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M E M O R A N D U M

TO:

October 30, 2000
TechMIS Subscribers

FROM:

Page 1 of 3
Charles Blaschke

SUBJECT: Washington Update Items

This TechMIS mailing includes the Washington Update which focuses on several items which have been in the headlines as well as some not well-known policy changes in special education and Title I. Specifically included are:

- An update on Title I state assessment and accountability plans which have been approved and continuing sticking points which will probably not be resolved until next year under a new Administration.
- New Kappan/Gallup poll findings on technology and testing which suggest John Q. Citizen is not very interested in how student use of computers contributes to academic achievement.
- Highlights from a recent Education Technology (September 19, 2000) article by Hank Becker suggesting that “student use of computers outside of school” be an alternative measure for assessing student effects and called for allowing students to use computers in taking assessments.

- A new report by GAO which questions the need for proposed Federal legislation to protect students from commercial activities and market research which erodes the justification for two “anti in-school advertising” bills in Congress.
- A “pre-election” report from the President’s Advisory Commission on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans which calls for expanded opportunities for Hispanics and includes the best compilation of statistical education trends related to Hispanic and limited English proficient populations.
- A report on Title XI Coordinated Services Projects which provides extensive flexibility to school districts to reallocate Federal program funds; however, only a limited number of districts have taken advantage of these opportunities due to inadequate support by USED officials.
- Another election year report from the Council of Great City Schools which found 32 of 58 reporting member districts spent slightly over 15% of class size reduction funding on staff development which is less than the 20% estimate during the first year reported last October; in several districts student performance appears to have increased.
- New Milken Family Foundation Report provides a “reality check” on performance based compensation for teachers including educators’ arguments against it.
- The EdNet 2000 Survey of Buyers and Users of Education Technology includes perspectives of technology-using educators on issues such as in-school advertising, e-mail marketing and other guidance for education technology vendors.
- Republican leadership announces education reform agenda for next year which in several important areas depart from Candidate Bush’s pre-election agenda.
- New USED guidance policy change would allow Title I funds to be used to provide incentive awards to teachers and service providers based upon student performance.
- First round of grants for “small safe high schools” grantees have been announced and could provide good opportunities for firms with high school products and services.

- New law increases the amount of fees to be generated under visa allotments for foreign high tech workers which could provide over \$200 million for US DOL and NSF funded technology literacy and information technology skill development projects for secondary and post-secondary students.
- Preliminary results of a report from the Benton Foundation which finds public support for Federal funding for technology use in schools; however, findings related to mandated filtering for inappropriate materials could negatively impact E-Rate.
- Funding for preschool programs among several Federal and state sources increasing dramatically representing growth opportunities for education software publishers.
- Special education student assessment issues have resulted in a wide variance in state's implementation of new IDEA which suggests specific states to target for selling instruction programs to improve special education student test scores.
- New "Compact for Reading" initiative to improve reading scores and link schools to home is underway in five states and could provide publishers with value added components unique sales opportunities.
- E-Rate update which highlights some of the new eligible products and services.

As of this writing, the FY 2001 appropriations have not been set by Congress. When the final funding levels are passed and signed by the President and after we have had a chance to analyze the conference report language, we will prepare a Special Report and e-mail it to all TechMIS subscribers. Hopefully this will be done during the week of October 29.

The next TechMIS mailing will include budget funding and related information on states which have been recently collected and the results of the November elections which in several states could have a major impact on state education funding and programs.

As always, if you have any questions don't hesitate to call me directly.

Title I Assessment Issues Becoming Critical But Resolution Will Be Left To The Next Administration

Only one state, Wyoming, has received USED approval of its assessment and accountability plan for Title I; four other states (Washington, Oregon, Kansas and New Hampshire) have received conditional approvals. All states were supposed to submit assessment plans for Title I by October 1 according to a strict interpretation of current law and those whose plans had not been approved were supposed to lose their Title I administrative set-aside funding. Moreover, only states with approved accountability and assessment plans could apply for Ed-Flex status which could provide them much more flexibility under numerous Federal regulations. It is likely that more states will receive tentative approval, but this year will be considered a “transition year” in spite of the mandated deadlines. However, resolution of most of the assessment issues will be in the hands of the new administration after the election.

USED currently uses a “peer review process” which has been fairly consistent in pointing out limitations in state plans which they have reviewed thus far. One of the largest issues is whether to include limited English proficient (LEP) student scores in Title I reports and the types of reasonable accommodations that can be provided to these students. This is the issue needing resolution in the four states that have received conditional approvals. A related issue is inclusion of special education student scores in reports and, to a lesser extent, reasonable accommodations that may be provided. While IDEA mandates that all special education students must take regular state assessment instruments unless a validated alternative instrument is available, under Title I special education students who also receive Title I services (e.g., in school-wide programs) may be provided different

alternative assessments. When alternative or local assessments are used for Title I testing and reporting, a major issue identified by peer review groups has been to the degree to which states are actually monitoring local district assessments.

While the above issues are in the limelight now, below the surface is the festering issue of “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) -- the second component of a state’s assessment and accountability plan which must be approved in order for the state to receive Title I funding. A state’s criteria for determining whether a school is making AYP is the primary factor in determining whether or not a school is “identified for improvement” under Title I. The AYP criterion level is to be submitted as part of each state’s Title I Consolidated Plan which are due in December. Approval of this plan is also a prerequisite for a state to apply for and receive approval for Ed-Flex status. During a meeting with state Title I coordinators in August, USED officials reiterated the questions peer reviewers will be asking in reviewing AYP in state plans, including:

- what mechanism the state uses to determine the adequacy of a school or district’s performance and does this lead to continuous improvement toward all students’ reading proficient standards?
- what types of assistance and support will be provided to districts and low-performing schools?
- what corrective actions will be taken to turn around low-performing schools and will these corrections have any impact?

As mandated in an executive order, USED will be releasing a report shortly which describes the “transitional” assessments and definitions of AYP which districts and states use currently in identifying low-performing schools. (See related item below.) During the August meeting, as reported in Title I Reports (September 2000), Assistant Secretary Michael Cohen indicated there is huge variation in state assessments and definitions and that the number of low-performing schools are actually increasing. It is likely that many states with accountability and assessment systems in place under state law will be using these state standards and definitions as part of a Title I transitional assessment. However,

it is likely that many of the existing state accountability and assessment systems will not meet the rigor of Title I mandates. Hence, in a particular state, there could be two separate assessment and accountability systems with Title I criteria differing from state criteria. Moreover, as reported in Title I Reports (September 2000), the definitions and ways states are currently determining AYP in the five states which have received approval vary significantly.

The bottom line implication for software publishers and related vendors is that the types of assessment instruments will likely vary even more than currently among the states because two or more types of assessments may be used in a specific state. USED has indicated that it would not approve any state's definition of AYP which relies only on the results of a single national norm referenced test. If any of the above assessment issues relating to Title I are not resolved and continue to cause problems for local districts and schools, then proponents of block grants which give states much greater flexibility will be armed with ammunition during the ESEA reauthorization debate next year. For more information in Title I Report, go to www.Title1.com.

New Kappan/Gallup Poll Findings On Technology, Testing, and Purpose of Schools Suggests Numerous Implications

The results of the Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll Survey, September 2000, suggest a trend relationship between technology, testing, and the major purpose of schooling. Almost 60% of respondents felt it is more important for schools to prepare students for college or work than to prepare students for effective citizenship. Almost 70% believed computer technology has improved the quality of instruction in public schools in their community. Moreover, over 80% felt that public schools should invest more in computer technology for instruction. Only 43% responded that about the "right amount of emphasis on testing" is occurring, which is 5% lower since the question was asked in 1997. The

percentage of respondents feeling there was too much emphasis on testing increased from 20% to 30%. By a 2-1 margin, respondents felt that the primary use of tests should be to determine the kind of instruction needed and not how much students have learned, and the best way to measure student achievement is by classroom work and homework (68%) versus test scores (26%). The report also found that only 26% of respondents felt test scores should be the primary measure of student achievement. Almost half of those respondents felt teachers' salaries and achievement should be linked and that the measures for assessing academic achievement should be portfolios, student work, and other demonstrations of academic competence.

These findings suggest that John C. Citizen believes that success in the workplace and in college will be dependent upon the nature and extent of computer literacy and related skills developed while in K-12. They also suggest that parents do not expect the contribution of computer technology to student achievement to be reflected in standardized tests. As the report notes, "policy makers should be prepared for the negative public reaction that high stakes testing and an increased reliance on standardized tests are certain to produce".

Shortly after the release of the Kappan/Gallup poll findings, Public Agenda conducted a survey of over 800 parents in five large urban districts and released its findings that found "scant evidence to substantiate a backlash against the high standards movement and increases in national standardized testing." Only 11% of parents said their child's school requires them to take too many standardized tests and only 12% said standardized tests asked questions so difficult and unfair that students cannot be expected to answer them. In several areas, however, findings were similar. For example, almost 78% of the Public Agenda survey respondents felt "it is wrong to use results of just one test to decide whether a student gets promoted or graduates; slightly over 60% of the other survey respondents felt that all students should be required to pass tests as a requirement for high school graduation. Almost 60% of Public Agenda survey respondents agreed that

“schools today place far too much emphasis on standardized test scores”, compared to 50% on Kappan/Gallup surveys. The Public Agenda survey found that 51% of parents thought their school districts should financially reward teachers whose students consistently get higher standardized test scores, while 60% of the Kappan/Gallup poll respondents felt that teachers’ salaries should be tied “very much or somewhat” to student achievement. Moreover, both surveys found that respondents overwhelmingly would use a combination of tests and other measures, rather than relying upon results on a single test for accountability purposes.

The Gallup Poll also asked respondents to select which of the Presidential candidates they would vote for in November “if the voting was based solely on the desire to strengthen the public schools.” The results were nearly dead even with Gore receiving 37% and George Bush 38%, with 25% undecided. Each candidate had some Kappan/Gallup findings to point to indicating public support for their positions. A definite plus for Gore is the public desire to invest more in technology, feeling that it had improved the quality of instruction without expecting computers to make large contributions to increased student academic achievement as measured by standardized tests. For Bush, who favors block grants -- particularly for the eight Federal technology funding categories, including the E-Rate -- over 70% of respondents felt that giving states flexibility in determining how to spend Federal money was more appropriate than distributing money for specific program activities under the existing Federal categorical program structure, with 68% of respondents who supported greater state flexibility identifying themselves as Democrats.

Out-of-School Use of Computers is Suggested as an Alternative to Standardized Tests to Measure Computer Use Effects on Student Learning

Dr. Hank Becker, who has conducted more empirically-based, primary research on the effects of computers on learning than any other single researcher, argues persuasively in Education Technology (September-October 2000) the need to use measures other than national norm-referenced tests (NNRTs) in assessing the impact of computer use on student performance. In a re-analysis of some of his large-scale studies, he has found that how teachers assign computer activities and software to students have effects on student out-of-class computer use, which is independent of student ability and socio-economic status. As Becker notes, “In particular, if teachers’ principal objectives for student computer use include having students make presentations of their work before an audience, this appears to result in greater use of computers for school work and at other times of the school day. Home computer use appears to be greater when teachers prioritize having students use computers to find information and to communicate electronically and when they give students frequent opportunities to use word processing software during class time.”

Becker’s suggestion that the extent of computer use by students out-of-class and at home is one positive outcome of teacher assignment of computer-related activities. He recognizes that this measure is not going to satisfy many policy makers who want to know the conditions under which computers make a difference in student achievement. Rather, he joins a small but growing number of researchers and other technology advocates in calling for new alternative measures to standardized testing. Similar to the modest proposal to provide computer-using students reasonable accommodations in test-taking (Washington Update, May 2000), Becker states clearly, “Nearly all instruments used in standardized testing situations to compare students having various levels and types of computer experience are composed of paper-and-pencil tests that exclude the very same computer resources and tools by which students with computing expertise

might be able to demonstrate their greater competencies to do academic work...the tests to which policymakers and the public pay attention deny computer-capable students the ability to demonstrate important competencies they may have acquired.”

During an invitation-only “outreach session” of the CEO forum, assessment and evaluation experts and advocates of increased technology use called for not only new and better measures of the effects of computer use on students, but also policy changes which would ensure the mandated use of certain assessment instruments be changed to ensure that computer-using students are on a level playing field. One of the more vocal members of the group was Harold Wengliensky, the author of the ETS 1998 report, which is cited by critics and skeptics of technology use in education. His re-analysis of NAEP assessment data suggested that students who used computers more did worse on NAEP reading and math assessments. During the meeting, however, he stated bluntly that the NAEP assessments were not designed to assess the affects of computers on student performance, even in basic skill areas.

Whether the CEO forum will address this policy issue in its fourth and last report on assessments and technology is unclear. In the meantime, during the first Presidential debate, both candidates called for increased assessments in their accountability plans with Candidate Bush calling for a mandated reading assessment using the NAEP.

New GAO Report Presents Findings Which Question the Need for Proposed Federal Legislation to Protect Students From Commercial Activities and Advertising and Market Research

In response to a request from Senator Christopher Dodd and Congressman George Miller, co-sponsors of S.1908 and HR 2915, (both of which would protect children from commercial exploitation by protecting student privacy), a GAO study of 19 elementary and secondary schools in seven districts questions: (a) the actual amount of advertising and other commercial activities currently in schools; and (b) the level of market research

activities using student provided data and preferences that is actually occurring. The report concludes “Commercial activities in schools run the gamut from non-controversial approaches such as grants and gifts, to highly controversial activities such as market research. Because most of the decisions (related to commercial activities) are made at the local level, different preferences of local officials will result in different levels of commercial activities across districts and across schools in the same district. New technology, particularly those involving the Internet, might increase opportunities for schools to earn money but raise questions about student privacy.” (Page 34 – 35)

None of the school officials reported that market research was being conducted in their schools by either school staff or employees of other organizations. None of the districts or schools had policies related to market research being conducted by outside groups with the exception that in most cases the superintendent or a designee must approve the data collection instruments that capture information on student preferences, etc.

GAO also reported that, currently, 19 states have statutes or regulations which address school-related commercial activities, but in 14 of these states, existing statutes and regulations are not comprehensive and relate only to specific types of activities. While most state laws place responsibility for decision making at the local level, California and New York specifically prohibit or restrict districts from engaging in any types of commercial activities. On the other hand, of the 18 states addressing direct advertising, seven permit school bus advertising, while eight prohibit it. No state education code currently targets school-based market research. However, student privacy laws prohibit any activity such as selling students names and addresses.

During the November 1999/August 2000 study period, schools in two districts had contracts with Channel One which provides free equipment in return for students viewing of in-school advertising. Two schools have also signed up with Zap Me which, according to GAO, provides free hardware and Internet access in return for Internet advertising,

which could include “tracking individual students by age, gender, school, zip code and aggregate information describing students’ Internet activities when they use Zap Me Computers.” Channel One and Zap Me have been cited by both Senator Dodd and Congressman Miller in their justification for their proposed legislation. The GAO report cites previous studies by groups such as Consumer Union (1995), the Annenberg Public Policy Center (May 2000) (see Washington Update, July 2000) and the Center for Media Education which report extensive collection of personal data on most commercial websites, without student or parent knowledge, through the use of sophisticated tracking tools. However, as GAO notes, “information on the prevalence of market research in schools is not available. Both of the two examples have been reported in the popular research literature --- however, advocacy groups report market research in schools is a growing phenomenon.” In the past, many of these advocacy groups pointed to the growth in districts sales of advertising on buses. However, GAO cites an Associated Press article (August 1998) which reported that only 45 of the 16,000 school districts had sold advertisements on their buses.

Without question the new technologies, particularly those that are Internet based, raise student privacy issues. However, one inference from the GAO findings is that many school and district officials do not believe the magnitude of the “market research/student privacy violation” problem is as great as reported in the press and that if problems do arise, local school boards, district superintendents, and principals are in a better position to make decisions reflecting the general mood of the local community, than are Federal legislators.

President's Advisory Commission Calls for Expanded Educational Opportunities for Hispanics

The six-year-old President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans issued its final report two months before the Presidential election, concluding that Hispanic youth are behind non-Hispanic youth as measured by most traditional education indicators of success and that within 25 years, Hispanics will constitute more than 25% of the school age population. The final section of the report entitled "Ten Things The Next Administration Must Do" summarizes many of the Clinton/Gore initiatives at both the K-12 and post-secondary level, and recommends their continuation and expansion with increased funding.

Although the report was most definitely written to be released prior to the Presidential election, the appendices are rich in statistics relating to the condition of education for Hispanics.

- Between 1978 and 1998, enrollment of Hispanics in public elementary schools increased almost 160% compared to 20% for black students.
- In 1996, about one out of every four students who lived in a central city and attended public schools was Hispanic, compared with one out of every ten in 1972.
- In 1997, 68% of Hispanic children used a computer at school compared to 84% of whites, and only 18% of Hispanic students use a computer at home compared to 52% of white students.
- Dropout rates for Hispanics are much higher than other ethnic groups (e.g., 30% of all Latinos 16-24 were dropouts, or about 1.5 million which is three times the rate for white students).
- In 1996, NAEP scores of Hispanic students age 17 were well below those of their white peers in math, reading and science.

For a free copy of the report call (202)401-1411 or go to www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/Hispanic.

Title XI “Coordinated Services Projects” Which Provide Unusual Funding Flexibility Is Seldom Used By Districts

The Coordinated Services Projects provision passed in 1994 and included in Title XI of ESEA, provides unusual flexibility that allows districts under certain conditions, to reallocate up to 5% of all ESEA program funds, including Title I, to create a Coordinated Services Project that is typically not allowed under the individual ESEA titles. An article in Title I Report (September 2000) written by Alexander Russo, a former legislative aide to Senator Jeff Bingaman, rightfully notes that where districts decided to use the provision to provide a critical funding mass to operate such Coordinated Services Projects, the district officials and USED officials were very pleased with the results. For example, USED usually points to Dallas ISD as the model use of such funds under Title XI; Dallas created nine school-based family centers to provide tutoring and parent classes, among other services. However, only six other districts nationally have requested and received Title XI waivers from the Secretary of Education and, even though Colorado and California received waivers to allow the SEA to approve requests for Coordinated Services Projects, only ten such projects were requested and approved in California and none from districts in Colorado. As previous TechMIS reports have noted, Coordinated Services Project provisions and guidelines are flexible enough to allow the establishment of community centers which could provide, among other services, technology-delivered instruction, particularly to parents and others for whom such services are not otherwise available.

According to Russo, state officials have noted that low district participation under Title XI can be attributed to the U.S. Department of Education’s failure to publicize and encourage districts to take advantage of this provision. However, as noted in a GAO report last year many SEAs have not encouraged districts to request waivers from the USED because of potential subsequent audit exceptions. One of the major authors of Title XI, Chairman Bill Goodling (R-PA) chided USED in 1999 for not encouraging more districts to take advantage of flexibility afforded in ESEA through Title XI, as well

as the commingling of funds provisions in Title I and in IDEA. In its proposed reauthorization of ESEA, in June 1999 the Administration did propose to delegate the responsibility for approving waiver requests from districts to the SEA level. Moreover, a strict reading of the proposed change would allow a district to submit a request for a waiver describing the project and, after a certain time period if the SEA did not respond, then the district could proceed without SEA approval in conducting such a project. However, once again USED failed to communicate its intent not only to districts and states, but also to Chairman Goodling and Subcommittee Chairman Mike Castle.

Russo suggests that such a current provision or even the proposed change by USED will be difficult to include in the next reauthorization because so few districts have taken advantage thus far of the flexibility under Title XI. However, until then, Title XI Coordinated Services Projects can still be created and implemented by reallocating funds from other ESEA programs. This is most likely to occur in districts that have received increases in Title I and other funds because Title XI projects could be funded out of the increases rather than cuts in existing program budgets. Two districts with Title XI Coordinated Service Projects which have consistently received increased Title I funding are Ysleta Independent School District near El Paso, and Los Angeles Unified School District, which received the largest increase over the last two years.

Large Urban Districts Report Impact of Class Size Reduction Over Two Years

The Council of Great City Schools has released the results of its second survey regarding the impact of class size reduction (CSR) funding. Preliminary data from two districts, Fort Worth and Philadelphia, show significant gains in reading that are attributed to class size reduction. In the 32 reporting districts, \$242 million was allocated of which 77% was spent on hiring teachers, 15% of the funds were used to provide professional development, while slightly over 7% was allocated to recruiting and administration.

Compared to last year, the percentage of CSR funds devoted to professional development declined slightly from 16% in 1999-2000 to 15.6% in 2000-2001. Twenty-seven of the 32 reporting sites for this year used some of the CSR funds for professional development, for approximately 42,000 teachers. Most of the professional development targeted current teachers rather than newly hired teachers. The types of professional development varied across the reporting districts as follows:

- In Denver, informal professional development and support was provided by mentors; lead teachers attended bimonthly seminars that focused on various topics including test preparation for the state assessment.
- In Ft. Worth, where reading scores increased by 50-100% in grades with class size reduction teachers, the professional development focused on team teaching, effective questioning, individualized instruction and implementation of Open Court and Reading Mastery literacy programs.
- In Oklahoma City, all professional development was provided by veteran teachers who were designated as mentors or professional development instructors. Such professional development focused on topics such as special education issues in elementary schools, phonetic tutoring from the literacy center and multiple intelligences.

For more information go to www.cgcs.org.

New Milken Family Foundation Report Provides A Reality Check On Performance-Based Compensation For Teachers

The Milken Family Foundation's new report entitled "The Pros and Cons of Performance Based Compensation" provide a reality check on the acceptance and implementation of performance-based compensation alternatives for teachers. The report includes various alternative approaches with coaching comments from highly regarded educators across the country. It concludes "We believe that new compensation methods are not only feasible, but necessary, in order to attract the best and the brightest into the teaching profession, keep most of these in teaching, and motivate all teachers. However, this is not the prevailing view held by the education establishment. Indeed, the passion and

emotion of most educators is so strongly negative on this topic that even the most market-oriented of policy analysts have dropped the term “merit pay” from their vocabulary.” The Milken Family Foundation Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) for systemic school improvement includes, as one of its five components, a performance-based compensation method. Salaries would depend upon teacher achievements, teacher performance, tasks undertaken and student achievement.

While the report’s accounting of the history of performance and incentive-based pay in the U.S. is very scanty -- and in several cases grossly incorrect -- the 50 participating educators, each of whom has received Milken Educator Awards from the Foundation and would, more likely than not, be receptive to performance-based compensation, had some rather poignant comments that reflect the difficulty of incorporating a capitalist concept into the socialist mindset which is generally anathema to competition. For example, as one respondent stated, “A spirit of competition would take over..... If certain teachers get merit increases, will administrators be jealous, especially if evaluators are other teachers?..... Teachers will no longer be willing to share their hard work if they fear that someone else is going to take credit and get the extra pay.”

The largest number of comments, however, were from those responding to the question “what is merit to be based upon?” Comments included:

- “Measuring a teacher’s value to the educational process is nearly impossible....How to evaluate that without creating massive dissension? Very difficult.”
- “A great teacher is an artist! This artist works in an imperfect situation with ‘raw materials’ over which there is no control outside of the classroom.”
- “There are so many things schools seek to do for students that basing performance-based compensation only on test scores diminishes the value and values of school.”

In a sidebar the report describes how regression analysis could be used to identify teacher effectiveness. One of the authors of this report, Lew Solmon, was as one of the key authors on the West Virginia ES/CE evaluation of the use of technology which found that in West Virginia an investment of approximately \$100 per pupil in technology and related training produced an equivalent achievement gain as a reduction of class size to 15:1 which would cost slightly over \$600 per pupil.

The merit of this report is that it identifies many of the arguments against pay-based-on-performance and cites cogent comments from knowledgeable educators. For anyone considering selling products or services on a performance basis or working with schools where teachers are under a performance based pay situation (e.g., Denver, Cincinnati, among others), this report is a “must read.” For more information go to www.mff.org or call (310)998-2800.

EdNet 2000 Survey of Buyers and Users of Education Technology Have Some Interesting Findings

In the most recent EdNet Survey of Buyers and Users (September 2000), 70% of respondents, most of whom are technology-using educators, were opposed to advertising and e-commerce, and most responses signaled a clear message of no willingness to compromise on the issue. The minority of respondents who supported advertising and e-commerce conditioned their acceptance upon “reasonable exposure to appropriate and relevant advertising messages.” More respondents were amenable to after-hour advertising, but the important concern once again was the nature of the advertiser and the level of intrusion. On the other hand, respondents overwhelmingly preferred sponsorships to advertising, as long as the sponsors were appropriate for the education environment, would not be intrusive or distracting, and institutions had the capability to monitor commercial involvement.

The EdNet survey of technology using educators has a number of other interesting findings which should provide some useful insights to technology vendors and marketers. Several are highlighted below.

- **E-mail Marketing Experience:** In both K-12 and post-secondary education, respondents almost unanimously opposed unsolicited e-mail; in almost all cases they claim to delete it without opening. Reasons include information overload and annoyance. “Clearly the message here is not to waste time and money on unfocused or general broad-based e-mail marketing.”
- **Emerging Trends:** Respondents have a higher interest in personal computing devices this year than in the past, along with increased interest in additional resources for purchasing professional development products and services. Respondents also indicated a higher interest in co-developing products with vendors and continued interest in products that enhance the teaching process rather than those designed to replace or supplant the role of the educator. One interesting trend reflected by respondent comments related to quality of market research. As stated, “A reoccurring theme is that vendors need to know the market is much more complex than is indicated by the popular market research. The respondent suggests that market researchers shift from counting the market characteristics to evaluating the effectiveness of technology and education and to engage independent firms to conduct your market research”.
- **Market Size:** Anne Wujcik of Wujcik and Associates, projects the educational technology market to grow from \$5.2 billion in 1998 to \$8.8 billion in 2001 – 02. Our TURNKEY estimates for that same time frame are slightly higher, to over \$9 billion which includes technology-related services. The report also suggests that firms with established brand names in education will have an edge over new market entrants largely because many new entrants, including education dotcoms, have gone out of business or could not sustain their business models. For a copy of the full report which costs \$499, contact Nelson B. Heller and Associates, (847)674-6282.

Republican Leadership Announces Its Education Reform Agenda For Next Year

In mid-October, the Republican Congressional leadership announced their Education Reform Agenda for next year in a report entitled “The Road to Excellence – Putting Student Performance First.” The report was prepared by the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the Committee on Education and the Workforce (U.S. House of Representatives). However, a small footnote states that the report has not been officially adopted and may not, therefore, necessarily reflect the views of committee members. When the report was unveiled following two years of hearings, the primary Republican spokesman was Chairman Bill Goodling, House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman, who is retiring. Based largely on testimony from hand-picked witnesses and over two years of hearings and anecdotal information, the report calls for more flexible funding, expanded support for charter schools, reducing Federal bureaucracy, and providing parents choice.

Conspicuous by its omission, is limited mention of support for expanded use of education technology. However, if one reads between the lines there are some recommendations which could affect support for technology use.

First, the Republican agenda recommends putting “performance and accountability” first and enact the Straight A’s proposal (i.e., the Republican Consolidated Block Grant Proposal), and empower schools to pay teachers according to their performance. In states with reasonable accountability and assessment systems in place and with some rewards and sanctions that are credible and enforceable (approximately 15 states), the use of technology-based products has increased. However, under Straight A’s and other proposed accountability provisions (e.g., for Title I), the specific proposal has less “teeth” than the current accountability legislation in ESEA and Title I. Rather, these proposals are basically designed to provide greater flexibility and direct funding to states “without

many strings” attached. The Bush accountability proposal would be much more rigorous with sanctions of potential Federal funding cutoffs if schools failed to perform over a specified time-frame. While the Republican leadership proposal would reduce the power of the monitoring responsibilities of USED, under Bush there would likely be more monitoring and enforcement under his accountability proposal.

Second, the Republican leadership would reform education research policy. Specifically, it would “reform the Department’s Office of Education, Research, and Improvement (OERI) so that it serves the needs of teachers and students, not researchers, so that we may know what really works in the classroom”. It would take measures to ensure greater independence from political entities in the Department’s statistical reporting of NAEP test scores and other data. It cites a study by Rand Corporation that found “the research and development community in education has been unable to provide consensus results” on practices to help policy makers and educators encourage or mandate their use. While the current Republican legislative proposal entitled “Scientifically Based Education Research” (HR 4875), does not specifically call for a national clearinghouse on effective practices, candidate Bush has called for such a clearinghouse to be created at the Federal level. He also calls for increased research and development focusing on developing and/or identifying effective practices. Past efforts by Congress mandating that USED identify and disseminate information about effective practices, and other specific mandates requiring districts and schools to adopt proven practices, (e.g., the School Reform Demonstration Act of 1997) have created unintended consequences with negative effects, outweighing positive ones in many cases. Moreover, many of the processes are incestuous; in some cases direct conflicts of interest have arisen as reflected in the attacks by Dr. Stan Pogrow and reactions from Dr. Robert Slavin, et al, in Phi Delta Kappan (September 2000).

Virtually all of the remaining substantive proposals for reform in the report were similar to current proposals by the Republican Leadership in Congress. Bush’s technology-

related proposals have been more explicit, such as rolling the E-rate into a block grant with seven other USED technology-administered programs and providing the funds directly to states. To do so would require major legislation regarding the E-rate and would likely result in its demise. Increased funding under Title VI could be used to support Federally supported technology use in nonpublic schools. Bush would also rely more heavily on university-based R&D to develop and/or identify “proven practices.” Currently, this responsibility has been relegated primarily to Regional Education Labs and Technology Consortia.

The same criticism the report directs at the research community could also be directed at the quality of research findings included in this report to justify several of its recommendations. For example, the report showcases Michigan’s school choice efforts, arguing that dramatic gains in student achievement on the NAEP made by Michigan students may be attributed to the implementation of charter schools and other choice initiatives in the State. The recent studies indicating slightly positive achievement gains among students who left public schools for private schools in New York City, Dayton, and Washington, D.C., have been questioned from many quarters. For example, the National School Board Association recently released a report that concluded “there is very little evidence across the board to suggest that charters have been successful in raising student achievement, providing greater classroom innovation, strengthening accountability or influencing traditional public schools.” (“Charting a New Course: Fact and Fiction About Charter Schools” is available from SDA for \$20.00. 800-706-6722) Moreover, the results of independent assessments show that student scores in choice environments in Michigan have been, to say the least, mixed. For a copy of “Education at a Crossroads 2000, the Road to Excellence,” go to <http://edworkforce.house.gov/circulation/circulatexroads.htm>

New USED Guidance Would Allow Title I Funds To Be Used To Provide Incentive Awards

In March, USED ruled Title I funds could be used as incentive awards for paid Title I staff and, presumably, a contractor who provides the same services. In this particular situation, a state employee had created an electronic application system to process Title I applications from school districts which saved the state Title I office approximately \$50,000. A state incentive award program allows the state to award up to \$10,000 when an employee comes up with an innovative cost-saving idea. The question was whether or not Title I funds could be used to fund the incentive award. The USED ruling found that the employee invention resulted in a more efficient administration of Title I and is consistent with OMB Circular A-87. This ruling has significant implications for vendors or contractors whose fee is based upon increasing performance or reducing costs.

In the early 1970s, OEO funded a Performance Incentive Remediation project in over 20 locations across the country where private firms operated programs primarily for Title I students, under agreements which provided vendors with financial incentives based upon student performance as measured by national norm referenced tests and other measures. In four sites, teacher groups entered into incentive contracts with the district. OEO provided start-up funds for the teacher groups to purchase necessary materials, obtain staff development, etc. Part of the performance-based incentives were to have been paid out of Title I funds. After instruction began in these sites, a USED Contracting Officer ruled that Title I funds could not be used to purchase “performance”, but could only be used to purchase services and “things.” The issue was never resolved and in those districts where bonuses were earned based upon student performance -- e.g., Miami/Dade County – (see September TechMIS [Washington Update](#)) other funding sources were used to pay such incentive bonuses.

The recent USED ruling opens the door to a growing number of districts which have entered into pay-for-performance arrangements with teachers (e.g., Denver, Cincinnati). Such incentives and bonuses could be paid using Title I funds. The ruling also provides opportunities for firms and other groups providing instructional or tutoring services directly to Title I students, because they too could earn Title I-paid incentive fees based upon student performance. Only a limited number of these groups now provide guarantees of minimal student performance; however, rather than receive a lower fee, these groups usually allow low-performing students to continue in the program for an additional year at no cost.

New Small Safe Schools Program Grantees Announced

During the 1999 appropriation process, a rider with a budget of about \$45 million was attached to provide grants to school districts to reduce the size of high schools and to demonstrate increased student achievement and to reduce violence and disruptive behavior. Under the first round of grants, the program has changed its official name to the Smaller Learning Communities Program, which awarded, to districts in 39 states, \$8.7 million in one-year planning grants and \$33 million in three-year implementation grants. More than 350 schools will be involved during the first year. The administration has requested \$120 million in the FY 2001 budget for this program.

The first round of grantees reflected a number of types of approaches including:

- career academies which are organized around a career theme with all activities directly related to that theme;
- mentoring and other teacher advisory systems where volunteers, school staff, and others serve as mentors to help students, on an individual basis, in developing personal learning plans and provide guidance with regard to career possibilities and college attendance;

- “school within schools” and “houses” in which these programs, within a high school, report directly to the district, not to the principal;
- career clusters which help students map out a curriculum for academic or technical education in a particular field.

The first set of guidelines emphasizes the use of innovative and “promising” approaches based upon research and empirical data. Moreover, an annual evaluation is required for all implementation grants through the use of instructional management systems which monitor and report on the performance of individual students. The primary sponsor of the legislation was Congressman David Obey, ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, who also followed a similar approach during the 1997 appropriation process in creating the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Act. Unlike that legislation, however, there were no specific “proven” models (and/or vendors of such models) specified for the Smaller Learning Communities Program. A group which had major influence on Congressman Obey was the National Association of Secondary School Principals headed by Gerald Tirozzi, former Assistant Secretary of Education, who has been instrumental in getting Congress and the Administration to focus upon secondary education problems and issues.

The first round of grantees represents opportunities for vendors to have their products and services demonstrated and evaluated. In the future, successful models will likely be designated as “promising” or “proven” practices which could assist enormously in marketing and sales. For a list of the recent grantees go to www.ed.gov/offices/oese/slcp.

New Law Increasing the Visa Allotments for Foreign High-Tech Workers Includes Mandated Funding of Computer Literacy Training for U.S. Students

Buried in the new “American Competitiveness in the 21st Century Act of 2000” signed by the President in October, are provisions mandating new high tech training and education

programs for U.S. citizens and K-12 students. In order for high-tech firms to hire foreign workers under the increased visa/H1B initiative, fees have to be paid to support training programs. Officials estimate that the total amount of fees to be generated in one year could be as high as \$200 million. Sections 110 and 111 of the new Act include a formula that allocates percentages of the total fee to various types of programs. For example, 55% of the H1B educational training fees go toward DOL demonstration programs and projects to provide technical skill training for workers. Of this total, 75% of grants go to Workforce Investment Boards. Moreover, a portion of the overall fees (estimated to be 15%) will go to competitive National Science Foundation grants for K-12 math, technology and science education projects. Another section of the Act would create the Kids 2000 Crime Prevention and Computer Education initiative which would provide after-school technology grants to the Boy's and Girl's Clubs of America. An additional \$20 million could be appropriated for the Department of Justice to fund crime prevention grants under the Violent Crime Control Trust Fund. Two other sections of this Act would allocate funds to monitor, and assess the results of, these and other efforts to reduce the so-called Digital Divide. For more information check the NSF website in the future.

New Survey Finds Public Support for Federal Funding to Support Technology Use in Schools and Libraries

Preliminary results of a survey of 1900 respondents, conducted by the Digital Media Forum, found that 76% support the use of Federal funds to train teachers to use the Internet, while 65% of respondents support the use of Federal funds to pay for Internet access for libraries and bringing access to K-12 schools. The preliminary findings released by the Benton Foundation, which recently conducted case studies on the use of E-Rate discounts and refunds found that over 70% of Internet users use the Internet for education reasons compared to 36% last year; 95% of respondents stated that the Internet was used for work skills development.

According to preliminary findings, citizens continue to have concerns over the types of materials they may find on the Internet; 76% regarded “inappropriate material” as a barrier to Internet adoption; 61% worried about dangerous ideas; 42% did not trust information found online. Regarding support for restricting types of Internet content, 92% agreed that schools should filter out pornography from student-accessed Internet computers, while 79% felt they should filter out hate speech; 74% felt the Federal Government should ban online pornography and 73% agreed the government should ban online hate speech. Overall 55% supported more control over content on the Internet by the Government.

Pointing to a real dilemma, Andy Carvin of the Benton Foundation, who continues to analyze the data, states “the public wants to embrace the Internet as an educational tool, but many people fear its potential to harm young minds -- to the point they shrug off first amendment considerations and support aggressive governmental content restrictions.” Ironically, while most members of the Digital Media Forum, which includes the Center for Media Education and the Electronic Privacy Information Center, oppose Government control, the findings in this survey could be used by advocates of the current filtering legislation which is likely to be attached to the FY 2001 Appropriations bill (see September 2000, Washington Update). On the other hand, the Child Online Protection Act Commission on October 19 recommend against mandatory filtering in schools. If the current legislative proposal supported by Senator McCain becomes law, the E-Rate discount initiative could be dealt a blow as filtering software would be required to be purchased by any approved E-Rate applicant; this would reduce the amount of remaining funds “under the cap” to be used for other E-Rate eligible products and services. If the law went into effect four months after passage (as proposed), then it could affect third round E-Rate allocations. If on the other hand, filtering software does not become an eligible E-Rate item, then a large number of would-be applicants might not want to apply because they would have to purchase filtering software out of their own funds. For a copy of the preliminary results go to www.DigitalDivideNetwork.org.

Funding for Pre-School Programs Among Several Federal Sources Increasing Dramatically

According to a recent GAO Report, during the 1999-2000 school year, slightly over \$400 million of Title I funds were spent on pre-school programs which served about 310,000 students. For every \$1 of Even Start funding, local projects usually receive an additional \$3-\$4 from other social service and related agencies. Increased Title I funding for pre-school programs began in 1988, doubling that year, and then tripling between 1994 and 1999. Such growth was attributed to the increased number of schools operating school-wide programs which could serve all pre-schoolers in their school attendance areas, as well as enrolled students from non-Title I-eligible attendance areas. Since its inception, the Even Start Program has continued to grow to almost \$150 million this year, with a possible increase to \$250 million under the proposed Learning Involves Families Together (LIFT) bill. This program is designed to provide family literacy programs and includes Even Start. Under the reauthorized LIFT, Even Start would be expanded to older students and more parents. Moreover, since 1998, family literacy can be funded under the Workforce Investment Act through One Stop Shops and local Workforce Investment Board initiatives.

Under special education, a portion of the state grant program -- funded at \$6.2 billion in FY 2000 -- can be used to serve students ages 3-21 and an additional \$390 million is available only for preschool grants for students with disabilities ages 3-5, approximately \$670 per student, for 580,000 students. An additional \$375 million of IDEA funds are provided in the form of grants for "infants and families."

Under the Child Health Insurance Program (which is budgeted at \$48 billion between 1999 and 2004 including state match grants), districts can be reimbursed for health and related services provided to pre-school age children. The reimbursement of

CHIP funds can free up IDEA funds to purchase more instructional products. In the state of Maryland, the CHIP reimbursement for students of all ages is equivalent to the average IDEA funds per-student allocated of about \$830. Over \$2.5 billion was reimbursed nationally under CHIP to states and districts in 1999.

Under a Gore administration, pre-school would receive the highest priority with over \$10 billion proposed. Under a Bush administration pre-school and early childhood education, particularly the latter, would receive a very high priority. Across the states, funding for “kindergarten and other pre-K activities” has increased more than any other single line item category over the last few years.

With such funding increases, Congress is more intent on asking whether or not these Federal funding increases are having any impact on school readiness. While acknowledging the existence of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey which began last year under USED and HeadStart Commission recommendations for alternative research designs to determine the effects of HeadStart, GAO generally concludes that, although more pre-school children are being served today than ever before, the effect on school readiness is difficult to determine. For more information on the GAO report entitled “Title I Pre-School Education: More Children Served But Gauging Effect on School Readiness Difficult” go to <http://www.gao.gov>.

Special Education Student Assessment Issues Result in Wide Variance In State Implementation of New IDEA Provisions Suggesting Which States to Target

The 1997 IDEA reauthorization provision that requires that special education students take state assessments beginning July 2000, unless validated alternatives exist, is in conflict with Title I provisions and has resulted in a wide variance in implementation at the state level. In turn, new data suggests which states should be targeted because

proportionately more special education students are taking state assessments and schools are being held accountable for results.

As we have reported in recent TechMIS mailings, IDEA/special education student and assessment provisions are creating major problems for most states in obtaining approval of their Title I assessment and accountability plans. This topic was addressed in the September 18-19 IASA Conference sponsored by USED. The new director of USED's Office of Special Education Programs, Ken Warlick, formerly State Special Education Director in Kentucky, emphasized that IDEA requires IEP teams to decide "how" special education students will participate in state assessments rather than "whether" they should. In situations where state laws and regulations are in conflict with that mandate, state provisions are over-ridden. Fairly consistently this last summer, state courts have ruled in favor of IDEA provisions related to requirements that special education students pass exit exams in order to receive regular high school diplomas. He also stated that state policies must be consistent with IDEA requirements regarding use of test scores, particularly in determining school grades, and the nature of accommodations that are used with students with disabilities. He noted that SEA's and LEA's should "carefully consider the intended and unintended consequences of accommodation policy that may impact on student opportunities such as promotion or graduation." The four states whose assessment and accountability plans have been conditionally approved by USED thus far still have to make changes with respect to inclusion and accommodations for LEP and special ed students enrolled in Title I schools in order to receive final approval.

In December 1999, preliminary results from a survey on state activities to implement IDEA assessment provisions were reported by the National Center on Education Outcomes at the University of Minnesota. The most recent updated report from NCEO now has for all 23 reporting states, the assessments used at the elementary, middle and high school levels and, the percentage of special education students taking such assessments, as well as the percent that are provided reasonable accommodations of one

type or another. Release of the actual participation rates suggests a number of states to target based upon the percentage of special education students taking state assessment and the number which are provided accommodation.

Only three states – Maryland, Kentucky and Indiana -- have approved alternative instruments and, as previously reported, more than 15 states are considering adapting the alternative assessment instruments developed in Indiana which cost \$3,000 per teacher.

In Kentucky, all special education students take the Kentucky core content test at grades 4-5, 7-8, and 10-12. Reasonable accommodations are provided mostly at the elementary and middle schools, but only half of the high school students are administered tests with accommodations. In Maryland, the overall participation percentage for special education students is approximately 95%, with around 50% provided reasonable accommodation at the elementary level and approximately 25% provided reasonable accommodation at the middle school level. Specifically Other states with participation rates at the elementary level higher than 80% are Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. States with high participation rates and some accommodation in 1999 at the high school level were Nevada, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Massachusetts, and Kentucky. In Texas, less than 50% of special education students in 1999 took state assessments. Policies have changed rather dramatically in several states generally increasing special education students participation in state assessments especially in Texas.

For more information about the NCEO report go to www.coled.umn.edu/NCEO/OnlinePubs.

New “Compact for Reading” Initiative to Improve Reading Scores and Link Schools to Home Underway in Five States

In August, USED Director of Planning and Evaluation Service, Alan Ginsburg, announced to State Title I Directors the new “Compact for Reading” Initiative in which intensive training will be provided for SEA personnel in five states this fall and the remaining states over the next two years. This training effort is based upon Ginsburg’s staff reanalysis of the previous Title I studies including the “Prospects” database which has data on Title I student achievement going back to 1990. The reanalysis indicates that family literacy programs and current compacts are effective ways to improve student reading scores in a significant manner. Also participating in the initiative are officials from the International Reading Association who will be trained to serve as trainers of local district level “mentor” principals and “mentor” teachers.

During the meeting, retiring national Title I director, Mary Jean LeTendre, emphasized that Title I funds can be used to train reading teachers and provide family literacy training for parents. It can also be used to purchase kits and other materials for at-risk students and their families. Title I school improvement and administrative funds could also be used to cover the cost of technical assistance.

Current Title I law requires that parents and schools develop compacts which state the responsibilities of the school, parent and student for improving student performance as measured by numerous indicators. While parent involvement receives a lot of emphasis in Federal and state officials’ speeches, in reality, few resources and little Title I funding is allocated to the implementing and monitoring of compacts and other parent involvement components as indicated by the recent SERFF survey (see Special Report in September TechMIS mailing).

One of the critical components of this initiative is the “School Home Links Reading Kit” which contains over 400 reading lessons and activities for children in grades K-3. This kit was developed by principals, teachers and other local school staff who have been successful in turning around low-performing schools across the country. The first five states to participate in the intensive staff development initiative are Alabama, California, Maryland, Virginia and Washington. Several states including Michigan, Illinois, Missouri and Texas are implementing a similar staff development effort using the same materials and a similar approach. The Compact for Reading materials are available at www.ed.gov/pubs/compactforreading which also can direct marketers to the dedicated listserv. USED is also planning to launch a website for low-performing schools at www.ed.gov/offices/oese/lps.

This unique initiative is being designed and conducted by many of the same R&D staff which actually conducted the field work and reanalysis of Title I effectiveness data. Increasingly Congress has accused USED of being lackadaisical in identifying what works in Title I and “putting promising research into actual practice.” TechMIS subscribers with reading products and/or components should review the lessons in the reading kit to determine whether or not their proprietary products can fit into, and be used in conjunction with, the kit, which will be widely promoted and distributed. Interested TechMIS subscribers should also review the new website dedicated to helping turn around low-performing schools and join the listserv which may be created.

New CEC Report Finds Only 60% of Special Education Teachers Retained After Four Years and 68% of Those Spend Less Than Two Hours a Week in Individualized Instruction With Each of Their Students

A Presidential Commission of the Council For Exceptional Children paints a bleak future for special education unless many current barriers are removed and funding and

commitment is increased at all levels. Identifying increased paperwork, documentation and related activities as a major time-consuming barrier which reduces the amount of time for actual instruction, the Commission recommends: “Schools must leverage the time spent in these critical activities (team assessment, goal setting, planning, analyzing student performance and prescribing lessons) by providing teachers with the technology they need for electronic case management, communication, record-keeping, data analysis and ongoing instructional modification and accommodations. In an era when business is able to connect locally, teachers rarely have equipment sufficiencies to connect from classroom to classroom. Teachers need to harness technology linking networks with powerful computers for every special educator.

Below some of the major findings which describe the special education process and the conditions and context of which current instruction is provided are highlighted below:

- Sixty-eight percent of special education teachers report they spend less than two hours per week on individual instruction with each of their students; this is attributable to too large caseloads which also reduce the amount of time available for planning, collaboration, co-teaching, mentoring, and other instructional support activities; the majority of special educators report they spend less than one hour per week in actual collaboration with other special education teachers and regular teachers of special education students.
- The average length of a typical IEP is between 8 and 16 pages with an estimated four hours of pre-meeting planning time going into each IEP conference; they also estimate that they spend a day or more a week on paperwork and 1.5 days per week in IEP related meetings; few special educators indicated they had appropriate hardware/software for case management.
- “Unfortunately too many widely adopted approaches to teaching in specific content areas lack evidence of successful learning outcomes. Furthermore, many learning approaches, materials and interventions are ineffective for students with exceptionalities; in spite of available research identifying teaching methods and strategies have produced learning

results, valuable instructional time is spent using weak teaching strategies.”

- The typical special education teacher spends about \$500 per year “out of pocket” to purchase instructional materials which are often well below grade level to accommodate specific student needs; many regular education teachers resent the special accommodations they are asked to make for special needs students.
- Special education teachers leave the profession at almost twice the rate of their general education colleagues with four out of every ten entering special educators having left before their fifth year.

Several other recommendations included in “An Action Agenda to Achieve Quality Conditions for Teaching and Learning” would also provide greater opportunity for technology use and hence sales to the special education niche market. One recommendation is to standardize the decision making processes which would create a universal set of processes for documenting effective and complete assessments, program planning, student progress. The lack of standardization, for example in IEP requirements, across the fifty states is one of the major barriers to the development and implementation of more technology-based IEP programs. Another recommendation relates to providing new “system supports” that can facilitate coordination and collaboration among and between special education teachers and regular teachers and provide relevant information for informed decision making on the part of teacher staff and parents.

The release of this report prior to the finalization of the FY 2001 Appropriation is no accident. It should provide additional support and factual justification for the need to increase IDEA funding by \$1-\$2 billion over the next year. For a copy of the report go to www.cec.sped.org or call 888-CEC-SPED.

USED Announces Planned Grant and Contract Funding Opportunities Over the Next Year For FY 2001

At the end of September, USED announced its planned FY 2001 grant application and competition plans. Updates will be provided through May 2001. The guidance notes that, depending upon a final appropriations level across the six major programmatic areas, the amount of funding in future competitions may be changed. Some of the grants and competitions of likely interest to TechMIS subscribers include:

- Technology Innovation and Challenge Grants with applications to be available in mid-January for five grants averaging \$1.7 million each;
- Smaller Learning Communities program with applications available March 5, 2001, to fund an estimated 100 grants at \$450,000 each.
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers, with applications available in mid-December 2000 to fund approximately 1500 projects at \$400,000 each.
- Community Technology Centers Program with applications available in mid-December with an estimated 100 grants of \$220,000 each.

Complete application forms will be published around the application available dates in the Federal Register. A more complete listing is available at www.ed.gov.

E-Rate Update

Updated as of October 12, the E-Rate eligible services list can be viewed at sl.universalservice.org/reference/eligible/asp. Some of the changes of interest to TechMIS subscribers include:

- Cellular service is eligible for discount when provided for use at a place of instruction and for education purposes; the service is not eligible when provided for such uses as security on school buses. Cost of telephones, however, is not eligible.
- Digital Signal One (DS-1) is an eligible telecommunications service and is also eligible as a leased Internet access service.

- Hot line service is an eligible telecommunication service; however, if included with voice mail the voice mail, component is ineligible; only that portion of the service located at the school or classroom level is eligible.
- Paging services are eligible when provided for use at a place of instruction and for educational purposes.
- Personal communication services are eligible (similar to cellular service.)
- Satellite service is eligible when provided by a telecommunications service provider or used to access the Internet; equipment used for satellite access to the Internet is eligible only if leased from a telecommunications service provider.
- Antennas used for wireless wide area networks are eligible only if leased and if they are part of cost-effective access to the Internet.
- Hard disc array control is eligible if used with an eligible component.
- Network Interface Cards (NIC) are eligible if they are part of an eligible product or service.
- Remote access servers are eligible if steps are taken to ensure that only eligible entities will have the capability to access it. Applicants must provide certification that such conditions are met prior to approval.
- Several system improvements and upgrades are eligible, including memory upgrades to computers that act as routers, switches or hubs.

It is important to emphasize that, during the October 18 Service Provider Conference Call, SLD staff noted that the updated list is not all-inclusive, under certain conditions, additional products and services could be eligible. In the past, several TechMIS subscribers have been successful in obtaining approval for products and services not on the list. The person to contact is Lew Tiboldo at ltibold@neca.org.

Year Two applicants who are outside the window are in the data entry and program integrity assurance review process and should be notified shortly. Also, Year Two

appeals that were deemed meritorious are in a similar situation. Between \$200 and \$400 million is likely to be approved -- all of which will likely be requested under the BEAR process, thus potentially providing more funds for purchasing noneligible items such as software and staff development. Also Year Two commitments, appeals and changes will be addressed in NSTC order and will likely provide extensions for Year Two commitments similar to the order issued for Year One. This ruling is expected by the FCC at any moment.

Several hundred service provider representatives attending the SLD-hosted training workshops on October 18 in Washington, D.C. Check the SLD website for updates, particularly those related to the service provider manual emanating from that workshop.

During the last service provider conference call, SLD officials indicated that no changes in forms are anticipated for Year Four and that the window is likely to open in November and close in January.

Alabama

The Alabama Online High School funded at \$10 million is being pilot-tested in five rural counties and could be available to high school students throughout the state. In a joint effort among the SEA, the governor's office, and the University of Alabama Programs for World Services and Research, 29 required courses are offered along with electives such as GED prep and remediation. All courses have to be accredited by the DOE, the SEA, and taught by certified teachers.

Arizona

The Arizona proposition 203 which is on the November ballot has increasingly met with resistance from the native American community. This English only proposition, similar to proposition 227 which passed in California several years ago, would replace bilingual education programs with English immersion programs. The majority of LEP Indian children are in ESL programs. However, as with many tribes in other states the native Americans, particularly the Navajo nation, believe that passage of proposition 203 would thwart efforts to resurrect the Navajo language. Almost 70,000 LEP native American students attend public schools and BIA schools in the state.

Supported financially by a foundation and Washington Mutual Bank, Great Schools Inc. has a web site which provides information on public schools, charter schools, and private schools in Arizona. One of the purposes of the web site is to assist parents in selecting which schools they would like to have serve their students within school district attendance areas.

California

In late October Governor Gray Davis announced that the state would be paying \$1.5 billion for special education costs which settles a 20-year-old law suit in which districts claimed the state should have paid for state mandated activities and services for special education students. The initial payment will be \$520 million this current year and part of next year with the remaining being paid beginning 2001 in increments of \$100 million annually for ten years. Currently California spends approximately \$2 billion in state funds to cover the cost of special education. As was the case when a similar law suit was settled in Michigan involving over \$1 billion, most of the districts used these one time funds for products and services which did not have reoccurring costs such as teachers' salaries. In Michigan a large amount of such funds is used to purchase technology. This is very likely to occur also in California under the new ruling.

Payment of the \$520 million in retroactive costs will include \$270 million to be paid during this fiscal year with \$25 million being paid to districts over the next ten years. In addition, the state special education appropriation will have \$100 million added to it over the ten years for a total of approximately \$1.5 billion over the ten year period.

Slightly \$575 million will be provided to teachers and schools over the next few months that meet the targeted improvement levels of student achievement as measured by the SAT 9, which is included in school progress reports rated by the California Academic Performance Index. One pot of funding pegged at \$227 million provides rewards to an entire school based on enrollment, which will be between \$70-\$150 per student that is to be used for school improvement. These schools had to increase 5% above last year's baseline rating on a scale of 200:1000. Another pot of about \$350 million would be distributed half to teachers in the school at about \$750 and half to the school to be used for school improvement. Another pot with the remaining amount will provide \$25,000 to approximately 1,000 teachers in schools with a 500 rating or less. Another 3700 and 7500 groups of teachers will also receive \$10,000 and \$5,000 respectively for making the second and third greatest gains. Unlike the situation in Florida, the amounts to be

allocated in California are much more structured and less loose end than in Florida, where the state is not able to meet the level of bonuses for all teachers who earned them.

As reported in Education Week (October 18) only two of six K-8 math programs that were identified as exemplary or promising by a USED Committee, have been submitted to textbook adoption committees who will decide whether or not state funds will be allowed to purchase them. The two programs which have been submitted for consideration by panels are Everyday Mathematics and Carnegie Learning Cognitive Tutor. Publishers which have withdrawn their submissions include CTM Education Program, Encyclopedia Britannica, Glencoe McGraw Hill and Prentiss Hall. Reflecting the major reasons for publishers withdrawals Bryant _____ publisher of CTM Education Program was quoted in the article as saying “the deck is stacked against an E-math program that isn’t in a traditional format”. The state’s curriculum framework does favor a traditional approach that reinforces basic skills and includes _____.

Colorado

The Colorado Basic Literacy Act of 1996 requires that schools develop an individual literacy plan for students who are not proficient or at grade level on the state’s third grade reading assessment and on other indicators of student achievement. While the student may be promoted to the fourth grade with peers, reading instruction is adapted to their individual levels and also includes a home reading component. It may also require the student to attend summer school or tutoring sessions.

The cost for Internet services for schools, colleges and libraries, is likely to double or triple as the existing ISP, Qwest, has already announced its intent to increase practice from the low subsidized rates that have been in place over the last year. The state is negotiating with AT&T and Wireless and Cable as a new contractor. In the meantime, Qwest will continue to provide such services at increased prices.

Connecticut

Senate Democratic leadership in the legislature is criticizing school districts in the state for not taking advantage of over \$3 million in CHIP reimbursements which they could have requested for providing related services for special education students. Not only does the CHIP reimbursement free up IDEA funds, but it also frees up state funding in many cases.

Earlier this year the legislature created the Commission for Educational Technology made up of education, computer and business officials, and appropriated \$32.5 million which can be used for computer wiring, teacher training, and creating a digital library. A prime mover in the state is Lieutenant Governor Rell whose goal is to have all classrooms wired to access Internet by 2004 and to make every student computer proficient by the sixth grade. The anticipated costs to meet these objectives is slightly over \$100 million.

The State Board of Education recently issued a document titled "Measuring Success" which argues that state assessment scores are not the only indicators of a school's performance in that such assessment's data should be used to design instructional interventions. The report argues that focusing solely on state assessment scores will have a tendency to narrow the curriculum. Over time Connecticut students score higher than students from any other state on the fourth and eighth grade reading, math and writing portions of the NAEP. The fourth, sixth and eighth grade state assessments were developed and implemented during the mid-1980s. In the past the state has issued an index by which all districts in the state could be ranked. However, this index will not be provided this year, although it has provided a list of 28 low-performing schools in the state.

Delaware

In 1998, the legislature passed legislation declaring that students in grades 1-8 must pass 50% of the course work, including language arts, to be promoted. In January, the Governor requested, and the legislature appropriated, funds to expand summer school, Saturday school and after school instruction to help districts and students address the problem of ending social promotion and raising student achievement. During any retention year, each district would ensure that an at-risk student pursues a course of study designed specifically to improve the student's reading ability to a proficient level and in that an individual improvement plan be developed for such students. Activities may include mandatory summer school, extra instruction and mentoring programs.

State vocational funds for technical and community colleges will increase almost 6% to \$56 million. In addition, tuition increases ranging from 3% to 7% will occur at colleges.

Florida

The Miami Dade County, United Teachers of Dade (an affiliate of the AFT), is proposing to manage 11 charter schools which will be actually operated by two firms under contract to the teachers union. One of the contractors would be Edison School which is proposing to operate ten charter schools, while the other would be Chancellor Academies, which is run by a former Miami Dade County Superintendent, Octavio Zisiebo.

In early October a Florida appeals court ruled favorably for the state voucher program finding that it did not violate the state constitution. This ruling overturns a trial judge ruling previously. Under the state's Accountability Act, if a school receives a failing grade two years in a row, parents have the opportunity to send their kids to other schools, including nonpublic schools. Only two schools in Pensacola thus far have received F's making them eligible. Fifty students attended private schools with vouchers worth about

\$4,000. Unexpectedly, as reported in the last update, the number of schools with failing grades was essentially lower than expected thereby reducing the trigger-effect for more schools falling under the vouchers option. In a related matter, the amount of funding allocated for bonuses for teachers in low-performing schools whose student scores increased, were not enough to meet the mandate. Hence many teachers are not likely to receive bonuses. The state argues that the plan was to provide bonuses to teachers whose students improved the most. This too is likely to raise some legal questions.

As reported in September issue of e School News, the Saint Lucie County, Florida, School Board, recently agreed to a collective bargaining demand from the Classroom Teachers Association which would protect teachers from liability for unauthorized use of school computers by their students as long as teachers otherwise follow the school board policy in preventing such use. This came after a teacher earlier this year was charged with a felony offense allowing a student to view obscenities on his computer which was subsequently dropped when it was proved that the student used his computer without his knowledge. He subsequently resigned. NEA officials are quoted as saying that the Saint Lucie's collective bargaining agreement is the first of its kind.

Illinois

The State Board of Education has approved a plan which would require annual testing of all students in grades 3-11. The plan would also require state intervention in schools in which 2/3 of students failed state tests. Currently intervention can occur in schools where half the students fail state tests. This would cut the number of "failing schools" from approximately 700 to 350. Proponents argue that the plan would require approximately \$50 billion of state aid to have students take the Illinois Standard Achievement Tests which replace the Illinois Goals Assessment Program last year. In addition, the plan would also require an additional \$25 million to aid in low performing schools. The plan

has to be approved by the Illinois legislature which recently passed a state law that a student could not take more than 25 hours of standardized testing in grades K-12. The proposed plan would increase the number of hours of standardized test taking.

Guidelines have been developed for the Illinois Virtual High School which is scheduled to go online in January. Almost \$400,000 has been set aside for startup. However, the legislature must test additional appropriations for continuing services in the future. Initially only a limited number of courses will be offered and some will charge a fee on a prorated basis for low income students.

Iowa

As reported in Education Week (October 11), the traditionally Caucasian white school enrollment is changing rather dramatically as the result of an influx of parents and children of other multi-ethnicities. For example, the number of LEP students enrolled in Iowa public schools has tripled since 1986 while the overall minority enrollment increased from 2.5% to 10% last year over the last 15 years.

Serious changes in National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) under consideration following a recent article in Education Week (see TechMIS Washington Update September 2000), by Mark Musick, Head of the National Assessment Governing Board, in which he proposed public disclosure of national standardized tests. In the October 11 issue of Education Week an article reports on several changes under serious consideration which could have direct implications for not only states but also education software publishers and vendors. One important change would be to provide feedback to individual schools on how students performed on NAEP exams. Currently results are only provided at the state and national level. This change is designed to provide an incentive for more schools and therefore states to participate in NAEP testing. Earlier this year eight states backed out of the next round of NAEP testing because not enough

schools were willing to participate because of the increased number of state high stakes tests which schools take very seriously, rather than the NAEP which consumes as much as three or four days of time for local administration and for which there are no rewards nor sanctions. Other proposed changes include:

- to describe in greater detail the nature and purpose of NAEP tests to school officials;
- hiring firms and contractors to administer the tests covering their costs with Federal funds and removing a costly state and local burden;
- assessing all students in schools rather than samples; and
- providing “tool kits” which will assist teachers to link NAEP test questions to state subject matter standards and develop instructional materials and lessons that are aligned with these test questions.

To make most of the above changes congressional approval will be required and the Federal cost will increase significantly.

Several implications are associated with these recommendations. If tool kits are allowed and provided to link NAEP questions to state assessments and then to align instructional activities and lessons, then states could reduce their reliance on costly norm reference tests and rely on NAEP scores. On the other hand, as analysts of NAEP scores, such as Harold Oglinsky (see above item) have stated, the current NAEP tests are not designed to assess the affects of computer use in the instructional process. One of the proposals recommended an above item by Dr. Hank Becker would provide “reasonable accommodation” to allow computer-using students to use computers in taking the assessments where appropriate (e.g., writing essays).

The NAEP governing board will consider the report at its November meeting after which time specific recommendations will be funneled to subcommittees for deliberation. The reauthorization of NAEP by Congress is scheduled to occur next year.

Insert above – During the first Presidential debate, Presidential candidate Bush chided Vice President Gore when he announced his support for voluntary testing at the fourth and eighth grade level for not mandating testing of all children in grades 3-8 and all Title I programs; continued Federal Title I funding to individual schools would be based on student achievement gains using the NAEP.

Kentucky

The Kentucky State Board of Education has picked Gene Wilhoit, currently one of the state's education commissioners to replace Wilma Coty as the Chief State School Officer. Prior to coming to Kentucky in 1997, Wilhoit was Co-Director of Educator in Arkansas and prior to that time was Executive Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education. One of his stated priorities is to use technology to provide instruction particularly for at-risk students.

Illinois

In 1998, the legislature enacted a policy prohibiting social promotion which places full responsibility for implementation at the local school district level. Local decisions to promote or retain students shall be based upon student results on the Goals and Assessment Program Test and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or other criteria established

by the local Board. Students who are retained shall be provided remedial instruction of no less than 90 hours, including tutorial sessions, increased or concentrated instructional time, and modification to instructional materials.

Almost \$200 million has been appropriated by the State to supplement Head Start Programs to operate all day year-round for at-risk children. Over the last three years, State funding has increased by almost 20% each year.

Kansas

The Kansas Revenue Department is planning to collect Internet sales taxes. It claims that online sales are costing the state between \$2-\$5 million per year in uncollected revenues that could result in a shortfall of \$50 million annually five years from now. Other states experimenting with Internet taxes are North Carolina, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Kentucky

The State Board of Education is deciding whether to add 0.12 points to a senior's grade point average if the student achieves above par on state assessments. Every time a student achieves the "distinguished" proficiency level beginning with the reading test in Grade 9 and ending with the writing test in Grade 12, those students could receive 0.24 points each time. Advocates argue that if approved the GPA incentives approach would encourage more students to be serious and careful in taking the state assessment which is used to rate schools and districts that are not used to determine graduation or promotion.

Louisiana

Almost 20,000 students at the fourth and eighth grade level will not be promoted this year because they failed the new state exams. 38,000 students who took the exams in the

spring were retested this summer after participating in free summer school programs. About 15,000 passed upon retaking the state exam. Special education students can receive waivers that would not require them to take such tests if the parent so requests. At the eighth grade student the district has options of not promoting a student or allowing them to go to high school while taking remediation courses.

For the first time the USED is investigating allegations that the Louisiana statewide tests have resulted in civil rights violations. Last year approximately 18,000 students in grades 4 and 8 were retained in their grade level as they failed state exams, the new standardized tests. A Louisiana parent group has accused the state of abusing standardized testing charging that over 50% of high-poverty school enrollments failed the test on taking it the second time. Previous allegations that Louisiana standardized tests unfairly determine student academic opportunities such as graduation, have been rejected by state courts.

Massachusetts

Twenty-two districts, including Boston, were anticipating receiving slightly over \$13 million in desegregation funds. However, shortly before schools open Governor Cellucci vetoed the appropriation. However, because of the disruption to school operations, the Governor has asked the legislature to restore the \$13 million for the 22 districts under the provision that no funds will be made available next year in order that districts can plan accordingly. Under a \$20 million initiative to increase performance of at-risk students in grades 3, 6 and 9, results reported by the Boston City Public Schools indicate that the extended learning effort was successful. Up to 15 months of extra help, specialized teaching and two years of summer school were provided to 6,800 students who were targeted for assistance and who did as well on English language arts exams as higher achieving students who did not receive extended learning. At the ninth grade level at-risk

students who were provided extended learning opportunities, did better than students not receiving such extra assistance; results in math were mixed.

As reported in Education Week (October 18) only two of six K-8 math programs that were identified as exemplary or promising by a USED Committee, have been submitted to textbook adoption committees who will decide whether or not state funds will be allowed to purchase them. The two programs which have been submitted for consideration by panels are Everyday Mathematics and Carnegie Learning Cognitive Tutor. Publishers which have withdrawn their submissions include CTM Education Program, Encyclopedia Britannica, Glencoe McGraw Hill and Prentiss Hall. Reflecting the major reasons for publishers withdrawals Bryant _____ publisher of CTM Education Program was quoted in the article as saying “the deck is stacked against an E-math program that isn’t in a traditional format”. The state’s curriculum framework does favor a traditional approach that reinforces basic skills and includes _____.

Michigan

Michigan is the only State whose vocational education plan has not been approved by USED. Until it is approved, \$8 million in Federal funds will not be released. At issue is which state board will oversee grant money under Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Program. Last year, Governon Engler issued an executive order to take vocational education programs out of the SEA and put them into the new Department of Career Development. He argues that the Governor’s Executive Order bears as much weight of law as a statute passed by the legislature. Until the issue is resolved, the \$36 million to be released in October, plus the \$8 million which was to have been released July 1, will not be available to vocational education programs in the State.

The current Michigan Pre-K half-day program, funded at approximately \$70 million, will increase by \$75 million over the next three years to create full day programs.

The State Board has adopted Governor Engler's Teacher Technology Initiative which will provide \$110 million to school districts at about \$1200 for full time teacher to buy or lease computers. Teachers must have some competency in the use of computers such as sending e-mail or surfing the Web in order to receive one of the computers. Free online courses will be provided to teachers who are provided computers. State officials estimate that 83,000 laptop computers will be purchased and 8,000 desktop Internet ready computers will also be purchased. Teachers will be allowed to take the computers home and use it anytime, anywhere.

Minnesota

Even though national computer systems have made several errors related to the administration and scoring of the state assessments, the SEA has decided to renew the contract with NCS for the next year even though it is withholding approximately \$300,000 from the previous \$3 million contract. Errors by NCS as reported in Education Week September 6, mistakenly flunked nearly 8,000 students when they had actually passed the test. Fifty-four seniors did not receive high school diplomas as a result. Earlier NCS acknowledged that it had printed the wrong state average scores on transcripts of over 60,000 fifth graders who took the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment exam this year.

Mississippi

The state Medicaid agency is offering to pay local schools \$20 for every student that the school enrolls in the Federally funded Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The CHIP reimbursement program covers the cost of related services for special education students such as transportation, health screening, etc. Over the next four years, \$48 billion of Federal and matching State funds are available under CHIP. The CHIP program has been under GAO and Congressional scrutiny because, in some states, reimbursements cover administrative activities in schools rather than services to benefit children directly. In some states such as Maryland, the amount of CHIP-related reimbursement is equal to the amount of Federal funds the state receives per pupil under IDEA, or approximately \$830 per student. In many states CHIP funds free up IDEA funds to be used for purchasing education technology products and services.

Nevada

Superintendent Mary Peterson announced that she will be retiring from her position in December. Appointed by the State Board in 1995, she has spearheaded the state's effort to expand a new accountability system to identify and assist low performing schools and establish an expanded state assessment program.

New Hampshire

Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Jeff Howard has proposed to put cameras in classrooms to allow parents to monitor their children using the Internet. Such equipment and activity has occurred in daycare facilities in some states, but never in public schools. Critics have argued that such a proposal reflects a "big brother" environment to a wasteful way of spending K12 dollars.

New Mexico

The New Mexico SEA recently dropped 94 schools from its list of “most improved schools” due to a computer error in calculating student scores and identified 101 different schools who will receive a total of \$1.8 million in bonuses. The final results are based upon student scores between 1999 and 2000 on the CQVS and the New Mexico High School Conference Exam.

New York

The State Vocational Education Agency has recommended a number of options for vocational education students to rely only the state Regents exam in order to meet graduation requirements. One option is a technical assessment component on the state’s Regents exam that reflects industry standards, while another would be a technical endorsement for voc ed students who complete required courses. Such an endorsement on their diploma would be recognized by both industry and higher education institutions. Another option would be to create a work skills certification and employability profile for a certificate of mastery based upon the _____ fees and foundations.

Ohio

The Columbus School district and union leaders are in the final stages of coming up with a performance based teacher pay plan. Bonuses of up to \$2,000 per year will be provided to teachers based upon student achievement beginning next Fall. The bonus system is voluntary and multiple measures (which have yet to be determined) will be used.

A 1997 law prohibits school districts from promoting fourth graders who fail state reading tests unless the student was exempted because of disability or unless both the reading teacher and principal agree that the student is academically prepared for grade five. Students reading below grade level in grades one and two must be offered interventions and for third grade students who are behind in reading, summer remediation is required. In 2001, fourth grade students will have three opportunities to take the Ohio proficiency tests which cover reading, writing, mathematics, citizenship and science.

The Ohio Pre-K program, funded at \$120 million, is used to supplement Head Start with the intent of improving the quality of programs, rather than expanding the number of students served.

Oklahoma

State funding for vocational and technical schools increased over 7% to \$125 million for this school year. In Oklahoma vocational technical education is a separate department from the Department of Education.

Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania teacher's association has called for a state court to limit the state's new power to intervene in school districts based upon the performance of students on state standardized assessments. The teacher's association argues that the state exam is not intended to be used to compare districts and that state intervention could violate teacher's contractual rights.

A similar lawsuit was filed by Baltimore City Public School Teacher Association when the state took over 3 schools and ruled that a contractor should operate such schools. A state judge overruled the teacher's union request in Maryland.

Under project Cyber Start, computers with Internet access would be provided to over 4,000 daycare centers throughout the state to ensure that preschoolers develop some level of computer literacy. Approximately \$3 million has been appropriated over two years to cover some of the cost of this effort. Only day care centers that have licenses to serve children age 3-5 can participate. Equipment includes IBM computers, printers, Internet available content from Lifespan and filtering software. The lead agency for the project is the Department of Community and Economic Development. The program will be evaluated by Penn State and the University of Pittsburgh staff. For more information go to Cyberstart@www.cyberstart.com.

As a followup to the four year, \$200 million link to learn project, a new initiative called Students Achieving Standards, over the next three years will focus on using technology to help students meet state standards and master basic skills in grades 3-5. \$50 million has been appropriated for this school year which will be provided to districts ranging from \$30,000 to a maximum of \$350,000. Districts must submit applications for such funds which can be used to purchase curriculum management, instructional management or integrated learning systems software from one or more of 29 vendors that have been approved through a state ITQ process. To the prequalified, vendors must submit proposals indicating their qualifications and past performance as well as client references for one or more of the three areas. For more information contact Bill Craig at the SEA's Office of Education Technology, (717)705-4486.

South Dakota

The Digital Dakota Network is now operational and provides Internet access for all 176 South Districts to the Internet. One of the distance learning courses is Discover South Dakota History for elementary students which includes opportunities for students to interact with various places in the state. Other districts have developed foreign language programs, including Spanish, which are available state-wide. The major objective of this initiative by Governor Bill Janklow has been to provide courses via the network to rural districts which do not have access to specific teachers and resources.

Tennessee

In his first annual review of schools, 48 elementary and middle schools have been designated as low performing schools and are eligible to receive additional state funds and FDA support to increase student performance.

Texas

The Advisory Council on Digital Economy released a report at the recent Texas Technology Summit which recommended the use of incentives to boost the number of K-12 math teachers and to use students and high tech workers to help teach technology. Scholarships should be provided to high school graduates to obtain technical degrees at two-year institutions. The report also calls for a doubling of the number of engineer graduates among Texas colleges and universities over the next five years. A report of this summary is in the Fort Worth Star Telegram (October 10).

Utah

Earlier this year, the legislature added provisions to end social promotion in its laws regarding assessment, reporting and evaluation of student performance. Students who are seriously deficient in one or more of the basic skills, as demonstrated through the state assessment (UPASS), will be provided remedial instruction. A plan, to be developed for each student to bring the student up to the appropriate reading level, must include opportunities for parents to receive materials and guidance so they can assist in the remediation process. The primary focus is upon mastery of reading skills.

A State ballot initiative would require English as the official language within the State. However, a recent opinion from the State Attorney General's office would not preclude communication in native languages between the school and the parent. The ruling also stated that the measure would not preclude foreign language or ESL instruction. Such interpretations of this ballot item are less proscriptive than Proposition 227 which passed in California several years ago and another referendum on the November ballot in Arizona.

Virginia

State education officials released the most recent state assessment results announcing that slightly over 20% of the public schools had achieved acceptable passing grades under the state standards of learning exam administered last spring. In 1999 only 6% of schools met the standard. In almost half of the school divisions within the state, at least one school now has met the accreditation requirement of passing the state's SOL. By 2007 if less than 70% of the students pass tests in four subject areas -- English, Math, History and Science -- the school will not be accredited.

In one of the largest RFP's across the country, the Virginia SEA has published a request for proposal and held a pre-bidder's conference earlier in October which would provide online assessment, remediation, and staff development that is aligned to the standards of

learning for all districts in the country. The winning contractor will have to establish _____ demonstration districts in February 2001 to demonstrate its program and if successful then districts have over \$125 million over two years to purchase or license the product in order to decentralize test administration, scoring, and analysis to the division level. The pre-bid conference, held on October 24, was well attended. Only a limited number of firms had a total capability to meet all the requirements of the RFP. Hence, SEA officials anticipate one or more consortia to be awarded the contract.

Virginia has provided a grant of \$3 million to Power Up which will work with youth in approximately 100 locations throughout the state in providing them technology literacy and related skills. Power Up, which is affiliated with AOL, will provide technology, funding, trained personnel, innovative interactive programming and in time support and other resources referred to as “power pack” to these locations. The contact at Power Up is Aili Zokela, (703)610-3517.

West Virginia

The State School Board has selected David Stewart as the State Superintendent replacing Hank Marockie who served as State Superintendent for 11 years. Marockie submitted his resignation about 3 months before planned retirement amid allegations of misuse of state funds for personal use. Mr. Stewart previously served as Assistant State Superintendent for Administrative Services and part of that time was Superintendent of Kanawha County.

Wisconsin

Beginning in 1995 in a pilot program involving K-1 students in 30 schools, the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program provides State funding to districts with a school which has 50% or greater poverty. The district identifies one school to serve as a demonstration site. The school must sign an achievement improvement contract with the State that includes a plan for improving student achievement. In return, it receives \$2,000 for each low-income student it enrolls. Funds must be used to reduce class size, develop a rigorous curriculum or for professional development purposes.