

Alabama Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that more than 75 percent of the 1,361 schools in Alabama failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) as required by the No Child Left Behind Act. Test results released in August showed that, in the 2003-04 school year, almost 70 percent of the schools met performance objectives in reading and mathematics. Most of the schools failing to make AYP do so because they did not achieve satisfactory participation rates (i.e., 95 percent or more for each AYP subgroup) for the assessments.

Alaska Update - August 2004

The New York Times reports that, under a court settlement announced at the beginning of August, high school students with disabilities in Alaska will be allowed substantial accommodations on the State's mandatory graduation exam. State education officials have agreed to allow disabled students, under certain circumstances, the use of word processors and calculators and, if appropriate, may read the tests aloud to some students. The settlement has emerged from suits filed by parents and advocacy groups claiming the tests make it unreasonably difficult for students with disabilities to graduate.

Arizona Update - August 2004

The Arizona Daily Star reports that the State's Attorney General has ruled that Arizona's privately-operated charter schools are considered public schools and are, therefore, allowed to receive Federal education funding. This ruling is in conflict with the determination by the U.S. Department of Education that charter schools are not public and are not entitled to Federal funds. In fact, USED's Inspector General is seeking the refund of more than \$1 million paid to 20 charter schools in Arizona for 2001.

Recent test results released by the Arizona Department of Education show that students in English immersion classes performed significantly better than those in bilingual classes. As reported in Education Daily, the State data show the improvement -- as measured by the Stanford 9 norm-referenced test -- by English immersion students occurred across all subject and all grade levels tested. Advocates of bilingual education have questioned the findings.

Arizona's Student Accountability Information System has collected data on virtually all of the State's 900,000 public school students. Created by the State at a cost of \$12 million over seven years, SAIS was designed to allow districts to track student enrollment and send the data to the State. Many school districts, however, argue that the system requires them to maintain expensive data systems of their own, including costs for software, technology specialists, and training.

As reported in the Arizona Daily Star, a study prepared at the direction of a Federal judge has determined that the total cost Statewide of complying with a court order to adequately fund English language learning will be approximately \$200 million. Currently, the State provides \$355 per student (in addition to the basic State aid of \$4,000 per student) to teach limited-English-proficient students. The study suggests the true additional costs range from about \$700 to nearly \$2,500 per pupil. The State legislature must find a way to pay for these added costs.

The Arizona Department of Education has awarded CTB/McGraw-Hill a five-year, \$45 million contract to develop and implement a new component of the Arizona Instrument to Measure

Standards (AIMS) called the Dual-Purpose Assessment. The new assessment will combine norm-referenced and standards-based assessments and will serve as the new Arizona assessment for grades 3-8 in Reading/Language Arts, Writing, and Mathematics.

Last year alone, Arizona public schools received more than \$66 million in Federal E-rate funds for Internet connections and infrastructure. However, many schools in the State who are eligible for E-rate funds either did not apply for them or failed to apply properly. As much as \$35 million more in E-rate funds could be made available to Arizona schools. The Governor has established a task force whose goal is to help districts and schools get the maximum allowable funding under the E-rate program.

Education Week reports that Arizona will be implementing a plan that would require all teachers and administrators to receive training in structured English immersion, the State's principal means of educating English language learners. Each teacher and administrator would receive 15 hours of in-service training or one college credit in structured English immersion by August 2006. Then, in order to be recertified, they would be required to take 45 of such training every six years.

The Arizona Republic reports that approximately 3,500 Arizona students are expected to enroll in the State's cyberschools this coming school year. The virtual schooling program began in 1998 with four schools and now has 14, including seven operated by school districts and seven run by charter schools. Under Arizona law, there are no geographic limitations on who can enroll in the cyberschools and there is no limit on the number of enrollees. The Tucson school district offers one cyberschool program in partnership with the Mesa school district. The Arizona Virtual Academy is expected to serve 1,000 students in grades K-8 this year, more than twice last year's enrollment. The Arizona Virtual Academy is part of K12 Inc., a national network of controversial virtual schools established by former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett.

In late August, Arizona released the results of the 2004 Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) and expressed disappointment with the scores. The Class of 2006 will be

required to pass all three AIMS sections -- reading, writing, and mathematics -- in order to graduate. Despite tutoring and practice tests, only 39 percent of the students (last year's tenth graders) passed the math section; 59 percent passed reading and 62 percent passed writing. Currently the SEA provides no earmarked state funds for remediation for those students who failed the exit exams.

Arkansas Update - August 2004

The Arkansas legislature has appropriated \$11 million this year, and \$6 million next year, for distance learning. Specifically, the funds will be used to install a compressed interactive video system in every Arkansas school district. As reported in Education Week, the systems will: (a) provide Internet courses for students who have scheduling problems; (b) give students online access to highly qualified teachers; (c) offer Advanced Placement courses online; and (d) provide classroom resources for teachers.

Education Daily reports that results from Arkansas' benchmark exams show marked improvement in student reading and mathematics scores. More than 50 percent additional sixth grade students reaching proficiency as did 25 percent additional eighth graders.

California Update - August 2004

Controversy has arisen over the allocation of funds for special education students in California's charter schools. As reported in Education Daily, the heads of several charter schools, seeing the large costs associated with teaching students with disabilities, have claimed that local school districts are not giving their charter schools an appropriate allocation of funds for these students. A study by the Reason Foundation supports the claims of the charter schools, while another study by the Rand Corporation tends to support district claims.

Education Daily reports that the State of California, in a tentative out-of-court settlement, has agreed to add \$1 billion to the State's educational funding. Under the settlement of a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the State will reimburse school districts and as many as 2,400 low-performing schools for school upgrades, over several years, up to a total of \$1 billion. In addition, in next year's budget, the State has allocated \$138 million for textbooks in poor schools.

LAUSD is planning on offering SES services to approximately 45,000 of the 230,000 eligible students this coming year. Last year, only 7,000 of 164,000 students received tutoring. Los Angeles was recognized as a model SES provider by USED, particularly the district-operated afterschool program, which provides more SES services than private firms.

As reported in the Los Angeles Daily News, only 42 percent of the tenth-grade students in the Los Angeles Unified School District passed both sections of the California High School Exit Exam, a requirement for graduation. About 62 percent of the district's students passed the language arts section, with 58 percent passing mathematics. Both figures were well below the Statewide averages of about 75 percent for both subjects.

The Los Angeles Daily News reports that the Los Angeles Unified School District has been sharply criticized for failing to provide tutoring to students in failing schools as required under the No Child Left Behind Act largely because parents and students have been unaware of its

availability. The district has set aside as much as \$500,000 this year to inform the public about the program.

Colorado Update - August 2004

The Denver Post reports that nearly 40 percent of the students who entered high school in Colorado in 1999 did not graduate from an in-State high school in 2003. Based upon a study by the Colorado Children's Campaign, 14 percent were confirmed as dropouts. The other 25 percent are unaccounted for; some may be dropout and others may have transferred out-of-State or have taken GEDs. The Statewide dropout rates continue to show that minority students dropout at far higher rates. Hispanic students have a 25 percent dropout rate and Black students dropout at a 17 percent rate, compared with 11 percent for White students.

Moreover, according to the Rocky Mountain News, Hispanic students in Colorado are failing to graduate from high school at a higher rate than in the past. A study by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education reported that, although the number of Hispanic high school students in the State increased by 3.2 percent from 2000 to 2003, the number of Hispanic high school graduates increased by less than half as much (1.5 percent).

Connecticut Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that a study of Connecticut schools has predicted that the State will be unable to meet the NCLB goals of making all students proficient in reading and mathematics by 2014. The report, which assumes student scores on State assessments will improve at the same rate as they did in 2000-02, indicates that 744 of Connecticut's 802 schools (93 percent) will fail to make AYP in the 2013-14 school year. The study's author cited as reasons for his conclusions the more rigorous goals in future years and inclusion of growing, low-performing subgroups that are not now large enough to be included in AYP calculations.

As reported in Education Week, the resignation of John Rowland as Governor of Connecticut has brought to office long-time Lieutenant Governor, Jodi Bell, a strong supporter of educational technology. The revised State FY 2005 spending plan, approved by Governor Rendell before his resignation, calls for \$2.1 billion in funding for K-12 education, a four percent increase over the prior year (and the originally proposed FY 2005 budget). Much of the new funding will be spent on literacy and early childhood programs.

Delaware Update - August 2004

This year, 130 of Delaware's 173 schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act. Last year only 76 schools made AYP. Middle and high schools reported the poorest results. Currently, 19 of the State's 30 middle schools, and 15 of the 28 high schools, are identified as low-performing. This past year, for the first time, the State has incorporated confidence intervals into the calculation of adequate yearly progress. This allows schools that are only slightly below the cut offs to be considered as reaching their targets.

In June, Delaware released standardized test results showing large gains by many Delaware students. Delaware politicians are scrambling to take credit for the increases with Rep. Mike Castle accrediting the success to the No Child Left Behind Act. Those who question the reliability of the results suggest that part of the improvement is attributable to the State law that required holding back students with low test scores leaving only higher achievers in the testing pool. These critics believe next year's results will decline indicating that much of the gains were illusory.

District of Columbia Update - August 2004

As reported in Education Daily, nearly half of the schools in Washington, D.C. failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year. The number of schools meeting AYP dropped from 62 to 57 and the number of schools “in need of improvement” went from fewer than 15 to 68. Elementary students scores improved slightly in both reading and mathematics, as did reading scores for secondary students (still less than a third were considered proficient). Students in secondary schools that failed to meet AYP are eligible to transfer to a higher performing school; however, there is only one school capable of receiving them. School officials are recommending that parents of these students consider tutoring instead.

Last school year, the District allocated \$1.3 million for tutorial services. But it is unlikely that funds will be available to provide tutoring for the 33,000 students who are eligible. Only three of the City’s high schools are identified as having made AYP, but these three schools are magnet schools with special admission standards and cannot accommodate new students. The option of free tutorial services is being made available in many of the low-performing schools.

Florida Update - August 2004

According to The Orlando Sentinel, Florida's high school students have seen little benefit from recent education reforms. Only about a third of the State's high school students are reading at grade level as determined by their scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Nearly three-quarters of the high schools in the State received Cs, Ds, or Fs on the annual school report card (compared with only about 40 percent for elementary schools). There has been little improvement over the past decade; most of the 23 high schools identified nine years ago as "critically low-performing," are still identified as in trouble.

As reported in The Miami Herald, the Miami-Dade school district is planning a major restructuring of 39 low-performing schools. Among the changes to be implemented in these schools are longer school days (by one hour), longer school calendars (by ten days), more teachers and counselors, smaller classes, more teacher training, and more rigorous student behavior and dress codes. The local teachers' union has demanded that teachers wishing to leave these schools be given transfers. The district is considering suspending the union contracts for these schools and has already removed principals in nearly a third of the affected schools.

Georgia Update - August 2004

As reported in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Georgia expects to have its entire new State curriculum in place by the end of the year. Most of the curriculum -- covering science, mathematics and language arts for grades 4-12 -- were adopted by the State Board of Education in July. Later in the year, the Board plans to approve the new curriculum for social studies and K-3 language arts. The curriculum reform has come about because Georgia's graduating seniors recorded the lowest average SAT scores in the nation, causing much educational and political embarrassment.

As reported in Education Daily, 78 percent of Georgia's schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act last school year. This represents a significant increase over the 63 percent reported the prior year. State officials indicate that nearly two-thirds of the 435 schools failing to meet AYP did so because of missing their targets for one student subgroup -- usually special education students.

As reported in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, passing rates for Atlanta students on the State assessment have shown steady improvement over the past five years. The greatest increases have occurred at the elementary level. For example, the passing rate for fourth grade reading has gone from 47 percent to 71 percent in five years; over the same period, fourth grade mathematics passing rates have increased from 43 percent to 69 percent. The improvement for middle school students has been less pronounced. The passing rate for eighth grade math students has improved from 36 percent to about 50 percent.

Hawaii Update - August 2004

Beginning in the 2004-05 school year, Hawaii will be pilot testing a \$3 million student information system.

A study by the Denver-based consulting firm of Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates has found that the cost to the State of Hawaii of implementing the No Child Left Behind Act is close to \$40 million. As reported in Education Daily, the study, funded by the Council of Chief State School Officers, suggests that the actual costs of NCLB are considerably lower in Hawaii (and in other states), than some state studies (e.g., New York, Ohio) had determined.

Idaho Update - August 2004

Education Technology News reports that Idaho is creating its Idaho Student Information Management Systems (ISIMS). The purpose of ISIMS is to provide common core educational software to users in every district and school in the State. Information on ISIMS can be found at www.jkaf.org/isims/isims.html.

The State of Idaho has awarded a \$4.3 million, multi-year contract to CRI Advantage, Inc. to provide analysis and reporting for Idaho's schools. Funded in part by the Albertson Foundation, the contract is a component of the Idaho Student Information Management System (ISIMS). CRI Advantage's Academic Accelerator will be used to provide Idaho's educators with current information about student and school achievement that will, in turn, allow schools to manage resources and modify instruction to enhance student performance.

Illinois Update - August 2004

As reported in the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Public Schools is planning a major overhaul in the structure of its schools. Based upon experiments and pilot projects conducted over the past decade, the district intends to break up large schools -- particularly those that are not performing well -- into smaller, more specialized units. The plan also calls for many of the City's schools to be operated by independent companies.

A review of testing data has increased substantially the number of Illinois schools making adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act. As reported in Education Daily, 450 more schools were designated as meeting AYP last year -- a decrease from 1,688 to 1,239 in the number of failing schools. Results from the State's Standards Achievement Exam show improvement in the academic performance of minority and low-income students. State officials believe summer and afterschool programs are largely responsible for reducing the achievement gap.

In a surprising move the State legislature discontinued state assessments in writing, social studies, physical development, and fine arts in a move to save \$6.3 million. The K-12 budget for next year will be \$9.1 billion which also includes state funds to continue expanding the number of grades to ensure that all students in grades 3-8 will be tested next year.

As reported in the Chicago Tribune, July 29, Chicago school officials have set aside \$37 million in Title I funds to provide supplemental education services and tutoring to approximately 97,000 of the 270,000 students who are eligible to receive SES services this coming school year. Officials estimate that 80 percent of the students will receive tutoring from teachers in their own schools or about 19,000 will receive SES from one of 28 private companies approved by the State. Even though NCLB prohibits schools identified for improvement from providing SES services, according to Chicago Superintendent Aren Duncan, USED provided an exemption which would allow teachers to provide tutoring. Last year only 9,000 of the approximately 166,000 students eligible to receive tutoring were provided such services.

The Chicago Tribune reports that Statewide test scores released in late July show improved student performance in almost every student category. Minority students in the elementary grades continued to show steady improvement; some of the gains for Hispanic students may be attributed to the use of the adapted IMAGE test rather than the regular ISATs. Test results also showed significant gains by minority students, particularly Hispanic students who, for example, showed a 9.2 percentage point improvement in fifth grade reading.

Scores of Chicago students on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) went up in 74 percent of the district's schools. The greatest increases occurred with third- and fifth-graders.

The Chicago Tribune reports that Illinois has, as part of a plan to reduce dropout rates, to require students to attend school through age 17 rather than 16 as previously required. Under the new plan, the State will implement a better tracking system for dropouts and will enforce truancy sanctions more rigorously. Moreover, in order to graduate, most high school students must pass Illinois' Prairie State Achievement Examination. Among the incentives in the new plan are the availability of alternative regular high school, including adult education classes and job training. Much of the new plan is directed at reducing dropout rates for minority students. State data show that, in 2001-02, Chicago's overall dropout rate was about 18 percent, with the dropout rate for black male students at 25 percent.

Illinois' annual report on special education performance shows that the proportion of the State's students participating in special education has grown to 14.7 percent. Although this represents a slight increase over the prior year, the number of formal disputes has decreased. The report is available through the State's website at www.isbe.state.il.us.

Preliminary results of the State assessment show a total of 694 schools in Illinois that have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for at least two consecutive years. A number of the schools are highly regarded, suburban schools. More than 80 percent of these schools are in the six-county Chicago area including 360 in Chicago itself. More than 450 of the Statewide total will be required to provide extra tutoring for students and 242 are designated for "corrective

action,” meaning significant structural and staffing changes. Twenty-three schools -- nearly all in Chicago -- have failed to make AYP for five years or more and must plan for restructuring.

Two Northern Illinois school districts have decided to reject Federal Title I funds rather than comply with all the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. Consolidated High School District 230 in Orlando Park and Township High School District 211 in Palatine turned down Title I grants of \$136,000 and \$238,000, respectively. The two Illinois districts join six in New England in what may be the start of a nationwide trend. Other districts in Illinois are also considering declining Federal funds rather than complying with the record-keeping, transfer, and tutoring requirements of NCLB.

A number of schools in Southern Illinois have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act for at least two consecutive years. At least 33 of these schools are in the suburban St. Louis area. The following schools (by district) required to offer school choice (transfer) options are:

Alton:	Horace Mann Elementary West Elementary North Middle East Middle Alton High
Belleville:	Belleville East Belleville West
Cahokia:	Wirth-Parks Middle
East St. Louis:	Alta Sita Elementary Brown Elementary Dunbar Elementary Lucas Elementary Nelson Mandela Elementary Park Annex Elementary Wyvelter Younge Middle
Venice:	Venice Elementary

The schools required to offer, in addition to school choice and supplemental education services, are:

Alton:	Lovejoy Elementary
Brooklyn:	Lovejoy Elementary Lovejoy Middle Lovejoy Technical Academy
Cahokia:	Huffman Elementary Lavomier Elementary
East Alton-Wood River:	East Alton-Wood River High
East St. Louis:	Morrison Elementary Harding Elementary Hawthorne Elementary Lincoln Middle East St. Louis High
Madison:	Harris Elementary Blair Elementary

Schools falling under “corrective action” include:

East St. Louis:	Manners Elementary Clark Middle
Madison:	Madison Middle

Indiana Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that 46 percent of Indiana's school districts made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year -- up from 32 percent the prior year. Most of the districts that failed to meet AYP did so because of only one or two student subgroups, usually special education students. On a school basis, more than three-quarters of the State's schools made AYP, about the same as the prior year.

Iowa Update - August 2004

Iowa's State Superintendent, Ted Stilwill, has resigned his position on August 12. He had originally been appointed by Republican Governor Branstad in 1995 and remained after Democrat Tom Vilsack took office in 1998. Iowa will conduct a nationwide search for Stilwill's successor.

The Des Moines Register reports that nine school districts in Iowa and 66 schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last year. A year ago, only 11 schools failed to make AYP. Three elementary schools have missed AYP for three consecutive years and will be required to provide tutoring to its students.

Kansas Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that only 21 schools in Kansas failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year -- down from 30 schools the prior year. Eight of the schools failing to make AYP did so because of reading scores not meeting AYP targets, 16 because of mathematics.

Kentucky Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that, based on preliminary data, more than three-quarters of the high schools in Kentucky made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year. Of the 286 schools that failed to make AYP, 130 are Title I schools. The data also showed that only 19 schools failed to make AYP for more than one year. The final report is expected to be released in October.

Education Daily reports that in 2002-03 Kentucky's Statewide dropout rate is the lowest it has been in ten years -- 3.3 percent (down from 3.9 percent the year before). The State's actual graduation rate declined slightly because, unlike previous State calculations, only students who graduate in four years counted under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Louisiana Update - August 2004

As reported in Education Daily, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of Louisiana's teachers that hold certificates -- from 84 percent two years ago to 90 percent now. Universities in the State produced 200 more qualified teachers this past year than they did the year before and expect to graduate even more this academic year.

As reported in Education Daily, 75 of Louisiana's 1,500 schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for at least two consecutive years under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year -- up from 65 schools the year before. These schools will be required to offer their students the opportunity to transfer to other schools. Twenty-seven of the 75 failing schools are required to rewrite their school improvement plans and one school has been taken over the State.

Maine Update - August 2004

The State of Maine is about to begin the third year of its four-year \$37 million laptop project under which Apple laptop computers are provided to all 34,000 seventh and eighth grade students and their teachers. Preliminary results of a study of the project indicate that the middle school students with laptops scored about the same on a standardized test as those who were not provided the computers. Critics of the project say this is evidence that the project represents “an expensive fad.” Supporters say its too early to judge.

Based upon commitments from at least 47 school districts, the State believes it can go forward with its plan to expand its laptop computer program to the high schools. The district assurances make it extremely likely that the State will reach the cutoff number of 8,400 students and teachers that will trigger the deal by which Apple will rent laptops (along with training and support) for \$300 per year. Governor John Baldacci plans to ask the legislature to fund the program’s expansion to all 119 high schools in Maine.

Maine’s students have continued to perform well on national standardized tests when compared with national averages. But, as reported in the Kennebec Journal, scores on the State assessment -- the Maine Education Assessment -- have not shown significant improvement. This is causing State education officials to question the validity of the test; a year long review of the assessment instrument is being conducted. Officials suggest that the State’s curriculum content is not consistent with the MEA.

Maryland Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that a State audit has estimated that Baltimore city Schools has misspent \$18 million in Federal Title I funds over the past three years. District officials dispute the audit findings, claiming that at least half the totals was properly accounted for. The district must negotiate an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education; if it fails to do so the already-financially-strapped school system faces the prospect of having the State withhold Federal funds this Fall.

Education Week reports that, based on results from last year's Maryland School Assessment, more than half of the third-grade students in financially troubled Baltimore City Schools scored "proficient" in both reading and mathematics, a significant improvement over the prior year. Similar, but less dramatic, improvement was shown by fifth-graders. Baltimore still has 32 schools designated for "restructuring" this coming school year under the No Child Left Behind Act.

As reported in the Baltimore Sun, most Maryland students passed both the reading and mathematic sections of the Maryland School Assessment last school year, but the performance of special education students has caused State officials great concern. Of the 199 Maryland schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress last year, the performance of special education students was the dominant reason for such failure. The State has earmarked an additional \$1 million to help local educators target disabled middle school students and identify their academic weaknesses.

Massachusetts Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that 96 percent of Massachusetts high school seniors have passed the State's exit exams, compared with 95 percent for the Class of 2003. After as many as four tries, 58,756 out of 61,338 seniors have passed both English and mathematics sections of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams. There was considerable variation in pass rates among subgroups with limited-English proficient students having only a 78 percent pass rate.

A report by the Massachusetts State auditor's office indicates that public schools in Massachusetts are losing as much as \$70 million a year in Federal reimbursements for some medical costs. Under the Medicaid school reimbursement program, schools could be reimbursed for half of expenditures for certain medical services provided to special education students from low-income families. Springfield, for example, is missing out on \$3 million in Medicaid reimbursements. The auditors blame complex and outdated billing regulations and bureaucratic inertia for the schools failure to apply for these funds.

Massachusetts recently became the eleventh state to reach an agreement under the class-action lawsuits filed against Microsoft Corporation. Consumers in the State could receive as much as \$34 million in vouchers to be used for the purchase of computer products. Half of the value of any unclaimed vouchers would be given to the State's poorer school districts. Massachusetts' \$34 million settlement is lower than that in many states because of the differences in states' consumer laws.

In late June, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney vetoed a bill passed by the legislature that would have created a moratorium on the establishment of new charter schools. The Governor argued that the charter school freeze was inconsistent with the State's budget which called for \$37 million to reimburse local school districts for money paid to charter schools for educating district students. The legislature is considering whether to override the Governor's veto or to accept his plan to reform the process by which charter schools are funded.

Massachusetts offers portfolio as a means of alternative assessment for students with severe disabilities. Slightly more than 5,000 of the State's 88,000 special education students have submitted portfolios this year; these submissions are currently being judged. Over the past three years, only about six percent of the State's special education students have submitted portfolios and only 2.4 percent of the high school seniors who have submitted portfolios have received their diplomas.

Massachusetts education officials are investigating whether or not many disabled students in private programs and cooperatives were not tested under the mandatory Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The students in question include more than 1,400 students with such disabilities that they cannot get appropriate services in their home schools. If the inquiry shows that these programs deliberately failed to test students, they could be decertified by the State.

Michigan Update - August 2004

As reported under Michigan's Education YES! school report card, the number of elementary and middle schools receiving grades of "A" or "B" under the State's accountability system increased by nearly 70 percent last school year. As reported in Education Daily, 531 schools were rated "C," down from 700 the prior year. A total of 50 schools were rated "D-Alert" calling for particular State scrutiny.

Minnesota Update - August 2004

In mid-July, Minnesota released the results of this past Spring's Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment tests for tenth and eleventh grade students. Overall, there was a reduction in the percentage of students performing as "proficient" in reading and mathematics. The State notes that, because of different scoring methods, the 2003 and 2004 results are not strictly comparable. However, the newly released 2004 scores will be used to determine if schools have made "adequate yearly progress." The State has already been "fined" by the U.S. Education Department for using measures other than standardized tests and will be obliged to use the questionable score differentials between the two years to measure AYP.

Mississippi Update - August 2004

Mississippi school districts have received a total of \$500,000 in distance learning grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Clarion-Ledger reports that the grantees are the Hinds County, Jackson County, and West Tallahatchie school districts. The Hinds County grant -- allocated to the Utica, Bolton, and Edwards schools -- will be spent on computer, video display equipment, distance learning modules, and a mobile computer lab.

As reported in Education Daily (July 20), the America's Choice School Design program, developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy, has been found to be effective in increasing the performance of low-achieving minority students based upon an evaluation by the Independent Consortium for Policy Research and Education at the University of Pennsylvania. The program is being used by almost 550 schools and ensures the alignment of academic standards with instruction and assessment in reading and math, and includes extensive professional development. As a result, The Mississippi Department of Education has decided to cover half the cost of a school adopting the program (\$70,000) using NCLB Title II A Professional Development funds. The remainder comes out of Title I or local resources.

New Hampshire Update - August 2004

A New Hampshire State task force has been meeting for nearly a year in an attempt to establish more rigorous educational standards for New Hampshire students. As reported in the Concord Monitor, the task force expects to have an official draft by October. After public review, a final draft will be sent to a legislative committee. If the new standards are approved by the legislature, the State School Board could vote them into law by late Spring 2005. Among the changes expected to be included in the new standards are universally available kindergarten, elementary classes of no more than 25 students, and three years of high school math (rather than two) required.

As reported in the Concord Monitor, the New Hampshire legislature has passed a revised school funding law that could shift the flow of State aid between school districts. The new law benefits districts with medium wealth, such as Concord, Bow, and Canterbury. Most local school districts based their budgets on the prior law. Districts receiving more State funds than expected can spend it as they see fit. Districts facing cutbacks could call special meetings to adjust their budgets.

New Mexico Update - August 2004

According to Phi Delta Kappan, a proposed law in New Mexico would establish a three-tiered framework for State licensing of paraprofessionals including minimum salaries.

Under New Mexico's laptop learning initiative, nearly 3,000 Hewlett-Packard laptop computers will be given to seventh grade students and teachers across the State starting in September. The contract to conduct professional development for New Mexico educators on technology integration has been awarded to Classroom Connect. The Classroom Connect/Hewlett-Packard partnership is also implementing a laptop program in Michigan.

New York Update - August 2004

The planned State education budget for next year included \$300 million more than last year for New York City alone, less than requested by the Governor or initially proposed by the legislature. The new bill fails, however, to identify additional revenue sources to pay for the increased funding.

The New York State legislature is considering a bill that would greatly ease the standardized testing requirements of New York students. As reported in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, currently high school seniors must pass five State Regents exams to earn a Regents diploma. The proposed bill calls for Regents exam scores to count for 75 percent of a student's grade, with course grades making up the rest. Therefore, students who just fail one of the Regents exams could be granted a diploma if they have done satisfactory work in the course over the year.

The New York Times reports that, this coming school year, New York City will restrict the number of students it will allow to transfer under the No Child Left Behind Act. Last year, the City permitted every student wishing to transfer out of a failing school to do so -- 7,000 students. Even this was only a small fraction of the 300,000 students who were eligible for transfer. With nearly 500 failing schools, the policy resulted in huge transportation costs and overburdened the City's successful schools. This year, the City plans to allow only about 1,000 transfers and will give priority to low-income students with the lowest test scores.

The New York Times reports that New York City schools are taking steps to cut high schools' dropout rates. A series of new programs, costing a total of \$8 million, are designed to create alternative high school programs for students who are at risk of not graduating. The programs will serve a total of 2,000 students most of whom are in five large high schools in the Bronx. These alternative programs are intended to lead students to regular high school diplomas, not GEDs.

New York City Schools has implemented a one-year “lead teacher” pilot program. As reported in Education Daily, the City has created 36 “lead teacher” positions from exemplary teachers who have at least five year’s experience and demonstrated mastery of teaching techniques and content. Earning an additional \$10,000 per year, these teachers will divide their time between regular teaching and mentoring duties. The pilot project will be funded by \$1.6 million from the City school district and a \$200,000 contribution from local community and parent groups.

North Carolina Update - August 2004

State Superintendent Michael Ward will be stepping down as of the end of August for family reasons.

As reported in Education Daily, North Carolina reported a 50 percent increase in the number of schools that made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last year. However, much of the improvement can be attributed to the first-time use of “confidence intervals” to make the school determinations. Using the same methodology as the prior year, the increase would have been closer to 20 percent. The reported results also showed a continued lessening of the achievement gaps across racial and economic lines. The differential between white and black students dropped to 22 percentage points in 2003-04, down from 34 percentage points from 1996-97 when the State’s accountability system was implemented.

North Dakota Update - August 2004

North Dakota has reached an agreement under the class-action lawsuits against Microsoft Corporation. It is the twelfth state to reach an agreement. A total of \$9 million in vouchers for computer products have been made available to North Dakota consumers under the settlement agreement, but only about 500 consumers made claims since the preliminary settlement in November. Half of the value of unclaimed vouchers would go to the State's 43 poorest school districts.

More than 84 percent of North Dakota's 486 schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last school year -- an improvement over 74 percent the year before.

Ohio Update - August 2004

In June, the Ohio Board of Education approved a lowering of the score needed to pass the Ohio Graduation Tests (OGT). As reported in Education Daily, the five-subject OGT is, according to State officials, more rigorous than its predecessors, so even with the lowered requirements, the State believes it is "raising the bar." The Class of 2007 -- this year's tenth graders -- is the first to feel the direct effect of the OGT so next school year is the first test administration that will have consequences for students.

Education Week reports that the Cleveland School Board has cut \$100 million out of the planned \$700 million budget for the 2004-05 school year. The drastic cuts will eliminate 1,000 teaching jobs and will reduce spending for textbooks and other supplies. Only seniors needing the classes to graduate will have access to summer school and transportation options will be curtailed forcing many more students to walk to school.

According to eSchool News, the Columbus school district is in the process of establishing an online high school to begin operation in the Fall. The new Internet-based school is in response to the possibility that the district could lose millions of dollars in State funds to charter schools. Last year, 16 online charter schools were operating in Ohio; they served 22 percent of Ohio's charter school students and received more than \$50 million in State funds. The district has projected that it will lose as much as \$34.6 million -- about \$5,000 per student -- in State funding by 2008. Columbus school officials indicate that the new school would serve about 125 students and would incorporate four community centers for students without Internet access at home and for in-person tutoring.

The Cincinnati Enquirer reports that, according to State assessment results, 49 of the 82 public schools in the Cincinnati school district have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act for two of the last three years. A total of 34 elementary schools will be required to offer transfer options for their students; and 23 low-performing schools must also offer tutoring services for students. The district has been required to set aside

\$2.4 million this year to pay for NCLB's requirements, but is not certain it will have to spend the full amount.

Oklahoma Update - August 2004

According to SEA officials 367 of 1,791 schools failed to make AYP last year as did 198 of 541 school districts.

Education Daily reports that Oklahoma Board of Education plans to fine testing companies if they fail to make corrections of errors in exam materials provided to the State. The State has approved contracts of \$2.8 million for CTB/McGraw-Hill and \$5.6 million for Harcourt, but the test publishers have not agreed to contract provision calling for the fines.

Oregon Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that test results from last school year show that 82 percent and 81 percent of Oregon's third-graders met the State's standards in reading and mathematics, respectively. However, data indicate that student performance declines precipitously in the higher grades. In the fifth grade, 76 percent of students met the reading standard and 78 percent met the math standard. Less than 60 percent of eighth-grade students satisfied the standards in both reading and math. And in the tenth grade, only 50 percent and 43 percent of students met the reading and math standards, respectively.

More than 60 percent of the schools in Oregon -- including more than 77 percent of Title I schools -- made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act during the 2003-04 school year. Three quarters of the State's elementary and middle schools made AYP, but only 23 percent of the high schools did so. Forty-three schools have been identified for improvement for at least two years and will be required to offer their students tutoring and transfer options under the No Child Left Behind Act. Only 44 Title I schools in the State failed to make AYP for the second year, identifying them as "in need of improvement." Ratings for 59 other schools are still pending. Most poor school ratings were a consequence of low test participation or low performance by special education students.

Pennsylvania Update - August 2004

Education Daily reports that 85 percent of Pennsylvania's 2,860 schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last year. Of the schools that missed AYP, 84 missed AYP for the first year, 193 missed AYP for the second consecutive year, 63 failed to make AYP for the third year; one missed AYP for the fourth year, seven failed for the fifth year, and 68 failed to make AYP for the sixth consecutive year.

Francis Barnes has been appointed by Governor Rendell to be the new State school superintendent. Dr. Barnes replaces Vicki Phillips who has taken the position of Superintendent in the Portland (Oregon) school system. Dr. Barnes has been Superintendent of the Palisades School District.

Two years ago, the Pennsylvania Department of Education became responsible for approving and overseeing online charter schools. However, as reported in USA Today, the funding of these "cyberschools" has created considerable controversy. Funding for students enrolled in cyberschools must be paid by the students' home districts, many of which have resisted using their State and local ADA funds to pay tuition to an independent charter school. The State must then deduct the payments owed from the district's State aid.

As reported in Education Daily, the Pennsylvania legislature is considering a bill that would require local school districts to get voter approval before raising property taxes more than the rate of inflation. The State School Boards Association and teachers' union are fighting the proposed measure.

It appears likely that casino gambling, supported strongly by Governor Edward Rendell, will soon be legal in the State. The Governor has proposed that \$1 billion annually of casino revenues be devoted to education, but a similar amount removed from education to property tax relief. Governor Rendell has signed into law a bill that would permit slot machines in the State. The projected \$1 billion revenue from the slots will be used to reduce property taxes and to increase funding for K-12 education by eight percent over the \$7.9 billion funding total for 2004.

The Governor has proposed a \$75 million in additional block grant funding for education in FY 2005.

As part of the Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, 58 new sites in Pennsylvania will receive a total of more than \$18 million in Federal grants for the 2004-05 school year. The three-year grants will be continued for the second and third year contingent upon program performance and the continuance of Federal funding for the program. For more information about specific grantees, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education (Brian Christopher) at (717) 783-9802.

Rhode Island Update - August 2004

Rhode Island has mandated that all students in the State receive an average of 5-1/2 hours of instruction per day. Currently, the requirement only applies to high school students. The requirement will become effective in 2005-06 for low-performing school districts and in 2007-08 for the rest of the State.

Rhode Island is implementing a new after-school program in Providence according to Education Daily. Supported by grants from the Wallace Foundation (\$5 million) and the Fleet Boston Financial Foundation (\$1 million), the public-private Providence After-School Alliance will allow many more Providence students to be served during their out-of-school time.

This year, 40 out of Rhode Island's total of 150 schools have been identified as in need of improvement and must offer students the option of transferring to higher-performing schools. This is a significant increase over the 24 schools that were required to offer choice the prior year.

South Dakota Update - August 2004

As reported in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, test results from last year show mixed results. Reading scores indicate that 77 percent of South Dakota students rated proficient or better -- up from 71 percent the prior year. And in mathematics, the increase was from 59 percent to 71 percent. On the other hand, the number of schools identified for improvement nearly tripled from last year. Of the State's 109 schools so identified, many were on or near Indian reservations. The list also included the eight largest high schools in the State.

Tennessee Update - August 2004

The national emphasis on improving services for struggling students has limited resources allocated to high-performing students. Gifted and talented students in Tennessee are receiving more interest recently in the form of more challenging online courses. The online classes are based on suggestions from a Statewide task force created by the legislature last year.

As reported in Education Daily, more than 80 percent of Tennessee's 1,677 schools achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act. Of the schools that missed AYP, most did so because of one subgroup or factor (e.g., low student achievement or lower than 95 percent test participation rate). A total of 199 schools in the State are considered "high priority" under Tennessee's accountability system.

Texas Update - August 2004

As reported in the Houston Chronicle, nearly half of the charter schools in Texas will not be graded this year. Because of budget cuts in the Texas Education Agency, schools which declare themselves as “alternative” schools -- 89 out of 185 charter schools in the State -- will not be graded until next year. Most of the State’s 7,700 regular schools will be graded this Fall. In past ratings, charter schools have fared poorly with 44 percent grading at the lowest category in 2002.

In July, Texas high school juniors who failed a portion of the TAKS exit-level exam were given the chance to retake the test. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reports that, although students must pass all four sections -- reading, mathematics, social studies, and science -- to graduate, the science portion has proven to be the toughest by far. In Fort Worth, for example, nearly 25 percent failed the TAKS science component. These results, combined with a recent study questioning the efficacy of traditional textbook-based science instruction, is likely to lead to a greater emphasis on inquiry experiment-based science.

Education Daily reports that, based on 2002-03 data, the Texas Education Agency has lifted the probation imposed on the Houston school district last year because of the under-reporting of dropout rates in 2000-01. In that year, the City omitted 3,000 students from the dropout list, reporting a districtwide dropout rate of 1.5 percent rather than a more realistic 54 percent. Houston’s accreditation will be reassessed in September when the State releases its analysis of data from the 2003-04 school year.

A State District Court in Austin is considering the legality of the Texas school finance system. According to the Dallas News, much of the case will hinge on the State’s reported dropout rates. Data from the Texas Education Association show a Statewide dropout rate of about five percent between the ninth and twelfth grades. The data do not square with enrollment reports showing 360,000 ninth graders in the 1999-2000 school year and only 243,000 seniors graduating in 2003, a dropout rate of closer to 30 percent.

Utah Update - August 2004

The Provo Daily Herald reports that three-quarters of Utah's schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last year. Out of a total of 784 K-12 schools in the State, 538 made AYP. About 85 schools failed because they did not achieve the required 95 percent student participation rate. Almost every high school in the State was on the list of schools failing to make AYP.

Vermont Update - August 2004

Vermont has begun to implement its plan to establish a Statewide electronic data warehouse consolidating school and student data from every district in the State. According to the Brattleboro Reformer, the development activity is being led by the Vermont Data Consortium representing 20 of the State's 60 school districts (called supervisory unions). The stated purpose of the data warehouse is to deliver "districtwide student information warehousing, data analysis tools, and training for data-driven decision-making."

Virginia Update - August 2004

Next Fall Virginia will implement a “virtual school” offering 13 Advanced Placement courses to high school students. Intended to provide AP classes to students in the more rural areas of the State, the virtual school will also allow students to earn college credits while still in high school. The State will reimburse school districts for the tuition and fees for the students enrolled in the AP virtual school.

In his speech before the recent annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States, Virginia Governor Mark Warner highlighted a number of initiatives under way in the state demonstrating how technology can be used to implement NCLB provisions, including:

- Online tutorials developed for students to use in summer remediation academies and other testing opportunities and they are also used for sharing of best practices between school districts;
- Pairing high-performing districts with low-performing districts;
- The creation of databases to track and monitor teacher effectiveness which also allows the evaluation of teacher preparation institutions based upon performance of students under its graduates;
- The creation of a cadre of “turnaround specialists” which will help create school climates conducive to learning and increase student achievement.

As reported in the Richmond Times Dispatch, Governor Warner is pushing to increase the number of citizens over 18 years of age who get GED diplomas. The State estimates that there are more than one million Virginians over 18 without high school diplomas. Currently, about 10,000 earn GED diplomas each year. The Governor’s “fast-track” program seeks to double that number with 90-day program of classes and test preparation. The program is now available in Hampton, Virginia Beach, Martinsville, Russell County, and Prince William County. Education officials hope to expand the program Statewide. The Governor’s program also calls for more GED testing sites to cut down on waiting time and employer-sponsored GED classes.

Education Daily reports that close to two-thirds of the schools in Virginia made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act last year. A total of 507 failed to make

AYP and, of those, 170 missed only one objective. Overall, however, only 29 percent of the State's 132 school districts made AYP. Statewide, 79 percent of students passed the reading assessment, 82 percent passed mathematics, and 84 percent passed science.

Washington Update - August 2004

There will be a referendum on the November ballot asking the electorate to repeal the charter school law passed in March. The Seattle Times reports that a coalition of opponents of charter schools -- including the State's largest teachers union -- has gathered enough signatures to require the referendum. The existing charter school law is expected to be put on hold until the result of the November vote is determined. This means new charter schools must wait until at least the 2005-06 school year to begin operation.

As reported in The Seattle Times, 436 schools and 125 school districts in Washington failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) last year under the No Child Left Behind Act. Changes in Federal accountability rules have allowed schools and districts more time to improve student performance.

Wyoming Update - August 2004

As reported in Education Technology News, Statewide in Wyoming, 86 percent of the schools and 56 percent of the school districts made adequate yearly progress (AYP) last year. Nearly 94 percent of primary schools reached AYP, compared with 82 percent of middle schools and 70 percent of high schools.