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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 31, 2004
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke
SUBJ: Washington Update Items: Calls for Abolishing Textbook Adoption Process, Essential Elements for Effective Adolescent Literacy Initiatives, and Related Items

The current TechMIS issue includes a range of Washington Update items which should be of high interest and have direct implications for many TechMIS subscribers. These include:

- A recommendation from the conservative Fordham Foundation which calls for abolishing the textbook adoption process currently used in 22 states; this represents the first time a conservative group has strongly urged abolishing textbook adoption, which, if implemented, could create opportunities for many smaller publishers.
- Highlights from the Association of American Publishers' first English Language Learners Summit with some direct implications for publishers.
- New Council of Great City Schools survey which finds Federal Title III English Language Acquisition Funding increased almost 110 Percent among its member districts after passage of NCLB and about 20 Percent of Title III Funds are used to purchase or develop instructional materials and technology.
- While there exists confusion regarding why E-Rate Funding commitment letters have been "frozen," the negative impact on districts now creates a market "paralysis" for many software publishers; advocates from many quarters are rallying to exempt E-Rate from Federal laws which the White House says SLD/USAC now violates.

- In its first comprehensive analysis of student achievement under NCLB, the non-partisan, highly-regarded Education Trust finds that, among states, student achievement scores move in the right direction but the pace of improvement is too slow. Another recent survey reaches opposite findings as the two reports have become enmeshed in election year politics, although Education Trust's findings are likely to be taken into account in lame duck session debates.
- Candidate Kerry advisor argues during an Education Week webcast that NCLB isn't working as it should because it hasn't been funded as promised and implemented with "common sense;" specific "fixes" to NCLB are however, difficult to discern in comments from the Kerry camp.
- Our analysis of the results of the AEP survey on the impact of scientifically-based research provisions on supplemental publishers suggests that the major impact is being felt in the Reading First program, while the impact in Title I and Math and Science Partnerships programs has been much less, although more and more focus on SBR in these areas is likely to occur in the future.
- A followup study of 21st Century Community Learning Centers conducted by Mathematica Policy finds few statistically significant differences between "treatment" and "comparison" groups. Because of continuing flaws in the study research design, these negative findings are not likely to impact future funding for Federal afterschool programs.
- As suggested in previous TechMIS Washington Updates, the number of large districts identified for improvement has increased significantly and they are being forced to consider alternatives to providing supplemental education services themselves. Firms wishing to "partner" with such districts should seek opportunities being created by alternatives districts are considering rather than allowing 20 percent of their funds to go to independent SES providers.
- USED provides guidance on state and district allocation of Title I professional development earmarks including the 10 percent for schools in a district identified for improvement, which allows Title I district officials to allocate such professional development earmarks to "greatest needs," including those outside of schools identified for improvement.
- A new report written by several authors of the National Reading Council Report (1999) which influenced Reading First, identifies 15 essential elements of effective adolescent literacy programs, but admits little evidence exists regarding how to combine and sequence them for effective strategies; this report entitled Reading Next, lays a foundation for middle and secondary school reform initiatives for struggling readers.
- A new study by the National Center on Education Outcomes finds out-of-level testing for special needs students has increased over the last few years even

though USED policy under NCLB disallows state use of out-of-level or out-of-grade level testing for determining AYP; the expansion of such policies is likely to increase in the form of different disguises and classifications.

Over the next 30 days, TechMIS subscribers should expect to receive some Special Alerts regarding policies which are likely to be affected by the election results and areas to be addressed during the November lame duck session, such as the IDEA reauthorization and the FY 2005 appropriations. If anyone has questions please contact me directly.