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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 6, 2007
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke
SUBJ: Proposed NCLB Changes, Highlights SIAA Ed Tech Forum, Reports on State Use of Technology Funding E-Rate Update

After the January lull related to NCLB reauthorization, momentum is picking up following the release in February of the NCLB Commission Report. Numerous proposals are being submitted relating to math, science and technology in the areas of innovation and competitiveness. Now that most key committee staff have been hired, a number of hearings should occur in March and April.

This issue includes a special report entitled "Highlights of SIAA Ed Tech Government Forum Reflect Consensus on Several Policy Trends, While Divergent Views Are Expressed on Technology Opportunities in K-12 Education."

This TechMIS report addresses:

- Recommendations made by the NCLB Commission which taken together represent a major overhaul of the Law and represents an almost unanimous consensus by all of the bipartisan Commission members which suggests it will gain significant traction perhaps as the "framework" for reauthorization this year;
- The Fourth Annual Survey of the State Education Technology Director's Association (SETDA) describes how Title II D funds are being used by states and districts which reflect emerging state priorities, especially in the areas of acquiring effective curriculum, hiring of technology coaches and technology use in formative assessments;
- The latest Office of Inspector General Report which continues to identify USED's lack of controls over the early implementation of the Reading First Program, but

most critically recommends that Congress and USED as part of the reauthorization clarify whether reading programs eligible for use in Reading First have to have “scientific evidence of effectiveness” which could reopen the debate on Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) once again. The first of several planned studies under the National Education Technology Trends study, which like the SETDA study focused on Title II D state grants, identifies trends related to technology literacy and provides a state-by-state snapshot of state technology initiatives through the Fall 2004;

- A new Head Start survey reports that the one percent cut in Federal Head Start funding has impacted services, including purchases of instructional materials and supplies and has reduced the amount of critical training and professional development provided;
- USED Office of Inspector General has found that hurricane relief and recovery funds were appropriately allocated to states and districts over the last year and a half, yet large amounts in certain states remain unexpended, including over \$400 million in Louisiana alone which could be used to purchase, among other things, textbooks and instructional materials destroyed in the disasters;
- E-Rate update includes districts which may receive E-Rate refunds as a result of appeals being found to be meritorious; if requested under the BEAR process, such discounted refunds can be used to purchase software staff development and other non-eligible E-Rate non-eligible products and services.
- Preliminary findings from a soon to be published SETDA report on the amount of state funds and state budget line items dedicated for technology use and the types of activities in purchases using such funds.
- New National Technology Trends Study of the Implementation of Title II D State Technology Grants Program Identifies Trends Related to Technology Literacy and Includes a Snapshot Profile of Each State in the Fall of 2004.

State profile updates cover a variety of topics ranging from funding increases for state initiatives, policy changes regarding assessment and AYP calculation rules, and proposed initiatives by governors and legislators.

If anyone has any questions, contact me directly.

Washington Update

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NCLB Commission Recommends Reauthorization Changes in the Law Reflecting Many Similar Recommendations Made by Education Associations and Advocacy Groups

The NCLB Commission, co-chaired by former Governor Roy Barnes of Georgia and former Secretary of HHS, Tommy Thompson, has recommended specific changes to NCLB during the reauthorization process. The Commission's report is a culmination of hearings held around the country in which many education associations and other vested interest groups testified. The bi-partisan Commission staff director was Alex Nock, who was the chief staff person on the House Education Committee when the reauthorization of ESEA occurred in 1994 and who will return to the Committee shortly to manage the reauthorization process. Below we describe some of the key recommendations which could have implications for many TechMis subscribers.

In order to insure accuracy and fairness in the accountability provisions, the Commission "recommends improving the accuracy and fairness of AYP calculations by allowing states to include achievement growth in such calculations." Referring to the current AYP process as a "fairly blunt instrument" in which schools "either make the AYP or they don't," the change would distinguish between schools in which some

progress, but not enough to meet AYP, is being made and those that are clearly failing. However, the Commission makes several recommends limiting the "wobble room" currently afforded to some states and districts by restricting the minimum subgroup size to no more than 20 students and confidence levels to no more than 95 percent. While it would continue to allow the existing one percent policy (for cognitively impaired students to take alternative assessments), it would reduce the current two-percent policy (allowing students with disabilities to be assessed against "modified achievement standards") by reducing that cap to one percent as well.

As other associations, such as CCSSO, have proposed, the Commission would place a much higher priority on school improvement, noting that the goal of accountability is not to label schools but to ensure that achievement improves. In recommending a "comprehensive approach" to expanding the availability and quality of options for students in schools that do not make AYP, it would allow a school district, which is unable to accommodate all of the requests for public school choice because of the lack of capacity in other schools, to provide SES to eligible students. Several other Commission recommendations are already in place through USED Non-Regulatory Guidance, such as school facilities being made available for private providers of SES on a level-field basis. The Commission would set aside a portion of Title I funds to allow USED and the states to

evaluate the impact of SES providers on student achievement -- which states are already supposed to do. If a school is in "corrective action," it would be required "to select a comprehensive set of interventions designed to have a systemic impact, rather than the one option presently required." The Commission also recommends that schools in corrective action have a full school year to implement such interventions before facing more serious sanctions. Many groups, such as the Center on Education Policy, have argued that the solutions undertaken thus far by many districts that have schools in "corrective action" or "restructuring," have been of a "tweaking" nature. This proposed change should increase the demand for many of the products and services included in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, which has evolved since 1997.

The Commission also recommended increased funding for state capacity-building to help chronically low-performing schools and additional funds for districts under "restructuring," which must target the lowest performing ten percent of their schools. The FY 2007 Continuing Resolution did include, for the first time, \$125 million to states for school improvement grants. The President's proposed budget for FY 2008 would increase that amount to \$500 million.

In order to improve the quality of assessments used by states, the Commission recommends reallocating existing funds, targeting them to several new assessment priorities including providing alternative assessments for students with disabilities and English language learners, developing science assessment and a proposed 12th grade assessment, and improving test

delivery and scoring technology.

In addition to improving the alignment of state assessments to college readiness and workforce preparation, the Commission recommends that districts be permitted to use a portion of their Title I funds "to develop or acquire and implement high-quality formative assessments and that they be required to use such assessments in schools that are identified for school improvement." Certainly this change would bolster a trend which is already occurring; many districts feel that state assessments do not provide data that would allow teachers to analyze and to inform instruction on a continuing basis.

The Commission also addressed the high school reform movement -- which thus far has been promoted by groups such as the Gates Foundation and the National Governor's Association -- expressing the belief that "districts can and should play a crucial role in turning around struggling high schools. Therefore, we recommend districts with large concentrations of struggling high schools to develop and implement comprehensive district high school improvement plans." The President's proposed FY 2008 budget would increase Title I funding by slightly over nine percent of which 90 percent would be allocated to high schools which qualify for Title I funds. Currently, less than ten percent of Title I funds are allocated to high schools which enroll approximately 20 percent of all Title I-eligible students.

Other Commission recommendations include:

- require all teachers to be Highly Qualified, Effective Teachers

(HQET) -- teachers who demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom -- which would create a demand for “guaranteed quality professional development” for teachers who need it the most;

- insure that effective teachers are assigned in equal proportion to both high-achieving and low-achieving schools, and that Title I comparability audits review the actual teacher salaries -- rather than averages, as now is the case, which often mask the disparity of quality teachers among high-poverty and low-poverty schools;
- create model standards at the national level to insure state performance standards in tests and reading, math and science are based upon NAEP frameworks; and
- earmark a portion of a state’s Title I allocation for the creation and establishment of longitudinal data systems.

For a copy go to:

www.aspeninstitute.org/atf/cf/%7BDEB6F227-659B-4EC8-8F84-8DF23CA704F5%7D/NCLB_Book.pdf

The Fourth Annual Survey Report by the State Education Technology Director’s Association Describes How Title II Funds Are Being Used by States and Districts, which Reflect Emerging State Priorities

The fourth annual National Trends Report, proposed by the State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA), describes how states and districts used Title II D/ Enhancing Technology state funds, under both the competitive and formula components in FY2005. The Report reflects changing priorities of states, partially due to the reduction in E²T² funding that began in 2005-06 and also describes trends in state funding which can be used for technology purchases.

In 2005-06, Round 4 of Title II D was the primary source of funding provided by SEAs to school districts for technology in three quarters of the states. In nearly 40 percent of the states, it was the only source of federal or state funding to districts for technology use. The states in which Title II D was the only source of funding provided to districts from the SEAs were: California, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin. In 31 states, some state funding for technology was included as a line item in the state’s FY2005 budget. The amounts ranged from \$500,000 for pilot projects to use online writing assessment tools in Connecticut to the \$55 million Microsoft settlement funding allocation in Minnesota. However, as the Report included, “States also noted an emerging trend for state education programs

that ‘allow’ rather than ‘mandate’ the use of state dollars for educational technology. For example, in California, a Discretionary Block grant for \$500 million allows for a menu of expenditures, including education technology; and a block grant for \$100 million was earmarked for library materials, curriculum materials and/or education technology.” As we have noted in previous reports over the last year, similar large block grants have been created and are expanded in a number of states including Pennsylvania, Florida, and Texas, among others.

During Round 4 (FY2005) SEAs awarded slightly over 1,400 competitive grants, totaling \$240 million, a decrease from the \$318 million awarded in Round 3. Due to a decrease in Federal funding for Title II D, the SETDA report noted that almost 75 percent of states established priorities in their competitive grant programs to help implement NCLB academic areas. About 45 percent of funds focused on mathematics and reading with almost 40 percent on writing, up from 28 percent in Round 3. Twenty-seven states spent more than the 25 percent required on professional development, while 21 states established priorities reflected in RFPs related to data-driven decision-making. Fewer than 10 states established priorities for instructional management systems and specific software for learning.

In the area of professional development, states are placing a heavier emphasis on the type of evidence districts use in justifying their proposed professional development approaches. On the other hand, states appear to be including fewer specific directives about the types of effective professional development that they will

fund. More and more states are placing a high priority on districts’ evaluations of the impact of Title II D funds in projects which they operate; however, the number of states who use only the number of schools identified for improvement under IEP as a sole measure has declined over the last year from almost 20 to less than 10. During Round 4, LEA activities under Title II D increased in three areas: (1) the acquisition of proven and effective courses and curricula designed to help students meet challenging state academic content and achievement standards; (2) the hiring of technology coaches who train other teachers in the effective use of technology; and (3) assessment.

In comparison with the competitive grants, approximately \$220 million dollars was awarded to more than 14,000 districts under the Title II D formula grant component. While 19 states reported awards under \$100, a total of 309 grants of more than \$1 million were awarded to districts in 11 states. While during the initial round of funding, most formula funds supported professional development, academic achievement, technology literacy and technology acquisition, LEAs used fourth round funds for all 11 of the “allowed activities.” The highest LEA priority uses were for professional development and increasing achievement in technology literacy. Over the last three years, LEA activities addressing data management, informed decision making, and the development of experts have more than doubled.

This year’s SETDA report includes brief descriptions of a large number of projects and activities which are being undertaken at the state or district level. In many of these projects, products or services which could

have the capability of becoming commercial successes could emerge. Although some of the projects involve private sector products which are being delivered through Title II D delivery systems, many districts and consortia are developing very specific curricula ranging from school-based interventions to improved student achievement to training mentors and coaches to providing training and technical assistance for teachers.

For a copy of the National Trends Report 2007, go to:

www.setda.liveelements.net/web/guest/2007NationalTrendsReport

New Office of Inspector General Report Identifies New Areas of USED Mismanagement and Lack of Controls Over the Reading First Program and Recommends that Congress, During the Next Reauthorization of NCLB, Clarify Whether Reading Programs Have to Have “Scientific Evidence of Effectiveness” in Order to be Eligible for Funding Under Reading First

In its February audit report of USED management of the Reading First program, the USED Office of Inspector General once again chided USED for favoring certain reading products and disregarding possible conflicts of interest on the part of contractors and consultants. Perhaps more importantly, the OIG calls for USED and Congress to clarify whether reading programs need to have “scientific evidence of effectiveness” in order to be eligible for

funding under Reading First. Dr. Robert Slaven, founder of *Success for All*, in an official complaint filed with the OIG alleged that neither USED nor its Technical Assistance Contractor and consultants followed the “letter” of scientifically based reading research (SBRR), defined in the Law, in recommending or approving instructional and assessment products for use in Reading First. Moreover, products such as *Success for All*, that have demonstrated effectiveness following SBRR including a study conducted by USED’s Institute of Education Sciences, were often precluded from being used by states and districts in their Reading First program. However, should Congress, in the NCLB reauthorization, decide to require strict adherence to the SBRR definition and criteria in the statute, it would be in conflict with likely new policies which are planned to be instituted by the What Works Clearinghouse which is increasingly recognizing and reporting on studies whose designs are less rigorous than “randomized trial experiments.”

The most recent OIG report found that USED used inadequate management controls that resulted in:

- The inclusion of a select number of reading programs during three Reading Leadership Academies held for state Reading First directors in early 2002, which many attendees felt to be the “list of approved programs”;
- A seal of approval upon at least one assessment instrument (DIBELS) that was included in a Guidebook; and

- Use of contractors and consultants who possibly had conflicts of interest; several were authors or consultants to publishers of products which were widely purchased and used in Reading First.

The OIG report glossed over one important item when it stated that USED generally “administered its Reading First website, and its *Guidance for the Reading First Program*, dated April 2002, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.” In the Reading First Conference Report, Congress stated its intent that tutoring and family literacy products and activities were to be allowed in the Reading First program; however, neither was mentioned as an allowable cost activity in the April 2002 Guidance, even though their Assistant Secretary, Susan Neuman, on many occasions during 2002-03, cited the effectiveness of volunteer and cross-age tutoring as a means to improve reading scores. The USED did not approve any states’ Reading First grants which proposed to rely on tutoring and family literacy until September 2003. At least one firm which developed an extensive tutoring program for use in Reading First suffered significantly from USED’s selective policy of not allowing Reading First funds to be used to purchase tutoring products.

At the root of many problems and issues which arose during the early implementation of Reading First was the working definition of scientifically-based research as it applied to Reading First. Following recommendations of the National Reading Panel (NRP), USED and its contractors used a “Consumer’s guide” to determine whether or not a reading program included “explicit and systematic instruction in the five

essential components of reading,” which the NRP argued were necessary if a program is to be effective. As noted in the OIG report, the National Reading Panel, in 2002, argued that only a limited number of reading programs had been rigorously tested and proven to be effective. However, as the OIG report states, “...since the initiation of the Reading First legislation, there seems to be some movement to place more emphasis on the scientific evidence of effectiveness of reading programs rather just the inclusion of the five essential components of reading.” It cites a letter from Senator Richard Lugar to Secretary Spellings, dated September 8, 2005, which requested that USED direct its technical assistance centers and states to “fully consider the scientific evidence of effectiveness for programs, not just program components, in considering programs under use for Reading First.” Indeed, the 2006 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations Bill urges USED to provide clear guidance to its technical assistance centers and states to “fully consider scientific evidence of effectiveness in rating programs for use under Reading First; contemplate an expanded list of allowable programs that include innovative programs with scientific evidence of effectiveness; when awarding new grants, consider giving preference to those schools that select programs with strong, scientific evidence of the effectiveness...and allow comprehensive reading programs that have scientific evidence of effectiveness to be implemented in full, as they have been researched.” Referring to the former chief of Child Development and Behavior within NIH, Reid Lyon, the primary architect of Reading First, the report notes that the above point was consistent with a statement made by Dr. Lyon in August 2006 when he noted, “...there should be a larger group of

programs that have been tested today than were available in 2002.” And he felt there should be a “push towards the next level.” In his statement, Lyon stated, “Effectiveness should be established using the most rigorous experimental designs that provide the strongest evidence of causal validity with priority placed on randomized clinical trials (RCT) and regression discontinuity studies.”

What Dr. Lyon recommends about moving to the “next level” is not supported by the very limited number of rigorous studies using RCT designs since 2002 and the apparent policy shift that the What Works Clearinghouse is likely to be making in the immediate future. The Clearinghouse would develop “practice guides” for practitioners based upon the best available evidence, indicating the varying quality of that evidence. Moreover, it would be considering evidence that may come from correlation studies, case studies, “beat the odds” studies without matching and expert opinion supported by conceptual models without direct support evidence. Without question, the What Works Clearinghouse is under increased pressure to provide more useful information for district-level school officials in their selection and purchase of instructional products. By recommending that Congress clarify whether programs for Reading First must have scientific evidence of effectiveness, it also states, “Congress will also be able to determine what it means for a program to be ‘based on scientific reading research’ and whether this definition is consistent with program effectiveness.” As far as the NCLB reauthorization is concerned, to our knowledge, no large national education group has called for any changes or even clarifications regarding SBRR. Many groups appear to be taking the

position that SBRR is evolving in a sensible manner. Given the intensity of feelings among many publishers about Reading First, one might expect that if Congress does address the SBRR issue generally, and specifically with respect to Reading First, political battle lines will be drawn quickly.

For a copy of the OIG report go to: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/auditreports/a03g0006.pdf

A New Head Start Survey Reports that the Recent One Percent Federal Budget Cut Has Impacted Services to Children Including Purchases of Instructional Materials and Supplies and Has Reduced the Amount of Critical Training and Professional Development Provided

The National Head Start Association recently released findings from its survey designed to explore how the one percent cut in Federal funding in FY 2006 has affected Head Start programs in each state. It found that, in over half the states, services to children were reduced, and almost 70 percent of the states indicated that staff development and training were reduced or eliminated. The report notes: “It is apparent from the data that the erosion in federal funding is harming Head Start programs. Fully 90 percent of the Head Start programs responding to this survey reported that they were at full enrollment. This signals that these programs have been forced to make increasingly deep cuts in order to maintain enrollments.” Certainly from this statement one could infer that the amount of Head

Start funds per student served has been reduced, which could reduce purchases of instructional and related supplies and materials and professional development services. Moreover, as Pre-K Now found in its recent study of state-funded Pre-K programs, while the amount of state funding has increased more than \$500 million over the last two years, the amount of state funds per student served has actually declined more than five percent over the last five years because of larger increases in the number of children served.

Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated that the one percent budget cut this year has impaired the quantity and quality of services to children and, specifically, “programs have cut instructional time, classroom materials and activities and resources for children. Programs have reduced targeted services including mental health, medical and dental, ESL, and services for children with disabilities.”

Noting that quality training and professional development is essential for quality programming, which has been reflected in most proposals to reauthorize Head Start this year, the Report found: “44 percent of programs indicated that the one percent budget cut has hindered training and professional development at their program. Some stated that training at their program has been drastically reduced.” In a related finding, 69 percent of responding Head Start programs indicated that the one percent budget cut has resulted in reducing staff positions and hours, combining positions, and eliminating salary increases and benefits. In addition, the budget cut has resulted in the lowering of salaries to uncompetitive wages, which has, in turn, created high turnover rates with quality

teachers and staff leaving Head Start programs.

In the HR 20 FY 2007 Continuing Resolution, the House has included an increase of \$103 million for Head Start, which the Senate has also approved. The National Head Start Association argues that, even with this small increase, the FY 2008 budget should be increased by an additional \$750 million to make up for the estimated 11 percent “real” cut in Head Start funding since FY 2002. This takes into account a 1.9 percent annual cost-of-living increase plus inflation over that time frame. Senator Kennedy, who chairs the Senate HELP Committee, continues to support the reauthorization of Head Start scheduled for this year and one of his highest priorities is increased funding for improving the quality of Head Start professional staff and teacher aides.

For a copy of the February 7, 2007 report, go to

www.nhsa.org/download/advocacy/PresidentFY2007Budget.pdf

USED Office of Inspector General

Finds That Hurricane Relief and Recovery Funds Were Appropriately Allocated to States and Districts, Yet Large Amounts in Certain States Remain Unexpended

On January 31st, the USED Office of Inspector General released a report which concludes that USED allocated recovery funds appropriately; however, in some states, certain funds remain unexpended among the three categories included in the Hurricane Recovery Act and in the emergency supplemental act passed six months later.

One of the grants, entitled “Immediate Aid to Restart School Operations” (RESTART), was designed to assist districts with \$750 million dollars to cover expenses related to the restart of operations and reenrollment of students in K-12 schools. The four states receiving these funds were: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. While the act does not specify a deadline for expending such funds, USED guidance stated that salaries and utility costs for non-public schools should have been expended by December 31, 2006 or through the end of the school year in which the school reopens. As of June 19, 2006, the OIG reported that only \$138 million of the \$750 million had been expended, with Louisiana expending only \$20 million of the \$445 million it was allocated. These RESTART funds could be used to purchase textbooks and instructional materials destroyed in the disasters.

The Temporary Emergency Impact Aid (EIA) grants for displaced students were to be allocated by states to eligible education

agencies and non-public schools to provide for instruction for displaced students. Initially, \$645 million dollars was appropriated for the program and the emergency supplemental passed six months later issued an additional \$235 million across all the states. As of June 2006, \$644 million of the \$809 million had been expended. In some states, such as Arkansas, Missouri, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma, most of the funds allocated had actually been expended. In many states, less than half of the amount allocated had actually been spent.

Of the remaining component referred to as Assistance to Homeless Youth, Congress appropriated \$5 million for the program; however as of June 2006, only \$122,000 had been expended. These funds could be used to address the educational and related needs of students in a manner, which was consistent with the McKinney-Vinto Homeless Assistance Act. As reported in Education Daily (February 13, 2007), the USED official responsible for implementing the Title I McKinney-Vinto Act said the hurricane relief funding for homeless youth did not match the requirements of McKinney-Vinto because many of the displaced students were “newly poor” (not having a history of being homeless). The OIG report stated that funds received under the HY Program must be obligated by September 30, 2007.

For a copy of the OIG report go to:
www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/auditreports/x19g0003.pdf

E-Rate Update Potential E-Rate

Refunds for Purchasing Non-eligible Products and Services

The Continuing Resolution through September 30, which basically constitutes the FY 2007 Education Appropriation Bill, includes a provision which removes the E-Rate from under the Anti-Deficiency Act. This will ensure, at least for one more year, that E-Rate discounts and refunds will flow uninterrupted to approved districts. Several years ago, the Office of Management and Budget proclaimed E-Rate to fall under the Anti-Deficiency Act which held up the flow of E-Rate funding for almost a half year.

As we attempt to do every quarter, we have included a list of districts which recently received funding commitments from the SLD for applications submitted over a year ago. We suspect that most of the funding commitment letters from 2004 and earlier represent appeals that were filed by districts when they were notified that certain requests in their applications were denied. In many cases, these districts went ahead and purchased the product in question, paying the whole pre-discount price. Because the SLD eventually found many of these appeals to be meritorious, these districts can request a check instead of a credit through the so-called BEAR process. Those districts doing so can use the discount refund to purchase non-eligible E-Rate products and services such as instructional software and professional development. If a district staff person is interested in purchasing a non-E-Rate eligible product or service, then he or she should contact the E-Rate office to determine whether a check was requested for the refund amount through the BEAR process and, if so, whether some of that money can be used to purchase the desired

product or service.

The accompanying chart shows the funding commitments greater than \$50,000.

E-Rate
Funding Year 2006, Quarter 4 (Oct-Dec) Commitments
(greater than \$50,000)

Applicant	City	State	Amount Committed
2005 Commitments			
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	LOS ANGELES	CA	\$9,564,740
STOCKTON CITY UNIF SCHOOL DIST	STOCKTON	CA	\$1,016,174
PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT	PROVIDENCE	RI	\$866,605
GASTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	GASTONIA	NC	\$215,490
JEMEZ MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DIST 53	GALLINA	NM	\$130,742
ASSOCIATED MARINE INSTITUTES	TAMPA	FL	\$130,075
HOLMES COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BONIFAY	FL	\$114,005
GARVEY ELEM SCHOOL DISTRICT	ROSEMEAD	CA	\$112,322
COAHOMA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	CLARKSDALE	MS	\$105,058
COLLETON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	WALTERBORO	SC	\$69,925
2004 Commitments			
WHITFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	DALTON	GA	\$141,526
LAS VEGAS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	LAS VEGAS	NM	\$106,518
WASHINGTON LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOLEDO	OH	\$74,683
BROWN COUNTY SCHOOL CORP	NASHVILLE	IN	\$51,902
2003 Commitments			
<i>none</i>			
2002 Commitments			
HOWARD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	ELLCOTT CITY	MD	\$393,844
2001 Commitments			
ND SCHOOL NET	FARGO	ND	\$2,760,015
DES MOINES INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	DES MOINES	IA	\$531,369
2000 Commitments			
NEWPORT NEWS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NEWPORT NEWS	VA	\$204,120
KING AND QUEEN COUNTY SCH. DIV	KING QUEEN CH	VA	\$79,375
1999 Commitments			
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	MIAMI	FL	\$2,990,209
CLACKAMAS ED SERVICE DISTRICT	MARYLHURST	OR	\$350,880
SUFFOLK COOP LIBRARY SYSTEM	BELLPORT	NY	\$73,743
DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	MIAMI	FL	\$61,222

SETDA Presents Preliminary Findings of Survey of State Funding Supporting Technology Use

During the SIIA Washington Conference on February 27-28, Dr. Mary Ann Wolf, Executive Director of the State Education Technology Director's Association (SETDA), provided some of the preliminary findings from SETDA's recent survey of its membership regarding the amount and types of state funding which is available for technology use. Thirty-two states indicated that some education technology funds are included as line items in their state budgets, totaled about \$460 million. Of that, about \$160 million is used to support education technology infrastructure, which in some small states such as Utah and Arkansas, was over \$15 million each -- about \$150 million was used to support end user technology, particularly in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana. Nearly \$70 million supported professional development, with some of the larger amounts available in Missouri and Indiana. About \$40 million was allocated for data warehousing projects and implementation, of which North Carolina included in their budget almost a third of the national total. In addition, 23 states allocated specific funds for distance learning, virtual schools and other online programs, a total of slightly over \$40 million, with such states as Alabama, Florida and South Dakota providing more than \$5 million each.

As we have reported in the related [Washington Update](#) items on the Fourth Annual SETDA Report on the use of Title II D funds, some of the areas noted above have been supplemented by the use of Title II D, particularly virtual schools and professional

development. As we have reported over the last several years, many states also have appropriated funds for block grants under which software, hardware and professional development can be purchased, along with other allowable costs. Large appropriations for such programs have been passed in California, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Texas among other states. According to Dr. Wolf, the final report should be available on the SETDA website around the middle of March. If anyone has any questions, contact me directly.

New National Technology Trends Study of the Implementation of Title II D State Technology Grants Program Identifies Trends Related to Technology Literacy and Includes a Snapshot Profile of Each State in the Fall of 2004

About the same time the SETDA report was released (see related item), USED released the first volume of its National Technology Trends Study (NETTS), entitled "State Strategies and Practices for Education Technology," which identifies trends associated with the implementation of Title II D and includes a state-by-state snapshot. The NETTS surveyed state technology directors and key officials in districts receiving Title II D grants and also included case studies in six states. Conducted in late 2004 and early 2005, most of the surveys reflect the perceived level of technology implementation by the Fall of 2004 among the states. Below are some of the more interesting findings not addressed in detail in the SETDA report.

The NETTS reported that 26 states provided online courses, tutorial software and other academic content and resources in core subject areas by the Fall 2004. Not all of these initiatives, however, were supported by Title II D funds. In five states, electronic networks or distance learning activities were a priority under the Title II D competitive grant program in FY 2003. This study also found that 26 states either were offering technology-based academic assessment of students or provided funding for research and development activities that supported student assessment. At that time, Georgia, Idaho, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas, West Virginia and Wyoming reported having online testing programs. Sixteen states reported supplementing teachers' assessment efforts by offering Internet or computer-based assessments of student academic achievement. Thirty-six states reported using technology for data-driven decision-making and online learning, while eight more planned to do so in the future.

The NETTS survey of district technology staff also found increased support for data-driven decision making in their schools. About 60 percent of students were in schools where building-level staff could access student data management systems. These district-level respondents reported that between 55-85 percent of students were in districts where technology coordinators said they had offered or planned to offer professional development on using data to tailor tasks to student ability, track student achievement and otherwise improve schools through data-driven decision-making techniques.

The NETTS addressed the implementation of technology literacy provisions in Title II D, reporting that, by FY 2003, the vast

majority of states had technology standards for students in place. Thirty-four percent had stand-alone standards, compared with 31 percent who had integrated standards; 15 percent had both. The NETTS report also pointed to a glaring gap between the existence of standards and the actual use of state assessments to determine levels of technology literacy skills among both teachers and students. For example, they found that only two states in FY 2003 -- Hawaii and North Carolina -- formally assessed technology skills of students and in only five states -- Pennsylvania, Illinois, Georgia, California and Arizona -- were state assessments formally given to teachers. Even though the law specifically requires states to conduct such assessments and report on the progress being made by students toward the goal of all students being technology literate by the eighth grade, USED does not require states to report such data. Hence, the low level of implementation of formal assessments; only 11 states plan to conduct such assessments in the future.

The NETTS estimated that, over the five-year existence of Title II D, approximately \$600 million has been used for professional development. Thirty-eight states indicated they gave low priority to professional development in their competitive grant program, and 28 states used part of their Title II D funds to support research and development activities related to professional development. A total of 27 states reported that they provided online professional development for teachers to help them integrate technology into the core areas. According to the NETTS, 43 states require teachers to take technology-related courses in order to get or renew teaching certificates.

For a copy of the NETTS report, go to:
www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/netts/netts-voll.pdf

California Update - March 2007

A recently released study by the Center on Education Policy indicates that the number of schools in California that have been required to “restructure” under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has increased from 401 in 2005-06 to 701 this school year. Schools in “restructuring” are those who fail to make adequate yearly progress for four or more consecutive years. Next year, the standards will become even more rigorous. This year 25 percent of students are required to score at grade level; next year it will be 36 percent. In the last year, only ten California schools under “restructuring” have improved enough to be dropped from the list. (See also attached TechMIS Special Report)

According to Education Week, an allocation of almost \$3 billion is available to help low-performing schools reduce class sizes, provide professional development, and hire more high school counselors. A total of 1,455 California schools are eligible for the grants, but they must submit their applications by March 31. The State anticipates awarding 500 grants.

Colorado Update - March 2007

In December, a State task force sharply criticized some of the State's online education programs for poor supervision and ineffectiveness. According to a State audit, online students have lower scores on Statewide tests and dropout more often than do students in traditional schools. As reported in Education Week, the audit also said the State had failed to act against districts that sponsored under-performing schools.

In early February, Governor Bill Ritter signed into law House Bill 1048 which includes a system to measure annual academic programs of individual students, a more sophisticated approach than a school's scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program. The Denver Post reports that the new law does not provide any additional funding but requires the State to use its own assessment method to measure yearly progress. The Governor sees the law as the first step in cutting the State's dropout rate in half within a few years.

According to the Rocky Mountain News, the Colorado State Senate has passed a bill that would require high school students to complete four years of mathematics and three years of science in order to earn their diplomas. If the law passes, school districts would have five years to revise their math and science curricula. The bill would allow a range of math classes from calculus to business math. Opponents of the bill argue the stiffer requirements could cause more students to drop out.

Florida Update - March 2007

Governor Charlie Crist's proposed budget plan for 2007-08 includes \$33 billion for education, a \$1.3 billion increase over the current year. Among the key features of the Governor's proposal are:

- \$3.8 billion to reduce class sizes (in compliance with the State's 2002 Constitutional Amendment), of which \$1.1 billion is for capital outlay and \$2.7 billion is for operating expenses;
- \$217 million for reading initiatives, a 14 percent increase over the current year; the increased funding will be used to hire 400 more reading coaches; and
- \$274 million for instructional materials, a 2.6 percent increase.
- Doubling the STAR, pay-for-performance, teacher incentive

The Florida legislature is considering a complete rewrite of the Sunshine State Standards with a goal of making the standards "globally competitive."

Georgia Update - March 2007

As reported in Education Daily, the Georgia legislature is considering a bill that would greatly expand the authority to approve charter schools. Currently, only local school boards can authorize the establishment of new charter schools. Under the legislative proposal, counties, public universities, and the State Board of Education would have such authority. Data indicate that the graduation rate for Georgia charter schools is 84 percent, about 14 percent higher than the rate for public schools. The bill would also establish standards and accountability measures for new charter schools and give new charters full State funding and 90 percent of their local funding portion.

Hawaii Update - March 2007

In her State-of-the-State address, Governor Linda Lingle highlighted science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) initiatives for the State's schools. As reported in Education Week, the Governor proposed a range of STEM opportunities for students in Grades 6-9 and suggested establishment of STEM academics in high schools that would allow students to earn high school and college credits. She also set a goal of making wireless Internet available Statewide by 2010, starting with the schools. She announced that NASA has pledged \$1 million to support up to 20 robotics teams in Hawaii.

Illinois Update - March 2007

Under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, starting in February 2008, all school districts will be required to assess the technological literacy of their eighth-grade students. As reported in the Daily Herald, only 13 percent of the 6,000 Illinois teachers surveyed last year used the basic technological threshold in their classes. The threshold is a technology standard established by the State nearly ten years ago. More than 92 percent of Illinois' 874 school districts received some Federal technology funding, a total of \$11 million.

Maryland Update - March 2007

The Maryland State school board has hired the consulting firm, MGT of America, to study the performance of the State's elementary and middle schools. MGT found significant improvement in student proficiency scores between 2003 and 2006. Education funding in Maryland was sharply increased as a result of the Thornton education reforms law, which has produced an increase of \$1.15 billion since its passage. Most of the additional funding -- \$800 million -- has gone to staff resources, including \$100 million to hire more staff, \$12 million for staff recruitment, and \$9 million for professional development. Among the classroom strategies MGT found effective are "pacing guides" (to allow teachers to follow student progress over time) and ensuring local district curriculum match the State curriculum.

Michigan Update - March 2007

According to the Detroit News, Michigan has elected to change its policy toward supplemental educational services (SES) providers under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Under the State's new policy, each provider of tutoring services will be evaluated based on the program's sustainability, school and parent satisfaction, use of research-based instruction, alignment with State academic standards, and student achievement. Last school year, more than 100,000 Michigan students were eligible for SES, but only about 12, 000 actually participated.

Scheduled to open in the Fall are six more "early colleges" that will allow high school students to receive their diplomas and associate degrees at the same time. According to the Detroit Free Press, the new schools will focus on health-care careers, an area where the State faces a shortage of qualified workers. Students would enroll as ninth-graders and study on college campuses. Funding for the program comes from a State grant approved by the legislature last Fall. Governor Jennifer Granholm has added money for another five or six such schools in her proposed FY 2008 budget.

Minnesota Update - March 2007

Governor Tim Pawlenty, in his State-of-the-State address, promised to increase general school spending by four percent -- with half of the increase dependent on school performance on the State Report Card. The Governor's proposal to transform the State's high schools includes \$75 million to establish "3R" high schools (rigor, relevance, results). These 3R schools would receive extra money, but would be required to (1) implement "rigorous and relevant course for all students including career and technology programs; (2) provide all students with college-credit opportunities; (3) provide work-based learning and internships; and (4) have every student complete a full-year of college while still in high school.

Governor Pawlenty's budget proposal for the 2008-09 biennium includes \$986 million for K-12 education, a 7.7 percent increase. Among the important components of the Governor's plan are:

- \$294 million to increase the State aid formula from \$4,947 to \$5,176 per student;
- \$75 million for 3R High Schools which provide high school students with college credit opportunities;
- \$150 million for Successful Schools, one-time bonuses for schools that score well on the State School Report Card;
- \$13 million to expand the O-Comp teacher merit pay system;
- \$4.5 million for Minnesota First Five which helps teachers in their first five years of teaching;
- \$6 million for Math and Science Teacher Academics;
- \$38 million for district technology improvements;
- \$9 million (\$3 million in 2008, \$6 million in 2009) for upgrading the State assessment; and
- \$5.8 million for a computer-based formative assessment.

Missouri Update - March 2007

In his State-of-the-State address, Governor Matt Blunt proposed a \$2.4 million increase in K-12 education spending for FY 2008 – a 3.8 percent increase over the current budget. The Governor’s plan includes: (1) \$2.9 million to provide up-to-date instructional technology (including laptop computers) for students in 100 classrooms; (2) \$2.6 million to continue a State initiative to establish online schools; and (3) \$1 million in increased funding for afterschool programs in mathematics, science, and health. If approved by the legislature, the plan would also fully fund the State’s school funding formula.

Nebraska Update - March 2007

As Education Week reports, Nebraska has struggled to maintain its assessment structure under which each of the State's 264 school districts uses its own testing procedures. Only in Writing – in grades 4, 8, and 11 – is there a Statewide test. As one can imagine, this approach has run afowl of the U.S. Department of Education because the approach does not comply with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The Nebraska legislature is considering a bill that would replace the local tests with a Statewide assessment system. Public hearings will be held in March.

New Mexico Update - March 2007

According to Education Week, Governor Bill Richardson has proposed a number of new education initiatives including a doubling -- from 2,200 to 5,000 -- of the number of prekindergarten students and tax credits for teachers who work in hard-to-staff schools. His plan also includes \$20 million for charter schools and \$283 million to repair schools and alleviate overcrowding.

New York Update - March 2007

As reported in The New York Times, New York City's plan to create small schools in an effort to overhaul the City's education system has, according to critics, not served well students with disabilities or English language learners. Because the new schools have been opening with only about 100 students and five or six teachers, the district has permitted the schools to limit their enrollment during their first two years of operation. The district will, for the 20 new schools scheduled to open in the Fall, provide additional funding so the schools will serve at-risk student populations.

Governor Eliot Spitzer's proposed 2007-08 budget of \$120 billion includes \$19.2 billion in K-12 school aid, an increase of \$1.4 billion over 2006-07. Over the next four years, the Governor proposes to increase funding for K-12 education by \$7 billion. Included in the Governor's budget increase is \$982 million to fund a new Foundation Aid program which will consolidate 30 of the State's GJ school aid programs into one grant program. The budget also includes \$99 million for Universal Pre-kindergarten, a program which will grow to \$645 million by 2010-11. Among the budgeted contracted services are a Student Assessment System that will allow parents to keep informed on their child's performance and a Student Data System to track and link students from pre-kindergarten through college.

North Carolina Update - March 2007

The resolution of North Carolina's share of the Microsoft settlement is close at hand. A total of \$40.9 million in vouchers will be made available to 857 eligible schools – those with students who participate in the Federal Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program. The Microsoft vouchers will help local school districts and charter schools to purchase classroom technology – computers, software, etc. District Finance officers will be the main contacts for voucher distribution, as well as for State instructions for eligible purchases and reimbursement.

North Dakota Update - March 2007

Education Week reports that Governor John Hoeven, in his budget proposal for the 2008-09 biennium, indicated that North Dakota has a general-fund surplus of \$540 million which could pay for \$116 million in property tax relief as well as provide an additional \$200 million for K-12 education. The education funds would be used to equalize education funding for disadvantaged school districts.

Ohio Update - March 2007

Ohio, like Louisiana, is conducting a study of the State's teacher preparation institutions. The result of a partnership among all of the 50 teacher prep programs in the State -- 13 public colleges and 37 private -- the study includes surveys of teachers who are in their first few years of classroom instruction. Findings from the study will help to establish program guidelines and profiles.

As reported in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the Ohio voucher program, known as Ohio EdChoice, provides tuition vouchers that allow students in low-performing schools to enroll in private schools. The vouchers are worth up to \$4,250 per year for elementary and middle school students and \$5,000 for high school students. Although the State legislature allocated funds for 14,000 vouchers and 46,000 students are eligible, only 2,914 students used them this year. State officials expect the participation rate to increase as the program becomes established. A report by Achieve, Inc., a bipartisan school reform organization, says that the private schools participating in the voucher program should be subject to the same accountability standards as public schools and should no longer be able to admit students based on academic performance, a practice that often brings them the students least in need of academic help.

Oklahoma Update - March 2007

The Associated Press also reports that the number of Hispanic students in Oklahoma public schools has reached nearly 640,000, about ten percent of the State's public school population, and an eight percent increase in last year alone.

The Associated Press reports that Oklahoma's seven-year-old Teacher Shortage Employment Incentive Program has increased the awards it will give to new teachers who agree to teach math or science in an Oklahoma secondary school for at least five years. The new benefit of \$11,148, starting in 2008, will be paid to teachers who complete five years of math or science teaching and must be used to retire student loan debt. In 2006, 42 teachers received the benefit.

Oregon Update - March 2007

In 2005, the Oregon legislature passed a law requiring at least half of the students at an online charter school to reside in the district where the charter school is based. The Oregon Connections Academy, in operation for two years, has become one of the largest schools in Oregon with students from all parts of the State. The Connections Academy has been grandfathered from the residency requirement, but when its contract expires in a few years, it may be subject to the residency rules. The legislature is considering a change in the law.

Pennsylvania Update - March 2007

As reported in Education Daily, Governor Edward Rendell's proposed budget for FY 2008 includes a \$528 million increase for pre K-12 education. Among the initiatives in the Governor's plan are: (1) \$75 million for a Statewide voluntary pre-kindergarten program; (2) \$25 million for a full-day kindergarten program; (3) \$90 million to purchase laptop computers for high school teachers and students; (4) increased funding for an elementary school science program; and (5) development and implementation of a rigorous high school curriculum.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review has conducted an analysis of the performance of Pennsylvania's 105 charter schools on the State's 2006 reading and mathematics assessments. Overall, students at the cyber charter schools scored significantly lower than students in regular charter schools. At four of the cyber schools -- Pennsylvania Distance Learning, Pennsylvania Learners Online, Central Pennsylvania Digital Learning, and Tuscarora Blended Learning -- a majority of students scored below the proficient level. Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School is the only cyber charter school in which a majority of students scored at least proficient on both tests.

Rhode Island Update - March 2007

The Providence Journal reports that, Statewide, about a quarter of Rhode Island's students read below grade level. And in urban school districts, about half of the students are under performing. The State has been phasing in "personal literacy plans" for struggling readers starting in 2002 (K-3) and expanding to grades 4-5 in 2004, with students at least three grade levels behind in higher grades coming into the system in the past few years. The State expected all students reading below grade level to have a literacy plan by 2011. Last year the State provided \$13 million in State aid to enable districts to hire additional reading teachers and coaches to purchase reading materials, and to provide special staff training.

The Rhode Island legislature is considering House Bill 5351 which would increase the drop-out age from 16 to 17 and would provide academic assistance for struggling students. The bill would also establish a new program for high school dropouts that would allow them to earn credits toward a high school diploma and community college credits at the same time.

Texas Update - March 2007

According to the Austin American Statesman, the Texas legislature is considering Senate Bill 4 which would greatly increase State funding for charter schools. At the same time, the Bill would make it easier for the State to close down ineffective charter schools. As many as a quarter of the State's 200 charter operators could be closed within a year, based on financial data and student performance. On the other hand, schools rated "recognized" or "exemplary" for two consecutive years would receive an extra "1,000 per student for facilities. The estimated cost of the Bill is \$175 million over two years.

Utah Update - March 2007

As reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. has signed Utah's expansive school voucher bill. Under the voucher program, allows families to spend between \$500 and \$3,000 in public funds per child for private school tuition. The program is estimated to cost \$9.3 million in the first year and \$12.4 million in the second year. It is expected that, in 13 years, all private school students will be using vouchers at a cost to the State of \$48 million per year. Opponents of the plan argue the program isolates the State Constitution's prohibition against directing public funds to religious organizations. A court test is likely.

The Utah legislature is considering a bill that would give \$5,000 each year to teachers who work in hard-to-staff schools. As reported in the Deseret Morning News, the State's public school enrollment is expected to increase by 50 percent in the next 20 years, with a shortage of as many as 1,200 teachers a year. The State's Professional Excellence Program (Pro Excel) could receive \$28.5 million to recruit and retain teachers in areas of shortage and to explore merit pay alternatives.

Also reported in the Deseret News, the Utah legislature appropriated \$460 million for public education, a 34 percent increase over two years ago. The new funding includes:

- a \$2,500 per year increase in the State's teacher pay scale;
- teacher bonuses of \$1,000;
- a one-time investment of \$50 million to provide Utah classrooms with up-to-date technology;
- \$7.5 million for the Governor's extended-day kindergarten initiative; and
- more money for the State's charter schools.

Vermont Update - March 2007

As reported in the Rutland Herald, Vermont is considering a consolidation of its 284 school districts into 63 realigned districts. Only four districts in the State have enrollments in excess of 2,000 students and the largest (Burlington) has an enrollment of only about 3,700. The vast majority have enrollments of less than 200. In fact, Vermont's 284 school districts have a total of only 311 schools. The State is conducting a series of 30 weekly public meetings across the State to discuss the issue.

Washington Update - March 2007

In January, Governor Christine Gregoire announced a biennial budget of \$12.3 billion for K-12 education, an increase of \$1.2 billion. Her budget proposal includes \$90 million to reduce class sizes in middle and high schools to 25 students. The State Legislature is considering a similar budget plan which would not include the Governor's class size reduction initiative, but which would direct funds toward hiring more math and science teachers and allocating \$30 million to reduce K-3 class sizes.

Washington Learns, a committee authorized by the State Legislature to study the State's education system, has recommended -- and Governor Gregoire has supported -- the creation of all-day kindergarten in ten percent of the State's schools (focusing initially on schools with the highest poverty levels) and spending close to \$200 million to improve students' math and science skills through smaller classes, more teacher training, and the recruiting of 750 new math and science teachers.

As reported in The Seattle Times, a study funded by the Washington Education Association teachers union says the State needs \$3.5 billion in new funding for higher teacher salaries, smaller classes, and new programs. This represents a 45 percent increase over the current education budget.

The Seattle Times also reports that a coalition of school districts, unions, and civic activists have filed a massive lawsuit against the State of Washington calling for an overhaul of the State's education finance system and an increase in State spending.

Highlights of SIAA Ed Tech Government Forum Reflect Consensus on Several Policy Trends, While Divergent Views Are Expressed on Technology Opportunities in K-12 Education

A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)
SPECIAL REPORT

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Various panelists reflecting positions of advocacy groups and Federal officials offered their perspectives on opportunities for education technology within the K-12 market, including Title I and special education, during the SIAA Ed Tech Government Forum at the end of February. Highlights of presentations and responses to specific questions asked by attendees are summarized below.

During the session about NCLB reauthorization, D'Arcy Philps who was a key legislative staffer for the House Education and Workforce Committee in the 1990s, and subsequently served as a lobbyist for groups supporting supplemental educational services, noted that a "desire" for reauthorization this year exists among Congressional leaders, but if a bill is not drawn up by late Spring, then reauthorization before 2009 is not likely. Russ Wiener, Vice President of the Education Trust, identified some of the thorny issues which will have to be addressed and likely outcomes, including:

- The wider use of growth models in calculating AYP; however, the "devil will be in the details" in any changes.
- Reversing supplemental educational services provisions, allowing SES to be provided the first time a school is identified for improvement if "capacity" doesn't exist, and possibly expanding the number of districts identified for improvement that would be allowed to continue providing SES as long as district achievement rates increase (referring to legislation to be proposed by Senator Hilary Clinton).
- Increased reliance on data-driven decision-making, which should create a demand for certain technology tools and products.

Panelist Gary Huggins, Director of the Commission on No Child Left Behind of The Aspen Institute, summarized some of the 75 recommendations included in the NCLB Commission Report (see February [Washington Update](#)). He felt that most of the recommendations would be acceptable to most groups and emphasized that only one of the Commission members objected to one of the recommendations, but that member subsequently changed her position during negotiations resulting in a consensus among all

Commission members on the 75 recommendations. Philps identified several areas where he felt the demand for certain technology products and tools would increase, including:

- Tools to help teachers interpret assessment data, because, as recommended by the NCLB Commission, formative assessments will expand.
- Various opportunities in schools entering corrective action or restructuring, the number of which will double or triple over the next two years; he stated that these schools will be under tremendous pressure to change.

As an interesting side note, while Philps was making his presentation, the Center on Education Policy released its case studies of approaches taken by four California districts in implementing restructuring plans in eight schools. The number of California schools in restructuring has increased from 401 last school year to 701 this year. As CEP reported, all case study schools have:

- Increased using data to inform instruction;
- Increased staff time for collaboration on how to improve achievement;
- Added “coaches” for teachers and principals; and
- Changed schedules to allow more time for interventions to be used with struggling students.

Last school year, half of the schools in restructuring made AYP in English/language arts. Over the last two years, the California Department of Education set aside about \$70 million for school improvement, of which approximately \$60 million was allocated to districts, with about \$10 million being allocated to technical assistance providers.

Dr. Jackie Jackson, USED Title I Director, in a subsequent session, felt that schools in corrective action or restructuring are not as good prospects as other schools because of the “tradition of failing” and conservative, low risk-taking decision-making at the district or school level. She considers the best prospects to be schools that are “on the edge,” such as those having to provide SES for the first time or wanting to get off the list of schools identified for improvement within a district.

Another panel identified opportunities and challenges related to Federal evaluations of educational interventions; some attendees had hoped the results of the multi-million dollar USED evaluation of technology-based math and reading interventions would be reported and discussed; this did not occur. Jim Kohlmoos, President of the National Education Knowledge Industry Association (NEKIA), argued that the “supply” side of available evidence on which to base decisions in selecting particular interventions, particularly schools in corrective action and restructuring, does not exist because the Federal Government had not invested in increasing the “supply” of interventions and evidence on what works with certain students under specific conditions. Existing Federal

policies bring sanctions, but do not include recommendations on how to replace the system which is failing. Referring to a Middle Eastern country, he noted that if you “blow up” a country and don’t have an effective replacement, chaos can occur. In response to a question regarding a reduction in Title I funds because of “set-asides,” he acknowledged that more money is needed if the demand for effective interventions is to be satisfied.

Phoebe Cottingham, Commissioner of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance within the Institute of Education Sciences at USED, acknowledged that some policy changes were being made with respect to the What Works Clearinghouse. One new initiative calls for “practice guides” on promising practices which would be developed by groups of experts; identified such practices would be through this use of “expert testimony.” In addition, the Clearinghouse would increasingly focus on “best evidence” gathered through a variety of studies -- including case studies and qualitative studies -- allowing the practitioners to judge the quality of the “reported best evidence.” Doris Redfield, President of Edvantia, formerly a regional education lab that, in the past, has assisted SIAA in providing advice to publishers about developing appropriate evidence of the effectiveness of their programs, suggested that firms should develop “portfolios of evidence” clearly indicating what their products can be expected to do -- and even what they are not expected to do -- and what populations they are not designed to serve. Products also should clearly describe “how your product is different from others.”

During an offline discussion with Cottingham, I asked her whether or not she was aware of the recent Office of Inspector General report which recommended that USED and Congress reconsider the definition of scientifically-based research used in Reading First and clarify what types of evidence on effectiveness, if any, should be required in Reading First. She was not aware of the report, but indicated that USED would have to make the decision whether or not they want to reopen this Congressional discussion and, if asked, IES would only provide advice.

Kohlmoos concluded his comments with the recommendation that Federal education policy should increase R&D funding dramatically; moreover it should develop solutions for “future problems” rather than being reactive, as is current policy. Greater emphasis should also be placed on innovation.

One of the first sessions focused on national math initiatives and possible recommendations of the National Math Panel. Virtually all of the panelists felt that the Math Panel should “avoid the problems associated with Reading First,” referring to allegations that the equivalent Reading First panel (the National Reading Council formed in the late 1990s -- with a report out in 2000 which became the basic framework for Reading First) was biased. The current head of the National Math Panel, Dr. Skip Fennell of McDaniel College and current President of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, in responding to a question as to whether or not the Math Panel would develop an operational definition of “scientifically-based research” did indicate that the Panel was not talking about specific curricula, but rather “practices and building blocks.”

In a candid response to a question, he also felt that the current Math Panel is not “doing justice” to the use of technology to either teach mathematics or deliver instruction. One concern of many of the attendees was that, as a result of the recommendations and criteria developed by the National Reading Panel, the use of instructional software in Reading First during the initial two-three years of implementation was minimal in most states.

While the reauthorization of NCLB this year is uncertain, several pieces of legislation relating to science, math, innovation and competitiveness are likely to be passed in the very near future. Another session addressed positions taken by several business coalitions, as well as math, science, and technology advocacy groups. Most of the possible legislation appears to be building upon governors’ initiatives which began as early as 2005. Under the Innovation America program sponsored by the National Governors Association, this project will be providing each governor with a “toolbox” for implementing recommendations at the K-12 level to ensure math and science teachers are trained in content areas.

Sponsored by Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), a longtime advocate of technology use in education and, particularly in math and science at the high school level, will submit legislation similar to S.3936 (which he sponsored last year) during early March. Some of the key elements of his bill will include:

- the use of incentives to encourage teachers to volunteer to teach in low-performing schools;
- increased emphasis on funding of Math Now, particularly at the middle school level;
- a new emphasis on high school improvement with the requirement that local business partnerships be developed.

Several initiatives supported by various industry groups will likely be included in any final legislation, including: (a) increased R&D funding for the National Science Foundation, as well as science, math technology groups within other cabinet departments such as Commerce and Energy, and (b) the creation of innovation “infrastructures” in agencies which provide R&D support with certain funds earmarked for applied research, which could result in “high risk payoffs” and the diffusion of resulting innovations.

John Bailey, former director of Office of Education Technology within USED, and now serving as a high-level official in the Gates Foundation (which has been supporting many high school projects of the National Governor’s Association), indicated that the Gates Foundation attempts to allocate funds which “can generate the most leverage.” Priorities thus far include:

- Reducing drop-out rates, particularly at the high school level;

- Ensuring that high school graduates have the skills to do well in college, rather than having to take remediation courses;
- Exploring the most effective incentives for rewarding teachers who are effective; and
- Supporting science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) initiatives where Gates will act as a catalyst in areas in which it will have the most leverage.

Bailey noted that one of Gates' new initiatives resulted from discussions with high-level business officials, who thought a greater priority and funding should be placed upon improving math and science education and supporting STEM generally; Gates provided funds to the NGA which will be creating "STEM centers that are linked to business development clusters in states."

One of the livelier panel sessions addressed the implementation of IDEA and particularly new provisions related to early intervening services (EIS) and response-to-intervention (RTI). Panelists included Patti Ralabate (National Education Association), Richard Mainzer (Associate Executive Director of the Council for Exceptional Children), and Nancy Reder (Deputy Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education). All of these groups have had some influence on the formulation of the RTI and EIS provisions in the new IDEA and regulations and have even greater influence on the implementation of these provisions at the state and district levels. There were several areas in which they all expressed consensus, including:

- The lead role in implementing EIS and RTI at the district level should be "general education" not "special education" because the program is designed to serve "borderline" students who have learning problems;
- Currently, the vast majority of regular education teachers and, to a lesser extent, administrators, are not knowledgeable about EIS or RTI and their expected lead role.
- Even though the legislative provisions are new, many districts have, for several years, been implementing approaches similar to EIS and RTI, referred to as Child Study Teams or SWAT teams.
- The EIS/RTI provisions require districts to create a process and set of procedures to identify students, appropriately documenting their problems, selecting appropriate interventions that are evidence based, monitoring and reporting on student progress being made, and prescribing different interventions where student progress is not being made.
- Technology can play an important role as an intervention and also in the administration and documentation of the EIS/RTI process.

While all agreed that RTI will individualize the education process, especially for at-risk students, Mainzer felt the reference should be to “personalize” education because of the baggage the term “individualized” raises, referring to IEPs which is a special education, not general education, function. In response to a question, Ralabate noted that whatever approach or intervention is selected, it should be based upon evidence, noting that some states have tried to limit interventions to those on Reading First state lists, but are “having a great deal of trouble.” Most agreed that Title I offices would be a prime candidate in the district for implementing RTI provisions, a point that Jackie Jackson agreed with during the following session. Reflecting the NEA position, Ralabate stated that effective implementation of RTI will require a significant increase in professional development for all teachers and that adequate money needs to be provided for professional development. Mainzer also noted the importance of using appropriate evidence-based interventions when working with students that have specific problems, indicating that CEC has just begun an initiative to develop a “taxonomy” of interventions which can or should be used. It will be provided in a year or so to CEC members.

The last panel session addressed uses of funds for technology in Title I, Title II A/ Teacher Quality, and Title II D/E²T². I was asked to respond to some of the panelists’ comments. The National Title I Director, Dr. Jackie Jackson, who will be retiring in June, indicated that the most recent survey on uses of funds took place in the late 1990’s. At that time, about four percent of Title I funds were used to purchase instructional technology and seven percent for instructional materials. Most of the remainder of Title I funds were used for salaries of Title I teachers and paraprofessionals. Dr. Jackson indicated that a new survey is being planned for this year or next. We urged her to see that information be reported separately on instructional technology versus administrative applications. She volunteered that one of the major problems in using technology in Title I is teachers “don’t know how to use the technology.” Her point was reiterated by Rich Long, Executive Director of the National Association of State Title I Directors and also a lobbyist for the International Reading Association. Long added that many of the district-level Title I directors view technology in the context of the integrated learning systems that were in vogue several years ago and that they often shy away from some of the newer technologies with which they’re not familiar. He did predict that the demand for software that can be used in formative assessments should increase dramatically, but the question is when will this increased demand for data-driven decision making actually be funded by districts.

Following Dr. Jackson’s comment that schools in restructuring are probably not the best targets for technology vendors because of their conservative nature and resistance to change, Long also noted that their top priority of Title I directors is compliance with the Law, which currently provides a number of loopholes that allows them not to make radical changes. Dr. Jackson confirmed what has been reported in the press -- that Response-To-Intervention implementation should occur in Title I programs, particularly schoolwide programs. She also noted that most Title I directors and teachers have very little, if any, knowledge about RTI, suggesting a massive professional development effort will be necessary. When I asked her whether the Office of Inspector General’s

recommendation that USED change its policy regarding supplemental educational services for districts that are identified for improvement, she indicated that more districts in improvement will be allowed to provide supplemental services, as is the case in the five-district Pilot Program, if SES student participation rates in the five pilot sites increase. Such an increase has already occurred in Chicago Public Schools. Several attendees expressed concerns about the use of approved lists of products by states, a practice which has been devastating to many software publishers during the early implementation of Reading First. Rich Long stated that any recommendations by states for certain products differ among the states largely because of state laws and policies. However, he acknowledged that even if there are no “official” lists, some state “unofficial” lists do exist and are communicated to districts.

Elizabeth Witt, Team Leader for Teacher Quality Programs at USED, reported that Title II A is one of the more flexible programs which can be used to support professional development, recruitment of teachers for certain schools through signing bonuses, and class size reduction. For 2004-05, she reported that approximately 50 percent of such funds was used for class size reduction, while 30 percent was used for professional development. Seven percent was used for signing bonuses. At the state level, however, she noted that most of the state set-aside funds are used to support professional development, in some cases at higher education institutions.

Mary Ann Wolf, Executive Director of State Education Technology Directors (SETDA), highlighted reports from its fourth annual survey (reported in a related Washington Update item). She also provided some preliminary data on state funding that is dedicated for technology use, as well as other block grant programs which allow such funds to be used at the discretion of districts for technology. This item is also included in yet another related Washington Update item.