

*Washington Update*⁸

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Secretary Paige Hints at Possible Policy Changes During Education Week's Talk Back Live September 24

During the Talk Back Live forum moderated by Lynn Olson of Education Week, Secretary Paige responded to a number of prescreened questions. His responses suggest possible changes in USED policies and interpretations regarding some of the unintended consequences of NCLB.

As reported widely in the press, one of the primary causes for thousands of schools being identified for improvement, based upon last year's test scores, was the fact that special education student subgroups failed to meet AYP. In response to a question by a parent as to whether a special education student who achieves grade level proficiency still receives needed special education services, the Secretary responded, "Students with disabilities do not drop their disability if they achieve proficiency on state assessments. These students may likely still need special services to continue achieving at high levels....In other words, these students will be expected to learn the same content as general students but their standard of proficiency will be more tailored to their unique needs." One can infer from his response that students with disabilities who achieve their AYP proficiency level will continue to be

counted as part of the special education subgroup of students for Federal AYP reporting purposes. Over the last year, conflicting policy interpretations have come from USED officials. The second inference is that the standard of proficiency for certain types of special education students (i.e., severely and profoundly cognitively-disabled) will not be the same proficiency level as the level all other students must meet by 2014.

In response to a question from a coordinator of NAEP (National Assessment for Education Progress) from Georgia who asked if there were any plans or discussions regarding using NAEP as an external confirmatory indicator for state assessments, the Secretary responded, "This additional data from NAEP will significantly increase the information that parents and the public can use to compare the academic achievement of students from state to state. NAEP data will also highlight the rigor of individual State's standards and assessments. If there is a large discrepancy between students' proficiency on a State's tests and their performance on NAEP, that would suggest that a State may want to re-examine the rigor of its standards and assessments." As noted in the September TechMIS Special Report on the NAFEP symposium highlights, a USED official, Sue Rigby, when asked a similar question, responded with her PowerPoint presentation, "The National

Assessment of Education Progress: cannot be used to verify state test results; does not provide a common external reference; proficient on NAEP does not mean average.” She urged Title I directors to educate the local press that proficiency on NAEP is defined differently from proficiency on most state assessments which includes many national norm-referenced tests as modified.

An assistant principal from a middle school felt the need for clarification about the interpretation that only one percent of the special education population at her school could use alternative assessments. After confirming that the IEP determines how students with disabilities are assessed, the Secretary noted that the Department hasn’t published final regulations in this area, but he indicated that those regulations should state the following: “There will not be a limit on the number of students who can take the alternative assessment based on alternative achievement standards. The limit will be imposed on how many students may be counted as ‘proficient’ on this assessment for making accountability decisions (i.e., adequate yearly progress, AYP). The proposed rule stated that this limit would be 1% at the district and state level, not the school level.” This draft regulation evoked the greatest response to any one proposed regulation from school officials across the country during the 2002-03 school year. The Secretary has told districts and states that out-of-grade-level assessment scores for many special education students were to be used during the transitional 2002-03 year only. However, the Department

continues to oppose out-of-level testing generally.

The Secretary’s response on what alternative does a school district have for students whose parents’ request a transfer when high-performing schools in a district are at capacity, confirms increased USED flexibility in this area by stating, “They can use supplemental services sooner, can create charter schools, and can create schools inside of schools. They can even use technology to provide choices and options for students. The district can also work with other nearby districts to provide more options to parents.” During the September NAFEP workshop, as reflected in the August draft final Non-Regulatory Guidance on supplemental education services, it became clear that a high-performing school could provide supplemental education services in the form of online remediation to students in a school identified for improvement or in a school which has failed to meet AYP for only one year as a preventative measure; it could also send teachers over to the school which failed for two consecutive years to provide afterschool tutoring, etc. It is still unclear as to whether or not a high-performing school would have to be approved by the state as an SES provider in order to receive Title I funding for serving Title I-eligible students in a school that has failed to meet AYP for only one year. According to No Child Left Behind Compliance Insider, the district can provide SES services itself without state approval for a school which has failed to meet AYP for only one year. “The Guidance doesn’t require that your district or its contractors be an approved provider in

order to serve these students.” If this interpretation is correct, there are enormous opportunities for firms who are currently planning to provide their products as part of solutions to be used by SES providers to partner with high-performing schools who can serve in the role of an SES provider. For a copy of the Talk Back Live interview go to www.edweek.org/ew/tb/tblive/transcript_09-24-2003.htm.

New Report on the Emergence of School-Based Staff Developers (e.g., Reading Coaches) Suggest Several Opportunities for Education Publishers, Providers of Staff Development, and Others in This Fast-Growing Niche Market

A new report entitled, “Making Our Own Road” by Allan Richard (May 2003) sponsored by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, suggests that there are opportunities for firms to take advantage of the rapid growth of the use of “coaches” and school-based staff developers across the country. The growth of school-based staff developers and coaches can certainly be attributed to several aspects of NCLB. The most evident growth of the use of coaches is in reading; virtually all of the approved Reading First plans call for initial hiring of reading or literacy coaches which will number close to 7,500 this school year. Almost a third of the \$2.9 billion allocated by Title IIA/Teacher Quality during the 2002 school year, according to GAO, was allocated for staff

development, in many cases, the hiring of “coaches” or in-house staff developers who were supposed to be hired to coach, mentor, or otherwise train new and current teachers in areas such as reading to math.

Many of these “coaches” were supposed to assist teachers in analyzing student achievement data and to make “data driven” decisions regarding lesson plan prescriptions for individual students. Under Title I during the school year 2002-03, at least 15 percent of Title I funds in schools identified for improvement had to be earmarked for staff development while the remaining Title I schools across the country were suppose to allocate up to five percent for staff development purposes. In many cases such staff development was to be provided by school-based staff developers. While the amount of funds that were intended to be allocated for in-house staff developers or coaches most likely was less than intended, as the Title I assessment and reporting “infrastructure” becomes more entrenched and SEA and USED enforcement increases, one can expect continued significant growth in the use of “coaches.”

As Allan Richard described the emergence of the use of in-house staff developers in districts ranging from San Diego to Montgomery County, Maryland, to the states of South Carolina and Mississippi, these in-house staff developers or coaches provide a myriad of roles ranging from “catalyst for change” to providing specific coaching and mentoring in improving student scores in reading, math, and other subject areas. One can infer numerous

opportunities. For example, before her departure from ED, during a meeting in 2002 of the American Association of Publishers, then Assistant Secretary Neuman chided publishers for providing lengthy, contradictory, confusing guidance in their teacher's guides accompanying basal text interventions. While clear, straightforward guidance for teachers is certainly important -- whether in the form of manual, videotape, or online -- it would also appear to be increasingly critical that checklists or other types of techniques be made available to "coaches" so they can closely monitor how teachers are actually implementing basal or supplemental interventions. For example, in his study of effective integrated learning systems used in math and science, Kulick reported, over a year and a half ago, that many of the programs would have been more effective if they were actually implemented as recommended by the publisher (i.e., number of minutes instruction per week). As reported in Education Week (October 8), Dr. Andy Porter describes a "template" which he and an associate have developed for quantifying content package and cognitive demands and standards, assessments, and local curriculum to compare reality to what teachers say and perceive they are doing. As Richard notes, "A primary goal of the onsite coaches is to help educators develop the habit of self-assessment --- to learn, to examine, and to prove their only professional work by reflecting on results, searching for more effective strategies, and calling upon their colleagues for ideas, feedback, and support."

Another set of opportunities can be gleaned from the study's findings regarding the myriad of duties assigned to these school-based staff developers. While most duties involve guiding and working with teachers across grade levels and subject areas regarding instructional strategies, their duties may also be shaped by content area strength or a school's improvement focus (i.e., literacy, math, science, etc.). Some of the roles may be defined by default to cover the lack of trained personnel to implement a specific activity such as analyzing and reporting on school performance data or leading committees to realign curriculum around state standards. Perhaps the greatest need for initial and ongoing training for school-based staff developers or coaches, is in high-poverty, low-performing schools to which Federal funds will increasingly be allocated under the above-mentioned NCLB Titles. The report cites specific challenges in these schools ranging from motivating current teachers to change their way of teaching to mentoring and supporting new teachers. The report found that most school coaches need ongoing professional development to sharpen their skills and to increase their effectiveness, and in-school coaches most often cite the need for training on adult learning theory and strategies to help low-achieving students succeed. The report also notes that the most difficult area for integrating the effective use of coaches is at the high school level where "there are no proven effective ways to deal with high schools in this area." "I don't think there is a right model for high schools," as one

experienced associate superintendent noted.

On one hand, it is certainly in the vested interests of an education publisher of specific basal or supplemental interventions to provide the necessary tools for coaches or in-school staff developers, where they exist, to increase the probability that their interventions will be implemented as recommended and otherwise ensure at least a modicum of quality control. On the other hand, although the current market for providing initial and on-going training and support for coaches may be relatively small, without question one can expect significant growth opportunities in the future. For a copy of "Making Our Own Road" go to www.emcf.org/pdf/student_ourownroad_bw.pdf.

Social Security Administration "Experiment" Could Provide New Opportunities for Firms with Products Designed to Assist Students with Disabilities in Their Transition to Work or Postsecondary Education

During the Spring CCSSO legislative conference, USED Assistant Secretary for Special Education, Dr. Robert Pasternack, outlined the Administration's position in the then to-be-drafted House version of IDEA reauthorization. One of his "oh, by the way" comments was that, for the first time, an Assistant Secretary for Special Education was meeting with officials at the Social

Security Administration to seek alternative ways that special education students can continue receiving disability benefits from various sources during the transition process. For most of these students, such benefits cease after age 18. A subsequent report by the Government Accounting Office found that many youth with disabilities did not take advantage of counseling and training programs offered under the Workforce Investment Act because they or their parents were concerned that such disability benefits to them or their families would be terminated.

On October 7, the SSA announced the Youth Transition Process Demonstration which "will test the effectiveness of altering certain SSI program rules as an incentive to encourage SSI (Social Security Income) recipients with disabilities or blindness to work or increase their work activity and earnings...SSA is conducting this project in six states for the purpose of helping youth with disabilities maximize their economic self-sufficiency as they transition from school to work." This one-of-a-kind project could provide opportunities for firms with products and/or services which could be used to facilitate effective transition initiatives and, perhaps at the same time, have their products including as part of a solution which will be carefully evaluated and could provide strong evidence about the product's effectiveness.

One objective of this demonstration project is to study the impact of assuring that all SSI and other disability benefits will not be terminated --- i.e., will it incentivize more youth with disabilities

to participate actively in a more streamlined transition program?

One of the awardees is the Maryland State Department of Education's Youth Demonstration Project. Some of this project's new activities include development of life skills for transition participants, preparing them better for life choices; another is developing skills leading to independence.

Another awardee is the City University of New York's Youth Transition Demonstration Project working with youth age 16 through 19. All students will be trained in self-determination skills. Tutoring in basic skills, vocational assessments, benefits counseling, and work-based learning laws will also be provided. College students with disabilities will serve as peer mentors.

The Mississippi Youth Transition and Innovations Project, operated by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, will facilitate training opportunities with potential employers with the intent of providing students with an Occupational Diploma.

Implementation of the Youth Transition Process Demonstration will begin earlier than most projects because many of the awardee states were proceeding with such programmatic efforts prior to receiving their grant, which for the most part will cover the cost of such streamlining and evaluation. However, by increasing the number of participants in the process, the amount of funds available from other sources to provide remediation, basic skills development,

guidance counseling, employment skills development, and other activities should increase.

Individuals with whom we have talked about this project indicate that this is one of the highest Administration priorities within SSA. For more information about the specific projects and the overall youth transition process demonstration, go to the Federal Register, October 7, 2003, page 57950.

New Initiative Underway To Help Districts Collect More Reimbursements for Related Services Provided to Special Education Students From Federal and State Medicaid Sources

A summit conducted last May in Atlanta by several Regional Resource Centers and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, identified many of the problems relating to "over" and "under" use of Medicaid reimbursements which are provided to districts for costs incurred for related services for eligible special education students. As reported in Counterpoint (Fall 2003), Dennis Smith, Director of the Center for Medicaid and State Operations at the Center for Medicare/Medicaid (CMS) reported that approximately 50 percent of Medicaid recipients' children, or approximately 1.2 million children, are eligible for such reimbursements. He also noted that the Federal government has spent approximately \$2.7 trillion on Medicaid,

while states have spent another \$2 trillion. A recent report by USED found that, in the year 1999-2000, approximately \$650 million of Medicaid reimbursements were recovered by districts. We estimate that, of the total \$4 billion in Medicaid funds available, slightly less than \$1.5 billion was requested by districts for reimbursements in 2002-03.

Recommendations following the summit include:

- Formation of a national alliance of Medicaid and state education agency representatives, as well as other groups;
- The establishment of a dynamic communications infrastructure;
- An education campaign among national policymakers.

The group also recommended the formation of a National Alliance for Medicaid in Education (NAME) which held its first meeting in September. NAME's website is www.medicaidforeducation.org.

Similar to last year, the Senate Finance Committee approved legislation that would give states flexibility, allowing families above the poverty level to help disabled children to participate in the Medicaid program while maintaining employment. The so-called Family Opportunity Act (S 622) would also reimburse school districts for health-related services they provide to Medicaid-eligible special needs students

in the school day. However, it is unclear whether or not this Committee proposal will reach the floor of the Senate.

One of the major issues relates to the need to streamline the Medicaid reimbursement process and to encourage more districts to actively seek reimbursement. Also for states such as Florida, Minnesota, Arkansas, and Oklahoma which have partial systems in place, there exists a great demand for products that will capture, report, and facilitate claim completion for reimbursement under Medicaid. The Office of the Inspector General at the HHS recently provided a report with the results of its audit and found numerous states having to return \$30 million in reimbursements due to ineligible billing and other errors. For a copy of the report go to www.oig.hhs.gov/reports.html.

New Brookings Institute Report Suggests Good Opportunities by Targeting Rural Schools and “Conversion” Charter Schools

The 2003 Brown Center Report on American Education (part of the Brookings Institute) suggests good opportunities for firms by targeting rural schools and charter schools, particularly schools which have been “converted” to charter schools rather than those charter schools starting from scratch. Opportunities most likely exist for different reasons, however.

Calling rural schools America's forgotten educational institutions, the

Report notes that rural, small districts are having the greatest problems in implementing some of the key provisions of No Child Left Behind. In the October 22 Education Week, a joint letter from New Mexico's Democratic Governor Richardson and Republican Governor Martz of Montana requested several amendments, providing greater flexibility for rural districts in implementing the Law. For example, teachers at smaller schools frequently teach multiple courses and would have to receive degrees or pass different subject matter tests in order to meet the 2005-06 highly-qualified teacher deadline. As several Washington Update items -- including the interview with Secretary Paige -- strongly suggest, online instruction and assessment may be the only way to provide supplemental services for schools that have been identified for improvement. The Brown Center Report, however, includes perhaps a more critical finding supporting the need for online services -- slightly less than 16 percent of students in rural areas attend public or private schools of choice compared to almost 29 percent in non-rural areas. While the Report states that it is difficult to say whether this pattern is a result of short supply or lack of demand, rural parents have fewer alternatives than do more urban public school parents. The Brown Report also cites Phi Delta Kappan/Gallop Poll survey findings in which rural residents gave their schools higher grades than either suburban or urban residents. A Metropolitan Life survey found that, compared to suburban and urban students, rural students were also more likely to give their teachers high grades on such critical aspects of

teaching as understanding subject area, treating students with respect, and maintaining discipline in the classroom. Yet another study, by Ingersoll found that rural schools have lower teacher turnover than other schools nationally. Another study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics in 1993-1994, found that rural schools reported a low drop-out rate in the senior year when almost 95 percent who started their senior year in the Fall graduated in June compared to 92.5 percent in suburban schools and 89.7 percent in urban schools.

As the Report notes, "rural schools are generally performing quite well, scoring above the average in all states except Arizona, Minnesota, and South Carolina" (data were analyzed from 11 other states with high percentage of rural districts). In rural districts with one or more Title I schools identified for improvement, it is likely that a high-performing school exists within the district which could become a supplemental education service provider of online services or afterschool services for the failing school and could receive Title I funds to cover the cost of the service and teacher transportation costs if required.

The Brown Center Report also included an analysis of charter school test scores from 1999 through 2002 and computed "z-scores" for charter schools which indexes charter schools' test scores relative to the mean and standard deviation of test scores within the state. The analysis focused on ten states and 569 charter schools. The Report notes "charter schools in this year's study ---

contrary to the charter schools in last year's study --- registered significant gains in test scores from 2000 to 2002." The Center also compared "conversion" charter schools (primarily in California, where one-third of all charters are "conversions" vs. start-up charter schools) to 90 charter schools operated by Educational Management Organizations (EMOs), such as Edison School, Chancellor Beacon Academies, and National Heritage Academies, among others. As the Report notes, one of the major differences between the two types of charter schools is that "conversion" charters usually retain some of the "best teachers," while startup EMO charter schools usually provide new management expertise. A major finding from this study was that, after controlling for demographic characteristics, one finds that conversion charter school scores were significantly higher than both charter start ups and regular public schools. As the report notes, "this is because conversions serve large numbers of students with social economic characteristics that are correlated with low test scores."

In a concluded comment, the Brown Center report hints at an area where greater growth may occur as follows, "Granting charter status to existing schools, in other words, does probably function more as a reward for demonstrating success as a turnaround or intervention strategy for low performance." On the other hand, as the Report notes, in spite of achievement score gains in various types of charter schools, a list of failing schools that states compiled in both 2002 and 2003 were over-represented by charter

schools. For a copy of the report go to www.brookings.edu/gs/brown/bc_report/2003.

Highlights of October 15 SIIA Webcast on "Finding Pockets of K-12 Funding"

During the October 15 SIIA webcast, a five-person panel shared their insights into the existence of "pockets of funding for education technology" among the NCLB programs, particularly Title I, IDEA/Special Education, and E-Rate. Below are highlights for TechMIS subscribers who were not able to participate in the webcast, and, for those who did participate, several comments are noted.

Julie Miller, Editor of Title I Reports, who has a well-deserved national reputation among Title I directors, noted that about 4-5 percent of Title I funds are spent on instructional technology and that some funding for professional development and administration also includes some types of technology purchases. Christine Dowd, cofounder of the Sage Team, estimated that approximately \$700 million of Title I funds were spent on technology, of which about two-thirds is hardware and a third on related professional development and software. As we have reported in the past, our estimate of Title I expenditures for technology is also about \$700 million. Over the last year, expenditures on instructional software have experienced a relatively small decrease at the expense of large absolute increases in spending on administrative,

assessment, reporting, and other applications which constitute the Title I “infrastructure” required to implement many NCLB provisions, a recent finding in QED’s annual purchasing forecast. However, in many cases, some of the increases in infrastructure expenditures came from state and local sources. Miller’s list of opportunities as a result of NCLB assessment mandates, are very similar to those which we have identified in previous TechMIS reports, including test prep programs, particularly those related to a state’s assessment domains; instructional materials aligned with state tests; programs that allow teachers to track student performance and to diagnose and prescribe lessons based on assessment data; and professional development relating to test prep. Virtually all Title I “experts” agree that distance learning and online services in the areas of instruction and assessment, as well as professional development for both teachers and aides, will be a major growth area, particularly in rural districts.

Several panelists often referred to provisions in the Law clearly allowing funds to be used for purchasing technology-based reading and other solutions. Julie Miller noted that the Law specifically allows “family literacy” and “tutoring” as allowable uses of Reading First funds. However, as we have noted over the last two years, the final Non-Regulatory Guidance for Reading First (April 2002), does not mention “family literacy” nor “tutoring” as an allowable activity that USED would approve in any state application. Hence, few, if any, states have funded districts that propose to use such

activities under Reading First. Miller, on the other hand, noted that some states do have “approved lists” noting that USED officials have made many ambiguous statements giving examples of specific commercial programs. She emphasized, “Some officials may want to influence states and districts by leaving the impression that the eligibility window is narrow.” Noting that some districts have received funding for technology-based reading programs, she suggested that the “keys are to show a research-based backing of the program; show how it covers one or more of the elements of reading instruction.” As we have noted on several occasions, USED officials have been very selective in providing guidance on NCLB provisions which they consider a priority in spite of what the Law explicitly states. Such action will continue until Congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle exercises their oversight responsibility, which thus far has been nil.

Most of the webcast participants agreed that some opportunities exist for software and other publishers in schools which have failed to meet AYP during the last year; at the least, one should target these districts. The specific opportunities depend upon the publishers’ products or services and the specific situation confronting the district/schools. If, for example, the school has failed to meet AYP for one year, then there are opportunities to provide solutions as “preventative medicine” to help the school meet AYP this school year and therefore not have to be identified for improvement. If, on the other hand, a school has failed to meet AYP for two consecutive years, the

primary opportunity exists for providing professional development as the district has to allocate at least 15 percent off the top for such purposes. If the district's high-performing schools have been approved as supplemental education service providers, then opportunities for working with such high-performing schools exist: (a) as a preventative measure for those failing AYP for the first time; and (b) providing SES services in the form of online or afterschool programs for schools failing AYP three consecutive years.

Sarah Fitzgerald, a principal within Funds for Learning, emphasized that the E-Rate program is "not a grant program -- you receive discounts when you [schools and libraries] purchase certain products or services." Too many groups in the "market research and list business" have failed to recognize this in their documents and technology-related reports. She noted that the FCC recently authorized "rollover" of unused fund which will increase the overall pot from about \$2.25 billion to \$2.6-\$2.8 billion starting with 2004-05 funding year. She also noted that due to delayed approvals by the SLD for applications for 2002 funding, many recipient schools and libraries have until September 30, 2004, to expend funds on some of their approved, eligible products and services. On October 10, the SLD published its new "eligible service list" (go to www.sl.universalservice.org/reference/eligible.asp) which now includes firewalls and firewall service, along with web hosting and voice mail services. Regarding opportunities for software publishers, she noted that "operational software may be eligible while content is

not and where software applications are 'necessary resources,' they may be eligible." She also mentioned that software, as well as other noneligible products and services such as staff training, may be available through "leveraging" of E-Rate savings for other purchases. As we have noted, between 1999 and 2002, before local school budget crises surfaced, there existed many opportunities in those districts which used the BEAR process (Form 472) to request checks for the discount amount for products which they paid the prediscount price. As George McDonald, head of the SLD, noted about a year ago, between February 2001 and February 2002, of the \$3 billion of E-Rate discounts which were approved, approximately \$1.8 billion was through the BEAR process providing significant opportunities for districts to purchase software, staff development and other products and services. In many cases, the delays in approval resulted from appeals that were subsequently determined to be "meritorious" by the SLD. For a list of recent delayed approvals see the enclosed Special Report for year 2002 and earlier.

National Governor's Association Creates a Standing Committee on Education Which Suggests NGA Influence on Federal Education Policy and Funding Will Increase Significantly

Under the leadership of Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne, NGA has created a Standing Committee on Education at its

annual meeting in Indianapolis in August. The Chairman of the Committee will be Governor Mark Warner of Virginia, with Governor Jeb Bush of Florida serving as Vice Chairman. As reported in Education Week, policies which the Standard Committee will initially focus on will be early childhood education, K-12 policy (including IDEA), and No Child Left Behind's unintended effects and workforce issues.

The NGA could have a major influence on the final provisions and funding levels for IDEA. Governors have been forced to make up for most of the difference between current levels of Federal IDEA funds -- about 18 percent of the \$80 billion costs in 2000 -- and the authorized amount in 1976 of 40 percent when P.L. 94-142 (now IDEA) was passed. Clearly, IDEA is considered the most serious of the "unfunded mandates". Many governors will also be wanting to address the reauthorization of Head Start. A number of governors, such as Governor Perdue in Georgia, have publicly supported the President's version of Head Start reauthorization as it would allow a limited number of states to receive Federal Head Start funding which could lead to commingling with state pre-K funding and possible supplanting of state funds.

The other Democrats on the Standing Committee are Governors Easley (North Carolina), Holden (Missouri), Napolitano (Arizona), Sebelius (Kansas), and Vilsack (Iowa). Republican Governors include Douglas (Vermont), Huckabee (Arkansas), Lingle

(Hawaii), Pawlenty (Minnesota), Perdue (Georgia), Rowland (Connecticut), and Camacho (Guam).

USED Technology Related Research Evaluation and Information Hearing of Interest to Many TechMIS Subscribers

During the October NCTET meeting, John Bailey, Director, USED Office of Technology, shared with attendees several documents highlighting some of the \$56 million for projects the Department is funding in the area of research and evaluation, which will identify the conditions and practices under which technology is used effectively with teaching and instruction. Some of these should be of high interest to technology vendors and software publishers, among others, as the findings could have significant implications.

As noted in the August 20, 2003, Washington Update, Mathematica Policy Research and SRI International are conducting a five-year, \$15 million, Congressionally-mandated study which attempts to identify the conditions and practices under which technology can improve teaching and instruction using scientifically-based research methodologies. As we noted previously, for firms which have submitted their research-based studies and other "evidence of the effectiveness" of their programs that they would like to have included as part of the evaluation, there are some potential benefits as well as risks. Firms which are invited by USED to have their product used in the

evaluation need to enter into serious negotiations to ensure that the teachers and school who select their programs are adequately trained and will implement the program effectively to ensure the full potential is achieved in terms of increased student performance in math and/or reading.

Another major study is the National Education Technology Trend Study (NETTS) which represents an attempt to understand how and to what extent the Title II D/Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT), helps further the goals of NCLB. Some of the key questions being addressed are:

- How are subgrantees (i.e., districts) using EETT funds?
- Is the EETT program helping to close the gap between high- and low-poverty schools', students', and teachers' actual access to technology?
- Is the EETT program supporting professional development programs that increase the percentage of teachers that meet their state technology standards?

The study is being conducted by the SRI Center for Technology and Learning, American Institutes for Research, the Urban Institute and USED. Although the NCLB provisions encourage the use of technology to ensure that an increasing number of eighth graders become technology literate and require states to report such progress, USED guidance in May 2001 does not require

SEAs to report on such progress. Whether this impact of EETT will in fact be included in the evaluation is unclear by reading the project summaries. Recent discussions with one of the key researchers involved initially in this project, suggest that staff turnover may have resulted in delays of some scheduled activities.

Another series of state grants, funded at \$15 million over the next three years, are designed to conduct high-quality evaluations of education technology. One of the major purposes is for the state to plan and conduct a scientifically-based evaluation of an educational intervention that uses technology applications as a tool to increase student achievement in one or more core academic subjects. Among the participating state departments of education are:

- Maine Department of Education, which is addressing the impact of teachers' professional development on mathematics achievement of low-performing students in rural schools through technology-rich classrooms;
- Arkansas Department of Education, which is conducting an evaluation of the EAST initiative (Environmental and Spatial Technology);
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, which is evaluating student and parent access through recycled computers.

Other participating states are Iowa, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

The New Institute of Education Science has also funded a number of research and evaluation projects, some of which will be evaluating the effectiveness of certain types of interventions related to both student instruction and teacher training, as well as the development of anticipated scientifically-based products. Some examples include:

- University of Texas Health Center (Principal Investigator Susan Landry), which will examine the effectiveness of an online early literacy professional development model for early childhood teachers;
- University of Texas Health Science Center (Principal Investigator Barbara Foreman), which will investigate the effectiveness of an intervention that uses the Internet and handheld computers to help teachers link results from reading inventories to instructional practice;
- Southern Methodist University (Principal Investigator is Patricia Mathes), which is studying the relative effectiveness of approaches to teaching reading when intervention teachers are provided different models of ongoing professional development that take advantage of sophisticated computer-based

systems for delivery of content and high-quality coaching;

- University of California at Berkeley (Principal Investigator Ann Cunningham), which will examine the efficacy of the *Ready Set Leap* literacy curriculum with at-risk preschool children;
- Media Group of Connecticut (Principal Investigator Harvey Dellin), which is developing a low-cost, easy-to-use, easily replicated, empirically tested, evidence-based training program that will strengthen the emergent literacy skills of at-risk preschoolers from poor families in any childcare setting;
- CAST, Inc. (Principal Investigator is Dr. Bridgit Dalton), which is investigating general and domain-specific support in a technology-rich environment with diverse readers learning from informational text.

In addition to the above research and evaluation projects, USED is also planning to conduct technology leadership summits over the next twelve months which would convene education leaders in an interactive forum to “deepen their understanding of how technology can assist them with achieving the goals of NCLB.” The first summit is planned for the week of March 1, 2004 and will focus on how technology can improve student

assessments with an emphasis on online assessments and how student data can inform teaching and learning. The intended audience includes chief state school officers, state assessment directors, governors, elected state officials, and LEA executives. The next conference on “Next Generation Innovations” planned for May 2004, is designed to provide a forum to assemble the best and most creative thinkers to explore new ways of using technology to engage students and assist teachers in pre-student achievements. Included in the invitation-only audience will be experts from various industries ranging from entertainment to venture capitalists to education software companies. The other summit on Virtual Schools is planned for July/August 2004. Attendees will include chief state school officers, state technology directors, governors, state legislatures, and distance learning groups.

For more information go to <http://www.ed.gov/Technology/reports>.