

PRICING

The cost of the project depends on the desired customization and integration of the resulting DataSpecs tool. This project is most often combined with ISInsight™, Data Governance and Enterprise Architecture Services, CourseWalk™, or as part of a larger systems integration project. Smaller, more tailored projects are also possible – ESP will work with your agency at no charge to determine the best possible solution that fits within your budget.

WHY ESP?

ESP Solutions Group specializes in improving the quality of education data. Our staff has worked directly with the development of all NCES data handbooks, Handbooks On-line, the U.S. Department of Education’s metadata dictionary, and many other national efforts to define best practices for education data collection and reporting. ESP personnel have advised many local school systems, all 52 state-level education agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education on the practice of P-20 data management. We are nationally recognized as leading experts in understanding the data and technology implications of state reporting, the Common Education Data Standards (CEDs), No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), EDEN/EDFacts, the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF), and EDFacts Shared State Solution (ES3).

CourseWalk™

CourseWalk™ + DataSpecs™ = Teacher/Student Data Link

Standardized course codes are essential to tracking student performance and improving instruction in the long run. They are also extremely useful for standardizing information in student transcripts. ESP’s CourseWalk tool facilitates the matching of local course codes to state or national course code standards. Adding CourseWalk to your DataSpecs project completes the teacher/student data link. See Objective 2.

DataSpecs Sample Reports
Shown here are 3 of the more than 30 reports currently included in DataSpecs.

Customized Reports
Additional reports may be designed according to your needs and specifications.



METADATA DICTIONARY – Course Number Crosswalk (State/District/SCED)

A crucial success factor of any enterprise education data system is the adoption of comprehensive metadata standards—and compliance with them. ESP Solutions Group can work with your education agency to standardize data elements, indicators, naming conventions, definitions, codes, and formats for improved data quality, comparability, and interoperability.

Metadata are literally "data about data." They are information that describe data.

ESP has provided nationally recognized expertise in the domain of education data and metadata since 1993. We specialize in working with education agencies to document data about data (metadata). Our combined knowledge and experience with metadata come together in **DataSpecs™**, a metadata inventory tool that facilitates sharing of data across all applications without the need to reformat them time and time again. More specifically, DataSpecs is used by ESP to manage the documentation of each data collection, repository, indicator/index, and output/report through our metadata services.

The data elements entered into DataSpecs can be linked (mapped) to data elements in existing education agency data dictionaries or to national standards, including Common Education Data Standards (CEDs), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Handbooks, EDFacts, the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF), and the National Education Data Model (NEDM).

DataSpecs is an application that manages an education agency’s metadata. This enables the agency, among many other benefits, to:

- Improve the overall quality of the organization’s data,
- Increase the proper interpretation and use of data,
- Increase the availability of data to decision makers in a timely manner and in a usable format, and
- Enhance the value of a longitudinal information system by ensuring that it is sustainable and extensible.

In general, these benefits are realized through processes that ensure all applications, software products, and databases align and comply with the organization’s enterprise data standards. This is accomplished through processes that:

- Control redundancies in data collections that impose unnecessary burden on staff;
- Reduce inconsistencies in definitions of data elements across repositories that cause lack of comparability in analyses;
- Align with standards that ensure compliance with federal reporting mandates; and
- Specify formats for files that greatly facilitate the design, building, implementation, and management of statewide data collection systems.

WHY AN EDUCATION AGENCY MUST HAVE A METADATA DICTIONARY
Eleven Objectives Met Using ESP's DataSpecs™ Metadata Dictionary Tool

There are many reasons an education agency needs DataSpecs to manage its metadata. In general, metadata are data about data, not the data themselves. So, DataSpecs is a tool useful for describing how an organization, specifically an education agency, manages its data to ensure quality and usability.

Following are the major reasons an education agency uses DataSpecs. Typical problems that are heard around education agencies are stated. Then for each, an objective is presented and an example is provided along with a sample report to illustrate what DataSpecs produces.

Problem Heard	MY PEOPLE WASTE TIME REPORTING THE SAME DATA OVER AND OVER.
Objective 1	To reduce the burden imposed by the redundancy from collecting and storing the same data multiple times, often with conflicting definitions, formats, and codes.
Example	The data elements (represented as "items") on each data collection throughout the agency are entered into DataSpecs. Each item is mapped to a common element that represents all of the items across all collections that are similar. This creates a linkage across all the agency's collections and allows analysis of the redundancy. The office/steward may then determine which redundancies can be deduplicated and which are necessary.
DataSpecs Report	Element Profile (for a single element, a report showing all collections and repositories where the element is used as an item.)

Problem Heard	HOW CAN WE KNOW IF THESE COURSES ARE EQUIVALENT ACROSS DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS?
Objective 2	To align local courses to state and/or national (SCED) course classification systems to allow the crosswalking of course codes for electronic reporting across entities using state or national standards.
Example	A district and SEA want to create a teacher-student data link but do not have local to state course mapping. To do so, they upload their course catalogue into DataSpecs and run the AutoMapping function. Local courses are mapped to SCED numbers, reviewed by local staff, accepted or edited as appropriate, and finalized. A file is downloaded into the local student information system and the SCED codes are imported. The state can use SCED now for all districts.
DataSpecs Report	Local to SCED Course Mapping

Problem Heard	WE ARE BUYING A NEW SOFTWARE APPLICATION. HOW DO WE TELL THE BIDDERS WHAT THEY MUST BE SURE THEIR DATA MODEL WILL MATCH OUR DATA STANDARDS?
Objective 3	To create the comprehensive functional data requirements for a new software application, database, or data store to ensure interoperability with extant systems.
Example	The education agency is procuring a data warehouse.
DataSpecs Report	Repository Profiles (for each of the major repositories that will need to be incorporated into the data warehouse); Output Profiles (for each of the major outputs that will need to be produced from the data warehouse).

Problem Heard	THE DATA WE GET ARE WRONG, BUT NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO FIX THEM. WE WONDER WHAT DECISIONS PEOPLE MADE WHEN THEY SUBMITTED THE DATA WE SEE REPORTED.
Objective 4	To document the business rules that apply to the data in a collection, a repository, or an output to ensure appropriate interpretation and use.
Example	An LEA submits a "Teacher/Class/Student" data file to its SEA. It goes first to the SEA's State Report Manager application for the checking of business rules. From DataSpecs, these rules have been captured and are being enforced before the data can be certified for use by the SEA. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Class size must be fewer than 45. — Teacher identifier must be valid (>5000000000, <6000000000). — Student cannot be in more than 8 classes.
DataSpecs Report	Business Rule Profile

Problem Heard	WE HAVE TO RE-ENTER DATA INTO MULTIPLE SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS EVERY TIME A STUDENT'S INFORMATION CHANGES.
Objective 5	To increase the interoperability among information systems to ensure efficient and accurate exchange of data.
Example	When a student enrolls in a school, that student's demographics and family characteristics need to be entered into multiple local and state applications. All of those applications must use the same element dictionary attributes for efficient exchange (without crosswalking or translation). DataSpecs will hold the item/element name, definition, codes for each application (considered a repository) and align them with the standard element definition as adopted by the agency to ensure interoperability. If SIF is adopted, DataSpecs maps to SIF and the objects in which the elements appear.
DataSpecs Report	Repository Profile; SIF Alignment Report

Problem Heard	EVERY TIME A NEW DEMAND FOR DATA ARISES WE INITIATE ANOTHER DATA COLLECTION.
Objective 6	To respond efficiently with existing data without imposing unnecessary increased burden when new mandates for data arise.
Example	The Legislature passes a bill requiring the SEA to determine how many times the SEA asks an LEA each year to include their superintendent's email address on a report. There are three possibilities. Ask the LEAs, poll the SEA offices, or run a DataSpecs report.
DataSpecs Report	Element Profile (for a single element, a report showing all collections and repositories where the element appears as an item.)

Problem Heard	WHO IS THE GO-TO PERSON FOR OFFICIAL DATA WHEN MORE THAN ONE OFFICE HAS THE DATA?
Objective 7	To supplement this calendar with data element level detail identifying the authoritative data source for each data element used for the organization's official statistics and for required reporting.
Example	The Deputy State Superintendent of Schools is meeting with the SEA staff to discuss grant applications, and everyone has been arguing over the number of low-income students in the state. What is the real number?
DataSpecs Report	Official Statistics: Source Data Elements

Problem Heard	HOW DO I KEEP UP WHEN ALL THE REPORTS ARE DUE? HOW DO I KNOW WHEN THE NEW OFFICIAL DROPOUT RATES WILL BE PUBLISHED? HOW DO I KNOW WHICH OFFICE IS THE PLACE TO GO FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS?
Objective 8	To maintain and publish a comprehensive calendar and directory of the periodicity of the organization's official data collection and reporting activities.
Example	The State Board of Education Chair is addressing the Legislature and wants to know when the annual dropout statistics will be announced. The Superintendent of the largest urban district is cutting staff but first wants to know when the state data report is due for funding.
DataSpecs Report	Periodicity of Official Statistics

Problem Heard	DO WE REALLY HAVE ALL THE DATA REQUIRED FOR EDFACTS? WHAT ARE WE MISSING?
Objective 9	To analyze and identify the gaps between required data mandates, needs, and available data.
Example	EDFacts has become a continual series of submission files from an SEA to USED throughout an annual cycle. Currently there are 105 submissions, 205 files, 2,407 elements, and 253 distinct elements. An SEA needs to know at any time if there is a gap between these requirements and the available data in its repositories.
DataSpecs Report	EDFacts Map and Gap Analysis

Problem Heard	I NEED TO COLLECT ALL NEW DATA FOR MY RESEARCH PROJECT.
Objective 10	To provide data for research from existing sources without burdening schools with new collections.
Example	A graduate student who is designing a dissertation study of student mobility patterns and their effects on graduation rates may not know that the SEA has a common student identifier across multiple years and all schools in the state. With a full understanding of which data files contain enrollment, withdrawal, dropout, and graduation data, the researcher may be able to design a study that uses only extant data.
DataSpecs Report	Repository Profiles

Problem Heard	CAN WE TRUST THESE DATA?
Objective 11	To increase the quality of the data throughout the agency.
Example	A fully loaded and accessible metadata dictionary is the best documentation to show that an education agency has established and is following standards for quality data.
DataSpecs Report	All DataSpecs reports support this objective.