

Alabama Update - July 2005

As reported in Education Week, Alabama added significant educational technology funding for the 2004-05 school year. It restored \$8.4 million in general technology aid to districts that had been zeroed out the prior year and increased the budget for the Alabama Virtual Library from \$1 million to \$3.5 million. For the coming school year, Governor Bob Riley has proposed an increase in the State's Mathematics, Science, and Technology Initiative from \$238,000 to \$15 million. The Governor's proposal also includes \$4.6 million to pay part of the cost of hiring a technology coordinator in each of Alabama's 129 school districts. He has also proposed a distance learning program known as the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS) which would provide online and videoconferenced classes for students across the State.

A recent report by the Yale University Child Study Center shows that 42 percent of the pre-kindergarten teachers hold Master's degrees, ninth highest in the nation. And, the State is right at the national median with annual salaries of \$30,000 for pre-K teachers.

Alaska Update - July 2005

Education Week reports that the legislative session that ended in May increased education funding by five percent --to \$849 million -- for FY 2006. The per-pupil allocation of State aid increased by 7.5 percent from \$4,576 per student to \$4,919.

The Alaska Board of Education has adopted new education standards with respect to teacher hiring and the science curriculum. Starting in 2006, new teachers will face a more rigorous licensing process that includes videotapes of prior work. In addition, the State's science guidelines will be revised to change language that some educators considered to be dismissive of evolution as the unifying principle of the life sciences.

Education Week reports that Alaska is planning to use some of its Federal e-rate funding to pay for telephone and Internet connections at a number of the State's Head Start centers. The State believes the centers are eligible for e-rate money because they provide the equivalent of K-12 services for low-income families in remote areas.

Arizona Update - July 2005

In March, the Arizona legislature passed a bill that would provide tuition vouchers of up to \$4,500 for private high school students and \$3,500 for private school students in lower grades. The program, if approved, would go into effect during the 2006-07 school year with kindergarten, first-grade, and high school seniors the first groups to be eligible for the vouchers. The remaining grades would be phased in over the next four years.

In early May, the Arizona House approved a State-funded voucher program for low-income students, despite a promised veto from Governor Janet Napolitano. The bill included a \$17 million expansion of the State's all-day kindergarten initiative strongly supported by the Governor. House Bill 2782 provides for the all-day kindergarten funding and a voucher plan that would, beginning in 2006, give \$3,500 yearly vouchers to 1,500 low-income kindergarten students. The bill also includes a new corporate tax credit for non-public school scholarships that would eventually become a \$55 million program each year.

State Superintendent Tom Horne has proposed a \$1.5 million budget for the Integrated Database for Enhancing Arizona Learning (IDEAL) system next year. The system, intended to enhance data-driven instruction in the State, is part of the State's Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). Education Week reports that currently, SAIS contains only enrollment and demographic data. IDEAL will expand the system to include student achievement and information about special needs students.

Education Week also reports that a program called Students Fair and Immediate Resources for Students Today (Students FIRST) funds a \$212 million construction program that was begun in 2000 to provide computers for Arizona school districts and Internet connections in all of the State's classroom computers. The deadline for completing more than 1,400 networking projects in three school districts was June 30, 2005.

The Arizona legislature has for some time been wrangling over the requirement that high school seniors must pass the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test in order to graduate.

Proponents of the exit requirement believe strongly that the requirement should stand. Currently, 57 percent – 37,000 students – of the Class of 2006 (the first to face the requirement) have not passed the reading, writing, or mathematics components of the AIMS. In mid-May, a compromise was reached to relax Arizona’s AIMS graduation requirements. Under the compromise, tenth- and eleventh-grade students who receive Cs or better in their reading, writing, and math classes could increase their scores on the AIMS by as much as 25 percent.

A new report by Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that Arizona does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled “Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes,” the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

As reported in Education Daily, Arizona has received a three-year grant from the U. S. Department of Education to help Arizona school districts encourage low-income middle and high school students to sign up for Advanced Placement Courses. Funded at \$996,000, the Federal grant will support the State’s Advancing Scholarship through Preparation, Incentives, and Rigorous Educational Standards (ASPIRES) program.

Arizona law says that the State’s 52 for-profit charter schools are considered to be public schools, subject to the same requirements as charter schools operated by public school districts or other nonprofit entities. As reported in Education Daily in March, the U. S. Department of Education (USED) ruled that for-profit charter schools are not eligible to receive Federal funds. A coalition of Arizona for-profit charter school operators has filed suit against USED challenging the ruling.

Arkansas Update - July 2005

Using Federal technology funding -- a three-year, \$1.8 million grant -- Arkansas will be evaluating its popular Environment and Spatial Technology (EAST) program. Education Week reports that EAST is a project-based learning system used in 140 schools, that teachers video editing, animation, and database design. The State has also established (in partnership with California) the Technology Information Center for Information Leadership, an Internet portal providing technology-related professional development and resources.

Arkansas appropriated \$11 million for distance learning for the 2004-05 school year but only \$6 million for next year. Now in its fifth year, the distance learning project offers courses that might not be available because of teacher shortages. Next year's funds will be used to install compressed interactive video systems in 214 schools across the State.

The Arkansas News Bureau reports that a total of more than 60 schools in the State have filed legal challenges to Arkansas' education funding laws. Headed by the Fort Smith School District and including 17 other districts, the most recent action claims that the State diverted property tax revenue collected for the schools into other State budget accounts. The districts also claim that the State's education budget of \$5,400 per student violates last year's legislative commitment to make public schools the State's highest priority.

California Update - July 2005

As reported in Education Week, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is pushing to expand the number of charter schools in California. In support of the Governor's position, retiring State Secretary of Education Richard Riordan argued that allowing two- and four-year colleges and universities to operate charter schools would improve education in the State. Currently, the State has 510 such schools serving more than 180,000 of the State's 6.8 million public school students. The State's teachers union opposes the Governor's plan.

Governor Schwarzenegger has appointed Alan D. Bersin to be California's next education secretary. Formerly Superintendent in San Diego, Bersin replaced outgoing Superintendent Richard Riordan as of July 1.

According to Education Week, California has appropriated \$16.3 million for educational technology programs for the 2005-06 school year. The State added one new technology program last year, an evaluation of Electronic Learning Assessment Resources, an online provider of tests in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

As reported in the Los Angeles Times, considerable opposition has arisen to the new high school exit exam which is scheduled to go into effect for the Class of 2006. Critics claim the exam will discriminate against minority students and will lead to low graduation and high dropout rates. Two separate bills being considered by the legislature are intended to offer alternatives to the exit exam through other assessment measures or delaying its implementation until school resources – more fully credentialed teachers, more adequate textbooks – are improved.

A new report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that California does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled "Teacher Quality:

Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes,” the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

The Sacramento Bee reports that California is negotiating with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to eliminate differences between the State’s two performance measurement systems. USED has indicated a willingness to let states use their own assessment system (rather than a Federal system) as long as the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are maintained. California has asked USED to use its Academic Performance Index for both State and NCLB purposes. In order to have its request approved, the State will have to make significant changes in its system, including doubling the improvement required at schools or establishing higher targets for subgroups in schools.

The U.S. Department of Education has denied a request from California to waive an NCLB requirement for the testing -- in reading and writing -- of limited English proficient students in kindergarten and first grade. The State already tests these students in listening and speaking.

Education Daily reports that ten California school districts are suing the State over its policy of requiring all students --including those with limited English proficiency -- to be tested with assessments designed for native English speakers. The lawsuit asks that English language learners be tested in their native language for the first three-to-five years they are in the U.S.

The Los Angeles Times reports that Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed a plan to reduce class size in California’s poorest performing schools. To be funded at \$174 million, the Governor’s proposal could reduce average class size to 20 students in the State’s 2,400 lowest ranked schools. Schools would have the flexibility to reduce class sizes as they see fit in Grades 4-12. The Governor has also proposed that failing schools be taken over by State-appointed trustees or management teams or that they reopen as State-approved charter schools. Overall, California has seen an unanticipated increase in revenues of more than \$2 billion; the Governor plans to use \$1.3 billion of that for transportation projects.

California's revised FY 2006 budget calls for an additional \$252 million for K-12 education, including \$174 million for class size reduction in the State's lowest-performing schools. As reported in Education Week, the plan includes \$49.5 million in "recruitment, retention, and recognition" grants for low-performing schools.

As reported in The Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles Unified School District is looking at a significant budget shortfall because Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed spending calls for the State to withhold funding for Proposition 98. The District is more than \$220 million short on its \$6.4 billion annual budget. Among the cuts for 2005-06 will be elimination of a \$14 million attendance incentive program and decreased spending by \$10 million for special education books and supplies. District officials argue that the Governor's decision to withhold State funds violates a promise not to do so that he made the year before when he similarly withheld Proposition 98 money. Another factor in Los Angeles' budget difficulties is the two-percent salary increase -- retroactive to July 2004 -- give under a new teachers' contract at a cost of \$76 million a year.

Colorado Update - July 2005

As reported in Education Week, Colorado is in the third year of its program using technology to support data-driven decision-making. Currently, more than 40 percent of the State's 178 school districts are using the program in an attempt to use data to improve instruction. Colorado also has seven full-time online schools which, last year, served approximately 8,000 students. Moreover, the State's three-year-old distance learning program – known as Colorado Online Learning – provides courses in core academic subjects to 3,000 students at all grade levels.

As reported in “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006,” Colorado has proposed to increase its investment in the State’s Preschool Program from \$22.6 million to \$34.0 million, a 50 percent increase.

The Rocky Mountain News reports that Colorado is planning to develop a program that would close achievement gaps on the State’s reading and mathematics exams -- across economic and racial lines. The State will identify as many as 60 schools in which the gaps between poor and wealthy students, and between white and minority students are consistently higher than the State average. The nature of the support that will be given to these schools has yet to be determined.

Education Week reports that higher education officials in Colorado have begun offering State vouchers worth as much as \$2,400 to attend colleges in Colorado. In addition, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education will send letters to all high school juniors scoring 19 (out of 30) or below on the ACT, informing them of remedial programs that could help them prepare for college. State education officials believe the added funds and information will attract more students to in-State colleges and universities.

As reported in the Rocky Mountain News, the Denver teachers’ union approved, by a 74 percent majority, a change in the salary schedule that restores a cut made two years ago. The school district’s 4,000 teachers will receive raises of up to 9.9 percent next year if the school board, as expected, approves the contract. The agreement will give teachers greater influence over issues relating to professional development and school reform.

As reported in Education Daily, this November, Denver voters will be asked to approve a merit pay plan for the district's teachers. Approved by the local teachers union, the Professional Compensation Plan for Teachers (ProComp) would eliminate the existing seniority-based system with one tied to increases in student performance and the acquisition of skills through graduate training and professional development. To approve the new plan, voters must accept a \$25 million per year tax increase.

Connecticut Update - July 2005

Connecticut's scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that the State's fourth- and eighth-grade students continue to perform well above the national average in reading and mathematics (2003 is the most recent year for which data is available). However, achievement gaps between white and minority students remain wide. Connecticut's white students are among the top five in the country while its black students are close to the national average. Nearly 54 percent of white fourth-graders are classified as proficient in reading compared with only 20 percent of black and Hispanic fourth-grade students. The gap between white and black fourth-graders is the third largest in the country behind only Michigan and the District of Columbia.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Connecticut has increased its investment in the State's School Readiness Initiative from \$51.6 million to \$62.1 million, a 20 percent increase.

Education Week reports that, in 2005, Connecticut used \$4.2 million in bond funds to help local school districts improve their technology infrastructures. Governor Jodi Rell has proposed allocating \$5 million in bond funds for infrastructure improvement in FY 2006 and an additional \$3.4 million to maintain the State network and to provide technical assistance to districts. By the start of next school year, all 166 Connecticut school districts will be connected to the Connecticut Education Network (CEN), a high speed Internet system allowing videoconferencing and other applications. Development of the CEN cost \$41 million over the past four years. Governor Rell also included in her FY 2006 budget \$15.5 million to purchase laptop computers for every ninth and tenth grade English student in the State's public schools.

Education Week reports that an analysis of school spending suggests that Connecticut must double its current \$1.4 billion budget for K-12 education. According to the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education funding, the increase it calls for is only half of what will be needed to provide students with the support needed to reach the performance standards called for by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Education Daily reports that the Connecticut State Senate has approved a bill that would authorize the State Attorney General to sue the U.S. Department of Education on behalf of the State's legislature. The potential lawsuit, based upon the "unfunded mandates" of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), has yet to be approved by the House or the Governor's Office.

Delaware Update - July 2005

The Delaware House has passed a set of bills that would require members of the Class of 2008 (this year's ninth graders) to meet a number of academic requirements to graduate with their class. Beginning in 2008, seniors who fail State tests will still receive their diplomas if they meet other State benchmarks such as high grades or high SAT scores. Students will take reading, writing, and mathematics tests in the tenth grade and can retake the exams as many times as necessary. Final student results are based on a weighted formula of test scores. Science and social studies exams are given in the eleventh grade; they could be added to the formula in future years. This structure replaces the never-implemented, three-tiered diploma by which seniors were given basic, standard, or distinguished diplomas.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Delaware has proposed to increase its investment in the State's Early Childhood Assistance Program from \$4.5 million to \$5.3 million – an 18 percent increase – to decrease the per-pupil funding gap with the State's Head Start program.

Delaware provides all its schools with access to the Internet and to the Statewide intranet. The intranet allows schools and districts to file financial information with the State. The student tracking system will be in operation in 18 of Delaware's 19 school districts next Fall. The State has a \$million technology block grant program which allocates funds to districts for maintenance and support of technology and State law permits districts to raise up to \$3.5 million for information technology from local taxes.

District of Columbia Update - July 2005

A report by The Washington Post says that more than 25 percent of the teachers in D.C. Public Schools do not have the required certification. More than 1,400 teachers are not properly credentialed, half of whom have never obtained a license in the subject they are teaching. The others have expired licenses. The report also indicated, based on comments by the District superintendent, that between 25 percent and 40 percent of the school principals in the district are not performing adequately.

As reported in The Washington Post, more than half of D.C.'s public schools have failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The District has established a comprehensive new intervention program designed to help low-achieving students at a cost of nearly \$30 million. For most of the schools, the intervention will be coaching by outside educators. The 16 schools that have failed to make AYP for three or four consecutive years could face replacement of staff or takeover by independent management. The program will also offer rewards for the District's 22 high-performing schools, including grants for special equipment, before- and after-school programs, and higher certifications for teachers.

As reported in Education Week, the District's budget for educational technology was \$3.1 million for the 2004-05 school year including both Federal and local sources. All high schools, most middle schools, and nearly a third of elementary schools have Internet access. District teachers are required to complete a professional development program on the use of curriculum materials and technology tools before the District will provide the teacher with new technology resources.

Florida Update - July 2005

The St. Petersburg Times reports that the Florida House has approved Governor Jeb Bush's education package which extends the State's voucher program and limits the controversial class size amendment. The package consists of two bills: (1) the A-Plus-Plus plan which follows up on the Governor's 1999 A-Plus program to emphasize standardized testing; and (2) a proposal to lower requirements for class size reduction and to increase starting teachers' salaries to \$35,000. Under the A-Plus-Plus plan, Reading Compact Scholarships would provide State-funded vouchers to any student who fails the reading component of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for two out of three years. A total of 250,000 Florida children would be eligible for the vouchers, but only a small fraction are expected to make use of them.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Florida has proposed to invest \$400 million for a constitutionally mandated voluntary pre-kindergarten program. Last year \$9.6 million was spent for professional development in prekindergarten classrooms.

Education Week indicates that Florida allocated \$55.6 million in State funds for school technology during the 2004-05 school year. Many Florida school districts combine Federal, State, local, and private resources so that they spend more than twice the State allocation alone.

With a budget of \$12.5 million, the Florida Virtual School enrolled more than 21,000 students during the 2004-05 school year, a 50 percent increase over the previous year. "Just Read! Florida" provided \$32 million in grants to public elementary and middle schools during the 2004-05 school year, a significant portion of which was used to purchase educational and software.

Education Daily reports that the scores of fifth- and eighth-grade students on the science component of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) were higher this year than they were two years ago. Scores of fifth-graders improved from 285 in 2003 to 296 this year and eighth-grade scores went from 287 to 291. In addition, eleventh-graders' scores went from 287,

when they were tested as tenth-graders, to 293. In December, achievement standards for science will be determined.

Education Week also reports that the U. S. Department of Education has granted Florida two of its requested changes to its State accountability plan. The first change allows the State to increase the size of a subgroup that must be counted toward a school's AYP calculation from 30 to 15 percent of the school's enrollment. The second change permits Florida to raise its annual targets for the percent of students who achieve proficiency in reading and mathematics is smaller, annual increments rather than every three years. If these changes had been in effect last year, it is estimated that 788 schools -- rather than the actual 331 schools -- would have met Federal standards.

Education Daily reports that Florida has established a category called "provisional adequate yearly progress" for schools that do not meet the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) but who meet State accountability standards. The State argues that this designation will better align the State's "A+" accountability program with NCLB. Last year, 68 percent of Florida's schools received top rankings on the State's grading scale, but only 23 percent met AYP as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. The State has petitioned the U.S. Department of Education to excuse provisional AYP schools from having to provide school choice and supplemental educational services. In the meantime, however, schools and districts must plan to face sanctions under NCLB, pending USED decisions.

Georgia Update - July 2005

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that Cobb County has approved a contract with Apple Computer to provide laptop computers to County students. Under the projects first phase, more than 7,100 teachers will receive Apple iBook laptops, perhaps as soon as July. Four high schools have been selected as pilot sites; students in these schools will get laptops next school year. In future years, if the program is continued, 63,000 iBooks will be distributed to all teachers and students in grades six through twelve. The County has estimated that the laptop project will cost \$70 million over the next four years and \$20 million per year thereafter.

A new report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that Georgia does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled "Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes," the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

The same report by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University found that fewer than half of Georgia's minority students graduate from high school in four years. The report indicated that, unlike non-Hispanic white students 64 percent of whom graduate on time, only 43 percent of Hispanic students and 47 percent of black students graduate within four years. Among Georgia's large school districts, Cobb County had the highest overall graduation rate of 73 percent, followed by Gwinnett County at 71 percent, Fulton County at 68 percent, Atlanta City at 52 percent, and DeKalb County at 51 percent.

In mid-May, the Georgia State Board of Education approved a new mathematics curriculum that will integrate algebra, geometry, and statistics into other classes rather than having them taught as separate subjects. Based on a Japanese model, the new math approach will be phased in over several years. The new approach was revised by a panel of experts including teachers, college professors, and curriculum specialists and is supported by State education officials. As reported

by Education Week, this integrated approach will start in the coming school year for sixth-graders with the new high school curriculum to be implemented in the Fall of 2008.

Georgia has placed a new emphasis on integrating technology into its academic curriculum, but is doing so with a budget for educational technology of only \$8 million for the 2004-05 school year -- \$1.5 million less than the previous year. Among the State's goals is to have at least 50 schools set up with wireless Internet connections by next school year using Federal funds to provide grants of \$52,000 per school. As reported in Education Week, 12 schools Statewide -- four elementary, four middle, and four high schools -- will be selected as 21st Century Model Schools; these schools will be provided with wireless technology and their teachers will receive special training in technology integration with instruction. The project will focus on literacy in the elementary schools, mathematics in the middle schools, and science at the high school level. Governor Sonny Perdue has also proposed establishment of an online high school, an expansion of the State's four-year-old "e-learning" project. The online school would provide at least two Advanced Placement courses in every high school in the State. The Governor has asked for \$500,000 in start-up funding for the Summer of 2005 and \$1.7 million in operating funds for the 2005-06 school year.

As reported in Education Week, Georgia's total budget for FY 2006 is \$17.41 billion of which \$6.4 billion will go to K-12 education. This represents an 8.5 percent increase over FY 2005. Nearly \$140 million out of the \$500 million increase for K-12 can be accounted for by enrollment growth in the school funding formula. Another \$14.7 million will be used to add 4,000 more students to the State's universal kindergarten program.

The new Georgia Virtual High School will allow Georgia students to take summer classes, Advanced Placement courses, and advanced science and math courses not available in many local school districts. The State legislature approved Governor Perdue's request of \$1.38 million start-up funding, as well as \$1 million to provide online SAT preparation courses. Beginning this summer, the Virtual High School will provide 60 online courses to students from 13 participating schools.

As reported in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, more than 20,000 (nearly 17 percent) of Georgia fifth-graders failed to pass both reading and mathematics sections of the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), passing of which is, for the first time, required for promotion to the sixth grade. These students will be given a chance to retake the test at the end of a summer school remedial course.

The Georgia Board of Education has approved guidelines that are likely to result in more schools making adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Under the State's new regulations, according to Education Daily, subgroups must have at least 40 students or ten percent of the school's tested population (up to a maximum of 75 students) to be counted as a tested subgroup. Georgia will adjust district scores for the 2004-05 school year to account for students with disabilities who did not make AYP.

Hawaii Update - July 2005

School Reform News reports that the U.S. Department of Education (USED) is investigating the withholding of Federal special education funds from charter schools by State education officials. Totalling \$1.7 million, the withheld funds have caused severe problems for some charter schools. One local charter school is in danger of being closed down because it is owed \$160,000 in Federal funds.

As reported in “Leadership Matters: Governor’s Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006,” Hawaii has proposed to increase its investment in the State’s Preschool Open Doors Project from \$3.2 million to \$8.4 million. It also plans to transfer \$20 million in TANF funds which would allow families to use the funds for prekindergarten programs.

As reported in Education Week, Hawaii’s online E-School offers 20 courses and hopes to serve as a means to meet the “highly qualified teacher” requirement of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The State has allocated \$2 million toward getting a computer for every teacher in the State, an expansion of the current 12-school pilot program. The computers will enable the teachers to use Hawaii’s new student information system and provide the kind of data needed to meet NCLB requirements. In addition, the State has ongoing a small pilot test of a new certification exam for eighth-graders on hardware and software knowledge.

As reported in Education Daily, the State of Hawaii has made changes in the services it makes available to special education students such that Federal oversight stemming from a 1993 lawsuit has finally come to an end. The suit was initiated by parents of a disabled student who argued that the State was in violation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Idaho Update - July 2005

In mid-April, the Idaho Charter School Commission approved INSPIRE -- also known as the Idaho Connections Academy -- as a new virtual school. Beginning operation next school year, INSPIRE will serve K-9 students in 2005-06 and will expand to K-12 in subsequent years. More information about the new online charter school is available by calling 1(877)CA-IDAHO.

Idaho's budget for educational technology was \$8.4 million for the 2004-05 school year, the same as the prior year. Education Week reports that the Albertson Foundation has had to modify the goals of its \$35 million grant for the Idaho Student Information Management System. Instead of the originally planned Statewide implementation, 29 school districts which piloted the system last school year will convert to one of three alternative configurations during the Summer of 2005.

Illinois Update - July 2005

As reported in the Chicago Tribune, there has been a severe cutback in the amount of State testing required in Illinois. The Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) is being given this Spring without many of the writing, social studies, fine arts, health, and physical development components given in the past. The State's third, fifth, and eighth grade students are taking only reading and mathematics exams. Fourth- and seventh-graders take only science tests. High school juniors will take cutback reading and math exams, just enough to comply with Federal No Child Left Behind Act requirements.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governor's Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Illinois has proposed to increase its investment in the State's Prekindergarten Program from \$214 million to \$243 million, a 14 percent increase.

A new report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that Illinois does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled "Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes," the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

Education Week reports that Illinois is considering two approaches to raising funds for school aid, including: (1) an exchange of higher State income taxes for lower property taxes; and (2) using more gambling revenues for the schools. Governor Rob Blagojevich has expressed opposition to the tax swap plan, arguing it represents a tax increase. The Governor favors the number of slot machines in existing casinos, taxes on which could yield as much as \$300 million in new funding for schools.

As reported in Education Week, State educational technology funding has decreased from more than \$11 million during the 2003-04 school year to only \$4 million for the school year just

ended. Technology spending is projected to increase to \$5 million next year. The most significant cut has been in the Closing the Gap program which had helped pay for professional development and technology infrastructure. It was cut from \$5.5 million for 2003-04 to zero this past year.

Established in 2000 and supported by Federal and State funds, the Illinois Virtual High School permits all high school aged students in the State -- public and private -- to take online courses for high school or college credit. Using Federal funds, Illinois plans, by 2006, to assess the technology skills of eighth-grade students in selected schools across the State.

As reported in the Chicago Tribune, Illinois has in place a law that allows special education students to graduate with a regular high school diploma and yet remain eligible for State-guaranteed training services through age 21. It is estimated that approximately 5,000 disabled students were enrolled in school past normal graduation age; most take advantage of transitional training services.

In June, a bill was approved that would increase the State's high school graduation requirements in English, writing, mathematics, and science. To be phased in between now and 2012, the new rules would require high school students to take four years of English instead of three, three years of math (including Algebra I and some geometry) instead of two, two years of science instead of one, and two years of "writing intensive" courses. As reported in the Chicago Sun-Times, currently 49 percent of Illinois school districts do not require four years of English and 59 percent do not require three years of math.

The Chicago Sun-Times reports that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has increased its support for the improvement of Chicago high schools from \$30 million to \$41 million. The initial \$30 million is intended to divide several low-performing high schools into smaller, more responsive units. The additional \$11 million will be used to (1) develop a districtwide high school plan (\$2.3 million); (2) create two new charter high schools through Nobel Street Charter School (\$1.4 million); (3) establish two new charter schools through the University of Chicago

(\$6 million); and (4) start yet another charter high school through Perspectives Charter School (\$550,000).

As reported in Education Daily, Chicago Public Schools plans to give greater autonomy over curriculum and professional development to 85 of the City's schools which have met the adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Beginning next school year, these schools will also be exempt from regular monitoring by City officials.

Indiana Update - July 2005

Tight Federal and State budgets have caused Indiana to choose a desktop – rather than laptop – model for its one-to-one computing program. As reported in eSchoolNews, the computers are being purchased at commodity prices without service contracts or warranties. School technology coordinators will handle maintenance and repairs. Prior to 2001, State funding for school technology was in the \$20 million to \$25 million per year range. Since then, State technology funding has been only about \$2.5 million annually. The desktop computing program is expected to cost \$550 per student compared with a projected \$1,300 per student for a laptop solution.

As reported in Education Week, there was no increase in the \$2.5 million of State technology funding under the Technology Plan Grant program for the past two years. The legislature is, however, considering budgeting \$7.5 million for educational technology for the next biennium. Since 2003, Indiana high schools have offered end-of-course assessments online in eleventh-grade English and Algebra 1. A total of 109,000 online exams were given last Spring. The State plans to add online testing in Algebra 2 and biology for the 2005-06 school year. Indiana is continuing toward its goal of a 1:1 computer-to-student ratio. The State has provided desktop computers (at \$375 each) to all students in 12 classrooms across the State, planning to have a 1:1 ratio in all high schools within four years.

In July, a bill will be introduced in the Indiana legislature designed to address the needs of students with learning disabilities. Requiring an amendment to the Indiana Education Code, HB 1488 will: (1) train teachers about “phonologic” weakness and its role in reading development; (2) determine the instruments that can detect phonologic weakness; (3) determine the instruments that can be used to assess reading development; and (4) apply assessment results to a student’s instructional program.

The Indianapolis Star reports that a total of 99 Indiana schools – up from 77 the year before -- failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2004 under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Of the 77 schools that failed to make AYP in 2003, eleven improved enough for a second straight year to get off the “needs improvement” list but 33 more schools were added to

the list, primarily because the number of students who took the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus more than doubled in 2004. More than a quarter of the schools failing to make AYP were in Indianapolis Public Schools.

Education Technology News reports that many Indiana high school students are taking the end-of-year Core 40 assessment exams online. Core 40, the State's recommended high school curriculum, is not currently mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Whether or not to take the Core 40 exams online is at the option of the participating schools, although the online option is chosen more frequently than the pencil-and-paper version. For example, 54,000 out of 68,000 students Statewide took the Algebra exam online. Among the lessons learned last year, where the online exams were pilot tested, was allowing enough lead time for testing -- specifically giving schools the flexibility to schedule students for computer lab time to take the tests.

As reported in Education Week, Indiana has adopted a new dropout policy which requires that any high school students (at least 16 years old) and his/her parents must participate in an "exit interview" with the school principal before dropping out. At the interview, the principal will explain the consequences of dropping out.

Governor Mitch Daniels has signed a two-year \$24.3 billion State budget, including \$5.8 billion in FY 2006 for K-12 education -- a 1.2 percent increase over the previous year.

As reported in The Indianapolis Star, the Indianapolis school district has provided laptop computers to students at their middle schools for the past four school years. The Federal grant funding that has supported the Tech-Know-Build program and its 2,500 laptops expires this summer. The district will be hard-pressed to find enough funds to keep the program alive.

Iowa Update - July 2005

In late March, the Iowa legislature approved a bill that would encourage school districts to provide college preparatory courses to more high school students. As reported in the Des Moines Register, Senate File (bill) 245 would set a goal of requiring at least 80 percent of graduating seniors to complete a model core curriculum which following recommendations of the American College Testing Program-- would include four years of English and three years each of mathematics, social studies, and science. The measure, however, contains no sanctions for districts that fail to meet the July 1, 2009 deadline for compliance.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Iowa has proposed to increase its combined investment in the State's Shared Visions Preschool Program and the Parent Support Program from \$11.3 million to \$31.3 million. All of the increase will be earmarked for prekindergarten programs.

Between 2003 and 2006, Iowa will have used a total of \$12.5 million in Federal E²T² funds for teacher professional development in the use of online materials to enhance their teaching in reading and mathematics. The State legislature anticipates no specific earmarks for educational technology. Iowa Learning Online provides distance learning opportunities for high school students, particularly in math, science, history, and foreign languages. In the past year, 545 students from 42 school districts have participated.

Kansas Update - July 2005

According to Education Week, it is expected that as many as 120,000 students will have taken the 2005 State assessment online this Spring. In the Spring of 2004, only five grades (4, 5, 7, 10, and 11) offered online testing in reading and mathematics. This year online tests were available for all grades and in all required subjects (reading, math, social studies, and science). In addition, KAN-ED, a State-sponsored telecommunications network, offered 15,000 hours of distance learning courses during the 2004-05 school year. More than 100 teachers helped provide 500 videoconferencing courses. Funding for KAN-ED is scheduled to expire at the end of June 2005, but the legislature is seeking to extend the program's funding through 2010.

A ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court has declared the State's school financing system to be unconstitutional, even though the State legislature, this Spring, approved \$142 million in additional spending. Under the Court's order, Kansas is required to allocate another \$143 million to education by July 1. As reported in Education Daily, the total of \$285 million in additional funding is still far less than the \$853 million recommended in 2001 by a consulting firm hired by the Kansas legislature. Both planned increases are outgrowth of a 1999 lawsuit against the State by the Salina and Dodge City school districts which argued that Kansas' school funding formula did not provide enough money.

Kentucky Update - July 2005

Education Week reports that Kentucky spent a total of \$70 million-- from all sources -- on educational technology during the 2004-05 school year – about the same as the prior year. Based on a review of the State’s technology master plan, State education officials estimate that education technology in Kentucky has been underfunded by \$50 million per year for the past five years. For example, Kentucky Education Technology Systems (KETS), a comprehensive voice-video and data system for schools, was recommended to receive \$35 million for FY 2005; it got only \$20 million. The State has determined that it has the technology to test only 2,000 students online at any one time. Moreover, it is estimated that 75 percent of student workstations and 67 percent of teacher workstations are not capable of running such applications as online testing.

The Louisville Courier-Journal reports that the Kentucky Department of Education has developed a long-range plan for improving the academic achievement of special education students. Among the plan’s key recommendations are: (1) ensuring that public schools provide the same range of instructional options as non-disabled students; (2) ensuring the availability of well-trained, qualified teachers; and (3) making State regulations more rigorous to avoid misclassification of special education students. More than 100 Kentucky schools failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) last year because of the low reading and math scores of learning disabled students.

Louisiana Update - July 2005

The New Orleans Time-Picayune reports that, in an effort to comply with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Louisiana will replace the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, as its principal assessment instrument, with the new integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP). The iLEAP is constructed from elements of the Iowa test and the older LEAP exam which is used to determine whether students will be promoted to the next grade. The LEAP exam will continue to be given in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grades; the new iLEAP will be given to students in the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth grades.

As reported in “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006,” Louisiana has proposed to increase its investment in the State’s Early Childhood Development and Enrichment Activity Classes from \$25 million to \$55 million, a 57 percent increase. The State plans to level-fund, at \$8.5 million, the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program.

For the 2004-05 school year, Louisiana added no money to the Classroom-based Technology Fund, the principal source of technology support for school districts. As reported in Education Week, the last time the Fund received State aid was \$10 million in 2002-03. Beyond the Technology Fund, the State has allocated \$700,000 for an online curriculum database accessible by all schools. The State has provided continuing support for the Louisiana Virtual School. With \$1.5 million in State funds this year, the Virtual School provided more than 30 courses for more than 2,100 online students. The State has also provided \$500,000 for an online Algebra I program with a certified online instructor and professional development for teachers who are not certified to teach Algebra I.

It is reported that four failing schools in New Orleans are likely to be taken over by outside entities over the objections of the district’s superintendent. Among the organizations scheduled to operate the schools are the University of New Orleans (College of Education), Southern University at New Orleans, Middle School Advocates, the Knowledge is Power Program Foundation, and a partnership of EMO EdFutures, Inc. and the New Life Leadership Foundation.

Maine Update - July 2005

Education Daily reports that a report commissioned by Maine's two Republican U. S. Senators, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, has recommended significant changes in the No Child Left Behind. Among the areas of change recommended are adequate yearly progress, assessment/accountability, LEP student testing, special education student testing, highly qualified teachers, and funding. The full report can be viewed at <http://Collins.senate.gov>.

Maine is considering joining one of the legal actions challenging the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Governor John Baldacci has estimated that NCLB could cost the State as much as \$11.5 million over the six-year period from 2003 to 2008 and the cost to local school districts could be many times more. The Maine legislature has accepted a measure that would allow the State to sue the U.S. Department of Education contending the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is so inadequately funded that Maine cannot be required to comply with the Federal law.

Maine's Learning Technology Initiative has, to date, provided a laptop computer to every seven and eighth grade student and teacher in the State – 34,000 Apple iBooks. It is one-third the way through the process of providing laptops to ninth-graders. Funding for ninth-grade laptops -- \$6 million – has come from a combination of Federal, State, local, and private money. The laptops have allowed districts to give the State writing assessment for eighth-graders online.

The Maine Distance Learning Project provides Advanced Placement, foreign language, science, and mathematics courses for high school students whose schools cannot provide the classes. Using videoconferencing technology, the Project is funded largely by \$1 million annually from the State.

Maryland Update - July 2005

The Washington Post reports on the difficulty charter school operators have getting established in Maryland school districts. The State's charter school laws are among the toughest in the nation (as rated by the Center for Education Reform). Moreover, local school boards continue to resist charters. Since 2002, seven Maryland districts have turned down charter school applications. Ten charter school applications have been approved and seven Baltimore City schools are converting to charters, but none have begun operations, despite strong support from the Governor.

Education Week reports that Maryland's State Board of Education has ruled that students attending charter schools must receive the same funding as public school students get from their local school districts. Although Maryland currently has only one charter school, ten more are planned to open in the Fall and seven public schools in Baltimore City will be converting to charter schools.

The Washington Post reports that reading and mathematics test scores for Maryland students have improved for the second consecutive year. The Statewide results showed the greatest progress in early grades. For example, more than 75 percent of third- and fourth-graders scored at "proficient" or "advanced" levels in both reading and math. Only a little more than half of Maryland's eighth-graders achieved at these levels in math. Moreover, scores for minority students closed achievement gaps.

According to the Washington Post, the Governor's Commission on Quality Education in Maryland has recommended using a "value added" approach to measuring school performance. The new system would take into consideration such factors as the financial and ethnic backgrounds of the school's enrollment. The value added approach is, according to Maryland educators, an effort to account for the fact that, in many schools, students do not enter school as well-prepared to learn as they do in the State's more affluent schools. Included in the proposed system is the goal of tracking all students beginning on the day they enter school for the first time.

Starting with the Class of 2009, Maryland high school seniors must pass the State's High School Assessment tests in English, Algebra, Biology, and U. S. Government -- either passing each or achieving a minimum composite score -- in order to receive their diplomas.

As reported in the Baltimore Sun, some school districts are providing "support" courses for incoming ninth-graders that will parallel their regular classes in the four test subjects. School officials believe these "support" classes will provide early help for students who could have trouble with the exit exams.

As reported in Education Week, Maryland school districts received \$304 million more in State aid than in the previous year. Although no new funds were allocated for technology, it is expected that a portion of the increase was used for educational technology. The State used Federal technology funds for competitive grants to the State's 24 school districts.

The Washington Post reports that Maryland's school "watch list" -- schools failing to meet State performance standards -- includes 173 of the State's 1,102 schools, down slightly from 179 last year. Because this year's standards were more rigorous than prior years, State officials considered the results to represent significant progress. Prince George's County (58 schools) and Baltimore City (67 schools) showed the highest number of schools on the "watch list." More affluent Montgomery County saw all 17 of its Title I schools meet State standards.

The Baltimore Sun reports that 20,000 Baltimore City students in 58 low-performing schools are eligible for supplemental educational services (SES). More than 7,000 parents of Baltimore students applied for SES this past school year; only 4,300 SES slots were available. Only students with the lowest test scores and greatest financial need were chosen to receive SES.

A recent study has recommended a school voucher program that could save Baltimore City Schools as much as \$30 million over the next ten years. Conducted by the Maryland Public Policy Institute, the study argues for providing \$7,000 vouchers to low-income (lower than 185 percent of the poverty line). Each year for the next decade, approximately one thousand new

vouchers would be made available. The report contrasts the \$7,000 vouchers with the \$9,000 annual cost for students in public schools in the City.

Massachusetts Update - July 2005

Governor Mitt Romney has appointed Ann Reale to be the State's first Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care. Formerly an education policy advisor to the Governor, Reale will be charged with combined the State's Office of Child Care Services and the Early Learning Services Division of the Department of Education into a single agency. The new Department will serve more than 60,000 early learners Statewide with a \$450 million annual budget.

Education Week reports that Massachusetts is pilot testing the Berkshire Wireless Learning Initiative, a three-year project which provides Apple iBook computers to teachers and students in three public and one private middle school. A total of 175 teachers and 2,125 students will participate in the pilot test. During the 2004-05 school year, the State allocated approximately \$2 million to the project plus another \$250,000 for the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts to provide teachers with professional development in the use of the computers.

Michigan Update - July 2005

The Detroit News reports that very low scores on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) writing exam has caused the State to pull back the test results. Fewer than half of the fourth and seventh grade students who took the writing MEAP met State standards. Believing the exam was too difficult, State officials plan to revise the scoring scale to make the results comparable to scores from prior years.

Incoming Superintendent of Public Instruction, Michael P. Flanagan has called preschool education one of his top priorities, arguing that it will pay off later in students' academic lives. He urged the use of volunteers to help children in reading and other activities prior to kindergarten. Another of his priorities is helping teachers improve instruction through the use of classroom technology. Superintendent Flanagan was Executive Director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators and is a former district superintendent and education advisor to Governor Jennifer Granholm.

As reported in Education Week, Michigan's Freedom to Learn Laptop Program for middle school teachers and students has been limited by State budget cuts. Now limited to sixth grade classes, the program received only \$3.7 million in State funds during the 2004-05 school year and was largely supported by \$22.6 million in Federal technology funding. Two-thirds of the State money was used to provide professional development to teachers on the classroom use of computers.

The State has maintained its \$1.75 million subsidy for the Michigan Virtual University (MVU) which offers online K-12 classes, test preparation, and career guidance. A total of 1,000 summer school -- mostly high school -- students participated last year. This Spring, MVU provided nearly 100 professional development workshops for teachers which will contribute to the State's meeting NCLB standards for "highly qualified teachers."

Minnesota Update - July 2005

As part of Minnesota's K-12 education funding package, the State legislature has proposed to replace the eighth-grade Basic Skills Test with a more rigorous set of Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA). The MCA, already given in third through seventh grades, covers a broader range of areas than the Basic Skills Test. The reading and mathematics components of the new exam will be given to eighth graders for the first time next Spring. These same students -- the Class of 2010 -- will be required to pass the MCA exams in order to graduate.

As reported in Education Week, Minnesota's budget situation has improved to the point where a number of K-12 education initiatives are expected to be undertaken. Governor Tom Pawlenty's proposed budget for FY 2006 includes an \$8 million increase over FY 2005 for educational technology. The Governor has requested \$4.5 million for his Equity in Telecommunications Access program which would provide school districts with funds for Internet connections and videoconferencing/distance learning. The State's Online Learning Option program offers full-time online learning to 240 transfer and home-schooled secondary students. The Governor's proposal would increase funding for the online program from \$1.25 million in FY 2005 to \$2.25 million next year and \$3.25 million in FY 2007. If approved, these funds would increase online enrollment by 190 students in each of the next two years. The budget proposal includes \$1.2 million for FY 2006 and FY 2007 to computerize the State's new science assessments for fifth-grade, eighth-grade, and high school students.

Mississippi Update - July 2005

Governor Haley Barbour has proposed a program that could enhance Mississippi's meager educational technology activity. One such proposal calls for the enrollment of a Statewide online K-12 academy as an expansion of the existing Mississippi Online Learning Institute which provides distance learning services for teacher professional development. The new academy would be funded with State money at a level equal to the per-pupil funding in each students home districts.

Missouri Update - July 2005

According to The Kansas City Star, Missouri is expected to receive an increase of \$11 million (six percent) in Federal Title I funds -- from \$185 million to \$196 million -- for next school year.

Education Daily reports that the Missouri legislature has passed, and the Governor has signed, a bill adding \$830 million in State aid to public schools during the next seven years and raising minimum teachers' salaries. Proponents believe the revised formula embodied in the bill could head off a pending lawsuit challenging the existing funding formula.

As reported in Education Week, the State's first new school aid plan in 12 years would shift funding emphasis away from property taxes and toward schools' actual costs. Under the new plan, districts would receive a minimum funding level of \$6,177 per student and would qualify for additional funding based on their percentage of disadvantaged, disabled, or limited-English-proficient students. The new formula would increase the amount of State aid to K-12 schools by an additional \$113 million this year and by \$700 million over seven years. The total State budget for education will increase by 4.4 percent -- \$158 million -- over last school year.

As reported in Education Week, Missouri has provided little funding for the State's educational technology initiatives for the past three years. The State has used \$9.5 million in Federal funds to support technology in Title I schools during the 2004-05 school year. But the funding will decrease to \$6.8 million for the coming school year. Approximately half of the \$9.5 million provides formula grants to schools. The other half supports eMINTS -- enhancing Missouri's Instructional Networked Teaching Strategies -- which has provided professional development to help 800 elementary and middle school teachers integrate technology into their teaching. The program is expected to be expanded to high school teachers within two years.

Montana Update - July 2005

As reported in "Quality Counts" from Education Week, Montana provides targeted support to its local school districts through 12 categorical programs. Totalling \$130 million in FY 2004, these programs included transportation, special education, school facilities, teacher retirement, and technology.

Education Week reports that Montana's budget for K-12 education will be \$1.2 billion over the FY 2006-07 biennium. And the \$597 million K-12 appropriation specifically for FY 2006 is a 6.8 percent increase over FY 2005. The budget represents a \$70 million increase for schools over the previous biennium. The budget includes \$3.4 million for the Indian Education for All Act which was passed in 1999 but which has never been funded. This funding is a partial response to a court ruling that the State must overhaul its school and system by October 1, 2006. Much more work in this regard will be needed next year.

The Billings Gazette has highlighted a report by the Alliance for Excellent Education which says that 18 percent of Montana's eighth-grade students are at risk of dropping out of school before high school graduation -- primarily because of reading problems. This rate compares favorably with the national average of 28 percent and the rates in other Northwest states. While the graduation rate has remained steady over recent years, graduation rates for the State's American Indian students continue to be significantly lower.

As reported in Education Week, Montana schools will receive \$3 million (\$21 per student) during the 2004-05 school year for educational technology from State timbering revenues. This represents a marked increase in timber funds from prior years -- \$1.9 million in 2003-04, zero in 2002-03, and \$160,000 in 2001-02.

Montana has awarded six grants to school districts using Federal technology money through a program called Partnerships for Student Academic Achievement Through Technology. These six districts have formed consortia that include 28 other districts and six colleges and

universities. Montana awarded extra points in the grant application process for applicants who proposed spending at least half of their grant for professional development.

Nevada Update - July 2005

The Las Vegas Sun reports that the Nevada State Assembly has approved \$100 million for K-12 remediation and innovation programs. Among the options being discussed for the use of the funds are: (1) career and technical education, including transition into middle and high school; (2) full-day kindergarten using \$50 million of the funds (plus \$21 million from other sources). Governor Kenny Guinn, on the other hand, wants the money to go into elementary education.

Education Week reports that Nevada has approved Statewide Funding for full-day kindergarten. Starting in the 2006-07 school year, the State will distribute \$22 million to public schools in poor neighborhoods -- those in which at least 55 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Some districts that already have full-day kindergarten may divert the funds to remedial programs. Clark County (Las Vegas), for example, currently provides full-day kindergarten in 56 of its poorer schools; the new funding would add 15 more schools.

As reported in Education Week, Governor Kenny Guinn's proposed budget for the 2005-07 biennium includes \$10 million for educational technology, roughly the same as the previous biennium. As a result, no new technology initiatives occurred during 2004-05 or are expected next year. The State's Commission on Educational Technology recommends that the aid be allocated as follows: 40 percent – infrastructure, 20 percent – digital content, 15 percent – professional development, 10 percent – program evaluation, 8 percent – technical support, and 7 percent – State-sponsored pilot projects.

The legislature has increased flexibility in the use of the State's remedial funds for next year, including professional development.

Clark County (Las Vegas) has seen enrollment at its virtual high school increase by 40 percent between the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years. The online school offers high school courses to all public, private, and charter school students in the district. Students from other school districts in the State can also take classes from the virtual school if their districts pay a fee.

Last year, several million dollars was set aside for district use in purchasing products which have been reviewed and approved by an evaluation committee. Clark County also urged Title I schools to purchase off of the State's remedial education list last year. Under the recent changes the funds can be used not only for purchasing products but also services including professional development.

New Hampshire Update - July 2005

According to The Union Leader, the New Hampshire State Board of Education approved proposed minimum standards for State schools, calling for -- but not requiring -- kindergarten. Under the proposed standards, school districts must "strive to" offer kindergarten instruction by the 2007-08 school year. The proposal must be approved by the Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules.

Education Daily reports that the New Hampshire legislature has approved a new school funding structure that reduces the State property tax and allocates more funds to poor school districts. The plan calls for the State to distribute \$456 million next year in State aid grants based on student needs and property values. A special fund of \$17 million has been established to compensate districts who have lost property tax revenues; no district would receive less than 85 percent of last year's allocation.

Although New Hampshire has never earmarked significant State funds for educational technology, the State is planning a network of six technology-related professional development centers, supported from Federal and local sources. As reported in Education Week, some school districts are also using Federal NCLB funds to establish, within the centers, technology-based mentoring programs for teachers. New Hampshire is currently in the final year of a grant from the Gates Foundation that has provided technology training to nearly half of the State's school administrators; it is hoped that the program will be moved to the centers when the grant funds expire. The State has not had sufficient funds to expand its modest laptop initiative which was modeled after Maine's larger effort. The New Hampshire program provided laptop computers to 700 seventh-grade students in six schools during 2004.

New Jersey Update - July 2005

According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, New Jersey's \$8.6 billion school construction program has been sharply criticized in a report by the State's Inspector General for questionable spending and management practices. The report says that the program's principal contractor is "vulnerable to mismanagement, fiscal malfeasance, conflicts of interest, and waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer dollars."

In conjunction with the Educational Testing Service (ETS), New Jersey is implementing a new Statewide educational data management system. Using ETS's Instructional Data Management System (IDMS), the new package will help school districts to track student performance, analyze data to demonstrate compliance with NCLB requirements, identify performance trends, and improve the effectiveness of teachers. At the heart of the new system is the ability to analyze and report on results from the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) which tests student achievement in the areas defined by the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards in language arts literacy, mathematics, and science.

As reported in Education Week, New Jersey has undertaken a pilot program designed to improve student performance in middle and high schools in the State's poorest school districts. Four such districts – Jersey City, Orange Township, Elizabeth City, and Bridgeton – have chosen to participate in the first phase of the pilot project. The plan calls for the conversion of large schools into smaller units and increasing the rigor of the curriculum. If the results found in the four pilot districts are favorable, the approach could be expanded to 27 other high-need school districts and, perhaps, eventually to all middle and high schools Statewide.

As reported in Education Week, 31 of New Jersey's poorest urban school districts are called "special needs" (or Abbott) districts. These districts receive additional State funds and services - such as full-day kindergarten. A State advisory panel has recommended that New Jersey's poor, rural districts be given the same intensive support. After assessing the districts' financial need, the panel concluded that at least 17 rural school districts should be designated as "special needs" districts.

Education Week reports that a recent revision to the State's administrative code allows State money to be earmarked for educational technology as part of school construction or renovation. The June 2004 code change makes technology an allowable expense; since the change, nearly \$7 million has gone for computer equipment in 20-30 new or renovated schools. New Jersey has also approved a set of technology literacy standards for high school graduates and is developing an eighth-grade technology assessment as a benchmark for the new standards. The State has 19 technology training centers that provide workshops for district-level educators.

New Jersey allocates \$50 per student for educational technology -- a total of \$65 million -- but, because the funds are consolidated into general State aid, it is not clear how much is actually spent for technology.

New Mexico Update - July 2005

The Albuquerque Tribune reports that New Mexico has decided not to join NEA's lawsuit challenging the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The State's Education Secretary, Veronica Garcia, acknowledges that complying with NCLB costs the State more than it receives in Federal education funding. But it intends to "work within the system and apply for the flexibility" it needs.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has proposed to increase the State's investment in its Child Development Program from \$1.6 million to \$9 million, although the legislature allocated only \$5 million.

Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, New Mexico established a laptop computer program for seventh-graders. As reported in Education Week, the program was funded at \$1.7 million in 2003-04 and at \$4 million in 2004-05, with a proposed budget of \$8 million for 2005-06. The increased funding, if approved, will double the number of participating schools from 27 to more than 50. Participating teachers get 13 days of in classroom training.

New Mexico is expanding its computerized system that provides feedback to teachers on their students' performance in meeting academic standards. Nearly \$3 million was spent on the program during the 2004-05 school year; \$6 million has been requested for the coming school year. The system now covers reading, language arts, and mathematics, and is expected to expand to other core subjects at all grade levels.

The State also has given \$5 million in each of the last two years for its Education Technology Fund which provides per-pupil allotments to every school district in the State.

New York Update - July 2005

A new report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that New York does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled "Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes," the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

In March, New York launched its Virtual Learning System (VLS), a web portal that provides teachers with more than 2,500 ready-to-use lessons as well as access to museums, libraries, archives, and broadcast programs. As reported in Education Week, Federal funds pay for the VLS. During the 2004-05 school year, the State received \$94 million in Federal technology funding, two-thirds of which went to school districts as competitive grants. The State contributed another \$193 million to districts for the purchase of hardware, software, and infrastructure improvements. The State also awarded \$3.3 million in grants to help districts use technology to improve student performance in middle school language arts and mathematics.

According to the New York Daily News, fourth-grade reading scores for New York City students increased significantly in the past year. Nearly 60 percent of the City's fourth-graders passed this year's reading exam compared with less than 50 percent in the prior year.

A recent study by Advocates for Children indicates that, over the past eight years, only about 12 percent of special education students who have left the New York city school system have done so with a full high school diploma. Another 12 percent received an alternative certificate. As reported in The New York Times, the City's graduation rate for special education students is less than half the rate in the rest of New York State and the U.S. as a whole. The New York city school district questioned the study's finding and presented data which showed that the number third-, fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-graders scoring "not proficient" in English dropped from 58

percent last year to 43 percent this past year. Similarly, in mathematics the percentage of “not proficient” scorers decreased from 61 percent to 53 percent.

A three-year Federal audit of New York City’s Medicaid system claims that City schools, because of poor record-keeping and documentation, has misspent \$870 million in Federal Medicaid funds used to provide speech therapy to special education students. As reported in Education Daily, the audit recommends that the State return \$435 million in Federal funds. Not surprisingly, State and City officials dispute the audit’s findings.

North Carolina Update - July 2005

The State Board of Education has approved a new set of high school graduation requirements which will become effective with the class of 2010. Currently, in order to graduate, students must pass basic course requirements and pass the State's eighth grade reading and mathematics tests. Under the new requirements, students will have to pass standardized, end-of-course exams in English, Algebra I, Biology, U. S. History, and Civics/Economics. Students will have up to three chances to pass the exams, and even if they fail all three times, they could still graduate based upon a case-by-case review of their course performance by a panel outside the school itself.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," North Carolina has proposed to increase the State's investment in its More at Four program from \$51.1 million to \$67.7 million, a 32 percent increase. The State's \$10.4 million Smart Start program is expected to be level-funded or increased slightly.

North Carolina has established a new Center for 21st Century Skills designed to give students a firm grasp of the information technology they will need in the workplace. As reported in Education Technology News, \$750,000 has been budgeted over the next two years to establish and operate the Center. Helping to guide the Center's creation will be the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the North Carolina Business Committee for Education. More information about the Center is available through the Governor's Office (919/733-5612).

As reported in Education Week, a \$1.3 billion State budget deficit resulted in a more-than-30-percent cut -- down to \$5 million -- in North Carolina's educational technology fund. Among the technology initiatives that are being planned are a student database project, afterschool computer literacy programs, and model school grants for educational technology. North Carolina Window of Information on Student Education (NC WISE) is an Internet-based student information system that connects about 40 new schools each week. All public and charter schools in the State's 118 school districts are expected to be using the system by 2007. Costing \$200 million over ten years, NC WISE tracks student and classroom information and provides

transcript service for college admissions offices. An adjunct to the database, NC WISEOWL, provides students and teachers with access to a wide range of curriculum and reference resources.

The Charlotte Observer reports that, in recent years, the Charlotte area has seen an influx of Hispanic students and local schools are poorly equipped to address their needs. Nearly 50 schools in the Charlotte region have Hispanic enrollments of at least 20 percent and more than 12,000 Hispanic children entered North Carolina kindergarten this school year. Many schools do not have enough teachers with training in teaching English language Learners and the State's curriculum for English as a Second Language was only implemented this year. The State has no guidelines as to how many students an ESL teacher should have and there are only two positions at the State level who are assigned to monitor the education of English Language Learners.

North Dakota Update - July 2005

Education Week reports that, for the third straight year, North Dakota teachers will receive raises due to a \$15 million increase in education funding for FY 2006. The State's \$1 billion budget for next year (beginning July 1, 2005) includes \$355 million for education – a four percent increase. As part of the education appropriation, the legislature increased the starting annual teacher salary by \$500 to \$22,000 and required school districts to spend 70 percent of any new State aid on teacher compensation.

The Bismarck Tribune reports that North Dakota's rural schools are having trouble finding tutors that will allow them to comply with the supplemental educational services (SES) provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The State has 20 schools, with 844 eligible students - - that are required to provide SES. But only 118 students (in 12 schools) have signed up for the services because the providers of tutorial services are far from the rural areas.

North Dakota schools received \$3.2 million for the 2004-05 school year from the State's general technology fund, slightly less than the previous year. Of this, \$1.69 million went to the Statewide K12 Network providing broadband Internet access videoconferencing for all of the State's 520 public schools. As reported in Education Week, the State has also budgeted \$1.3 million for professional development and other support relating to educational technology. In addition, Federal money has supported technology grants (totaling \$1 million) to eight schools and a Statewide student database.

Ohio Update - July 2005

According to Education Week, Ohio is planning to expand Cleveland's choice voucher program to other Ohio school districts. Funded by \$9 million in State funds, the proposed program would be specifically targeted at students in identified schools that have failed State reading and mathematics test for three straight years. The number of vouchers – valued at \$3,500 – would be capped at about 2,600 students. These students would have to take the same standardized tests as other Ohio public school students.

As reported in “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006,” Ohio has proposed to increase the State’s investment in its Public School Preschool Program from \$103 million to \$116 million, a 12 percent increase.

Education Week reports that Ohio is continuing expansion of its Third Frontier Network, a Statewide fiber-optic network linking K-12 schools and higher education. In addition, the State has worked to establish an online professional development system. As of January, 18 online courses had enrolled more than 1,000 teachers and administrators. By increasing the enrollment to 8,000 within the next few years, the State hopes to meet the “highly qualified” teacher standards of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Because little State technology funding is available, Federal funds have supported a project to help students become technologically literate by the eighth grade (\$9.9 million) and Federal E²T² money provides competitive grants to schools in 200 of the State’s school districts to support technology projects in language arts and mathematics.

The Cleveland school district’s projected \$36 million budget deficit is expected to result in drastic cost-cutting measures. Already, 500 teachers have been notified that they are to be laid off next year. And other cuts will be made before the start of a new budget year on July 1.

Oklahoma Update - July 2005

As reported in Education Week, revenue from Oklahoma's new education lottery and from Indian reservation gaming are expected to produce \$150 million for K-12 education initiatives in the 2005-06 school year. A State technology survey found that Oklahoma school districts offer 98 online credit courses, that nearly a third of the State's districts (170 out of 540) permit students to take Internet-based courses for credit, and that 77 districts use distance learning to provide Advanced Placement classes. This Spring, all Oklahoma seventh-graders took their State geography test online; it was administered by Harcourt Assessment, Inc.

Oregon Update - July 2005

As reported in The Oregonian, less than a third of Oregon's high school graduates (Class of 2004) have earned a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM), the State's credential of academic proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and public speaking. Instituted six years ago, the CIM consists of three multiple-choice tools, two essay tests, three long-form math problems, three speeches, and two in-class essays. The Oregon House has passed a bill that would do away with two elements of the State's school reform law – the Certificate of Initial Mastery and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery – scheduled to become effective for the Class of 2007. Led by Republicans, the bill would abolish the two measures of student performance as too costly and irrelevant. It is expected that the Oregon Senate and Governor Ted Kulongoski will oppose the bill.

As reported in Education Week, Oregon has provided no State technology funding to schools since 1999. For the 2004-05 school year, the State received approximately \$6 million in Federal technology money, half of which was distributed in the form of competitive grants to districts. The funding will drop to \$4 million for the coming school year. Oregon now has ten district-sponsored virtual schools offering 300 courses, making a broader curriculum available to rural school students. During 2004-05, students from 1,100 Oregon schools took online exams in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. The State also offers "adaptive" online tests for reading and math in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 and for science in grade 10.

Political wrangling over education spending during the 2005-07 biennium has suggested the possibility of a repeat of last year's teacher layoffs and reduced academic schedules. As reported in Education Week, Republican legislators have proposed a \$5.2 billion budget for K-12 education while Democrats are calling for as much as \$5.4 billion.

Pennsylvania Update - July 2005

Education Technology News reports that Pennsylvania has partnered with Microsoft to establish peer-coaching networks designed to help high school teachers integrate technology into the curriculum. Funded by a \$2 million donation from Microsoft, the program has two components. The first is the creation of a list of best practices and resources in coordination with a new high school in Philadelphia, known as "The School of the Future." The program's second component is distribution of "Best of Class Professional Development" courses to technology-using teachers (called keystone teachers). For more information about this program, contact Kate Philips (717/783-1116).

Pennsylvania has designated as "Keystone Teachers" those who used technology most effectively to enhance learning in the State's schools. Under the Keystone program, teachers will receive additional training in the effective classroom use of technology. Keystone will allow its 533 participating educators to participate in ongoing professional development, make presentations at conferences and seminars, and network with their peers.

Last summer, as reported by Stateline.org, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell signed into Law the legalization of slot machines intended to reduce property taxes by 20 percent and contribute to education Statewide. However, many school districts are reluctant to sign on to the program which is expected to generate \$1 billion per year when all slot machines are in place (in casinos and horse racetracks) by 2007. Among the reasons for the districts' reticence is that the gambling revenues are not expected for at least a year and uncertainty about how the State's Supreme Court might rule on the new Law.

As reported in Education Week, Michael Golden, formerly the State's technology director, has been appointed Deputy Secretary of the new Office of Information and Educational Technology. State officials believe the new office will help to coordinate the multiple strategic plans and databases used by districts. For the 2005-06 school year, the legislature has approved a \$10 million fund -- derived from fees on telecommunication providers -- that can be spent on educational technology and related services. Also beginning in 2005-06 is a grant matching

program to provide full-time technology-integration mentors to schools. Last year, teachers in grades 7-12 could apply for \$10,000 grants to purchase hand-held computers for their classes to test their instructional effectiveness; the program will expand to grades K-6 for the coming school year.

The Philadelphia School Reform Commission has expanded its contract with Edison Schools to include two additional schools: Huey Elementary and Hartranft Elementary. This brings the company's total to 22 Philadelphia schools serving more than 12,000 district students. The district expressed pleasure that its partnership with Edison Schools produced enormous academic gains last year in the Edison-operated programs.

Rhode Island Update - July 2005

Unlike many states who are challenging the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Rhode Island has demonstrated support of the Law by changing its graduation requirements, reforming the way it assesses student performance, and instituting the Rhode Island Scholars program to encourage students to enroll in more rigorous courses. The Providence Journal reports that, as early as 2008, portfolios and senior projects will become part of the State's high school graduation requirements and, in many districts, will be available online for review by parents, colleges, and prospective employees.

Tennessee Update - July 2005

Governor Phil Bredesen's plan for a Statewide prekindergarten program for at-risk children is being met with opposition from some Republican legislators who question the State's ability to pay the program's long-term cost. The program's \$25 million in start-up costs is scheduled to come from State lottery funds and some legislators are not convinced the lottery money will be available to pay for even a portion of the cost of the prekindergarten program. Modeled after the pre-K program in Georgia, Tennessee's pre-K system would concentrate on keeping class sizes small, giving families the choice of public or private preschools, and serving as many children as possible.

Beginning with the Class of 2005, all students wishing to receive a high school diploma are required to pass end-of-course ("Gateway") exams in English II, Algebra I, and Biology I. A review of sample results from previous years shows that 89 percent of the sample group passed all three tests. Low-income students (80 percent) and English Language Learners (77 percent) passed all three exams at reasonably high rates. However, less than 17 percent of special education students passed all three tests. All high schools are required to provide help -- including remedial classes and tutoring -- for students who fail one or more of the exams.

The Tennessee Department of Education is working with Pearson Educational Measurement (PEM) to pilot test online testing for the Tennessee High School Gateway and End-of-Course assessment programs. After the pilot test in nine school districts, the State and PEM will conduct a research study to determine the level of comparability between the online and paper-and-pencil administrations of the tests. If these studies prove successful, the State intends to transition to electronic testing over the next five years.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has given Tennessee new flexibility in a number of requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). One such change allows an increase in the number of students with disabilities who will be allowed to take alternative assessments -- from one percent of the student population to three percent. This number will increase from 9,000 last school year to 27,000 next year. USED has also allowed Tennessee high schools more

time to calculate graduation rates and has permitted more limited-English proficient students to take modified reading exams.

Texas Update - July 2005

The Texas legislation is considering a bill that would replace the existing extensive textbook review and adoption process with a system that would combine textbooks and technology into one “instructional materials” category. Under the proposed legislation (House Bill 4), schools would be allowed to spend up to \$70 per student on instructional materials and would have full discretion as to how the funds are to be spent. Supporters of the bill argue that the revised approach could provide laptops to students so they can get up-to-date information from the Internet rather than from often-outdated textbooks. The bill’s opponents – including the State Board of Education – decry the loss of authority to approve textbooks on the part of State officials.

The Houston Chronicle reports that about a third of Houston’s fifth-grade students failed their first try at the mathematics portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam and nearly 40 percent failed the reading portion. This is the first year that, in order to be promoted to the next grade, fifth-graders must pass both sections of the TAKS exam. As many as 4,500 students may be retained in the fifth grade if they don’t pass the test by August. Houston’s math results were 12 percentage points below the State average.

The Dallas Morning News reports that State Education Commissioner Shirley Neeley is considering tightening the testing requirements for special education students despite the fact that school districts were told to make no changes in their annual testing this past Spring. Regular students take the TAKS; most special education students take the State Developed Alternative Assessment. The Commissioner has criticized the U. S. Department of Education (USED) for its inconsistent guidance but vowed to work with USED to make appropriate changes to its testing approach.

More than 90 percent of Texas 1,027 school districts made adequate yearly progress (AYP) under NCLB in 2003-04. However, the State granted waivers for 431 districts; without these appeals close to half the State’s districts would have failed. Similarly, 94 percent of the

approximately 6,700 schools in the State made AYP during the 2003-04 school year. Had not more than 1,300 appeals been granted, the failure rate would have been more than 25 percent.

Education Week reports on the Texas High School Project, an effort to coordinate more than \$60 million in State school improvement grants as well as grants from private foundations. Most of the private funding is being managed by the Communities Foundation of Texas whose initial award of \$21.5 million is expected in June-July. The new grants are planned to establish 75 new or redesigned high schools in high-need communities. Of the \$21.5 million, \$8.7 million will be used to redesign five large high-performing high schools into “smaller learning communities.” Another \$6.1 million will be used to establish eight charter high schools for underserved students. Yet another \$6.6 million will be allocated to higher education systems to set up eleven high schools near college campuses.

As reported in The Dallas Morning News, the Class of 2005 is the first that must pass all sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in order to graduate. Students first take the TAKS in the eleventh grade and have five chances to pass the test. Nearly 700 students in the Dallas school district -- 10 percent of the Senior class -- will not receive diplomas this year. Students who fail the TAKS can continue to take the assessment until they pass or they can take a GED program.

As reported in Education Week, Texas’ 2005 legislative session ended without a revised school financing plan. This leaves the State’s plan to pay for K-12 education in the hands of the State Supreme court which, on July 6, will hear arguments in the challenge to the current system. Adopted in 1993, the current arrangement requires well-to-do school districts to share property tax revenues with poorer districts. The State estimates that under the current plan \$1 billion will be shared under the so-called “Robin Hood” provision.

The Dallas Morning News reports that Governor Rick Perry has vetoed Texas’ entire \$33.6 billion school budget and called the legislature back into session to come up with a new spending plan. If the legislature cannot produce a budget acceptable to the Governor by the start of the new State fiscal year (September 1), it is possible that schools might not open in the Fall.

Utah Update - July 2005

School Reform News reports that, in March, the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship Act was signed into law. It will provide private school vouchers to 600 special education students. Although the legislature appropriated only \$2.5 million for the program to provide aid to students in the 2005-06 school year, it reappropriated \$1.4 million in unspent funds from a similar voucher program that was vetoed last year by the prior Governor.

On May 2, Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. signed a formal State law protesting the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). But, as reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, the State stopped short of withdrawing from the NCLB and the \$107 million in Federal funds the State could lose if it does not comply with Federal requirements. Negotiations between the State and the U.S. Department of Education are expected to continue but, in the meantime, the State plans to operate a “dual system approach” with the Utah Performance Assessment System for students (U-PASS) as the primary assessment and a system compliant with NCSL also in operation.

As reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, pass rates for Utah’s high school seniors on the State’s exit exam showed a large gap between the performance of Anglo and Asian students and that of Black, Hispanic and American Indian students. Approximately 80 percent of the White and Asian students passed the math section of the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test (UBSCT) while more than half of the other minority students failed. All racial groups performed better on the UBSCT’s reading and writing components, but there were ethnic gaps for these tests as well.

Virginia Update - July 2005

Two Republican members of the U. S. Congress from Virginia have introduced legislation that would shift Federal authority under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to the states. The bill put forth by Senator George Allan and Representative Robert Goodlatte would allow states like Virginia, which already have rigorous testing programs, to opt out of NCLB requirements. Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are required of students beginning in the third grade and their passage is a high school graduation requirement. Under the proposed legislation, states could: (1) set their own required passing rates for the tests in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science; (2) establish standards for high school graduation rates; and (3) determine sanctions for low-performing schools.

As reported in "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006," Virginia has proposed to increase the State's investment in its Preschool Initiative from \$34.9 million to \$53.2 million, a 52 percent increase.

A new report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project says that the teacher quality requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) do not take into account local labor markets, organizational structure, or local budgets. Moreover, the study found that Virginia does not have the capacity to collect data on teacher quality and that high-quality teachers are underrepresented in urban and low-income school districts. Entitled "Teacher Quality: Equalizing Educational Opportunities and Outcomes," the report is available at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/esea/Teacher_Quality.pdf.

As reported in Education Week, the chronic shortage of middle school mathematics teachers has led to the establishment of the Virginia Middle School Teachers Corps, a list of expert teachers compiled by the Virginia Department of Education. Teachers who are accepted into the program and who transfer into designated low-performing schools can earn bonuses of up to \$10,000 per year for a three-year commitment. Another program, now in its pilot phase, would pay bonuses of \$15,000 to skilled teachers who transfer into any of four especially hard-to-staff schools.

Education Daily reports that Virginia has received verbal approval from the U. S. Department of Education (USED) to make changes in the State's requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). These include: (1) allowing special education or LEP students who earn diplomas according to their specified scheduled to be considered as graduating on time; (2) counting students who pass retakes of the State's Standards of Learning exam as proficient for AYP purposes; and (3) increasing the minimum subgroup size (for schools and districts) to the larger of 50 or ten percent of enrollment (up to a maximum of 200). USED rejected Virginia's request to provide supplemental educational services to subgroups that failed to make AYP for the first time. USED also refused to let the State consider special education students who "demonstrate a year's worth of academic growth on instructional level tests" to be proficient for purposes of calculating AYP.

Washington Update - July 2005

As reported in Education Week, Washington State has instituted a new set of security measures for the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The new procedures include a mandatory testing schedule designed to eliminate the possibility of students who have already taken the test providing answers to students scheduled to be tested later.

As reported in “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Proposals, Fiscal Year 2006,” Washington has proposed to increase the State’s investment in its Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program from \$25.2 million to \$32.4 million (a 28 percent increase) over the next two years.

Wisconsin Update - July 2005

Education Daily reports that, for the 2004-05 school year, Wisconsin increased its reading and mathematics proficiency targets under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and calculated assessment results using a 99 percent confidence level. Based on these changes from 2003-04, 98 percent of Wisconsin's schools, and all but one school district, made adequate yearly progress under NCLB. A total of 51 schools missed AYP, 45 of them for the second consecutive year. These 45 schools must offer school choice and/or supplemental educational services to their students.