MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 14, 2016
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke and Dr. Suzanne Thouvenelle
SUBJ: USED “Guidance” on New Title II and Title IV ESSA Provisions; State Funding; Pay for Success Initiative; Digital Citizenship; Pre-K Early Childhood Development Guidance; Charter School Funding; and New SEL Commission

This TechMIS issue includes two Special Reports, a Special Funding Update on Title I and SIG, and several updates on important developments affecting some TechMIS subscribers.

We are working on a Special Report based on our analysis to identify implications for most TechMIS subscribers, which can reasonably be expected under a Trump Administration and GOP-controlled Congress. Aside from numerous sound bites on education issues, without more knowledge about actual plans, it is difficult to ascertain the extent and nature of those implications. Beyond the likelihood of rescinding of the Obama/Duncan/King regulations, such as supplement-not-supplant, one can only speculate on those implications, which will also be influenced by the final selection of a new Secretary of Education whose power, in certain areas however, will be limited under ESSA (i.e., prohibitions drafted by GOP sponsors). Stay tuned for a preliminary report shortly.

The first Special Report highlights opportunities in the new USED “guidance” for software and technology providers in the ESSA Title IV consolidated grant program. The guidance suggests that under the most likely assumption about funding levels being appropriated for this coming year (about $700 million) that the best prospects may indeed be districts with high priorities on technology which are receiving less than $30,000 in Title IV funds rather than districts receiving triple that amount or more. The “guidance,” however, raises some questions that require further clarification, as we note.

The second Special Report summarizes USED’s recent guidance on Title II Part A (the old Teacher Quality NCLB version), which provides states and districts wider uses of funds in more flexible ways which can provide opportunities for most TechMIS subscribers, including for-profit organizations.
Also included is a Special Funding Update on Title I allocations and SIG funding. Many districts have halted or “slowed down” Title I purchasing due to corrections being made to their final Title I district allocations made by USED and SEAs in October. Purchasing should increase in November-December, but budgets and sequester cap issues could arise in January-February resulting in another slowdown of purchasing until March-April.

Official SEA “invitations” for new eligible schools to submit applications for new SIG funding in most states were closed by October. However, opportunities for firms with “eligible” interventions for SIG schools may exist in the district Title I program, which provided re-programmed funding over the last six months to continue funding SIG schools or new SIG schools due to a nine-month delay in USED allocating states and districts their final FY 2016 SIG funding (see the October TechMIS issue for state allocations).

The Washington Update includes:

- **Page 1**
  New Survey Finds Almost Half of the States Will Provide Less “General” or “Formula Aid” Funding for K-12 Education in 2017 than in Pre-Great Recession in 2008, With Eight States Spending About 10% Less Per-Pupil

- **Page 2**
  On October 11th, USED Issued Its First Ever “Pay-For-Success” Grant Awards to Expand Opportunities in Career and Technical Education and Dual Language Programs

- **Page 4**
  A New International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) Report Recommends Changes to State Policies to Increase Support for Personalized Learning Under Flexible Provisions in ESSA

- **Page 6**
  Ed Tech Developer’s Guide Defines Digital Citizenship and Has Implications for Publishers and Software Developers

- **Page 7**
  US Dept of ED and DHHS Issue a Joint Policy Statement on Early Learning and Technology

- **Page 8**
  A Recent SIIA Webinar on Title II Part A Addressed the Part B Literacy Education for All Results for the Nation (LEARN), Which Expands Upon the Old Striving Readers Program, Which Provided Competitive Grants to the States
High School Transition Courses Designed to Reduce the Need for College Remedial Programs Appear to Be Growing, With Some Indications of Success

A number of miscellaneous items are also addressed including:

a) To support the Charter School movement, USED has provided grants totaling $245 million to eight states and 15 charter school networks.

b) The Aspen Institute, a Democratic-leaning policy non-profit, has created the National Commission on Social/Emotional and Academic Development, to help schools improve teaching of social and emotional skills in conjunction with academic subjects.

c) A new study conducted for Pearson by George Mason University professors, among others, found that various stakeholders, including teachers, believe personalized instruction is important; but for “effective teachers,” there is a gap between what teachers know and can do and what they choose to do.

d) USED has directed the Texas Education Agency to discontinue its use of an 8.5% “cap” on the percentage of special education students identified by each district, which according to a Houston Chronicle report, has kept “tens of thousands of children out of special education.”

e) The Board of Directors of the NAACP has officially passed a resolution calling for a ban on new charter schools.

f) Under the new ESSA, the amount of Federal funding to serve eligible students who enroll in private schools could increase, which in turn could increase the amount of “adjustments” made to a district’s preliminary Title I allocation (see March 10th TechMIS Special Report).

g) “Access to Media Mentors, or Not,” highlights a key equity problem for the 21st century. In a recent web post as homage to Media Literacy week Lisa Guernsey of New America Foundation contends that parents and educators with media mentors can help young children realize the benefits of technology use, which permits children to discover, explore and create.
Special Report:  
USED Issues Non-Regulatory Guidance (NRG) on ESSA Title IV “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants” (SSAE), Which if Aligned With Final Regulations, Could Allow Districts With Small-Medium Title I Funding to Spend All or Most Title IV Funds on Technology if They So Desire

A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)

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

November 14, 2016

The new ESSA Title IV Consolidated Grants program which if “fully-funded” would allow districts to spend up to 60% on “effective use of technology” (remaining 20% each on “well-rounded” education and “safe and healthy” schools). Title IV would allow relatively small to medium Title I districts to spend relatively more on technology and related professional development if Congress appropriates less than the “fully authorized” amount of $1.5 million, which is almost certain to occur, and if a district’s Title IV grant is less than $30,000.

This paradox is even greater because the NRG does not clarify whether 15% of the 60% cap on “technology” includes instructional and directly-related software. This issue is discussed below and was initially addressed in a previous TechMIS Special Report in 2015.

The above prediction is based upon an assumption that the amount Congress appropriates for Title IV will be in the neighborhood of $600-700 million for FY 2017. Currently, the 50+ programs consolidated under Title IV have a total funding appropriation of $270 million. The Senate Committee has proposed a Title IV budget of $300 million, while the House supports an appropriations level of $1 billion for FY 2017, all of which is less funding than the authorized $1.5 billion in ESSA. If this estimate holds true in the FY 2017 budget, many small-medium districts with relatively small amounts of Title I funding (which is the primary basis for determining the amount of formula funds a district gets under Title IV) will not receive the minimum funding level required of $30,000 before the 60, 20, 20 percentages are “triggered.”

The majority of districts will not receive the required $30,000 to trigger the following Title IV requirements:
• 20% must be allocated by the district to activities supporting “well-rounded” education opportunities (e.g., music and arts, foreign language, accelerated learning including AP or IB, dual enrollment, civics instruction, social/emotional learning, and environmental education, among others);
• 20% to activities supporting “safe and healthy” schools/students (e.g., preventing bullying and harassment, dropout prevention, exclusionary discipline, violence prevention, drug environment and violence prevention, school-based mental health services, nutrition education, drug and alcohol prevention, among others);
• 60% on certain technology, professional development activities supporting the “effective use of technology.”

This TechMIS report focuses only on “effective technology use.” The NRG cites a “Special Rule” in ESSA which states not more than 15% of the 60% may be used for “purchasing technology infrastructure as described in subsection (a)(2)(b), which includes technology infrastructure purchased for activities under subsection (a)(4)(a).” The guidance then states “to clarify, LEAs or consortiums of LEAs may not spend more than 15% of the funding in this content area on devices, equipment, software applications, platforms, digital instructional resources, or other one-time IT purchases (ESEA section 4109 (b)).” It would appear that the NRG also suggests that other allowable activities to be funded out of the up to 15% activities include implementing blended learning strategies, districtwide approaches to inform instruction, and supporting teacher collaboration and personalized learning, among other allowable uses. If instructional software is included under “software applications, platforms, digital instructional resources,” then it would appear that the amount of commercial software purchased would be relatively low. This indeed was likely the intent of a key sponsor of the I-TECH amendment, which became this part of the Consolidated Title IV, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT). The Senator has been a primary advocate of Open Education Resources (OER), which has also been championed by USED, to the chagrin of many for-profit software publishers. As the guidance states, OER resources are those “that reside in the public domain or have been released under a license that permit free use, reuse, modification and sharing with others; open resources may include full online courses, curated digital collections, or more gradual resources such as images, video, and assessment items.”

The remaining 85% of the 60% can be used to support a variety of professional development activities “which are directly related to improving the use of technology…Professional development should be sustained (not standalone one day, or short-term workshops, but intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, in-classroom focused). Title IV funds could also be used to provide continuous, just-in-time support that includes professional development, mentors, and informal collaborations.”

Without further clarification in regulations, the above uncertainties would exist in districts whose Title IV allocation is at least $30,000. Such requirements generally do not have to be met for districts whose allocations are between $10,000 (the minimum) and $29,999. As the guidance states in a Q&A section (page 14), the question is posed “Is an individual LEA that receives an
allocation of less than $30,000 of SSAE [Title IV] program funds required to use a certain percentage of funds for each of the three content areas?” The guidance states, “No. Section 4106 (f) allows an individual LEA receiving an allocation of less than $30,000 to use funds for only one (or more) of the three content areas in the SSAE program. Such LEAs must provide an assurance that they will either use not less than 20% of the SEA funds for well-rounded education, use not less than 20% for funds for safe and healthy students, or use a portion of SSAE funds to support the effective use of technology consistent with 4106 (f).” As Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog (October 21st) concludes, “And even though districts are allowed to spend their money on technology, no more than 15% can go to technology infrastructure (such as laptops). Districts that get less than $30,000 don’t need to meet these requirements, according to the guidance.”

Assuming that any subsequent regulations are aligned with this guidance, it would appear that a district, which receives between $10,000 and $30,000 of Title IV funds, which wants to spend more funds on technology and related professional development, will be allowed to spend more money in this manner than if it had to abide by the above “trigger” rules. For example, if it received $40,000 of Title IV funds. If this holds true, then the implication is clear: target districts, which are most likely to receive less than $30,000 whose highest priority is spending such funds on technology and related professional development.

The guidance also identified other situations in which small to medium districts receiving less than $30,000 could spend even relatively more funding on technology and related services. For example, an SEA may propose to spend funds for particular activities such as improving instructional technology for which the SEA could provide matching funds. Another example is encouraging small to medium districts receiving less than $30,000 to apply for funding as part of a consortia as authorized under ESSA. Here, the guidance states, “Combining SSAE funds may result in economies of scale so that smaller LEAs may benefit more than if they had received their individual allocations. LEAs in a consortium may also benefit from communities of practice and glean lessons from other LEAs implanting similar activities.” Another reason for an LEA to apply as part of a consortia is to participate in consortia-based group buys which provide a volume discount. Also, if an LEA is placing a relatively higher priority on “effective technology” than the remaining member LEAs of the consortia, it is important to note that in the case of a consortia of LEAs totaling more than $30,000, the assurances regarding the use of funds apply to the consortia as a whole “i.e., each LEA in a consortia is not required to meet the expenditure requirements individually with respect to its allocation.” Thus, a consortium may for example spend less than 20% of a single member’s allocation of SSAE program funds for activities to support well-rounded education opportunities if the consortia spends at least 20% of its aggregate funds for those activities. This suggests an opportunity could exist in BOCES, for example, which are applying for their individual LEAs or an existing consortia created for E-Rate funding, whose numbers are growing under the E-Rate Modernization Initiative.

The bottom line is that a number of general questions re what the 15% cap on “technology infrastructures” includes remain. As SIIA concluded in its “alert” to members on October 27: “Unfortunately, the unanswered questions remain unanswered and some of the guidance seems
to push the department’s pet projects [OER] as more acceptable uses of funds than others. There still is not interpretation of a ‘readiness shortfall’ as it relates to the 15% funding cap for software and hardware. We also don’t know if software or digital curriculum purchased for a well-rounded or safe and healthy student program would be exempt from the cap.”

The NRG is available at: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html
The USED Fact Sheet on Non-Regulatory Guidance released September 27th “encourages states and districts to prepare, train, and recruit high-quality teachers and principals to increase student academic achievement...States and districts have the opportunity to reimagine the way Title II Part A funds can be used through driving innovation and building on evidence to better support educators.” As Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog noted, USED recommends states and districts “use funds to make sure that teachers are supported from the time they enter educator training programs through their early years of teaching, and as they take on leadership positions including principalship.” The guidance also “reminds” states and districts under ESSA they have to “reach out to teachers, support personnel, community partners, and others for figuring how to use their Title II funding...To support strategies that support effective instruction with Title II Part A investments to not only improve student outcomes, but sustain those improvements.”

In concert with USED’s increased emphasis on existing civil rights laws going back to 1964 for enforcement, a primary thrust of the guidance is to ensure low-income and minority students have equitable access to effective educators. The guidance clarifies that a state has the authority to direct a district to use a portion of its Title II Part A funds to provide greater equitable access, as long as it does so in a manner “that is consistent with allowable activities outlined in ESSA.”

It cites a number of examples of allowable district uses of Part A funds, such as “teacher-led professional development, improved working conditions and compensation,” and “the creation of school environments where teachers and leaders have time to collaborate and opportunities to lead and grow as professionals.” This guidance suggests districts use provisions in the proposed supplement-not-supplant (SNS) requirements, which encourage a district to use a methodology for allocating state and local funds, which is consistent with the Compliance Test (B). That test
levels the amount salaries for lower-paid, younger teachers in Title I schools be made up with additional state and local spending on other staff (counselors) or products and services such as professional development, and ongoing technology-delivered support for lower-salary Title I teachers. Districts must ensure the amount of state and local funds are equally distributed between Title I and non-Title I schools, which must be demonstrated before Title I funds can be used to supplement local and state funds (discussed below).

As Education Week notes, districts and states can use Part A funds for a variety of purposes, which could create opportunities for firms which provide:

- professional development in “coaching” or “co-teaching” in high-needs schools;
- formative assessments and data systems tools to improve working conditions and facilitating collaboration among teaching staff in high-needs schools;
- planning and actual training services for teachers in “alternative preparation” programs such as academies;
- support as “principal supervisors” to school leaders; and
- training for principals (see also February 2016 TechMIS Washington Update for other opportunities).

Title II Part A funds can also be used by districts to create teacher evaluation systems, but unlike the teacher evaluation policies in Race to the Top, states are not required to include student test scores in such evaluations (i.e., they may do so if they wish). Rather, USED guidance recommends that multiple measures, including student academic growth, observation, and surveys, be used in appropriate ways and are communicated directly to teachers to ensure district expectations from professional development are met.

Over time, the amount of funding for each state under Title II Part A (currently $2.3 billion, but likely dropping to $1.9 billion next year) will be based on a new formula. One major change in new Title II is that funds will be allocated to LEAs under a formula in which 20% is based upon the number of students enrolled, and 80% based on number of poverty students, which is more heavily weighted to poverty students than the previous formula. In an earlier TechMIS Washington Update, a Congressional Research Service report identified states that over time are likely to receive relatively more funding under the new formula, which are California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

On September 28th, SIIA sponsored a webinar where a representative of the CCSSO provided some relevant information regarding what it is recommending states should do in developing their plans to take advantage of the Title II Part A flexibility and funding. The CCSSO has reminded states that the types of professional development must be evidence-based, which would include the three tiers used by the What Works Clearinghouse (randomized control experiments; quasi-experimental; and correlations). The fourth less rigorous new tier is “logical” based on research that the selected PD approach would likely be successful. While states have to submit their plans by next spring, most are now conducting stakeholder engagement activities. Some of the state SEA priorities being seriously considered include:
• activities to ensure equitable access to teacher resources is similar in both high-poverty and high-wealth schools; and
• the use of tools, mechanisms, and activities to ensure that feedback from professional development, which is based upon “needs assessments” and ongoing monitoring, are provided to school leaders on an ongoing basis.

Another trend which appears to be surfacing is a higher priority being placed upon retaining good teachers in both low- and high-poverty schools by improving school climate, providing extra professional development, etc. rather than the use of incentives to entice higher-paid experienced teachers to transfer to low-performing, high-poverty schools. If this trend continues to grow, then many districts will likely be using the local district Compliance Test (B) for supplement-not-supplant which could provide opportunities as more state and local funds will be allocated to about 5,000 high-poverty Title I schools, which USED estimates are receiving about $450,000 less in state and local funds than they should. Technology-based professional development and ongoing support could be used to make up for the differences in teacher salaries in Title I versus non-Title I schools.

As we discussed in our earlier TechMIS report, one piece of good news is that if district plan calls for using its allocation of Title II funds for class size reduction, the district must present evidence that such uses will improve student performance. The most recent USED report on uses of Title II funds indicated that approximately $830 million of the $2.3 billion allocation was used for professional development, with almost all of the remaining funds used for class size reduction (i.e., hiring additional teachers and other salaried staff). Current research indicates that class size reduction has little impact on student performance, which should provide an incentive for districts to use such funds to provide training and support for lower-paid teachers. Another notable trend that will likely grow is SEAs coordinating Title II funds use with the possible large increase of Title IV funding which could be used for technology-related professional development.

Special Funding Update:
Title I and School Improvement Grants (SIGs)

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

November 14, 2016

Several developments have occurred in the last two months affecting aspects of Title I and related SIG funding, which have direct implications for subscribers.

In early October, USED alerted SEAs that corrections were being made to the previous USED Title I district allocations before SEA adjustments, which was unexpected. While the corrected allocations do not affect the amounts of each previous USED district allocation very much, if at all, the net effect has been for some SEAs to withhold sending notifications of final corrected district allocations for the remaining approximate two-thirds of each districts’ Title I allocation for the 2016-17 school year. As a result, in many districts the actual purchasing cycles were halted or “slowed down” in October, which have impacted purchases from certain TechMIS clients. By mid-November, virtually all districts will have been notified and purchases should increase. However, because of uncertainty over the final Title I allocations for FY 2017 budget (which are being level-funded in a Continuing Resolution through December 9th), and the possibility of a “sequester cap” once again being put on Title I funding in January-February under a Trump Administration, it is possible that some districts may be putting into the Title I reserve for potential “carry over” relatively more Title I funds than last year. Until the final budget amounts are determined and/or resolution of the sequester cap is removed, uncertainty will exist. This could result in a relatively higher amount of purchasing during the next cycle beginning in late February-March, or the opposite could occur if Title I appropriations for next year are cut or “sequester caps” return. We will be reporting on developments as they occur.

In our October TechMIS report, we included the amounts of the last year of SIG funding sent to each state. However, because this round of funding is almost nine months later than normal, many SEAs and districts took advantage of USED waiver opportunities, which allowed them to continue currently-funded SIG schools in their second-third years or new school applications using funds from other programs such as Title I; and once they received the most recent SIG October allocations such funds were then reallocated back to the original source (e.g., Title I). Most of the states have closed their call for applications’ due date for new school funding with
SIG funds. However, clients should consider the possibility of some of their would-be SIG interventions which are allowed to be funded under Title I to check with district Title I offices to see if such opportunities exist now under Title I programs using re-programmed SIG funds. Also, some states which closed applications for new SIG schools during the last two to three months might have reopened the application cycle for newly-determined eligible schools (e.g., new test scores used) or if the applications previously submitted were not approved.

Please call Charles directly (703-362-4689) for additional information as developments continue to occur in this last funding cycle of SIG SEA grants.
New Survey Finds Almost Half of the States Will Provide Less “General” or “Formula Aid” Funding for K-12 Education in 2017 than in Pre-Great Recession in 2008, With Eight States Spending About 10% Less Per-Pupil

The highly-respected Center on Budget and Policy Priorities’ most recent survey reported most states increased per-pupil funding this year; however, 19 states imposed new cuts. Over the last decade, 35 states have provided less overall state funding per-pupil in 2014 school year than in 2008, which suggests that K-12 state funding has declined over the last decade and has yet to recover.

In terms of current expenditures, the survey found that in the 47 states with available current data (in October 2016) on state formula funding found that 23 are providing less per-pupil funding this year than in 2008, and in seven of the 23 states, the cuts are 10% or more. While most states raised per-pupil formula funding this year, such increases did not offset earlier cuts. While 28 states raised general per-pupil funding in 2016, only two states (Illinois and South Dakota) raised funding enough in the last year to make up for cuts in earlier years. It cites Alabama as an example which raised per-pupil state funding $168, which was much less than needed to offset the state’s $1,082 per-pupil cut over the previous eight years. States which are spending in 2017 less than in 2008 include Oklahoma -26.9%, Michigan -8.5%, Texas -8.2%, and Florida -4.9%. Those states which are scheduled to spend more per-pupil in 2017 compared to 2008 include Washington +18.3%, Connecticut +14.2%, New York +10.6%, California +10.3%, New Jersey +1.9%, and Pennsylvania +.9%, among others.

While most states have increased formula funding per-pupil this last year over next, 19 states actually cut general funding per-pupil this year, including Texas -5.0%, Alaska -1.6%, Oklahoma -2.9%, among others. States which have increased per-pupil formula funding over the last year by one percent to slightly over 5% include Massachusetts, Vermont, Georgia, Wisconsin, Washington, Delaware, Virginia, Rhode Island, Alabama, Utah, Tennessee, New York, Illinois, and South Carolina. The largest increase (24%) occurred in South Dakota (see actual numbers at: http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/10-20-16sfp.pdf).

CBPP listed several reasons why state K-12 funding has not recovered from the 2008 recession, including:

- State revenues have been slow to recover and where they have improved, increases have not been enough to keep pace with state needs; it cites as an example about 1.1 million more K-12 students exist now than in 2008.
- Federal K-12 aid to states decreased after the 2009-11 stimulus funding ran out.

The report cites a decrease in Federal spending for Title I since 2010 of 8.3% with...
the decrease in spending on IDEA special education found 6.4%. Even though Federal funding for these two niche markets remain below the 2010 level, as we have argued in numerous TechMIS reports over the last six years, the opportunities exist in the new “flexibilities” which have increased over time in how such remaining Title I and IDEA funds can be used, especially to technology and related products and services.

Several closing comments are worth noting.

First, the state funding levels addressed relate to only “general” or “formula aid” and did not include “categorical funding” such as state “compensatory education” or ESL bilingual set-asides. These categorical funds exist to varying degrees of funding in almost half of the states and for the most part compliment Federally-funded niche markets such as Title I and IDEA special education by providing targeted funds to similarly-situated at-risk students.

Second, the CBPP report dated October 20th for the first time addresses capital spending used to build and innovate schools. As the report states, “In most states, capital spending fell shortly after the recession hit as did the non-capital school funding discussed in this paper. Elementary and high school nationally cut capital spending by $28 billion or 37% between fiscal years 2008 and 2014 after adjusting for inflation.” Between 2008 and 2014, total capital spending has dropped from almost $75 billion to $48 billion. These cuts occurred in 40 states with eight states cutting capital spending by more than 50% with Nevada having the sharpest reductions by 86%.

It should be noted that while state funds for renovation and school facilities cannot be used to purchase instructional materials and related products and services under the new E-Rate Modernization Initiative, it would appear that many districts are spending such “capital” expenditures on E-Rate eligible infrastructure-type products and are paying the pre-discount full price for such products. In return, an increasing number of districts are requesting increased amounts of E-Rate refunds for the discounted amount (e.g., about 70% discount in most districts) which, when received by the districts can be used to purchase, among other things, instructional materials, professional development, etc. The latest round of funding commitment letters to districts receiving E-Rate refunds was included in our August 9, 2016 TechMIS report.

On October 11th, USED Issued Its First Ever “Pay-For-Success” Grant Awards to Expand Opportunities in Career and Technical Education and Dual Language Programs

The USED press release on the recent White House Town Hall announced the President’s first USED awards for new Pay-For-Success (PFS) approaches “to improve outcomes for at-risk youth by finding and scaling career and technical education (CTE) programs, as well as to advance effective dual language programs for early learners.” Calling PFS the “centerpiece” for the President’s “social innovation agenda,” it is designed to be a “better, more effective solution by aligning funding with positive social outcomes. Instead of paying up front for the promise of results, PFS enables government to pay only after positive outcomes are achieved. Impact investors often cover the upfront costs of providing services and are repaid
with a modest return if individual lives are measurably improved as determined by an independent evaluator.” The press release also adds, “Pay-for-success is not a substitute for government funding; in fact, pay-for-success can be useful in proving the case for increased public investment in successful interventions.”

Using Federal funds to pay for “performance” has been around in education for more than a half century beginning in the late 1960s with the notion by funding more than 20 performance and incentive contract projects to improve Title I students’ scores, with the contractor or small groups of teachers being paid in part for those students who met pre-determined achievement levels (e.g., increases in grade levels over an instructional timeframe). A number of districts (e.g., Dallas Independent School District, Dade County, Florida, among others) and at least one state, Virginia (in seven districts under Governor Linwood Holton’s direction), conducted projects in which success was evenly split. Unlike the OEO-funded 20 performance contract only sites, most of the district- and state-sponsored projects followed the “performance contract turnkey model” for low-cost experimentation and expansion within districts if the contractors’ program were successful; these districts experienced more success than those in the OED project.

In 2014, the Office of Management and Budget issued guidelines for all agencies, including USED, to implement “performance-type contracts, which used Federal funds with some states partially adopting such rules (e.g., New York state) in updated guidelines since then. Pay-for-success appears to be one prime example which the current Administration has referred to as its “centerpiece agenda for social innovation.”

The new PFS projects were awarded to a Partnership of School Finance Incorporated and Jobs for the Future ($2 million) to implement new or scale-up of existing high-quality approaches in the CTE area. The other award was a feasibility study to America Institutes for Research (AIR), which will identify two school sites which are using evidence-based interventions for early learning and dual language models which could determine the feasibility of scaling-up the interventions to other schools.

The CTE project involving School Finance and Jobs to the Future will select four local programs and determine how a PFS project could expand CTE opportunities after an initial feasibility study. Three sites will actually construct and launch high-quality PFS projects.

AIR’s feasibility study will attempt to find out how PFS could leverage private funding for services upfront and allow the government to pay only once individual student benefits can be measured. AIR will particularly look at different types of supports that districts should provide, but do not have the resources to provide for Spanish speakers who represent about 80% of currently enrolled English learners.

The degree to which the next administration will place a high priority on funding PFS strategies in various educational areas is unclear. As the media has widely reported, the Clinton Administration will be influenced significantly by national teacher groups such as the NEA and AFT, whose current AFT president has been named as a possible Secretary of Education under a
Clinton administration. Even the Obama Administration, in its last several months, has retreated from its strong position of having teacher evaluations based on in part student test scores, as reflected in the recently-released regulations on Teacher Evaluations. The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.” The Trump Administration would likely “latch onto the pay-for-success approach.”

Several of the recommendations would appear to be critical to building upon recent progress in a number of states to facilitate the expansion of personalized, individualized instruction through the appropriate and effective use of technology. Unlike specific recommendations from most technology advocacy groups, the iNACOL report recommends the policies which will create an environment under which the benefits (e.g., costs, saving time, etc.) of using technology could be realized without overwhelming leaders and state policymakers with requests for new funding for technology.

Under the new ESSA, iNACOL called for states to “rethink accountability for continuous improvement” as a new definition of student success, which goes beyond cognitive areas such as math and reading. The new ESSA is designed to promote equity and identify student supports as multiple measures, including “whole child” and non-cognitive indicators, will be integrated into state accountability systems.

The new ESSA calls for a variety of assessments beyond “summative” assessments (emphasized under NCLB) to support personalized learning, and to do this “state systems will need to provide rich, real-time data to teachers to support continuous improvement of student learning through college and career readiness and to promote rapid closure of subgroup achievement gaps through personalized systems.” These recommendations are based upon the experience and knowledge of iNACOL “veterans” and others who have attempted to personalize learning over the last seven decades (see Education Week, November 1, 2016 for recent history).

A New International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) Report Recommends Changes to State Policies to Increase Support for Personalized Learning Under Flexible Provisions in ESSA

The increasingly influential iNACOL association recommends states create or expand state policies which would increase personalized learning, which are allowed or are encouraged under new ESSA. Headed by Susan Patrick, former Director Education Technology at USED, iNACOL offers a number of recommendations to states, which range from “rethinking accountability for continuous improvement” to “aligning assessments with student-centered learning” to “creating competency-based education
competency-based education.” The report encourages states to select and pilot test new assessment forums allowed under ESSA which include:

- Adaptive assessments, which can “pinpoint more accurately where students are in their learning progressions.”
- Interim assessments, which can be administered through multiple statewide interim assessments from which a single summative score can provide valid reliable and transparent information on student achievement and growth.
- Formative assessments, which can empower students and educators with immediate feedback on student learning.
- Performance assessments, which are key to competency-based learning.

Underlying the activities to increase personalized learning is the “creation of competency-based education systems.” As the report notes, “ESSA makes it possible for states to pursue a more comprehensive policy approach to supporting personalization at scale by removing Federal policy barriers for states to align accountability assessment and education preparation and development systems to [support] student-centered learning.” A prerequisite for expanded student personalized learning is personalized competency-based teacher training and state policies for teacher evaluation. The report recommends states provide “educator candidates with multiple pathways to obtaining competency-based credentials, some of which could use micro credentials replacing seat-time based Continuing Education Units (CEUs), and creating ongoing job-embedded professional development to build capacity in educators in school leaders to transfer to new personalized models of instruction.”

Concurrently with policy development for competency-based educator training and evaluation policies, for states getting started, task forces should be established to identify policy barriers, particularly those which prevent districts from moving from seat time to demonstrated mastery for “graduation.” Innovation zones should be created for “pioneering school districts with flexibility from state policies and requirements in order to implement personalized learning models.” Such flexibilities are not only necessary to demonstrate student success, but in order to take such systems to “scale” and realize benefits of competency-based systems and personalized learning flexibilities. In a previous iNACOL report on performance “contracting” in education, iNACOL rightfully argues that to scale-up and realize the benefits either increasing the level of individual student performance and/or reducing the cost and time spent in achieving certain competency-based performance criteria, old policies must be changed. Such changes have to be made statewide. Proficiency-based “diplomas” and/or other types of “credentials” coupled with “continuous improvements” will be required.

In order to facilitate personalized learning through competency-based education, the report calls for new “learning models infrastructure,” which includes “robust broadband connectivity, secure learning-centered data systems, and openly-licensed content.” Data systems, the report argues, must be aligned to personalize learning in order to chart each student’s learning profile.
and to track actionable information to “facilitate just-in-time supports and interventions.” To expand high-speed broadband connectivity, states should ensure that contracting strategies and volume discount purchases take advantage of potential cost savings at the district level and take advantage of Open Educational Resources for “free resources” and E-Rate funding; they should ensure student data privacy policies protect students’ rights while “avoiding prohibitions that could have unintended consequences for the ability of educators to personalize learning.”

The entire report is available at: www.inacol.org For those not familiar with iNACOL, its mission is “to catalyze the transformation of K-12 policy and practice to advance powerful, personalized learning centered experiences through competency-based blended and online learning. Over the last decade, iNACOL has become a leader in blended learning with membership including both users and providers and has produced some of the most objective and informative reports available in that field.

**Ed Tech Developer’s Guide Defines Digital Citizenship and Has Implications for Publishers and Software Developers**

The Office of Educational Technology in its Ed Tech Developer’s Guide, *A Primer for Software Developers, Startups, and Entrepreneurs*, published the following definition of digital citizenship: “a set of norms and practices regarding appropriate and responsible technology use... and requires a whole-community approach to thinking critically, behaving safely, and participating responsibly online.”

As early learners, which according to USED’s latest brief can be before age two, reach an appropriate age to use technology more independently, they must be taught about cyber safety, including the need to protect and not share personal information on the internet, the goals and influence of advertisements, and the need for caution when clicking on links.

The Developer’s Guide goes on to note these skills of discernment are “particularly important for older children who may be using a parent’s device unsupervised. Early childhood educators and administrators should ensure that the proper filters and firewalls are in place so children cannot access materials that are not approved for a school setting.”

The USED Office of Educational Technology Guide focuses on leveraging technology to create personalized learning experiences for all students and promoting increased connectivity to improve access to education and make college more affordable. The Guide maintains, “The demand for high-quality educational apps is increasing as communities become more connected, devices become more affordable, and teachers and parents are looking for new ways to use technology to engage students.” This message is particularly resonant with software developers and entrepreneurs as he identifies ten areas where TechMIS clients may find opportunities to create impactful tools for teachers, school leaders, students, and their families. Each of these ten areas include the following topics:

**Ten opportunities for technology to transform teaching & learning:**

---

*TechMIS publication provided by*

**Education TURNKEY Electronic Distribution**

256 North Washington Street, Falls Church, VA 22046
703/536-2310, fax 703/536-3225, cblaschke@edturnkey.com

Education TURNKEY Electronic Distribution®, Vol. 21, No. 10, November 14, 2016
1. Improving mastery of academic skills
2. Developing skills to promote lifelong learning
3. Increasing family engagement
4. Planning for future education opportunities
5. Designing effective assessments
6. Improving educator professional development
7. Improving educator productivity
8. Making learning accessible to all students
9. Closing opportunity gaps
10. Closing achievement gaps

This guide for developers, startups and entrepreneurs addresses key questions about the education ecosystem and highlights critical needs and opportunities to develop digital tools and apps for learning. The complete guide is available here http://tech.ed.gov/developers-guide/

US Dept of ED and DHHS Issue a Joint Policy Statement on Early Learning and Technology

Recognizing the growth of technology use in early learning settings, the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services collaborated in the development of the Early Learning and Educational Technology Policy Brief to promote developmentally appropriate use of technology in homes and early learning settings.

The guidance reflected within this policy brief will help those who care for nearly 36 million children from birth to age eight make wise decisions about media use, and provides four guiding principles for families and early educators on the use of technology with young children. The brief includes a call to action for researchers and media and app developers, highlighting topics for further research and encouraging the development of research-based products.

The vision of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is that (1) all young children will have adults in their lives who are well-informed on how to use technology to support learning at various ages; and (2) all young children will have opportunities to learn, explore, play, and communicate through a multitude of approaches, including the use of technology.

According to the Policy Brief, “The purpose of this brief is to:

- Provide guiding principles for early educators (including those in home settings), early learning programs, schools, and families on the use of technology by young children to support them in making informed choices for all children.
- Inform the public, families, and early educators on the evidence base used to support these guiding principles.
- Issue a call to action to researchers, technology developers, and state and local leaders to ensure technology is advanced in ways that promote young children’s healthy development and learning.

While the brief addresses early learners from birth to 8 years of age, the Departments acknowledge that this is a large age span in the development of a child and what is appropriate for an 8-year-old is likely not appropriate for a toddler or infant. This brief
focuses mainly on age-appropriate guidance for children ages 2-8. Given this age range the brief rightly addresses the importance of unstructured and unplugged play, and how the use of technology must address content, context and an emphasis on building and extending relationships with others, including peers and adults.

The policy brief offers very concrete examples of the differences in the use by early learners between e-books and print versions. Appropriate uses of technology with young children represent promising ways to help early learners use technology with peers and adults to foster relationships, expand learning, and solve meaningful problems. Primarily the recommendations included within the Guide emphasize use of technology with others—peers and adults, and should be interpreted as an essential part of the context of appropriate use for the youngest learners.

Some parents and educators may be surprised by the inclusion of the 2016 revision of the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Media and Young Minds Brief, which suggests for children ages 2 to 5 “that one hour of technology use is appropriate per day, inclusive of time spent at home and in early learning settings and across devices.” There are more restrictive guidelines from the perspective of time spent using technology included in the Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, which are recommended by HHS.

With respect to use of technology with school-age children the brief emphasizes, “just as with other educational tools, school-aged children should be taught how to correctly handle and care for devices. These skills and the use of digital media devices should generally not be taught as a separate rotation or class, but rather integrated into the learning objective of the lesson. In some cases, however, individualized instruction may be desirable to meet the specific needs of a child. As children grow older, they should continue to build on this basic skill set with lessons in digital citizenship.


**A Recent SIIA Webinar on Title II Part A Addressed the Part B Literacy Education for All Results for the Nation (LEARN), Which Expands Upon the Old Striving Readers Program, Which Provided Competitive Grants to the States**

It is likely to be funded at approximately $150 million and under ESSA will cover comprehensive literacy instruction for early childhood and provide grants to LEAs to implement evidence-based interventions for at-risk students. Five-year grants are provided to states on a competitive basis and then 95% of those funds go to subgrantees, which include school districts. Similar to Striving Readers, 15% of funds focus on birth through kindergarten; 40% upon K-5, and the remainder for state and local programs for grades 6-8.

Funding can be used for professional development and administering evidence-based literacy programs and family engagement at the pre-K level; and another priority is supplemental and accelerated interventions for at-risk students in grades...
As SIIA has noted, funds can support the use of diverse, high-quality print material and differentiated instructional approaches (which is likely to also include digital materials) and can also be used for screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Districts can use such funds for self-directed learning activities that include Universal Design Principles for Learning (UDL); and literacy instruction, which must be aligned with state academic standards and can likely be used to teach digital subject matter. Other small competitive grants as well as those funded under National Activities (i.e., 5% of total Title II funding) places priorities on applications which serve 20% or more at-risk students of low-income families.

High School Transition Courses Designed to Reduce the Need for College Remedial Programs Appear to Be Growing, With Some Indications of Success

During an SIIA Government Forum in 2012 on opportunities created by early implementation of Common Core Standards, a number of attendees identified potential growth opportunities in high school “transition” programs, which would reduce the need for college-level remedial or development courses. While many Common Core proponents argued that the need for college-level remediation would decrease, some of us argued that remediation needs would actually increase at least initially, and that high school transition programs would increase significantly. In the October 25th Education Week, veteran reporter Catherine Gewertz, who has closely followed remediation issues and developments in her High School & Beyond blog, writes, “Fed up with long rosters of college freshmen who can’t handle college-level courses, states are increasingly turning to twelfth-grade transition classes to build academic muscle to help students skip the remedial courses that can diminish their chances of earning a degree. From coast to coast, states are bringing together high school teachers and college faculty to design a breed of English and math courses that reflect college expectations. Students who perform well in them can enroll directly in entry-level credit-bearing courses in their states’ colleges rather than wasting time and money on remedial classes.”

Over the last two decades, the college readiness remediation niche market has grown to $2-4 billion, based upon independent estimates from the Alliance for Education Excellence and other groups. And, as we have argued, so would opportunities for education technology, particularly online and blended learning than in K-12 generally, due in large part to the lower “teacher resistance” (e.g., having taught remedial courses on a college professor’s resume was not considered a “great contribution to academics”). Companies such as Plato, among others, took advantage of such opportunities in the 1990s with moderate to great success.

The opportunities in the high school transition remedial marketplace appear to be greater than college-level remedial course opportunities because of the lack of success in college-level remediation, as reported in numerous articles (Education Week May 29, 2012, February 19, 2013, January 20, 2011). As Education Week reported in May 2012, “The high rates of student referrals to remediation and the low rates of their success threaten to undermine national and
state goals to increase post-secondary attainment.” An ECS report (2012) argued that more effective assessment and placement policies and practices would be required to move more students toward degree completion.”

The increased growth of high school transition remedial courses represents an alternative to traditional college remediation; almost two-thirds of high school graduating students have serious academic weakness such that two-thirds at community colleges need remedial classes. As Gewertz notes, while several states have offered twelfth-grade transition courses in the past, “at least a half dozen more have joined them in the past few years…For most of the new transition courses, it’s too early to tell whether they boost student college grades or their likelihood of completing degrees.”

The article cites a number of the states with new or expanded transition course initiatives including:

- Washington State, which began building transition courses in 2012 that relied on courses based on materials that already had been developed by groups such as Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), California State University Expository Writing Courses, and SREB’s Math Ready; courses are now offered in 150 high schools.
- Hawaii, which developed a math transition course that was piloted last year which takes a project-based approach which is now offered in 15 high schools.

In the Education Week article, Gewertz also identifies some of the early findings and challenges, stating, “Preliminary studies of the SREB courses suggest they can boost students’ ACT scores and their performance on college placement tests.” One of the major challenges is the lateness of test scores (i.e., “feedback”) on individuals to determine whether they should enroll in transition classes. As the article notes, in the absence of reliable test scores, teacher recommendations on eleventh graders to sign up for transition classes are relied upon. Another problem is state policies. As she notes, only eight states require college readiness interventions be offered for lower-scoring students based upon results of statewide tests, and only six require students to participate in those programs.

In the article, she cites SREB President David Spence, who has been a leader in the field having designed the California Early Assessment Program and now the SREB transition courses which are used in ten states: “This is such a simple, good idea: let’s take care of readiness problems while students are still in high school, but that’s not going to happen unless states realize the extent of the readiness problem.”

**Miscellaneous (a)**

To support the Charter School movement, USED has provided grants totaling $245 million to eight states and 15 charter school networks. While charter schools generally have received bipartisan support in Congress, and with any new Administration likely to continue charter school support at a general level, controversies have arisen in states as a result of some of the grants. For example, in September, USED released a $71 million FY 2015 grant to the Ohio Charter School Program, in spite of “many
years of poor academic achievement and even fraud among many Ohio charter schools” (see Education Week’s Charters & Choice blog October 7th). Massachusetts recently received a grant of $12.5 million in this FY 2016 round of funding and will take a vote in November to decide whether the state should lift its current cap on the number of charter schools in the state.

The SEAs and the amount of grants they received under this round include: California ($27.3 million), Florida ($58.4 million), Georgia ($24.4 million), Louisiana ($4.8 million), Tennessee ($15.1 million), Texas ($30.4 million), and Washington ($4.1 million).

The other grantees in this current round of funding are charter management organizations (CMOs), which provide services to charter schools like financial management, fund raising, communications and curriculum selection and professional development. Even though the number of CMOs has grown over the last decade, more charter schools currently are actually single campus operations, as reported in Education Week.

At present, the degree of independence between charter schools and CMOs has become an issue for the USED Office of Inspector General, which found in some cases little independence exists. For example, USED/OIG examined 30 schools in six states and found some examples of conflict of interest, related party transaction, and insufficiency segregation of duties, which are designed to prevent fraud. As a result of these findings and other “improper relationships” between CMOs and their schools, the GAO audit concluded that “the lack of such controls significantly increases the risk that Federal programs are not being implemented correctly and are wasting public money,” as reported in Education Week (October 4th).

In spite of such reports on fraud and abuse, USED’s recent round of grants to CMOs, which are mostly non-profits, included Amethed Charter Schools, California ($2.1 million), Carmen High School, Wisconsin ($1.3 million), Collegiate Academies, Louisiana ($1.7 million), Democracy Prep, New York ($4.5 million), Denver School of Science and Technology, Colorado ($4.0 million), Equaitas Academy Charter School, California ($1.1 million), IDEA, Texas ($6.3 million), Inspire Nola Charter School, Louisiana ($1.3 million), Kipp Foundation ($29.7 million), Naca Inspired, New Mexico ($1.3 million), National Center for Hebrew Language ($2.1 million), Propel School Foundation, Pennsylvania ($8.5 million), Friends of Bronx Charter School, New York ($7.7 million), Tinley Network, Indiana ($1.9 million), and Uncommon Schools, New York ($8.0 million).

While both presidential candidates support, to varying degrees, the charter school movement, they do so generally for different purposes. Nominee Clinton has argued that charter schools can serve as a catalyst for bringing innovation and new approaches to education if adopted by public schools, which was one of the major initial goals during the creation of the charter school movement by leaders such as Joseph Nathan. On the other hand, it would appear that a Trump Administration would support charter schools as one of several means to expand parent/student choice in public schools along with tax credits and state subsidies, which could have the effect of draining funds from public schools over the
long run.

The entire list of the newly-funded SEAs and CMOs is available at ed.gov. According to the USED press release, the total amount of funding over several decades has been over $3 billion to help launch 2,500 new schools.

Miscellaneous (b)

The Aspen Institute, a Democratic-leaning policy non-profit, has created the National Commission on Social/Emotional and Academic Development, to help schools improve teaching of social and emotional skills in conjunction with academic subjects. The new ESSA requires each state to include at least one “indicator in their state accountability system” which focuses on the development of the “whole child.” This should give a boost to the movement requiring schools to focus more on developing social and emotional learning skills (SEL). As Education Week (October 4th) notes, “There is much disagreement about what to call the field which includes overlapping approaches, each of which comes with its own name, including social and emotional learning, character education, non-cognitive skills, and soft skills.” Building upon this momentum, the Aspen Institute’s Executive Director Ross Wiener argued that this is “an important time to go from whether we should do this to how we should do this.”

Co-chairing the new commission are three nationally-recognized education reform leaders, including:

- Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor Stanford University and possible Secretary of Education under a Clinton Administration
- John Engler, President Business Roundtable and former Governor of Michigan
- Timothy Shriver, Co-Founder and Chairman of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which is arguably the leader of the movement at the district level

Other members of the new Commission include: Governor Terry McAuliffe (D-VA), and Governor Brian Sandoval (R-NV), James Comer, Professor Yale University, Pedro Noguera, Professor University of California, James Shelton, Former Assistant Secretary under the Bush 2 Administration, Dr. Meria Carstarphen, Superintendent Atlanta, Craig McKinley, CEO of National Defense Industrial Association, and Laszlo Bock, Senior Advisor, Google Corporation.

After noting how this group of individuals from diverse organizations, research fields, and interest groups was intentionally sought, Shirley Brandman, Executive Director of the Commission, is quoted in Education Week as saying, “Our expectation is that this group is going to take a really deliberate look at what we know and take a look at the gap of what we know and what we do, [which] could result in a road map of how skills should be strengthened among children of different ages, new directions for research, and practical steps for policymakers.”

Miscellaneous (c)

A new study conducted for Pearson by George Mason University professors, among others, found that various stakeholders, including teachers, believe personalized
instruction is important; but for “effective teachers,” there is a gap between what teachers know and can do and what they choose to do. As the report states, “What surprised us is that few education professionals, like teachers and principals, cited factors that are well-known to make teachers effective. For example, less than two percent responded that focusing on developing students non-cognitive was important, or that the ability to consistently assess student learning progress and adjust instruction.”

The Pearson study team interviewed students, parents, teachers, principals, policymakers, and education researchers, about what they thought were the most important teacher qualities of U.S. teachers and found the top three were:
- Ability to develop trusting, productive relationships
- Patient, caring, kind personality
- Knowledge of learners

Of the top ten, the three less important were:
- Teaching skills/pedagogical practices
- Creativity in planning and delivering instruction
- Managing the classroom learning environment

And, while the report states, the survey responses “align with what the research says matters in the area of personalizing instruction…there were a few significant gaps between what the educator stakeholder groups (teachers, principals, researchers and policymakers) valued most and what research tells us matters most in enhancing student learning. Few educators addressed the importance of knowledge and use of Assessment to evaluate and track student progress. Yet researchers suggest that this is the single most important aspect of teaching practice to enhance student learning.”

According to the report, the major implication overall is “the greater emphasis placed on teacher dispositions such as relatedness, caring and kindness, reflect a strong focus on the dispositions required for effective teaching. Dispositions are considered to be the bridge between what a teacher is able to do and what he or she chooses to do.”

For firms that provide personalized learning training (e.g., using assessment data to identify a student’s individual needs and prescribe needed specific instructional activities), such training may have a limited effect unless if teachers do not have the dispositions (patience, compassion, passion, and responsibility) to use that which they have learned. Hence, firms must justify and convince teachers why such components of individualized or personalized learning are critical. Or personalized learning training should be taught in combination with teaching the above disposition attributes of what stakeholders believe are effective teachers (i.e., patience, compassion, and responsibility, etc.). As the report states, “Likewise, training programs may want to emphasize the knowledge and skills that were mentioned less frequently but have been shown to be critical to effective teaching and student learning. These could include assessment of learner progress and provision of a challenging, rigorous curriculum for all students, with an emphasis on the learning process and the skills students need for college and career success.”

A related implication is that “collateral” and messages used to approach different levels of decision makers (i.e., principals and
teachers versus district-level curriculum and related staff versus instructional technology and research staff) should be differentiated or otherwise taken into account.

For a copy of the full report go to: https://www.pearson.com/innovation/global-survey-of-educator-effectiveness/united-states.html

Miscellaneous (d)

USED has directed the Texas Education Agency to discontinue its use of an 8.5% “cap” on the percentage of special education students identified by each district, which according to a Houston Chronicle report, has kept “tens of thousands of children out of special education.” The “artificial” 8/5% cap (which the TEA argues is merely a “guideline”) prevents over identification of students for costly special education programs. If lifted, it will increase the number of students receiving special education services and/or response to intervention (RTI) approaches in districts which are newly-identified for “significant disproportionality.”

In 2004, the last year before the 8.5% cap was instituted, the percentage of special education students was 11.8%. The general RTI approach, prompted by the Reading First initiative during the 2000-2005 timeframe, was a Texas “hot bed” of activity promoted by several Texas university professors. It is likely that the most significant growth will be in the area of RTI, as the USED October 3rd letter to the TEA commissioner states, “Specifically based upon our initial review of [USED] PBMAs indicators, we note that other indicators may also be problematic [in addition to the 8.5% artificial cap]. For example, SPED indicators 11, 12, and 13 may lead to denial of identification of children with disabilities from specific racial/ethnic or language groups. We will be following up with you on these indicators as well.”

Disproportionate under-representation as well as over-representation of racial groups (e.g., Hispanics) in special education could have resulted from the use of the “8.5% cap.” Under-representation of Hispanics was found to be the case in Massachusetts in 2010-11 (many of the Texas districts likely have this type of “disproportionality”). One can expect local opposition to “lifting the 8.5% cap.”

The bottom line is that the artificial cap is likely to be actually lifted, with more students receiving special education or even RTI approaches rather quickly in some districts, while in the remaining districts court action will likely occur when enforcement occurs.

Miscellaneous (e)

The Board of Directors of the NAACP has officially passed a resolution calling for a ban on new charter schools. The reason given in the official resolution is a lack of community control in heavily black populated communities and cites specific examples, including: high rates of suspensions and expulsions for black students, mismanagement of fiscal matters, and generally poor oversight by authorizers of charter schools.

The resolution also blames foundations for supporting large charter “chain” groups such as KIPP, YES Prep Public Schools, and Aspire Public Schools to target low-income
neighborhoods for the purpose of serving black and Latino students. While about a quarter of the national enrollment in U.S. charter schools is African-American, in some areas it is the dominant population being served. The foundations include Walton Family Foundation, Eli and Edyth Broad Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for bankrolling what it calls “an international education privatization agenda,” as reported in Education Week.

Major critics of the NAACP’s call for a moratorium on new charter schools include the Black Alliance for Education Options (BAEO), founded by Professor Bruce Fuller, and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools who argued that the NAACP position “has been a blow to the charter movement and exposed a rift in opinion among African-Americans on charter schools.”

It is somewhat ironic that both presidential candidates have supported the charter school movement generally, but for different reasons (see related Washington Update).

**Miscellaneous (f)**

Under the new ESSA, the amount of Federal funding to serve eligible students who enroll in private schools could increase, which in turn could increase the amount of “adjustments” made to a district’s preliminary Title I allocation (see March 10th TechMIS Special Report). In addition to reducing somewhat the amount of SEA funding allocations of Title I funds to districts, this could also create some uncertainties, thereby lengthening the time (and purchasing cycle) when districts become aware of their final Title I allocation.

Under NCLB, districts are required to provide an “equitable amount of services,” and hence funding to private schools to serve Title I and other eligible students from the district’s attendance area who enroll in private schools. As reported by Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog (October 24th), the new ESSA requires each SEA to create a new ombudsman officer, “who oversees the distribution of these Federal funds by districts to private schools in order to comply with the ‘equitable services’ requirement. The state education agency appoints its ombudsman.” If a district does not provide an “equitable” amount of such funds for services, then the private schools can approach the ombudsman office requesting that the SEA provide such services or funding. Moreover, the SEA ombudsman office must notify private schools of the equitable amount of services (or funds) which the district is required to provide to them.

As Education Week reports, also under ESEA/NCLB before a district determined the amount of funds which should “follow an eligible student” to a private school, the district would be allowed to take part of its Title I allocation “off the top,” thus reducing the remaining amount of per-pupil funds to schools, which would constitute the level of per-pupil funding for “equitable services” sent to private schools. This ESEA/NCLB provision, which groups such as the Council for American Education and lobbyists for Catholic education felt under NCLB was “illegal,” will under ESSA also increase somewhat the amount of funds transferred to private schools under “equitable services” provisions.
The bottom line is that the amount of a district’s Title I funding allocated per-pupil to private schools to serve Title I and other eligible students will increase depending upon the “political power” of the SEA ombudsman office. Moreover, the way of allocating the amount of funds under “equitable service provisions” would also favor private schools. This in turn will also create some uncertainty, particularly during the first years of ESSA implementation, which will postpone the district’s final Title I allocation determination and extend the purchasing cycles in many districts serving moderate to large numbers of Title I eligible students enrolled in private schools.

**Miscellaneous (g)**

“Access to Media Mentors, or Not,” highlights a key equity problem for the 21st century. In a recent web post as homage to Media Literacy week Lisa Guernsey of New America Foundation contends that parents and educators with media mentors can help young children realize the benefits of technology use, which permits children to discover, explore and create. Without this support, which is so important to appropriate and effective use of today’s technology, the equity problem persists for many disadvantaged children/students.

In this article, she considers, “What will these disparities mean for children who are already getting less than their well-off counterparts? We know that compared to students who come from middle-to-high income homes, children from low-income families continue to struggle in reading, as do children who are African-American or Hispanic. Not only are roughly 80 percent of these children not proficient in reading by the end of fourth grade, they also may be offered fewer opportunities to learn skills beyond basic literacy. They will need educators who are not only equipped to help with traditional literacy but can also guide them to think critically, to be selective, and to ask questions about the stories and messages they hear. And they need educators who will help them to be creators and not just consumers.”

It’s so important for Teachers and Parents/Families to engage with children as they use various technology devices and apps that can enhance children’s skills, abilities, and habits of mind. Guernsey states, “Parents feel like they are flying blind. They have heard that apps could help their children learn the ABCs, and they believe their kids will need tech skills, but aside from feeling pressure to buy a touchscreen tablet, they are a little fuzzy on exactly what to do. Teachers are unsure too. No one has shown or talked to them about materials that could be tailored to the needs of their particular children . . .”

Many early education and care leaders are beginning to address these inequities in their research and writings, including Guernsey. For example, in a new book, *Family Engagement in the Digital Age: Early Childhood Educators as Media Mentors*, edited by Chip Donohue of Erikson Institute’s Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center, findings from decades of research on the gains in learning that come from making good choices about content, context and the use of materials that match with children’s individual needs are compiled.

With her vast experience in research and analysis of the technology and young
children landscape, Guernsey, identifies two integrated approaches that can help address this problem:

1. Inject media mentorship into the dialogue on improving the workforce; and
2. Experiment and build a research base on what works in media mentorship.

Further, Guernsey states, “This will involve creating a big tent—one under which professionals from many strands of early learning, librarianship, early intervention, and traditional education settings can see themselves as allies. It also requires a focus on equity and diversity to truly help the greatest number of children and families.” With a new administration on the horizon, she argues that the finalization of the implementation of ESSA offers no better time to consider a comprehensive approach to the equity issues inherent in technology access and use, especially with young children in mind. Perhaps a new niche market will be created in much the same ways “reading coaches” demand was generated by NCLB/Reading First in the 2002-2008 time period.