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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 31, 2008  
**TO:** TechMIS Subscribers  
**FROM:** Charles Blaschke and Blair Curry  
**SUBJ:** Final USED District Title I Allocations and District SES Per-Pupil Set-Asides; FY 2009 Appropriations Update; Continuing Growth of Distance Learning; Highlights of Senator McCain's Proposed SES Changes and Increased Funding for Virtual Schools; State Profile Updates

This report includes two related Special Reports.

The first covers USED's final district Title I allocations, before SEA adjustments which can be compared to USED's preliminary district allocations (see April 7<sup>th</sup> TechMIS Special Report). The number of districts experiencing significant changes between the preliminary and final allocations is generally much fewer than occurred last year and are isolated to districts in certain states (e.g., Louisiana). The number of districts experiencing budget cuts for this coming year are much fewer than those which experienced cuts last year. SEAs will have to make fewer adjustments in district allocations because of the 10 percent hold harmless provision. On the other hand, more states are likely to be allocating the entire four percent state set-aside for school improvement which will reduce, by a few percentage points, the number of districts experiencing increases. However, because more schools will have been identified for improvement -- and therefore have to set aside 20 percent for SES -- regular Title I operating budgets will be reduced in more districts than last year. This could help firms that have the types of products and services which can be purchased under the set-asides. The districts which have to set aside funds for SES and professional development (and most likely early intervening services) are identified in the report based on a list provided to us by MCH which is currently being updated.

The second, related report identifies the USED-determined amount of a district's allocation which should be set aside per eligible Title I student for SES. This represents the upper level of the fee that could be paid to a third-party SES provider if the district has to provide SES. In the majority of districts, this amount is more than the actual amount of Title I allocated per Title I student served as many non-Title I eligible students are served in Title I schoolwide programs. However, the amount of SES funds which

could be allocated for SES does provide an indication of the variation in district Title I program “purchasing power.” Among the 570+ districts receiving a \$400,000 or greater increase in Title I funding, purchasing power ranges from less than \$1,000 to more than \$3,500 per eligible student.

Earlier this month, we sent out another special report in which we highlighted some of the major changes which SEAs in six states will be making with regards to funding allocations for SES and for schools in restructuring under the so-called differentiated accountability model pilot program. Given the approval of the six states for Differentiated Accountability, the states approved for Growth Model pilots, and the 8-10 states which are likely to be approved to provide supplemental educational services before parent choice, the potential opportunities for firms have to be determined by looking at specific states, changes, especially related to SES and restructuring. Subscribers are encouraged to discuss specific states and opportunities for certain types of products and services directly with me.

Included in the [Washington Updates](#) are a number of items, including:

- **Page 1**  
From his website and spokesperson’s comments, Candidate McCain’s plan for strengthening America’s schools would strengthen, but significantly change SES; would reward teachers based on student performance and principals’ criteria; and would increase funding and expand opportunities for online learning and virtual schools as a means to provide greater choice. More funding would be set aside for SES. Parents would have greater say-so about how funds are used and Washington would be more involved in certifying and paying SES providers directly.
- **Page 5**  
New NCEES report finds the number of students taking credit courses via distance learning increased by almost 60 percent between 2002 and 2005 with student online enrollments increasing primarily in the same districts. Beyond online credit courses, even greater growth, according to other studies, has occurred in supplemental, remedial/tutoring, test prep and test taking and retaking, with states and districts taking the lead roles in funding.
- **Page 6**  
Although Congressional appropriations subcommittees would boost the FY 2009 education appropriations by slightly over four percent, especially for Title I and IDEA, final appropriations action would not likely occur until next February-March. Under a Continuing Resolution, Reading First funding would continue at slightly less than 40 percent of the previous year’s funding. If candidate McCain is elected, one can expect existing funds under a Continuing Resolution to be redirected; while if Obama is elected, overall funding, particularly for improving teacher “quality” and “equity,” would increase.

- **Page 8**  
New 21<sup>st</sup> Century GI Bill will likely increase the demand for college-level remediation instructional software materials, especially those delivered online. For eligible veterans, including National Guardsmen, up to \$1,200 would be provided for remediation/tutoring upon college entry, if needed. Community colleges, particularly those that provide online classes, should receive most of the enrollment increases, if “convenience” becomes the most important college/university selection criteria.
- **Page 9**  
Most recent biennial report to Congress on the implementation of Title III English Language Acquisition Grant Programs provides additional justification for proposed regulatory changes which would affect LEP students served in both Title I and Title III programs. The report also suggests what states to target due to: (a) large gaps between LEP students who are “identified” but not “served;” and (b) low percentages of students participating in both programs who are failing to meet proficiency levels in English language acquisition, math, or reading/language arts content areas.
- **Page 11**  
Proposed legislation would fund partnerships to train guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists, while increased funding for behavioral interventions would most likely come from early intervening services set-asides under IDEA. Likely enactment will occur because of funding in NCLB priorities and as a result of the recent momentum of the EIS/RTI movement.
- **Page 12**  
Miscellaneous Developments

## **Final Federal Title I Allocations to Districts Receiving Significant Increases Before State Adjustments**

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)*  
**SPECIAL REPORT**

*Prepared by:*  
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July 31, 2008

In our April 7, 2008 Special Report for TechMIS subscribers, we included a list of districts receiving preliminary increases of \$400,000 or more in their Title I allocation for the 2008-09 school year. We emphasized that the “preliminary” allocations were just that, and that a number of adjustments would have to be made. The enclosed is a list of final Federal Title I district allocations made by USED. We want to emphasize that these allocations do not take into account any adjustments that will be made by SEAs. Enclosed with this email is the April 7 TechMIS cover memorandum which discusses the nature of the various types of SEA adjustments. Also, many of these districts which have been identified for having disproportionality under IDEA will have to reallocate 15 percent of their IDEA funds to Title I programs to be used for early intervening services/response to intervention approach.

The enclosed attachment of about 570 districts receiving an adjusted \$400,000 increase or more for next year (Exhibit A) takes into account the 2007-08 state per-pupil expenditures which USED incorporated into the Title I formula in June to come up with the final Federal allocations. The final adjustments will affect some districts in certain states significantly, although, in most of the districts, the impact has been minimal.

Most changes between the preliminary LEA allocations from March and the final allocations have been minimal. A small number of districts had decreases such that they failed to meet our arbitrary cut-off increase of \$400,000. In an even smaller number of cases, districts received enough of an increase to bump them up onto our list. In a very few instances, there were apparently significant changes -- either gains or losses -- between the preliminary and final allocations. TechMIS clients interested in particular school districts can compare the allocations in the April 7 report with those attached here to see if those districts were significantly affected. A brief review of the two allocations (April 7 and now) shows very few districts that saw substantial increases between preliminary and final, as well as some that had large cuts. The largest changes between the preliminary and final Title I allocation generally occurred in large districts and so constituted an insignificant percentage change. Los Angeles, for example, saw a cut from preliminary of \$780,000 -- a drop in the bucket for a \$432 million Title I allocation.

Similarly, New York County (NY-Manhattan), received a \$582,000 increase from preliminary on a Title I allocation of \$126 million.

Among the big gainers are (remember these numbers represent changes in already substantial increases):

- Wichita (KS) -- increase went from \$187,000 (preliminary) to \$783,000 (final);
- Duluth (MN) -- increase went from \$244,000 (preliminary) to \$664,000 (final); and
- Granite (UT) -- increase went from \$279,000 (preliminary) to \$445,000 (final).

In addition, three large districts, unintentionally omitted from the preliminary listing [St. Louis and Columbia (MO) and Memphis (TN)], are included in the final table.

At the other extreme, a few districts saw substantial declines in their increases between preliminary and final allocations. The most significant negative changes between preliminary and final allocations occurred in Louisiana. East Baton Rouge Parish, for example, lost over a million of its increase -- from \$6,422,000 (preliminary) to \$5,322,000 (final) -- and Orleans Parish saw its increase go from \$5,339,000 (preliminary) to \$3,924,000 (final). These reductions in increases are likely attributed to USED not applying the 100% hold harmless provision to Louisiana districts as it had done since Katrina, which could generate an appeal from the SEA or some of the affected districts. And other Louisiana districts faced equally significant reductions in their expected increases. Among the losers (again, remember these districts will have large gains over last year -- just smaller than originally indicated) are:

- Mt. Diablo (CA) -- increase went from \$684,000 (preliminary) to \$249,000 (final);
- Kentwood (MI) -- increase went from \$823,000 (preliminary) to \$613,000 (final);
- Columbus (OH) -- with a preliminary increase of \$1,335,000, ended up with a decrease of \$217,000;
- Portland (OR) -- increase went from \$5,586,000 (preliminary) to \$4,724,000 (final); and
- Allentown (PA) -- increase went from \$465,000 (preliminary) to \$113,000 (final).

Overall, there were far fewer differences between preliminary and final LEA allocations this year than there were a year ago.

Exhibit B presents smaller districts with significant increases -- increases of \$100,000 or more which are at least 20 percent higher than the 2007-08 allocation. Not surprisingly, most of these are districts in states with smaller community (not county) school systems. Of the approximately 710 districts in Exhibit B, 52 showed increases of at least 200 percent (300% of 2007-08); 32 of these are in five states -- Illinois (7), Indiana (7), Michigan (8), Ohio (5), and Pennsylvania (5). Again, there were very few significant differences between preliminary and final allocations.

One use by USED of the final Federal district allocations, before state adjustments, is the calculation of each district's per-eligible-Title I-student allocation (see other TechMIS Special Report). In the past, USED has posted what constitutes 20 percent of those allocations as a benchmark for determining -- for each district identified for improvement or which has a number of schools identified for improvement -- the amount to be set aside per Title I student for SES and the parent choice transportation option. In effect, this is supposed to establish the maximum fee that third-party SES providers can charge per-eligible-student for participating in their SES program. In states that have made significant adjustments, the existence of the Federally-calculated 20 percent per-eligible-student calculation has created confusion and time-consuming negotiations between districts and third-party SES providers.

As always, call me directly if you have any questions.

**USED Has Released Its Annual Report on Federal Title I Allocations  
Per Eligible Student for Every District Which, in Combination  
With Other Data, Should Help Firms Decide  
What States and Districts to Target**

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)*  
**SPECIAL REPORT**

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July 31, 2008

USED has released its annual report which identifies the amount of Federal Title I allocations (before SEA adjustments) per eligible Title I student in each district. This is supposed to establish the maximum amount of funds districts should allocate per student participating in choice and supplemental educational services (i.e., the 20% set-aside). In combination with other recently compiled data (see accompanying TechMIS Special Report on Final District Title I Allocations), this Special Report should assist firms in determining which districts within states will probably set aside earmarks for SES and staff development and which will have the greatest “purchasing power” per eligible student. The maximum per eligible Title I pupil SES expenditures cap (identified in the last column in Exhibit C), does not take into account a number of adjustments SEAs will make in the final installment to districts after October 1, when the amount of “advanced” Federal Title I funding is to be released to states.

In Exhibit C, we have included the districts in the accompanying Special Report that are receiving at least a \$400,000 increase (before SEA adjustments) in Federal Title I allocations for next year. Districts that received a \$200,000 or greater increase last year have asterisks. Specific information about schools and districts identified for improvement have to set aside at least 20 percent initially for SES and parent choice transportation and which can be obtained from Kirk Chritton at MCH (800-776-6373). The purchasing power of districts based upon the maximum per-pupil SES expenditure cap ranges from about \$650 in several districts to over \$3,500 in Wyoming.

As we emphasized in our April 7th Special Report on preliminary Title I allocations, some of the districts’ increases in Title I allocations will be reduced because of two adjustments which will be made by the SEAs: (a) one adjustment due to “hold harmless” provisions in the Title I formula which will reallocate Title I funds from “gaining” districts to districts losing ten percent or more (e.g., in Louisiana), and (b) additional reductions in Title I funds from the “gaining” districts in order for the SEA to set aside four percent of the state’s total Title I allocation for school improvement grants. Districts

with schools in “corrective action” or “restructuring” will likely receive some of these Title I funds back later on during the year and could also receive a portion of the \$491 million in a separate School Improvement Grant which goes to the SEAs for the second time this year.

By posting the Federal Title I allocations before SEA adjustments, USED, perhaps intentionally, will be creating negotiating problems between third-party SES providers and the districts. In many cases, the actual final Title I per-pupil allocation to the district will be significantly lower than the maximum; this could become a bone of contention during negotiations.



# Washington Update

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Vol. 13, No. 8, July 31, 2008

## **McCain's Plan for Strengthening America's Schools Would Expand, and Significantly Change Supplemental Educational Services; Encourage More Effective Teaching by Having Principals Reward Teachers Based on the Principal's Criteria; Increase Funding and Expand Opportunities for Online Learning and Virtual Schools as a Means to Provide Parents and Students Greater Choice**

Long time a Republican platform “plank,” Presidential candidate McCain’s Education Reform Plan casts public school bureaucracy as a major barrier to reform. It would increase parent and student choice through changes in supplemental educational services (SES) provisions, provide expanded opportunities for the growth of online learning and virtual schools, and expand alternative teacher certification routes, which would compete with traditional teacher college preparation programs. At a general level, this same anti-public school bureaucracy ideology was the underpinning behind some of the flagship provisions of NCLB and the Bush Administration’s policies and the Non-Regulatory Guidance implementing these provisions over the last six years. While spokespersons for Senator McCain have shed some light on specific new initiatives which would change existing NCLB provisions, the general McCain plan was spelled out in a July 16<sup>th</sup> press release on the candidate’s website concurrent with his media-covered speech that day before the

NAACP. In discussions with individuals knowledgeable about or otherwise involved in the development of the plan and insights from respected reporters, we have outlined below an analysis of some of the most significant proposed changes that would likely occur under a McCain Administration.

### **Increased parent choice and increased funding for redirected SES activities**

According to McCain’s plan, “Choice is the best way to protect children against a failing bureaucracy. But parents must have more control over the money.” As reported in Education Week, during his NAACP speech, McCain stated, “Under my reforms, moreover, parents will exercise freedom of choice in obtaining extra help for children who are falling behind. As it is, federal aid to parents for tutoring for their children has to go through another bureaucracy. They can’t purchase the tutoring directly, without having to deal with the same education establishment that failed their children in the first place.” Children who are struggling to meet “state standards” would have immediate and easy access to high-quality tutoring programs. The plan states, “Local school districts can certify education service providers but providers can also bypass the local bureaucracy and receive direct federal certification. Education service providers can then market directly to parents. Title I money will be directed straight to the provider.” A literal reading of the McCain position, with some likely accurate interpretations about details, would suggest significant implications.

First, the state education agency (SEA), which currently under the Law has sole responsibility for approving SES providers, would have that responsibility usurped by local districts which could certify SES providers; or SES providers could seek and get certification approval at the Federal level. While SEAs now have responsibility for evaluating the performance of individual SES providers in improving participating students' performance, the plan does not address which level would be responsible for such evaluations. If the certification -- and potential decertification -- responsibility is at the Federal level, then the Reading First "phenomena" could resurface (i.e., Chairman Dave Obey alleged that Bush "cronies" were initially approved and received most of the initial state and district Reading First funding); others could point to the ESEA provisions passed by the previous Bush Administration which prohibit USED from approving or forcing states or districts to adopt a certain curriculum. If responsibility were delegated to the district level, could the districts decertify an SES provider whose participating students did not meet predetermined student or performance levels? Spokesperson Lisa Keegan Graham, when asked the question whether McCain supported SES fees based on student performance said McCain supported teacher pay based on student performance. She argued that SES providers have to demonstrate "performance," but was not clear what type of performance (e.g., such as getting students to attend sessions) and noted that parents have a choice that after two years allows them to select another SES provider anyway. (See July 2008 TechMIS Washington Update)

Second, an underlying assumption of

providing greater SES selection and funding decision-making authority to parents will likely raise the "voucher issue," which could generate resistance in a Democratic Congress. On the other hand, the growth of the equivalent of Florida's "McKay scholarships," a voucher concept, has been expanded to at least five other states over the last several years would allow parents to receive vouchers to send their children with disabilities to private schools. In addition, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, which McCain ardently supports, could provide a model for justifying SES "vouchers" to parents. This is particularly more likely if the SES funding allocation is in the form of a "separate funding stream," and not a set-aside from existing district Title I allocations. Such an initiative would likely increase the amount of SES allocations to third-party SES providers. In 2008, of the \$1.8-2 billion set-aside for SES, approximately a third went to third-party providers, slightly more than a third to districts which provided their own SES, and slightly less than a third was unspent and reallocated to purchase other allowable Title I products and services or carried over to this year. This change, plus additional proposed regulations if finalized, would reduce even further the amount of unspent SES set-asides being reallocated for other purchases (see July 21, 2008 TechMIS Special Report). Other opportunities could also be created by another priority in McCain's plan. "If we are to succeed, we must empower committed parents with critical knowledge about their child's performance, and empower them with real and meaningful choices to act upon that knowledge." One could infer that parents would have to be provided more detailed information on their students' performance than just report cards at the end of the year;

providing student performance data on an ongoing basis could create a demand for formative assessments and parent reporting systems.

### **Increased support for online learning**

The McCain plan, as reported in the press, provides additional Federal funding and support for the use of online learning and virtual schools. However, the underlying rationale is distinctly different from the primary justification over the last decade, which was to provide students with opportunities which individual schools and districts did not have the teachers or course offerings to provide. The McCain rationale is once again to provide parents and students with greater choice. The McCain plan would reform the E<sup>2</sup>T<sup>2</sup> program and “will target \$500 million in current federal funds to build new virtual schools and support the development of online course offerings for students. These courses may be for regular course work, for enhancement, or for dual enrollment into college.” The plan would also support states that commit to expanding online education opportunities by providing funds to “build virtual math and science academies, to help expand the availability of AP Math, Science and Computer Sciences courses, online tutoring support for students in traditional schools, and foreign language courses.”

In addition, under the \$250 million Digital Passport Scholarship initiative, a wide range of providers -- including public schools, charter schools and virtual schools -- could provide services to eligible students who would be awarded funds through a National Scholarship Administrator which would manage the student application, monitoring, and evaluation process.

According to Susan Patrick, Executive Director of NACOL, who is very knowledgeable about the McCain plan, the total amount of funding under the three initiatives would be about \$750 million. While such funding increases could expand AP and dual enrollment credit courses, it is likely to have an even greater impact on provision of online tutoring, remediation, and test prep, as well as online assessment programs whose current growth is probably surpassing the rates of growth officially reported by NCES (see related [Washington Update](#) item).” An NCES report found that between 2002 and 2005, student enrollments in online courses credit increased by 60 percent; however, the number of districts with students enrolled in such courses increased very little. But where such increases occurred, one large contributing factor was the existence of state online courses and state virtual schools. This survey also found that the number of out-of-district students enrolled in other public school district online courses has remained pretty constant at less than five percent. One of the possible growth opportunities under the McCain proposal would be an increase in the number of eligible SES students receiving such services through online state virtual schools and/or third-party online firms under contract to provide SES.

### **School leadership/teacher incentives**

Beyond significant changes for the delivery of SES and direct Federal certification and funding to SES providers, the plan would increase the role and responsibility for Federally-supported reform on school leadership, particularly the principal. Principals would have much more control over school budgets and for determining how such Federal funds will be used. While

teachers could receive bonuses for “combat pay” (e.g., signing bonuses for teachers to be assigned to lowest-achieving schools and most in need of improvement) and receive additional incentives based in part on student achievement, principals could determine the nature and extent of such incentives based on other important considerations, such as peer evaluations, student subgroup improvements, or the schools being removed from the improvement list. As reported in Education Daily, Richard Flannery, Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, expressed concern: “Certainly we support better spending autonomy, but there needs to be more clarity on the criteria on which principals make these decisions. Principals already have very busy schedules, and I would hate to think they would get caught in a situation where they are the purveyors of funds.”

In addition to providing incentives and rewards to teachers, the McCain plan would also increase opportunities for more individuals to enter teaching through alternative approved certification programs. Five percent of Title II Teacher Quality funding (Title IIA Teacher Quality funding is approximately \$2.9 billion) would be provided to states to recruit teachers who graduate in the top 25 percent of their class, or participate in alternative teacher recruitment programs, such as Teach for America, the New Teacher Project, or excellent university initiatives. Sixty percent of Title II funding would be used for incentive bonuses or activities noted above. The remainder of the funds would be provided for “needed professional teacher development.” As the plan notes, “Where federal funds are involved, teacher development money should be used to

enhance the ability of teachers to perform in today’s technology driven environment. We need to provide teachers with high quality professional development opportunities with a primary focus on instructional strategies that address the academic needs of their students.” From reading the plan, one can infer that principals will have wide discretion in determining how Title II professional development funds are to be used.

### **E-Rate**

Somewhat conspicuous by its absence is any policy or support in McCain’s plan for the E-Rate program; he currently chairs the Senate Committee which has oversight over E-Rate. During the early days of E-Rate implementation (1999-2003), Senator McCain was highly critical of some of the Clinton appointees responsible for E-Rate policies and procedures. During a personal discussion with him in 2003, he indicated that he was a supporter of E-Rate, but was pleased that some of the initial leadership of that program had been replaced. When we advised him of an attempt by President Bush to change the E-Rate product and service eligibility criteria, which would have led to the demise of the E-Rate program, Senator McCain was quick to review the situation and was able to have the language in the President’s proposed FY 2004 budget deleted. With his increased support in funding for online instructional delivery, virtual schools and directly related activities, one could infer that his support of the E-Rate program would at the least, continue, if not increase over time.

### **Federal Funding**

Regarding the Federal funding issue, the July 16<sup>th</sup> plan is silent. However, on several occasions, McCain Spokesperson Lisa

Keegan Graham, has stated that one of the first steps McCain would take would be to evaluate all federal education programs, determine those which are effective, and reduce funding for those that were not effective. In response to a question during the NAACP speech, as reported in Education Week, McCain stated that he would “fully fund” programs under NCLB and that NCLB had to be fixed, not scrapped. Within the context of his previous statements that he would freeze domestic discretionary spending until an in-depth review is conducted. At the most, one might expect a McCain Administration to fully fund those components of NCLB or whatever it will be called, that are effective, but not fully fund NCLB in its entirety to the level authorized by Congress.

### **New National Center for Educational Statistics Report Finds the Number of Students Taking Credit Courses Via Distance Learning Increased by Almost 60 Percent Between 2002 and 2005, With Enrollment Increases Primarily in Same Districts**

As reported in the NCES report, *Technology-Based Distance Education Courses for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: 2002-03 and 2004-05*, between 2002 and 2005, the number of students enrolled in distance learning credit courses increased by almost 60 percent to slightly over 500,000. Virtually all of the increases occurred in the districts which had students enrolled in distance learning courses in 2002 or earlier. In 2005, ten percent of public schools had students enrolled in distance learning courses, only a slight increase from nine percent in 2002. The percent of urban schools enrolling

students in online credit courses remained at five percent between 2002 and 2005, while the percentage of suburban schools increased from seven to nine percent. Rural schools experienced a small increase of one percent to 16 percent over the same timeframe.

Enrollment increases were attributed to significant growth in the number of in state-sponsored virtual schools -- now in 26 states. About 60 percent of online course enrollments were in high schools with 33 percent in combined or ungraded schools. About half (47 percent) of the districts reporting distance learning enrollments had courses delivered by post-secondary institutions, while a third of districts with students in technology-based distance education had courses delivered by another local school district or schools in other districts in their state; another 24 percent had students enrolled in distance education courses delivered by a state virtual school. The percentage of districts with online courses delivered by state virtual schools increased from 18 percent in 2003 to 24 percent in 2005, a growth to which Susan Patrick, President of the North American Council on Online Learning, attributed most of the enrollment growth, as reported in Education Daily (July 22<sup>nd</sup>).

Overall, during 2005, about one-third of public school districts had students enrolled in technology-based distance education courses. According to Education Week, knowledgeable officials attribute such low or no growth in other districts to broadband deficiencies, funding shortfalls, dated policies, and inadequate leadership, particularly in the 24 states which did not have state-supported virtual schools in 2005.



In 2005, about 15 percent of all technology-based distance education enrollments were in advanced placement (AP) and dual-credit college-level courses, up slightly from 14 percent in 2002. AP courses were equally delivered by post-secondary institutions (36 percent), public school districts (36 percent), and state virtual schools (35 percent). In 2005, almost 60 percent of districts with technology-based distance education enrollments used asynchronous Internet instruction as a primary mode of delivery, followed by two-way interactive video (47 percent). Asynchronous instruction increased by 11 percentage points between 2002-05, while two-way interactive video -- which was the most commonly used technology in 2002-03 -- decreased from 55 percent to 47 percent. In 2005, in the districts providing online education courses, 86 percent of students accessed courses from the schools and 59 percent accessed courses from home. Almost 20 percent of districts paid for a computer with home access and 18 percent of districts paid for Internet service providers for these students.

The NCES longitudinal study focused on students enrolled in online credit courses and did not address the use of online delivery of supplemental, remedial, test prep, and formative assessments, which other studies suggest has seen even greater growth. For example, Greaves et. al. (2008), in their America's Digital School 2008 Survey, reported that over 60 percent of responding districts used both online assessment and online instruction in 2007. The Center on Education Policy, in its annual survey of state use of exit exams, found that in most of the 22 states which have exit or end-of-course exams, districts were provided state funds or provided their own dollars for test prep and online test

retaking for students who failed portions of such tests. Recent studies by NACOL have also identified an increasing use of online distance education in the area of credit recovery and test prep. The growth of online distance learning and assessment in these non-credit course areas has created a need to focus on the issues and policies affecting both online credit and supplemental distance learning and assessment. NACOL Director Patrick, commenting on the release of USED's new guide, *Evaluating Online Learning*, made suggestions based on a draft of the report urging the department to separate evaluation issues pertaining to complete online courses and online supplemental resources. (See related Washington Update item on the McCain plan)

For a copy of the NCES longitudinal survey in technology-based distance education courses go to: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008008.pdf>

If you have any questions or wish to discuss possible opportunities in specific states, please contact me directly.

### **Although Congressional Appropriations Subcommittees Would Boost FY 2009 Education Appropriations by about 4 percent, Final Action Will Not Likely Occur Until Next February-March**

Although the House and Senate Education Appropriations subcommittees have proposed slightly over a four percent increase for education in FY 2009, committee chairmen have publicly stated that action on the final appropriations will not occur until the new President takes

office with a Continuing Resolution (CR) likely until that time. President Bush is almost certain to veto the current panels' proposed education appropriations, as both the House and Senate would zero-fund Reading First which would, however, continue to be funded at the current year's level under a Continuing Resolution. The subcommittee marks provide at least one benchmark reflecting a consensus within the two subcommittees which would be relatively close to that supported by an Obama Administration. Under a McCain Administration, however, a Continuing Resolution would likely be passed through September 30, 2009, after which time a McCain budget would likely freeze all education discretionary programs and reflect his priorities on vouchers and other changes reflected in his statement before the NCAAAP (see related [Washington Update](#) item).

Most of the proposed increases by both committees would be for Title I and IDEA special education programs, both of which would receive increases of between a 4.0 and 4.3 percent over this year's budget. All of the increases in Title I grants to districts would be in the "incentive" and "targeted" grants components of the Title I formula, totaling between \$500-600 million. In addition, the House version would increase the School Improvement Grants (Section 1003(g)) from \$491 million to \$600 million which would raise the amount of funds reallocated by SEAs to districts that have eligible schools in corrective action or restructuring. The House level for IDEA would be somewhat higher than the Senate version.

Outside the proposed appropriations levels for the U.S. Department of Education, several other Congressional actions have

implications for some TechMIS subscribers. The Supplemental Spending Bill -- signed by the President on June 30<sup>th</sup> -- to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan would place a moratorium on proposed actions by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in DHHS, which would reduce the amount of reimbursements to districts for administrative and transportation costs and other related services for eligible students with disabilities. The moratorium would remain until April 2009 and would continue the \$500-600 million in Medicaid reimbursements currently allowed for districts. The new 21<sup>st</sup> Century GI Bill would increase the amount of education benefits for veterans who have served in one or both of the two wars since September 11, 2001. It also would provide up to \$1,200 per veteran for the cost of tutorial or college remediation services, as noted in the related item. One casualty of the supplemental appropriation was the deletion of the funds to continue the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 which benefited certain districts, primarily in Northwest states, who are now likely to have to make dramatic budget cuts because many treated these funds as part of the district's regular operating budgets. In some counties, districts received as much as \$6 million.

If McCain is elected President, based on his recent statement before the NAACP, his Administration would likely attempt to redirect some funding under a Continuing Resolution for Title I and perhaps IDEA through the regulatory process in the following ways:

- Increase parent school choice for all parents who want it.
- Increase opportunities for supplemental educational services

by providing vouchers (most likely equivalent to per student SES allocations) directly to parents.

- Provide bonuses for teachers based on student performance and certain types of “combat pay.”

Under an Obama regime, over time, more of the Title IIA Teacher Quality funds would be redirected toward efforts to improve the quality of teaching, including professional learning communities, collaboration, mentoring, extended learning, greater use of formative assessments and related activities.

### **New 21<sup>st</sup> Century GI Bill Will Likely Increase the Demand for College-Level Remediation Instructional Software and Materials, Especially Those Delivered Online**

With a cost of \$62 billion over ten years, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century GI Bill, spearheaded by Virginia Senator Jim Webb and signed by the President, and would increase the GI bill benefit to cover up to the cost of in-state tuition at the most expensive public college in the veteran’s state. It would also provide a monthly housing stipend and an extra \$1,000 annually for books and an additional payment of \$100 per month for tutoring assistance for a maximum of 12 months. Veterans, including activated reservists and National Guard, would be eligible over a 15-year period if they served three to 36 months of qualified active duty after September 11, 2001. Under the new GI bill, beginning in August 2009, the estimated eight million veterans would receive significantly more financial support than the current \$9,600 a year for four years. Moreover, there is additional state financial support for returning veterans, which in Massachusetts,

for example, is \$800 million annually. While there are a number of uncertainties about its impact, one potential opportunity for TechMIS subscribers may be in the area of college remediation programs which are likely to increase significantly as more eligible veterans need and take advantage of the new benefits program. The question then becomes in what states and with what types of institutions will such opportunities exist.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, about 40 percent of current GI Bill recipients are pursuing two-year degrees in community colleges. The largest “destination” institutions for veterans, according to an Inside Higher Education article, are the University of Phoenix, the American InterContinental University, American Public University, the University of Maryland, Central Texas College, Kaplan and Strayer Universities and Florida community colleges. In the June 20<sup>th</sup> article, Keith Wilson, Director of Education Services at the Department of Veterans Affairs, said, “...convenience is still going to be paramount,” rather than veterans wanting to go to big-name schools. Another uncertainty is whether a veteran will transfer his or her GI Bill benefits to a dependent. If “convenience” becomes the most important selection criterion, then it is likely that community colleges, particularly those that provide online courses, should be the largest destination for veterans.

Beginning eight to ten years ago, some of the largest growth in online distance learning remediation offerings occurred in community colleges and to a lesser extent in four-year colleges where the percentage of entering freshmen who had to take one or more developmental or remedial non-credit



courses was between 40 and 50 percent. Interestingly, studies conducted by NACOL and others have found that the K-12 area receiving the most growth in online credit courses has been in the area of credit recovery. Even though the overall benefits accruing to veterans who participate in half-time on-site or full-time online courses are less than benefits accruing to those who enroll full-time in a college (e.g., housing stipends are provided). The importance of “convenience” provides an obvious nod to online delivery institutions where opportunities for TechMIS subscribers could arise.

As with any new law, the devil is in the details. Points of clarification will be made through the regulatory process, which will almost certainly be affected by the next occupant of the White House.

### **Most Recent Biennial Report to Congress on the Implementation of Title III English Language Acquisition Grant Program Provides Additional on Justification for Proposed Regulations Affecting Limited English Proficient Students Served in Both Title III and Title I Programs**

In the June 2008 TechMIS Washington Update, we predicted that the proposed USED Non-Regulatory Guidance (NRG) would increase the number of limited English proficient (LEP) students served in both Title I and Title III and that all such students would remain longer in Title III programs. Moreover, if the proposed NRG were put into effect as proposed, the demand for instructional programs that are effective in helping LEP students acquire English language skills and become proficient in

math and reading would increase significantly. USED’s recently released Biennial Report to Congress provides some justification for the proposed changes, as well as additional information which should assist in determining the states to target because the number of “identified,” but not served, students and the number of LEP students failing to achieve proficiency in math and reading are the highest.

Although the Biennial Report to Congress found that the number of LEP students who participated in Title III-funded K-12 programs increased by almost 650,000 students to 4.9 million between 2003 and 2006, the percentage of identified LEP students who participated in Title III funded programs remained fairly consistent at about 85 percent. Of the almost five million LEP students, slightly over one million were immigrant students. Across the country, the report notes, only about two-thirds of these immigrant students were served by Title III-funded programs. In several states, the number of immigrant students identified as LEP in 2006 which were not served by Title III was significant, such as Illinois (59,000 versus 19,000 served), Minnesota (15,000 versus 5,000 served), New York (103,000 versus 53,000), Texas (109,000 versus 47,000 served), and Washington (23,000 versus 4,000 served). The six states which reported that all of their identified LEP students were participating in Title III funded K-12 programs were Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island and Utah. Title III provisions allow a state to set aside up to 15 percent of its Title III funds to make subgrants to LEAs that experience a “significant increase” in the percent of immigrant children and youth enrolled in public and non-public K-12 schools.

The Biennial Report also notes that the percentage of LEP students reaching basic proficiency on NAEP tests has increased between 2000 and 2007 and the gap between LEP and non-LEP students has tended to decrease over that same timeframe. In the 2005-06 school year, of the 40 states and territories that provided data, 25 met their “targets” in terms of the percentage of students making progress in English language acquisition and that of 43 states that provided these data, 28 met their targets on the percentage of LEP students obtained English proficiency included in AYP calculations. On the other hand, the USED notes that “states differ greatly in the extent to which they reach their targets in terms of the percentage of LEP students that scored in the proficient or advanced categories on state content area assessments.” States with lowest percentages of LEP students achieving proficient or advanced in mathematics in 2006 included Hawaii (8 percent), Massachusetts (16 percent), Missouri (5 percent), Rhode Island (14 percent), and Washington (18 percent). In reading/language arts in 2006, states reporting low percentages achieving proficient or advanced included Hawaii (12 percent), Massachusetts (16 percent), Missouri (4 percent), Nevada (17 percent), and Rhode Island (17 percent).

The Biennial Report also identified the following trends:

- “Achievement decreases as grade level increases -- with each grade level, fewer states met their targets.”
- “Achievement in mathematics, as measured by states reaching their performance targets, is higher than in reading or language arts.”

The report also notes that the number of

states reaching their targets in mathematics increased from grade 8 (six states) to high school (eight states) with the reverse occurring in reading/language arts.

In addition to providing some useful information for targeting states, the report also includes additional useful information on use of Title III funds, the types of language acquisition programs used in states, and professional development needs and priorities.

In the area of professional development, approximately 320,000 teaching staff were employed in Title III programs in 2006. All states combined anticipated needing another 104,000 teachers in five years. The largest group of teachers receiving professional development in instructional techniques and assessments was general or regular classroom teachers followed by teachers working mostly with LEP students.

In terms of the types of language instruction educational programs, the states tend to focus on English literacy (almost 50 percent in 2005-06) or literacy in two languages (42 percent). According to a key staff person on the Senate HELP Committee, chaired by Senator Ted Kennedy, the amount of Title III funds per LEP student served is \$163 which, as reported in Education Daily, “would not support implementation of the programs,” particularly the additional training needs of teachers.

The three most frequently used Title III-funded activities for immigrant students were: (1) family literacy, parent outreach, and training activities designed to assist parents to become active in the education of their children (47 states); (2) support for personnel, including teacher aides, trained or

being trained to provide services to immigrant children and youth (47 states); and (3) identification and acquisition of materials (46 states).

For a copy of the report go to: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/title3binnial0406.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/title3binnial0406.pdf)

### **Proposed Legislation Would Fund Partnerships to Train Guidance Counselors, Social Workers and Psychologists, While Increased Funding for Behavioral Interventions Would Come Mostly From Early Intervening Services Set-Asides Under IDEA**

The Increased Student Achievement Through Increased Support Act, sponsored by Representative Linda Sanchez (D-CA) and Representative Edolphus Towns (D-NY), would provide five-year funding for competitive grants to establish partnerships between school districts and universities to train school counselors, social workers and psychologists to improve quality of services meeting the emotional and behavioral needs for students in eligible districts. According to Education Daily (July 11<sup>th</sup>), the sponsors argued that the partnership grants would complement the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, funded at about \$48 million, which provides money to hire mental health professionals -- a priority area of former Assistant Secretary Robert Pasternack who led the charge supporting the integration of Early Intervening Services/RTI approaches into the IDEA 2004 reauthorization. Associations representing counselors, school psychologists, and social workers, as well as the NEA, support the bill. Supporters also

justify the proposed law, which focuses on retraining highly qualified teachers, on the grounds that studies have shown student behavioral problems in high-need districts have been a major reason why highly qualified teachers leave such districts and schools. The American Counseling Association (ACA) estimates that the current ratio in U.S. public schools is 476 students to one counselor.

The proposed competitive grant program would highlight the need for improving the delivery of behavioral, social and emotional interventions. The primary source of funding will likely be the Early Intervening Services provisions in IDEA which require districts identified for disproportionality to allocate 15 percent of their IDEA funding to serve at-risk, minority students with RTI approaches which could eliminate the need to place them in costly special education programs. The most recent survey conducted by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) sponsored by Spectrum K-12 (see May 2008 TechMIS Washington Update), found that 44 percent of district respondents to its Survey on RTI Adoption implemented RTI behavioral interventions in 2007-08. Based on our survey in 2006-07 and the 2007-08 CASE survey, we estimate the amount of funding earmarked under the 15 percent set-aside increased from \$500 million to \$1.3 billion.

## MISCELLANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS

### **Senate NCLB Reauthorization to Emphasize “Quality Instructional Teams” More Than “Teacher Quality,” Which Could Provide Greater Opportunities for the Use of Technology Applications and Materials to Facilitate Collaboration, Data-Driven Team Decision-Making, Mentoring and Related Activities**

During a recent forum sponsored by the National Commission on Teaching in America’s Future (NCTAF), Senate Committee Chairman Kennedy’s aide, Carmel Martin, stated that the funding and development of “quality instructional teams” will be emphasized more heavily in the Senate NCLB reauthorization of Title II. As reported by Stephen Sawchuk in Education Daily (June 15<sup>th</sup>), committee aide Martin envisioned instructional teams meeting weekly or even daily as part of “a professional learning community” to review data, articulate instructional strategies and focus on areas where students need help. These concepts fit in nicely to what another senior Kennedy aide, Roberto Rodriguez, noted during the AEP breakfast summit (see July 2008 TechMIS Washington Update) -- that perhaps the most significant change will be the much higher priority placed on formative assessments as opposed to high stakes summative assessments, a change which would underpin many activities in the proposed NCLB reauthorization.

The NCTAF and several other leading “teacher quality” organizations have endorsed the concept. Many of the attendees at the forum with whom we talked were very supportive of the team concept as being much needed. Many of the concepts

anticipated in the Senate reauthorization proposal would incorporate key provisions from S.1979, sponsored by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), that would provide in-school training for both new and veteran teachers to collaborate in professional learning communities. At least three Senate HELP Committee members, including Senator Barak Obama, have lent support to S.1979. As reported in Education Daily, Martin noted, “We really need to tackle (teacher equity) and make it a top priority for reauthorization.”

### **59 Schools Awarded \$18 Million in Literacy Library Grants to Improve Students’ Reading Skills**

In its July 18<sup>th</sup> press release, USED announced 59 grantees which will be awarded \$18.2 million to improve low-income students’ reading skills under the Literacy Through School Libraries Program. Uses of the grant funds include: acquisition of instructional materials, improvement of school technology resources, facilitating Internet links and other resource-sharing networks, providing professional development and expanding extending hours of access to library services, including after-school tutoring and remedial programs. Thirteen of the successful awardees were Oklahoma schools. The press release includes the names of the primary contacts in each of the schools, along with contact information

([www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07182009a.html](http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07182009a.html)).

# Alabama Update

## August 2008

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The Birmingham News reports that Governor Bob Riley has approved an FY 2009 budget that would spend an estimated \$6.36 billion from Alabama's Education Trust Fund -- a 5.5 percent cut from the previous year's spending. Some State legislators believe revenues for the Trust Fund will be as much as \$132 million less than the approved spending level necessitating further, mid-year cuts.

The Montgomery Advertiser reports that Alabama is planning to implement fully the initiative known as Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators and Students Statewide (ACCESS) in every high school in the State. Designed to allow high school students to use video-conferencing and the Internet to take courses not available at their home schools, ACCESS currently has 170 sites around the State. The initial plan called for full implementation by 2010, but the program is ahead of schedule.

# Arizona Update

## August 2008

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Months of political wrangling finally ended when the Arizona legislature ended its session with a \$1.2 billion budget shortfall for the 2007-08 fiscal year and a projected shortfall of \$2 billion for 2008-09. In response to the continuing lawsuit over the State's funding of programs for English language learners, the legislature approved a \$40.6 million increase in ELL funding.

According to The Arizona Republic, Arizona has sued the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for counting the test scores of English language learners (ELLs) when it identifies schools for improvement. State law requires that the State assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics -- the Arizona Instrument to Measure Skills (AIMS) -- be administered in English only. Currently, 78 Arizona schools face sanctions solely because their ELLs failed the exam. The State says it had a verbal agreement with USED in 2003 to exclude the scores of ELLs until they completed three years of instruction. In 2005, USED began requiring Arizona to count ELLs after only one year of instruction.

Also reported in the Arizona Republic, 136 Arizona schools have, since 2002, received \$130 million from the Federal Reading first program. Expected to die from lack of funding in 2010, Reading First has provided more than just funding for Arizona schools. State legislators have been so pleased with the Reading First method, that they enacted a State law requiring all schools to develop Reading First-like programs. The new law did not, however, allocate any money to implement the reading programs which would not preclude any future Reading First funding for districts.

A ruling by Arizona's Attorney General has said that excess money from a legislative contingency fund could not be used to pay for two voucher programs that had been cut from the State budget. The Speaker of Arizona's House had proposed to use \$5 million in contingency funds to continue support for programs that have provided private-school scholarships to disabled and foster-care students. Last year, more than 350 students received scholarships

through the two programs which were declared unconstitutional by the Arizona Court of Appeals and which were not funded in the new State budget.

The Arizona Republic reports that Arizona is planning to create a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Center to be housed in the non-profit Science Foundation Arizona. The STEM Center's goals will be to: (1) promote teacher recruitment, training, and retention; (2) generate interest in math and science among preK-12 students; and (3) encourage college students to work toward degrees in STEM fields. The Phoenix-based copper producer, Freeport-McMoRan, has donated \$1.5 million to help launch the STEM Center. Governor Janet Napolitano's policy advisor for higher education, Darcy Renfro, has been appointed as the Center's executive director.



# Arkansas Update

## August 2008

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Analysis of scores on State benchmark exams shows a narrowing of the achievement gap between White and minority students. This year, for the first time, the State used what is called the Augmented Benchmark exam, a combination of the old Arkansas Benchmark Exam and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Overall, scores improved this year with percentage of students scoring at “proficient” or higher increasing in every subject and grade (except seventh-grade literacy which stayed the same). The gap between White and Black students narrowed on eight of 12 tests and the gap between Whites and Hispanics narrowed on seven of 12 tests.

A recent survey by the Clinton School of Public Service has found that half of Arkansas students in grades 6 to 12 are unsupervised after school on a regular basis. Based on a survey of 3,700 Arkansas students, the report found that a majority of these children would consider attending after-school programs if they were available. Moreover, Hispanic children have the lowest participation in after-school programs, but are most likely to participate if programs were available. The survey report recommends the establishment of more after-school programs.

As reported in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, Arkansas has launched the *Arkansas Smart Leadership* initiative designed to help school principals evolve from building managers to instructional leaders. The *Smart Leadership* initiative is the latest step in a series of Statewide professional development programs that began in 1998 with *Smart Start* for elementary teachers and continued with *Smart Step* for middle school teachers and *Next Step* (now known as *Smart Future*) which focused on high school grades. The new initiative is intended to ensure that principals are able to recognize good teaching, correct poor teaching, and use data effectively in decision-making.



# California Update

## August 2008

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Education Daily reports that California has approved \$234 million in funding for the construction, modernization, and repair of public school facilities. Of the total, \$75 million will go to build new schools in ten counties across the State, \$127 million will be used to modernize schools in 15 counties, \$21 million will be devoted to construction of joint-use facilities (auditoriums, gymnasiums) in 13 counties; and \$11 million will be used for emergency repair projects in 15 counties.

As reported in the San Francisco Chronicle, the actual high school dropout rate in California last year was 24 percent -- far higher than the 13 percent State officials had estimated before implementation of the student tracking system. The State's new "Statewide Student Identifier System" can track missing students through a unique identifier. The system, for example, determined that 53,600 students who claimed to be transferring to a new school never showed up or that 4,609 students identified as dropouts have completed all graduation requirements except the newly (in the last two years) mandatory exit exam. The system also shows that Black, Latino and Native American students drop out at far higher rates than White students.

According to the Los Angeles Times, California has approved a policy that would require every eighth-grader in the State to be tested in algebra whether they have taken the course or not. Policy advocates want algebra to become mandatory in the eighth grade within three years. Currently, only 38 percent of California eighth-graders test proficient or better in algebra, although more than half of them are taking algebra courses (up from about 30 percent in 2002). Some State education officials are pushing for use of a less rigorous algebra test (currently being developed), but others argue such a test would institutionalize lower expectations.

State enrollment data show that the enrollment in the Los Angeles school district has been increasing sharply, but the number of graduating seniors has dropped for two straight years. As reported in the Los Angeles Times, the California State website indicates that only 48 percent of

Los Angeles students graduate on time; the district disputes the graduation rate, claiming a 64 percent rate for 2005-06 (the last year district data were available). Conducted by the California Dropout Research Project (University of California, Santa Barbara), the State research concludes that the district's low graduation rate can be attributed to the poor quality of students' middle school experience and the inadequate quality of high school teachers.

Also reported in the Los Angeles Times, a number of prominent officials are encouraging the Los Angeles school board to place a \$3.2 billion school bond issue on the November ballot. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, philanthropist Eli Broad, and former mayor Richard Riordan are among those pushing for the bonds which must be approved by five of the seven board members no later than August 8. The money would be used to repair and upgrade existing schools and build more traditional schools. Proponents of the bonds want it to include at least \$300 million for charter schools.

# Colorado Update

## August 2008

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As reported in The Denver Post, Governor Bill Ritter has proposed to create Colorado Promise Scholarships to help Colorado students attend college. The plan would be funded by increasing taxes on oil and gas companies to the tune of \$300 million, \$180 million of which would create a scholarship fund for low- and middle-income students. The scholarship program, which still must receive legislative approval, would include an income-cap eligibility and require students to maintain certain minimum grades through college graduation. Low-income students could receive as much as \$6,000 per year at a four-year institution and \$5,000 per year at a community college.

# Connecticut Update

## August 2008

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After a special session, the Connecticut legislature approved a K-12 education budget for FY 2008-09 that is the same as the one established last session. As reported in Education Week, the education budget increased by 3.8 percent -- from \$2.6 billion in FY 2007-08 to \$2.7 billion in FY 2008-09. Missing from the budget is \$19.7 million for Early Reading Success grants, a longstanding program that provided funds to the State's poorest districts.

Scores on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) of the State's tenth-graders improved by an average of three percent last year over 2007. Given each Spring, the CAPT showed improvements of three percent in reading (to 82.7 percent of students scoring as proficient), 5.9 percent in writing (to 88.2 percent), 2.4 percent in math (to 79.7 percent), and .9 percent in science (to 81.4 percent).

# District of Columbia Update

## August 2008

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The Washington Post reports that, in the 2007-08 school year, D.C. public school students showed remarkable achievement gains across grades and subject areas. The reading proficiency level for D.C.'s elementary students increased by eight percentage points -- compared with one percentage point the year before. The math proficiency level increased by 11 percentage points last school year, compared with three percentage points the year before. Despite the progress, the percentage of public school students who reach proficiency is low. Only 46 percent of elementary students were considered proficient in reading and only 40 percent in math. At the secondary level, only 39 percent were proficient in reading and 36 percent in math.

# Florida Update

## August 2008

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Starting this Fall, all Florida middle school students must pass their core subjects in order to be promoted to ninth grade. As reported in the [Miami Herald](#), the new requirements have caused thousands of middle-schoolers across the State to enroll in remedial programs, both during the school year and in the summer. Students who fail one or two classes in middle school can still be promoted but they cannot go on to high school unless they complete the remedial work.

Former Governor Jeb Bush, out of office for 18 months, has continued to push for education reform in Florida. His Foundation for Excellence in Education held a recent two-day summit which argued for more school choice and high stakes testing. He believes Florida -- with its extensive voucher programs and many charter schools -- could serve as a national model for education reform. Bush's critics argue against what they call his right-wing ideology and cite Florida's low graduation rate as evidence that his programs have not been universally successful.

# Georgia Update

## August 2008

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According to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, this year, 31 percent of Georgia schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act -- compared with only 18 percent the previous year. At the high school level, only 48 percent made AYP compared with 56 percent the year before. Among middle schools, the percent meeting standards remained the same at 65 percent. And the proportion of elementary schools making AYP dropped from 96 percent to 77 percent. The drops had been expected because the State administered tougher math tests to match the State's new, more rigorous curriculum.

A recent report by the non-partisan Southern Education Foundation has found that Georgia, the first state to offer universal voluntary prekindergarten, has fallen behind other states in terms of education for four-year-olds. Entitled "Time to Lead Again: The Promise of Georgia Pre-K," the report says the expectation of universal pre-K has not been fulfilled and places Georgia's per-child expenditure for prekindergarten services at \$4,010, 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 38 state-funded pre-K programs. The State counters that the State's real expenditures is \$4,165 and that it will be able to deliver universal pre-K.

The troubled Clayton County school district is scheduled to lose its accreditation on September 1 unless it meets nine requirements from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Education Week reports that, in mid-August, a SACS team will visit the district and review documentation the district hopes will result in a renewal of its accreditation. The original SACS report criticized the district's "fatally flawed" school board, saying it yielded to special interests and meddled in school decision-making. A number of board members have since stepped down or have been removed.

# Hawaii Update

## August 2008

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As reported in the Honolulu Advertiser, the Hawaii Department of Education is expecting to see a \$20 million budget reduction this year. Among the budget-cutting options being considered are scaling back the State's A-Plus after-school program (\$667,000), reducing other non-school-hour programs (\$800,000), and cutting athletic coaches' salaries (\$1 million).

The Honolulu Advertiser also reports that 60 percent of Hawaii's public schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act last year. Despite rising test scores, the benchmarks for school success have gone up. In 2006-07, 44 percent of students had to meet reading standards for a school to pass; this past year 58 percent must pass. The tougher benchmarks -- decried by State officials as unrealistic -- meant that 60 percent (170) of the State's 282 schools failed to meet standards compared with 35 percent the year before. At the high school level, 37 of 42 public high schools (88 percent) failed to make AYP.



# Idaho Update

## August 2008

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The Idaho Statesman reports that, according to State test scores, 90 percent of Idaho's fourth-graders are proficient in math, but the figure drops to 77 percent by tenth grade. To address this concern, the State is planning to invest \$3.9 million on a new approach to math instruction. Of the total, about \$1 million will be devoted to training teachers. Part of the teacher training is expected to be a one-year, \$450,000 contract with the director of Boise State University's Institute for Developing Mathematical Thinking to guide the math instruction of 1,800 educators next year. The Institute's program is based on research on Dutch arithmetic instruction.

# Illinois Update

## August 2008

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According to the Chicago Tribune, this year's Illinois State budget is \$1.4 billion lower than last year. K-12 education will receive a \$360 million increase, one of the lowest hikes in recent year. The education total is \$515 million less than the amount approved by the legislature. Dropped from the legislative budget were school construction funds for Chicago and 20 suburban schools, as well as money for school laptop computers.

A recent report from the Illinois Research Council has determined that the quality of teachers in schools from disadvantaged Chicago neighborhoods has improved over the last ten years, in large part, because the district has hired more teachers who may be inexperienced but who have stronger academic backgrounds. The report investigated changes in teachers' academic credentials and experience levels from 2001 to 2006 and found that the largest gains supported the district's hiring inexperienced teachers from more competitive teacher-preparation programs who tended to have higher ACT scores.

# Louisiana Update

## August 2008

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As reported in The New Orleans Times-Picayune, a major dispute has arisen over the definition of “failing” schools in Louisiana. The State has identified 41 schools, covering grades K-3, as failing; these include all schools in the New Orleans Recovery School District. Governor Bobby Jindal is a strong voucher advocate. Some education officials, however, question the interpretation, arguing that 18 of the identified schools have assessment indexes higher than the cut-off for “academically unacceptable” schools or are newly opened and do not as yet received an academic rating. State Superintendent Paul Pastorek is reviewing the conflict.

Louisiana is planning to implement a private-school voucher program for New Orleans that includes elements from other voucher plans across the country. As reported in Education Week, the \$10 million plan could provide vouchers for up to 1,500 New Orleans students to attend nonpublic (secular or religious) schools. Students in grades K-3 would receive about \$6,300 in tuition aid, with higher amounts for students with disabilities. Participating non-public schools would be required to give State-sponsored achievement test to voucher students, but the exam results would not be used for purposes of promotion to the grade as is the case for fourth-and eighth-graders in the public schools. The program is expected to grow as students age through the grades and as new students enter. Proponents of school vouchers see the program as a foothold in the State which has in the past, because of pressure from teachers’ unions, rejected vouchers.

Despite a national study questioning the effectiveness of the Federal Reading First program, Caddo Parish (Shreveport) plans to spend \$1.6 million on the program next year. As reported in the Shreveport Times, district officials believe the K-3 reading initiative targeting low-performing schools has been effective in improving students’ reading skills. District data show that reading scores have improved, not only in the district’s ten Reading First schools, but also in the seven “Reading Excellence” schools which don’t receive Federal funding but which pattern their reading programs after Reading First.

# Maryland Update

## August 2008

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As reported in the Washington Post, between 2007 and 2008, Maryland students showed significant gains in their test scores. Overall, the percentage of students Statewide who were rated proficient or better on the Maryland School Assessments increased from 76 percent to 82 percent in reading and from 72 percent to 76 percent in math. These numbers are in contrast with the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress which rated only 36 percent of Maryland students at proficient or better in reading and only 40 percent in math -- although these Federal scores have been improving over the past decade. State officials credit the improvement to increases in the number of reading and math specialists in low-performing schools, as well as programs designed to identify struggling students and diagnose their weaknesses.

The Washington Post also reports that Prince George's County in suburban D.C. is planning to implement performance-based pay initiative for its teachers. Teachers from 12 participating schools could earn bonuses of up to \$10,000 based on a number of criteria:

- \$2,500 for the school meeting target scores on State tests;
- \$2,500 for the teacher's class meeting State targets;
- \$1,500 for teaching hard-to-staff subjects;
- \$1,500 based on an evaluation of classroom skills; and
- \$2,000 for participating in professional development and other out-of-class activities.

Despite the opposition of national teachers' unions to performance-based pay, the Prince George's program has been supported by the local teachers' union.

According to Education Daily, a Baltimore high school identified as having persistently high levels of violence, has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to reduce school violence, decrease its dropout rate, and improve student behavior and performance. The school, WEB DuBois High School, will receive an award of \$3,651,512.

# Massachusetts Update

August 2008

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The Governor has said the State will retain the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test as a high school graduation requirement. There is concern, however, about achievement gaps on the MCAS. Last year, 91 percent of White students and 90 percent of Asian students passed the MCAS English and math exams on their first try, compared with 73 percent of Black students and 67 percent of Hispanics. To address these gaps, the State is proposing a “birth-to-school” strategy for healthy development of low-income children and creation of a “Readiness Passport” to help parents track their children’s progress.

A recent report by the Milken Institute continues to rate Massachusetts as the state that best derives economic growth from technology. Massachusetts is followed by Maryland, Colorado, California, and Washington.

As reported in the Boston Globe, Governor Deval Patrick a 55-point initiative for extensive education reform. Among the Governor’s proposals for K-12 education are: longer school days and years; consolidation of school districts; a Statewide teacher contract; an early warning dropout prevention program; hiring of student coordinators to help students and parents utilize community-based social services; universal prekindergarten and full-day kindergarten; and allowing students as young as 16 to graduate. The Governor has not detailed how he expects to pay for his proposals. Many of these proposals are expected to meet opposition from special interest groups such as teacher unions and charter school advocates. The Governor’s plan also includes such recommendations for higher education as more needs-based financial aid, transfer of credits between State institutions, and allowing children of illegal immigrants to pay in-State rates.

# Michigan Update

## August 2008

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As reported in The Detroit News, negotiations over Michigan's FY 2008-09 budget are expected to result in an average of about \$72 per K-12 pupil more than last year. The increase is unlikely to offset much higher costs for districts Statewide. Detroit -- with its projected \$408 million shortfall -- will be the most seriously affected; the district expects to lay off 818 teachers, eliminate 288 central office positions, delay salary increases, and reorganize transportation. Other districts will make similar cut-backs, as well as reducing expenditures for arts and athletic programs.

The Michigan legislature has approved, and Governor Jennifer Granholm is expected to sign, a funding plan that would phase in full-day, everyday kindergarten programs by reducing State money for less-than-full-time programs. Under the plan, starting with the 2009-10 school year, only Developmental Kindergarten and Young Fives all-day programs would continue to be funded at the current level. Then, in 2010-11, kindergarten students would have to receive at least 60 percent of the instructional time of older students or their funding would be halved. The following year, the threshold would move up to 70 percent.

The Detroit News also reports that, according to a State audit, the Detroit school district misused \$53.6 million in Federal Title I funds. The audit found \$1 million in questionable personnel expenditures and \$52 million in inadequately documented costs. The district must provide appropriate documentation for the money or return it to the U.S. Department of Education. Detroit is already facing a \$408 million deficit and just received \$38 million in emergency payments from the State.

# Minnesota Update

## August 2008

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According to the Star Tribune, Minnesota students made small gains in reading and math on the State assessment. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) test tenth-graders in reading, eleventh-graders in math, and students in grades 3-8 in both subjects. Reading scores improved Statewide by three percent over 2007 and math scores went up one percent. However, only one third of the eleventh-graders passed the MCAs and scores of minority students went down. This was the first year the tenth-grade test was a graduation requirement; scores improved by nine percent.

The Minnesota Virtual Academy (MNVA), with a current K-8 curriculum provided by K12, will be expanding to the high school level starting in September. After rollout of its high school curriculum during the 2007-08 school year, K12 will be offering the curriculum in 12 states next year.

A recent evaluation by the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor addressed student performance and financial situations of the State's 143 charter schools. Among the study's findings are:

- about half of charter schools make adequate yearly progress (AYP) compared with two-thirds of regular schools;
- charter schools teach students about as well as regular schools when the comparison is controlled for differences in race and family income;
- in the central cities (Minneapolis, St. Paul), charter schools performed better than regular schools;

The evaluation also called for a clarification of charter school oversight, the implementation of standards and additional training for charter school sponsors, and an amendment to the State's charter school law to remove the requirement that teachers comprise a majority of charter school board members.

# Missouri Update

August 2008

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According to Education Daily, the November ballot will contain a proposal to increase casino taxes' contribution to education funding. Currently, the State gaming tax generates \$300 million a year for the schools. Under the Proposed Schools First Initiative, the gaming tax would be raised to 21 percent, adding \$105 million to \$130 million in new funding for K-12 schools.



# Nevada Update

## August 2008

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The Las Vegas Sun reports that the Clark County school district is facing the need to cut more than \$100 million from its budget for the 2008-09 school year. And yet the district has frozen hiring for next year, leaving it nearly 800 teachers short. The district has already reduced its operating budget by \$60 million and projects another \$50 million to \$70 million in cuts for next school year. Moreover, the district faces the loss of \$133 million in State funding for the 2009-10 academic year. District officials expect to make a number of adjustments including the reassignment of specialists -- for literacy, technology, English language learners, and gifted-and-talented -- to classroom duties.

# New Mexico Update

August 2008

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According to Campus Technology, New Mexico, as part of its Innovative Digital Education and Learning (IDEAL-NM), is implementing a Statewide program to standardize on a single electronic learning platform and to support a new Statewide virtual high school. Under the initiative, the State would consolidate 22 existing systems -- used by the State's 89 public school districts and 25 colleges and universities -- into a single system through Blackboard's Managed Hosting service. The initiative is expected to expand professional development opportunities and support distance learning for high school and college students.

# New York Update

## August 2008

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The New York Times reports that New York students in grades 3 through 8 have shown significant improvement since last year in their reading and math scores. Statewide, 81 percent of students tested were at or above grade level in math, compared with 73 percent last year. And, in reading, 69 percent met standards, up from 63 percent last year. Similar improvements were found in urban areas that have historically shown little improvement. Many educators question the results noting that the Statewide results were not consistent with New York's scores in recent years on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the "nation's report card."

Education Daily reports that the Berkshire Union Free School district has received a \$3,651,512 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to reduce school violence, decrease dropout rates, and improve student behavior and performance.

# Ohio Update

## August 2008

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Ohio has become the first state in the nation to charge in-State tuition to all veterans -- as well as their spouses and dependents -- attending Ohio's 36 colleges and universities on the G.I. Bill. Known as Ohio G.I. Promise, the program is expected to help the State reach the goal of its strategic plan of increasing public college attendance from the current 470,000 to 700,000 over the next ten years.

# Oklahoma Update

August 2008

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According to the Tulsa World, Oklahoma with the shortest school year in the nation -- 175 days - is urging its educators to make better use of their classroom time, including more effective use of technology. Money constraints have kept the State from lengthening the academic year.

Among the approaches the State is following are:

- requiring every school to undertake a time analysis process;
- restricting parent-teacher conferences;
- limiting extracurricular activities; and
- providing expertise from the Boston-based National Center on Time.

# Oregon Update

## August 2008

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According to USA Today, Oregon State officials have approved a graduation testing plan that avoids some of the problems encountered in neighboring states. Going beyond the basic high-stakes testing requirement, the Oregon plan allows students who fulfill all course requirements to pick one of three options: a national test, State assessments, or a local option such as a portfolio demonstrating mastery of reading, writing, applied math, and speaking skills. Critics of the plan argue that the local option gives students -- and districts -- an easy way out.

According to The Seattle Times, Oregon's partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other reformers to create smaller high schools has not yielded significant improvements in attendance, test scores, or graduation rates. Funded in 2004 with \$25 million in foundation money, the Oregon initiative gave \$1 million each to 11 large high schools to break into academies of fewer than 400 students each. Even Gates Foundation officials are dissatisfied with the uneven results of their small schools initiatives and plan to focus more on improving teacher quality.

In mid-June, Oregon granted a waiver to the Oregon Virtual Academy, allowing the school to enroll more than half of its students from outside its home district (North Bend). With a curriculum provided by K12, the Academy will start in September with 600 K-8 students. In 2008-09, K12 will operate in 21 states plus D.C., with Oregon, Hawaii, Indiana, and South Carolina coming online in September.

# Pennsylvania Update

## August 2008

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In early July, Governor Edward Rendell signed a new State budget that allocates \$9.7 billion for education. As reported in Education Daily, the budget is intended to bring relief to property owners by reducing the share of school funding that comes from property taxes. Under the new budget, the State's portion of school funding would be \$274 million higher. The new budget calls for \$54 million per year -- up 70 percent -- to be used on State assessment tests. The Governor also proposed to require all Pennsylvania students to pass a battery of ten subject-specific tests before they could graduate from high school. The Governor and the legislature have, however, reached a compromise that would make the exams optional, at least for the 2008-09 school year.

At the request of Governor Ed Rendell, the chairman of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education, Karl Girton, has resigned. Girton had been advocate of the Board's controversial proposal that would require Pennsylvania students, starting with the Class of 2014, to pass a series of subject-specific high school exams in order to graduate.

Also reported in Education Daily, seven Philadelphia high schools have received grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to reduce school violence, decrease dropout rates, and improve overall students' behavior and performance. The schools, all of which have been identified as having persistently high levels of violence, are Overbrook, Germantown, University City, Abraham Lincoln, West Philadelphia, and John Bartram -- each of which will receive grants of \$6,423,139 -- and Thomas FitzSimons which will get \$3,651,512.

According to the Washington Post, six years ago, the Philadelphia school district began an experiment in school privatization. A total of 38 schools were managed by private operators, 20 of them by Edison Schools. Based on recent data, the commission overseeing Philadelphia's schools has elected to deprivatize six of the schools and has given another 20 of the schools one year to show improvement or face reversion to the school district. Although student

performance at the privatized schools has improved, no differences were noted between the privatized and district-run schools. Opponents of privatization cite the commission's decision as evidence the concept does not work.



# Rhode Island Update

August 2008

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According to Education Week, Rhode Island has approved the State's \$6.9 billion budget for FY 2009, including \$690 million for public K-12 education -- about the same as FY 2008. A bill extending gambling hours at casinos is expected to yield about \$12.8 million in additional funding -- the exact amount will be determined by the amount wagered.

Education Week reports that the Rhode Island legislature has approved the establishment of "mayoral academies," public charter schools overseen by municipal, not school district, leaders. Formed by groups of mayors and municipal leaders, these academies would be designed to serve students regionally, crossing district boundaries and would be operated by a non-profit provider. Because of State budget constraints, the earliest one of the academies could open is the Fall of 2009. Currently with 11 charter schools, Rhode Island was operating under a moratorium on the creation of new charters which ended on June 30.

# South Carolina Update

## August 2008

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As reported in The Charleston Post and Courier, there is a petition circulating that supports changing the State constitution from mandating that the State provide a free public education system to requiring that it offer a “high quality education.” The State is currently defending a lawsuit that says the State has not allocated enough funds to provide at least a “minimally adequate” education. The case is expected to be decided in the Fall.

The South Carolina legislature is considering plans to revamp the State’s school funding formula which has not been changed in 12 years. Many legislators are inclined toward a concept called “backpacking” which ties school funds to students, not programs or school districts. In general, the lawmakers want to create a formula that: (1) is easy to understand; (2) allows school districts to shift money to where it is most needed; and (3) provides more funds to poorer districts and to students with disabilities.

# South Dakota Update

August 2008

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According to the Argus Leader, two schools that have been participating in South Dakota's Classroom Connections laptop pilot program have said they will continue the program after State funding ends. The program was planned as a three-year initiative, costing \$39 million, to provide laptop computers for every high school student in the State. The program's first year was largely paid for by a Citibank legal settlement; year two was covered by unspent school aid money. The current -- third -- year is up in the air as the legislature has killed the Governor's funding request.

# Tennessee Update

August 2008

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The Knoxville New Sentinel reports that six Tennessee colleges are customizing their remedial courses to help students in specific subjects. The participating colleges are Chattanooga State, Cleveland State, Jackson State, Columbia State, Northeast State (Kingsport), and Austin Peay State (Clarksville). A State task force is redesigning remedial classes which will then be studied in a three-year pilot program. It is hoped the new approach can be adopted Statewide.

# Texas Update

## August 2008

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The Dallas Morning News reports that Texas is considering a new rule that would require alternative certification programs to accept only students who have maintained a 2.5 grade-point average in college and would require these new teachers to undergo a fixed amount of training before they enter the classroom. About 20 percent of Texas' public school teachers -- and half of all new teachers -- come from alternative certification programs. For-profit firms that operate alternative certification programs argue that an expanded pool of teacher candidates is good for school districts that are having trouble attracting new teachers. Such programs, as well as non-profit and district- and state-operated programs, charge about \$4,000 per teacher candidate. State data show that *iteachTexas* is the largest alternative route producer of teachers in the State with nearly 1,400 certifications issued last year.

As reported in The Dallas Morning News, a State audit shows that five out of eight alternative teacher certification programs in Texas reported that teachers had completed program coursework, when in fact they had not. The programs failed to keep accurate records documenting trainees' completion. Moreover, the Texas Education Agency was cited for failing to give the programs proper oversight and allowing the programs to establish their own standards.

In early July, Texas administered retests for eighth-graders who failed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) twice during the last school year. As reported in the Houston Chronicle, this year for the first time, Texas eighth-graders must pass the TAKS to be promoted to high school. Before this summer's retest, 55,918 students Statewide faced retention in eighth grade. With the new requirement, third-, fifth-, and eighth-grade students must pass the TAKS in order to be promoted to the next grade.

As we reported in the April TechMIS issue, many Texas school districts have opted out of the State's \$148 million merit pay plan for teachers. Indeed, less than 20 percent of the districts in

the State have decided to participate, leaving 192 districts with larger shares of the pot. According to The Dallas Morning News, Dallas, for example, will get \$10.5 million under the program, 50 percent more than originally projected last Fall. Teachers will receive bonuses of at least \$3,000 based on test scores and other performance factors.

# Utah Update

## August 2008

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Utah has awarded a \$7.5 million contract to DigitalBridge for the creation of a Statewide data system. As reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, the Utah legislature appropriated \$3 million in State funds for the system (to be supplemented by additional Federal funding) which was to be established within two years. The system is expected to allow teachers and parents to track students' test scores online and to keep transcripts electronically for easy transfer when students move. When the system is implemented -- expected by the end of the year -- participating school districts will pay the ongoing operations and maintenance costs.

# Virginia Update

## August 2008

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According to the Washington Post, Virginia's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Billy Cannaday, Jr., will resign effective September 30 after two years in office. The first African-American to be head of the State's school system, Cannaday will become dean of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies at the University of Virginia. The new superintendent will be the current Chief Deputy Superintendent, Patricia I. Wright. Dr. Wright has been with the SEA for 23 years and has served in many areas including math and early childhood education.

As reported in Education Week, Fairfax County (in suburban Washington, DC) is one of 88 recipients of \$26 million in grants from the National Security Language Initiative. The Federal initiative is intended to help people with unique language skills -- particularly in Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi -- get training and certification with the goal of adding 1,000 new foreign language teachers in the next two years. The Fairfax County program will emphasize training teachers in Chinese and Arabic.

According to an interim report from a three-year study of laptop computers in Henrico County (suburban Richmond), students show improvement in a number of areas, including more communication, research, teamwork, problem-solving, and community-based assignments. The study -- in which 14,550 Henrico high school students use Dell laptops -- questioned students, teachers, and parents about their perceptions. As reported in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, students who used the computers more scored higher in reading, world history, biology, and chemistry than did students with lesser computer use -- although they scored lower in writing and algebra. The report also found that 81 percent of the parents of children in the study believe the schools have done a good job of integrating the computers into instruction.



# Washington Update

## August 2008

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According to The Spokane Spokesman-Review, Washington State has adopted a new graduation requirement under which high school students must pass Algebra II in order to earn a diploma. Currently, districts vary in their math requirements for graduation. The State is also considering an increase in the number of credits required for graduation -- from the current 19 to 24. However, because the State is already \$1 billion short of its mandate to fund basic education, the new requirements will not be implemented until the legislature allocates appropriate funding.

# West Virginia Update

## August 2008

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According to The Charleston Gazette, West Virginia has mandated that every public high school in the State must offer at least four Advanced Placement classes. The AP courses can be taken in person, through video teleconferences, or through the West Virginia Virtual School, a Statewide distance learning program.

As reported in The Intelligencer/Wheeling News-Register, the West Virginia legislature has, effective July 1, modified procedures for the State's General Educational Development (GED) testing. Now GED candidates must pass an Official Practice Test (OPT) before taking the actual GED exam. Candidates who fail the OPT are offered free adult basic education classes to improve their skills. Students who pass the OPT can register for the GED using the online process known as *GEDWizard*. The new policy also waives the \$50 GED fee, eliminates the waiting period for 18-year-olds, and requires 16- and 17-year-olds to be out of school for at least one month before testing.

The Charleston Gazette reports that the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission will receive an \$18 million grant from the Federal GEAR-UP program to help low-income students go to college. GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness for Undergraduate Programs) provides specialized college preparation and financial incentives for students and their families. West Virginia's six-year GEAR-UP project will involve the participation of 13,000 students in seventh through twelfth grades from Boone, Clay, Lincoln, McDowell, Mango, Roane, Summers, Webster, Wirt, and Wyoming Counties.

# Wisconsin Update

August 2008

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According to State data, 156 Wisconsin schools -- up from 95 schools last year -- failed to meet standards under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. More than half of these schools (82) were in Milwaukee. Four districts as a whole -- Beloit, Madison, Milwaukee, and Racine -- also failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB. Of the 56 schools identified for improvement because they missed AYP for two or more years, 33 had low reading scores on the State assessment, 35 had low math scores, 12 had low attendance or graduation rates, and six did not have enough students tested.

Wisconsin will be one of the first states to participate in the National STEM Equity Pipeline Project intended to attract more girls, minorities, and students with disabilities to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Developed by the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Education Foundation and funded by the National Science Foundation, the project will test a number of strategies -- such as mentoring and student pairing -- for making STEM more inclusive.

The Daily Kenoshan reports that, for 2008-09, Wisconsin will fund 22 educational technology projects through the Federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (E<sup>2</sup>T<sup>2</sup>) program. Affecting 223 school districts in the State, the grants are intended to help every student become technologically literate by the end of eighth grade and to encourage the integration into teacher training and curriculum development. Grant activities must be based on research and 40 percent of funding must be used for staff development that can help educators use technology to improve student performance.

# Wyoming Update

## August 2008

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The Wyoming Department of Education has appointed Susan Kinneman to become the Statewide coordinator for students at risk of dropping out of school. According to the Casper Star-Tribune, the new appointee will work with a study commission and explore the effects of school on the performance of at-risk students. The State wants to establish a single support system for schools dealing with potential dropouts.