

## **Alabama Update - January 2006**

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Education Week reports that Alabama is planning a \$118,000 project by which the Alabama High School Athletic Association will offer an Internet-based program that provides advice on such subjects as steroid use, confrontational parents, and respect for officials. Funded by the State's character education program, the resources are being developed by Learning Through Sports, an Alabama-based publisher of online materials.

## Arizona Update - January 2006

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Arizona State Superintendent, Tom Horne, has asked the legislature for authority to make local districts responsible for improving “under-performing” schools, including earmarking funds for teacher training. Current State law places the full burden on the principal, requiring the district to participate only after a school is rated “failing” -- i.e., “under-performing” for three consecutive years. On a related note, the State has taken over the Colorado City school district because of financial mismanagement.

Beginning this year, the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is a requirement for students to receive a high school diploma. The Arizona Daily Star reports that State Superintendent Tom Horne has proposed that community colleges offer AIMS remediation classes for students who have passed their high school academic requirements but who have not passed the three AIMS tests -- reading, writing, and mathematics. Pima Community College (PCC), however, does not want to offer such remediation classes. PCC is working with sixth-graders in Tucson and Sunnyside school districts to improve future AIMS scores.

Beginning with this year’s senior class, all students must pass Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) in order to graduate. Statewide, 37 percent of the Class of 2006 has yet to pass. Only 16 percent of the State’s seniors who are English Language Learners have passed the AIMS. State officials estimate that 16,200 Arizona seniors will drop out before graduation and another 4,500 will pass their classes but fail to graduate because of the AIMS requirement. There is a pending legal action that could exempt 4,000 seniors who are learning English from the AIMS graduation requirement.

A Federal judge in Arizona has ruled that the State must adequately fund programs for English language learners. As reported in Education Week, the Court set a deadline of January 24, after which the State would be fined \$500,000 per day for the ensuing 30 days and \$2 million per day thereafter. The State Superintendent, Tom Horne, has requested \$750 million in Federal aid to pay the costs of educating Arizona’s estimated 125,000 undocumented students. The Court also ruled that, until the funding issue is resolved, English language learners do not have to pass the State’s high school exam in order to graduate.

## Arkansas Update - January 2006

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A report by a State-appointed task force, funded by the Koret Foundation, has called for a number of important changes in Arkansas educational system geared toward greater accountability for districts and schools. Recommendations from the 11-member panel include:

- Revision in State curriculum guidelines;
- Administration of standardized tests by computer;
- More transparent reporting of student performance;
- Expansion of charter schools; and
- Financial incentives for teachers based on student performance.

## Colorado Update - January 2006

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The Rocky Mountain News reports that Colorado's School Accountability Reports have shown modest improvements in academic performance:

- The number of schools rated "high" or "excellent" increased from 40.3 percent to 42.9 percent.
- More schools -- 32.8 percent -- showed improvement than those getting worse -- 28.3 percent.
- More than 20 percent of the State's schools (down slightly from the year before) were rated as "low" or "unsatisfactory."
- Of the State's 168 low-income schools, 120 were rated "low" and eight were rated "unsatisfactory."

Results of a recent study from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) show that 30 percent of Colorado's high school graduates enrolled in public colleges in the State are in need of remediation in reading, writing, or mathematics. A total of 28,268 Colorado high school graduates enrolled in public colleges in the Fall of 2004 (the most recent data); 8,366 (30 percent) of them required remediation, up from 28 percent the year before. The need for remediation is based on students' SAT or ACT scores. The CCHE has been pushing for more rigorous high school graduation requirements to reduce the "expectation gap" between high schools and colleges.

As reported in Education Daily, Colorado has become a leader in the charter school movement. In the past 12 years, the State chartered more than a hundred schools. Over the years, the legislature has lifted the cap on schools, provided readier access to funding and facilities, and created an independent authorizing body, the Colorado Charter School Institute. Unlike most states that have focused their charter schools on urban communities, Colorado has chartered a mix of urban and rural, rich and poor schools. Indeed, the State has voted a desire for school choice in suburban and rural communities.

## **Connecticut Update - January 2006**

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Education Daily reports that the Connecticut Board of Education has approved a plan to increase the number of charter schools in the State from 14 to 24. The \$18.3 million plan must be accepted by the Governor's budget and approved by the legislature. Included in the Board's recommendations are: (1) funding for four previously approved charter schools; (2) approval of two new charter schools for the 2006-07 school year; (3) approval of four more charters for 2007-08; (4) lifting the State's limit (250 students) on charter school enrollment; and (5) increasing by 25 percent per-pupil funding for charter school pre-kindergarteners.

## **Delaware Update - January 2006**

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The Delaware Department of Education has abandoned its controversial and never-implemented three-tiered diploma system by which the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) was the sole determinant of the type of diploma high school students would receive. All tiered diplomas will be eliminated by 2008, but, until then, a two-tiered structure will be used. Students with high enough scores on the DSTP -- or the SAT or Advanced Placement exams -- will qualify for a “distinguished” diploma. Students who meet district graduation requirements but do not score well on any of the tests will receive a “traditional” diploma.

## Florida Update - January 2006

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As reported in Education Daily, the Florida School Boards Association is planning to sue the State over the Florida Education Department's ban on team teaching. In order to comply with the 2002 constitutional amendment requiring a reduction in class sizes, many districts have adopted team teaching approaches. The State ruled that team teaching violates the amendment and barred such approaches. The expected lawsuit seeks to overturn the State's ban.

According to the Orlando Sentinel, 40 percent of Florida's kindergarteners are not prepared to learn to read. The results of the State's early reading assessment indicates that:

- 20 percent of kindergarteners are considered to be "high risk"; that is "seriously below grade level";
- between 35 and 40 percent of kindergarteners did poorly on at least one pre-literacy test putting them at "moderate" or "high risk";
- six of the State's 67 school districts -- Gulf, Hendry, Hernando, Okeechobee, Polk, and Washington -- were identified as "high risk" because of low student performance.

The St. Petersburg Times reports that, because of the large numbers of students who fail in the ninth grade, the State is considering eliminating grade retention in high school. Florida's Commissioner of Education, John Winn, indicated that nearly 17 percent -- 38,000 -- of ninth-grade students were retained in grade last year; in many counties the number was more than 20 percent. The Commissioner argues that traditional grade-level classifications should be redefined and that struggling students should receive additional remediation. The Commissioner also indicated that eliminating ninth-grade retention could reduce the number of Florida students who pursue GEDs -- more than 6,000 last year.

According to Education Week, the teacher evaluation system used in Miami-Dade County for the past five years is likely to be eliminated. Education officials believe that the Professional Assessment and Comprehensive Evaluation System (PACES) is outdated by current technology and by new State requirements. This Fall, Dade County allocated \$300,000 to replace PACES, likely with an off-the-shelf framework. The County expects the new system to be ready for review by the end of the school year. The local teachers' union argues that the problem with PACES is not the system but the amount of resources devoted to it. Currently, teacher evaluations are based largely on observations by administrators usually lasting less than an hour.

## **Idaho Update - January 2006**

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The Idaho Board of Education is considering stiffening the requirements for students entering high school. According to Education Week, the requirements for going into ninth grade could include maintaining a cumulative C average in core academic subjects for all three years of middle school and passing a pre-algebra class. In addition, high school students would be required to take four years of mathematics (instead of two) and three years of science (instead of two).

Currently, Idaho law prohibits district spending for children under five years old, one of eight states with such restrictions. The Idaho Business Coalition for Education Excellence is supporting a change in State law that would allow districts to raise funds for early childhood education.



## Illinois Update - January 2006

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As reported in The Chicago Tribune, Illinois' 27 charter schools have become so popular they are turning away prospective students. State data indicate that the charter schools received 12,300 applications for fewer than 5,800 slots. Despite the charter schools' popularity, Illinois is considered a weak charter school state because local districts have the authority to grant and revoke charters.

The Chicago Tribune also reports that many underperforming suburban school districts in Illinois have yet to begin offering tutoring services under the supplemental education services provision of the Federal No Child Left Behind. Elgin, for example, will not be providing tutoring services until March 2006. Of the \$626,000 in Federal funds allocated to Elgin for tutoring last year, only \$64,000 went to the program.

## Indiana Update - January 2006

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The number of special education students in Indiana grew by more than a third between 1994 and 2004. The Kids Count Indiana 2005 Data Book indicated that the increase was more than eight times the overall increase in public school enrollment. Between 1994 and 2003, the number of special education students with learning disabilities increased by more than 25 percent, those with communication disorders increased by 16 percent, and students with autism increased five-fold.

Results of the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus (ISTEP-Plus) given this Fall show slight improvement in mathematics scores but little change in reading. As reported in The Indianapolis Star, the State's \$26.5 million testing program showed improved student passing rates for math in Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 and unchanged passing rates in Grades 3 and 10. Only students in Grades 5, 6, and 8 showed improvement in their English/language arts scores.

The Indianapolis Star reports that, last year, 2,756 (15 percent) of the more than 18,000 Indiana students eligible for free tutoring took advantage of the opportunity, a decline of nearly 1,000 from the previous year. In Indianapolis, 24 tutoring providers received \$11.5 million; the year before, only \$1.3 million was paid to five providers. Providers in Indianapolis were paid as much as \$1,440 per student. Concerned about the escalating cost of tutoring, education officials intend to improve their oversight of the programs. Competition among providers for students has become intense. The Indianapolis and Perry Township school districts have organized school fairs to allow providers to market their programs to parents.

As reported in the Chicago Sun-Times, Lawrence Township, Indiana, in partnership with Ivy Tech Community College, are planning to establish an early college high school that would require its students to enroll in high school classes that earn them college credits. On graduation, students in the school could earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree (or credits that could be applied to a four-year college). The school would target poor and minority students.

## Iowa Update - January 2006

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The Des Moines Register reports that Iowa's Institute for Tomorrow's Workplace has issued a series of preliminary recommendations for improving the State's educational system and making it more compatible with 21<sup>st</sup>-century workforce needs. Established by the State legislature, the Institute will present its final recommendations in January. The preliminary recommendations include:

- establishing student performance standards including specific skills and subject area knowledge;
- requiring student mastery of the standards before grade promotion or high school graduation;
- requiring the State's high schools to offer four years of English; three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies; and two years of foreign language; and
- requiring Iowa's public colleges and universities to go beyond class rank and grade point average in assessing student admissions.

## **Kansas Update - January 2006**

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The Kansas Board of Education is considering whether to approve a voucher program for special education and at-risk students. New State Education Commissioner, Bob Corkins, supports the proposals but approval from the Governor and State legislature is so far less certain. Such a program has never before been approved in the State and would require additional approval from the State legislature. The Board is also considering easing the requirements for establishing charter schools in Kansas. Heretofore, local school boards have had veto power over charter schools in their districts.

## **Kentucky Update - January 2006**

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Education Daily reports that Kentucky's No Child Left Offline pilot project will provide 500 surplus State computers to underprivileged eighth-grade students across the State. The State Department of Education and other State agencies will recycle and refurbish the computers.

According to the Associated Press, Kentucky has requested Federal approval for the flexibility to replace the Federal standard requiring all schools to meet the same testing goals with the State's Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) which rewards schools that show improvement. The State has also requested the ability to offer tutoring before student transfers. During the 2004-05 school year, more than 800 of Kentucky's 1,249 public schools failed to meet Federal academic standard; only 48 missed the State's goal.

## Maryland Update - January 2006

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Education Week reports that Maryland has chosen not to participate in the twelfth-grade tests on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) next year. This is the first time a state has opted out of a full set of twelfth-grade NAEP exams. States are required to take part in the reading and math sections of the NAEP at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. The State has taken the action out of concern about the number of required exams for high school seniors.

Education Daily reports that the Baltimore City school board has approved four charter school applications including one high school. Five other applications were rejected. The four approved applicants will now negotiate with the school district over the logistics of the new schools. Two of the applications call for the conversion of existing schools, while the other two would establish new schools. One of the new schools would be the City's first charter high school focusing on health sciences. The other new school -- the Green School of Baltimore -- with an emphasis on environmental education, would open in the Fall of 2006 as K-2 and add a grade each year until it had a full K-8 program.

## Massachusetts Update - January 2006

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Governor Mitt Romney, as reported in [eSchool News](#), has plans to provide laptop computers to all 500,000 middle- and high-school students in Massachusetts. A key element of his plan, however, is the availability of laptops at a cost of about \$100 each, MIT researchers have announced such a low-cost machine but they are not yet available in quantity.

In December, the Massachusetts Board of Education proposed new standards that would allow the State to intervene in failing schools immediately, rather than after several years. Currently, “underperforming” schools are given time to develop an improvement plan and at least two additional years to demonstrate improvement before the State declares them “chronically underperforming,” triggering State intervention. Under the proposed plan, such schools could be turned over to alternate providers, including non-profits, colleges, charter school operators, or private school management firms. Currently, the State has identified 32 schools as underperforming.

## Michigan Update - January 2006

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Education Week reports that Michigan's State Superintendent, Michael Flanagan, has recommended that all high school students, before graduation, be required to have four mathematics credits (including Algebra), three science credits, four language arts credits, three social science credits, one health/physical education credit, and one fine arts credit. Currently, the only State graduation requirement is one civics course. All other graduation requirements are left to local districts.

Michigan revised its curriculum standards in 2004 to conform with the testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Education Week reports that under the revision, grade-level expectations are more rigorous, testing has been shifted from Spring to Fall, and new tests have been added in Grades 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The State plans to establish performance standards for the new tests by mid-January; committees are currently reviewing textbooks in which test items are arranged in order of difficulty to determine appropriate cut-off scores.

The Michigan State Board of Education has approved a new requirement that all high school students must take at least one online course in order to graduate. State officials believe the requirement will better prepare students for higher education and employment. The plan will require the approval of the legislature and the Governor.

The Michigan Virtual High School (MVHS) has received accreditation from the Commission on International and Trans-Regional accreditation (CITA). Operated by the Michigan Virtual University, MVHS has, since it began operation in 2000, had more than 22,000 course enrollments and, in addition, has provided online review tools to 125,000 for the SAT, PSAT, ACT, and State assessment.

The Detroit News reports that Michigan is a state that provides extremely strong support for special education. Most states require that school districts offer services for students with disabilities through age 21. Michigan requires such services through age 26.



The Detroit News also reports that charter school enrollment in Michigan increased 13 percent -- to 91,000 students -- last year. Most of the increase occurred in the State's urban districts -- particularly Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids. State officials expect charter school enrollment to surpass 100,000 next year. Many parents perceive charter schools as safer and more personal than their public schools. Public school officials, on the other hand, argue that public schools have higher standards, better qualified and paid teachers, and greater academic and extracurricular opportunities. Some charter schools have increased their enrollments despite poor academic performance.

## **Minnesota Update - January 2006**

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A recent survey shows that 36 percent of Minnesota's public high school graduates in 2002 who enrolled in State colleges or universities required at least one remedial course. This is an increase from the 33 percent rate in 1999. State officials attribute the increase to broader college enrollment and stricter academic screening.

The Education Commission of the States reports that at least a third of Minnesota's local school districts have shown interest in the State's new performance based teacher salary program, Quality Compensation for Teachers. Known as Q-Comp, the program has five important elements: (1) teacher career ladders; (2) embedded professional development; (3) standards-based assessments and instructional observations; (4) measures to assess student growth; and (5) alternative teacher pay.

## **New Jersey Update - January 2006**

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As reported in The Star-Ledger, a study of the Abbott Preschool Program indicates that New Jersey students who participated in State-funded pre-kindergarten from the State's poorest districts made significant academic improvement in language arts and mathematics. In 2004, the program served 38,000 and cost the State \$367 million. The State expects to expand State-funded pre-kindergarten in another 101 low-income school districts for as much as \$33 million and another \$2.6 million will be provided to fund low-income children attending pre-K in 29 high-income districts.

## **New Mexico Update - January 2006**

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As reported in Education Week, a new estimate of the cost to expand New Mexico's pre-kindergarten programs to all four-year-olds has reached \$59 million annually, significantly higher than the earlier \$30 million estimate. The new estimate is based on a rate of \$2,278 per child which includes instructional materials, transportation, administrative expenses, and professional development for instructional staff. The State estimates that a total of 24,700 four-year-olds could be served by pre-K programs. The legislature has already approved \$5 million for a pilot pre-K program which will serve about 1,500 children.

New Mexico is continuing its Laptop Learning Initiative Pilot program which began in 2004, by providing laptop computers to seventh-grade students and teachers in six middle schools. As reported in eSchool News, last year, the State spent \$4 million to expand the program to 27 schools and the State legislature has approved \$1 million more for further expansion. The pilot program, which allows students to keep their laptops through high school, is intended to lead to Statewide implementation, pending, of course, the availability of funds.

## **New York Update - January 2006**

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As reported in Education Daily, under-performing students in New York City will -- beginning in February -- be required to attend tutoring sessions after school. Approved by the new teachers' contract, the 37½ sessions will provide additional instruction and the district will provide special buses to take students home after the extra classes.

As reported in The New York Times, the New York State Board of Regents has approved a new set of mathematics standards for the 2007-08 school year. The problem began in 2003 when two-thirds of the students taking the Math A Regents exam failed. As a result, the State adopted broad changes in the State's math instruction. The new curriculum emphasizes conceptual knowledge over rote learning. Test-writers believe it will take about two years to prepare exams for the new curriculum.

## Oregon Update - January 2006

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Oregon has announced an interactive, Internet-based course on assistive technology assessment. As reported in Education Daily, the class's \$175 registration fee will provide two credit hours at Portland State University plus extensive handout materials including the manual, *Education Tech Points: A Framework for Assistive Technology Planning*. The class will run from January 9 through March 18, 2006. For more information, contact Gayl Bowser at [gayl.bowser@douglasesd.k23.or.us](mailto:gayl.bowser@douglasesd.k23.or.us) (941/440-4791).

According to The Oregonian, Oregon is planning to drop its system of high school achievement certificates because they are not understood by the public. In use since the late 1990s, the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) is a voluntary measure of achievement at the tenth-grade level. Only about a third of the State's high school students earn a CIM. The Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) was intended to show a higher level of student achievement. The State is currently considering new performance measures to replace the CIM and CAM that would become effective next year.

## **Puerto Rico Update - January 2006**

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Over the last two years, Puerto Rico has lost approximately \$60 million of the \$150 million allocated to the Commonwealth under Reading First because of disagreements over the approaches and materials proposed for use between new Commonwealth leadership and USED, including its reading expert consultants. Over the last several years, Puerto Rico has been the target of numerous USED audit exceptions (amounting to over \$100 million) and allegations of fraud and abuse on the part of Puerto Rican administrators. As reported in Education Week (November 30), the new education leadership within the Commonwealth objected to the most recent Reading First proposal developed in consultation with Utah State University contractors on several proposed points, including: (a) that students be taught to read in both Spanish and English by grade 3 and that teachers be fluent in English, both of which conflict with traditional Spanish language policies in the Commonwealth; and (b) that the proposed approach focuses only on skills instruction without adequate time being spent on comprehensive and writing activities. The Education Week article notes that Commonwealth officials recently visited USED Reading First officials to discuss a revised proposal; current Commonwealth officials indicate that they do not object to using materials which have all five components required under Reading First, but that the proposals should also include writing skills and content meaning. The current Commonwealth official, Yolanda Vilches, Assistant to the Deputy Secretary for Academic Services, indicates that the most recent proposal has a good chance of being approved before the September 30, 2006, deadline.

## South Carolina Update - January 2006

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South Carolina has adopted a new career education program by which entering high school freshmen -- beginning next Fall -- must choose a “career major.” As reported in Education Week, by 2007, all public high schools in the State must offer three or more clusters of classes each focusing on a specific career field. The State has developed 16 such career clusters. Schools must develop career-oriented individual education plans for eighth graders. The South Carolina program is modeled on *High Schools That Work* which was designed by the Southern Regional Education Board. The State expects to ask for \$14 million next year to hire 400 new career counselors to reduce the number of students each counselor must serve in some schools from 700 to 300.

A recent study by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) indicates that South Carolina four-year-olds in public preschool programs show improvement in vocabulary and reading skills that exceeds that of children who do not attend pre-kindergarten. Currently, about a third of the State’s 54,000 four-year-olds attend public preschool at a cost of about \$52 million. In the proposed budget for next year, the State has asked for \$45 million more in order to provide full-day kindergarten for the State’s 28,000 four-year-olds who are at academic risk.

A bill pending in the South Carolina legislature would call for elementary and middle school students to take high-stakes tests by computer. Currently, the State’s assessment -- the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) -- is a pencil-and-paper test that requires months to return scores. Under the proposed legislation, proposals would be sought from a number of testing providers (the current PACT contract as reported by the Associated Press, ends in 2007). The State has already asked for \$33 million to implement the PACT online. It is already moving high school end-of-course exams online.



## South Dakota Update - January 2006

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According to [eSchool News](#), State education spending in South Dakota -- K-12 and higher education -- would increase by \$18.8 million under a budget proposed by Governor Mike Rounds. The Governor has also proposed \$39 million, over several years, for a project that would provide every high school student with a laptop computer. The Governor's proposal calls for the State to allocate \$13 million which would be used as matching funds for the laptops -- one State dollar for every \$2 provided by local school districts.

Students in K-12 schools along the South Dakota border will be allowed to attend schools in either State as a result of a new cross-border enrollment program. Cross-border students will be treated as residents of the state in which they go to school; out-of-state tuition negotiations will not be necessary.

## Texas Update - January 2006

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A year and a half ago, the State approved a procedure by which local school districts could instantly certify college graduates as teachers in hard-to-place subjects like high school math and science. At the time, the plan was opposed by teacher groups but advocated by those who felt it would relieve teacher shortages. However, as reported in The Dallas Morning News, only one new teacher has been certified through the procedure. Only two of Texas' 1,037 school districts -- both small ones -- have been authorized to offer the Temporary Teacher Certificate. A total of 1,640 people have applied for the Certificate, all but one of whom have been turned down because they failed to meet all requirements (e.g., passing the State competency exam) or because they had no job offer from a school district.

Texas schools have made a practice of avoiding the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act by testing special education students at the lowest possible level. The San Antonio Express-News reports that special education students are not required to take the State's standardized test -- the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills -- but instead take the alternative SDAA II. Schools, however, can choose the grade level and achievement level at which each student is to be tested. A special education student could be tested at a grade below his/her actual level and could be given the Level 1 (the lowest of three levels) achievement test. Statewide, 41 percent of special education students are tested at Level 1. Some school districts test all of their special education students at the lowest level.

As reported in the San Antonio Business Journal, Texas is planning an extensive expansion of the Texas High School Project (THSP), a \$180 million public/private initiative intended to increase graduation and college enrollment rates and to decrease dropout rates. The program expansion -- known as the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (TSTEM) initiative -- will be designed to prepare students better in technical subjects for college and the workforce. Funding for the TSTEM will come from the State of Texas (\$10 million in State funds and \$10 million in Federal money), the Michael & Susan Dell foundation (\$20 million), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (\$20 million), the technology firm National Instruments

(\$1 million), and the Communities Foundation of Texas (\$10 million), the organization that manages the THSP.

The Dallas Morning News reports that the Dallas Independent School District has contracted with the National Center for Education Accountability to identify ways to improve student performance. Among the Center's 17 recommendations are:

- eliminating the use of test preparation materials in the early grades;
- making the rigor of the district's curriculum more consistent across grades;
- ensuring instructional resources are aligned with district academic objectives and are proven effective with similar student populations;
- requiring low-performing schools to use district-selected curriculum materials, but giving greater flexibility to high-performing schools;
- closely monitor student performance beginning in the early grades; and
- developing an intervention plan and providing added resources for the lowest-performing schools.

Three Texas school districts have contracted with 4GL School Solutions, Inc. to provide Internet-based software for tracking special education caseloads and automating student record keeping. The three districts -- Tomball and Goose Creek near Houston and Sherman near Dallas -- enroll nearly 3,000 special education students in total.

## Utah Update - January 2006

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The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has agreed to reconsider some of Utah's requests for waivers from requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The State and USED have quarreled continuously since the passage of NCLB in 2002. Among the issues to be reconsidered are the State's handling of students who fail to meet Federal standards and when tutoring should be provided to struggling students relative to the transfer option.

The Salt Lake City Tribune reports that all special education teachers in Utah, in order to be rated "highly qualified" under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), must take 16 college credit hours in the subjects they teach. Teachers can earn a degree in their subjects or pass a rigorous standardized subject-specific test (yet to be developed) by June 30, 2006. Teachers of multiple subjects must become "highly qualified" in one subject by that date and have two more years to become "highly qualified" in their other subjects. The State approved this policy reluctantly in fear of losing \$100 million in Federal education aid if it failed to comply with NCLB requirements.

## Virginia Update - January 2006

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As reported in the Washington Post, newly-elected Governor Tim Kaine is pushing for universal preschool. Called Strong Start, the Governor's program to enroll all 100,000 of Virginia's four-year-olds is expected to cost \$296 million when fully implemented (probably at least four years from now). The Governor is planning to ask for \$74 million the first year and add \$74 million per year for the subsequent three years. State officials believe the preschool program will pay for itself by reducing the need for remediation and incarceration. Legislators, however, are skeptical that the money will be available because of the State's need to fund health care and road improvement programs.

A total of 22 Virginia school districts have been identified as having disproportionate enrollments of minorities in special education. These districts are required (as noted in the accompanying Washington Update item) to allocate 15 percent of their IDEA Part B funds to early intervening services in order to eliminate the disproportionality. These districts, along with their total IDEA Part B allocations are:

Arlington County	\$ 4,063,268
Bedford County	\$ 1,948,343
Charlotte County	\$ 450,161
Charlottesville City	\$ 1,130,648
Fairfax County	\$31,069,227
Fauquier County	\$ 1,988,116
Fluvanna County	\$ 569,445
Fredericksburg City	\$ 497,753
Gloucester County	\$ 1,147,479
Goochland County	\$ 451,675
Hanover County	\$ 2,844,812
King William County	\$ 404,557
Lancaster County	\$ 269,216
Loudoun County	\$ 8,041,265
Mathews County	\$ 258,241

Mecklenburg County	\$ 995,627
Middlesex County	\$ 297,240
New Kent County	\$ 537,882
Radford City	\$ 309,441
Richmond County	\$ 194,090
Williamsburg/James City	\$ 1,532,814
York County	\$ 1,832,290

## Washington Update - January 2006

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Starting in 2008, Washington school districts will be required to implement classroom-based tests in social studies, arts, and health/fitness. The State is beginning to distribute model assessments to gauge what students know in social studies.

The Seattle Times reports that nearly a quarter of the children in Washington below the age of six have at least two factors (e.g., poverty, parental unemployment) that increase the risk of failure in school. Only 25 percent of children in the lowest-income schools are prepared for kindergarten, compared with nearly 60 percent for high-income schools. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is providing as much as \$90 million over the next ten years to support an early learning initiative to increase the quality of day care and education for preschool children. The initiative plans to establish two model child-care centers -- one in Eastern Washington and one in the Western part of the State -- that will provide highly trained teachers, high-quality care, and appropriate space for early learners. Each center will serve as a hub for other child-care providers.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reports that the Seattle school district is considering asking the State for a waiver of the State assessment as the only high school graduation requirements. Under current procedures, the Class of 2008 -- this year's tenth-graders -- will be the first who must pass the reading, writing, and mathematics portions of the WASL in order to graduate. Students who fail the WASL twice are permitted to take one alternative assessment. Under the Seattle proposal, students could skip the WASL and complete an alternative assessment, such as a portfolio to demonstrate mastery of required courses. Other alternatives such as SAT scores or grades in "rigorous" core courses would be available to students who fail the WASL.