

**National Title I Director, Dr. Joseph Johnson, Resigns: Likely
Bad News for Firms Selling to the
Title I Market Niche**

A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)
SPECIALALERT

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Under pressures from higher levels within USED and from the White House, Dr. Joseph Johnson, who has been one of the few capable USED appointments who has not only the relevant experience but also respect of the Title I community, announced on May 29 his resignation. He will be missed by the Title community and also by vendors who sell products to Title I. Regarding the latter, his departure will create even more uncertainty at the state and hence the district level because of the lack of USED guidance. In response to a crying need, he sent a letter to the Chief State School Officers on April 28 clarifying his interpretation of the paraprofessional problem limited the new two-year college requirements only to paraprofessionals who were directly involved in instruction; his intent was to jumpstart districts to come up with budgets for Title I programs next year. As reported in the March and April TechMIS reports, in presentations before the Council of Great City Schools and NAFEPA he emphasized that districts should take into account the intent of No Child Left Behind legislation and make decisions accordingly to increase the probability of improving student academic achievement rather than relying on strict interpretation of what is on paper. In doing so, he told Title I directors "Don't ask too many questions, just do it." Within the USED, Dr. Johnson was the only reasonable, rational, and experienced person who could ensure the implementation of many No Child Left Behind Title I provisions in a reasonable and realistic time frame. As we predicted, either Dr. Johnson or hardline officials in USED would soon depart.

While it will be impossible to find a replacement with the experience, capabilities, and respect of Dr.

Johnson, his replacement is likely to be a hardliner, handpicked by the White House, or the Reid Lyon team. Several interpretations related to technology which Dr. Johnson had agreed to ensure inclusion in forthcoming regulations, included: (a) allowing online tutoring as a supplemental service for three-year targeted schools; (b) advising states that approved “supplemental services” could include those which were demonstrated to be effective by districts but not requiring them to meet the rigorous criteria of scientifically-based research; (c) delimiting the paraprofessional qualifications only to paraprofessionals who are directly involved in instruction which would “free up” an enormous amount of money otherwise spent on recruiting higher qualified aides across the board; and (d) limiting the rigorous application of scientifically-based research only to Early Childhood reading programs. The biggest impact will be the lack of adequate guidance to states and districts which will postpone actual implementation of Title I provisions in many states to even a greater extent than the lack of much action thus far by many states. Ironically, to the extent that the White House was instrumental in forcing his resignation, Bush advisors may have removed the one individual who perhaps could have persuaded and cajoled districts to implement most of the major provisions related to the intent of the new law. As a result, education could become the albatross around the neck of the President in 2004 presidential election.