

*Washington Update*⁸

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New Public Agenda Survey of Teachers Identifies Perceived Priority Training Needs and Includes Teacher Perception of What They Like and Don't Like About Assessments and Accountability

The nonpartisan Public Agenda report entitled "Stand By Me" identifies perceived priority training needs and also what teachers like and don't like about standardized testing and accountability, including financial incentives. Respondents included 211 newcomers (less than five years) and 484 veterans (more than 20 years) for a total representative sample of 1,345 teachers.

Based upon their observations, almost 50 percent feel there is a great need for training about effective ways to "handle students who are discipline problems" and more than 40 percent feel there were "quite a large number" of teachers needing more training on effective ways "to reach struggling students." Asked if a teacher had to pick one topic for additional professional development for themselves, 42 percent identify the need for training in "new teaching techniques," while 14 percent and 17 percent, respectively, feel the need for training in classroom management and content of the subjects they taught. On the other hand, about 50 percent of teachers believe that the professional development they have received in the past "made them a better teacher," while an equal number feel

that it "made little difference." Only 55 percent say their professional development was immediately useful to them in the classroom. Only 13 percent feel the group listed under "something else" (i.e., for technology training, parent involvement, special education, or how to implement new NCLB mandates) was a priority.

While about half of the teachers know some teacher who entered the profession through an alternative certification process or route, almost 60 percent say that teachers "entering alternative route certification" should receive the same "dose of training" that traditionally certified teachers go through. On the other hand, slightly less than 40 percent of the teachers believe it is essential that teachers pass tough tests in the subject matters they teach, which will be a requirement for all teachers by 2005-06 school year under NCLB.

While almost two-thirds of teachers feel that the current push for standards, testing, and accountability is "here to stay," over 50 percent believe that standardized tests in their districts are a seriously flawed measure of true student performance and that their district uses them because there is no choice. Even more, 62 percent, feel that standardized tests are a "necessary evil and that schools need some kind of standardized assessment." Over 60 percent of teachers feel financial incentives would be appropriate for teachers who teach difficult classes with "hard to reach students" or teachers who "constantly work harder putting in more time and effort" than other

teachers. However, only slightly more than one-third favor financial incentives for teachers whose students scored higher than similar students on standardized tests. Almost half of the teachers favor financial incentives if students of some teachers made more academic progress in terms of improved reading levels, teacher evaluation, and classroom tests, compared to similar students taught by other teachers. Generally newcomer teachers were more likely than veteran teachers to support various types of merit pay.

Interestingly, while the Public Agenda survey did not find many teachers interested in learning more about or being trained in implementing the NCLB legislation, another recent report by ACORN argues that USED is not too interested in enforcing provisions related to “highly-qualified” teachers. In its survey of 23 states and Washington, D.C., only nine states have the required teacher quality information, as part of their state report cards, that can be viewed by parents; only 13 percent of the districts in these states send any teacher quality data to parents. ACORN found that only one state that it surveyed had completed their plan for providing incentives to encourage highly-qualified teachers to go to low-performing, high-poverty schools. Only 14 of the 24 states surveyed had even defined what “highly-qualified” means in their state, which makes it difficult for districts to comply with the requirement.

For a copy of the Public Agenda report go to www.publicagenda.org and for the ACORN report entitled “Leaving Teachers Behind” go to www.acorn.org/acorn10/betterschools.

Proposed FY 2004 Budget Update: Good News for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, IDEA/Special Education, and Math/Science Partnerships

The House Subcommittee overseeing education appropriations has approved and forwarded to the full committee proposed FY 2004 appropriations for education. The most likely big winners include:

- IDEA, whose funding would increase \$1 billion over FY 2003, bringing the total to \$9.9 billion;
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers which would increase \$400 million over the President’s budget request, bringing the total to \$1 billion, the same as this year;
- Math/Science partnerships which would increase from about \$100 million to \$150 million;
- Title I, which would receive an additional \$666 million, to \$12.35 billion, the same as the increase in the President’s proposed FY 2004 budget; and
- Reading First, which would increase about \$150 million to \$1.15 billion.

Major programs which would be “level funded” include Title II/Teacher Quality, Magnet School Assistance, ESEA school counseling, Safe and Drug-Free School state grants, education technology state grants,

English language acquisition grants, vocational education, and adult education programs. The relevant Senate appropriations subcommittee will likely propose a slightly larger increase for IDEA and perhaps for Title I. While the House markup would zero fund Star Schools and Community Technology Centers, the Senate version will likely include some funding for these programs.

There will be pressures on both the Senate and House to minimize absolute increases in the education budget for FY 2004. Hence, one can anticipate a number of “robbing Peter to pay Paul” tactics as reflected in the final appropriations bill and/or directly related legislation, including:

- a larger percentage of the Federal FY 2003 education appropriation will be “advanced funded,” which will result in a smaller percent of funds allocated in July with a larger increase provided in October/November; this would create uncertainty and, hence, an extended purchasing cycle beyond those in the recent past;
- while IDEA is likely to receive the largest absolute increase if the House reauthorization version is enacted, up to \$1.5 billion of IDEA could be used for “through the back door” funding increases for Reading First (see Updated Special Report);
- there will be a reduction in the number of products and/or types of products and services which can be purchased using specific

Titles, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

Once the House and Senate reach a compromise on the FY 2004 appropriations and pass reauthorizations for IDEA, and the President signs the resulting bills, the Administration will once again reflect its “interpretations” in the form of nonregulatory guidance (in the case of IDEA), or develop priorities for funds release, especially for low priority program budgets forced upon USED by Congress. USED has had a definite policy of “selective implementation” of the provisions which it supports under No Child Left Behind; this is likely to occur, as well, for IDEA implementation and the earmarks in the FY 2004 appropriations bill relating to projects USED supports, such as the ELC “follow the leader initiative.”

For a copy of the House Subcommittee appropriations markups go to www.house.gov/appropriations/news.

New NSSEA Market Segmentation Survey Finds That Almost \$8 Billion of Instructional Materials Sold To Schools and Teachers Went Through Dealer Channels in 2002

A market segmentation study conducted by Acclaro Growth Partners for NSSEA estimates that, of the \$20 billion spent on instructional materials, almost \$8 billion were purchased by schools and teachers from dealer channels. The remainder was sold through mass market and mass specialty retailers. Of the estimated \$8 billion, approximately \$640 million was for education games; \$320 million for media;

and \$240 million for instructional software. Of the \$8 billion instructional materials sold through dealers, approximately \$1 billion and \$1.2 billion represent purchases of workbooks and preschool resources, respectively. Dealer sales of computer hardware for the same time frame were between \$150 million and \$200 million. About 25 percent of manufacturers/suppliers of instructional materials noted in the survey that less than 50 percent of their instructional material sales go through dealers. The study estimates that instructional material sales have grown from 7.6 percent of total dealer sales in 2001 to a projected 8.4 percent in 2003.

The report also identifies the major threats to the dealer channel, including e-commerce, although only 5 percent of instructional material sales are estimated through this channel currently. The report is available from NSSEA for its members and for nonmembers available at a cost of \$199 (call 800/395-5550 or go to www.nssea.org).

USED Mistakes in Determining Preliminary District Title I Allocations and Late Guidance in May to SEAs Regarding How To Make LEA Allocation Adjustments Creates Additional Confusion Which is Resulting in Uncertainty and Therefore Postponed Purchases at the District Level

USED mistakes in determining preliminary district Title I allocations -- almost four months later than last year -- and late guidance to SEAs on how to make

adjustments under the new NCLB provisions, is creating uncertainty at the district level which results in postponed purchasing cycles, especially regarding unused FY 2002 Title I funds. If Title I directors tell sales staff they don't know what their Title I allocation will be next year, in most cases they are telling the truth. Why? Preliminary USED allocations had numerous mistakes in at least 14 states. In Texas, for example, a large district, Lubbock Independent School District, was overlooked and other mistakes were reported to have been made in at least 40 smaller districts. Our discussions with knowledgeable individuals at the Congressional Research Service suggested that that office did not want to have access to the preliminary USED allocations for fear that information provided to a congressman or senator about a certain district would be incorrect. Final USED allocations to districts are supposed to be made in late June or early July. District Title I directors are being forced to make decisions about whether or not to spend unused Title I funds, particularly those funds held in reserve to cover potential transportation and supplemental education services costs, which did not occur, or whether to carry over such funds to next year if they are allowed to do so. This is another example of how USED errors creates uncertainty and postponed district Title I purchases of products and services.

Another reason for the uncertainty relates to provisions in NCLB regarding SEA adjustments, guidance for which USED provided to SEAs only in late May. The 34-page guidance document specifies procedures for SEAs to make adjustments in their LEA allocations due to several new requirements, including:

- SEAs are required to reserve two percent of their total allocations this year and four percent next year to fund improvement activities in those districts which have schools identified for improvement, i.e., failing AYP for two consecutive years;
- SEAs may reserve up to five percent of any increase in state allocation for achievement award programs which provide bonuses to high-achieving Title I schools.

The NCLB amendment also ensures that no district receives less than 85 percent of its previous year's allocation as the result of a dramatic decline in the number of students from poverty families enrolled in the district. In addition, the SEA must hold in reserve a certain amount of LEA allocations to provide Title I funds to charter schools and other entities which serve Title I eligible students. As a result, the districts which receive the largest increases in Title I allocations are likely to have their preliminary or even final allocations, as determined by USED, adjusted by the state resulting in a lesser amount of funds allocated to the district.

In those states which are likely to require the most adjustments and hence changes in Title I allocations to districts receiving increases (such as Texas, California, and New York), there will likely be one allocation made in July for the amount of basic and concentration funds allocated to the district and then another allocation in November/December after preliminary adjustments are made, with a final allocation to be made in January through March 2004. In short, the Title I allocation and allocation

process relating to funding creates a multi-stage purchasing cycle which firms need to take into account in any direct marketing campaign. If you would like specific information regarding purchasing cycles for certain types of districts in certain funding situations, please give Charles Blaschke a call directly.

USED Use of 1999 Census Data in Determining State Title I Allocations for Next Year, Benefits Most States While Negatively Impacting Two

By switching from the 1997 to the 1999 census data, USED's preliminary allocations of Title I funds to states has resulted in increases in several states of as much as over 20 percent while in two states, Iowa and Maryland, the allocations to the state and subsequently to districts represent a small percentage decrease in funding. In those states receiving only small increases or actual decreases, the impact upon LEAs generally will be even greater because as SEAs must reserve at least two percent for program improvement this year and four percent next year, plus other adjustments in Title I students enrolled in charter schools. The states with increases of 20 percent or more include Washington, D.C., Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, and Rhode Island. Those states with a 15-20 percent increase include Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Montana, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Wyoming, and Puerto Rico. In some of the states with lesser increases, some districts, particularly large urban districts with relatively high rates of poverty, will receive large increases

as identified in our May Special Report on districts receiving \$500,000 or more in Title I increases for this coming school year.

As noted in another Washington Update item, many SEAs are hesitant to release preliminary allocations determined by USED to individual districts because some of the preliminary USED allocations were incorrect. As a result, the purchasing cycles related to Title I will vary from state to state for this coming year. For more information about targeting states contact Charles Blaschke directly, 703/536-2310.

New Guide for Small and Rural Schools Recommends a Large Role for Technology to Assist in Implementing Several NCLB Provisions

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National Association of State Boards of Education have prepared a guide which suggests creative ways, including the use of technology, for small and rural districts to implement new NCLB provisions and identifies perceived problems faced by part of rural and small districts. Recommendations and illustrative examples include various technology applications. Any TechMIS subscriber targeting small or rural districts receiving large percentage increases in Title I funding (see May TechMIS Special Report), should be prepared to cite certain recommendations and examples in this guide when approaching such districts.

As we have suggested in several TechMIS reports over the last two years, the guide

recommends the use of online supplemental education services even for schools identified for improvement for the first time, if the district/school has the appropriate infrastructure for tutoring, remedial, and ongoing assessment services available for teachers and students as appropriate in a timely manner. It also advises small and rural districts, which are served by an education service agency (e.g., Education Service Centers in Texas), to see if such supplemental education services could be provided through the service agencies. As we have recommended in the past, online service providers should attempt to work out partnerships with such ESAs. The guide also suggests that distance learning may be the only option some districts have to meet the “highly-qualified” requirements of both paraprofessionals and teachers. As stated, “To answer the first question about the feasibility of additional training, rural districts will once again be looking at the likelihood of distance learning...while local districts are not required to pay for the additional training, they are allowed to use up to five percent of Title I dollars to provide the training.” The guide cites the example of Edgefield County Public Schools, South Carolina, where their plan for ensuring all paraprofessionals are highly-qualified by the year 2006, includes using the ETS “parapro” test to assess whether the teacher aides have the necessary competencies. The guide recommends that rural districts develop a data system that is accessible to all teachers and principals to allow them to deal with the influx of student data, including assessment scores and that this should also be the priority focus of teacher training. As the guide states, “A good use of the set-aside 15 percent of the school’s Title I budget if the school has been failing for two consecutive years” would be

to train teachers to use the new assessment data, such as item analysis and test scores, to inform instruction.

NCLB. For a copy of the guide go to www.aasa.org/governmentrelations/rural.

The guide was prepared by AASA which lobbied for the new Rural Education Achievement Program. It urges small and rural districts to consider using this new REAP stream of Federal funding, in combination with funds districts receive under Title II D/Technology Enhancement, to address technology, particularly upgrades. Under the Small and Rural Schools Achievement program, of the 4,700 eligible districts, slightly over 4,000 applied and this year received funding which can be consolidated at the district level under any one single program, such as Title I. As the guide notes, "From a small district in New Hampshire that plans to set up a data analysis system to comply with Title I to the district in Nebraska who plans to use the dollars to upgrade all computers and technology in the district, the uses of these dollars are widespread." Under the Rural and Low Income Schools program, the guide states clearly that "such funds allocated by states to districts can be used for teacher professional development and education technology (software too!)." Both of the small districts receiving REAP funding under the two components, were cited as examples of using a large portion of their funds for expanding technology literacy programs or upgrading technology through purchasing new computers to aid in integrating technology into the classroom.

In addition to the suggestions and recommendations made by AASA and NASBE, the guide also includes exact wording in the legislation on some of the most difficult to implement provisions under