

## **Alabama Update - January 2003**

---

---

As part of Alabama's Technology Education adoption for 2003-09, the State has adopted EasyTech -- an online technology integration curriculum developed by Learning.com -- for use in Alabama's 1,500 elementary and middle schools. EasyTech not only teaches students word processing, spreadsheets, and multimedia presentations, but also integrates these applications into everyday mathematics and language arts curricula. Correlation of Alabama's Technology Education standards with EasyTech lessons is at [www.learning.com/Alabama](http://www.learning.com/Alabama). Districts will be required to place purchase orders for EasyTech prior to April 15, 2003 (see [www.alsde.edu.html.home.asp](http://www.alsde.edu.html.home.asp)).

## **Arizona Update - January 2003**

---

---

Despite inheriting a projected \$1 billion deficit for FY 2004, Arizona's new Governor, Janet Napolitano, intends to increase funding for public schools. A Statewide voter referendum, to large degree, prevents the legislature from reducing education funding. The Governor has expressed her concern about Arizona's high dropout and illiteracy rates and has indicated that early childhood education is a key area in which improvement should be made.

## California Update - January 2003

---

---

In a series of court rulings and reversals, California's teacher bonus plan has been thrown into disarray. Under the State's Incentive Act, teachers in low-performing schools could get bonuses of as much as \$25,000 if their students' achievement test scores improved by five percent or more. The State Education Department, in an effort to ensure the score increases were valid, changed the formula to require increases over a two-year period. Although this policy was approved by the Superior Court, an appellate court overturned the ruling, giving bonuses to 30 Sacramento teachers who were party to the legal action. The State has not yet decided if it will appeal this ruling. Budget cuts have terminated the bonus plan for future years.

Newly re-elected Governor Gray Davis has indicated that California's serious budget problems -- a \$35 billion statewide shortfall -- will result in cuts to the education budget of at least \$10 billion. These cuts will be in addition to the State's education administration budget. The Governor has urged that the \$18 billion in new school construction bonds passed in the November elections be issued at a faster rate than prior bonds -- perhaps \$300 million per year.

The California Board of Education has decided to retain the State's rigorous definition of academic proficiency even though the definition might make it difficult to meet Federal NCLB requirements, possibly costing the State a great deal of Federal funding. State officials acknowledge that the definition -- all high school graduates must be prepared to attend a four-year college -- will be difficult to attain even in the 11 years set forth by the State. California will also retain its Academic Performance Index, a Statewide ranking of school's performance.

During the current legislative session, California legislators are planning to enact a "master plan" that has been developed through a cooperative effort among lawmakers and the education community. The "master plan" is expected to consist of nine separate education bills, the first two of which were introduced in December. The first of these reorganizes the State's administration of education by appointing a cabinet-level "chief education officer," establishing a California Education Commission to analyze education data, and requiring diversity in the membership of the State's Board of Education. The second bill introduced last month would

provide for mandatory all-day kindergarten and institute a grant program offering prekindergarten for all three- and four-year olds. The “master plan” can be accessed at [www.senate.ca.gov/masterplan](http://www.senate.ca.gov/masterplan).

As part of its settlement of the Microsoft Anti-Trust case, California schools will receive vouchers for free computer hardware and software. The \$1.1 billion settlement, yet to be approved by the courts, could benefit as many as three million students in 4,700 California schools. The vouchers may be used to purchase equipment and software from any provider and is not restricted to the Windows operating system. The bulk of the settlement will be targeted on the State’s poorest schools; to be eligible at least half of a school’s enrollment must receive free or reduced price lunch.

A plan proposed by Governor Gray Davis calls for an immediate, across-the-board 3.7 percent cut in education expenditures -- a total of approximately \$1 billion. These mid-year cuts are expected to have a significant impact on after-school programs.

## **Colorado Update - January 2003**

---

---

In the November election, Colorado voters passed an amendment requiring public schools to teach classes in English and that English learners be placed in English language immersion programs of one year or less.

In addressing the \$700 million shortfall in Colorado's FY 2003 budget, Governor Bill Owens avoided major cuts in K-12 education. However, it is expected that balancing the FY 2004 budget will require significant reductions in funding for the preschool program for at-risk children.

## Florida Update - January 2003

---

---

According to knowledgeable Florida observers, on December 12, 65 individuals were released from the Florida Department of Education, including the three highest ranking officials in the State Title I office. This cut was not expected, certainly so quickly after the election. It appears that the Florida Department of Education and/or the new Secretary of Education are attempting to centralize control over No Child Left Behind fund flowing into the State -- including Title I, Reading First, and other program funds.

One of the key persons to be responsible for administering these funds is veteran Department of Education official Lou Marsh, who several years ago was responsible for the State Title I program.

As previously reported, the final Title I allocation to Florida districts was approximately ten percent or \$40 million less than preliminary allocations in February 2002 suggested. Although such reductions have created extremely tight Title I budgets, some districts are expending these funds now.

Florida is one of almost 30 states that have contracted with ETS to use its "Parapro" to certify teacher aides who are involved in instructional support to meet one of several requirements in the new Title I regulations. Most of the Title I directors in the State agreed to attempt to use the ETS Parapro for this type of certification wherever possible. The first administration of the assessment is to occur in January, although a number of districts have been pilot-testing it over the last couple of months. However, the Committee of Practitioners, which must decide the cutoff points for passing or failing the test, has yet to be appointed. Hence, most officials feel that such cutoffs to be used for determining which aides have been certified will not be available until mid- to late Spring, which could create major compliance problems for the State.

Officials attending the State Educational Technology Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C., indicated that even though there are pressures to cut K-12 funding in Florida and uncertainties still exist in terms of how certain Federal funds can be used, the State appears to be continuing to

support funding for technology earmarks -- which have been in the neighborhood of \$60 million annually over the last five years.

A study conducted by the Consortium for Policy Research and Education (CPRE) has found that students in America's Choice schools in Duval County did better in writing and, to a lesser extent in reading and mathematics, than students in matched schools between 1999 and 2001. In no cases did the matched schools' students do better than the America's Choice schools. In mathematics, students in their second year attending America's Choice schools significantly outperformed their peers in both fourth and eighth grade. This study by CPRE, a highly respected research organization, will provide additional ammunition for choice advocates not only in Florida, but also in policy deliberations relating to IDEA reauthorization. The so-called McKay scholarship program which allow parents to select providers for their special education students, has also been heralded as a success in terms of parent satisfaction and decreases in litigation brought by parents. It is also providing support for the introduction of vouchers into the reauthorization of IDEA.

In a December report to the State Board of Education, a task force appointed by the Governor recommended that the State develop alternative assessments for students with disabilities leading to standard academic diplomas. Under the task force's recommendation, disabled students could substitute more appropriate assessment measures (e.g., portfolios, observations, alternative tests) for specific parts of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The task force also called for more research on technology solutions -- including computer-based and Internet-based assessments -- that would make the FCAT more usable by disabled students. In January the State Department of Education will consider the task force recommendations.

## **Hawaii Update - January 2003**

---

---

Voters in Hawaii, during the November election, passed a ballot question authorizing the issuance of revenue bonds in support of private, not-for-profit schools and colleges -- both sectarian and non-sectarian.

## Idaho Update - January 2003

---

---

Governor Dirk Kempthorne announced in his State of the State Address that Idaho could have to make severe budget cuts to address the State's \$200 million shortfall, including at least \$70 million from education. As alternatives, the Governor suggested a series of revenue-enhancing measures including a 34 cents per pack increase in the cigarette tax (\$30 million in added revenues) and hike in the State sales tax of 1½ cents (which would generate \$240 in revenues over three years).

The Albertson Foundation, a long-time benefactor of education in Idaho, has provided a \$35 million grant to establish an electronic communications network so local schools and State offices can more easily share student achievement information.

State officials are estimating that the State's FY 2004 budget will face a deficit of \$160 million. Last year, the use of one-time revenues to balance the FY 2003 budget avoided major cuts in K-12 education. However, it will be difficult to spare education in FY 2004.

Grant applications to the State under the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program are due on February 28, 2003. Intended to develop research-based, after-school programs, these five-year grants totaling \$1.4 million (minimum of \$50,000 per school) will be directed at schools with high numbers of poor students. The application package can be found at [www.sde.state.id.us/dept](http://www.sde.state.id.us/dept).

The Idaho Department of Education has approved five websites from ABC-CLIO Schools as supplemental social studies curricula in the State's middle and high schools. These websites -- American Government, American History, State Geography, World Geography, and World History -- incorporate a library of reference resources, guided lesson plans and activities, daily news updates, and archived maps, graphs, photographs, and audio clips.

## Illinois Update - January 2003

---

---

For FY 2003, Illinois faces total budget shortfalls of \$600 out of a \$52.6 billion State budget. Statewide, K-12 education has seen reductions of four percent -- about \$176 million out of \$8.3 billion.

In his 2002 budget, Governor George Ryan increased funds for literacy and adult education by nearly a third. Moreover, last year, responsibility for literacy and adult education was transferred from the State Board of Education to the Community College Board which has allocated \$70 million for the purpose. Another \$3 million from the Secretary of State's Literacy Office is available specifically for family literacy projects. To simplify the grant process, community-based organizations can apply for State funds directly without going through local school districts.

State education officials have proposed more rigorous requirements for paraprofessionals in Illinois in order to meet Federal "highly qualified" requirements under the No Child Left Behind program. Academic requirements for teacher aides will increase from 30 to 60 semester-hours and the State will seek to develop a Statewide training curriculum for aides based upon the standards developed by the American Federation of Teachers. In the near term, paraprofessionals will be given a test to measure their teaching skills. Being considered are the ParaPro exam from the Education Testing Service and the Work Keys test from the American College Testing Service.

A grant from the Illinois Board of Education will allow every school in the State to receive Encyclopedia Britannica's online reference and education service at no cost. The suite of reference works, made available through Britannica's consortium-pricing program, can be used anywhere in a participating school that has Internet access. Schools must, however, enroll with Britannica to obtain access to the package.

## **Indiana Update - January 2003**

---

---

For FY 2003, the biennium's education budget of \$7.64 billion was cut by \$482 million. Indiana educators hope that a restructuring of tax revenue and other measures will at least maintain education funding in the 2004-05 biennial budget.

Indiana's Governor declared that the State would continue to develop a more rigorous high school curriculum despite the fact that there are no funds to implement it. Indeed, he has proposed no increases in funding for FY 2004 or FY 2005.

Over the last decade, Indiana has progressively increased funding for various technology earmarks and State funds to districts which can be used for technology and training purposes. Recently, however, the State has been forced to cut virtually all State funding for earmarks and State formula flow-through funds to districts for the purchase of technology -- including expansion of the State infrastructure, which has relied heavily on e-Rate funding. As one Indiana official noted during the State Technology Leadership Conference, it is difficult to cut additional funds when the appropriated level is zero. However, this staff person indicated that many districts have unofficially communicated to the State that they plan to transfer much of the Title II D/Technology Enhancement Funds, which could be up to 50 percent of the formula portion, to Title II A/Teacher Quality, or in some cases (particularly in large urban areas), to Title I programs and within them to schoolwide programs.

In January, Indiana became the twenty-second state to be approved for funding under Reading First. The State will receive a total of \$84.4 million over the six-year duration of the grant, with \$12.9 million available in the first year. Through its grant, Indiana will, as part of its professional development plan, hold 40 sessions statewide on scientifically based reading instruction for all K-3 teachers (including special education teachers) and administrators. Following these sessions will be the Indiana Literacy Conference to enhance K-3 teachers' ability to apply scientifically based reading instruction in the classroom and to use and interpret effectively appropriate reading assessment tools. The State will hold a competition for eligible schools this Spring; about 66 schools are expected to receive subgrants.

## Iowa Update - January 2003

---

---

Through two special legislative sessions Iowa reconciled its \$220 million budget shortfall for FY 2003 without major cuts in K-12 education. The principal casualty was the \$5.7 million earmarked for education technology.

Governor Tom Vilsack has proposed a “virtual academy” initiative that would enable small and rural high schools to have access to greater instructional options. This State-operated program would establish online courses for students. Additional “regional academies” could serve to pool the course offerings of smaller schools.

## **Kansas Update - January 2003**

---

---

The Kansas Department of Education is developing a computerized assessment program for all students that will particularly “benefit students with disabilities.” All special education students would take the standardized test on a computer which would produce more timely results than hand-graded tests. Depending on how the student does, the teacher would be able to link a student to lesson plans to help enhance skills.

## **Louisiana Update - January 2003**

---

---

K-12 education in Louisiana has seen an \$8.3 million (out of \$2.7 billion) cut in funding. Most of the reductions came from the State's school accountability program.

## **Maine Update - January 2003**

---

---

Maine's first-in-the-nation laptop initiative has been expanded to cover even more students. About 18,000 Apple laptop computers were provided to seventh grade teachers and students this past September, with another 18,000 laptops scheduled for delivery next year. About half of the schools permit their students to take the computers home with them, but many do not have Internet access in their homes. Starting later this year, all seventh and eight grade students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch will be given free Internet connections at home.

## Maryland Update - January 2003

---

---

Although an additional \$1.3 billion would be allocated annually to more than 16 of the poorest school districts each year over the next five years (following the recommendation and subsequent legislation stemming from the Thornton Commission Report), many districts believe that shortfalls in local revenues will more than offset the increase in State revenues. The new State funding is supposed to be targeted on special education, at-risk students, and limited-English-proficient students. According to the Baltimore Sun (December 22), some districts have dropped plans to replace textbooks and train teachers (hence reduce class size) because of local revenue shortfalls.

Newly-elected Republican Governor, Robert Ehrlich, Jr., has proposed numerous budget cuts to meet a \$1.8 billion shortfall projected over the next 18 months. He is hoping to raise approximately \$400 million of new revenue by allowing slot machines at four Maryland racetracks. However, to the surprise of many in the Maryland education community, his budget includes full funding for K-12 educators with a 12 percent increase between FY 2003 and FY 2004, which would be budgeted at \$3.4 billion. One of the largest poor districts, Prince George's County, would get an overall increase of \$25 million, half of which would be for K-12 schools to improve student achievement.

The State has also decided to save slightly over \$4 million in its current budget by not replacing some positions currently available in certain offices such as corrections education. The new Governor has decided that the proposed revenue from slot machines be put into the State's general fund and not earmarked specifically to pay for the \$1.3 billion plan to improve public instruction in 16 low wealth districts across the state. Opposition to the lack of such earmarks can be expected immediately from Democrats.

A new coalition of educators and advocacy groups, called Leadership in Action, has developed a five-year plan to ensure that: (1) all children five years old and younger have access to early childhood education; (2) teachers in these programs are well trained; and (3) parents are successful as their children's first teachers. The program's goal is for 75 percent of all

kindergarten students are ready for school by the 2006-07 school year. The plan will be considered for funding by the legislature in February.

Because of budget cuts the State Department of Education has decided to not require fourth and sixth grade students to take the CTBS state test. While districts will continue to have students take the second grade CTBS test at State expense, districts may decide to continue testing in the fourth and sixth grade level by using local funds to cover the cost. Next year, the new Maryland School Assessment, which is designed to meet new Federal requirements in ESEA, will begin testing students in the third, fifth, eighth, and tenth grades.

## **Massachusetts Update - January 2003**

---

---

According to a recent survey, a bonus program established in 1998 to attract professionals not trained in education into the teaching profession has not been successful in retaining such professionals. Bonuses of \$5,000 per year for four years have been paid to 56 professionals in 1999; only 25 (46 percent) were still teaching three years later. Over three years, the program has seen a 28 percent attrition rate; this contrasts with an 18 percent attrition rate for the teaching professional as a whole.

In its FY 2003 State budget, the Massachusetts legislature approved a \$3.6 million appropriation to reinstate the “master teacher” program that was discontinued last summer for lack of funds. This program provides bonuses of up to \$50,000 over ten years to educators who serve as mentors for new teachers.

## **Michigan Update - January 2003**

---

---

Based upon Michigan's current accountability plan, more than 40 percent of the schools in the State will be classified as "failing" under the No Child Left Behind Act. The State Board of Education has approved a new plan to give more flexibility to schools. It is still expected that 15 percent of schools may be still considered as "failing."

Five school districts in Michigan are recipients of the States Learning Without Limits grant program. These districts -- Berrien County, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Flint Community, Detroit, and Traverse Bay -- each have received grants of between \$1.1 and \$1.3 million to support implementation of wireless computing programs. Another eight Michigan districts have received grants of \$100,000 each to supplement wireless computing solutions already in place.

## Mississippi Update - January 2003

---

---

Mississippi is currently finalizing its five-year (2203-2008) education technology plan. Among the standards set forth in the plan are the requirements that: (1) students be technology-literate; (2) teachers be trained in the State's technology standards; (3) schools integrate technology into their curricula; (4) schools use appropriate and up-to-date reporting and accountability systems; (5) schools use technology to communicate with parents and the community; and (6) all education institutions utilize the broadband capability of the Statewide communications infrastructure.

The Mississippi legislature is considering a number of major revenue measures to address the State's \$246 million deficit for FY 2003. Nearly \$80 million has already been cut. These revenue measures include new taxes on cigarettes and casinos, as well as shifts in other revenue streams. The Governor has asked for a \$230 million increase in funding for K-12 education, some of which will go toward continuing the State's effort to put an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom. The Governor has heralded Mississippi as the first state to have every classroom connected to the Internet.

## Missouri Update - January 2003

---

---

A State-appointed task force, called the “K-16” panel, has issued a series of recommendations for improving student achievement, increasing teacher quality, and closing academic gaps among students. Among the key recommendations are:

- bonuses of as much as \$10,000 for teachers who will work in low-performing schools;
- higher standards for teacher quality;
- ongoing assessment of teachers’ content knowledge;
- greater accountability for teacher preparation programs; and
- greater focus on urban education in teacher preparation programs.

In an effort to meet the accountability requirements passed by the Missouri legislature in 2001, the State Department of Education has established a website that provides a broad range of accountability information for every school and district including test scores, teacher experience, dropout rates, student-teacher ratios, and per-pupil spending. The website is [www.dese.state.mo.us/schooldata](http://www.dese.state.mo.us/schooldata).

## **Nebraska Update - January 2003**

---

---

The Nebraska Supreme Court recently issued a unanimous decision among seven justices that school districts cannot give teachers signing bonuses unless such bonuses are approved by local teachers' unions. The Nebraska Association of School Boards, in a friend of the court brief, argued that some employees need to be paid more than in union contracts to improve the quantity and quality of services. To the extent that Federal funds are used to provide signing bonuses, this State Court decision could be overridden by the final Title I regulations for No Child Left Behind because the new law takes precedence over most collective bargaining agreements.

## **Nevada Update - January 2003**

---

---

Over the last two years, slightly more than \$9 million has been appropriated by the legislature each year for a combination of hardware, software, and staff development purchases by districts and schools. However, during both years the Governor would not release such funds. The State technology group, which has been assigned leadership responsibility throughout the State, has once again recommended that approximately \$10 million be allocated to districts for purchasing technology, staff development, software, and related items. This proposal is likely to be included in the Governor's proposal to the legislature which will be meeting early this year.

Nevada has been using standards-based high school exit exams in language arts and mathematics for three years; a similar science exam was originally scheduled for implementation in the 2002-03 school year. The science graduation requirement was then delayed until the 2003-04 school year and now it appears it will be postponed another year until 2004-05.

## **New Jersey Update - January 2003**

---

---

Governor James McGreevey has proposed allowing high school students who pass tests of required courses be allowed to take more advanced classes and allowing twelfth grade students to participate in apprenticeship, college courses, etc. if they have already passed graduation exams. No longer would seat time be a requirement for receiving credit for specific courses.

A coalition of New Jersey education and business organizations has developed a pilot program to reform student assessment in the State. The five-year pilot program will use “performance-based assessments” in nine school districts starting during second half of the 2002-03 school year. The program will be funded at at least \$850,000 for its first year; \$750,000 will come from the State; \$100,000 will be contributed by the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE); and \$400,000 of in-kind support will be provided by the Coalition for Responsible Educational Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation (CREATE).

New Jersey is in the process of revising its eight core curriculum standards and is beginning to overhaul the State’s student assessment system by adding performance-based assessments to its use of standardized tests.

The Education Testing Service (ETS) has received a \$35 million contract to manage the development and implementation of reading and mathematics assessments for third- and fourth-graders in New Jersey. Under the four-year project, ETS will: (a) develop a customized test for third-grade language arts and math; (b) propose a test for fourth-grade language arts and math; and (c) develop a fourth-grade science assessment. The test will be administered to about 200,000 New Jersey students in 600 school districts, including Spanish language versions for about 2,500 limited-English-proficient students.

In New Jersey’s FY 2003 spending plan, \$10 million was included for the first year of a four-year program to fund reading coaches in low-performing elementary schools. About 80 such coaches have been in place this school year.

## **New York Update - January 2003**

---

---

The legislature finally passed a State budget of almost \$90 billion of which \$14.6 billion will go to K-12 education, representing a three percent increase. Some of the increases include teacher recruitment and after-school programs, such as the Advantage program which offers supplemental after-school education services at more than 100 locations throughout the State. Advantage received a 25 percent increase of \$5 million.

According to [e-School News online](#) (December 18), the State University of New York Charter Schools Committee has ruled that the New York virtual charter school proposed by former Secretary of Education William Bennett and Bennett's firm, K12 Inc., violates State law because students enrolled in the proposed virtual school would not be educated in one building. The proposed virtual school would be tuition free and would provide students with home computers and online teacher support. The League of Women Voters of New York State also argued that it would not only fail to serve certain at-risk population students, but also lead to resegregation of education. The Charter School Committee will reconsider the initial decision in January. K12 Inc. has established similar virtual charter schools in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Ohio, Idaho, Minnesota, California, and Arkansas.

A recent survey of New York City parents concerning the right to choose schools has found results that differ markedly from other studies nationwide. Conducted by the independent Foundation for Education Reform and Accountability, the survey found that three-quarter of parents whose children were in low-performing schools thought the schools were not failing. More than 80 percent of these parents support the NCLB provision giving them the right to transfer their children to better schools and 97 percent support their right to free tutoring and supplemental services. When these parents were made aware of the low-performing status of their children's schools, 94 percent indicated that they would likely transfer their children to better schools if they could. This could represent a huge problem for New York City where the 331 low-performing schools serve nearly 300,000 students.

During the months of December and January, all eighth grade students in New York have been allowed to take a free online diagnostic reading test, aligned to State reading standards, prior to the official administration of the State reading exam. The reading comprehension test, called iloli SM (iLearningOnline), was developed by Harcourt Interactive Technology. It will score the 40-item test and provide immediate test reports to the students. These test reports will identify student strengths and weaknesses.

The Mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, has announced a plan for the complete overhaul of the City school system. For many years, New York City has been decentralized into a number of autonomous local subdistricts which have had localized decision-making. The plan would centralize control over all schools and would institute a single common curriculum for all but the highest-performing schools. It has been suggested that the uniform curriculum will be beneficial to the many students who often move from school to school.

Although New York has an estimated \$2 billion shortfall in its FY 2003 budget, K-12 education has been spared. The \$14.5 billion in expenditures for public schools represents a three percent increase over the prior year.

## **North Dakota Update - January 2003**

---

---

Governor John Hoeven has asked the North Dakota legislature to appropriate \$100 million to link education and economic development in the State. Citing North Dakota's sound financial condition, the Governor indicated that his "Smart Growth" program would improve education, increase the number of high-skilled jobs, and develop linkages between businesses and schools. Among the specific proposals are increases of \$1,500 in teacher salaries over two years, increases in per-pupil State aid of seven percent, and \$1 million to reduce the gap between poor and wealthy school districts.

## **Ohio Update - January 2003**

---

---

In January, Governor Robert Taft signed into law a major revision in the State's online charter program. Among the changes is the requirement that appropriate telephone lines and computer equipment must be connected in students' homes before school starts. The new law also expands the number of charter schools in the State, provides charter schools with more flexibility to borrow funds, and establishes new rules for charter school sponsors. Ohio's nine online charter schools serve a total of more than 7,000 students and receive \$38.3 million in State funding.

In January, Ohio was announced as the 24<sup>th</sup> state to receive funding under the Reading First Program. Ohio will receive \$175.8 million over the next six years with \$26.8 million available during the first year. As part of its first year grant, Ohio will conduct Summer Institutes for Reading Intervention, a professional development series for all PreK-3 teachers (including special education) in the State. This Spring, Ohio will conduct a grant competition with schools in 26 eligible districts expected to be funded.

Governor Taft is expected to introduce his 2004-05 biennium budget this month. In FY 2003, K-12 education saw a \$30 million reduction in its \$7.8 billion budget. The cut was small because the legislature raised the cigarette tax and used nonrecurring funds to balance the budget.

## **Pennsylvania Update - January 2003**

---

---

According to State sources, more than a quarter of Pennsylvania's 3,400 schools are expected to fail to achieve "adequate yearly progress" based upon the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) results. These 884 schools would represent a sharp increase from the 256 schools identified as failing last year. Based upon 2002 PSSA results, the State set its initial targeted student-proficiency levels at 45 percent in reading and 35 percent in mathematics. More than 775 schools failed to achieve these levels; more than a hundred other schools -- largely suburban -- failed to test the required 95 percent of their schools.

Two private grants totaling \$120,000 are being used to establish a Web portal to manage special education reporting in Western Pennsylvania. When the Pennsylvania Department of Education dropped its use of Statewide software to track special education students, the Fox Chapel Area School District developed a prototype portal. The \$60,000 grants from the Heinz and Grable Foundations have gone to a non-profit organization -- 3 Rivers Connect -- to deploy the portal to other school districts in the region. It is anticipated that the Web portal will allow teachers and administrators to cut down on time spent on paperwork and to devote more time to student instruction.

Pennsylvania is currently pilot-testing an artificial-intelligence based assessment system that can grade essay questions on its State-mandated exams. Developed by Vantage Learning, the system -- called IntelliMetric -- must be calibrated by human scorers before it is able to understand what the long-answer responses should look like. According to Vantage Learning, studies suggest that the system is as accurate as human scorers. If the State's testing is favorable, IntelliMetric could reduce the cost of human scorers and provide immediate feedback of results to students.

## **South Carolina Update - January 2003**

---

---

The South Carolina Board of Education, as part of its 2002 adoption cycle, has approved the web-based BoxerMath curriculum for use in Geometry and Math for the Technologies III, as well as supplemental materials for Algebra and Math for Technologies I and II. BoxerMath is a web-based math curriculum for grades 3 to 12. The adoption allows South Carolina schools to purchase BoxerMath with State funds through 2009.

During the 2003 fiscal year, South Carolina cut nearly \$100 million from K-12 education to help address the State's \$246 million deficit. A deficit of at least \$300 million is anticipated for FY 2004.

Ten schools have received almost a total of \$2 million to supplement technology initiatives related to building renovations. Funds can be used for wiring, development of computer networks, new hardware and software. For more information contact the State Department of Education, (803)734-7169.

## **South Dakota Update - January 2003**

---

---

As a result of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and the lack of adequate computers, South Dakota has dropped its online testing program in reading and mathematics and will revert to pencil-and-paper tests. Instead of the Dakota Assessment of Content Standards (DACS) and the Stanford Achievement Test used last year, the State, in conjunction with Harcourt Educational Measurement, has developed the Dakota State Test of Education Progress (STEP) for use in the future. However, because the online version of STEP may not be complete and has encountered technical problems, a paper-and-pencil version will be used for at least this year.

## **Tennessee Update - January 2003**

---

---

Tennessee has been a national leader in the monitoring of student progress, including “value added” analyses in its evaluation of test scores. This approach, which, looks at both test scores and the ways they change from year-to-year, fits the AYP requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures individual students’ gains in learning over time and compares them with “normal” or expected gains for the child. The system also helps to identify effective teachers and also to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers.

## **Texas Update - January 2003**

---

---

The Texas Education Agency has just instituted its new Texas Math Diagnostic System (TMDS) which lets middle school teachers construct and administer math tests online. TMDS also provides immediate grading for rapid feedback to the students. TMDS is based on platform and system architecture designed by Vantage Learning which was selected by the TEA in a competitive bidding process involving more than 20 offerers. Designed for grades 4-8, TMDS is a web-based diagnostic and teaching tool which contains a series of pre-developed, grade-specific assessments aligned to the State's math curriculum standards (TEKS). More than 125 Texas school districts have signed up to use TMDS.

For the first time in more than a century, Republicans control the Texas governorship and both houses of the legislature. Voucher proponents believe this will lead to strong support for a pilot voucher program in Houston. The voucher bill was, in fact, introduced last session by a Democratic Houston Representative, Ron Wilson. Opposition to vouchers is led by the Democrats with some support from rural Republicans who fear a loss in tax revenues if vouchers reach their communities.

## Virginia Update - January 2003

---

---

Over the last three years, the legislature has appropriated approximately \$50 million each year to be allocated to school divisions and schools for purchasing hardware, software, and training. However, because of the use of bonding authority over that time frame, only about half of the funds have been allocated and used by districts for such purposes. Governor Warner recently announced that, in spite of State employee cutbacks and across-the-board budget cuts, funding for K-12 will generally be left alone. SEA officials felt that the Governor will once again propose, and the legislature will approve, the special bonding authority for districts to purchase hardware, software, and training as it has in the past. However, the amount actually to be spent on technology is unclear.

Governor Mark Warner has told State legislators that, despite a \$2.1 billion shortfall in the biennium budget for 2003 and 2004, there will be no cuts in education funding. In fact, the Governor has proposed a \$65 million increase in Virginia's total education budget of about \$8 billion. This increase would not include State-funded raises in teacher salaries.

During the last year, a number of districts, particularly those without the highest degree of connectivity in the State, have been provided funds under the Standards of Learning evaluation initiative to purchase necessary equipment to allow for online assessment of students' SOL tests. It is also likely that some of the Federal assessment funding earmarked for states (a minimum of \$3 million per state with more to states with larger enrollments) will likely be diverted away from evaluation and reporting in Virginia because the system is pretty much up and running. The funds will be reallocated for instructional purchases delivered via technology either online or CD-ROMs.

Boxer Learning, Inc., located in Charlottesville, Virginia, announced in December that its grade 3-K Web-based Boxer Math had been approved by the Virginia Board of Education as an instructional program which could be used by low-performing schools in the State. Earlier this year Governor Warner announced a small State compensatory education program to provide

funding for schools that have received academic “warnings” because their SOL pass rates were 20 or more percentage points below annual benchmarks.

In January, Virginia became the 21<sup>st</sup> state to receive a Reading First grant. The State will receive \$110.4 million over the grant’s six-year duration -- \$16.9 million the first year. A key component of Virginia’s Reading First plan will be a partnership with the University of Virginia to establish a center for the development and implementation of Teacher Reading Academies for K-3 teachers, special education teachers, reading teachers, and Title I teachers.

Virginia will hold a competition for subgrantees in June. Approximately 65 schools in eligible districts are expected to be funded.

## **West Virginia Update - January 2003**

---

---

SEA officials who are responsible for pulling together the Governor's proposed budget for 2003 have left the agency due to a number of controversial activities and events. State officials responsible for technology are aware that the initial proposed budgets would likely reduce technology-earmarked funding which has been between \$10-\$20 million annually over the last five years. However, it is not clear which components were actually recommended for reduction and whether, with the departure of the individuals, a new budget will have to be prepared. Knowledgeable observers of the budgetary process in West Virginia have suggested that only a slight increase for technology, if any at all, can be expected for next year.