
Suggested Approaches in Targeting Schools Targeted for Improvement Under Title I

The most recent count of Title I schools that have been targeted for improvement, currently at more than 7,100, will likely continue to increase as 2001-02 state assessment data is analyzed and districts are notified by SEAs. Toward the end of June USED released the state-by-state number of schools that were targeted as the result of 2000-01 assessments. As reported in Education Week, July 10, some SEA officials in states such as Ohio, were upset that USED released old data, released the number of targeted schools based upon relatively old test data. The schools identified thus far by Mailings Clearinghouse, for the most part, have been submitted at its request by districts. Those schools targeted for improvement for two years by September have to allocate ten percent of their Title I budgets for staff development, and must offer a parent the option of having their child transferred to another school with Title I district funds paying for the transportation (up to a maximum of 10-15 percent). Schools targeted for improvement for three consecutive years must continue offering professional development (for a minimum of five percent of the Title I budget) and must offer parents not only the options to have their child transferred to another school but also to receive supplemental afterschool services from a provider that has been approved by the state. The district itself could create an afterschool program or provide an online supplemental service if the parents so choose, as long as it has been approved by the SEA.

Below we outline a number of suggested approaches which depend upon what the state is planning to do regarding approved lists and the types of products and services which would qualify as a “supplemental service.”

The first step is to select the specific supplemental products or services which are most likely to meet the needs of students in targeted schools and be approved by the state. Clearly, one type of such service would be professional development for schools targeted for improvement for two years. In addition to the 10 percent of the schools' Title I budgets which must be devoted to staff development, states may also require districts to allocate a large portion of their Title V funds to support training or supplemental services in targeted schools. Another type of service could be online tutoring or assessment and remedial instruction as the new guidance clearly allows (and even encourages) the use of distance learning. Another type of product would be supplemental materials which have been proven to be effective based upon "relevant research." None of the services or products have to meet the more rigorous criteria of "scientifically-based research."

The second step is to decide what states to target. According to the most recent count from Mailings Clearinghouse, the following states have the indicated the number of targeted schools located in reporting districts.

California - 1,158 in 306 districts

New Jersey - 608 in 180 districts

Georgia - 627 in 166 districts

Ohio - 564 in 254 districts

Illinois - 604 in 73 districts

Pennsylvania - 257 in 32 districts

For the most part, in those states where targeted schools are concentrated in a small number of districts, district-level Title I coordinators will likely be more decision-makers than in states such as Iowa which has 188 targeted schools in slightly over 100 districts. In Iowa, the likely contact would be the principal in the targeted school, again depending upon the service or product being proposed.

The third step is to get on the state's approved list. A firm with a product which has evidence from a third-party evaluation regarding its effectiveness (especially if it is used

by other districts in the state), should approach the SEA Title I office or be prepared to respond to RFPs which some states are using to get vendor responses. Some states such as Virginia and New Jersey solicit informal nominations by districts with effective Title I programs on effective products and services as the basis for developing their approved list. One suggestion would be to contact one or more users of such products and services within a district (or in another district) and ask them to nominate the vendor's products or services to be included on the approved list. Many SEAs will require that the evidence provided must come from a user in the state and that the remedial program must be clearly aligned with state standards or the state assessment instrument.

The next step is how to propose and price the service. For example, if the product is an online assessment and tutoring system which is designed to remediate low-performing students, a marketer could: (a) propose to the district Title I coordinator that the central office -- or one or more high-performing schools -- provide the supplemental service to the targeted school which would likely result in a lesser amount of Title I funds going outside the district to an onsite tutoring program vendor; and (b) propose to a high-performing district which is currently a customer to enter into contractual arrangements with targeted schools in other districts thus ensuring that most of the funding stays within the Title I "community," even though in another district.

If a firm has a supplemental product and provides related staff development, then it should propose a comprehensive supplemental service solution very similar to the solution being used by an existing Title I program within the state. Again, nomination by a using district is more likely to get SEA attention than a "cold call" from the vendor.

Another approach might be to team with another supplemental publishing vendor that has a complimentary product or to even approach one of the vendors who provide supplemental services and tutoring, such as Edison Schools, Inc., Sylvan Learning, and other "school takeover" firms. (See also following item on non-public schools.)

If any TechMIS subscriber has specific questions, please contact Charles Blaschke directly. Those interested in more information on the list of targeted schools for improvement should contact Mary English at Mailings Clearinghouse, 800/776-6373.

Supreme Court Voucher Decision Likely to Spur State Legislation Next Year While Major Immediate Impact Will Increase Significantly Participation in Non-Public Schools in Providing Supplement Services Under New ESEA

The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that the Cleveland Voucher Program is constitutional will likely accelerate efforts on the part of state legislatures to propose voucher and other choice initiatives next year; however, the most immediate impact will be to confirm the constitutionality of faith-based organizations providing “supplemental services” to Title I schools targeted for improvement for three consecutive years and for such organizations who also apply directly for 21st Century Community Learning Center grants. While the new ESEA certainly allows such participation for faith-based organizations, many observers predicted that lawsuits would be filed by groups such as ACLU and People for the American Way, the moment that parochial schools, for example, would be paid directly for tutoring Title I students under new choice options.

Both advocates and proponents of vouchers feel that state efforts will be underway next year in many states, but particularly in Colorado, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. According to General Counsel for People for the American Way, which opposes vouchers, about one-third of the states have constitutions that expressly prohibit paying state money to religious organizations, while another third have permissive language and the other third are neutral as far as their state constitutions are concerned. The largest state-approved voucher programs involving secular schools are Milwaukee and the Florida A+ programs. One subtle but could be significant impact of the court’s decision

which has not been covered in the press, is that the probability that parents of special education students will be given the option of obtaining vouchers for a portion of the cost of special education for their child, and having the child transfer to a nonpublic school or entity. This has been one of the major growth areas in the Florida state voucher program thus far.

Parochial school participation in Title I has been influenced significantly by U.S. Supreme Court decisions and then reversals. In the 1980s in the *Agular v Felton* case, the Supreme Court ruled that Title I eligible students who are enrolled in parochial schools are eligible to receive the same amount and quality of services that Title I provides for Title I students in the same public school attendance area. However, Title I teachers could not go to parochial schools to provide such remedial supplemental services. This resulted in a large number of districts providing computer-based instruction in nonpublic schools for Title I eligible students under the supervision of a computer “technician” which merely facilitated the student’s use of the CAI configurations. Then in the 1990s the Supreme Court overruled the *Agular v Felton* case once again allowing Title I teachers to provide remedial instruction for Title I eligible students in parochial schools for one or two hours a day. The new ESEA legislation and the recent court decision on vouchers now allows teachers in parochial schools which provide supplemental services (including tutoring) as a choice option to provide such instruction directly to the transferred Title I students with Title I funds paid to the nonpublic school for such services.

In light of the above, one of the immediate implications for vendors of products and services which could be classified as being “supplemental,” would be to target those parochial schools (hopefully existing customers) located in close proximity to Title I schools which have been targeted for improvement. These parochial schools could purchase their products and then use them in providing such services. Such payments for purchases will likely have to be extended over time and the parochial schools may wish

to have the vendor share some of the accountability burden as performance agreements have to be negotiated between the school, the parent, and the parochial school providing such services that student achievement goals will be met. The priority one parochial schools to target would be those located in districts with relatively high numbers of schools that have been targeted for improvement for three consecutive years.

New ESEA Teacher Quality Requirement Provisions are Likely to Force SEAs and Districts to Transfer Funds Out of Technology Block Grant/Title IID

Recent USED state reports and publication of new Title II, Part A “Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Nonregulatory Guidance,” strongly suggest that a large percentage of the 50 percent transferable formula core technology (Title II D) funds will be reallocated to meet the new teacher quality provisions, especially in Title I schoolwide programs (see related [Washington Update](#) item). The amount of funding in FY 2002 for technology was reduced from \$830 million to \$700 million. Moreover, under the transferability provisions, 50 percent of the formula portion (or approximately 25 percent of the 700 million) could be reallocated to other ESEA titles, including Title IIA (Teacher Quality). Several recent developments suggest this is likely to occur.

On June 7, USED released nonregulatory draft guidance on Title II Part A (Improving Teacher Quality) state grants. On Question A4 regarding whether Title IIA funds could be used to supplant State and local funds, the guidance states that these funds “must supplement and cannot supplant state and local funds that, in the absence of the program, they would use to support authorized activities.” However, in the next Question, it states, “However, in certain instances, an SEA or LEA may be able to overcome the presumption that supplanting will result if Title IIA, Part A funds are used for a State-mandated program or activity. In order to make such a case, the SEA or LEA should have available written documentation (e.g., budget information, planning documents, or

other materials) demonstrating that it would not have the resources to meet State mandates if it did not have access to Title II, Part A funds. If the agency can produce that documentation, the agency will have made a sufficient case that the activities it will fund under Title II, Part A are supplemental, even though some of them are mandated by the State.” This provision invites state legislatures to provide new mandates for teacher licensure, assessments, etc. without providing the necessary funding, forcing districts to use Title IIA funds to implement such “unfunded mandates.” As noted in the last round of TechMIS state profile updates, due to revenue shortfalls in more than forty states, summer school and professional development have been two areas where mid-year budget cuts have occurred this year and are likely to be even further reduced next year in terms of state funding.

In another development, USED released, in early June, a report which found that, in the 1999-2000 school year, 58 and 68 percent of students were taught by middle grade teachers that had neither a major nor a certification in English/reading or mathematics, respectively. The percentage of students taught by middle school teachers with neither a major nor certification in physical science was 93 percent. During the first Annual Conference on Teacher Quality in Washington, D.C. on June 11 and 12, Secretary Paige stated “too many teachers are not qualified in the subject they are teaching.... Research confirms that the most effective teachers are those who are smart and who know what they’re teaching inside and out.” The USED study also found that only 23 states require middle school teachers to have licensure in subject areas. It is likely that more state legislatures will require teachers to pass subject matter or content area tests, the cost of which can be funded under Title IIA as noted earlier. In the context of recommending that states require prospective teachers to pass rigorous exams in the subject areas they plan to teach, Secretary Paige also called for greater use of alternative certification, indicating that streamlined programs (e.g., Teach for America) can provide teaching skills as well as lengthy programs. As reported in Education Daily, June 12, Bob Chase, President of the National Education Association disagreed by stating, “Claims that

inexperienced college graduates can be as successful as formally trained teachers are insulting and demeaning to qualified members of the teaching profession. Instead of helping to professionalize teaching, the Secretary's proposal has demeaned it by promoting teaching as volunteer work."

During the conference, Secretary Paige also cited statistics pointing out a "teacher quality divide" between high-poverty and low-poverty schools as follows: 43 percent of math teachers in high-poverty schools have neither majored nor minored in math-related fields, compared to 27 percent of middle-class schools; 25 percent of disadvantaged children are taught English by teachers who don't have a degree in English compared to only 11 percent of middle class children. One of the new provisions in both Title II and Title I is that districts must develop a plan and each year report on reducing the teacher "quality gap" between high-poverty and other schools. To do so, many districts are providing signing bonuses and other financial incentives to encourage high-quality teachers to transfer to high-poverty schools. In addition, signing bonuses and other financial incentives will likely be required to ensure that all newly-hired teachers or recently retired teachers who decide to re-enter the profession, meet the requirements of a "highly qualified teacher" beginning this September.

The FY 2002 budget calls for a \$300 million increase in total funding for teacher quality. However, most of the increase will be more than absorbed by allowing or requiring districts to use Title II, Part A funds to serve many more teachers. For example, after consultation with nonpublic schools, staff training provided to public school teachers must also be made available for private school teachers; and, much greater emphasis under the new ESEA will be placed upon providing training for parents to participate actively in the education of their child. Unlike the predecessor Class Size Reduction and Eisenhower Professional Development initiatives, Title II funds can now be used to cover the cost of principals and teachers taking courses for advanced degrees.

Adding fuel to the fire of making teacher qualifications a political issue at the state level are recent reports recently submitted by each state as required by a new teacher quality provision in the Higher Education Act passed two years ago. One highly critical assessment of state reporting was just published by the nonpartisan Education Trust which noted that some states clearly worked hard to meet the spirit of the Law by providing comprehensible information. The report also noted: “states provided data often in overwhelming quantity but much of the reporting was inconsistent, incomplete and uttering incomprehensible.” For example, across all states only one of 1,300 teacher colleges was labeled as low-performing.

Even though many groups are counting on the \$2.85 billion under Title IIA, Teacher Quality, to be used for professional development, it is more likely that the majority of these funds next year will be used for recruitment, signing bonuses and other related activities. As we noted on several occasions in previous TechMIS reports, most of the demand for professional development will be in Title I schools which have been targeted for improvement for two or more consecutive years because ten percent of their school Title I budget must be allocated for professional development. In addition, many states will require Title V funds allocated to districts to also be used for professional development in Title I targeted schools. For a summary of the report submitted by states as required by Congress, go to www.edtrust.org.

Final USED Regulations on Consolidated State Plans Deals Technology Another Blow and Opens the Door Wider for Districts and States to Use Federal ESEA Funds to Supplant State and Local Funds Which Were Recently Cut

On May 22, USED published final regulations which states must follow when submitting consolidated plans for implementation of all ESEA titles -- with the exception of Reading First. When the draft regulations became available earlier this year, many state

technology directors' major concern was that the SEA office which would take the lead role would be the Title I office, not the technology office. The final regulations create an even greater concern. One of the four initial indicators under the goal that all students will reach proficiency or better standards by 2012, has been removed --- namely "the percentage of students that meet or exceed state standards for student literacy in technology."

By deleting the indicator relating to students being proficient in technology literacy, states do not have to report annually on progress being made in this area even though the new ESEA is very explicit on this indicator. In addition to the technology literacy indicator, other indicators that were removed were: the percentage of teachers qualified to use technology in the classroom; and the percentage of students with access to network computers. According to Title I Reports, "In each case USED agreed with criticism that these indicators are not related directly enough to achievement and that it will be difficult to collect reliable and useful data." In light of state budget deficits, an even greater amount of the 50 percent transferability of formula technology funds under Title II D will likely be transferred out of technology into other areas such as Title I and Title V. As noted earlier, transfers into Title I schoolwide programs require no separate accounting; hence, teachers paid last year by local funds could now be designated as Title I teachers and be paid out of Title I funds. Under Title V, which has been a block grant since it was created in 1982, such funds can be used to purchase just about any product or service that relates to innovation and school reform.

In addition, the final regulations include a new requirement that states must specify what actions will be taken to remove state fiscal and accounting barriers to allow schoolwide programs to take "complete advantage" of the flexibility to commingle Federal and other funds without having to report separately how such funds are spent. To many states and districts, this is an open invitation to transfer up to 50 percent of all ESEA titles except Title I into Title I schoolwide programs, allowing them to legally violate the 30-year-old

traditional Federal requirement of using Federal funds to supplement and not supplant state and local funds. The good news is that more Federal funds will be allocated to existing and new Title I schoolwide programs which can be used to purchase appropriate technology-based products and services.

Several TURNKEY surveys over the last five years found that SEAs are one of the major problems confronting districts that want to commingle Title I with other Federal funds, including IDEA (which has been allowed under the Law since 1997), by requiring LEAs to maintain records of expenditures made by or on behalf of schoolwide programs on a program-by-program basis, including funds used to provide services to specific groups of students. Reflecting the findings from two GAO reports in the late 1990s, the final regulations state, “These procedures have acted as the very barriers that have prevented schools from exercising the flexibility that they were intended to have and, we believe, have thereby inhibited the ability of school administrators and teachers in these schools to use Title I, Part A schoolwide authority to increase achievement of all students in the school.” The estimated number of schoolwide programs in Title I during the last school year was approximately 18,000. Next school year the number of eligible schools designated as schoolwide programs could be well over 30,000 as the threshold poverty level to qualify for such a status will drop from 50 percent to 40 percent poverty enrollment. Even more so than in the past, Title I schoolwide programs should be priority one targets for firms whose products are designed to teach basic skills, provide remediation, and provide online assessment and specific intervention instructional strategies.

One other area in which the final regulations will help generate a higher demand is programs and services which help limited-English-proficient students acquire English language skills and effective ways to assess such progress; over 60 percent of LEP students are enrolled in Title I schoolwide programs. The law is very clear that limited-English-proficient students must be provided English language acquisition skill

development and that such progress be reported annually. The final regulations also require that states report annually on the percent of LEP students who are at or above proficient levels in reading and math on state assessments. When states submit their consolidated plans in 2003, they must include: plans for providing assessments in language other than English; implementing these assessments of English language proficiency in 2002-2003 school year; and a timeline for establishing annual achievement objectives which cover state reading and math content standards. English language acquisition skills, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and comprehension, must be addressed in any instrument developed or selected by the state.

Because the final regulations were not published until May 22 with state applications due 20 days later, many states did not have enough time to make the necessary changes and/or will have to revise portions of the state plan previously submitted under the draft regulations.

The final regulations on consolidated plans were published in the Federal Register May 22, 2002 and are available at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ESEA/regsandguidance.

Parents of Special Education Students Advice to Congress: Don't Overhaul IDEA, Just Tinker With Perceived Limited Problems and Uneven Implementation at the District and School Level

A new report by the nonpartisan Public Agenda, entitled "When It's Your Own Child: A Report on Special Education From the Families Who Use It," has found that two-thirds of parents rated their local special education program "good" or "excellent." On the other hand, most responding parents perceived that students with behavioral problems, not special needs, were "sometimes" placed in special education. Most also say that some children in special education would not need such programs if they had gotten help earlier. In light of the current reauthorization process for IDEA, most special education

students' parents feel that such programs work well especially when a child's disability is identified early and they are placed in the program. Another complaint by the majority of responding parents was that information about special education provided by the school is hard to come by. With the current reauthorization process for IDEA underway, one can infer from the report's findings that Congress would be advised to address some of the perceived implementation problems without overhauling the overall IDEA framework.

Some of the other findings were surprising. When asked which would do more to improve special education, "more money" or "better programs," the responses were almost split. As the report states, "Given the conventional wisdom that parents always want more money spent on their school services their own child uses, this mixed result qualifies as downright surprising." Almost three-fourths of parents reported that their child spends most of the school day in a regular classroom, with almost 60 percent of respondents believing that mainstreaming helps children learn. The report notes that the social aspects of mainstreaming (e.g., learning how to get along with others, making friends, playing schoolyard games) is as important as learning. Another surprising finding was that only eight percent of parents picked "raising academic expectations" as the biggest issue in their child's special education program. A third indicated that the focus "should be helping students sooner," while 30 percent would put a greater emphasis on "cutting bureaucracy and red tape" in order to improve the program. Social interactions, the report notes, "can be just as important to parents, if not more so, than academics." On the other hand, over 80 percent of parents expect their child to receive a standard diploma with over 80 percent indicating that their child should be required to take the same state assessment (or the same assessment with special accommodations). Less than five percent felt their child should be excused from the test.

The report cites numerous examples of the minority of critics of local special education programs and reported that approximately 16 percent of parents said they had considered

a lawsuit as the result of a school not placing their child in special programs. One possible explanation for this relatively small number of disgruntled parents is that only ten percent indicated that they were very familiar with current IDEA. Only 29 percent feel that what happened in special education is because of the Federal government and related laws, while 31 percent and 12 percent, respectively, felt the Federal government has only a small role or virtually no role to place in what happens in special education.

Efforts are currently underway through the implementation of the new ESEA to address several of the perceived IDEA problems. Even though over 60 percent of parents said their child's disability was identified before kindergarten or first grade, the new K-3 Reading First initiative is designed to reduce the number of students placed in special education by providing early diagnosis and assessment to identify whether the student has a learning or related disability, or has a reading problem. While the new legislation requires that special education students take the same state assessments as other students, it provides financial incentives to states to ensure that appropriate reasonable accommodations are built into state assessments as an ongoing process. On the other hand, at least one of the primary goals of the new No Child Left Behind law, is to increase the number of special education students who achieve proficiency or better performance levels on state assessments. While this is important to some parents, of equal importance is the need for special education programs to foster social interaction with other children and to prepare them for life in the real world after high school. As noted in the TechMIS Washington Update (April 2002), former Assistant Secretary for Special Education, Tom Hehir in recent testimony argued that only moderate changes be made in the law, keeping the basic framework intact and giving the states and districts the time they need to implement the 1997 IDEA regulations for which were not finalized until two years later. For a copy of the report go to www.publicagenda.org/specials/specialed/specialed.htm.

NSBA Survey Finds Over 50 Percent of Districts Report Students Provide Technical Support for Technology Used in the District

A new report from the National School Boards Association has found that 54 percent of responding districts (which constituted a representative sample), reported that students are providing technical support for technology within their district, and in many cases students provide the majority of technology support. In over 40 percent of the districts, students troubleshoot hardware, software, and infrastructure problems. In one-third of the districts, students provide technical maintenance. As the report states, “Students seem to be putting their technical prowess to good use in schools which may have insufficient time or talent or staff for technical support. In the process, they (the students) gain experience and skills through performing hands-on, authentic learning tasks, tutoring others, and contributing to effective and creative use of school technology.”

During the 1980s, the National Science Foundation supported a major demonstration project in Issaquah, Washington, whereby high school students provided 80-90 percent of the development and support for technology used for both instructional and administrative purposes in the district. During the 1990s, firms such as Novell, Cisco, and Microsoft actively promoted and then supported training efforts, provided through districts to students, to do first-line troubleshooting, etc. In some states, such as Kentucky, student training for technical support and troubleshooting was provided in all medium to large districts. One of the unintended consequences of such training in certain districts such as Orleans Parish, Louisiana, was that technology trained students dropped out of school at the 11th grade to take high-paying industry jobs, finishing their high school diploma or GED equivalent at night or through JTPA programs.

About 80 percent of the respondents reported that the primary instructional use of the Internet is for research, including teachers’ research for their lessons. Somewhat surprisingly, Internet use in subject areas is primarily for history/social studies (76 percent) and science (58 percent). This finding suggests that Internet use in Title I

programs continues to lag behind K-12 generally, although the number of multimedia computers per pupil in Title I programs is the same and in some districts exceeds the numbers in K-12.

Nearly half of district respondents indicate that formal technology training is provided to all students and over 30 percent offer computers to families at free or reduced prices. The major barrier to equity associated with the digital divide is funding, as reported by 70 percent of large districts. Sixteen percent of districts reported a major barrier is lack of time for staff training in providing school access to the Internet. In 71 percent of the districts, the e-Rate program was felt to be instrumental in helping bridge the digital divide.

As for the future, almost 30 percent of respondents felt that at least one in five students will receive a substantial portion (i.e., one-third or more) of their instruction online in three years. The study also found that decisions on technology policies and budget allocations are generally centralized with superintendents (42 percent), school boards (38 percent), and technology directors (18 percent) making the final decisions on technology purchases and Internet use. Parents are three times more influential in large districts than in small districts in terms of having a “say so” in technology-based products and services. The following technology solutions appear to be in highest demand: (a) standards-based resources (64 percent); (b) online assessment and test preparation (59 percent); (c) standards-based report cards (50 percent); and (d) web-based portfolios (48 percent).

Think Tank Report Ranks States on Progress Toward Utilization of Digital Technologies

A recent report from The Progress & Freedom Foundation rated each of the states with regard to their effective use of technology in a range of state functions, including

education (K-12 and higher education). The Digital State 2001 is the fourth in a series which charts the technology-related progress of the states.

The report cites Illinois, South Dakota, and Utah at the top of the list and mentioned Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, and Minnesota as showing the greatest improvement in the last year. The report showed that more than 80 percent of the states maintain electronic student records for K-12 students, including individual academic performance data.

Forty of the fifty states recorded education scores of 70 or above on the report's scale of 0 to 100. Four states -- Oklahoma, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wyoming -- did not provide sufficient data for analysis. The seven reporting states that were given the lower education scores were Arkansas (53), New Mexico (53), Mississippi (60), Missouri (60), New Hampshire (60), West Virginia (60), and Rhode Island (67).

The report cites activities in a number of states as being particularly significant:

- Illinois was ranked the highest of all states across all categories as well as in education. The Illinois Virtual High School was cited in the report as the best education practice. The IVHS opened its virtual doors in January 2001 and, by the end of 2001, providing online instruction through 69 full-semester courses and ten advanced placement review programs. During 2001, the IVHS also provided online staff development for 65 teachers.
- Also highly ranked, Pennsylvania maintains a great deal of education information, including school profiles which allow comparisons across schools on achievement and budgetary data.
- Minnesota has established a web site called CLASS which maintains data on finances, student demographics, assessment results, and teacher status. CLASS also enables State education officials to analyze school resource data as they relate to academic achievement at the school level.
- Washington State has an online Education Profile System that contains data on all schools and school districts in the state.

More Participants in Remedial Programs in Colleges and Universities Suggest Good Opportunities, Especially in Two-Year Colleges

The percent of first- and second-year undergraduates in two-year colleges who took remedial courses in 1999-2000, was almost 76 percent in math, 36 percent in reading, and slightly over 40 percent in writing. In four-year public colleges and universities, the percentages for math were 75 percent, reading 31 percent, and writing 43 percent. In spite of efforts over the last decade to reduce the amount of remedial course taking, particularly in states such as California and New York, the percentage of students taking such courses has actually increased.

The percentage of females taking math courses is slightly higher than males while the reverse is the case in reading and writing. Interestingly, the percentage of white students vs. black or African-American students is almost identical at 75 percent for math and 40 percent writing, while a higher percentage of African-American students took reading courses (43 percent vs. 28 percent). For math the comparison of non-Hispanic vs. Hispanic were almost identical at 74 percent. However, in reading and writing more Hispanic students took courses in reading (48 percent) and in writing (50 percent). Of all age groupings, those students 40 years or older are much more likely to have taken math remedial courses (82 percent), but much less likely to have taken reading and writing courses than all of the younger age groups.

Over the last two or three years, several groups have estimated that the total amount of money spent on remedial courses is over a billion dollars annually which represents a very nice niche market. Two recent reasons for anticipating even more remedial course taking in the near future are: several large states such as Texas and California allow recent immigrants to take college courses and pay “resident” tuition fees; and an increased number of welfare recipients are taking college courses, including remediation, which have counted as “work hours” under the 1997 Welfare Reform bill, which is up for

reauthorization this year. On that matter, the House version would not count as “work hours” vocational training or other college courses, while the Senate version would expand the number of hours so counted. For additional information on the findings of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), go to www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002168.

USED Awards Education Leaders Council (ELC) \$3.5 Million to Help States Develop Model Action Plans to Implement No Child Left Behind Act

The so-called “Following the Leaders” Project is designed to help states develop state model action plans for implementing No Child Left Behind. Under this project, the ELC will identify states that can “lead by example” and help the ELC establish a guide on assessment and accountability that others can use. In a select number of states and schools, integrated accountability and information systems “from the schoolhouse to the state house will be demonstrated.” According to the USED Press Release (June 28), the project will provide tools to help administrators and others use student assessment data to improve instruction.

The ELC, a splinter group of the Council of Chief State School Officers, moderated the June 13-14 Conference on Supplemental Service Providers as reported in the last TechMIS Report. Under Secretary Hickok was the first elected president of the group. The current president and director, Lisa Kagan, former state superintendent in Arizona, moderated the Supplemental Services Conference. Accountability Works, a nonprofit organization according to the Press Release, “with expertise in standards assessment and accountability will provide policy assistance.” Its president, Theodore Rebarber, who served as a policy analyst at USED during the first Bush presidency, provided a good analysis of the major policy provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act.

The tools to be used to develop model plans for assessing student data to improve instruction will be provided by Project Achieve to 15 to 50 schools in up to 20 states. Achieve's database of instructional resources would be available to all teachers in these states. Project Achieve was created by the National Governors Association several years ago and has conducted several standards/assessment alignment studies for states over the last few years.

Developed by the Milliken Family Foundation, the Teacher Advancement Program is a strategy to attract, retain, and motivate talented individuals in the teaching profession. It will also be used in developing model state, district, and school action plans.

According to the Press Release, the entire project will be thoroughly evaluated by the Thomas D. Fordham Foundation, a private foundation active in education reform and education research. The Foundation is headed by Checkers Finn, a former assistant secretary of education in previous Republican administrations. Finn has been an advocate of the application of rigorous research and application criteria in assessing activities and reports published by USED/OERI.

The Following the Leaders grant is funded under the Fund for Improvement of Education in the USED/OERI, which is also the funding source of a \$20 million earmark last year to Pennsylvania to use technology for school improvement and reform and an \$18 million earmark for the Houston Independent School District.

Also funded earlier this year is a project co-operated by the Center for Accountability (initially associated with the University of Texas), and the Education Commission of the States which is designed to provide guidance regarding the implementation of accountability and assessment systems.

The Education Leadership Council is much more influential under this Administration than in the past and will be instrumental in influencing the implementation of No Child Left Behind. In one of its recent reports entitled State Innovation Priorities for State Testing Programs, it argues that computerized reporting is a crucial element for improving testing. Such computerized assessment and reporting will not only result in timely delivery of individual scores to teachers but also decrease the time and cost of paper report and handling. For a copy of the report go to www.educationleaders.org.

The Instructional Materials Accessibility Act is Likely to be Enacted into Law Which Could Pave the Way for Section 508 Accessibility Standards Applying to Public Schools

Over the last two years, pressures have been building to ensure greater accessibility for students with disabilities to technology, media, and the Internet. Hearings were recently held during which Senator Christopher Dodd (D, CT), a sponsor of S. 2246 “The Instructional Materials Accessibility Act,” appears to be gathering increased support in the Senate, with similar support being generated in the House. Under this legislation, textbook and other publishers would send electronic files of their books to a central clearinghouse through which districts could access copies of textbooks in various formats. Because more than 25 states have somewhat different requirements, Dodd argued that the situation is currently cumbersome for these publishers and leaves many visually-impaired students without timely access. The proposed law is also supported by the Association of American Publishers whose president, Patricia Schroeder, is quoted in Education Daily as saying, “This is a way to break through the clutter of the current system. This is how we really leave no child left behind.”

Opposition in the House appears to be subsiding; the House Republican leadership last year failed to cut funding for the “Tech Act” and related projects and centers designed to provide increased accessibility and to help districts meet the new Section 508 standards;

these standards were implemented in June 2001 at the Federal level across all agencies. Currently all multimedia software and related technology-based delivery systems must meet Section 508 standards to provide greater accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Passage of The Instructional Materials Accessibility Act would be another major step toward implementation of Section 508 accessibility standards among school districts. Under the reauthorized ESEA, students with disabilities are required to take state assessments and Federal ESEA and IDEA funds can be used to ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided to such students. As reported in several TechMIS mailings over the last year, online or technology-based assessments are almost required to meet the reporting provisions under the new ESEA assessment and accountability provisions. Further buttressing this trend are lawsuits or threat of lawsuits by groups such as the Disability Rights Advocates in California which would require districts to provide opportunities for computer-based assessments and reporting. Approximately \$17 million will be available through competitive grants to help states meet the testing requirements of the new ESEA, including ensuring that reasonable accommodations are provided for students with disabilities as they take required state assessments.

Without formal requirements from the Federal level, some states such as Maryland have developed regulations which have the de facto effect of ensuring greater instructional accessibility through the use of technology and other media for individuals with disabilities and even limited English proficiency. Advocates of increased accessibility (along the lines of Section 508 and/or products that follow “universal design” principles) have also designed tools that can assess the degree to which multimedia and related products meet “universal design” principles (e.g., the Compliant Software Tester “Bobby” which assesses web-based products) and are making these tools available to publishers. As reported in Education Technology News (July 3), a website is being developed at the University of Maryland, University College (UMUC) which will highlight the key concepts educators need to be aware of in order to make online courses

accessible. The website targets teachers who develop online instructional lessons, etc. The website should be available early next year.

For more information about the planned website, contact Theo Stone, UMUC, 301/985-7602 or tstone@umuc.edu.