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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 28, 2007  
**TO:** TechMIS Subscribers  
**FROM:** Charles Blaschke and Blair Curry  
**SUBJ:** NCLB Reauthorization, Math Now, SES Flexibility, What Works, Beginning Reader Effective Programs and State Profile Updates

Earlier this month, we sent an updated list of USED determined district Title I allocations before state adjustments which are estimated based upon an August report from the Center on Education Policy. In about a fifth of the states, the “gaining districts” in Title I final USED allocations will likely retain a moderate or significant portion of their Title I increases after state adjustments. However, in many states, districts receiving preliminary increases identified in our March 30<sup>th</sup> report will have most, if not all, of their gains wiped out because of adjustments due to hold harmless provisions and the four percent SES set-aside for school improvement. Please call me directly if you have any questions.

This TechMIS issue includes a number of Washington Updates based upon developments and reports published in August in spite of a Congressional lull, as Congress has adjourned for their annual recess through Labor Day.

- **Page 1**  
House Education Committee Chairman George Miller outlined six principles underlining the House proposed NCLB reauthorization, noting, “There are no votes in the U.S. House of Representatives for continuing the No Child Left Behind Act without making serious changes to it.” Drafts of the proposed bill are being circulated, staff are negotiating details with education groups and a final bill will be submitted next month;
- **Page 4**  
Teacher related issues will become a major focus of the NCLB reauthorization debate as conflicting data raise questions about the rationale for some of the proposed strategies which include: teacher pay based upon performance,

incentives for teacher retention, and the definition of highly qualified teacher requirements;

- **Page 7**

What Works Clearinghouse review of beginning reader programs finds ten interventions have positive or potentially positive effects in four outcome main areas. The study of widely-used basal curriculum products, particularly in Reading First, will be included in the next review. Reading Recovery and Success for All were among the highest rated;

- **Page 8**

USED expands flexibility for using the SES 20 percent set-aside into national pilot programs. Clark County, Nevada joins Anchorage, Memphis, Hillsborough County and Boston in being allowed to operate their own SES program and can use one percent of the set-aside for administrative purposes. Additional districts will most likely be allowed to provide SES before the parent choice transfer option;

- **Page 9**

Math Now components of the recently enacted *COMPETES* bill recently signed by the President are less prescriptive and differ in several other respects from Reading First “model”; products must be research-based and have a demonstrated record of effectiveness; secondary Math Now program would increase funding for professional development for mathematics coaches;

- **Page 11**

NCS publishes its annual report on revenues and expenditures of public school districts. Per-pupil expenditures for instructional programs vary from 76 percent in Alaska to 55 percent in Arizona. Twelve of the largest 100 school districts spent at least 70 percent of the expenditures for instruction;

- **Page 12**

The tax foundation report identifies states in which districts are more dependent on Federal revenues from a variety of sources, which in turn suggests what states to target if the House proposed FY 2008 appropriations becomes law, which is the largest proposed increase for Title I in decades;

- **Page 14**

A new issue brief from the Institute of Education Sciences suggests the levels at which early intervening services are needed most to reduce over representation of minorities in special education programs and the types of schools needing products and services to serve students in disability subgroups which are failing to meet AYP; rural districts provide some unique opportunities for partnering as they provide their own SES, especially for special education student subgroups;

- **Page 17**

New Center on Education Policy study finds that less than 10 percent of states and districts feel highly qualified teacher requirements in NCLB have improved achievement or teacher effectiveness to a “great extent.” However, other somewhat surprising findings point to several opportunities, including content related professional development funding out of Title I and data systems for SEAs.

The state profiles address a number of timely issues.

If you have any questions please contact me directly about the Washington Updates, or Blair Curry regarding state profiles.

# **Washington Update**

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*Vol. 12, No. 9, August 28, 2007*

## **House Education Committee Chairman George Miller Outlines Six Principles Underlying the House's Proposed NCLB Reauthorization, Arguing the Need for Significant Changes and Noting, "There are No Votes in the U.S. House of Representatives for Continuing the No Child Left Behind Act Without Making Serious Changes to it"**

On the Monday before Congress recessed for August, House Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA), one of the original authors of NCLB, announced six principles representing significant changes underpinning the House's NCLB reauthorization proposal, which he intends to submit for a House floor vote by the end of September. Having reviewed the recommendations of more than 100 education, civil rights, and business organizations during a press conference at the National Press Club attended by virtually all education associations and advocacy groups, he indicated that he and his colleagues have "heard an emerging consensus about needed changes." Indeed, at one level, consensus does exist to varying degrees among many of the most powerful education associations; on the other hand, their spokespersons have stated that the "devil is in the details" when the proposal's language is made available. While some have questioned the need for Miller to announce the framework for NCLB reauthorization at this time, most observers believe that the August recess will provide opportunities for committee staffers to

negotiate "details" with vested interest groups to ensure an even greater consensus reflected in the proposal to be submitted in September. Below are the highlights of Chairman Miller's comments, with possible "details" which could emerge.

Not unexpectedly, the Chairman argued strongly for growth models that give credit to states and schools for progress students are making over time, saying that such models also "will give us fairer, better and more accurate information" which can be "timely and helpful to teachers and principals in developing strategies for improvement and in targeting resources." While "strong emphasis" would still be placed upon reading and math skills, the proposal would allow states to use "multiple measures," including, under certain conditions, student scores on tests administered in other subjects and graduation rates as a measure for high schools. According to Miller, "The legislation will also drive improvements in the quality and appropriateness of the tests used for accountability. This is especially important for English language learners and students with disabilities who should be given tests that are fair and appropriate, just as they should continue to be included in our accountability system." Referring several times to the need for greater formative assessments, Miller argued the need for increased Federal funding not only for the development of appropriate tests for special needs populations, but also for the development of state longitudinal data systems, which is a necessary ingredient for

implementation of growth models on a nationwide basis. Even though Miller stated that the use of multiple measures would not be an “escape hatch,” consensus here may be difficult to negotiate as Secretary Spellings, Ranking Committee Republican Buck McKeon (R-CA), the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (which includes 100 groups), and several civil rights groups have expressed concerns about the use of multiple measures and are waiting for the “details.” Other civil rights groups, including the NAACP and Council for Exceptional Children, support use of alternative measures, including written essays, open-ended problems and performance-based tasks. In June, in a memorandum to new members of the House Education and Labor Committee, Miller noted that, in areas where conflicts exist between recommended assessments in a child’s IEP and NCLB mandates, the IEP should “trump” NCLB.

Arguing that the reauthorized NCLB should “encourage a rich and challenging learning environment,” particularly at the secondary level, Miller called for the development of critical thinking, teamwork, and applications skills and skills applied to knowledge in challenging contexts reflecting some of the provisions in numerous “competitiveness” proposals in Congress. Recognizing that states, under the leadership of many governors, are already addressing the development and assessment of these skills, the Chairman argued that the Federal law should provide states with incentives and assistance to continue and expand such activities. In a related principle, the Chairman stated, “The bill will include comprehensive steps to turn around low-performing middle and high schools,” as he also recognized governors for their

leadership in this area. Again, his proposal would “reward these successes” and “help sustain them, build on them and bring them to scale.” Several questions during the press conference about how such initiatives would be funded under NCLB were generally left unanswered. The strategy here could be to authorize related activities and rely upon, for the most part, state funds actually to implement initiatives that are already underway in the majority of states; the approach would also provide a connection with the various STEM “competitiveness” proposals in Congress which have been or will be passed this year (see related [Washington Update](#) item).

The Chairman’s proposal would address closing the “teacher quality gap,” which has been recommended by virtually all advocacy groups. However, an emerging bipartisan consensus suggests that the emphasis should be on teacher “effectiveness” and Miller has called for some type of teacher pay based on performance. The Chairman noted, “For these reasons, the legislation I will introduce will provide performance pay for principals and teachers based on fair and proven models, teacher mentoring, teacher career ladders, and improved working conditions.” As reported in the August 1st [Education Week](#), NEA lobbyist Joe Packer reiterated NEA’s opposition to the Federal government getting involved in merit pay, saying it should focus on “providing hard-to-staff schools with a variety of tools and resources such as high-quality mentoring programs, professional development and good working conditions.” The Chairman’s proposal is similar to a recommendation by the No Child Left Behind Commission whose Director, Alex Nock, is now working for Chairman Miller and is very involved in drafting the NCLB reauthorization proposal.

Although there haven't been any recent, large-scale studies that have found teacher pay based on student performance as being effective, there are a host of models now being implemented, which allow some type of "pay" or "bonuses" to be provided to individuals or groups of teachers based on performance. This money could be used, for example, to improve working conditions or to provide bonuses for such teachers who wish to become mentors for younger teachers.

Under Miller's proposal, schools would still be held accountable for students' progress -- most likely under growth models -- which would be applied to all subgroups. However, differing from the Bush "one sanction fits all" approach, the interventions and sanctions would "distinguish among different schools and the challenges facing them, as well as their needs for addressing those challenges." Differentiated sanctions and interventions, at least at a general level, were recently supported by Secretary Spellings and appear to have the support of key House Republican Committee members. During the press conference, the Chairman was asked what types of changes would be made in supplemental educational services and school choice provisions. As reported in July 31<sup>st</sup> Education Daily, "Miller gave no details on how the accountability sanctions would be addressed in the bill beyond mild support for switching the order of tutoring and choice in the sanctions timetable....'that's under considerable discussion; that's not resolved yet.'" With the exceptions of some civil rights groups, most education associations favor giving districts the option of providing SES before the parent choice transportation option. This could occur to a greater extent this year under the Secretary's Pilot Program where

about 25 eligible states have been invited to nominate up to seven districts each to provide SES first, under certain conditions this coming school year. Thus far, verbal or written statements by Chairman Miller and Senate Committee Chairman Kennedy have not addressed the issue of allowing or encouraging districts identified for improvement to provide their own SES in order to increase student participation rates. Key committee staffers are acutely aware of the problems and issues which have been created for mostly large urban districts, with the exception of the five that are currently participating in another national Pilot Program. One strategy for the Congress may be to remain silent on this issue and include language in the official proposal in September which could be ignored in the debate which will likely focus on major issues such as "multiple measures" and "teacher pay based on performance" proposals.

And the final principle underpinning the Chairman's proposed legislation will be the need for greater and "sustained" investments in American education. While not picked up in the press, the key word here appears to be "sustained" investment, not increased spending, for example, to hire new teachers to reduce class size. The types of "investments" Chairman Miller mentioned in the past and during the press conference include development of fair and appropriate assessments for English language learners and students with disabilities, the development of longitudinal data systems which can link student performance to individual teachers and underlie the development of valid growth models, increased funding for formative assessments to provide timely and useful information teachers can use to inform instruction

(which requires a heavy investment in technology), and extensive professional development.

While the Chairman pointed to the recent House floor passage of a significant increase in Title I and IDEA funding, which the President has stated he would veto, he stated strongly, "I would only say this: President Bush's legacy will not be established if he vetoes the education funding in the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill."

As mentioned earlier, while Congressmen and Senators are spending their August recess in their districts and states, key staffers are negotiating with various education associations with vested interests concerning specific issues and possible language to be incorporated in the final NCLB House proposal.

If anyone has any burning issues or wishes to discuss how to proceed and perhaps with whom to talk, please contact Charles Blaschke directly.

### **Teacher Issues Will Move to the Forefront in the NCLB Reauthorization Debate as Conflicting Data Raise Questions about the Rationale for Some Proposed Strategies**

A plethora of legislative proposals have been made to address teachers' issues, such as "quality" vs. "effective" teachers, professional development, recruitment and retention, and incentives. House Education Committee Chairman George Miller promised, in a July 30<sup>th</sup> press conference, "The legislation I will introduce will provide for performance pay for principals and

teachers based upon fair and proven models, teacher mentoring, teacher career ladders, and improved working conditions." Findings from several recent reports, however, conflict with previous studies and estimates and call into question the severity of certain problems and the justification for several proposed approaches.

The USED National Center for Education Statistics in July released its report "To Teach or Not to Teach" which was based upon its survey of Bachelor's degree recipients ten years after they graduated from college in 1992-93. Over 9,000 graduates (of which approximately 20 percent entered teaching) responded to a number of issues/questions, including teacher attrition or turnover, job satisfaction, and plans for continuing to teach. The survey found that only 18 percent of Bachelor's degree holders that entered K-12 teaching left teaching within four years, while attrition rates for other occupations ranged from 17 to 75 percent during the same time frame. As reported in Education Week (August 1<sup>st</sup>), the Commissioner of NCES noted that, "despite the perception that there is an incredibly high attrition rate among teachers," actual teacher turnover rates are actually lower than in most other professions, a factor which he attributed to a "dynamic job market." A report released a month earlier by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) indicated that teacher attrition has grown by 50 percent over the past 15 years with the annual teacher turnover rate rising to 16.8 percent. The NCTAF also estimated that the cost of public school teacher turnover could be over \$7.3 billion a year. The report cited another NCES survey, which reported that 332,000 teachers left teaching in 2003-04, with only 88,000

leaving to retire. While NCTAF has attributed increased teacher attrition to a number of factors, including working conditions, NCES in its latest survey addressed job satisfaction and reasons for “leaving” teachers among the Bachelor’s degree holders. In 2003, slightly over 90 percent expressed satisfaction with “teaching overall,” with 77 percent stating they were satisfied with the “learning environment” at their current school which included many working conditions; 48 percent indicated satisfaction with parent support, with students motivation to learn and with pay; and about 60 percent were satisfied with the “size of classes” and “student discipline and behavior” in their school. About 90 percent of the current teachers in 2003 said they would choose teaching again, with about 67 percent saying they would remain teaching the rest of their working life.

In 2003, of all of the Bachelor’s degree holders from 1992-93, 11 percent were teaching when they were interviewed and another nine percent had taught at some point, but were not teaching at the time of the interview. While almost 20 percent indicated that the main reason for leaving teaching was to raise children or other family-related reasons, only 13 percent said the main reason to leave teaching was to earn higher salaries. The main reason for male teachers leaving was to work outside of education, while female teachers raising children or family-related reasons were mentioned most. Science and math teachers who left teaching said the main reasons for not teaching in 2003 were “working outside of education” (26 percent), or “working in a non-teaching job in education” (26 percent), or “low pay” (16 percent). Teachers in low-minority enrollment schools and schools

with low free and reduced-price lunch enrollments indicated by far the major reason for leaving was “to work outside of education.”

Addressing the issue of recruitment, the NCES survey found that almost half of all of the Bachelor’s degree recipients in 1992-93 were not interested nor had considered teaching and had taken no steps to prepare for teaching (i.e., they did not enter the “teacher pipeline”). Of those with the science, math or engineering degrees, 55 percent did not enter the teaching preparation pipeline, while 7.5 percent completed the pipeline and actually taught. For those that entered the teacher pipeline, but never taught nor applied for a teacher position, the major reasons for deciding against teaching were: not interested in teaching (34 percent); already been offered another job (32 percent); or wanted a higher salary (30 percent). The *COMPETES* Bill recently passed by the House and Senate includes a number of scholarships, loan forgiveness provisions, and other incentives to lure more teachers into math and science teaching fields. Moreover, according to the Education Commission of the States, more than 30 states have also created scholarships and other financial incentives for teachers to enter hard to fill positions such as math and science; however in a recent Education Week (July 31<sup>st</sup>) article, Professor Dan Goldhaber of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington in Seattle, stated, “There’s been virtually no research on how effective [these] options are. We ought to be making decisions about these programs based on something more than what might be effective, and instead base it on empirical evidence.”

Chairman Miller in his July 30<sup>th</sup> press conference stated that the performance pay provisions that he will propose in NCLB reauthorization would be based upon “fair and proven models.” While no large longitudinal study of the effects of pay based upon student performance and other measures have been conducted, at least one group referred to as the Working Group on Teacher Quality has attempted to identify best practices in terms of “design elements” and “implementation procedures,” which are included in a report entitled “Creating a Successful Performance Compensation System for Educators” (July 2007). Several of the projects that were cited were funded by USED’s Teacher Incentive Fund and follow the design of the Teacher Advancement Program operated by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. The Working Group also includes the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, The Center for American Progress, and The National Council on Teacher Quality. Two important design elements recommended by the Working Group are an “integrated results-driven, job-embedded professional development component,” and another is the use of “multiple measures of teacher performance in determining pay-based compensation.” The latter is important, the report argues, for teachers that are concerned they will not earn bonuses if their students initially do not show significant improvement. Also, the evaluation system should be based on professional standards using agreed upon standards of practice and should facilitate support and feedback. Both NEA and AFT have generally opposed teacher pay based upon student performance as part of compensation reform, pointing to its failure to increase student performance on a large-scale basis such as in Florida.

One of the members of the Working Group - - Kate Walsh, President of the National Center for Teacher Quality -- voiced a caution as reported in Education Daily, “Some of our enthusiasm [for the systems] has gotten ahead of our knowledge.” On the other hand, she noted that initiatives tying pay to local needs and rewarding teachers for classroom effectiveness are spreading and that districts need information that will help them implement such programs successfully. The question here is whether pay based on performance alternatives will be “mandated” or “allowed” under the NCLB reauthorization.

In mid-August, the Center on Education Policy released its report on the effects of the Highly Qualified Teacher requirement on improved student achievement and quality of teachers. Less than ten percent of the state and district survey respondents felt the requirement led to improvement “to a great extent” in either area. (See related Washington Update items)

For a copy of the NCES report, go to: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007163.pdf>, and for a copy of the Working Group report go to: [www.talentedteachers.org](http://www.talentedteachers.org).

## **First What Works Clearinghouse Review of Beginning Reading Programs Finds Ten Interventions Having Positive or Potentially Positive Effects in the Four Outcome Domains (Alphabetics, Fluency, Comprehension and General Reading Achievement); Studies of Widely Used Basel/Curriculum Products Will be Included in the Next Review**

In August, the What Works Clearinghouse, which is currently undergoing some significant changes, released its initial review of studies which met the WWC design criteria and found that ten interventions had positive or potentially positive effects on alphabetics, fluency, comprehension and general reading achievement, with 11 more interventions having such affects in one or two of the domains. In all, 51 studies of 24 interventions met the WWC evidence standards, with 27 reporting results “without reservations.” The report also indicated that 36 additional interventions passed the initial screening criteria, but were not included in this first wave of Beginning Reading Reviews largely because most of these interventions had only one study that met WWC evidence standards. Interventions which had positive affects or potentially positive affects in three or four of the domains included *Reading Recovery*, *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)*, *Success for All*, *Start Making a Reader Today*, and *Ladders to Literacy*. Other interventions with positive or potentially positive affects included: *Accelerated Reader*, *Stepping Stones to Literacy*, *Voyager Universal Literacy System*, *Waterford Early Reading*, *Wilson Reading*, and *Earobics* with positive results falling mainly in the alphabetics domain.

WWC also ranked the programs in terms of “average improvement index” (which is similar to “effect size” used in many intervention evaluations) and found *Reading Recovery* percentile points were among the highest in all four domains. Studies on the effectiveness of other programs which were reviewed, but which were found not to meet the WWC standards for rigorous design, included *100 Book Challenge*, *Breakthrough to Literacy*, *Compass Learning*, *LeapFrog Schoolhouse*, *Merit Reading Software*, *My Reading Coach*, *Direct Instruction/Spelling Mastery*, and *Skills Tutor*, among others. The 32 additional interventions for which studies have met the WWC rigor standards with reservation were not named. Phoebe Cottingham, who directs the WWC, stated in Education Week, “We expect the What Works Clearinghouse to continue and expand. We’re not finished with beginning reading by any means.” Reporter Kathleen Manzo in the Education Week article noted that *Open Court* and *Reading Mastery*, along with *Houghton Mifflin Reading* are in the group of products that are in the process of being reviewed.

In the past, officials from two of the firms whose interventions showed positive effects, *Reading Recovery* and *Success for All*, had alleged that USED and its technical assistance contractors -- as well as Reading First consultants -- discouraged states and districts from using their programs because of inadequate evidence of effectiveness. This resulted in six investigative reports by the Office of Inspector General which, indeed, found evidence of conflict of interest in the initial Reading First program administration. As a result of the OIG findings, Secretary Spellings announced earlier this year a number of corrective actions that were being taken, including a

solicitation of changes recommended by states to improve the effectiveness of the Reading First program. Thus far, USED has not reported on any changes that have been recommended by SEAs. As a result of the WWC Beginning Reading reviews, one would think that some states which were discouraged, during the early implementation of Reading First, from using Reading Recovery, Success for All or other programs that have subsequently been found to produce positive effects would want to amend their initial applications to include some of these programs as approved or recommended for use in Reading First.

During the week of August 20, Secretary Spellings met with an advisory group that was created to address some of the alleged conflicts of interest and favoritism found by the OIG reports. In the meantime, while there have been numerous leaks of data on the effectiveness of Reading First, the first report on overall effectiveness of Reading First nationwide has yet to be released, which some observers now question will be as positive as state and local perceptions of the program as reported by groups such as the Center on Education Policy.

For a copy of the IES What Works Clearinghouse Beginning Reading Review, go to:

[www.whatworks.ed.gov/PDF/Topic/BR\\_TR\\_08\\_13\\_07.pdf](http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/PDF/Topic/BR_TR_08_13_07.pdf)

### **SES Urban Pilot Programs to Expand With Greater Flexibility for Using SES 20 Percent Set-Aside**

USED officials responsible for the Administration's flagship NCLB "choice" and "SES" initiatives recently acknowledged that the four districts in the Urban Pilot

Program -- which allowed districts which have been identified for improvement to continue providing their own SES -- have received the OK to continue doing so next year while adding Clark County (Las Vegas), Nevada to the pilot. And, states which have allowed selected districts to participate in the other Pilot Program -- allowing SES to be provided before the parent choice transfer option -- will be allowed to add districts. In an interview with Education Daily staff writer Sarah Sparks, Morgan Brown, the USED official responsible for SES, indicated that Utah would probably be added to the pack. As a result of the success of the two pilot programs, increasing student participation in SES, and problems identified during a recent USED tour of 14 urban districts administering SES programs, USED will allow one percentage point of the 20 percent SES/parent choice set-aside to be used by the five districts in the Urban Pilot Program for outreach, training and administering supplemental educational services. Brown also indicated that pilot program results are encouraging and supports Secretary Spelling's proposal to switch the order of SES and parent choice transportation sanctions as part of the NCLB reauthorization. These changes increase the opportunities for firms to partner with districts that operate their own SES programs and for firms that have administrative applications to help districts manage SES programs.

Based upon the interview with Brown, one can infer that districts in additional states may be allowed to participate in the pilot program that allows SES to be offered before parent choice transfer. Expansion of the Urban Pilot Program, to include additional districts beyond Anchorage,

Memphis, Hillsborough County (FL), Boston and now Las Vegas may take a different approach. On several occasions, Deputy Secretary Simon has indicated that, if participation rates in these districts continue to outpace student SES participation rates in identified districts that have to rely on independent providers, the Department could change its Non-Regulatory Guidance policy, thereby allowing more districts that are identified to provide their own SES. One direction would be to further encourage 21<sup>st</sup> Century-funded after-school program operators to begin providing SES because USED Non-Regulatory Guidance policy has already indicated that, even though the district is an active participant in such 21<sup>st</sup> Century after-school programs, because of their separate funding stream, these programs are considered “separate and distinct” from the district. Another route would be to encourage groups of teachers to become service providers, as is the case in Las Vegas, where the local NEA chapter is the largest third-party SES provider.

While key staff for both Chairman Miller and Chairman Kennedy -- who are taking the lead role in the Congressional reauthorization of NCLB -- are acutely aware of the problems that USED’s Non-Regulatory Guidance has created for urban districts by siphoning away Title I funds to third-party SES vendors, none have indicated verbally or in print how this issue will be resolved in their respective NCLB reauthorization proposals.

## **Math Now Components of *COMPETES* Bill Passed by Congress Are Less Prescriptive and Differ in Several Other Respects from the Reading First “Model”**

The two Math Now components of the bipartisan *COMPETES* Bill, which was overwhelmingly passed by the Congress and signed by the President in August is certainly less prescriptive, but also different in several other important aspects from the Reading First legislation, which the White House pointed to as a model in its Math Now proposals three years ago. While the \$95 million authorized for each Math Now component is relatively small, combined with other Federal agency funding (e.g., NSF, Department of Commerce, Department of Energy) along with increased matching and other funding in certain states, the legislative framework for Math Now components could influence the way a large amount of funds will be expended, including the types of instructional materials and services to be purchased.

The Math Now component for elementary and middle school students (Section 6201) would help low-income students who are struggling with mathematics -- particularly in grades four through eight -- to increase achievement, particularly to pass algebra courses, through the use of “comprehensive mathematics initiatives that are research-based and reflect a demonstrated record of effectiveness.” Neither the term “scientifically-based research” nor its NCLB definition is mentioned. Under the “Permissive Use of Funds,” an LEA grantee could use such funds to purchase mathematics instructional materials and assessments, including formative assessments; provide remedial course work

and interventions for students, including after-school programs; provide small groups with individualized instruction in mathematics; and conduct activities designed to improve teacher content knowledge and expertise such as enrichment activities and interdisciplinary methods of mathematics instruction. In its application for Math Now grants, a district must describe “the core math instructional program, supplemental instructional materials, and intervention programs or strategies that will be used for the project, including an assurance that programs or strategies are research-based and reflect a demonstrated record of effectiveness and are aligned with State academic achievement standards.” It explicitly prohibits the Secretary from endorsing or sanctioning any mathematics curriculum or engaging in any activity that requires the adoption of a specific math program or instructional materials.

The SEA has a set-aside of 10 percent (compared to a 20 percent set-aside under Reading First) which can be used to provide technical assistance to LEAs in “evaluating and selecting diagnostic and classroom based instructional mathematics assessments; and identifying eligible professional development providers to conduct the professional development activities.” The “gatekeeper” role of the SEA appears to be different from its role in Reading First for which most states had to propose specific core reading interventions in their initial applications for Reading First funds, along with one or more diagnostic assessment instruments, which was at the heart of the six Reading First audit investigations and findings of the Office of Inspector General. More than 40 states used DIBELS, which many state officials claimed

USED required for approval. While SEAs under Reading First contracted with individuals and groups to provide professional development, under Section 6201, the SEA only identifies eligible professional development providers, which is a new and different role. Unlike Reading First, SEAs must provide a 50 percent match in order to receive Math Now grants under Section 6201.

Math Skills for Secondary School Students (Section 6203) targets low-income students in grades 9-12 who are struggling with mathematics as evidenced by achievement levels significantly below grade level, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Support is to be provided through the use of comprehensive math initiatives “that are based upon the best available evidence of effectiveness” and that are “effective research-based mathematics programs.” In addition, one of the stated purposes is to “provide in-service training for mathematics coaches who can assist secondary school teachers to utilize research-based mathematics instruction” to improve student performance. The definition of *mathematics coach* means a certified or licensed teacher “with a demonstrated effectiveness in teaching mathematics to students with specialized needs in mathematics “and who” has the ability to work with classroom teachers to improve teachers’ instructional techniques to support mathematics improvement, who works on site at a school.” This definition seems to imply that mathematics coaches will not only work with teachers, as was the intent of reading coaches in Reading First, but also work directly with individual students, which would be a role similar to so-called “graduation coaches” for which most states

have provided increased funding over the last two years. Under this component, 20 percent of Math Now funds can be used by the SEA to carry out state-level activities which include technical assistance to help LEAs identify high-quality screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based assessments; and identify high-quality research-based mathematics materials, including those to be used by students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. LEA uses of the funds include:

- “Hiring mathematics coaches and providing professional development for them;”
- “Procuring and implementing programs and instructional materials based on mathematics research, including software and other education technology related to mathematics instruction with demonstrated effectiveness in improving mathematics instruction and students’ academic achievement;”
- “Measuring improvement in student academic achievement, including through progress monitoring and other assessments.”

Section 6203 makes it clear that funds can be used only to support new services and activities and that such funds must supplement, not supplant programs that were in place at the district level before the enactment date of the Act. At the heart of this secondary Math Now program is the extensive use of mathematics coaches and the professional development provided to them and, through them, to all teachers. As with the elementary/middle school component, \$95 million is authorized plus a 50 percent required match by the SEA,

although exceptions exist.

As was the case with Reading First, the “devil will be in the details” of the guidance provided to states to assist them in preparing their applications for Math Now grants.

### **NCES Publishes its Annual Report on Revenues and Expenditures for Public School Districts**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has published its annual report on the finances of the nation’s public elementary and secondary school districts. As is typical with most NCES reports, the information from the agency’s extensive survey database covers past years -- in this case the 2004-05 school year.

For the U.S. as a whole, the average current per-pupil expenditures for K-12 schools in 2004-05 was \$8,237 -- about the same as 2003-04. At least six states showed average current per-pupil expenditures in excess of \$10,000, with Alaska (\$15,255), New York (\$13,392), D.C. (\$12,979), New Jersey (\$12,423), Wyoming (\$11,262), and Connecticut (\$11,167) leading the nation. A total of five states had total current expenditures of less than \$7,000 per pupil -- Tennessee (\$6,271), Utah (\$6,331), Kentucky (\$6,930), Alabama (\$6,974), and Oklahoma (\$6,985).

NCES also reported the current per-pupil expenditures for the 100 largest school districts in the U.S. The districts with the highest current per-pupil expenditures in 2004-05 (in order) were:

Boston	\$16,124
New York	\$13,755
D.C.	\$12,979

Montgomery County (MD)	\$12,004
Atlanta	\$11,324
Detroit	\$11,112
Fairfax County (VA)	\$10,897
Columbus	\$10,817
Milwaukee	\$10,778
Howard County (MD)	\$10,716
Cleveland	\$10,115

On the other end of the spectrum, the four districts with the lowest current per-pupil expenditures were in Utah:

Alpine (UT)	\$4,641
Jordan (UT)	\$4,736
Granite (UT)	\$4,983
Davis (UT)	\$5,220

Followed by:

Mesa (AZ)	\$5,932
Garland (TX)	\$6,271
Seminole County (FL)	\$6,377
Clark County (NV)	\$6,386
Ford Bend (TX)	\$6,490

NCES also broke out expenses identified as “Instruction and instruction-related,” defined as salaries and benefits for teachers, aides, library staff, and teacher trainers, as well as costs of curriculum development, student assessment, technology, and instructional materials and supplies. Almost all states spend between 62 percent and 67 percent of their total current per-pupil expenditures for instruction and instruction-rated costs (the national average is 65 percent). A few states reportedly devote more to instruction -- Alaska (76%), Tennessee (71%), New York (67%), Vermont (69%), and Georgia (68%). An equal number of states fall outside the range on the low side -- D.C. (51%), Arizona (55%), New Mexico (57%), North Dakota (60%), and Oklahoma (60%).

Of the 100 largest school districts in the U.S., 12 of them spent at least 70 percent of their expenditures for instruction -- New York City (76%); Cobb County, GA (72%); Alpine, UT (72%); Knox County, TN (71%); Los Angeles (70%); Montgomery County, MD (70%); Fresno (70%); Cypress-Fairbanks, TX (70%); Fulton County, GA (70%); Granite, UT (70%); Plano, TX (70%); and Clayton County, GA (70%). The large districts that devote the smallest percentage of their current expenditures are: D.C. (51%); Tucson (57%); Denver (58%); Detroit (59%); Prince George’s County, MD (59%); Jefferson County, CO (59%); and Wichita (59%).

It is of interest to note that, nationwide, independent charter school districts had average current per-pupil expenditures of only \$7,229 in 2004-05 compared with \$8,237 for regular public school districts. Moreover, the charters devoted only about 55 percent of their current expenditures to instruction and instruction-rated items compared with 65 percent for regular districts.

**The Tax Foundation Report Identifies States in Which Districts are More Dependent on Federal Revenues From a Variety of Sources, Which in Turn Suggests What States to Target if House’s Proposed FY 2008 Appropriations Become Law**

Using the most recent NCES Report on Revenues and Expenditures for K-12 Districts for Fiscal Year 2005, the conservative Tax Foundation has conducted an analysis which identified the states in which Federal revenues per pupil have increased most since 1999-2000. In its

calculations, NCES relied upon the School District Finance Survey, a district-level survey consisting of data submitted annually to NCES, that includes district revenues, not only from USED Federal programs, but also Federal funds from other agencies, which could explain some of the volatile changes in dependency on Federal funds over the five-year period.

Overall, districts received an average per-pupil increase in Federal funding from \$578 in 1999 to \$919 in 2004, a 60 percent increase before adjustment for inflation or a boost of approximately 40 percent in Federal aid after adjustment. However, the average Kansas district received an 88 percent increase in Federal funds per pupil, while Arizona districts averaged only a 15 percent increase over that same time frame. States receiving the largest increases in Federal per pupil revenues include: Hawaii (66%), Kansas (88%), Nebraska (68%), Nevada (62%), and New Hampshire (63%). In addition to Arizona, states receiving the smallest percentage increases included: Illinois (22%), Kentucky (28%), Michigan (27%), and Alaska (28%). On the other hand, Alaska has by far the largest absolute dollar amount of Federal revenue per pupil which increased from \$1,562 in 1999 to \$2,283 in 2004. Other states, which in 2004-05 received Federal revenues of more than \$1,000 per pupil are: California, Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia and Wyoming. Many of the states that rely heavily on Federal funding are rural states such as South Dakota, North Dakota and New Mexico. On the other hand, some of the states which have a lower dependence on the Federal Government for K-12 funding

are states such as: Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Virginia and Wisconsin -- mostly high-income, high-tax states -- in which large amounts of K-12 revenues are provided by state or local sources.

The Tax Foundation also reported that, between 1999 and 2004, total per-pupil spending increased (after adjustment for inflation) about 12 percent, which it attributes to higher Federal assistance and property tax revenue. Over the last 20 years, the states with the largest per-pupil expenditures have been relatively stable with New Jersey, New York, Alaska, Connecticut, and Massachusetts leading the pack. On the other hand, states with the lowest per-pupil expenditures over that time frame continue to be Ohio and Utah, among others.

As one reviews the Tax Foundation data, several cautions in projecting trends are worth noting. USED's Federal education funding increased during the 2000-2004 timeframe and leveled off the next year; and for 2006-07 Federal funding was actually reduced by about one percent. Moreover, the volatility in Title I district allocations can be attributed in part to the Title I formula and large changes in census counts of poor students from year to year which could result in even greater volatility in the future because the U.S. Census Bureau will be using a different survey to capture poverty data that will be incorporated into the Title I formula next year (i.e., the American Community Survey will replace the current Population Survey).

A third cautionary note stems from the conservative bias of the Tax Foundation as reflected in one of its closing conclusions,

“There are costs and benefits of the federal government’s role in K-12 education. On one hand, low-income states can use federal money for capital costs like new school buildings, or for recurring costs such as higher salaries or even more generous pensions for administrators and teachers. The money may be spent well or poorly. On the other hand, accepting federal money means giving up some local control and quite possibly a less efficient education program.” In talking with the author, Gerald Prante, I mentioned that USED Federal education funds cannot be used for construction or for increasing teacher salaries or pensions for administrators, to which he indicated some of the other Federal non-USED funds possibly could be used for these purposes. However, in the ensuing debate over the FY 2008 Education Appropriations bill, it is very likely that those in opposition to proposed funding increases will refer to the Tax Foundation report. While the interpretations may be somewhat biased, we have reviewed the NCES data (see related article) and found that the 2004-05 data used in the Tax Foundation report is generally accurate.

For a copy of the Tax Foundation report go to:

<http://www.taxfoundation.org/publications/pinter/22519.html>

## **New Issue Brief from the Institute of Education Sciences Suggests Levels at Which Early Intervening Services Are Needed Most to Reduce Over-Representation of Minorities in Special Education and the Types of Schools Needing Products and Services to Serve Students in Disability Subgroups Which are Failing to Meet AYP**

The National Center for Education Statistics within the Institute of Education Sciences has released an Issue Brief, which suggests the grade levels in which the need for early intervening services to reduce disproportionality are the greatest. The Issue Brief also suggests that certain schools in specific regions of the country have the greatest need for products and services which are effective with students with disabilities in order to meet AYP. The study relied on data captured between 1998 and 2003 on a nationally representative sample of more than 20,000 students as part of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study which has become somewhat of a “norm” for what children should have learned at the beginning or end of each grade level from kindergarten to fifth grade.

The Issue Brief provides a detailed description of the percentage of elementary school students that received special education in kindergarten, first grade, third grade and fifth grade; the primary disabilities of these students; and the variation in these measures across a range of demographic and school characteristics which included school urbanicity, region, and poverty concentrations. Some of the findings only confirm those in reports such as *The Condition of Education* and *The Annual Report to Congress* submitted by the

Office of Special Education Programs within USED. Others are somewhat surprising, or perhaps need further clarification as noted below. For example, the percentage of students with specific learning disabilities increased from 0.5 percent in kindergarten to 6.5 percent in the fifth grade, which was well over half of all students with disabilities. On the other hand, students with a speech or language impairment represented 2.3 percent of the students identified at the kindergarten level, but declined to 1.4 percent at the fifth grade level. Many of such students evidently exit from special education programs as a result of speech language therapy and/or maturation as they outgrow the speech/language disabilities, such as “stuttering.” At the fifth grade level, almost 12 percent of all students were reported to have one or more disabilities. While no other type of disability had a prevalence of more than one percent in any grade level, the percent of students having health impairments, mental retardation, or serious emotional disturbance were eight to ten times greater at the fifth grade level than at the kindergarten level.

The findings regarding the prevalence of certain disabilities at different grade levels suggests when types of early intervening services (EIS) or RTI interventions and services should be in high demand in order to prevent or reduce disproportionality or over-representation of minorities being inappropriately placed in special education programs. EIS/RTI advocates have pointed to the need for such services, largely because of the over-representation of African American students -- mostly males - - in special education programs for mentally retarded and serious emotional disturbance. Even though the findings do not present

disaggregated data (for example, black, male, in high-poverty schools), the aggregated findings suggest this probability, but also call for more detailed analyses on the part of NCES. For example, at the kindergarten level, 5.3 percent of male students were identified with disabilities, while at the fifth grade level the percentage had increased to almost 15 percent. However, the black, non-Hispanic percentage between kindergarten and fifth grade grew in similar proportions to the number of white students across all categories (i.e., 12.5 percent for whites and 11.9 percent for black non-Hispanic). Without further disaggregation, these findings could mask the need for addressing only the misidentified black males with early intervening services. The percentage of students in mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance special education programs was higher in the fifth grade than in kindergarten or first grade. At the same time, the proportion of students having specific learning disabilities increased between grade three and grade five from 3.3 percent to 6.5 percent.

Between kindergarten and grade five, the proportion of poor versus non-poor students increased proportionately for all disabilities such that, at grade five, 18 percent of poor students had disabilities compared to 9.6 percent of non-poor students. Also, a greater percentage of students attending high-poverty schools than low-poverty schools (i.e., 50 percent or less versus greater than 50 percent poverty enrollment) received special education in both kindergarten (5.6 versus 3.9 percent); and in third grade (10.2 versus 8.4 percent). However, beginning in the third grade, the proportion of students designated as having specific learning disabilities in lower

poverty schools grew significantly, surpassing the percentage in high poverty schools designated as having specific learning disabilities by the fifth grade (7.2% vs. 6.2%). The unanswered question here is whether the increase in the proportion of students with disabilities in low-poverty schools represents, in fact, the poor students at grade five in those schools.

Another surprising finding in the Issue Brief using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study data was that “central city” schools reported lower percentages of students receiving special education than did schools in other settings. At all grade levels, “small town/rural” schools had the highest percent of students with disabilities beginning at kindergarten with 5.0 percent and increasing to 14.7 percent in the fifth grade. At the fifth grade level, the proportion of students with all disabilities in the central city was 10.5 percent compared to 14.7 percent in small town/rural schools and 11.1 percent in “urban fringe/large town” schools.

Percentages of students with all disabilities varied by region with the highest percentages in grades K, 1, and 3 being in the Northeast and the Southeast, while, in the West, a lesser percentage of students with disabilities were identified. By the fifth grade, there were no significant differences across regions. One interesting finding was that, even though the West has the lowest percentage of students with disabilities generally, at the third grade level, about two percent have specific learning disabilities while over six percent have learning disabilities at the fifth grade level, over two thirds of the total number of students with disabilities in the West. Recent reports from states such as Alaska, Washington, Nevada, among other western states suggest that the

large increases in the number of students being placed in learning disability programs could be attributed to inappropriate placement of Native American, Hispanic, and other ethnicities not related to whites and blacks.

Even the aggregate data presented in this Issue Brief suggest that “small town/rural” districts have the largest percentage of students with disabilities. Over the last year, during NCLB reauthorization hearings, it has become clear that these same districts are having the greatest problems in providing supplemental educational services, especially for students with disabilities. It is likely that the proportion of students receiving supplemental educational services in these districts is greater than that in “central city” SES programs. On the other hand, studies by the Council of Great City Schools and others suggest that one of the major problems urban districts are having in providing SES is serving English language learners who make up a large proportion of students participating in SES. Ironically, other studies conducted by the After School Alliance have found that, in regular after-school programs, many of which are funded by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, twice as many students with disabilities are enrolled in such programs when compared with English language learners.

The Issue Brief is available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007005.pdf>

## **New Center on Education Policy Study Finds Less Than Ten Percent of States and Districts Feel Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements in NCLB Have Improved Achievement or Teacher Effectiveness to a Great Extent, However Other Somewhat Surprising Findings Point to Several Opportunities**

In the latest of its NCLB implementation studies conducted over the last five years, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) recently reported that only six percent of states and four percent of districts indicated NCLB's highly qualified teacher requirements had improved student achievement to "a great extent" and only eight percent of states and six percent of districts felt the requirements improved the effectiveness of teachers to "a great extent." CEP also found that special education teachers "pose the greatest challenge to meeting the highly qualified requirements," as reported by 83 percent of states. The CEP study (August 2007) identified the strategies most commonly used by districts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers as being induction/mentoring programs and content-driven professional development. In this area, several findings were surprising and point to opportunities for TechMIS subscribers.

Approximately 60 percent of districts used content-driven professional development to meet NCLB requirements, yet only 50 percent of districts used Title I funds for this purpose, while 56 percent used Title IIA funds or non-Federal funds (often local funds in combination with state funds). Earlier this year, USED reported that, during the 2005-06 school year, less than 25 percent of Title IIA funds were used for

professional development -- about \$600-700 million. We estimated that during that same time frame over \$1 billion of Title I funds were used for professional development, including hiring substitute teachers to cover classes while teachers were receiving training. Although Title I funds are rarely used for "signing" or "retention" bonuses, a third of the districts reported using Title I funds for bonuses or stipends to attract teachers to "high-need" schools. On the other hand, a much higher percentage of districts used Title IIA funds for mentoring programs (24 percent), assistance in preparing teachers for state exams (49 percent), and signing bonuses (19 percent). About 75 percent of urban districts reported content-driven professional development as an important common strategy; only about 35 percent of districts felt the Federal NCLB teacher requirements have had a moderate to great impact on the effectiveness of professional development. Fifty-five percent of urban districts with schools in improvement reported a "moderate" or "great impact" on the quantity of effective professional development that suggests more professional development is being provided in these districts than others. Twenty-four percent of districts indicated that the NCLB teacher requirements had improved professional development "somewhat," and eight percent said it has improved the quality of professional development to a "great extent." One impact of NCLB has been to increase the amount of professional development on "examination of data and professional development needs," as indicated by 68 percent of the states and almost 40 percent of the districts; this focus was reported by a higher percentage of districts with at least one school identified for improvement.

At the state level, CEP identified one of the major challenges as being state reporting capacity. Although most states felt they were fulfilling at least the minimal requirements in this area, 23 states cited “insufficient technological capacity” as a great or moderate challenge to implementation of the requirement for reporting the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers. A similar number reported inadequate Federal funds as a challenge. On the other hand, about 75 percent of the states felt that the NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements have “improved the system for collecting data about teachers,” while only 25 percent of districts felt the requirement had improved its system for collecting data about teachers. Clearly, SEAs have a greater perceived need for such technology applications than do districts. Indeed, one of the recommendations by CEP was to provide Federal assistance to states to develop and implement comprehensive data systems that would include data about teacher qualifications, student:teacher ratios, teacher time spent on preparation vs. teaching, and mobility rates of teachers and administrators.

For a copy of the report go to:  
[www.rep.dc.org/](http://www.rep.dc.org/) at “What’s New.”

# Alabama Update

## September 2007

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A total of 241 Alabama high schools failed to meet Federal academic standards; 45 percent of them failed solely because of low graduation rates. Alabama sets its graduation rate threshold at 90 percent. Schools must improve each year until they reach the 90 percent level and then must stay above 90 percent. Starting in 2009, the State will use a system that measures the number of on-time graduates divided by the number of entering ninth-graders four years earlier (adjusted for transfers). To improve its graduation data, the State is implementing two programs:

- PASS (Preparing Alabama Students for Success) -- which provides tutoring, mentoring, and homework help to sixth-to twelfth-graders through community organizations; and
- a program that allows 25 high schools with low graduation rates to hire graduation coaches and dropout-prevention advisors to work one-to-one with potential dropouts.

As reported in the Montgomery Advertiser, 82.2 percent of Alabama's schools (1,117 out of 1,358) made adequate yearly progress (AYP) last school year under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The percentage making AYP is down slightly from the 87.5 percent of 2005-06. State officials say, however, that 76 percent of the 241 schools that missed AYP did so by only one measure and argue that there should be different sanctions for schools that miss AYP by just one goal. The State also noted that, last year, there were only 153 schools identified as "needing improvement" (missing AYP for two consecutive years) compared with 458 the year before. Many believe the improvement can be attributed to the Alabama Reading Initiative and the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative. More than 900 schools participated in the Initiatives during the 2006-07 school year. Catherine Mitchell, who leads the Reading Initiative, was recently named Chairperson of the new national Reading First Advisory Committee.

For the coming school year, Alabama is beginning a \$4 million, State-funded program to provide mentors to help new teachers adapt to public school classrooms. Every first-year teacher will have an experienced teacher -- who will receive a \$1,000 stipend -- as a mentor. State officials

hope the program will help to reduce the teacher attrition rate that has 30 percent to 50 percent of new Alabama teachers leaving their schools within five years.

# Arkansas Update

## September 2007

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According to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, for the coming school year, Arkansas will receive nearly \$900,000 less in Federal funding for English language learners than the State received in 2006-07. However, in 2006-07, the State received a 90 percent increase over 2005-06. The violent funding fluctuations are a result of the U.S. Census Bureau's difficulty in extrapolating accurate counts of ELLs in each state.

Education Week reports that the Arkansas Virtual Academy, operated by K12, has decided not to reapply for the \$25 million in Federal grants it had been receiving because it has a steady funding stream as a Statewide charter school. The USED grant (under its public school choice program) flowed to the Virtual Academy through the Arkansas Department of Education and provided funding for online teachers, computers, and other materials. Currently, the online school has an enrollment of 500 students funded at \$5,700 per student by the State.

# California Update

## September 2007

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According to the North County Times, because the California legislature did not pass the budget by June 15, the State held back some required payments to school districts. Payments totaling \$3.2 billion to schools, community colleges, daycare centers, nursing homes, and hospitals were stopped until budget issues are resolved. Although most education funding was still flowing, some money for special education, adult education, and transportation stopped causing cash flow problems for many districts. In August, however, the State's 51-day budget deadlock was settled with K-12 education receiving \$57 billion, an amount that will fully fund the State's schools as required under Proposition 98. School districts are expected to begin receiving funds by the first of September.

A report by Policy Analysis for California Education has found that less than a third of California community college freshmen who plan to transfer to four-year institutions actually do so within six years. The study, entitled *Beyond Recess: How the First Semester Matters for Community College Students' Aspirations and Persistence*, followed students who entered the State's community college system in the Fall of 1998. A quarter of the students did not enroll for the next semester and almost two-thirds did not re-enroll the following Fall. The report can be accessed at: [http://pace.berkeley.edu/pace\\_publications.html](http://pace.berkeley.edu/pace_publications.html).

As reported in The Sacramento Bee, this year's standardized test scores show achievement gaps among racial groups to be greater than those based on economic criteria. Overall, test scores are up over the last five years, with 43 percent of students rated as proficient in English (up from 35 percent) and 41 percent proficient in math (also up from 35 percent). The racial gap, however, persists with Asian and white students scoring higher than Hispanic and black students. For example, in math 38 percent of poor (qualified for subsidized lunch) white students rated as proficient, compared with 30 percent of non-poor black students and 36 percent of non-poor Hispanic students.

# Connecticut Update

## September 2007

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As reported in the Hartford Courant, Connecticut's education officials are concerned about the State's five-year decline in reading scores on State assessments. The State intends to make improved reading performance a priority by: (1) making preschool classes more available; (2) expanding training requirements for teachers, many of whom are under-qualified; (3) exploring how schools manage teaching time in reading; and (4) determining which reading programs work best.

# Delaware Update

## September 2007

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According to Delaware Online, Vision 2015, a coalition education, business, and community leaders, is seeking to improve the State's school system. Vision 2015 has chosen four school districts (two schools in each) and two charter schools to participate in a pilot test of educational reforms. The participating schools are:

Indian River School District

Indian River High School

Sussex Central High School

New Castle County Vocational Technical School District

Howard Technical High School

St. Georges Technical High School

Capital School District

William Henry Middle School

Central Middle School

Appoquinimink School District

Breck Mill Elementary School

Silver Lake Elementary School

Kuuniba Academy Charter School (Wilmington)

MOT Charter School (Middletown)

This year, under the Delaware State Accountability system, 28 of the State's schools are ranked in the lowest category ("academic watch") compared with only eight last year. Based primarily on Delaware Student Testing Program English and math scores, the ratings showed that 125 of the State's 193 schools were rated as "superior" or "commendable." Under Federal (No Child Left Behind) standards, 128 Delaware schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) -- vs. 136 last year -- and 65 schools missed AYP -- vs. 42 last year. This year, Delaware used both the standard model for judging whether a school made AYP and the growth model which the State believes provides better data about student performance.

# Florida Update

## September 2007

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According to the Orlando Sentinel, Florida's projected \$1.1 billion budget deficit is likely to result in significant cuts in education spending. Moreover, next January, Florida voters could approve a Constitutional amendment that would reduce school-tax revenues by as much as \$1.8 billion more. Currently, the State provides about \$10.5 billion in State aid to schools; a likely cut of four percent would reduce school funding by \$400 million. The State's School Board Association has recommended that the legislature divert funds allocated to a teacher's bonus plan (\$147.5 million) and high-performing schools (\$100 million) into basic classroom needs.

The Orlando Sentinel reports that opposition to Florida's merit-pay program has grown among teachers and administrators. Known as STAR (Special Teachers Are Rewarded), the original program championed by former Governor Jeb Bush has been dismantled. Replacing it is MAP (Merit Award Program), which was at first supported by teachers and unions because it gave the districts more flexibility in assessing teacher performance. The \$147.5 million program is at risk with many Florida districts declining to participate.

The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is one of the largest online schools in the U.S. with at least 2,700 full-time and as many as 52,000 part-time students in grades 6-12 from Florida and 35 other states. Established ten years ago, the FLVS serves as a model for many of the 25 state-managed virtual schools and 170 online charter schools across the country. FLVS offers nearly 100 courses ranging from basic English and mathematics to economics, computer programming, web design, marine science, and Chinese to name just a few examples. The State also has contracts with Florida Connections Academy and Florida Virtual Academy to provide full-time online classes for younger students from kindergarten to eighth grade.

As reported by Florida Today, more than 140 students in Brevard County transferred to better performing schools under the school choice provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the largest number of transfers in the County since NCLB provided the option. Last

year, only 13 students transferred although the same number of schools (21) were required to provide the option because they failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB for two consecutive years. The district also has eight schools in “corrective action” for missing AYP for four years in a row and five schools in “restructuring” for missing AYP for at least five years in a row.

# Idaho Update

## September 2007

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The Idaho Statesman also reports that the State has appointed a 16-person task force to study ways to make math more engaging to students. State test scores in math tend to go down as students advance in grades. Based on November 2005 data, 73 percent of fourth graders were proficient or better in math compared with only 68 percent of eighth graders. The task force will consider restructuring the elementary curriculum, making the math curriculum more problem-solving, and determining whether a new State math assessment is needed. Recommendations are expected in January.

A recent study by Philanthropy Northwest found that, in 2004, Idaho's educational institutions received more charitable contributions than its neighboring states. As reported in the Idaho Statesman, 69 percent of charitable giving in Idaho was directed into education programs and organizations, compared with the national average (23 percent), as well as Montana (42 percent), Oregon (23 percent), and Washington (16 percent). Overall, grants and contributions in Idaho totaled \$41.6 million from 280 organizations including the Albertson Foundation, the State's biggest education contributor, which has funded large technology initiatives in the past. Some believe the high level of giving to education is intended to offset recent cuts in State education funding.

# Illinois Update

## September 2007

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According to the Chicago Sun Times, the Chicago school district will, this Fall, begin a program to help incoming freshmen adjust to high school in hopes of reducing the City's dropout rate. Principals will prepare freshman transition plans and will send to every student's home a checklist to help them prepare. In addition, school staff will call all incoming freshmen and visit them at home. "No-shows" on the first day of school will receive another home visit. Grades of freshmen will be checked after three weeks and struggling students will be identified for additional help. There will also be a pilot dropout prevention at ten high schools designed to find and bring back students who have stopped coming to school.

A report conducted by the New Teacher Project has found that the system used by the Chicago school district to evaluate teachers is in need of overhaul. About 93 percent of Chicago's teachers were rated in the top two categories -- superior or excellent. Principals acknowledge inflating teacher evaluations, blaming the evaluation form or the teachers' union contract. The district is undertaking a pilot program that provides teacher bonuses tied to student performance.

# Indiana Update

## September 2007

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As reported in The Louisville Courier-Journal, the Indiana legislature has increased funding for all-day kindergarten from \$8.5 million last year to \$33.5 million this year and \$58.5 million next year. A total of 263 school districts have applied for all-day kindergarten grants equivalent to \$665 per student. Most districts will have to supplement State funds using district money or charging tuition to parents of kindergarteners. Some Indiana districts have been using Federal funds to provide free all-day kindergarten for at-risk students and will use the State funds to provide at least a portion of the cost for other students.

# Iowa Update

## September 2007

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According to The Des Moines Register, Iowa has announced a one-year grant for the State's science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program. The grant is intended to develop a Statewide model for STEM learning, including after-school and summer programs. Currently, about 200 students participate in the State's STEM activities. One of the State's STEM partners is Rockwell Collins, an Iowa-based communications and aviation electronics firm that hires many with technical skills.

As reported in Education Daily, nine one-year State grants totaling \$900,000 have been awarded to expand the availability of before- and after-school programs in Iowa. The two largest grants went to Clear Creek Amana Community School District (\$187,530) and Storm Lake Community School District (\$136,526). Other grant recipients are: Clinton Community School District, Jessup Community School District, Postville Community School District, the Lamoni SAFE Coalition, Oakridge Community Services, St. Mark's Community Center, and the Boys & Girls Club of Cedar Rapids.

# Kentucky Update

## September 2007

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As reported in The Louisville Courier-Journal, Barbara Erwin, who was to become Kentucky's new education commissioner, resigned only three days before she was to take office. Erwin has been criticized for errors on her resume and irregularities in her personnel file from the St. Charles, Illinois school district where she had been superintendent.

The Lexington Herald-Leader reports that Software Technology Inc. (STI) has sued the State because it was denied in its effort to have its contract to operate the State's student information system -- in place since 1999 -- renewed. STI claims the contract was awarded to Infinite Campus, Inc. under a "secret unlawful deal." The State and the successful bidder (also named in the suit) argue that they followed appropriate bidding procedures.

# Louisiana

## September 2007

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Education Week reports that Louisiana's budget for K-12 education in the new fiscal year will be \$3.48 billion, an increase of 15 percent over the previous year. Included in the budget are: (a) salary increases of at least \$2,375 for all of the State's public school teachers; (b) \$16 million for high school initiatives that include reducing the State's dropout rate, a more rigorous curriculum, and an additional math graduation requirement; (c) \$25 million for classroom technology; and (d) \$5 million for a pilot program to provide sixth-graders with laptop computers.

During an August 20 webcast, convened by Education Week, Paul Vallas, Superintendent of the Recovery School District in Orleans Parish, offered the following response from a question regarding his priorities for technology in the district, "We are moving to Web-based instructional models, online instruction and video conferencing capability. In fact, we will be providing supplemental professional development online and teachers will be able to secure additional online support from teacher mentors. We are also focusing a lot of attention on classroom modernization. This includes smart boards and Promethean boards in all 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, a ratio of one laptop and desktop for every 2 and a half students and laptop computers in the hands of every high school student. Those are considered to be minimum requirements as part of our classroom modernization efforts. Also over the next two years we will be providing students with an opportunity to take courses online that are not offered in their individual schools. In addition, we're partnering with a number of prominent national companies with expertise in cyberschools and online and Web-based course offerings to assist us."

In response to a question from a former employee of Vallas while he was superintendent in Chicago regarding the priority being placed on mathematics in the recovery districts, he responded, "I place as much importance on mathematics as I do on language arts. Not only have we standardized the language arts and mathematics curricula, but instructional guides require two hours of language arts a day and 90 minutes of math a day, but children can receive more

than 200 hours of instruction through our extended year program.”

Louisiana State education officials are hoping the plan now being implemented in New Orleans will serve as a model for other districts in the State. The New Orleans plan calls for small class sizes (no more than 20 students) and extended school days that would include two-hour reading blocks and 90-minute math blocks. Also included are literacy and math coaches in most schools and “climate managers” for school discipline, as well as laptop computers for older students and electronic chalkboards for teachers. The district will also offer \$5,000 signing bonuses for new teachers. Much of the funding for these approaches will come from the \$454 million the city received after Hurricane Katrina.

# Maryland Update

## September 2007

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As reported in the Baltimore Sun, 176 Maryland schools were identified as in need of improvement, nine more than last year -- 52 new schools were added to the list, but 43 showed enough improvement to be dropped. Sixty of the poor-performing schools were in Baltimore City, two more than last year -- five Baltimore schools improved enough to get off the list, but seven more were added. Based on the Maryland School Assessments reading and math exams, the list included ten schools in Baltimore County (up from six) and (for the first time) two in Howard County. The increase in the number of poor-performing schools could be attributed to more rigorous standards for a school to be called "passing."

The Washington Post reports that a number of Maryland school districts have initiated approaches to counteract the summer regression in learning that is most prevalent in least affluent schools. Begun in 2002, Montgomery County's program -- called Summer Adventures in Learning -- has shown improvement in student scores over the district's average improvement. Funded at \$2.5 million, the Montgomery County program serves more than 4,600 students (about half of those eligible) in all Title I schools. Since 1998, Charles County has conducted four-week voluntary summer academies in reading and math, this summer serving 2,100 students. Three high-poverty schools in St. Mary's County have, for the past four years, offered a four-week Eleven Month School Program which this year provided full-day instruction in reading, math, and enrichment for 360 students.

# Massachusetts Update

## September 2007

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The Boston Globe reports that Massachusetts' new school funding formula favors more well-to-do school districts. The State's education budget of \$3.7 billion -- up 6.2 percent from the previous year -- provides State aid to school districts under its Chapter 70 provisions. A number of wealthy districts in the northwest suburbs of Boston received increases in excess of ten percent. Many poorer communities received increases of less than six percent.

Governor Deval Patrick has appointed a panel to develop a ten-year plan to provide free public education for every Massachusetts citizen from preschool to community college. The panel will also consider a number of other changes to the State's education structure including longer school days, more rigorous curriculum requirements in English and mathematics, better teacher training programs, and a review of the State's high school graduation exam.

The Boston Globe reports that more than half of Massachusetts' minority teaching applicants failed the writing component of the State's teacher licensing exam. Fifty-four percent of black applicants and 52 percent of Hispanics failed the writing test compared with only 23 percent of white applicants. Minorities also scored lower on other portions of the exam -- English, mathematics, and history. The State has established a task force to explore why minorities score lower on the exam.

# Michigan Update

## September 2007

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This past school year, the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) has been replaced as the State assessment by the new Michigan Merit Examination which consists of: the WorkKeys job skills assessment in reading and math; end-of-course exams in math, science, social studies, and writing; and the ACT college entrance exam. According to The Detroit News, more than half of the State's eleventh-graders failed the new math exam and 40 percent failed reading and 44 percent failed science. Students did best in social studies where 83 percent passed, but only 40 percent passed the writing exam.

As reported in the Detroit Free Press, Michigan has rated the 31 teacher training programs in the State. Ratings were based largely on pass rates on the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification exams, with consideration also given to such factors as surveys of student teachers, program completion rates, enrollment diversity, and degree of emphasis on math, science, and special education. Oakland University and Hope College had the highest scores. Three low-performing institutions -- Olivet College, Adrian College, and Marygrove College will be required to improve within two years or face State sanctions.

Education Week reports that Detroit's enrollment decline continues with district enrollment dropping to 111,000 students, 5,000 fewer than last year. Although the decline is smaller than the year before when 14,000 left the district's public schools, the district still had to close 33 school buildings amid public uproar and lawsuits. Most of the departing students either left the district, enrolled in charter schools, or attended school in another district (as permitted under State law). Detroit school officials have criticized charter schools, saying they take State funds from regular schools. State law limits the number of charter schools in school districts serving more than 100,000 students (Detroit is Michigan's only such district). If the district's enrollment drops below that threshold, many more charters (than the 40 already in place) will be allowed to operate in the district.

# Mississippi Update

## September 2007

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A new five-year strategic plan, approved by the Mississippi Board of Education, is intended to reduce the State's 27 percent dropout rate by half and reach the national average on assessments, both within seven years. As reported in the Jackson Clarion-Ledger, the plan includes five strategies:

- make the curriculum and assessments more challenging to students;
- increase the number and quality of teachers;
- improve school leadership;
- create a culture that understands the value of education; and
- redesign education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

The State's education budget includes \$18.3 million for support pilot high school redesign programs.

# New Jersey Update

## September 2007

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The New York Times reports that 618 New Jersey schools (out of 2,430 in the State) failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act -- down slightly from 643 schools the year before. The number of schools that failed to make AYP for two years in a row (and are their subject to sanctions) also dropped -- from 574 to 517. There are now 38 schools in New Jersey that have never met standards for seven consecutive years, including five each in Camden, Elizabeth, and Peterson and four in Newark. Eight schools that had never met standards improved enough to be removed from the list.

Results of the licensing exams in New Jersey during 2005-06 indicate that prospective teachers in the State do not score well in the subject areas they intend to teach. Only 58 percent of those who took the Praxis tests in math were able to pass. Similarly, 71 percent passed English and 64 passed social studies. Moreover, less than a third of minority candidates passed the math test. Despite these results and a serious shortage of math teachers in the State, New Jersey is considering an increase in the minimum passing score.

# New York Update

## September 2007

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Education Daily reports that a number of members of the New York Congressional delegation have urged Governor Eliot Spitzer to allocate \$30 million for a continuation of the State's after-school programs. A shortage of funding had caused the State to discontinue support for the after-school programs funded, in large part, by Federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, which serve 34,000 students.

The New York Times reports that New York City will reallocate an additional \$50 million to 50 of the City's poorest performing middle schools and also appoint a district administrator to establish professional development programs for middle school principals and teachers. The emphasis is in response to a report that showed that only 42 percent of eighth-graders performed at grade level in reading and only 46 percent do so in math. The district will expand the number of advanced-level Regents classes in middle school to prepare students better for high school graduation exams. The district did not commit to some of the report's other recommendations including reduced class sizes. The director of the middle school initiative is Lori Bennett.

Education Week reports that New York City has, for a number of years, been leading the movement toward smaller high schools. However, advocates of students with disabilities and English language learners have argued that the smaller schools have not adequately served special needs populations. City officials believe that small schools have been effective with special needs students, pointing to 2005-06 data which showed 74 percent of special education students in small schools were promoted from ninth to tenth grade (compared with 39 percent in regular high schools) and 88 percent of English language learners were promoted (compared with 67 percent in regular schools). For this Fall, ten new small high schools will receive two-year grants of \$45,000 annually to hire a lead special education teacher. And ten other small schools will receive one-year, \$45,000 grants to hire a certified teacher of English language learners.

According to Education Week, a recent report on the academic performance of New York City's charter schools shows higher gains in reading and math than comparable regular public schools. Using a rigorous methodology, the study found that charter school students gained an additional 12 percent of a performance level in math and an extra 3.5 percent in reading over comparison groups. Both results were statistically significant. Moreover, charter school enrollments tend to be poorer and more minority than regular schools -- 64 percent of charter school students were black compared with 32 for the district as a whole. Researchers were unable to identify specific reasons for the results, but hypothesized that the longer school year in charter schools is an important factor.

As reported in The New York Times, New York City has attempted to address the dropout issue by establishing programs to identify and help students at greatest risk of dropping out, already expending \$37 million and contracting for \$31 million more for such programs. The City has also created special centers for students past traditional graduation age; these provide counseling and night classes that remove the stigma of being in class with much younger students. This special centers program began in 2004 serving 2,000 students; it now serves more than 7,000.

# North Carolina Update

## September 2007

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North Carolina education officials have added end-of-grade science tests to the reading and math exams students must pass to be promoted to the next grade. Concerned that the national emphasis on reading and mathematics has hurt science instruction, the State will require regular science classes (even in elementary schools) for fifth- and eight-grade students who will be required to take the exams next Spring.

As reported in Education Week, North Carolina's FY 2008 budget for K-12 education is \$7.71 billion, a seven-percent increase over the year before. Included in the budget are:

- five percent salary increases for teachers;
- \$70 million in bonuses for educators in schools that meet State performance targets;
- \$7 million in competitive grants to schools that work to reduce dropout rates;
- \$1.3 million for restructuring of seven high schools; and
- \$4.4 million for a pilot school improvement initiative in five districts.

Much of the education funding -- \$350 million -- comes from the new State lottery with projected revenues intended for class size reduction, expanded preschool, and school construction.

# Oregon Update

## September 2007

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The Oregonian reports that a study of Oregon's academic standards and assessments, conducted by the non-profit research center West Ed, says the State should direct teachers and students toward the most important content for students to master rather than covering broader ranges of content in less depth. Currently, Oregon fourth-grade teachers are required to teach 105 new reading and writing skills (47 of which are covered on State tests) with no indication of which ones are most important. The State is prepared to modify its approach. For example, proposed new math standards specify three or four key skills students should master in-depth at each grade, rather than 25 or 30 currently called for.

A Federal review of Oregon's assessment structure has determined that the standardized tests given to the State's approximately 5,000 students with the most severe disabilities do not meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. As reported in Education Week, NCLB requires that students take exams targeted at their specific grade level. Oregon's current system, phased in only last year, has middle and high school students taking the same test. The State expects to have separate tests in place next Spring.

# Pennsylvania Update

## September 2007

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Pennsylvania's new State budget includes a 6.3 percent increase over the previous year's pre K-12 education spending. The budget fully funds Governor Ed Rendell's initiatives for: (a) pre-kindergarten (\$75 million); (b) universal full-day kindergarten (\$45 million); and (c) Classrooms for the Future (\$90 million).

The \$75 million for the State's Pre-K Counts initiative is intended to serve 11,000 more preschoolers than currently served by State-supported programs. As reported in Education Week, the State has heretofore had three separate funding streams for preschool education: district programs for four-year-olds; supplemental funding for the Federal Head Start program, and the State's Education Accountability Block Grant. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), the new Pre-K Counts program will meet nine of NIEER's quality benchmarks, compared with only three for the State's program for four-year olds, six for supplemental Head Start, and two for the Block Grant.

The Classrooms for the Future initiative, a plan to put a laptop computer on every student's desk, is a three-year, \$200 million program, of which \$20 million was used in the first year (2006-07). This year's budget includes \$90 million and another \$90 million will be in next year's budget (if approved).

# South Carolina Update

## September 2007

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According to Education Week, South Carolina's FY 2008 budget for K-12 education is \$3.2 billion -- a five-percent increase over FY 2007. Much of the increase -- \$50 million -- will go to the purchase of new school buses for the State-owned fleet.

An economic analysis commissioned by the South Carolina Policy Council shows that the State's low high school graduation rates impose high economic costs on the State in the form of lower tax revenues, high public health costs, and more people in the corrections system. The analysis estimates the cost of one year's dropouts at \$4.9 million. It predicts that, if 35,000 more students went to private schools, the public school graduation rate would improve, saving \$5 million to \$10 million a year in public expenditures.

# Tennessee Update

## September 2007

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The Memphis Commercial Appeal reports that the State is stepping into the management of 17 Memphis schools that have failed to meet standards for the past six years. Although the State has the power to remove the school board, turn the school into a charter school, or close it down, it is not expected that such extreme measures will be used. The State's education funding formula was revised this Spring to increase Memphis' State money by \$42 million. The district plans to invest \$10 million of this new funding for improvements in the struggling schools, including extending the school day by 30 minutes. Each school will also institute a performance pay plan that would provide incentives for principals (up to \$7,500) and teachers (up to \$3,000).

# Texas Update

## September 2007

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In July, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued further guidance on implementing Early Intervening Services, an update to the February guidance which was included in an earlier Texas State Profile. Under the new guidance, if a district is identified by the State as having “significant disproportionality,” then the district must “reserve the maximum amount of funds” (which the TEA interprets to be 15 percent of IDEA funds) only for Early Intervening Services. The TEA guidance stipulates that the 15 percent reserve cannot be used for “any other purpose” which is in conflict with a strict interpretation of the Law which indicates that a portion of any increase may be used, under the “local adjustment provision,” for other purposes (e.g., up to 50 percent of an increase in IDEA funds can be used for a superintendent’s “slush fund”). Moreover, the 15 percent funding reserve “is triggered solely on a determination of significant disproportionality. In other words, the obligation to reserve funds for EIS occurs independent of any analysis of whether that disproportionality is the result of inappropriate identification.” This interpretation appears to be in conflict with the USED Letter of Determination mandating that the TEA report the number of districts with disproportionality solely because of inappropriate identification. TEA also states there is “no appeal process when the State has identified an LEA with significant disproportionality.” Moreover, the district must make a public announcement of the types of changes in policies, procedures, and practices that it has made and report on the number of students receiving Early Intervening Services. Each LEA must also set up an accounting “object” to account for the receipt and expenditure of Federal funds, which may include more than the 15 percent from IDEA, and submit such reports to the TEA. In addition to reporting to the TEA on the number of children receiving Early Intervening Services, the LEA must also report the number who subsequently receive special education and related services.

The TEA reports that the percentage of high school students taking Advanced Placement exams has nearly tripled in the last decade. In 2005-06, almost 19 percent of the State’s juniors and seniors sat for AP exams, up from 6.8 percent in 1994-95. Moreover, the number of schools that offer AP classes has grown from 158 in 1992 to 1,135 in 2005. About ten percent of Black

students and 15 percent of Hispanic students took AP exams in 2006, compared with 22 percent of White students and 43 percent of Asian students. Nearly 700 public school districts in Texas had students who took at least one AP test.

According to the TEA, the State's graduation class of 2007 set a new record for number of test-takers and composite ACT score. A total of more than 76,500 students took the college entrance exams, nearly a third of the State's senior class and about 3,000 more students than last year. The composite score for Texas students was 20.5 (out of a possible 36), slightly lower than the national average of 21.2. The Texas scores did, however, improve in each of the four subject area tests -- reading, English, mathematics, and science.

The Dallas Morning News reports that many Texas educators are considering what is called "dual language" as a better way to teach English language learners. Under the traditional bilingual education model, limited-English-proficient (LEP) students start learning in almost entirely Spanish in pre-school and gradually learn more in English as they grow older. Dual language, as implemented in the Dallas school district, has students receiving half their lessons in English and half in Spanish through fifth or sixth grade. Texas has seen a 48 percent increase in the number of LEP students in the past decade and 2005 test results showed as much as a 60 percentage point gap between white and Hispanic students in eighth-grade math.

According to the Houston Chronicle, a new Texas law is designed to see that more Texas school children are covered by health insurance. The new law raises the amount of savings a family can have to be eligible (from \$5,000 to \$10,000), allows families to deduct child-care expenses from household income, and requires reapplication every 12 months (instead of six). In Houston, 40,000 students (20 percent of the district's enrollment) were, based on a 2005 survey, without insurance. A program called the 100 Percent Campaign -- supported by the Houston school district, the Children's Defense Fund, and three Houston hospitals -- is seeking to identify uninsured students and to link them to some form of health care.

The Austin school district is beginning to implement a performance-based pay structure for its

teachers. Partly modeled after the system in Denver, the Austin approach has begun with a nine-school pilot program under which teachers are rewarded for schoolwide gains on test scores. The district has allocated \$4 million per year for the pilot program. A districtwide plan, subject to voter approval, could cost as much as \$30 million per year.

# Virginia Update

## September 2007

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Beginning this Fall, Virginia will rate the State's 132 school districts and 1,839 public schools according to the new Virginia Index of Performance. As reported in the Washington Post, the system, based on test scores and other factors, is intended to provide incentives for schools to exceed, not just meet, proficiency standards. Top scorers will be eligible for a Governor's VIP Award for Educational Excellence. Eligible schools will be rated using a point system based, in large part, on the State's Standards of Learning (SOL) exams, but also considering such factors as high school graduation rates, the percentage of graduates going to college, the percentage of third-graders reading at grade level, and the percentage of students taking algebra by the eighth grade.

The Washington Post also reports that Virginia's tight State budget and political opposition have caused Governor Tim Kaine to severely modify his plan for universal pre-kindergarten. Instead, the Governor will focus on doubling the number of low-income four-year-olds in preschool. To be considered by the legislature in January, the Governor's new plan to provide prekindergarten to four-year-olds eligible for free or reduced-price lunch will add 17,000 children to the preschool roles at a cost of \$75 million per year. Called Start Strong, the new plan will include a rating system to ensure that there is a solid network of prekindergarten programs.

# Wisconsin Update

## September 2007

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Earlier this summer, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provided guidance to districts on early intervening services, most likely prompted by the recent USED Letter of Determination on disproportionality as part of the Annual Performance Report submitted by the DPI in February. In some respects, the guidance is identical to the final IDEA regulations; however there are some important differences. In Wisconsin, the primary focus is kindergarten through grade 3 and four-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten who may receive EIS. State guidance makes clear that there is a distinction between the “early intervention services” for infants and toddlers and “early intervening services” for older children. The guidance distinguishes professional development for teachers and other school staff in delivery of scientifically-based academic instruction from scientifically-based literacy instruction; the professional development can be used as part of EIS, focusing on behavioral interventions and instruction in the use of adaptive and instructional software. In the guidance, EIS funds may be used to develop a multi-tier system of “prevention/intervention” options. Several large districts such as Charlotte/Mecklenburg, North Carolina also emphasize “prevention/intervention” and use those words almost interchangeably. A key contact person relating to the Wisconsin DPI guidance is Cathleen Laffin (608) 266-2841. For a copy of the guidance, go to: [www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/eis.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/eis.html).

The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel reports that Governor Jim Doyle plans to double the State’s budget for the youth Apprenticeship program to \$2.2 million per year. Some in the legislature, however, want to keep the funding at \$1.1 million. The program currently serves about 2,000 high school students who participate in school-to-work activities. If passed, the increased funding would double the number of students served to 4,000.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel also reports that there are 36,000 limited-English-proficient students in Wisconsin with native Spanish and Hmong speakers comprising 80 percent of this population. Last year, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) cited the State’s alternative

assessment for English language learners as a major problem. This Fall, the State will be providing translations for the math, science, and social studies components of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exams, as well as of the prompts for the language arts and writing portions. The State believes this approach will address USED concerns.