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New Report Highlights K-12 Online Learning Trends Regarding Enrollments, Course Offerings, Online Instruction Policies, and Expenditures; However, Opportunities for Publishers and Technology Vendors Can Only Be Inferred From Overall Growth Trends

The 2005 update of “Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: A Review of State Level Policy and Practice,” published by Learning Point Associates/NCREL indicates significant growth trends in K-12 online enrollments, courses offered and expenditures, from which one can assume opportunities from which certain publishers, content providers, and vendors of distance learning equipment are likely to benefit more in the future. However, the report does not address, in any detail, recent initiatives by states for test preparation, delivery of supplemental educational services, and exit exam taking/retaking which other reports have identified as major growth opportunities (see [TechMIS Washington Update](#), August 2005 on the recent Center for Education Policy annual study of exit exam trends).

As of July 2005, twenty-one states have statewide online learning programs, cyberschools or district-level online programs. The twenty-one statewide programs have many features in

common: “All are primarily or entirely supplemental; all of them operate primarily at the high school level; almost all of them rely in whole or in part, on local schools or districts to provide support for the online students; and most are experiencing rapid growth.” Statewide programs are experiencing consistent growth of 50-100 percent per year, with the largest statewide programs being Utah’s Electronic School (more than 35,000 students), Florida Virtual School (more than 33,000 course registrations), Clark County School District (Nevada), and Michigan Virtual High School (about 6,000 students enrolled). The report notes that the mission statements for some of these statewide programs identify target groups such as at risk students from high-poverty districts or students from low-performing schools or schools identified for improvement; however, little detail is provided.

In terms of the curriculum, the report notes, “Most statewide programs develop all or most all of their courses; only three programs (Mississippi, Wisconsin, and West Virginia) license the majority of their courses from a third party. All three license at least 95 percent of their courses; the next highest percentages are Illinois, which licenses 47 percent of its courses, and Michigan, which licenses 33 percent of its courses.” License opportunities have existed for several years for firms offering Advanced Placement and

related programs, as well as for courses that range from those which are highly interactive led by a teacher with small groups of students, to highly individualized courses that are self paced and which provide flexibility for some students who can only take online courses at their convenience. While most states require online courses to be aligned with state content standards, according to the report, no states have created curriculum standards specific to online courses.

Even though the report includes profiles for K-12 online instructional programs and activities in all states, it concludes “It is notable that there are only 16 states that have a level of policy activity that is of enough significance to report on. These are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington.” The state profiles also provide a good snapshot of numbers of teachers and students involved, as well as some anecdotal information about competition between providers such as Cyber Charter Schools and public schools in Ohio. In the enclosed state profiles we have included brief information on whether state policies target at-risk students and/or students in schools identified for improvement or otherwise provide special support and funding for at risk students. For a copy of the report go to www.ncrel.org/tech/pace2/Keeping_Pace2.pdf.

New GAO Report Concludes More Districts Are Using Title II A, Teacher Quality Funds and Title I Funds For Professional Development -- A Trend Likely To Continue Over the Next Couple of Years

A new GAO report to Congress on the implementation of Title II, A, Teacher Quality provisions has found that all eleven districts in its recent survey reported spending Title II, A funds on professional development and about half of the districts had reduced their II, A funding for class size reduction, with some of those funds reallocated for professional development. Moreover, the report also found that, in all of the districts, Title II, A funding for professional development represented a relatively small portion of total funds expended on professional development activities when compared particularly with Title I (as the result of new NCLB “earmark” provisions). In an earlier report, GAO found that, in 2002-03, approximately one-third of the districts nationwide used Title II, A funds for professional development, while two-thirds used such funds for recruitment, signing bonuses, incentives for highly qualified teachers to transfer to high-poverty schools and related activities. In addition, the new report reiterates the NCLB requirement that schools and districts which are not making adequate progress to ensure that all teachers meet the highly qualified teacher standard and, if a district fails to meet its AYP student objectives for three consecutive years, the state must enter into an

agreement with the district to develop and implement professional development strategies. In referring to other major funding sources for professional development, the report notes that any school receiving Title I funds which has yet to meet its teachers' annual objectives, must earmark five percent of its Title I allocation for professional development and, if the school fails to meet adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years, it must spend an additional ten percent on professional development for teachers.

While the eleven surveyed districts used Title II, A funds to support professional development, particularly in the area of core academic instruction, the report states, "However, district officials told us that they have begun shifting emphasis from class size reduction to initiatives focusing on improving teacher qualifications." GAO also found that most of the districts targeted Title II, A funds on professional development designed to help teachers improve student achievement. Among the eleven districts, a variety of directly-related professional development activities were funded using Title II, A funds, including:

- One district provided summer workshops on research-based instructional strategies in reading and paid for instructional coaches;
- Two districts spent Title II, A funds on math coaches who helped teachers develop lesson plans and use student test data to identify and address academic needs;

- In four districts, Title II, A funded the purchase of new instructional materials;
- In ten districts, Title II, A funds were spent on professional development for general and non-teaching staff; and
- One district used Title II, A funds to provide all teachers during their first three years of employment with extended training on classroom management, student assessment, and parental involvement.

The recent GAO report notes that the NCLB definition of professional development emphasizes activities that increase student academic knowledge which is sustained and intensive, rather than short-term, and increases teachers' understanding of effective instructional strategies that are based upon principles of scientifically-based research. On the latter point, the report notes that officials in most of the districts felt that NCLB's emphasis on using strategies supported by research had led to improvement in the quality of professional development: "They had become much more selective when approving professional development providers, looking for those programs that focused on intensive research-based instructional strategiesThe district approved only those providers whose programs could be substantiated by research-based evidence of effectiveness. They also indicated that they had moved away from one-time workshops and begun to emphasize

ongoing professional development that provided teachers with opportunities to reinforce and apply concepts learned.”

Interestingly, GAO found that, while all districts reported using some Title II, A funds for professional development, in six of the districts, Title II, A funds were transferred into Title V, one of the earliest block grant Federal programs, because “it afforded them the most flexibility in spending the funds.” The report notes that its own earlier report on use of Title II, A funds in 2002-03, as well as a similar report by USED during the same timeframe, reported close to 60 percent of Title II, A funds that year were spent on class size reduction. The new GAO report implies that funds for this activity have been reallocated in some cases for additional professional development, or perhaps have been transferred into Title V or other titles under the “50 percent transferability provision,” included under NCLB for the first time. The GAO report also notes that previous studies have found, as this one also did, that most professional development activities in districts are funded by other Federal programs such as Title I: “...but in high-poverty districts Title II funds constituted a larger share of total funds spent on these activities than in low-poverty districts.” These high-poverty districts are also most likely to have schools identified for improvement, which requires additional Title I funds being earmarked for professional development.

Another interesting finding of the GAO document is the results of USED monitoring reports on 20 states reviewed

between June 2004 and July 2005 which indicated that:

- ten did not include all the required data elements on their state report card;
- thirteen did not adequately reflect the status of teachers in meeting the annual progress requirements; and
- twelve did not have annual measurable objectives for districts and schools.

As noted in our last TechMIS report, on October 21, Secretary Spellings announced a “reprieve” for some states, announcing that they could have an additional year to meet the highly-qualified teacher requirements if they meet several “good faith” conditions, including meeting requirements for parent notification and state report cards and have an adequate data reporting and tracking system in place to ensure reported progress is accurate, among other conditions.

This GAO report certainly suggests that Federal expenditures under Title II, A and Title I for professional development will likely increase. It also points to flexible allowable uses of such funds, ranging from hiring coaches to training teachers in using assessment data to inform instruction. One of the areas which was not addressed in the GAO report is the flexibility which Title I officials have in deciding how to reallocate the five and ten percent “earmarks” for professional develop-

ment. In October 2004, USED issued Non-Regulatory Guidance in a policy letter, indicating that a district could allocate its Title I professional development earmarks to meet the district's "greatest need," which may not include providing professional development for teachers in schools identified for improvement -- which generated the "earmarks." This suggests that there is more flexibility for selecting and funding professional development under Title I than under Title II.

For a copy of the report go to www.gao.gov/new.items/d0625.pdf.

New USED Publication Provides Rationale for Newly-Found "Flexibilities" Under the Spellings Regime and Points to Additional Options Available to States and Districts In The Very Near Future

The new *No Child Left Behind: A Road Map for State Implementation* (prepublication copy: November 10, 2005), is designed to "help States and local educators understand what the Department expects as it reviews State policies and considers alternative policy options and flexibility for implementing specific requirements of NCLB." This publication differs from the Regulations and Non-Regulatory Guidance, during the last ten months, regarding "newly-found flexibilities" in supplemental educational services, alternative assessments, and interventions for "cognitively and academically impaired"

special education students, among others. This new document is designed to guide officials responsible for implementing NCLB's challenging requirements at the state and district levels; it can also be used in communicating such policies to the press and tangentially involved educators. The document is an excellent reference guide for sales staff involved in "consultative selling" as they position products and services to address many of the challenges created by NCLB. While the document does not identify specific implications for publishers and other vendors selling NCLB-related solutions, it should be considered a "companion" to previous TechMIS reports which have spelled out, in greater detail, the nature of some of the provisions summarized in the *Road Map* and what the implications are for companies with certain types of products and services.

Four of the six areas where new flexibilities have been found and/or discussed have direct relevance to many TechMIS subscribers and are highlighted below.

In the section addressing Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Measures the *Road Map* summarizes some of the measures and trajectories used by different states in determining whether AYP targets are met. It also provides a rationale for certain variations among states with respect to the size of subgroups (N), differences in state's use of "confidence" intervals, "safe harbor," and additional academic indicators for AYP, such as the recently announced Average Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR), a uniform way of calculating

graduation rates across states. The *Road Map's* discussion of these issues, and others (e.g., using "achievement indexes" for determining AYP, state accountability growth models and identification of districts and schools for improvement), also provides examples of states which have been approved who made significant variations compared to what has been approved for most states and the rationale for the approval. Another recent document, published by the Council of Chief State School Officers in its annual report entitled "A Report on 2005 Amendments to State Plans, October 2005," provides the current status of amended state plans (especially in the above areas), key issues, and challenges (see related item). Alternatives which have been requested by states, but which have yet to be approved, are described in much more detail.

The *Road Map* also includes an early look at guidance that will be "coming soon" from USED in several areas. One area is proposed policy on modified assessments aligned with grade level content, often referred to as the interim policy on the "two percent cap" for academically disabled students (see related Washington Update item). The *Road Map* emphasizes much more heavily the need for "designing instruction to meet their specific needs and providing support such as physical therapy, counseling services or interpreting services to help such students learn alongside their peers and reach the same high standards as all other students." Referring to the "two percent cap" on students receiving alternative assessments with modified

achievement levels, the document states, "The Department has reviewed research conducted over the last four years on the issues of students with disabilities, alternate assessments, and alternate achievement standards. We know a lot more about who these students are, their needs, and the range of instructional strategies and kinds of assessments appropriate for them." Reiterating what Deputy Secretary Simons indicated last summer (see Washington Update April 2005), approximately \$14 million is being allocated to "improve assessments, help teachers with instruction, and conduct research for students with disabilities who are held to alternate and modified achievement standards in 2005. Additional funds will be directed in 2006." Part of these funds are being used to invest in "technical assistance centers to provide support to States and to improve the participation of students with disabilities in assessment and accountability systems." Earlier Deputy Secretary Simons indicated that the three Reading First technical assistance centers would be providing states with advice on the selection/development of instruments and/or interventions (see May 2005 Washington Update).

A second area for which guidance is "coming soon" relates to assessments for LEP students. The *Road Map* implies that the regulations will cover in greater detail: what tests would be allowed (English language acquisition vs. state reading assessment) for LEP students new to the country; guidance for states in identifying LEP subgroups; types of accommodations and assessments which will be allowed; and exceptions which may be negotiated on a case-by-case

basis. However, as the document concludes, “In the meantime, the Department’s transitional policy remains in place. For new arrivals to our Nation’s schools, during their first year of enrollment, LEP students have the option of taking an English language proficiency assessment in lieu of the reading assessment. Students must take math tests, with accommodations as appropriate. States may include results from the math and, if given, the reading content assessments in AYP calculations. In addition, the flexibility allows States to include in the LEP subgroup when making AYP decisions, for up to two years, those students who attained English proficiency (‘formerly LEP’ students).”

And last, the *Road Map* addresses the evolution of new flexibilities related to supplemental educational services. The already-announced “pilot program” to change the order of SES choice interventions describes the rationale for the Virginia approval to offer tutoring before transportation in four districts. The *Road Map* reiterates the conditions that Virginia agreed to meet in order to participate in the “pilot program.” One condition is that the state must report on the achievement gains of students participating in SES; an additional requirement not previously emphasized is that each of the districts will have to offer continuous or multiple enrollment periods throughout the school year until the district has spent all of the 20 percent funds or must otherwise ensure that all eligible students interested in SES are served. The other “pilot program” involves districts that have been identified for improvement but which

have been provided waivers allowing them to continue or expand district-operated SES programs funded under Title I (including Chicago, Boston, and New York City), which are addressed in the enclosed TechMIS Special Report. The *Road Map* clearly emphasizes that one of the major, if not the major goal, of the pilot programs initiated through the assistance of the Council of Great City Schools, is to increase the number of eligible students receiving SES throughout the year. This has not happened in Chicago because of the late notification of its waiver approval a month after school got started; parents had already elected to have their students receive SES from third-party vendors.

The second objective is to identify best practices for improving the academic achievement of students receiving SES. This is supposed to be done through an independent third-party which will be provided academic data on students by the participating districts such as Los Angeles, Dayton, Memphis, among others. The *Road Map* does not cover the rather confusing policy shift noted in our last Special Report and also addressed in Electronic Education Report (November 18), which stated, “Forecasting how large and how competitive the market for Supplemental Educational Services will be more difficult following the recent contradictory rulings by state and federal education officials on who can provide tutoring. This month, the Department of Education granted New York City a waiver to provide its own tutoring to children in failing schools, while in Florida last month state education department officials rejected the plans of

three school districts to tutor students indirectly through district-affiliated organizations, including afterschool programs and vocational technical centers.” One can infer that policy relating to SES is still evolving.

For the copy of the *Road Map* go to www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/roadmap/roadmap.pdf. The CCSSO report on 2005 amendments to state plans is available at www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=286.

State Expenditures for State Pre-K Expenditures Increased Slightly Over 20 Percent to \$3.5 Billion Over the Last Year With Increases of More Than 30 Percent in Ten States Pointing to the Emergence of a Growing Niche Market in the Future

The annual report by Pre-K Now, an advocacy group funded primarily by the Pew Charitable Trust, reports that, in 26 states, state pre-K expenditures increased \$600 million during the 2005 legislative session -- the single largest increase in five years. The slightly over 20 percent increase in pre-K expenditures occurred primarily in ten states whose legislatures provided a funding increase of 30 percent or more. The states include Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia. At least some funding increases have occurred in sixteen other states with similar

increases expected in four states which had not completed legislative sessions by the time the report was prepared (October 2005). Only nine states -- Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming -- according to Stateline.org (November 16), reportedly do not fund preschool programs with state appropriations.

The report also identifies the sources of the major thrust in each state for increasing pre-K expenditures as the Office of the Governor or the State Legislature. Several governors -- including Jeb Bush (R-Florida), Rod Blagojevich (D-Illinois), Bill Richardson (D-New Mexico), Phil Bredesen (D-Tennessee), and Christine Gregoire (D-Washington) -- have “made the push for preschool a cornerstone of their education policies.” While the legislatures in Illinois, Tennessee, and Louisiana supported their governors’ initiatives, in states such as Arkansas and Nebraska the legislatures took the lead role. In addition, ex officio groups serving as policy advisors or pre-K advocacy roles were created in certain states such as the Early Childhood Education Cabinet in Connecticut and Early Learning Councils in both Virginia and Washington. The full report details some of the key legislators and other individuals who are the most influential in increasing support for pre-K education.

The increase in state funding comes at a time when Federal Head Start funding has virtually plateaued at approximately \$6.9 billion serving about 900,000 children. The most recent attempt by

Congress to pass the FY 2006 appropriation would have provided no new money for Head Start, which is also scheduled to be reauthorized next year (see Washington Update, May 2005). While there have been a number of political sensitivities related to the reauthorization (e.g., use of Federal funds to hire only religious members to operate faith-based Head Start programs), there are a number of proposed changes which are likely in the reauthorization; they are designed to improve the quality of teaching and place greater emphasis on numeracy and literacy at early age levels (see TechMIS Washington Update, January 2003 attached). As the Stateline.org article notes, currently about two-thirds of 3-4-year-olds already are enrolled in some type of preschool (e.g., church nurseries, Federal Head Start centers, public classrooms staffed by certified teachers). But the quality varies widely state by state (e.g., pre-K supervised by certified teachers reaches fewer than ten percent of the 3-4-year-olds nationwide, according to Pre-K Now which advocates universal access to preschool). Last year, the NIEER, in its 2004 state preschool yearbook, ranked the quality of state pre-K programs on ten benchmarks. Some states receiving higher ratings included Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Nebraska.

As states expand the number of 3-4-year-olds served in preschool programs and as the nine states that currently do not fund pre-K programs, plus the two states -- New Jersey and Vermont which cut funding for preschool in 2005 -- are pressured to increase their funding,

opportunities should grow for firms with appropriate instructional materials, assessment tools, and services, particularly training for pre-K teachers and paraprofessionals. Pre-K Now also identifies another important trend which is that the number of states funding pre-K, through tax base and attendance driven formula is increasing. According to the report, "...This is a smart approach to ensuring program stability...When pre-k is part of the education budget, it is largely protected from fluctuations in the economy and belt-tightening budgets." For a copy of the report go to www.preknow.org/documents/LegislativeReport_Nov2005.pdf.

Many States Await Issuance of USED Guidance on "Modified Assessments" for Special Education Students Under the So-Called "Two Percent Cap" Flexibility; Opportunities Will Increase for Firms Which Can Work With States in Selecting/Developing Modified Assessments and Directly Related Interventions

When USED releases its new Non-Regulatory Guidance (NRG) on the "two percent cap" modified assessment flexibility, about half of the states are likely to ratchet up their initiatives to develop/select modified assessments which have proficiency levels aligned with state standards thereby creating opportunities for firms with imbedded items, assessment tools, and/or

“adaptable” assessment instruments and related interventions for so-called “gap students.” A large portion of the \$400 million allocated to states to meet next year’s implementation deadline for multi-level NCLB assessment provisions will undoubtedly be allocated to developing modified assessments falling under the “two percent cap”; additional funding has already been allocated to develop alternative assessments for severely cognitively-impaired students falling under the so-called “one percent cap.”

In its annual “report” on the 2005 amendments to state plans, the Council of Chief State School Officers (October) noted that 40 states applied this summer to take advantage of the “two percent cap interim policy flexibility” following guidance issued on May 10. Of the three options, most states requested approval for Option One (see TechMIS Washington Update, August 2005). Under Option One, a state would be allowed to add, as a proxy (only for year 2004-05 calculations), a number equaling two percent of all students assessed to the percent of students with disabilities (SWDs) scoring at or above the proficient level in determining AYP. For states that currently do not have modified assessments, several conditions must be met, including one in which a state must describe a number of steps it will take to build appropriate modified assessment tools for the target group of students. The Non-Regulatory Guidance should identify target groups of students and allowable specifications for modified assessment instruments. The states that were formally approved to use Option One (often referred to as the

“proxy method”) include Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New York, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. As reported in Education Daily (November 10), in addition to the above states which were formally approved, an additional eighteen states have received verbal or tentative approval for using a modified version of Option One or have decided to use Option Two (i.e., the state has already developed and used for two or more years appropriate modified assessments -- such as Kansas), or Option Three (i.e., the state requests approval to use another alternative modified assessment -- such as Maryland, Massachusetts, and Colorado). For the remaining states, the CCSSO report notes, “States and researchers we talked with seemed to be in agreement that a high minimum “N” and the use of “confidence intervals” will be more effective in minimizing the number of schools -- especially those with small enrollments of SWDs -- identified on the basis of the group’s results alone.” To qualify for Option One, a state has to ensure that the students with disabilities subgroup has the same “N” size as other groups and confidence intervals will not be used.

Education Daily reporters Sparks and Sawchuk interviewed SEA officials responsible for implementing the modified assessment flexibility guidance in Nevada, North Carolina, Alaska, Maryland, Michigan, Tennessee, Kansas, and Washington State. They reported that virtually all officials stated that the Non-Regulatory Guidance

(which is already three months late) is key in defining more clearly the target population to which the modified assessments will be administered and the types of modifications which will be allowed by USED. After release large amounts of funding for assessment selection/development should occur.

The CCSSO report, for the first time, reported on the types of accommodations which are provided to students with certain types of disabilities. No formal guidance has been provided by USED and policies have been negotiated with states on a case-by-case basis through the Peer Review Process. The report notes, "One such accommodation is allowing portions of a reading test to be read aloud to a student during testing. This is a decision ED seems to have left to States as being responsible for defining the construct that is tested and for further deciding what accommodations might invalidate the results." One common accommodation is to "read aloud" portions of the state assessment with no restrictions or with some limited restrictions. States with such negotiated policies include Massachusetts, Missouri, Vermont, Maryland, Delaware, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and South Carolina, and a few other states in which "read aloud" accommodations for students with some disabilities are allowed, but not for reading comprehension items. Many of these states are using text-to-voice assistive technologies in administering the test; this not only ensures quality control but also reduces the cost of test administration. For a copy of the CCSSO report, go to

www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=286.

New International Reading Association Collaborative Identifies Suggested Roles for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches Who Will Increasingly Become Important Influencers/Decision-Makers In Selecting Instructional and Related Programs

In an attempt to develop a consensus on the role of literacy coaches as middle and high school reform initiatives expand, the International Reading Association, in collaboration with four national content-related associations, agreed upon "requisite roles and associated responsibilities" for middle and high school literacy coaches. The "requisite roles and qualifications" not only point to important "gatekeeper" roles which should evolve for literacy coaches, but also outline in some detail the type of professional development needs which will likely be in high demand as more and more funding is allocated to high school reform, particularly focusing on adolescent literacy.

The foundation underlining the anticipated growth and the use of literacy coaches in high schools -- and to a lesser extent middle schools -- is based upon more than a year and a half of research synthesis conducted by a team from the Harvard Graduate School of Education headed by Professor

Catherine Snow, a leading expert on adolescent literacy. The report refers to coaching as a major new target of investment in education improvement, noting a \$31 million contribution in Pennsylvania by the Annenberg Foundation, more than \$30 million dedicated to hiring literacy coaches in Florida, and major professional development efforts relating to literacy coaches in districts such as Boston, Dallas, New York, and Philadelphia. The report identifies a number of literacy coach standards which should be adopted by states and districts, ranging from increased collaboration in determining a school's strengths (as well as its need for improvement), identifying needs (which, if met, would improve student reading and related achievement), and routinely examining best practices and curriculum materials related to adolescent literacy for English Language learners. Skillful job-embedded coaches should have a repertoire of reading strategies at their disposal to share with and model for content area teachers and be able to provide professional development related to strategies to help students analyze and evaluate which Internet sources are reliable, including those written in a native language of certain students. Several "requisite roles and associated responsibilities," which point to the growing importance of coaches as "gatekeepers," include dissemination of current literacy research findings to team leaders creating literacy plans for schools. Some of the identified "discretionary roles and associated responsibilities" include identifying funding opportunities, scheduling professional development time and

common planning time for teachers, continuing review of literacy research, and collecting teacher- and student-level data, while providing feedback to administrators and teachers.

Based upon the synthesis of existing research on literacy coaching at the middle and high school level, literacy coaches increasingly "...envision themselves as vehicles for professional development. A literacy coach working at any grade level is more concerned with teachers' learning and growth than students' learning and growth. Whereas reading specialists or learning disability specialists typically spend most of their time working with students and only a small portion of time focused on staff development, most literacy coaches are primarily concerned with increasing the skills and knowledge of teachers and administrators."

These standards for middle and high school literacy coaches are important for two primary reasons. First, the report is credible due to the leadership role of the IRA, working in collaboration with the National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Math, National Science Teachers Association, and National Council for Social Studies, with the Harvard Graduate School of Education taking a lead role in conducting research and preparing the document under the leadership of Dr. Catherine Snow. And second, the timing of the report is keyed to middle and high school reform initiatives by states that are just now gathering momentum, along with pressures coming from other quarters, including Congress through the recent GAO report (see October

TechMIS Washington Update) on identifying and disseminating effective practices and interventions at the middle- and high-school levels. Unlike the evolution of elementary reading coaches hired under the Reading First program which was based on only limited research on effective practices, the recommendations in this report are based upon much sounder research (although more is needed according to the report), which could result in greater uniformity of implementation over the next few years. This, in itself, will have a tendency to aggregate the market for products and services targeting reading coaches and the teachers under their supervision.

FCC Releases Eligible Services List For Funding Year 2006 Opening the Window For Eligible Entities to Submit Applications Beginning on December 6, 2005

In a Public Notice statement dated November 22, the FCC released the updated List of Eligible Services thereby opening the “window” for 2006 funding for December 6, 2005. The lengthy 71-page document clarifies the conditions under which certain products and services are eligible and includes some new products -- such as terminal servers -- which are eligible under certain conditions.

Under the “telecommunications bucket” certain services are now eligible under certain conditions, including:

- Conferencing services are eligible if per-minute conferencing charges are limited to educational purposes and educational personnel and if an auditable monitoring system provides a way to allocate between eligible and ineligible uses; hence, a portion of the cost of teleconferencing to facilitate meetings between individual parents and the IEP team in developing or updating IEPs would be eligible; this is now consistent with IDEA provisions.
- Eligibility of distance learning video and audio technologies would be limited to the telecommunications transmission service that enables distance learning, but services that include their own content are not eligible; firms offering online tutoring as part of supplemental educational services would have to separate the cost of delivery from the cost of the content delivered to be eligible.
- Homework Hotline Services are eligible but the costs of configuration or maintenance of content are not.
- Software that provides functionality for basic e-mail service is eligible, but the cost of “substantial additional functionality” would be ineligible.

Under the “miscellaneous” category, if the applicant for services includes the

cost of lodging and food in an eligible services contract, then the per diem cost would be eligible, if it is cost effective. The document also states that the FCC has not resolved whether the provision of “unlit dark fiber” is a Telecommunication Service and, pending FCC resolution, it would not be considered eligible for funding. The same is true with voice over IP (VOIP), which will also remain ineligible for funding until the FCC determines whether certain VOIPs are telecommunication services.

For a copy of the Public Notice go to http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-05-197A1.pdf.

For the eligible service list, go to http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/FCC-05-197A2.pdf.