Assessment Names.

    To submit enhancement requests or suggestions for future TREx phases, please contact Customer Support at TREx@tea.state.tx.us.

9. Because elementary campuses do not store course grades by semester, the current TREx XML schema does not support the format needed for elementary-level student records. When will this be fixed and what workaround is available before then?

    Answer: Phase II of TREx will include either a new data element for Cycle Grade or a change to the schema to allow the Course Grade data element to be included in a XML group that can handle six- and nine-week grading periods.

    Until that fix is implemented, an elementary campus/district may submit the other student data outside of coursework through TREx and attach the report card or academic record of the student to the extract file in TREx.

10. Since TREx has so many data elements shown as Not Required, how can districts/campuses expect to receive a valid student record through TREx?

    Answer: It remains the responsibility of every district/campus to provide required student data in TREx consistent with current methods and policies. The *2007-2008 TREx Data Standards* state the following on pages 2.1 and A.1:

    "If a field is shown as not required but data are available and relevant to the accuracy and completeness of the student record or transcript, it is the responsibility of the campus to include these data."

    The decision was made for Phase I of the TREx implementation to provide the maximum amount of flexibility possible in the XML schema with the intent of minimizing extract failures as districts/campuses are learning the new process and application; consequently, the majority of data elements were changed to Not Required within the schema. This does not eliminate the legal requirement of the district/campus to provide the data in a student record or transcript.

11. How will districts/campuses know if another campus or district is ready to receive and send data through TREx?

    Answer: At the August 2007 PEIMS ESC Coordinator training, the group agreed to have all districts and campuses using TREx to send and accept requests by November 12, 2007. By that date districts/campuses can use the Manual Data Entry screens (slated to be available by October 29) or simply respond to requests if their software vendor has not completed the SIS extract process. The deadline for vendor completion of SIS extract file process has been moved to November 30, 2007.