

Education TURNKEY Electronic Distribution, Inc.

256 North Washington Street
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549
(703) 536-2310
Fax (703) 536-3225

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 13, 2013
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle
SUBJ: Title I Conference; Sequestration/FY 2013 Budget Update; Waiver Hearings; State and Urban District Common Core Plans; USED Pushes Evidence-Based Rigor Again; and State Profile Updates

The TechMIS Special Report includes highlights of the annual Title I Conference during which both attendees and exhibitors expressed concern about sequestration/FY 2013 budget uncertainty which has delayed Title I spending. Much of the estimated \$3 billion will be encumbered before the end of the states' fiscal years if the reduced 5.1% across-the-board sequestration uncertainty lifts. A Special Funding Alert on possible sequestration/FY 2013 budget outlines current facts/benchmarks, possibilities, and implications for firms.

The Washington Update addresses a number of issues of interest to many TechMIS subscribers and includes:

- **Page 1**
The Senate held its first hearings on state waiver flexibility approved for 35 states which Secretary Duncan argued “is working”; however, key Senators, advocacy group officials, and others expressed concerns, which suggests some alternative “directions” might be included in reauthorization of ESEA.
- **Page 2**
A second annual survey finds most states have completed plans for implementing Common Core Standards in the areas of professional development, developing instructional materials, and devising aligned teacher evaluation systems, which suggest what opportunities are emerging in certain states.
- **Page 4**
A survey conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools finds over 80 percent of

urban districts plan full implementation of Common Core Standards by 2014-15. While the majority are revising their curriculum this year, about four in ten districts plan to integrate “publishers criteria” into textbook and related purchasing opportunities for many TechMIS subscribers.

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Most of President Obama’s gun control proposals which would benefit some TechMIS subscribers would require legislative action or new funding which most observers feel is doubtful.

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USED is seeking to incorporate evidence-based research and rigor into all of its competitive grant programs by making changes in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR); it could simplify the grantees’ competitive bidding process, and could benefit firms with products that have strong effectiveness evidence which justifies their use by grantees.

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Findings from a new Stanford University study could have direct implications for firms hoping to use charter schools as test beds for products which could then be transferred/adopted by traditional districts’ Title I programs.

- **Page 10**

A new report on trends and funding by philanthropic education grant entities suggests certain funding possibilities for districts to purchase certain products and services, especially in newly funded federal competitive grant programs such as i³, which require “matching.”

- **Page 11**

Secretary Duncan’s waiver authority and second-term agenda was criticized by National School Boards Association members as infringing too much upon local policymaking.

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122 additional Head Start grantees required to re-compete for funds.

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A number of miscellaneous items include:

- a) Growth and recent trends in charter schools
- b) The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state assessment consortia has proposed accommodation policies for students with disabilities which could increase the demand for RTI-related products/services.
- c) E-Rate update on districts with “potential” E-Rate refunds for purchasing non-eligible products and services

Also included are State profile updates which address a range of issues including: Governors' State of the State addresses, Race to the Top implementation, state budgets, and college remediation.

Special Report:
The Annual Title I Conference, Held in Nashville at the End of January with an Estimated 3,500 Title I Directors and Staff Attending, Was Felt by Exhibitors as Having Fewer Participants than in the Past, But Higher Quality Influencers and Decision-Makers; Funding Uncertainty Concerns Were Expressed By All

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)
Special Report*

Prepared by:
Education TURNKEY Systems, Inc.
256 North Washington Street
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549
(703) 536-2310 / (703) 536-3225 FAX

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Below are highlights and “takeaways” from discussions with exhibitors and attendees in the exhibit area and several influential district Title I directors.

Virtually all exhibitors felt that Title I expenditures over the last several months had declined compared to last year due to Federal funding and budget uncertainties/issues. A number of key district Title I directors expressed concern that, under sequestration, they will have difficulty carrying over unspent Title I money from this year to next year because of the large amount of funds that their district carried over from last year to this year. Without waivers, districts cannot carry over more than 15 percent from one year to the next more than once every three years; hence, in most states, they must obligate some unspent funds by June 30th. Many indicated that they would be purchasing products and professional development with such funds.

Prior to the conference, we requested from USED a state-by-state breakdown of the amount of Title I funds by state which have been “drawn down” by districts thus far; we have yet to receive this information. Last year, during the conference, we were able to provide such state-by-state breakdowns showing that approximately 18 states, as of January 2012, had, at that time, between 20 and 50 percent of Title I ARRA funds still unspent (see January 30, 2012 TechMIS for states). States in which many districts have a tradition of withholding Title I funds for contingencies until late in the fiscal year before spending or attempting to carryover funds include: Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming. Under the Education Flexibility Partnership Act of 1999 (Ed Flex Statute), ten states received Ed Flex status: Colorado, Delaware, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania,

Oregon, Texas, and Vermont. These states could waive a number of provisions in the ESEA including the 15 percent limitation on carryover of unspent Title I funds from one year to the next without seeking a waiver from USED. The four states that have a tradition of providing waivers of the 15 percent limitation are Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Vermont. Texas has made more extensive use of the waiver of carryover limitation than the other states.

Many of the exhibitors who attended the Title I conference in Seattle last year were also in attendance this year, although some major firms targeting Title I in the past were not exhibiting for any number of reasons. Unlike the Title I conference exhibit area three years ago when almost a third of the exhibitors had “signage” promoting their products’ use with autistic children, no such signage was observed this year. On the other hand, promotion of RTI approaches, especially in elementary and middle school math, increased over last year. Firms promoting professional development, particularly online, had good booth attendance. At least one firm announced a new teacher evaluation tool which can be used by administrators for making objective-based hiring or assignment decisions. Another firm which has targeted Title I for several years was promoting development of “customized applications” to be used by teachers and principals to increase the use of existing technology in Title I programs.

Sessions which exhibitors’ staff attended or were of interest included:

- ESEA and Title I funding
- increased flexibility under the waiver initiatives and allowable uses of funds
- parent and community engagement
- developments in brain research and related applications
- using formative assessment data and RTI in Title I

The types of firms which appear to be most upbeat showing relatively good growth over the last year and continued growth in the foreseeable future included those which:

- have packaged/customized RTI solutions, including some with solutions for different tier levels or those having components/applications that could be integrated and used in an RTI approach;
- provide professional development services and/or materials, especially with components which are delivered online; and
- can facilitate increased parent and community engagement and communications.

Some small supplemental publishers with specialized products (e.g., student authored books) which were in print formats had poor attendance at their booths.

It is noteworthy that exhibitors’ number two question, after “When will Title I funds start flowing?”, concerned Common Core Standards and assessments -- how many states will fully implement them, when, and whether any Federal funds will be available for districts to use? On the other hand, few Title I directors had questions or concerns about the impact of Common Core Standards on their Title I programs.

**Special Funding Alert:
Sequestration FY 2013 Budget Update: Facts,
Possibilities/Probabilities, and Implications for Districts and Firms**

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)
Special Report*

*Prepared by:
Education TURNKEY Systems, Inc.
256 North Washington Street
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549
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This update presents facts/benchmark deadlines as they exist today, possibilities which could occur in the next two months, and probabilities as we see them emerging, along with implications for both districts and TechMIS subscribers who are anxiously awaiting release of Federal funds which are not being spent at the district level because of sequestration uncertainty.

The facts/deadlines as we know them today are as follows:

- The 8.2% sequestration scheduled for January 2nd has been postponed until March 1st; the amount of Federal funds which could be sequestered has been reduced to 5.1% across-the-board cuts, which is what we projected in our November 14th TechMIS Federal Funding Update.
- The Continuing Resolution (CR) keeps Federal funds flowing at FY 2012 appropriation levels until March 27th, at which time it could be renewed for the remainder of the fiscal year, or FY 2013 appropriations levels could be passed as a result of negotiations between the White House and Congress.
- Under the current USED ruling, “advanced funded” education programs, such as Title I, IDEA, and most other formula programs, would not be impacted by a sequestration, if it occurs, until July when FY 2013 funds begin flowing to states, and in turn to districts; some USED programs (e.g., Impact Aid) which are not “advanced funded” would be impacted immediately, should the sequester occur.
- As we suspected (and, for the most part, confirmed -- see related Washington Update item on Title I Conference -- during discussions with district Title I directors and observers), many districts have withheld between eight and 15 percent of this year’s Title I allocation in the district “reserve” until the sequestration uncertainty lifts. Moreover, many districts carried over more than the 15 percent “limitation” of unspent Title I ARRA funds from last year to this year and hence, without waivers, will not be allowed to carry over more than 15 percent from this year to next year to soften any impact on

next year's Title I program, should sequestration occur. IDEA funds cannot be carried over.

- Many knowledgeable observers believe some type of sequestration at some level is likely to occur on March 1st; however, as we have reported and most other observers now agree, the sequestration is now intricately tied to the fate of the FY 2013 Continuing Resolution.

As Richard Long, Executive Director of the National Title I Association wrote in his February 2nd blog, "The other part of this [sequestration] is that the continuing resolution is scheduled to expire on March 27th, thus, in reality these two issues are being merged into one." In their January 31st *Ed Money Watch* blog, Jason Delisle and Clare McCann go even further, "Yes, the sequester will cut education programs by 5.1 percent on March 1st, but what matters is the funding level Congress and the president set for programs as of March 27." There are a number of reasons for these two observers making the above statements, with which we agree.

First, during the campaign, President Obama when broached with the question of sequestration stated flatly, "There will be no sequestration." And more recently, in a national speech, he also called for the sequestration to be postponed for two to three months in order for Congress to work out adequate spending cuts and/or revenue increases (which the GOP opposes) to remove the need for sequestration. And, Speaker Boehner on several occasions has re-iterated that he's against sequestration and closing down the Federal government because of a deadlock over the FY 2013 Continuing Resolution on March 27th.

Second, if a sequestration occurs on March 1st, and if an FY 2013 budget is passed before July with adequate reductions in total non-defense discretionary spending with little or no reductions for large advanced funded programs such as Title I and IDEA, then the impact would be negligible and sequestration clouds of uncertainty will have been reduced significantly.

Third, if a March 1st sequestration occurs at the 5.1 percent across-the-board level and the current Continuing Resolution is extended for the remainder of the year, according to Delisle in *Ed Money Watch*, the FY 2013 budget level would be "capped" at existing levels minus the 5.1 percent reduction. According to Delisle the cap on discretionary funding levels that would be very similar to budget levels in 2008. Hence, future spending caps would "tie the hands" of both Congress and the President and would be a disaster politically for both, as any increases above the caps would require future sequesters.

Fourth, if the President proposes an education budget with adequate funding cuts in discretionary programs to fend off the sequestration or at least postpone it until the final FY 2013 budget is negotiated and passed before the March 27th CR deadline or shortly thereafter, which we feel is a high probability, then the following optimistic scenario could occur.

Even though the President's State of the Union Address called for replacing the sequester with a less reckless, more sensible deficit reduction budget, most observers feel the sequester will occur on March 1st after which the FY 2013 budget will be negotiated before the March 27th CR deadline. Building on the public outcry which will pressure the GOP House, the President will

hold the line on wise investments in education (e.g., early childhood, high school reform, and college graduation priorities mentioned in the speech) which will likely result in level funding for Title I and possibly small increases in IDEA special education. If the reductions in other agencies or in certain education programs are adequate, then the sequestration could be lifted. Once the sequestration fears and anxieties among districts subside, then much of the Title I funds being held in district-level reserves (about \$3 billion), will begin to become obligated/spent in many districts. Some will be actually be obligated by June 30th in about 45 states, with the remainder having an obligation deadline of August 30th or September 30th.

The amount of unspent Title I funds which will be spent/obligated before the end of the fiscal year could be reduced if the Secretary of Education under his “waiver authority” once again provides for a blanket waiver for states to allow districts that carried over more than 15% last year to carry over once again more than the 15% limitation from this year to next year. Readers should also be cautioned that even if the level of Title I funds remains about the same, either under an extended Continuing Resolution or a FY 2013 budget, the amount to be allocated to individual districts will differ from the previous year because of the use of most recent Census data and the level of funding for each of the four components. Over the last decade, increased Title I funding has occurred for the “incentive” and “targeted” components -- which tend to favor large urban districts versus rural districts -- at the expense of the “basic grants.”

We will continue to monitor, analyze, and report on developments relating to the sequestration in FY 2013 budgets as they occur.

Washington Update

Vol. 18, No. 2, February 13, 2013

Senate Holds First Hearings on Waivers in This Session

The lead witness during the February 7th hearings on NCLB was Secretary Arne Duncan who argued that flexibility through the State waiver process is working, but that he would have preferred to have had a reauthorization of ESEA, which however was stalled in Congress. The Secretary's blog said he was "not willing to stand by and do nothing" while educators, students, and policymakers continue to suffer under NCLB. Also, he argued, "NCLB has become a well-intended, but overly-prescriptive law that created incentives to lower standards, encouraged teaching to the test, mislabeled many schools as failures, and prescribed a one-size-fits-all accountability system that failed to support local solutions and innovation." In his official testimony, from which the Secretary sometimes deviated, he added, "The exclusive focus on tests, and disregard for other important measures of success, forced teachers to teach to the test. And, subjects such as history and the arts were pushed out."

During the hearings, a number of Chief State School Officers and advocacy groups identified some effects -- both positive and negative -- of waivers and what aspects should be incorporated into a reauthorization of ESEA. Key Senators also identified, during the hearings, their major "sticking points."

As reported by the *Politics K-12* blog on

Education Week, state superintendents from Kentucky and New York -- Terry Holliday and John King, respectively -- preferred a reauthorization of ESEA because of its predictability over a longer period of time, rather than waivers which currently remain in effect for only two more years. However, Holliday for example, felt the waiver process allowed his state to transition to Common Core State Standards more quickly and easily.

Kati Haycock, President of The Education Trust, expressed concerns about the increasing focus of the waivers on the 15% worst-performing schools, while letting states and districts focus on the other 85% of Title I schools. She referred to a recent report from The Education Trust, entitled "A Step Forward or a Step Back? State Accountability in the Waiver Era," which criticized the use of "super subgroups," failure of states to use multiple measures, and lack of rigorous plans for turning around low-performing schools identified among waiver states' plans. Andy Smarick, who previously served as deputy in the New Jersey Department of Education, felt that waivers should be given a chance to work before "upsetting the applecart" with a new law that could have unintended consequences for states as swift legislative changes are made. His position differs from most Chief State School Officers', according to *Politics K-12*.

The hearing also allowed Senate leadership to express their concerns. For example, ranking Republican Lamar Alexander, who

was Secretary of Education under the first Bush Administration and a former Tennessee Governor, was critical of Secretary Duncan's infringement on state and local decision-making through the use of his waiver authority, particularly related to teacher evaluation requirements. As reported by Michele McNeil, *Politics K-12* blogger, Senator Alexander asked Duncan "point blank" whether he was considering waivers for districts; Secretary Duncan responded that he would rather work with states, but would make a decision about district waivers down the road in light of the pending proposal from eight California districts for waiver approval because California was recently turned down for a waiver. Committee Chairman, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) acknowledged the stalemate in Congress on reauthorization and tended to support the rationale behind the waivers; however, he continued having concerns about the use of so-called "super subgroups," also a concern of The Education Trust. Senator Mike Bennett (D-IL), a go-to person in the Senate for Secretary Duncan, felt that the waivers, however, resulted in states "dreaming up" new ways of tracking individual progress; Senator Harkin agreed, even though Secretary Duncan recently denied Iowa's request for a waiver.

It is interesting to note that during a "fireside chat" sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers the following day, moderator Andy Rotherham, a former Special Assistant to the Secretary under the Clinton Administration, evoked interesting responses from several chiefs. For example, the question was raised, "When states begin switching to common tests and cut scores, and student performance appears to do a nose-dive, will all of these new waiver accountability efforts fall apart?"

Kentucky's Superintendent Holliday felt the test must reveal results similar to those on the NAEP for the state or the new Common Core Standards test "will not be credible." When asked whether states will make a lot of changes to their waiver plans, as reported in *Politics K-12*, New Jersey Superintendent Chris Cerf said that he does not want to see a lot of Federal nit-picking and letters back and forth, as in the Race to the Top amendment process. He also said, "We have to be careful not to conflate flexibility with the Wild West," and was more interested in being held accountable for student outcomes which might take a while to determine.

Most States Have Completed Plans to Implement Common Core Standards in Professional Development, Developing Instructional Materials, and Devising Teacher Evaluation Systems Aligned to the CCSS

Based on the second yearly survey of state planning for implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), conducted by Education First and the EPE Research Center, states have completed planning in many areas, making substantial to moderate progress compared to the development of plans summarized in the 2011 survey. Significant findings regarding the status of state planning and progress made over the last year -- as reported by states in the three areas of professional development, curriculum alignment and teacher evaluations -- are highlighted in this report.

The survey found that 22 of the adopting states have fully developed plans in all three of the above categories which is a significant increase over the seven states

reporting having done so one year ago. Only three states -- Illinois, Maine, and Michigan -- did not have a fully developed plan in any area in 2012.

As noted in other surveys conducted by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) and the Council of the Great City Schools (see January TechMIS issue), most activities undertaken during early implementation, and even now, have focused on professional development for teachers. The most recent survey found that every state that adopted CCSS (except Indiana) has either a fully-developed plan (37 states) or is in the process of developing a plan in this area (nine states), compared to only 20 states last year. Professional development delivery components included train-the-trainer modules and online modules. Several states offer training at regional service centers; hold conferences, institutes, symposia, and academies; or use live and recorded webinars. The majority of the states also have compiled professional learning activities and resources on their own CCSS websites, with a sharing of materials among the states. Some states, where local control is important, have issued guidance regarding professional development and technical assistance as opposed to providing districts with prescriptive plans. Most teacher professional development focuses on awareness-building in both English/language arts and math, as well as on developing teacher capacity to implement effective instructional practices around instructional shifts such as text-dependent questions, effective teaching of non-fiction text, and using evidence in reading and writing.

Thirty states report having fully developed plans for changing instructional materials,

while 12 have plans in process. Illustrative of instructional materials that were developed or used included crosswalks between the CCSS and previous state standards, concept maps, curriculum frameworks/guides, model curriculum units, and formative and summative assessment items. As the report notes, "These materials are often accessible to educators via an online platform or repository." A few states indicated plans to adopt new textbooks. The report notes that:

- six states (Arizona, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Vermont) have fully developed plans around curriculum guides and instructional materials;
- five states (Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, and Nevada) noted state-level progress in this area even though these are considered local-control states; and
- five states (Indiana, Kansas, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming) indicated having no plans in the works largely because of local control issues.

The report notes, "Our survey indicates that many states are offering instructional exemplars (e.g., aligned lessons, instructional videos) and technical assistance tools (e.g., transition action planning guides, templates to monitor implementation progress, alignment rubrics) that districts and schools can elect to use."

In the area of teacher evaluation systems, the survey found that 42 states have either developed a plan (30 states) or are in the process of developing a plan (12 states) to revise teacher evaluation systems. Only four of the CCSS-adopting states (Iowa, Kansas, Montana, South Dakota) indicated

no plans for development in this area. The analysis found that state plans reveal “a considerable degree of state-to-state variation in connections between CCSS implementation and state policies designed to incorporate student achievement growth and/or teacher observations into teacher evaluations.”

The report also summarized states’ perceptions of progress being made between 2011 and 2012. Most states reported forward movement on their planning activities in at least one of the three areas; eight states reported progress in two categories; and seven states moved forward across all three categories. Interestingly, six states reported being further away from completing plans in at least one category in 2012 than they were in 2011; most perceived more work has to be done with respect to curriculum guides and materials than previously anticipated. Colorado, Connecticut, and Indiana reported setbacks in both curriculum guides and professional development. The report includes a chart indicating state-by-state planning movement between 2011 and 2012 in the three areas.

For a copy of the report go to: http://www.edweek.org/media/movingforward_ef_epe_020413.pdf

Urban District Survey of Common Core State Standards CCSS) Implementation Suggests 87% of Urban Districts Plan Full Implementation by 2014-15, While the Majority Plan to Revise Their Curriculum in Both English Language Arts and Mathematics in 2012-13; Approximately Four in Ten Districts Plan to Integrate “Publishers’ Criteria” into Textbook and Related Purchasing Opportunities

Conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, the first of a multi-year analysis of CCSS implementation trends found 87 percent of member districts plan to fully implement CCSS by 2014-15; 50 percent of the districts began implementing English/language arts (ELA) in 2011-12 with another 40 percent plan to implement CCSS in 2012-13. Similar trends exist for mathematics in the survey of 36 of the 67 member districts June-October. The majority of the 36 responding districts plan to revise their curriculum in both areas in nearly all grade levels during this school year starting with ELA implementation in grades K-3 and math in grades K-2 and 6-9.

As the report states, “Approximately 41 percent of respondents have integrated Student Achievement Partners’ ‘publishers criteria’ for the Common Core Standards in English language arts and literacy into recent textbook purchasing opportunities. Meanwhile, another 53 percent of respondents have not pursued any new textbook purchasing opportunities.” As the *Curriculum Matters* blog on Education Week (January 25th) notes, the question regarding district use of the math “publishers’ criteria” was not “apparently included in the survey.”

As we have noted in previous TechMIS reports, the Council of the Great City Schools indicated plans to use the purchasing power of its members to “encourage” publishers to meet the “publishers’ criteria.” The total amount of textbook and related purchases related to Common Core among the 67 district which could be as high as \$4 billion. Over two years ago during an SIIA Government Forum meeting, officials from the Council indicated that they had formed “working groups” which would be refining and adapting the CCSS for their member districts taking advantage of the flexibility allowed for individual states to add up to 15 percent additional standards to the uniform CCSS standards.

As the Center on Education Policy found almost three years ago, professional development was one of the first initiatives states and districts were focusing on during early implementation, which the Council survey also found to be true. In the area of ELA professional development, most PD focused on:

- building a shared understanding of the CCSS among staff;
- using informational texts to build background knowledge;
- building students’ academic vocabulary in math.

The most emphasized PD activities in math professional development included:

- building a shared understanding of CCSS among staff;
- building students’ deep understanding of math concepts; and
- understanding learning progressions across grade levels.

For both ELA and math, the least emphasized activities including:

- integrated technology in the classroom; and
- differentiating instruction for English language learners, struggling readers, and students with disabilities.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of districts reporting having organizational structures in place to implement online professional development resources was much lower than the proportion of schools that have structures in place to implement “professional learning communities” and “common planning time” for teachers. The survey also found approximately 30 percent of respondents reported that their district has developed interim assessments aligned with CCSS, while another 55 percent are currently in the process of doing so. Only 15 percent reported not having developed any interim assessments aligned with CCSS. One can anticipate professional development in this area will likely increase dramatically the closer the implementation of the consortia or other CCSS assessments begin implementation, largely because of their heavy emphasis on interim and formative assessments.

Another area which is under development in three-quarters of the districts is communication strategies to inform stakeholders, communication mediums. According to the survey, respondents in the future are planning to use information brochures, meetings with business leaders, parent guides, local newspapers, and meetings with parent groups. In light of Gallup and other surveys which have found public knowledge about CCSS is relatively low, communication initiatives would appear to be critical and as over 80 percent of respondents felt feedback from stakeholders would be used to make changes

to implementation efforts.

For a copy of the report go to:
<http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Content/Domain/4/Implementing%20the%20Common%20Core%20State%20Standards%20FINAL.pdf>

Most of President Obama’s Gun Control Proposals, Which Would Benefit Some TechMIS Subscribers, Would Require Legislative Action and/or New Funding, Which Most Observers Feel is Doubtful

Included in President Obama’s gun control proposals are a number of school safety/mental health initiatives, most of which would require new legislation and/or funding, which most observers feel would be difficult to get through Congress at this time. Some of the common-sense proposals could be implemented through executive orders by redirecting priorities in existing programs, such as the COPS joint program with Department of Justice to add more school resource officers, and a model school emergency response development program. However, a number of proposals would require new legislation, including \$150 million for a new comprehensive school safety program under which districts could hire school psychologists, counselors, and social workers and funds could be used to train staff in crisis interventions. Fifty million dollars are proposed to implement staff training in the use of behavioral interventions and supports, which are currently supported in new Race to the Top-District and Promise Neighborhood grants. A number of initiatives, which would address mental health issues that relate to school safety, include:

- \$15 million for programs for local school districts to help teachers and other staff identify students for early crisis and other interventions, and another \$40 million to provide similar activities in coordination with law enforcement and mental health agencies;
- \$40 million would be provided to districts to work with local agencies in areas of enforcement and mental health to ensure identified students receive appropriate services; and
- about \$75 million would be used to provide training and offer services in areas such as conflict resolution and to train counselors in mental health areas.

As Education Week (January 23rd) noted, in a conference call with reporters Secretary Duncan said that such funding was not likely to be enough to put social workers in place in every school that needs one. As he said, “There’s much greater interest in this than we’ll have the resources available.” While Senate Chairman Tom Harkin was encouraged that the President’s proposals address mental health services, especially the emphasis on prevention and early intervention, House Education Committee Chairman John Kline indicated that he planned to “review carefully the proposals and the Committee would convene a hearing on school safety.” As a side note, Senate Chairman Harkin also announced that he would not be seeking re-election in 2014.

Over the last three years, some existing school safety and violence prevention programs (e.g., Safe & Drug-Free Schools) have been targeted for funding reductions or eliminations by Congress and even by the

Administration. House Chairman Kline has requested that Secretary Duncan explain why some of the grant programs under the Safe & Drug-Free Schools Program could not be used to support some of the newly proposed activities which is likely to be one of the key questions to be raised during the proposed hearings.

USED is Seeking to Incorporate Evidence-Based Research and Rigor into All Competitive Grant Programs Through Significant Changes in Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)

In addition to announcing new/refined priorities for i^3 , and likely other competitive grant programs during the next four years (see January TechMIS), USED is also attempting to infuse research-based evidence as a basis for selecting and rewarding successful research grantees in the future. According to Michele McNeil's recent article in Education Week (January 29th), two related goals are: "to reward projects that already have established a research-based track record of success and to encourage grant winners to produce rigorous evidence detailing the extent to which their project does -- or does not -- work." By incorporating such provisions into EDGAR, which governs all USED grants, USED would not have to incorporate such provisions into each individual program (e.g., Teacher Incentive Fund) on a case-by-case basis. Last year, the Office of Management and Budget issued a memorandum encouraging all agencies to incorporate evidence-based decision-making into their competitive grant award processes. The Knowledge Alliance and the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, two

Washington-based groups, support the effort which is modeled on the Investing in Innovation (i^3) grant program.

Some of the proposed EDGAR changes which are related to evidenced-based research and rigor are available for public comment until February 12th, include:

- the use of tiers of evidence, such as the different levels of research rigor required for development, validation, and scale-up grants in the i^3 program;
- the creation of standardized definitions of "strong," or "moderate" evidence, "evidence of promise," and "strong theory," again following the i^3 model; and
- continuation of grants to allow collection of longitudinal data to determine sustaining effects of experimental or other projects.

In addition to infuse many of the model components of the i^3 program, the changes to EDGAR would also incorporate successful components of the What Works Clearinghouse, which over the last decade has attempted to establish the so-called gold standard which uses randomly assigned experimental and control groups for testing interventions. The article notes that the Coalition's President, Jon Baron, is urging USED officials to make one change, namely "...to make clear that strong evidence should be linked to outcomes that matter -- such as high school graduation rates -- and not an outcome that may be statistically significant but not related to improving student achievement."

In addition to the provisions related to infusing evidence-based research and rigor into the grant selection process, the

regulations proposed to also simplify the procurement process used to select implementation partners and evaluation service providers. Currently, for such services, grantees must conduct full competitive bidding for contracting with implementation partners and project evaluators. The new provisions would allow partners or evaluation providers, if they are identified in the application for the grant, to be exempt from formal competitive bid requirements and still meet regulatory statutory or priority requirements related to the specific competition. The grant application must ensure no conflict of interest exists and informal competition requirements used for small purchases could be applied. These changes would allow, for example, a specific evaluation provider to participate actively in developing the application and would not preclude the provider from conducting the evaluation as existing competitive bid/procurement policies would.

Some of the proposed changes would also allow the Secretary of Education to place a higher priority on the ability of the project to be taken to scale and the sustainability of the project after completion. In addition, the Secretary would have the discretion to extend the length of a successful project and appropriate funding levels after initial completion dates. The proposed regulations would also take into account whether the applicant in a competition is taking advantages of and/or builds on similar related efforts in order to improve relevant outcomes.

While the proposed regulations will certainly provide greater flexibility for the Secretary of Education to use his discretion in selection criteria and refining competitive

grant priorities, it would also reduce some burden placed on grantees and provide opportunities for partners -- particularly those involved in implementation and project evaluations -- to participate without going through the formal competitive bidding process. On the other hand, the proposed regulations do not appear to address directly the problems confronting for-profit organizations in participating directly in certain competitive grant programs such as Investing in Innovation. However, if a firm's specific product(s) has strong evidence of effectiveness based on rigorous research (e.g., high ratings by What Works Clearinghouse), LEAs and other applicants would be incentivized to propose to name/use them in the application.

The proposed changes are available in the December 14, 2012 [Federal Register](#).

New Stanford University Study Findings Have Direct Implications for Firms Hoping to Use Charter Schools as a Test Bed for Products Which Can Then Be Transferred/Adopted by Traditional Districts' Title I Programs

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University reports several study findings which have direct implications for firms which target charter schools as "test beds" for transferring/turnkeying their best practice products into traditional districts' programs, including Title I. Having conducted extensive research on a host of "charter" schools and developed partnerships with 25 state agencies, CREDO measured the impact of education management organizations (EMOs), charter management organizations (CMOs), and independent charter schools on

students' learning over time to determine whether student performance increased over time and whether performance levels continued in "replication" schools.

The study found that: (1) It is possible for a school to be excellent on Day One, and that (2) The initial signals of performance are predictive of later performance. For example, when one looks at the third year of student learning performance, 89 percent of low-performing schools remain low-performing, while 97 percent of all "high flyers persist at the top of the distribution." CREDO also found that only schools in the second quintile showed substantial patterns of change over time, with half the schools moving to a higher quintile (mostly to the third quintile) and half remaining in the bottom two quintiles.

A third, related finding which has significant implication for vendors was that "Substantial improvement over time is largely absent from middle schools, multi-level schools and high schools. Only elementary schools show an upward pattern of growth if they start out in the lower two quintiles." The implication is two-fold: (1) target EMOs, CMOs, or other charter schools that initially produce the greatest students' academic performance increases, and (2) focus on elementary schools, not middle or high schools.

Another study finding is that "CMOs post superior results with historically disadvantaged student subgroups. They produce stronger academic gains for students of color and students in poverty than those students would have realized in either traditional public schools (TPS) or in many categories what would have learned in independent charter schools." This finding

strongly suggests that, if best practices and/or firms' products used successfully in charter schools are to be successfully turnkeyed into traditional public schools' program, the most appropriate programs would be Title I. The study findings apparently did not address the question of whether charter school learning experiences of students with disabilities were also positive.

Another finding suggests caution must be used in selecting what EMOs, CMOs, or other charter school entities to target. CREDO found that "...the trend analysis showed that about a third of CMOs has significant and positive growth in performance over time. In one quarter of CMOs, the average learning gain declines significantly over time. The rest of the CMOs remain stable. These findings illustrate that it is possible for CMOs to evolve their performance to higher levels."

On a positive note, the CREDO study also compared student learning results among some of the 34 CMOs which have received some funding from the Charter School Growth Fund, a non-profit group which channels foundation and individual donations to help charters expand. The CREDO study examined results for 73,000 students in 14 charter school networks supported by the Growth Fund and those in selected comparison charter schools and traditional schools. Students in Growth Fund schools produced much larger gains in math than those in both other charter networks and regular schools. Significant increased reading scores were also observed. Growth Fund students also outpaced their peers by smaller, but still "dramatic margins" according to the *K-12 Marketplace K-12* blog on [Education Week](#) (January

31st). Funds from the Growth Fund were used to support charter school expansion only after the schools have shown three years of good results in terms of student learning. This finding suggests that the process used by the Growth Fund to target initial investments appears to have a solid track record of identifying EMO schools which have good replication potential for continued growth.

As we reported in our January TechMIS issue, attempts in the Houston Independent School District to adopt charter school best practices, such as intensive tutoring and expanded use of data-driven decision-making, have had some positive preliminary results.

New Report on Trends and Funding by Philanthropic Education Grant Funding Entities Could Point to Certain Funding Possibilities for Purchasing Products and Services

The annual *Benchmarking 2012: Trends in Education Philanthropy* conducted by Grantmakers for Education has identified certain trends in education philanthropic funding for K-12 and postsecondary institutions could be used to purchase certain products and services. The survey of almost 200 education philanthropies “overwhelmingly cited the Common Core State Standards as the most significant trend impacting education and by extension education philanthropy.” It found that 24 percent are planning to make grants for implementation of Common Core which is up from 13 percent in 2011. About 55 percent of these funders are local or community foundations, while almost 40 percent are national funders. Such national

foundations noted by *Education Week’s Curriculum Matters* blog (January 17th) include the Gates Foundation, the Helmsley Charitable Trust, the Beck Dell Foundation, GE Foundation, and the Buick Foundation, among others. About 75 percent of grantmakers support professional development for teachers, 49 percent were investing in public awareness and communication initiatives, and 44 percent supported the creation of new curriculum and instructional materials. As the report notes, two funders invest in student supports or efforts to align new standards with higher education systems. The Center on Education Policy surveys on Common Core implementation also found that the latter states are also only recently began to address the issue of aligning K-12 Common Core standards with postsecondary institutions admission procedures.

Another area in which funders anticipate increasing their attention and investments in the future is the use of technology to “transform instruction from traditional schools to virtual ones,” according to the report which includes early education, K-12 or higher education. The report notes that one group of funders is focusing primarily on ways that technology could alter the delivery of education to promote better student outcomes while a second group focuses on the use of technology to reduce costs and increase productivity. Interestingly, as we reported in our last TechMIS Special Report on USED priorities with an i³ program, online delivery and using technology to increase productivity will most likely be one of the i³ priorities. The report also notes that funders are not likely to use their funds to supplant federal funding, but rather to fund supplemental activities which are not allowed under some

grants, including public awareness, evaluations, and similar activities.

Another priority which has remained at the top in previous surveys is improving teacher effectiveness which will be a studied priority for USED during the second term, according to Secretary Duncan. Another trend identified in the report is the trend to want element-based practices and greater accountability for both education systems and education philanthropy which is also one of the stated priorities. It is one of the ten areas also identified for public comment in the i³ proposed priorities. It is interesting to note that during a recent conversation with USED official Jim Sheldon who directs the i³ program when I asked him if many comments had been received on the proposed December announcement of priorities, he indicated that not many comments had been received. Specifically, the December announcement requested comments on the use of technology to improve productivity. The report also identifies the funding priorities reported by philanthropic education groups which included:

- closing the achievement gap identified by 92 percent; nearly 65 percent of respondents committing major investments ranging from dropout prevention, college success, ELLs;
- 80 percent invested in improving teacher quality and performance with 34 percent citing this as a major investment;
- 74 percent reported ensuring college and career-readiness as a funding priority, especially among corporate funders;

- expanded learning opportunities continued to be a priority investment area in about 70 percent of the respondents over the last several years, including expanded learning time (51%), community schools (57%), and out-of-school, after-school or summer programs remaining about 70%.

For a copy of the report go to: <http://edfunders.org/downloads/GFEReports/Benchmarking12.pdf>

Secretary Duncan's Waiver Authority and Second-Term Agenda Criticized by National School Boards Association Members as Infringing Too Much Upon Local Policymaking

In response to his recent speech before the National School Boards Association Annual D.C. Legislative meeting, school board members criticized Secretary Duncan for infringing on local school board policymaking turf/authority under “flagship” programs such as state waiver authority conditions and Race to the Top competitive grants having strings attached. As Michele McNeil reported in Education Week (January 29th), the Secretary’s most recent “tangle” with school board members evoked an opportunity for local board members to vent their criticisms in certain areas including:

- his support for charter schools which are reducing district enrollments and siphoning money “away from traditional public schools while operating without the same level of oversight.”

- Grievances about competitive grant programs, such as *Race to the Top*, with conditions and strings.

Reflecting the “pushback” from local school board members to a variety of the Secretary’s new initiatives, NSBA is lobbying for a new legislative proposal to address the issues; its first stated purpose is to “Support the local decision-making function of local educational agencies to ensure overall student educational excellence, while meeting national goals, by authorizing the Secretary of Education to engage only in issuing regulations, rules, grant conditions, guidance materials, and other activities under the jurisdiction of the Department that are (i) specifically required to implement federal legislation, and (ii) demonstrated to be educationally, operationally, and financially within the capacity of local education agencies to implement.”

The bill is also designed to “Ensure that national policy in education is established by Congress through specific legislation.” Furthermore, it would ensure that Federal regulations, conditions, and other requirements do not conflict with local education policies in a variety of areas including curriculum, procurement policies, personnel policies, and others, and would not result in additional costs to LEAs for grant administration unless fully paid from Federal funds, including unfunded mandates. The bill would severely limit the Secretary’s waiver authority, passed in 1994, which Secretary Duncan has used extensively.

In her *Politics K-12* blog, McNeil’s interview with Thomas Gentzel, NSBA’s newly appointed executive director, quotes

him as saying, “All too often these activities have impacted local school district policy and programs in ways that have been beyond a specific legislative intent. School board leaders are simply asking that local flexibility and decision-making not be eroded through regulatory actions.”

The Secretary did lay out several items for the second-term agenda including reauthorization of ESEA after full implementation of state waivers and passing gun control legislation. However, as McNeil notes, “But for the most part, school board members didn’t want to hear about his agenda. Instead, they sent a clearer message: Your policies continue to overreach into our territory.”

122 Additional Head Start Grantees Required to Re-Compete for Funds

The Department of Health and Human Services recently announced the names of 122 additional Head Start grantees that will be required to re-compete for continued funding. This is the second cohort of Head Start grantees that have been identified for “designation renewal.” Funding applications for replacement of the initial cohort have been reviewed, and announcements of winners will be forthcoming sometime this Spring.

Among the 122 newly-identified grantees, 36 states are represented. Only two of nine Early Learning *Race to the Top* award-winning states (Delaware and Rhode Island) did not include Head Start grantees slated for re-competition. About ten percent (N=13) of those on the list were operated by local or county governments including school districts, regional service centers,

and/or city or county agencies. The remaining 109 Head Start grantees were run by community action agencies or single-purpose agencies. Overall, about one-third of all Head Start programs nationally are operated by public schools. Three of the largest Head Start grantees -- New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles -- competed for continued funding and were part of the initial cohort of grantees identified last year.

Related to Head Start funding, the funds allocated recently for Hurricane Sandy relief include about \$300 million for 25 Head Start grantees in New York and Connecticut.

For the list go to:
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/dr/pdf/2nd-cohort-competition.pdf>

Miscellaneous (a)

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, the number of public charter schools increased by 381 to 6,000 schools in 2012-13, enrolling 275,000 students more than last year -- the single largest-year increase since the movement began 20 years ago. Approximately 2.3 million students are now being served by public charter schools, comprising more than five percent of the public school enrollment nationwide. Five states are responsible for a net gain of 237 new schools this year: California (81), Florida (67), Texas (41), New York (25), and Michigan (13). Altogether, these states account for more than 2,400 of the nation's public charter schools. According to the *Charters & Choice* blog on Education Week (January 15th), states which topped the list of closures in 2011-12 were California (28), Florida (17), Wisconsin (16), and Arizona,

Georgia, Louisiana and Michigan which closed ten schools each.

As we have noted in previous TechMIS reports, groups such as the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools have recently begun to promote the transfer of best practices from charter schools to public schools to minimize political sensitivities and tensions. More than 40 states have state laws allowing charter schools or recent increases in caps on student enrollments and/or numbers of charters. One of the principal goals of the charter schools movement for leading advocates 20 years ago -- including Dr. Joe Nathan, now of the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota -- was to increase competition with public schools while providing choice alternatives for parents.

Miscellaneous (b)

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment consortium has released two draft accommodation policies for a wide range of students with disabilities. The first accommodation will allow passages, test items, and answer choices on English language arts/literacy assessments to be read to students who have a disability that prevents them from accessing printed text or who have not yet learned Braille. As reported in *Fritzwire*, the second accommodation will permit the use of calculators by students who do not have the ability to calculate single digit numbers for all items on math assessments, except those that measure fluency; fluency is a skill required by the CCSS in some early grades. Both accommodations will have specific eligibility criteria which will limit the

number of students who will be provided accommodations. One of the criteria being discussed is the requirement that eligible students will have participated in an RTI approach which should increase the demand for components, materials, and training-related products to implementation of RTI. The entire PARCC accommodation policy manual is scheduled to be made available for comment in April 2013; it will include writing accommodations. As Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog notes, Martha Thurlow of the National Center for Education Outcomes, a leading advocate of well-implemented RTI approaches, helped "shape the policies" regarding accommodations.

such as instructional software and professional development. If a district staff person is interested in purchasing a non-E-Rate eligible product or service, then he or she should contact the district E-Rate office to determine whether a check was requested for the refund amount through the BEAR process and, if so, whether some of that money can be used to purchase the desired product or service. The accompanying chart shows the funding commitments greater than \$50,000. It should be noted that more than half of the commitments are to Texas school districts with Laredo ISD getting more than \$13 million.

Miscellaneous (c)

E-Rate Update on Districts With "Potential" E-Rate Refunds for Purchasing Non-eligible Products and Services

As we attempt to do on a regular basis, we have included a list of districts that received funding commitments from the SLD, during the last quarter, for applications submitted back to 2005. We believe that most of the funding commitment letters represent appeals that were filed by districts when they were notified that certain requests in their applications were denied. In many cases, these districts went ahead and purchased the product in question, paying the whole pre-discount price. Because the SLD eventually found many of these appeals to be meritorious, these districts can request a check instead of a credit through the so-called BEAR process. Those districts doing so can use the discount refund to purchase non-eligible E-Rate products and services

**E-Rate
Funding Year 2012, Quarter 4 (Oct-Dec)
Commitments**

(greater than \$50,000)

Applicant	City	State	Amount Committed
2005 Commitments			
KANSAS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	KANSAS CITY	MO	\$128,487
2008 Commitments			
TUBA CITY BOARDING SCHOOL	TUBA CITY	AZ	\$798,103
KLAMATH-TRINITY JT UN SCH DIST	HOOPA	CA	\$368,965
2009 Commitments			
LA JOYA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA JOYA	TX	\$2,397,361
LA FERIA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA FERIA	TX	\$1,633,156
BROWNSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY	BROWNSVILLE	TX	\$1,433,851
KANSAS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	KANSAS CITY	MO	\$1,154,326
PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO I S D	PHARR	TX	\$715,104
WEST OSO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	CORPUS CHRISTI	TX	\$549,234
SOUTHWEST INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN ANTONIO	TX	\$343,826
TWIN RIVERS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	NORTH HIGHLANDS	CA	\$197,508
SAN DIEGO INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN DIEGO	TX	\$181,619
SANTA ROSA INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SANTA ROSA	TX	\$143,915
MERCEDES INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	MERCEDES	TX	\$127,236
KINGSVILLE INDEP SCHOOL DIST	KINGSVILLE	TX	\$51,343
2010 Commitments			
LAREDO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LAREDO	TX	\$13,500,662
PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	SAN JUAN	PR	\$6,943,552
PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO I S D	PHARR	TX	\$5,699,495
PROGRESO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	PROGRESO	TX	\$2,413,107
TANGIPAOHA PARISH SCHOOL DIST	AMITE	LA	\$2,213,486
KINGSVILLE INDEP SCHOOL DIST	KINGSVILLE	TX	\$1,293,050
HIDALGO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	HIDALGO	TX	\$1,155,863
SCHOOL CITY OF EAST CHICAGO	EAST CHICAGO	IN	\$885,290
KANSAS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	KANSAS CITY	MO	\$882,609
SCHENECTADY CITY SCHOOL DIST	SCHENECTADY	NY	\$847,475
MERCEDES INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	MERCEDES	TX	\$792,711

WEST OSO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	CORPUS CHRISTI	TX	\$714,866
BEAUMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DIST	BEAUMONT	CA	\$694,908
SOUTHWEST INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN ANTONIO	TX	\$654,831
SALEM-KEIZER SCHOOL DIST 24 J	SALEM	OR	\$629,258
MONTEREY PENINSULA UNIF SCHS	MONTEREY	CA	\$471,277
ZUNI PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	ZUNI	NM	\$447,771
GOLDEN PLAINS UNIF SCH DIST	SAN JOAQUIN	CA	\$337,428
SANTA ROSA INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SANTA ROSA	TX	\$317,871
LA JOYA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA JOYA	TX	\$313,588
GREEN COUNTY	GREENSBURG	KY	\$270,541
SAN FELIPE-DEL RIO CISD	DEL RIO	TX	\$242,515
BONITA UNIF SCHOOL DISTRICT	SAN DIMAS	CA	\$238,485
HOLY REDEEMER CHRISTIAN ACAD	MILWAUKEE	WI	\$230,987
TAFT INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	TAFT	TX	\$210,199
YESHIVA SHAAREI YOSHER SCHOOL	BROOKLYN	NY	\$190,800
CHEDER CHABAD OF MONSEY SCHOOL	SPRING VALLEY	NY	\$188,367
GARDEN CITY UNIF SCH DIST 457	GARDEN CITY	KS	\$169,181
MONTGOMERY CO SCHOOL DISTRICT	MOUNT STERLING	KY	\$157,971
CENTRAL CONGREGATION OF YETEV LEV	BROOKLYN	NY	\$149,585
LA FERIA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA FERIA	TX	\$143,673
BATH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	OWINGSVILLE	KY	\$136,616
CONGREGATION KOL TORAH	BROOKLYN	NY	\$132,924
COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DIST 218	OAK LAWN	IL	\$124,361
UNIONTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	UNIONTOWN	PA	\$101,919
LAMAR COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	VERNON	AL	\$100,474
HUNTERDON COUNTY E S C	LEBANON	NJ	\$94,624
MADISON COMM UNIT SCH DIST 12	MADISON	IL	\$86,971
BROOKS COUNTY INDEP SCH DIST	FALFURRIAS	TX	\$80,126
WASHINGTON UNIFIED SCHOOL DIST	W SACRAMENTO	CA	\$79,705
ORANGEBURG CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT FIVE	ORANGEBURG	SC	\$78,812
SAN PERLITA INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN PERLITA	TX	\$71,959
YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT 7	YAKIMA	WA	\$69,972
CONG BAIS YAKOV NECHEMYA	BROOKLYN	NY	\$69,121
CHICAGO CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	CHICAGO	IL	\$68,074
NEW HORIZONS REG ED CENTER	HAMPTON	VA	\$66,665
SAN DIEGO INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN DIEGO	TX	\$63,250
DETROIT EDISON PUBLIC SCHOOL ACADEMY	DETROIT	MI	\$62,641
IRONWOOD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	IRONWOOD	MI	\$62,524
VIREVA NURSERY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN	CHICAGO	IL	\$59,729
SHORELINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DIST	TOMALES	CA	\$51,425
YESHIVA CONGREGATION	COTTAGE GROVE	MN	\$50,656

Alabama Update

February 2013

As reported in the *Curriculum Matters* blog on Education Week (February 1st), Alabama has withdrawn from membership in both the Partnership for Assessment of Reading for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment State consortia for assessing Common Core Standards. In the past, Alabama's membership has been in a "participating" or "advisory" role in the consortia which means it was part of discussions but had no voting power. Alabama officials are quoted as saying that it has decided to go in another direction, but still move ahead to implement the Common Core State Standards. In a related February 1st blog, *Ed Money Watch* on NewAmerica.net, Ann Hyslop referred to an earlier posting that said Alabama was ahead of the curve with its planning to implement a more rigorous assessment to measure students' post-secondary preparedness which would be aligned to the ACT battery of assessments -- EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT. Like Kentucky, Hyslop said Alabama decided to use an established measure of college readiness which was more acceptable to the postsecondary college community and the use of the ACT COMPASS exam to determine whether students require remediation. She also noted that she would not be surprised if other states decide to go the ACT route rather than stick with the consortia.

Alaska Update

February 2013

Alaska Governor Sean Parnell has set, as a Statewide goal, an increase in the State's graduation rate by 20 percentage points over the next seven years. According to the Anchorage Daily News, Alaska's current graduation rate is under 70 percent. His approach involves raised expectations of both students and teachers, as well as improving reading instruction for students in kindergarten through third grade. In his annual address to the legislature, Governor Parnell said achieving this goal would require improved reading instruction in grades K-3 and "unwavering" focus on the lowest-performing schools. Further, he advocates continuing the State's digital learning initiative that aims to provide a laptop for every student and teacher.

Arizona Update

February 2013

According to *Ed Money Watch Roundup* (January 18th), Arizona has proposed joining the increasing number of states using performance-based budgeting for higher education (i.e., number of graduates not admissions) and K-12 schools (graduates and other measures).

Governor Jan Brewer is proposing to adjust the State's K-12 funding formula to include school performance and student outcomes. Schools showing year-to-year improvements would receive funding in addition to their base formula funding.

Arkansas Update

February 2013

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush recently urged Arkansas lawmakers to expand the use of charter schools according to Education Week. Bush said, “Fifty-six years after the Little Rock Nine, our most disadvantaged kids are the ones least likely to receive a quality education when they’re the ones who need it the most,” and this makes access to quality education “the civil rights issue of our time.” He recommended that Arkansas State legislators find ways to expand educational opportunities through charter schools. Specifically, he encouraged the State to approve a measure that would remove the Arkansas Board of Education’s authority to approve charter school applications, and to appoint an independent Statewide authorizer instead. This would ensure that local school districts did not “just reject out of hand high quality charters.”

California Update

February 2013

In his State of the State address, Governor Jerry Brown proposed a new funding formula with more aid to schools with higher proportions of disadvantaged students. Analysis of a previous version of the proposed plan indicates that a district with 80 percent disadvantaged students could receive an additional \$3,520 per child. Gov. Brown advocates distributing more money to local school boards in order to let them decide the best way to distribute the money rather than requiring that allocated funds be spent for specific State-identified categories of education services (i.e., more than 50 funded categorical programs exist).

The Mercury News reports that California's State Board of Education will allow middle-school students to take either Algebra I or an alternate course that includes some algebra. The State's new standardized tests will focus on the alternate course which will be aligned to the Common Core curriculum. Even though it's commonly believed that Algebra I is the single best predictor of college graduation, the article reports that advocates support a more practical way of teaching math that recognizes that not all students can pass Algebra in middle school. Rather, students should take Algebra when they are ready to do so, according to State Department officials.

According to the Los Angeles Times, Governor Brown is proposing to limit the number of credits community college students can accumulate and to change the State funding formula to pay colleges for students who complete courses. This could have an enormous impact not only on two-year colleges in California, but also elsewhere. His proposals are among the most significant policy shifts in California in years. Most of the 2.4 million students in California entering college are unprepared, with 85 percent needing remedial English and 75 percent needing remedial math. By moving to performance-based funding, concerns have been expressed by certain college officials that difficult-to-complete courses could be cut and students could switch to less demanding classes. The Governor has also proposed to provide nearly \$17 million toward this initiative; currently about 27 percent of students take at least one course

online. The Governor's plan also proposes to allocate \$316 million to shift adult education and apprenticeship programs out of K-12 to community colleges, with students taking adult education having to pay the full cost of instruction.

Education Week's Politics K-12 blog reports that eight districts, including LAUSD, representing over one million students, which are part of the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) are likely to request NCLB flexibility waivers in light of USED's recent disapproval of the California Department of Education's Statewide request. According to the blog, USED "is giving serious consideration" to the proposal, which was originally discussed during the Council of the Great City Schools legislative conference three years ago. In addition to LAUSD, the initiative's leading districts include Long Beach, Fresno, Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, Sanger and Clovis. Most of these districts, at that time, sought relief from NCLB sanctions. The Superintendent in Long Beach, Chris Steinhauser indicated that NCLB provisions had actually cost his district money (about \$18 million) because the district, at that time, had no schools in improvement and, hence, under the 4% SEA set-aside, money was taken away from the district to be sent to other districts which had low-performing schools identified for improvement. Prior to becoming superintendent, Steinhauser was an influential Title I director in formulation of national Title I policy. According to Education Week's District Dossier blog, L.A. Superintendent John Deasey said the CORE consortium planned to implement a request soon. He also noted that the CORE districts "have already been working on a number of reform initiatives including teacher and administrator evaluations that have put the district on a faster-track path than the rest of the state." If USED considers any formal requests from the CORE consortium, serious implications could include some Texas school districts applying for a waiver and further pressures for ESEA reauthorization which were discussed during the February state waiver hearings in the Senate (see related Washington Update item). As previously reported, during his first speech to the CCSSO shortly after the election, Secretary Duncan indicated that after negative response from a number of chiefs, district waivers would not be on the table. However, in a subsequent interview with Michele McNeil (*Politics K-12*), he indicated that district waivers would still be on the table.

Colorado Update

February 2013

In his State of the State address, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper highlighted the State's \$30 million Federal Race to the Top grant which will support early childhood education and early literacy. The State hopes to serve as many as 6,500 new preschoolers and kindergarteners. According to Education Week, the Governor also mentioned Colorado's efforts to intervene with struggling readers by the end of third grade and recent measures of teacher effectiveness.

A bill has been introduced in the Colorado legislature that would increase funding for English language learners to five years rather than the two-year maximum currently; only one percent of ELLs reach English proficiency within two years. According to Education Week (January 16th), the Republican-backed bill has support from Democrats as it would also direct the State education department to track progress of English language learners until they graduate from high school.

Delaware Update

February 2013

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Delaware is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. The Delaware Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS II) for evaluating teachers is expected to be fully implemented, incorporating student growth measures for teachers of non-tested grades and subjects. Delaware will also fully implement the CCSS and college readiness programs, including the Middle School Preparation Program. During Year 3, the Education Insight Portal for educator communications will be expanded and more teachers will be encouraged to use its capabilities.

District of Columbia Update

February 2013

The U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives indicates that, during Year 3, D.C. is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities. Its RTTT team expects to play a major role in a tiered system of support which is aligned with the District's approved ESEA flexibility request. The District will continue to provide professional development for educators on implementing CCSS and plans to promote its CCSS resource website. During RTTT Year 3, the District plans to finalize the design of its Teacher Preparation Program Scorecard and to launch its STEM Learning Network. Two competitive grant programs -- Charter School Teacher Pipeline and Professional Learning Communities for Effectiveness -- will be expanded to include additional schools and teachers.

Florida Update

February 2013

USED's recent Year 2 report on Florida's implementation plans for Year 3 of its Race to the Top grant shows a number of initiatives that have begun or continued. Under standards and assessments reforms, the State plans to:

- implement CCSS in grade 1 and provide additional training and professional development;
- continue piloting math and reading formative assessments to be implemented in Year 4;
- help LEAs develop assessments for hard-to-measure subject areas; and
- make enhancements to teacher standards, instructional tools, and student tutorial.

The State will provide users access to its single sign-on portal later this year and development of additional training to support educators will continue. Under the priority of improving great teachers and leaders:

- the principal evaluation system will be revised and begun to be used in some districts;
- work on a more rigorous teacher certification exam will be developed, especially in the area of mathematics, by the end of the year;
- new mathematics and science teachers will receive training in new curriculum standards; and
- high-engagement instructional practices on-the-job training and grade-specific mentoring.

In the area of turning around low-performing schools, additional charter school operators will be recruited to open schools in feeder patterns of low-performing schools and work will continue to expand STEM into career and technical education programs.

Governor Rick Scott has announced that all 23 Florida's colleges that offer bachelor's degrees have agreed to make available a \$10,000 degree program in at least one area. They normally cost \$13,200 over four years. A similar challenge to Texas colleges has been made by Governor Rick Perry and ten universities have agreed to offer \$10,000 degrees.

Georgia Update

February 2013

Governor Nathan Deal, in his State of the State address, asked that the legislature allocate additional funding to education to cover the costs of increasing public school enrollment. Of the overall 2014 education funding request of \$7.4 billion, \$147 million would be allocated for newly enrolled students. Additionally, the Governor wants to add ten days to the preschool calendar, restoring earlier cuts.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Georgia is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities in Year 3. The State plans to work with an outside consultant firm to enhance its RTTT communications plan. It will pilot test the second phase of its formative assessment toolkit and proceed with benchmark assessments. Georgia will focus much of the RTTT resources on its educator evaluation system including rigorous ongoing feedback, educator communication systems, analyses concerning student growth, and implementation of the evaluation electronic platform.

Hawaii Update

February 2013

Governor Neil Abercrombie's State of the State address advocated greater State education funding in three areas: (1) early education, (2) technology infrastructure and digital devices, and (3) curriculum.

Education Week's *Politics K-12* blog observes that Hawaii has made considerable progress in meeting the requirements of its \$75 million Race to the Top grant. Despite this, it is still struggling with implementation of its teacher- and principal-evaluation plans. It has not reached an approved contract with its teachers' union that enforces a new teacher-evaluation system that is being expanded from a small pilot project and ties the evaluation to teacher salaries.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Hawaii is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. The State will continue its transition to the Common Core State Standards, provide job-embedded professional development for all teachers, begin implementation of the College and Career Ready (CCR) diploma starting with this year's entering freshmen. Educators in 81 schools will participate in the second year of the State's educator evaluation system, including a pilot of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Students in the 18 low-performing schools included in the Zones of School Innovation (ZSI) will have extended learning time and ZSI educators will have additional professional development days.

Indiana Update

February 2013

In his 2013-15 State budget, Indiana Governor Mike Pence has proposed K-12 education spending that increases by one percent in each of the two years, but the 2014-15 increase would be “performance-based” for “outstanding schools and teachers.” According to the Indianapolis Star, the expected increase would be \$63 million in 2013-14 and \$64 million in 2014-15, the latter of which would be based on such factors as school quality, graduation rate, and third-grade reading assessments. The Governor also proposes to increase teacher excellence grants by \$6 million to increase pay for high-performing teachers.

The Governor, in his State of the State address, also called for expanded school choice through vouchers. Additionally he wants to establish “regional work councils” that include educators and businesses with the purpose of developing curricula that would ensure students have opportunities for high-paying jobs that are in demand.

Iowa Update

February 2013

Iowa Governor Terry Branstad's State of the State address emphasized recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. He proposed a \$160 million teacher quality initiative to recruit top educators, reward effective performance, and keep them in the State. According to Education Week, he also proposed an expansion of the existing *Teach Iowa* program to provide a total of \$20,000 in tuition reimbursement for top college education students who agree to work in the State for five years.

Kansas Update

February 2013

In his recent State of the State speech, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback proposed a new reading program called the *Kansas Reads to Succeed Initiative*, according to Education Week. Noting that 29 percent of the State's fourth-graders cannot read at a basic level, the Governor included in his proposed initiative:

- requiring third-graders to demonstrate adequate reading abilities before being promoted to fourth grade;
- providing incentives to elementary schools that show the most improved fourth-grade reading scores; and
- allocating \$12 million to support innovative programs to help struggling readers.

Maryland Update

February 2013

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Maryland is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. The State will continue to prepare educators for full implementation of the Common Core State Standards in the 2013-14 school year and the PARCC assessments in 2014-15. In RTTT Year 3, Maryland school districts will participate in another pilot test of the new principal/teacher evaluation system, with full implementation expected in 2013-14. The State's Curriculum Management System and Learning Management System will be available to educators in Year 3.

Massachusetts Update

February 2013

According to Education Week, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has proposed a school investment plan intended to expand access to education for all children. The plan would cost \$500 million in its first year and increase to nearly \$1 billion annually over the next four years.

Among the key elements of the Governor's plan are:

- universal access to early education from birth through age 5;
- full funding for K-12 education;
- extended school days in high-need schools;
- making college more affordable;
- expanding efforts by community colleges to provide students with critical thinking skills;
- and
- addressing persistent achievement gaps for students with disabilities, minorities, and English language learners.

More specifically, the Governor's budget plan includes: \$131 million for "high-quality early education" for children from birth to age 5; \$226 million in aid to local school districts; and \$152 million to make college more affordable and accessible for lower and middle income students. For high need middle schools, an additional \$5 million for expanded learning time is requested.

Education Week reports that Massachusetts' four-year graduation rate has improved for six years in a row. Some of the biggest gains have come from Hispanic students and students with disabilities, along with African-American graduation rates. The State's annual dropout rate declined to 2.5 percent in the 2011-12 school year.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Massachusetts is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. The State plans to implement fully the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks which incorporate the Common Core State Standards and all RTTT-participating school districts will

implement new educator evaluation systems. Massachusetts will expand its supports for low-performing schools, including Wraparound Zones grants and the district review process, to Level 3 schools. The State will continue to develop data systems and curricular materials to support RTTT initiatives.

Minnesota Update

February 2013

According to Minnesota Public Radio, Governor Mark Dayton has shown strong support for early education in his budget proposal, which includes an additional \$92 million for early learning scholarships and other help to families to afford high-quality childcare. In addition to extending State support for full-day kindergarten, the Governor's plan increases the funding to schools by \$118 million. Tom Doohan, President of the State teachers union, Education Minnesota, said, "...that's refreshing compared to the flat budget seen in the past few years. Where in the past we've either had to fight off cuts or just fight to get to flat . . . we're starting in January already ahead, and that is really a good sign." Although Dayton did not offer to immediately pay back of the approximately \$1 billion borrowed from schools to balance the State's budget in recent years, he said that districts would get their money back by FY 2017. District officials would rather see new monies at this point than have the old debt repaid right away. Since there's a gap in what the Federal government mandates for special education and what it actually pays of about \$600 to \$1,000 per student, the Governor proposes increasing special education funding to school districts by \$125 million.

Mississippi Update

February 2013

According to the Hechinger Report, a number of states are considering holding high schools accountable for the costs of graduates who require remedial education at the community college or undergraduate level. Lawmakers in Mississippi have plans to introduce two bills, which put the onus directly on high schools for the costs of college remediation. The proposed bills would require each university and community college to report, to the State, the high school and school district of every student receiving remedial education. State agencies would determine the cost of remediation for those students and withhold funding from the school districts that did not matriculate college-ready students. Unprepared high school graduates who attempt college coursework and costs for remedial services for these students have long been debated. Opponents of the proposed measures say its requirements are “illogical” because money is being taken away from educating current students; and there are more systemic issues at play, including that there is a lack of alignment between high school and higher education curricula which impacts the necessity of remedial education at post-secondary institutions. Nationwide, about 50 percent of undergraduates and as many as 70 percent of those entering community colleges are placed in remedial courses. With costs to states for college remediation totaling nearly \$4 billion nationally, this has been a contentious issue.

Missouri Update

February 2013

As reported in the *Digital Education* blog on Education Week (January 22nd), the Missouri Association of School Administrators, in a recent survey, found that only 42 percent of district officials believe they have adequate technology to administer computer-based assessments in 2014-15 during the planned CCSS rollout. An additional 18 percent are unsure about having the necessary technology to do the assessment. Sixty-five percent said that the biggest obstacle they face in moving to online tests is having the time needed to test students and testing so many students at one time, drawing time from other online instruction. Thirteen percent said they did not anticipate any problems moving toward the CCSS assessment. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they have not conducted a study of the financial implications of implementing new technology for the exams and most feel the State should take on more of the financial load.

Nevada Update

February 2013

Governor Brian Sandoval's education budget request for FY 2014 is \$1.8 billion, as presented in his State of the State address. The two-year budget for FY 2014 and FY 2015 includes \$135 million in new education spending for longer kindergarten classes, school choice, teacher quality initiatives, and Teach for America, and specifically \$20 million in new funding for early education and expanding all-day kindergarten in at-risk schools and \$14 million for English language learners.

According to the *Ed Money Watch* blog, if sequestration occurs, the Nevada Department of Education would lose between \$25 to \$27 million in Federal funds which are currently used to pay the salaries of 90-140 employees. Between ten and 20 employees would be laid off immediately. As the [Las Vegas Review Journal](#) notes, the Nevada State Department of Education is one of the smallest in the country with major funding for employees coming from different Federal funding set-asides for SEA administration and some competitive grant programs.

New Mexico Update

February 2013

In her State of the State address, New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez requested \$100 million in new education spending of the roughly \$2.5 billion total public schools budget proposed. She is seeking approval of \$2.5 million to expand the availability of Advanced Placement courses and train more teachers to teach them and to provide fee waivers for students from low-income families. A total of \$4.7 million is targeted for struggling schools and more than \$11 million for efforts to recruit and retain teachers and offer rewards to those who demonstrate success with students.

According to the [Alamogordo Daily News](#), almost half of New Mexico's third-grade students cannot read at grade level. Last year, the State legislature considered measures addressing the issue but could not reach agreement. This year, Governor Martinez has asked the legislature to pass a bill that would limit social promotions. During last year's deliberations, the Governor supported a bill that would bar parents from vetoing a recommendation to hold their child back. She also agreed to focus on remediation before retention. Opponents of the approach say parents and teachers are best equipped to make decisions about holding a student in grade.

According to the *On Special Education* blog on [Education Week](#) (January 30th), New Mexico could lose as much as \$93 million in IDEA special education funding because it failed to meet maintenance of effort requirements in FY 2010 (\$53.7 million) and FY 2011 (\$39.7 million). The [Santa Fe New Mexican](#) reports that the State had requested waivers for both years, but recently learned such waivers would not be approved, which USED confirmed recently. A number of other states have also requested such waivers over the last three years, including South Carolina and Kansas. The South Carolina situation involved more than \$100 million and was the subject of negotiation between USED and the South Carolina Department of Education. Early last year, USED decided not to approve the waiver for which the state has now filed an appeal. If New Mexico does not appropriate additional State funding to make up for an agreed

upon amount of the maintenance of effort deficiency reported by USED, then pressures will be placed on districts to make up some of the differences which could create uncertainties in the district-based special education market niche.

The University of New Mexico has redesigned its remedial math program in an effort to improve its pass and retention rates. Located in a new math lab, the new course -- Math 120 -- allows students to use computers to learn at their own pace and provides teachers and tutors to assist them. Last Fall, the university pilot tested the course; currently more than 1,000 programs are enrolled in the program. University representatives acknowledge that the self-paced nature of the program makes it difficult to keep students engaged.

New York Update

February 2013

As part of its application for Race to the Top funding, New York State passed legislation requiring 20 percent of teacher evaluations to be based on student improvement on State tests. The remaining parts of teacher ratings are locally-determined measures (20 percent) and such measures as classroom observations and parent or student surveys (60 percent). According to Education Week, New York City is one of a few school districts that has not complied with the requirement due to the City's inability to reach agreement with its teachers' union representing 75,000 teachers. The union says that talks are continuing. If no agreement is reached, the school district is at risk of losing a total of \$450 million in Federal and State funding.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, New York is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. All school districts will implement new teacher and principal evaluation systems and all grade 3-8 English and math assessments will reflect the Common Core State Standards. In the 2013-14 school year, New York's Regents exams in Algebra I, Geometry, and high school English will reflect the CCSS and in 2014-15, the Algebra II Regents exam will reflect the CCSS. The State will launch its Education Data Portal (EDP) and will add nine new graduate teacher preparation programs to the two that began in Year 2.

New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg has indicted the State's new teacher evaluations as "shams," according to Education Week (January 28, 2013). The Mayor asserts that the 2010 law that ties school aid to union approval of teacher evaluations is irresponsible because unions have no incentive to approve effective teacher evaluations. Because the Mayor and the City's unions failed to agree on a local system to evaluate teachers by the January 17th deadline, New York City Schools are expected to lose \$250 million in State aid as a penalty. This loss results in a lower base of State aid for years to come, and, according to the Mayor, continues to shortchange New York City's one million students. District level teacher evaluations were mandated for all

states, including New York that received Race to the Top grants; 99 percent of New York's 700 school districts met the deadline for putting in place teacher and principal evaluations. Although the City has a \$19.7 billion operating budget, this year's loss of \$250 million in State aid and another \$200 million in grants will impact services to students.

North Carolina Update

February 2013

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, North Carolina is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3 including full implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The State will offer comprehensive professional development, including nearly 100 regional face-to-face sessions and online resources. North Carolina will continue to support educators through its Regional Leadership Academies, Distinguished Leadership in Practice program, and the North Carolina Teacher Corps. It will also begin implementing its two major technology initiatives -- the Cloud and Home Base. Coaches will continue to provide support to the State's lowest-performing schools.

Ohio Update

February 2013

As reported by The Columbus Dispatch (January 31st), Ohio Governor John Kasich has proposed a two-year education plan that would include an expansion of the State tax-funded voucher program to increase new opportunities for low-income students. The State's \$15.1 billion education plan would also increase State aid to schools by six percent in the first year, and 3.2 percent in the second year. A new \$300 million "Straight A Fund" would provide \$90 million for tutoring and intervention services for students reading below grade level under the State's newly enacted third-grade reading guarantee. The new voucher program would provide up to \$4,250 a year per student for private school tuition beginning next year. About half of the 1.8 million students in Ohio would be eligible. About 16,000 students currently receive vouchers under Ohio's Ed Choice Scholarship Program. Under the Governor's proposal, districts would no longer have to pay Education Service Centers \$6.50 per child for services, but rather would only pay for services they want.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Ohio is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. Specifically, the State will pilot or implement the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES) with plans for full implementation by the 2013-14 school year.

Oregon Update

February 2013

Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber has advanced an ambitious education goal, called 40-40-20, that aims to have 40 percent of the State's adults attain a four-year college degree or equivalent, 40 percent attain a two-year degree or equivalent, and 20 percent of the population graduate with a high school diploma. The Governor's annual address to the legislature indicated that to fund Oregon's public education system adequately will require that the legislature undertake comprehensive reform of State's public finance system.

Pennsylvania Update

February 2013

According to Education Week's Digital Education blog, Pennsylvania State Education Secretary, Ron Tomalis rejected all eight cyber charter school applications for next school year citing shortcomings across curriculum, finance, and operations. The Secretary elaborated, "The proposals submitted by the applicants lack adequate evidence and sufficient information [on] how prospective students would be offered quality academic programs. In addition, the financial plans presented call into question each applicant's ability to maintain a long-term, viable educational program for the benefit of Pennsylvania students." Scrutiny of applications is becoming more stringent due to new data showing that the number of Pennsylvania charters making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) -- a requirement under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act -- has dropped significantly when scores were calculated using a new more rigorous method at the direction of the US Department of Education. Under these new calculations, the number of Pennsylvania charters Statewide making AYP dropped from 77 to 43; and none of the cyber charters subject to AYP met the requirement, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Rhode Island Update

February 2013

The U.S. Department of Education’s report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives indicates that Rhode Island is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. School districts will develop units of study aligned to the Common Core State Standards and will fully implement new educator evaluation systems that include student growth data, differentiated educator performance levels, and identify professional growth supports for educators. During Year 3, Rhode Island will also pilot test new compensation structures for educators and place more teachers certified through alternative routes.

According to the *Beyond School* blog on Education Week (January 21st), high school students in Providence, Rhode Island can receive credit for learning experiences by earning “digital badges,” which, according to the Providence After-School Alliance (PASA), is the first such project in the country. Students can earn badges for academic work out of school which can then be approved for credit by the school system. PASA evaluates student progress and awards badges. Funding is provided by Mozilla Foundation and the McArthur Foundation.

South Dakota Update

February 2013

South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard aims to reduce the number of students entering college who are required to take remedial courses by moving remedial work back into high school. In his State of the State address, the Governor said students identified “at risk” according to their ACT scores would be targeted for remedial help while they are still enrolled in high school. Ideally, this will lessen the rate of dropping out in college and avoid costs of postsecondary remedial courses that do not contribute to matriculation requirements.

Tennessee Update

February 2013

In his State of the State address to the Tennessee legislature, Governor Bill Haslam called for spending increases in higher education and buying new computers and other technologies for elementary, middle, and high schools. He also endorsed a limited school voucher program, but would not infringe on traditional public school funding. According to TheTennessean.com, about \$51 million would be allocated to technology upgrades in schools, \$34 million for capital needs, and \$35 million for increased teacher salaries. He also announced a partnership with the Western Governor's University to establish an online university.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's report on Year 2 implementation of Race to the Top initiatives, Tennessee is beginning or continuing a number of RTTT activities during Year 3. Specifically, the State will make enhance its existing Field Service Centers (FSCs) -- which will now be called Centers of Regional Excellence (COREs) -- to provide content-specific support to schools and districts. Tennessee will also make changes to its education evaluation system to reflect feedback from principals and teachers.

Virginia Update

February 2013

The Virginia legislature has passed Governor Robert McDonnell's education reform bill. It would require annual evaluations which could be used to fire principals and teachers after one bad appraisal. Unlike last year's rejected bill, this one is supported by the Virginia Education Association and does not address tenure.

As reported by the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), Governor McDonnell proposed his "most dramatic K-12 education initiative of this year" by proposing to create a Statewide school district that would manage all low-performing schools that currently lack accreditation. The so-called Opportunity Education Institution would be run by an eleven-member board doing whatever it takes to have such schools achieve full accreditation. State and local funding would follow the child to the district. Currently, four schools would be affected -- one in Alexandria, two in Norfolk, and one in Petersburg. The Virginia Association of School Superintendents, in a recent meeting, expressed concerns that a private firm will be hired to run the school under contract. The new institution would be modeled after the Recovery School District in Louisiana created in 2003 which operates 80 schools.

Wyoming Update

February 2013

Passed quickly by the State legislature, Wyoming Governor Matt Mead has signed a bill which would reduce the role of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Office to a ceremonial one, as reported by the Casper Star-Tribune. According to the *State Ed Watch* blog on Education Week (January 30th), there has been a long running battle between State superintendent Cindy Hill and the legislature regarding an independent audit which alleged numerous problems with Hill's implementation of the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act. Superintendent Hill has also removed some NCLB accountability tests which USED argued it should continue. Moreover, the State has not applied for an NCLB waiver. The Governor has appointed a "Director of the Department of Education" who will have power over the entire education department.

A bill passed by the Wyoming Senate would provide for the development of a curriculum focusing on natural resources and energy to be taught in all K-12 schools. Officials from the energy industry would provide materials and assistance. The Governor's office would be responsible for the development of the curriculum.