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New Report Based Upon Afterschool Alliance Survey Findings Suggest Large for Pent- Up Demand for Afterschool Programs

The recent report by the Afterschool Alliance, entitled "America After 3 PM," found that only 6.5 million (or 11 percent) of K-12 youth participate in afterschool programs. On the other hand, approximately 30 percent or 15 million youth who are currently not participating in afterschool programs would likely participate if afterschool programs were available in their community. Of the afterschool program participants, 66 percent are K-5; 15 percent are grades 6-8; and 8 percent are in grades 9-11. Over 90 percent of parents were satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend, while the majority of afterschool program are provided by public schools. Religious organizations, Boys and Girls clubs, private schools, and YMCAs are the next more widely used providers. In Texas and Illinois, parents report more children participated in YMCA afterschool programs than public school-operated afterschool programs.

As suggested above, there are a number of reasons which strongly indicate the demand for products and services for afterschool programs should increase dramatically in certain districts and states in the immediate future. There is

significant pent-up demand among parents of school age children for different types of afterschool programs, including those operated by public schools. Thirty percent of school-age children's parents whose children who currently were not participating in any type of afterschool program would place their children in such programs if they were available and convenient. Approximately 91 percent of parents of children in afterschool programs appear to be "very" or "somewhat satisfied," according to the Afterschool Alliance Survey. In addition, more funds will likely become available in most states. As noted in our last TechMIS issue, as tax revenues continue to increase (in some states unexpectedly), it is highly likely that states will restore cuts made previously in remedial and related programs.

And, as was demonstrated two years ago when the Administration attempted to cut the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program from \$1 billion to \$600 million, the Afterschool Alliance, with strong support from parents, was able to stave off such cuts lobbying Congress.

One source of increased funding will be state compensatory education or directly related categorical programs, which in the past have been used to provide afterschool and summer school programs. The need will likely increase even more as students who fail high

stakes tests and end-of-exam tests will be required to enroll in after or summer school remedial courses. Moreover, as the number of schools failing to meet AYP increases -- particularly those identified for improvement for two or more consecutive years -- the amount of Title I funds earmarked for SES will grow. During the first year of No Child Left Behind implementation, the Education Leaders Council estimated that \$40 million was so allocated. USED recent reports indicate that at least 160,000 students received SES. If the average costs were \$1,000 per student, the SES allocation would have increased to at least \$160 million this year.

Another related reason to expect more funding for afterschool programs is the possible change in Administrations as a result of the November elections. John Kerry, as President, would likely place a higher priority on afterschool programs, providing greater flexibility to districts to operate their own programs or to work in partnership with vendors. The number of SES services provided by districts in the form of afterschool or summer school programs will probably grow at a faster rate than those provided by independent SES providers. However, in districts with existing independent SES afterschool providers, these providers will have an incentive to become approved by the state and operate and expand their afterschool programs by convincing parents of students in schools identified for improvement to enroll in the independent provider's program.

IDEA also represents a new possible funding source for non-special education programs that have pre-referral interventions. The IDEA reauthorization will likely allow school districts to use up to 15 percent of IDEA funding -- currently at slightly over \$10 billion -- to pay for these interventions operated by the school district, or perhaps by some independent SES providers, in both regular classes and afterschool programs.

And finally, over the next 12 months, a number of independent groups will be releasing their findings based on rigorous evaluations of students participating in certain types of afterschool programs. This can be attributed to a large extent to the findings released two years ago by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., which reported no significant differences between the students receiving afterschool programs and control groups which did not. This was the justification for the proposal to reduce 21st Century Center Learning funding by \$400 million. Even though groups such as the Afterschool Alliance and others called the study flawed and the results were contaminated by political whims, the need for independent longitudinal studies was confirmed when the Mathematica senior research advisory group resigned calling the study flawed and that the findings, even where valid, did not justify the proposed cutback. The new evaluations will likely show clearly that afterschool programs, with high student participation rates and increased time on instructional tasks which are correlated with state or other assessments, are effective. Many of

these to-be-released evaluations will identify additional characteristics of effective programs, products and services. Some of those were included in USED guidance related to 21st Century Learning Center programs:

- Instructional products which can be used in a constructivist approach and which lend themselves to hands-on use in student-directed instructional projects;
- Lessons and materials that are aligned with district or state content standards and that are actually covered by teachers;
- Materials and activities which are highly-motivating to students to increase participation rates; and
- Products and programs which have specific interventions that can be used to remediate individual student reading, math, or other problems.

USED Advice on Creating Strong Supplemental Education Services Programs Differs from Earlier Rhetoric About SES Providers

Reading the recently-published USED advisory entitled “Innovations in Education: Creating Strong Supplemental Education Services Programs,” one can infer a significant difference from the rhetoric of creating a \$2 billion+ market for private firms to

provide SES. The new publication favors, more strongly today than during the first (2002) SES providers conference, the role of the district as the primary supplemental education service provider, partnering with other service providers and publishers. This is evident from the selection of the five model districts with exemplary practices cited in the report: “All five districts in this study had existing programs that provided extended learning opportunities for students. They tended to see SES as a congruent effort that, in some instances, would enable them to get services to more students and, in other instances, would help them get more services to the neediest students.” The districts and types of extended services included:

- Rochester, New York, which set up an SES component that complemented the state-mandated academic intervention service system for students who have not passed, or who were at risk of not passing, New York’s state assessment;
- Forsyth Public Schools, Georgia, which expanded its relationship with an existing tutoring group for third-grade students who did not pass the state’s criterion referenced assessment to include students eligible for SES;
- Los Angeles Unified School District, which relied upon its existing Beyond the Bell afterschool program, as well as several independent service

providers with whom LAUSD partners and provides facilities;

- Toledo Public Schools, Ohio, whose 2000 program improvement initiative which used the Title I education center as the location where SES programs were provided and which placed SES services under the responsibility of the director of its existing early extended learning opportunities (ELO) office.

In both Toledo and Rochester, the teacher unions have created entities (Leadership for Reform Institute in Rochester and Reading Academy in Toledo) which provide supplemental education services directly. Interestingly, as a June 16 Education Week article notes, the USED report “doesn’t specifically mention either union, but it does urge districts to form relationships with local tutoring providers even though the state officially approves providers.”

The report also identifies some of the cost savings and other advantages to having districts providing all or most of SES. For example, the guide states “A critical issue is where services will be provided. In many cases, a school site is an attractive location. Parents like to have afterschool services housed in the same place their child attends school; it is familiar and no transportation is required. But in deciding whether or which providers should be allowed to work with the school site, a number of factors must be considered including adequate student management and

supervision, teacher property and space, and cost to the district.” If SES is provided by, for example, teachers from a high-performing school, the cost of student supervision, protecting teacher property and space would likely be less than if SES were provided by an independent third party. In addition, not having to get parent permission to release student data to independent providers would minimize another time-consuming and sensitive activity. A recent report from the Council of Great City Schools found that a growing problem with independent SES providers is inadequate alignment between the independent SES provider’s instructional content and assessment instruments with state content and assessment domains. This is less likely to occur when districts provide or partner with current operators of existing extended learning programs, especially those funded under 21st Century Community Learning Centers which require close alignment between materials covered and state content standards.

Recognizing the problems of districts in isolated rural areas in finding independent SES providers, the guide suggests that a district which may not have the infrastructure for distance learning should consider partnering with the closest Education Service Agencies (ESA) noting, “Some ESAs may already have the required technology and staff to support online learning. ESAs may also be well positioned to become SES providers themselves, especially if they could serve students from multiple schools or from more than one district.”

As reported in Title I Report (April 2004), Laraine Roberts of WestEd, who prepared to report for USED, stated, “The five districts we looked at were very courageous in letting us come in and work with them,” as “this program is in its infancy”....We looked for districts that are integrating supplemental services.....into their program to improve student learning.....We looked for districts that built relationships with [outside] providers.”

In the May 14 of the Education Leaders Council policy update, ELC reported that USED claims to issue the third Non-Regulatory Guidance document on supplemental education services which will focus more on exemplary practices than the previous two documents did.

For those TechMIS subscribers debating whether to enter the supplemental education services “fray,” the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory of Portland, Oregon, has prepared a report entitled “Supplemental Services Symposia Narrative Summary” which highlights the problems and issues concerning rural vs. urban vs. suburban vs. sparsely-populated states regarding the SES provisions in No Child Left Behind. Participating in the symposia were state Title I directors, USED officials who drafted the SES guidance documents and state technology officials, among others. Because many of the states, including Alaska, in the northwest are rural and sparsely-populated, many of the pros and cons of using distance learning to deliver SES services were addressed. One definite conclusion is that state policies regarding supplemental education

services are evolving and vary in some cases significantly from state to state.

For a copy of the USED publication go to www.ed.gov/admins/comm/suppsvcs/ses/programs/report.pdf.

New Survey of District and School Officials Involved in Reading Programs Shows Impact of NCLB Scientifically-Based Research (SBR) Criteria on Program Selection Increasing As Does District-Level Decision-Making

A new report entitled “Beyond Reading First: The Effects of No Child Left Behind and SBR on K-12 Reading Market” concludes that the SBR requirements in NCLB are beginning to have an impact on district and school selection of reading materials. Moreover, the results of the survey, conducted by the Media Management Service (MMS) indicate that evaluation, decision-making, and purchasing of reading materials at the district (vs. school) level is increasing. The district-level participants in the survey included primarily curriculum supervisors -- particularly English, reading, language arts coordinators -- with only nine percent of respondents being Title I directors. School-level participants included reading teachers and literacy coaches, while only ten percent were Title I teachers or specialists. Also at the district level, over 75 percent (and, at the school level, over 80 percent) of

respondents indicated that part of their job responsibilities was to recommend supplemental instruction materials to be evaluated for reading and language arts. Sixty percent at the district level and 52 percent at the school level indicated that part of their job responsibility was to make final recommendations for purchasing supplemental instructional materials. Virtually all district respondents indicated familiarity with NCLB requirements, while slightly over 85 percent of school respondents were “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with NCLB.

Approximately one-third of all district-level respondents felt that they purchased additional materials this year due to SBR requirements. Slightly less than one-third of all school respondents indicated they had made a change in materials used due to SBR. On a scale of zero to five (with five being very important), district respondents in districts receiving high levels of Federal funding felt that SBR will be important for purchasing decisions next year at a rating of 4.4. School participants in schools receiving high proportions of Federal funds provided a rating of 4.3 on a scale of zero to five. In high Federally-funded districts, almost two-thirds of district respondents indicated that evaluations about scientifically-based research are made at the district level. However, in high Federal-funded schools, almost 50 percent of school-level respondents felt that evaluations about scientifically-based research were made at the school level. About one-third of district-level respondents reported that schools select from a district-approved list of products that

meet their interpretation of SBR requirements, while almost two-thirds of the school participants responded that schools select from a district-approved list.

Actual decision-making is gravitating toward the district level according to MMS. Fifty-one percent of district-level respondents indicated final decisions about product purchases are made predominantly at the district level now and 19 percent felt that next year more decisions would be made at the district level. On the other hand, two-thirds of school participants felt decisions are made at the school level, while almost one-third felt more decisions would be made at the school level next year. Perception and reality often don't agree when potential decision-makers are asked questions related to decision-making. However, the good news is that one-third of district-level respondents indicated that spending on supplemental materials will increase this coming year while almost 25 percent of school respondents indicated as much.

District and school officials involved in reading programs report a growing influence of SBR criteria on selecting supplemental materials. The Center for Education Policy survey, conducted last Fall and reported in February (summarized in the February TechMIS issue), found that states, districts, and even schools were placing a low priority on implementing SBR provisions in Title I and other programs. Only in Reading First were the SBR requirements, defined as “five essential elements,” having an impact. However, less than two percent of the district

respondents in the MMS study were involved in Reading First. Our recent interviews with state and district Title I coordinators also indicates that SBR requirements remain a low priority, while other activities related to meeting AYP requirements and implementing choice and SES provisions are taking most of their time and energy. One might reasonably conclude from the MMS report that SBR requirements are becoming more influential in selecting supplemental materials for reading programs generally than in Title I. The low priority being placed on SBR in Title I can also be attributed to the lack of guidance found being published by USED in this area and the extent to which Title I directors feel USED will not even attempt to enforce SBR provisions in the Law, because there are no sanctions that can be brought to bear on district-level Title I programs.

Both this survey and the earlier CEP survey have found that both states and districts are hesitant to admit that there are “lists” of approved reading products. The CEP survey found that only 16 states maintained lists of curriculum or instructional programs that could qualify under SBR provisions and only six states require districts to use programs for Title I. Ironically, in the CEP survey, district respondents indicated that their method for developing district lists where they exist, were most often based upon lists provided by the states. Without question, there continue to be “official lists” and “unofficial lists” which are usually communicated verbally from one level to the next level down. It should be noted that the University of Oregon published its second edition of “Review

of Comprehensive Reading Programs” (March 2004) ostensibly for use in the Oregon Reading First program. Many supplemental publishers feel that this list of primarily textbook interventions will once again create an unlevel playing field in Reading First and maybe in Title I nationally.

The Media Management Service report is available for \$159 at www.edumedia.com or call 800/315-5010. The second edition of “Review of Comprehensive Reading Programs” is available at www.oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/corereport.

Schools in at Least Ten States Could Benefit from Microsoft Anti-Trust Settlement if Consumers Failed to Claim Their Portion of \$1.1 Billion Value in Software Vouchers

According to eSchool News (June 2004), schools in ten states could receive windfalls from Microsoft settlements should consumers fail to claim their share of \$1.1 billion in software vouchers. California is likely to be a major beneficiary; other states reaching similar settlements are Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. As of the middle of April, only about five percent of 14 million California consumers had filed their claim,s with only 2,500 claims filed by businesses. Under the California settlement, schools can apply for two-

thirds of any vouchers not claimed by consumers. The settlement specifies that two-thirds of the unclaimed portion go to an estimated 4,700 schools across the state which have more than 40 percent of students eligible for Title I. Half of the claimed vouchers can be redeemed for hardware, software, and adaptive devices sold by Microsoft while the rest can be redeemed for software sold by any company, including Microsoft. As the eSchool News article notes, schools are expected to submit their lists of desired purchases to the district office which, in turn, will submit orders to Microsoft -- although the application process has not been finally determined by the state.

During NECC on June 21 a California SEA official noted that the deadline for filing claims has been extended and that the final anticipated amount to be available to schools is still not clear.

New Report from the National Council on Disability (NCD) Provides Objective Summary of Varying Widely-Held Perceived Impacts, Both Positive and Negative, of NCLB on Special Education Programs and Students Which Should be Taken into Account by Sales Staff When Approaching District Title I and Special Education Officials

The National Council on Disability provides an objective summary of the various perceived impacts of NCLB on

special education programs and students, concluding: “Overall, there is a general sense that NCLB can have and is already having a positive impact on most students with disabilities. However, the true impact of NCLB will depend upon a number of factors, including the type of disability in question, how large the unintended consequences are from implementation of the law, how much states, districts, and schools ‘game’ the system, and how well these same entities provide support for special education teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the rigor required for adequate yearly progress.” Education publishers and other firms that market products and services to Title I and special education market niches would be well-advised to ensure that sales staff are aware of the widely-held, varied perceptions of both the positive and negative consequences held by district Title I special education officials and other district officials.

Based on interviews with district and state officials, researchers, and a limited number of Federal officials, the report notes, “The term ‘cautiously optimistic’ probably best articulates the sentiments of most of the individuals interviewed for this review.” Generally speaking, NCLB has:

- improved reading, math, and science learning and teaching, and on the “average” has benefited schools;
- increased the number of states which are testing larger numbers of special education students and otherwise are collecting more accurate data and reporting such

data on academic and other performance measures on special education students;

- increased the dialogue among educators, policy makers, and researchers and between general education and special education teachers and other staff; and
- generally bolstered the academic standards movement.

There was also general agreement that the perceived impact differs when talking about different types of special education students --- those with mild learning difficulties, those with behavior difficulties, those with mental retardation, and those with multiple disabilities.

Among the panelists, there was general agreement about the perceived unintended consequences of NCLB provisions affecting special education programs and students. Some of these unintended consequences which could be harmful to special education students through states or districts “gaming the system” include:

- increasing the size of the special education subgroup for determining whether AYP was met (i.e., if the actual number of special education students in a school is less than that number, then special education student scores don’t count toward AYP);
- a school administrator panelist noted, “another unintended

consequence of NCLB is that as you improved the test scores of some higher performing students with disabilities your overall score may decrease because your best students do well enough that they no longer are considered special education, leaving your remaining pool with the lower standard.”

A June 7 New York Times article stated that USED has approved amendments to several state accountability and assessment plans that allow these subgroups of special education students and English language learners to be larger than that of other subgroups in order to minimize the number of schools identified for improvement. Approved thus far are amendments in Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C., with five more states requests still pending and likely to be approved, according to the New York Times article. Twenty-six states are also proposing to use “confidence intervals” and likely seven more will also propose to use confidence intervals as a statistical device that would serve as “cushions” by taking into account error based upon the size of the sample.

Another unintended consequence has been redirecting more instruction to reading and math for students with disabilities at the expense of experience-based programs, which is particularly true in states where high-stakes tests is used as the only measure of student performance. The report notes that there was generally no consensus as to whether or not NCLB and high-stakes testing mandates will increase or

decrease the dropout rate which is much higher for special education students than for non-special education students.

Among the plethora of issues surrounding NCLB assessment provisions for students with disabilities, there was a consensus among panelists that one of the major impacts will be upon “gray area” special education students (i.e., those who are not taking alternative assessments that are not in the general curriculum/education). The report cites recent studies from the Center for Education Outcomes and Education Week which clearly indicate that more students with disabilities are taking alternative assessments. As noted in our previous TechMIS issue some states -- such as Texas, Michigan, and Virginia, among others -- have requested waivers to increase the one percent cap on students achieving proficiency on alternative tests as being counted for AYP purposes. Texas has requested that the cap be raised to seven percent of students.

The NCD report also provides a meta-analysis of recent research on effective evidence-based practices used with students with disabilities in the areas of: (a) instruction; (b) reducing dropout rates; (c) effectively transitioning students into work or postsecondary education; (d) preparing students with disabilities for college; and (e) effective ways to provide accommodations to students with disabilities on state or alternative assessments. The NCD report is likely to be cited in the remaining hearings and debates regarding the reauthorization of IDEA and possible legislative changes in No

Child Left Behind in the immediate future. For a copy of the report go to www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publication/2004/educationoutcomes.

ISTE Symposia on Assessment and Technology During NECC from Which a Probable Scenario on Online Assessment and Instruction Will Evolve

During NECC, ISTE held its Assessment and Technology Forum 2004 from which one might “crystal ball” a scenario for the evolution of online instruction, and particularly assessment, at the district and state level, especially if provisions in the Senate version of IDEA reauthorization become Law.

In the Fall 2003, ISTE conducted a survey of mostly district-level and state-level administrators and “other educators” as a quasi-needs assessment. Some of the highlights of that survey included:

- About 30 percent of individual teachers or subgroups (such as special educators) make use of technology-based assessment (TBA);
- About 10 percent of students at that time participated in TBA;
- Slightly over 60 percent of educators felt TBA would provide more timely results to inform classroom instruction, while almost 50 percent felt that

- TBA will increase consistency of test administration;
- Over 50 percent felt TBA would provide greater accommodations for students with special needs and almost 60 percent felt TBA would require a significant investment in professional development in order for staff to utilize technology for assessment.

In the working group entitled “Addressing Universal Design and Accommodations,” David Rose, who is a co-director of CAST, moderated (and sometimes led) a discussion from which a scenario related to the evolving expansion of online assessment and instruction emerged. Rose, who is the leading authority on the application of “universal design principles” to learning, highlighted some of the major events in the scenario which have already occurred. The 1997 reauthorization called for the maximum use of accommodations to allow more special education students to take regular state assessments with appropriate accommodations, a movement which was further bolstered with No Child Left Behind which basically mandates that these same students be provided accommodations and assessments similar to those provided in instruction. As a result of the creation of the accessibility standards for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and its mandate that all multimedia products meet such standards when purchased by Federal agencies, many states undertook separate initiatives to require or encourage publishers to provide textbook and

instructional materials which met, to varying degrees, Section 508 standards. Because of the confusion and problems created by the use of different standards among the states, in 2003 the USED announced the creation of the National Center on Assessing the General Curriculum (NCAC) whose mission is to develop a “voluntary national file format” that could serve as a foundation for accessing education materials. NCAC, housed at CAST, has been working, not only with advocacy groups, but also with groups such as the American Association of Publishers. Prior to that time, Congress passed the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards legislation and the so-called “Chafee” amendment which laid a foundation for the development of a uniform file format and addressed the “copyright” issue which was a major concern of content owners such as education textbook publishers.

Rose noted that, as a result of these activities, more and more publishers are beginning to accept the notion of providing textbook and other instructional materials in the form of e-books or xml formats, particularly at the college level. The Senate version of the IDEA reauthorization goes even further in requiring that, after a certain time after its passage and after regulations are promulgated by the Secretary of Education (if textbooks are to be adopted by states), publishers must guarantee to deliver electronic versions at the same time for use by students with hearing, vision, and other disabilities.

During the ISTE working group session, it became evident that state officials are going beyond provision of accommodations but rather are encouraging, if not mandating, that state assessments be designed around universal design principles. For example, under a USED grant, the Minnesota Department of Education has contracted with the University of Minnesota National Center for Education Outcomes to develop a training guide for test developers, item reviewers, and others working on the development of assessments. The Guide will outline a number of important universal design considerations that should be taken into account at the beginning stages of designing an assessment and individual items to ensure that such tests are accessible to the widest range of students possible.

One of the subtle, but substantial, forces behind the increasing adoption of xml formats and e books, as well as online assessments, is cost, not only of regular state assessments but also of alternative assessments, in meeting NCLB assessment mandates. As one discussion noted, just by having e books or books with accommodations such as text readers, the need for having highly-qualified teacher aides is minimized. A recent article in Counterpoint (Summer 2004) reported that use of the text reader by students to take the Kentucky Commonwealth Accountability Testing (CAT) online system, not only was found to be extremely preferable by students and teachers but also motivated students to participate in assessments as it allowed them to go from “stigma” to “status” by not having someone reading

them the test. Another reason is the enormous cost of specialized devices (noted in the April TechMIS issue) which was found by the Special Education Finance Project to be over \$400 million in 2000-2001. Another subtle but serious force, particularly behind computer based or online assessment, is the threat of lawsuits by groups such as the Disability Rights Advocates on the behalf of parents of students with dyslexia. Indeed, the first major online state assessment program was based upon a settlement in Oregon several years ago.

A recent article in Education Daily, based on a survey conducted by Travis Hicks, found that just about every state is using, piloting, or plans to pilot, online assessments for regular state assessments. Our own recent survey found that states such as Alabama, Kentucky, and others are using online testing for their alternative assessments designed for students with certain disabilities. In addition to potential cost savings, an underlying reason is that accommodations can more easily be provided using computer-based testing and can minimize potential threats of lawsuits.

**School District Decision-Makers
Feel That Current Benefits of
Administrative Applications Are
Much Greater Than
Instructional Applications
Although These Same Decision-
Makers Feel There is Much
Greater Opportunity for
Classroom Use in the Future**

A new report by COSN based on a survey conducted by Grunwald Associates of over 450 district-level decision-makers revealed that the perceived benefits for administrative applications in supporting data-driven decision-making are much greater than instructional benefits for students. However, as the report notes, "The majority of school leaders believed their communities are much more supportive of technology purchases for classroom use than they were three years ago --- a good sign that the public increasingly understands its students' need to be able to use technology during regular classroom activities. Three times as many school leaders, 53 percent, say communities are more willing to dedicate resources in this area than say they are less willing (18 percent)." While over 70 percent of decision-makers feel technology provides timely data for decision-making, improves support staff efficiency, and increases administrators' productivity, only 40 percent believe technology helps raise student test scores. In districts with the poorest school districts, about 50 percent of decision-makers believe that technology helps raise test scores and 53 percent felt lack of training is a

particularly serious problem. These districts are more likely to be heavily involved in Title I programs.

The report also found that slightly over half of the respondents identified "integrating technology in the classroom or learning experience" as a major problem with a similar percent citing professional development as a major impediment to effective use. The report notes, "Overall school leaders give their teachers a failing grade (5.3 out of ten) on this measure of professional competence (in integrating technology)."

Over the last three years, 62 percent of district decision-makers reported that their technology budgets have remained unchanged or have decreased, while 38 percent reported technology budgets have increased; 33 percent of the respondents report a "significant decrease" (18 percent) than a "significant increase" (15 percent). COSN, however, points to a startling finding: "Where there is a will to deepen schools' commitment to technology, there seems to be a way --- and this seems to be more important than funding." Moreover, the findings "indicate a clear connection between community support and spending on classroom technology." When district technology budgets have been cut, over 60 percent of respondents indicated that they had to cut back on equipment and supplies and that they were less likely to explore the use of laptop computers. Fifty percent report cutting staff in response to reduce technology budgets. Only about 30 percent of respondents reported that the district tapped into reserves or "rainy day funds" or "re-

purposed” other funds. The executive summary is available on the COSN website at www.cosn.org.