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USED Under-Secretary Urges Principles Which He Feels Should Be Followed by Congress in Reauthorizing ESEA Which Differ from Some Policy Positions Taken by the White House in Specific Cases

During the EdNET Conference on September 9-12, Under-Secretary Eugene Hickok enunciated a number of principles which he felt Congress should follow in reauthorizing ESEA. In several cases these principles differ from those of White House staff who have taken the lead role in representing the Administration during negotiations with the Conference Committee.

One important principle is that states should develop their own accountability system which is tied to standards and uses state-selected assessments which are aligned to standards. A strict interpretation of this principle would suggest that states will continue to define what constitutes "adequate yearly progress," which schools must meet over time or be designated as low performance. To ensure that states do not select "dumbed-down" assessment instruments for statewide assessments, he emphasized on several occasions that the NAEP would be used as a "benchmark" and would be administered to a sample of the third through eighth grade student who take the state assessments. He also suggested that states be given increased flexibility in how to allocate funding to districts, particularly under block grants. Dr. Hickok was formerly Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania and was a leader in the Education Legislative Council, a splinter group of Chief State School Officers which was created several years ago to oppose some of the political positions taken by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

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He also emphasized the need to ensure that data on student performance be disaggregated and collected and maintained over time in order to compare performance of students by ethnicity, particularly African-American and Hispanics, to determine whether or not the achievement gap with White students is being closed. He did not mention closing the achievement gap between special education and non-special education students such that special education students within ten years will achieve "proficiency levels." As noted in previous TechMIS reports (March 2001) a study by the National Center on Education Outcomes argued that it is not possible to reduce this achievement gap as students with disabilities are usually "graduated" from special education when their reading and other scores exceed the norm and are replaced by lower achievers.

Another principle which he emphasized was providing parents of children enrolled in low-performing schools the choice to have their child sent to another public school or to place their children in Sylvan Learning Centers. The Title I funding would follow the child and the district would be responsible for covering the cost of transportation.

He was critical of the track record of USED in conducting quality research to find out what works. He noted, however, that the NCES data collection and analysis activities were "OK". Not only should USED research offices conduct the necessary research to find out what works, but they should also disseminate results in different forms understandable by stakeholders, parents, and even students. He already felt that a priority should be placed upon evaluating the impact of technology on student performance in academic areas, also suggesting that technology could be important in teaching 21st century technology literacy skills.

In closing he particularly noted the expanded use of the Internet for online state and other assessments, pointing to a Pennsylvania company which has been a leader in the area of online writing assessments (i.e., Vantage Learning which recently was awarded the contact in Oregon to provide statewide assessments).

During the question and answer session he was asked the following question: "As a supporter of state use of the Internet for assessing students who take such state assessments online, how can you advocate the use of the National Assessment of Education Progress assessments in, for example writing, which currently does not allow students to use technology as is the case of Oregon, to take such NAEP writing exams?" Differing slightly from the White House position (which is reflected in the Senate version), he indicated that if there were more appropriate valid instruments he would consider its use as an alternative to NAEP or would possible allow technology to be used when taking the NAEP. In a followup one-to-one discussion, he implied there would indeed be some major changes in the use of NAEP which are currently under consideration by the NAEP governing authority.

Also from his remarks and subsequent discussion, he appears to be perhaps the highest level USED official which supports the appropriate use of technology and stated that USED would "continue its support for infrastructure expansion to facilitate Internet-based education activities." Certainly, the support of expanded infrastructure as reflected in the E-Rate is not a high priority among White House staffers involved with current ESEA negotiations.

School Partnerships with External Groups Have Expanded Significantly Over the Last Decade Suggesting Opportunities for Firms to Maximize Sales Leverage From "Free" Resources

Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of school districts that have partnerships with external groups such as local businesses, religious groups, etc., has increased from 51 percent in 1990 to almost 70 percent in 2000, according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Partners in Education for the USED. The NAPE estimates that:

- more than 35 million students benefit from school partnerships today, which is 5.3 million more than in 1990;

- almost 3.4 million volunteers serve in school partnerships;
- the combined value of financial and in-kind resources provided by partnerships is estimated to be $2.4 billion for America's schools.

While parent organizations remain among the most frequent district partners, the greatest growth has been with small corporations (from 41 percent of school districts in 1990 to 76 percent in 2000), with business associates (from 23 percent to 59 percent), and with community colleges (from 6 percent to 47 percent). The foci of the partnerships suggest some opportunities for TechMIS subscribers. As expected, the percentage of partnering districts which focus on achievement and competency remains high, increasing from 65 percent in 1990 to 81 percent in 2000 and the percentage focusing on technology use and support has increased from 48 percent to 74 percent of partnering districts. The area of focus which has increased the most is professional development -- from nine percent of participating districts to 62 percent.

Within the academic achievement category, the greatest increase in partnership "focus" was in improving test scores -- from 24 percent of partnering districts to 69 percent. Although there was no benchmark in the 1990 questionnaire, in 2000 only 30 percent of partnering districts addressed the development of new standards. In 1990, between 48 percent and 56 percent of partnering districts focused on basic skills, technology, reading, and math/science. That range has increased to between 72 percent and 75 percent in 2000.

Partnering districts involving mentoring programs increased from 24 percent in 1990 to 75 percent in 2000, those providing tutoring increased from 41 percent to 71 percent, and those dealing with internships increased from 3 percent to 47 percent.

In 2000, over 80 percent of the partnering districts focused on the development of student technology skills and increased technology use, and almost 60 percent focused on

training teachers on technology. Over one-third of partnering districts focused on pre-school activities while, in 62 percent of the districts, special education services were provided, in many cases in conjunction with community health organizations to provide transition services. Overall the percentage of partnering districts actually delivering instruction increased from five percent in 1990 to almost 60 percent in 2000 and those with a continuing education focus increased from four percent to 46 percent.

Approximately 40 percent of the districts with partnerships have a partnership "director" which is the obvious primary contact person.

For more information go to www.partnersineducation.org.

Thirteen States to Receive $327 Million Under Reading Excellence Program Which Provides Good Opportunities for Vendors That Have Reading Products and Provide Staff Development Services

The third round of funding for states under the Reading Excellence Program should provide good opportunities for TechMIS subscribers that have "balanced" reading products and can provide staff development services. The 13 states in this round have already identified districts and schools within districts who are eligible to apply for grants. In addition, because so few schools are eligible, the probability is much higher than in other grant programs that an applicant will be successful in being selected as a grant recipient. For example, in Connecticut only 31 schools are eligible to receive grants totaling approximately $13 million. In Nevada, 88 schools are eligible, of which approximately 47 schools will be receiving grants averaging $450,000 per school. In some states, such as South Carolina which receives almost $26 million, there will likely be two competitions: one for schools which are eligible to apply for reading improvement grants and another for those schools qualifying for "tutorial assistance" grants which will be used by the school to provide external tutoring assistance options for

parents in low-performing schools who would like to have their children participate in these external tutoring activities. In such situations, the funds allocated for a student would follow the child in the form of district-paid tuition to the service provider. Discussions with several state contacts -- whose names and phone numbers are included at USED's website (go to ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/awardees) -- suggest that a limited number of states will attempt to solicit applications very quickly in order to begin implementation early next year; most are planning to extend the application process over a longer time frame.

A review of the winning state proposal abstracts suggests several opportunities. Virtually all of the proposals indicate that well over half of funds will be used to plan and conduct staff development and, in about half of the states, university teams will be involved in providing training in the use of "scientifically-based effective approaches." These include: (a) New Hampshire with assistance from the University of Massachusetts; (b) Tennessee with support from Vanderbilt University; (c) Nevada involving Don Bayer at the University of Nevada; (d) Minnesota with significant involvement of the University of Minnesota, including Jim Ysseldyke, who directs the National Center for Education Outcomes; (e) Indiana which will involve Michael Pressley and other University researchers; and (f) Arkansas with university consultants Russ Gersten and Lynn Fuchs. Some states such as Georgia, New York, and Indiana will modify and expand several reading initiatives currently underway.

Virtually all grantees plan to establish a clearinghouse-type activity which compiles and disseminates information about best practices and research-based approaches. Firms that have products which could be considered should contact SEA officials directly to determine exactly how each state plans to implement this activity and whether such opportunities are for real.

This is likely to be the last year the Reading Excellence Program in its current form will be funded, because it will almost certainly become the Bush Administration's Reading First Initiative which is almost sure to be passed by Congress in the next few months. This initiative will be heavily weighted toward phonics and phonemic awareness. States which support a "balanced approach" are likely to move quickly in order to award grants before regulations are published by USED under the Reading First Initiative.

Analysis of National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Math Scores Find Increased Student Scores Associated with the Use of Computers to Demonstrate New Topics or for Simulations

The findings in the recently released NCES Report, entitled "The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2000," has found that eighth grade students' performance increases more on the NAEP when teachers use computers primarily to demonstrate new math topics or for simulations than for students whose teachers reported using computers primarily for drill or for playing math learning games. The use of computers for drill-and-practice and for games was associated with lower average scores than for students not using computers at all for instruction. It is important to note, however, as previously reported in TechMIS, that there is an inverse correlation between most nationally norm-referenced tests (which have been increasingly used for state assessments), and the NAEP. Drill-and-practice, whether by computer or otherwise, is perhaps the most commonly used approach in preparing students to take national norm-referenced tests.

Another very interesting finding relates to the availability of computers in the classroom. At each grade level, the percentage of students with computers available "at all times in the classroom" increased by at least 20 percentage points between 1996 and 2000. While the percentage of computers "available at all times" in the classroom at the eighth grade level was 52 percent (and available in computer labs was 92 percent), there has been no increase in the percent of teachers reporting that they use computers for instruction which

remained at about 48 percent over the four-year period. This confirms a finding from Dr. Hank Becker's 1997-98 survey of teacher use of the Internet and technology generally --- the least likely subject area teachers to use computers or assign computer-based lessons to students were math teachers.

A number of recent surveys have suggested that more and more computers are being used in regular classrooms rather than in computer labs. Findings from the NCES survey found that, between 1996 and 2000, access to "computers in labs" increased in grades 4 and 8 by five percentage points even as it declined four points at the twelfth grade level.

The NAEP analysis also addressed whether teacher-reported use of calculators by students in the classroom has increased over time and whether the use of calculators on portions of the tests had any impact on student performance. Between 1996 and 2000, "everyday use" by students in the classroom actually declined from 55 percent of teachers reporting to 48 percent. On the other hand, at the eighth and twelfth grade levels, student daily use of calculators at the eighth grade level was associated with higher student performance on the average and "unrestricted calculator use on tests" was also associated with higher scores at the eighth grade level.

As previously reported, one of the biggest issues policy makers are beginning to confront is whether or not students should be allowed to use computers in taking the NAEP exams. In 1994 and 1998 students who used computers "weekly or more often" did worse on the NAEP writing assessment than students who never used computers. Prompted by lawsuits related to providing reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities in taking state assessments, the number of states allowing and supporting online or web-based state assessments is increasing almost monthly with Massachusetts recently changing its policy to allow students to take the state writing assessment using the computer. It is very likely that, in the near future, administrations of NAEP will allow computers to be used if students so desire, if not as a result of policy changes at the

Federal level, then in response to class action lawsuits filed by parents of students with certain disabilities for which computers can be used to compensate.

The entire NAEP Report Card is several hundred pages long. For a discussion of the use of calculators and computers and their relationship with student performance, they can be found on pages 141-149 and 160-165, which can be downloaded separately. Go to nces.ed.gov/ nationsreportcard/pdf.

New Head Start Curriculum Guide for Literacy Development to be Modeled on One Used in Dallas Head Start Cone Center and Championed by First Lady Laura Bush

While the President's much-publicized proposed Reading First initiative for K-3 would increase Federal support from $280 million (under the current Reading Excellence Act) to over $900 million next year, a new less well-known literacy curriculum guide for Head Start modeled after the Cone Center curriculum is likely to be published soon for all 16,000 Head Start programs. This could have a major impact. Proposed funding for the pre-K literacy development program would be $75 million. Most of the implementation would be supported by Federal Head Start funds which have steadily increased to $6.2 billion today with the number of Head Start centers expanding by 45 percent since 1996. In a New York Times article on February 10, 2001, the First Lady is quoted as saying "Young people deserve to have strong pre-reading and language activities in their pre-K programs." A Bush aide noted in that article that HHS which is responsible for Head Start, would soon begin developing a curriculum that every Head Start teacher will be expected to follow; it will be modeled after a curriculum which was created at the Cone center by a Southern Methodist University team.

As reported in the official USED publication Community Update, April 2001, an evaluation of the results of the Cone center curriculum found that average scores on the

ITBS gradually increased from 20-30 percentiles in 1992 to 60-70 percentiles in 1994-95. An additional evaluation in 2000 found participating students performed well above average on the SAT 9.

According to a member of the evaluation team, the ITBS (kindergarten version) which was administered in April of each year, was used with Cone "graduates" prior to implementation of the Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) in the Cone Head Start center and then in the following years. Also included in the New York Times article is a parenthetical statement that, while the Cone graduates were scoring on the average at the 94th percentile nationally on the ITBS, the non-Cone students at the same school had also improved, scoring at the 80th percentile.

At the center of the model curriculum is LEAP which focuses on building cognitive and language skills in young children and involves training teachers and parents to ensure success in kindergarten and beyond. The 20-week lesson plan, used with small groups of children throughout the day, includes six areas --- stories, words, sounds, letters, ideas, and pre-writing motor skills. It is designed so that children who complete the curriculum by the time they reach kindergarten are able to name letters of the alphabet, retell a story in their own words, and speak in complete sentences, among other skills.

The New York Times article states that the Head Start "establishment" has strong reservations about literacy intervention at the pre-K level even though teaching numeracy and literacy at the kindergarten level, was written into the 1998 Head Start reauthorization. Just as controversial, if not moreso, the President has also proposed to move Head Start from the DHHS to USED. When Head Start was originally created under the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1965, the primary argument at that time was that public schools would not adequately serve poor disadvantaged children and that separately operated centers would be more responsive to parents' needs and desires than would public school bureaucracies.

During the last week of July, a two-day summit was convened by First Lady Laura Bush to share "research on reading readiness" in programs, such as Head Start. Earlier a Joint Task Force between DHHS and USED had been created. USED's Assistant Secretary for Research estimated about a third of all children lacked the reading readiness capability and proposed that all children be screened for early reading readiness difficulties.

According to Wilson Marketing Group, $18 billion of public funds were allocated this last year to early education and childcare with about 34 percent targeting Head Start and "early" Head Start initiatives. Head Start funding this coming school year is up 17.7 percent with state funding for pre-K up 20 percent.

The Administration's proposed early intervention reading initiatives can be expected to pass Congress with an intact appropriation. By improving student reading scores, the Administration hopes to reduce, over time, the number of students placed in special education programs by almost a third, which would reduce the cost of special education and hence the need for as much Federal funding in this area.

For more information about the Language Enrichment Activities Program used in the Cone Center, go to the website of the Texas Instruments Foundation, which funded the development of the program by SMU Learning Therapy program, www.ti.com/corp/docs/company/citizen/ foundation/leapsbounds/learning.shtml or contact the Center at 972/917-4505 (Director Lue Alma Somlin).

Business Coalition for Excellence in Education Takes Strong Position on ESEA Reauthorization Reforms But Where Will the Money Come From?

In August, the Business Coalition for Excellence in Education (BCEE) an organization of 80 leading corporations and business organizations, expressed their support for President Bush's call to "get accountability right." While the several recommendations appear to be on target, the real question is whether there will be any additional funds for education reform in light of the diminishing Federal budget surplus due to the economic slow-down and decreased revenues.

In a July 31 letter to Chairman John Boehner who chairs the House/Senate Conference Committee which is attempting to arrive at the final ESEA reauthorization bill, BCEE indicated their preferences related to differing accountability and other provisions in the House and Senate versions. In some cases they suggested provisions that were not included in either version.

The BCEE strongly supports Senate provisions that would use the NAEP as the national benchmark for quality with comparable data coming from states over time, participation of all states in the NAEP, and the Federal government covering all the cost of administering the NAEP to a sample of students to ensure that the state assessments and passing criteria are not "dumbed down." Moreover, they would require that school and district tests be comparable and that disaggregated data on year-to-year student achievement year to year be reported. On the sticking points of ways to assess Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the BCEE recognizes the weaknesses in both House and Senate versions and calls for provisions which meet the following principles: (a) they are transparent and understandable to all stakeholders; (b) they set rigorous but realistic goals and require continuous improvement over time for all student groups; and (c) they ensure that all students participate.

The BCEE also supports House provisions that would allow Federal funds for state assessment development to be used by consortia of states in the development of such assessments, thus providing states leverage with test development/manufacturing firms.

The BCEE recommends a number of strong provisions for teacher quality, math, science and technology, including:

- raising teacher qualifications and reducing the percentage of out-of-field teachers;
- increasing advanced certification and credentialling such as master teachers, increasing career opportunities, differential and bonus pay, mentoring teachers, and strategies for greater teacher mobilities;
- requiring that all paraprofessionals, within three years, have at least two years of higher education;
- allow funds to be used for teacher summer internships or year-round arrangements with businesses on the cutting edge of applications in math and science.

Regarding technology-related teacher training, the BCEE "supports a strong and clear statement in the final bill that allows states and localities to use the larger allocation of Title IIA funds for training teachers in the use of and integration of technology into curricula and instruction, including distance learning." It also recommends the inclusion of a general provision that allows use of funds under ESEA for technology that is necessary to achieve program goals, or specific provisions under each program that will allow such funds to be used for technology, including software and electronically-delivered content; professional development that includes training in the use of technology; instruction that can include online distance learning; and technology use in accountability systems.

The BCEE approach provides a greater balance than either the President's blueprint proposed in April or the Senate and House versions. For example, BCEE goes beyond

the White House priority of using proven technology products and services to improve student proficiency only in math and reading by emphasizing student technology literacy as one of the priority uses of technology. Moreover, it provides a greater emphasis on math and science in both teacher preparation and instruction, calling for more frequent administration of NAEP science assessments than either the House or Senate version. It emphasizes the use of technology to deliver instruction to meet the objectives of the various consolidated programs and strongly encourages expanded technology-related training for teachers, particularly related to curriculum integration. BCEE emphasizes allowing districts to use portions of any of the ESEA components for this purpose.

The BCEE could have a major impact on the final ESEA reauthorization. The BCEE co-chaired by prominent industry spokespersons such as Craig Barrett, Chairman and CEO of Intel, and Thomas Engibous, Chairman and CEO of Texas Instruments. A driving force behind this group is the National Alliance of Business which was instrumental during the 1990s in generating industry support for the SCANS Commission headed by Dr. Arnie Packer whose 21st century "competencies" and "foundations" have been imbued into state standards across the country. If education groups can not arrive at a consensus on considerations, such as Adequate Yearly Progress and other accountability provisions, which are significantly different between the House and Senate versions, then the conference committee is likely to follow the recommendations of another large stakeholder beyond educators --- namely industry. For a copy of the draft discussion paper and letter submitted to Chairman Boehner, contact the BCEE at 202/289-2932 or Lindsley@nab.com.

Demand for GED Products and Services Increasing Before New, More Difficult GED Battery of Exams Replaces Current Version on January 1, 2002

The demand for GED products and services should increase dramatically this year as adults and youth are attempting to take or finish taking the battery of GED exams prior to the expected-to-be-more difficult version takes effect on January 1, 2002. While the number of participants taking the GED test battery increased 4.5 percent between 1998 and 1999, the largest increase in the 57-year history of the GED occurred in 1996 prior to the introduction of the 1997 higher "passing standards." Nearly 860,000 students participated in the GED program in 1999 with 750,000 completing it or 70 percent meeting passing score requirements thus earning GED high school equivalency credentials. However, those earning GEDs in 1999 represented only 1 percent of the estimated 50 million adults in North America without high school diplomas.

Special testing accommodations have increasingly become a problem. For example, in 1999 40 percent of participants in Puerto Rico took the Spanish language GED test, while in the Continental United States almost 60 percent took the Spanish language test. Between 1998 and 1999, there was an almost 10 percent decrease in the number of approvals of special accommodations for participants with specific learning disabilities. On the other hand, over the same time frame a 10 percent increase occurred for adults needing special reading devices or marking devices.

A recent interview with Lynn Schaeffer, Director of Test Development for the GED Testing Service (part of the American Council on Education) as reported in Education Daily (July 25), suggests several new or increased areas of emphasis and knowledge to be assessed in the new January 1, 2002 version. For example, the test will likely use twice as many graphs and charts and allow the use of calculators to solve math problems, which are likely to be based on workplace situations. The new version will also expand upon the writing part requiring participants to write an essay that has a focus. It is not clear

whether participants will be allowed to use word processors and spell checkers in writing such essays, accommodations which are increasingly allowed in state assessments nationwide as noted in previous TechMIS reports. (See related item on NAEP.)

Approximately 70 percent of 1999 GED participants were 19 years or older with 1.3 percent younger than 19 years. Approximately 2/3 of those taking the GED have reportedly completed the tenth grade or higher before leaving formal schooling.

The type of service provider most likely to be expanding GED prep services are community colleges or community centers dedicated to adult literacy and GED prep. Since the 1997 Welfare to Work legislation became effective, the number of former welfare recipients in literacy courses funded, initially under welfare reform and now under TANF surpluses, continues to increase. The demand for GED prep services should also increase for recent immigrants who are now able to enroll at lower tuitions as residents in colleges as in Texas (a situation which is likely to occur in California as well -- see July TechMIS Washington Update). Demand for GED prep programs is also likely to increase if a large portion of the 500,000 teacher aides currently employed in Title I and special education are required not only to have a high school diploma or GED equivalent but also to receive a two-year Associate degree by 2005. A record 6.5 million adults are now under correctional authority with almost four million more on probation. Many probation judges and officers require youth and others who do not have a GED or high school diploma to take such courses.

For many information about the GED testing service go to www.acenet.edu/calec/home.html.

Effective Practices Which are Most Likely to Close Achievement Gaps of Students in High Poverty Title I Schools Identified in New USED Study

The new report entitled the "Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change in Performance (LESCP) in Title I Schools" (2001) has identified several practices and activities which are likely to reduce reading and math achievement gaps between low-performing students and national norms. This study followed students in 71 high-poverty schools as they progressed from the third to the fifth grades; focusing on math and reading. Between 1996 and 1999, the standards movement was being implemented across districts and states. Hence, LESCP is the first major study to assess the impact of standards-based reform practices on student achievement.

The study found that reading achievement improved faster when two factors were present:

- Teachers gave high ratings to their professional development in reading -- The growth in student test scores between grades 3 and 5 was about 20 percent greater when teachers rated their professional development high than when they gave it a low rating;

- Third grade teachers were especially active in outreach to parents of low-achieving students -- Growth in test scores between the third and fifth grade was 50 percent higher for students whose teachers and schools reported high levels of parent outreach early than students whose teachers and schools reported low levels of parent outreach activities.

On the other hand, LESCP found that growth in reading test scores was 10 percent lower when teachers spent a lot of time on basic instruction (such as filling out work sheets or reading aloud). In the area of mathematics, students of teachers who highly rated their professional development showed a 50 percent higher growth than students whose teachers gave it a low rating. Test scores of students in mathematics grew 40 percent more for students whose teachers reported high levels of current outreach. Growth of scores for students of teachers who reported relatively high usage of exploration and

instruction were about 17 percent higher than for fifth grade students whose teachers reported low usage. Another reported finding related to the issue of coverage was: "Students' initial reading scores tended to be higher in classrooms where teachers reported they were aware of and implementing policies of standards-based reform. When third grade teachers reported very high visibility of standards and assessments and said they believe their curriculum reflected these policies, their students scored 2.8 points above the LESCP average in the third grade."

As the study concluded, the best combination of circumstances for reading achievement gains included:

- less use of basic instruction in upper elementary grades;
- high teacher ratings of professional development;
- more intense outreach to parents of low achievers; and
- higher visibility of standards and assessments in the third grade.

LESCP included that 110 students had this exact combination of circumstances. They were 10.6 points behind their peers in 1996 and narrowed the gap to 4.9 points behind their peers in 1999.

These findings suggest that TechMIS subscribers who have products or services which can facilitate these "circumstances" should cite the study's findings in positioning their products. Highlighting the "research-based" aspect of the products to potential customers is particularly important because new guidelines or nonregulatory guidance from the national Title I office are likely to include "research-based practice," especially for low-achieving schools and schools targeted for improvement. It is important to note that one of the members of the Technical Work Group for this longitudinal study was Dr. Joseph Johnson from the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Johnson is now the national Title I director. Another important member of the technical work group was Dr. Andrew Porter, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin/Madison, whose

ongoing surveys are finding that, not only are few state assessments highly correlated with content standards, but actual teacher coverage of materials which are related to the assessments are relatively low across states. Teachers in some states reported less than 10 percent coverage in their classroom content that is addressed on state assessments. For a copy of the report go to ed.gov/offices/ous/pes/edfordisadvantaged.

Federal Special Education Earmarked Funds ($300 Million) Under School Renovation Grant Program Likely to be Used to Purchase Technology and Non-Reoccurring Cost Products

In the FY 2001 appropriation, $1.2 billion was included under the School Renovation program. Of that amount, $300 million was earmarked for implementation of IDEA mandates and/or the purchase of technology. Since July, states have been submitting applications for their portions of the funds. However, because of the novelty of this most likely one-year-only grant program, many states such as California have yet to submit their applications. In that state the implementation will be shared by the California State Department of Education, which will handle the special education/technology portion, and the State Allocation Board, which will handle the school repair and renovation portion. Also in California, decisions have yet to be made as to how charter schools can participate.

The district application process has begun in some states. For example, in Texas the "request for applications" was available in mid-July for LEAs, public charter schools, and education service centers. One of the Texas guidelines stipulates that districts which are awarded grants may only use such funds for special education students whose IDEA cost is two times or more greater than the state per-pupil expenditure (which is $7,700). The Texas grant applications states "it is anticipated that funding will be appropriated by the U.S. Congress on a one-time-only basis. It is likely that continuation funding will not be provided." Moreover, it appears that districts whose applications are approved will be reimbursed for an amount that is the difference between the cost associated with high-

cost students and special education funds generated by targeted students. Such reimbursement will be made at the completion of the project. Hence, districts could purchase assistive technology, software, and other non-reoccurring cost items for targeted students and be reimbursed approximately one year later.

The grant application and funding process will vary considerably among states, although all projects must be completed by 2003. Knowledgeable officials have projected that applications in California will not likely be approved until late next spring. On the other hand, applications in Texas are due in October. However, because this new appropriation is very likely to be only a one-year phenomenon, most of the districts will use such funds to "invest" in non-reoccurring cost items such as technology rather than hiring staff. Interested TechMIS subscribers should go to the individual SEA websites to determine the status of the states' application process.