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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2010
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke and Blair Curry
SUBJ: Title I Carryover Waivers, ESEA Reauthorization, State MOE Waivers, Common Core Assessments, and Impact on Testing Industry

On June 16th we sent TechMIS subscribers a special report covering interviews with SEA officials in many states whose SIG applications had not been approved that updated timelines and any proposed changes based on SEA/USED negotiations. At that time, about 20 states' SIG applications had not been formally approved by USED. Some now speculate that the delay may be related to the Administration's current attempt to reprogram non-allocated or unspent ARRA funds, including Race to the Top, Title I, IDEA, and possibly SIG funds, which would be redirected toward a \$10 billion teacher jobs retention initiative. The Education Week blog *Politics K-12* (as of June 30th) the latest version would redirect \$800 million from USED Race to the Top (\$500 million), Teacher Incentive Fund (\$200 million), and Innovation and Improvement (\$100 million) toward teacher retention. Earlier versions would have redirected several billion of unobligated Title I and IDEA ARRA funds proposed for the Edujobs bill.

This TechMIS issue includes a number of Washington Updates of interest to most TechMIS subscribers:

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USED has strongly encouraged districts to request waivers of the 15% limitation of regular FY 2010 Title I carryover funds in order to extend the effective date of obligation through September 30, 2012. Moreover, USED, in a national webinar in early June, strongly encouraged districts to draw down and spend Title I ARRA funds quickly; however, two weeks later, the Administration proposed to redirect some unspent ARRA funds including to the teacher jobs retention initiative. Whether this was a "scare tactic" to get districts to spend Title I ARRA funds before June 30th or a reverse in policy to get teacher votes in November is unclear.
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ESEA reauthorization update addresses "continuing" Hill discussions, education groups' alternatives to the Obama-proposed "Blueprint," and a Duncan initiative to "build"

bridges with state legislators to ensure state policy changes already made remain intact after probable governorship and state superintendent turnovers after the November election.

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USED quietly announces rigorous criteria it now says it will consider in deciding whether to approve a state's waiver request of the IDEA maintenance of effort requirements; where if approved, this could result in reduced expenditures for special education programs next school year.

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Three state consortia vie for \$350 million to develop high-quality assessments aligned to common core standards. Computer-based assessments and scoring, including adaptive testing, are likely to be used in states which adopt resulting tests.

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In a related item, the impact of the common core and assessment development initiatives on the testing industry is analyzed by Thomas Toch, whose insights in the past have been on target; whether the overall assessment effort will be successful is also addressed.

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Online delivery of instruction for different forms of remediation will likely continue to grow significantly, including college remediation, credit recovery, graduation exams testing and retaking, and test preparation (including summer school).

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Districts with potential E-Rate refunds through BEAR process, for purchasing non-eligible products and services have been identified from the most recent E-Rate quarterly reports; some districts are receiving huge refunds from two to four-year-old appeals which have only recently been found to be meritorious.

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Technology using educators provide useful insights on challenges as well as opportunities for personalizing education.

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A number of miscellaneous updates are also provided including:

- a) House passes reauthorization of America Competes Act, but appropriation levels are questionable.
- b) NGA report summarizes the fiscal state fiscal situation affecting education funding for FY 2010 and projected for FY 2011.
- c) The Administration proposes five percent reduction in discretionary funding across all agencies.
- d) Mass Insight's School Turnaround Group releases recommendations on building a "state-level" turnaround office, with a soon-to-be-published report to address building a "district-level" turnaround office.

- e) A new report concludes that KIPP charter middle schools are successful in reducing achievement gaps among minority students which could support KIPP's effort to win one of the \$50 million scale-up i³ grants.
- f) Senator Michael Bennet, who is closely aligned with the Obama Administration, has proposed the creation of School Leadership Centers for Excellence which would train principals to become turnaround experts.
- g) AASA provides strong rationale for Congress to pass an Education Jobs Bill, arguing that the net effect would be positive, generating \$32.2 billion in GDP.

Also included are state profile updates which address state K-12 budgetary situations, school improvement initiatives, adoption of the Common Core Standards, Race to the Top applications, charter schools, online learning, and state assessments.

Washington Update

Vol. 15, No. 6, July 1, 2010

USED Strongly Encourages Districts to Request Waivers of the 15% Limitation on Regular Title I Carryover Funds in Order to Extend the Effective Date of Obligation to September 30, 2012 and to Draw Down and Spend Title I ARRA Funds Wisely but Quickly

During the USED June 15th webinar on “Strategic Use of Title I and IDEA: How to Maximize ARRA FY 2009 and FY 2010 Funds,” officials strongly encouraged districts to use Title I and IDEA ARRA funds quickly while requesting waivers of the 15% limitation carryover for regular Title I in order to extend the period of obligating regular Title I FY 2010 funds until September 30, 2012, thus minimizing the impact of the so-called funding cliff. As Cathy Solomon, Advisor for Recovery Act Implementation in USED emphasized on several occasions, spend the “first money in, first, because even with approved waivers, ARRA funds must still be obligated by September 30, 2011.” About 10 percent of the attendees during the webinar poll indicated they may have some trouble in meeting the ARRA obligation deadline.

As of the end of May, USED officials indicated that approximately \$50 billion of the \$100 billion education stimulus ARRA funding bucket had been drawn down as an outlay, which has resulted in only about 35% of Title I and IDEA ARRA funds being drawn down during the same time frame. Officials pointed out that there are a number of activities that both Title I Part A and IDEA regular and ARRA funds could be

used for, including the four assurance priorities under Race to the Top and additional ones such as differentiated instruction for diverse learners, innovation, school climate, and safe and healthy students. States and districts were also encouraged to use Title I ARRA funds to initiate implementation of School Improvement Grants in Tier I and Tier II schools before official approval of state and district plans, to provide more staff and intensive instruction in lowest-performing Title I schools, to expand programs to additional Title I-eligible schools, and to initiate new programs that have never been funded by state or local funds, using future Title I funds to continue the programs after the funding cliff without violating supplement-not-supplant provisions. Referring to the September 2, 2009 Non-Regulatory Guidance (see TechMIS September 15, 2009 Special Report), officials also explained the conditions under which Title I funds can be used to retain teacher positions which would otherwise be lost due to local and state funding cuts and other ways to retain teachers by changing job descriptions and creating new programs.

On several occasions, districts were encouraged to apply for waivers of the 15% limitation not only for 2009, but also for 2010 regular Title I appropriations. This would be especially important for districts in states where the state has not received approval for Title I carryover 15% limitation waivers. Officials also clarified that the amount that can be carried over can be significant -- up to 50 or 60 percent of the

state's allocation. The same officials made it clear that IDEA ARRA funds do not have a carryover limitation and that the ARRA \$12.2 billion must still be obligated by September 30, 2011, a deadline which was included in the September 2009 IDEA Non-Regulatory Guidance on the use of IDEA ARRA funds (also included in our September 15, 2009 IDEA TechMIS Special Report).

ESEA Reauthorization Update: "Hill" Discussions Continue, Education Groups Recommend Alternatives to Proposed "Blueprint," Obama Administration "Courts" State Legislators to Ensure Recent State Policy Changes are Retained After November Elections

As Congressional summer recesses (July 4th and August) occur, "quiet periods" generally become the rule on the Hill. However, movement on the ESEA reauthorization is gaining some momentum mostly behind closed doors. In mid-June, key chairmen and ranking Republicans on the four K-12 committees and subcommittees met with Secretary Duncan and White House Domestic Advisor Melanie Barnes behind closed doors to discuss ESEA reauthorization. According to Alyson Klein (Politics K12/Education Week), participants felt "The meeting itself was very congenial, and staffers will continue to work in a bipartisan way to complete the reauthorization, ideally sooner rather than later. Every single person agreed that the current version of the law, the No Child Left Behind Act, is flawed and needs to be changed. Everyone gave the secretary high marks for an inclusive process." On several occasions over the last six months,

responding to questions about the ESEA reauthorization, Rich Long, Executive Director National Association of State Title I Directors (IRA), has emphasized that, once key committee staff from both sides of the aisle agree on certain points, even if the reauthorization does not occur this year, the progress made will be a starting point during the next Congress, even if there is some Congressional turnover. As Klein noted, "Lawmakers have a way of picking up where they leave off on bills like this."

On a separate but parallel track, the Forum on Education Accountability, consisting of more than 150 national organizations (civil rights, religious, parent, labor, and other groups), has come up with an updated series of recommendations for improving ESEA/NCLB following the submission earlier this year of USED's proposed "Blueprint" about which FEA has "serious concerns about several elements." In the assessment arena, FEA supports "growth and improvement approaches, provided they incorporate "multiple measures" and ensuring that new assessments consider the needs of diverse learners, including use of the Principles of Universal Design for Learning. Unlike the so-called Blueprint, FEA's approach would provide supports to low-performing schools rather than "punishing them" and would "allow a broad range of 'turnaround' options rather than the narrow menu established in NCLB, Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants, and the "Blueprint." It would also use indicators and reviews to tailor change actions to schools' need and build improvement plans for elements demonstrated to be essential to school improvement, e.g., collaborative professional development, strong leadership, parent involvement, and rich and challenging curriculum." FEA recommends

a greater emphasis on capacity building and eliminating set-asides for tutoring and parent choice and using the money for professional development and teacher collaboration. It would also avoid the overuse of competitive grants, as proposed in the Administration's FY 2000 budget, which would reduce real-dollar funding for school programs." Many of the FEA recommendations are likely to be supported, with slightly different "twists," by large education associations such as the NEA, AFT, NSBA, AASA, and the Council of the Great City Schools, among others in separate sets of recommendations. As noted in the last TechMIS [Washington Update](#), during the most recent series of the reauthorization hearings chaired by Committee Chairman George Miller, a number of recommended changes under School Improvement Grant intervention models are likely to be reflected in the next ESEA reauthorization draft.

In addition to Secretary Duncan's calling for ESEA reauthorization this year, another strategy appears to be to ensure that state policy changes in the direction of the Duncan/Obama priorities (e.g., tying teacher salaries to student achievement) remain in tact in expectation that significant turnover could occur in 38 governorships and Congress as a result of the November elections. One initiative in this strategy occurred in mid-June when USED held a day-long meeting with 25 state legislators, including chairpersons of many states' education committees, who received briefings by high-level USED officials and a Q&A session with Secretary Duncan. According to Lesli Maxwell (*State EdWatch* blog on [Education Week](#)), Duncan praised state legislatures "for a series of new laws and changes to K-12 policy that have been driven, in large part, by the \$4 billion Race

to the Top competition."

The conference was convened with assistance from the National Conference of State Legislatures whose lobbyist has been extremely critical of the Bush NCLB initiative; a number of key state legislators are also being critical of some of the Obama/Duncan initiatives such as Race to the Top, which did not call for a sign-off from state legislatures. This is especially important in states confronting a worsening fiscal situation next school year. One might expect the Obama/Duncan administration to be pressured to provide more Federal State Stabilization or other flexible stimulus-type funding as a bargaining chip to minimize any retraction of some of the new education policy changes.

USED Announces Rigorous Criteria It Will Consider in Deciding Whether to Approve State Waiver Requests of IDEA Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Requirements; More States Are Likely to Request Such Waivers with Some Being Approved, Which Could Result in Reduced Expenditures in Special Education Programs Next School Year

USED recently announced the factors it would take into account when it considers whether to approve an SEA waiver request of IDEA maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements. More states, beyond the two which have been approved (Kansas and Iowa), are likely to apply due to pressures from governors and state legislatures which are only now becoming aware of the availability of such waivers. Since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 and in spite of the recently-stated rigorous USED criteria

and discouragement of such applications, the political realities of mid-year elections may force USED to approve such requests because of “exceptional or uncontrollable” state budget situations. It is very likely that, in states where waivers are approved, district expenditures on special education programs will decline during the next year.

Under IDEA, as reauthorized in 2004, USED can waive maintenance of effort requirements for one year as a result of “a natural disaster or a precipitous and unforeseen decline in the financial resources of the State.” Until recently, no such waivers have been approved and very few, if any, have actually been requested because state officials felt the effort would be futile. Because of tight fiscal situations, Kansas, Iowa, South Carolina, and West Virginia recently requested such waivers for this school year; two have been approved thus far. With this break in tradition, knowledgeable observers, such as ECS’s Michael Griffith, expects more waivers to be requested from as many as 15 states because of the worsening financial outlook in these states and increased costs of special education programs. In response to a story in Education Week (June 15th) by Christina Samuels, USED reportedly e-mailed a two-page letter outlining the review process to be used and factors to be considered. The USED e-mail lists a number of factors to be taken into account beyond the general above-stated condition in IDEA, including:

- “The State’s compliance and performance record in implementing Part B of IDEA -- the nature and length of any non-compliance, data in its State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report, including data on performance and compliance indicators, the State’s

determination under Section 616 of IDEA, whether there are outstanding findings of non-compliance, whether corrective actions are underway, and whether the Department has placed special conditions on the State’s Part B grant.

- A number of other factors related to the reduction in state funds for special education relative to reductions in other K12 and higher education allocations and other sources of revenue used by the state for special education.

In the most recent Performance Review, USED rated states from “meets requirements” to “needs serious intervention,” based on a review of 2008 data; 28 states were rated as meeting requirements. About 12 months ago, USED issued policy letter guidance to states which used the Annual Performance Report ratings to encourage SEAs to use similar district-level ratings to determine whether or not a district was eligible to take advantage of Section 613 which would allow up to 50 percent of their IDEA increase this year to be used to free-up the same amount of local funds being used to pay for special education programs. While USED strongly encouraged SEAs to do so, most states used their “interpretations” of performance ratings to determine whether or not districts were eligible to take advantage of Section 613. A GAO report last December estimated that, in the states they studied, about 45 percent of districts took advantage of Section 613.

The situation related to Section 613 local maintenance of effort differs from the state maintenance of effort requirement in several respects. While USED encouraged states to

take into account district LEA performance report ratings, it was up to the SEA to do so; whereas, for the SEA MOE waiver request, the primary decision-maker is USED, which in its June 15th memo indicated it will use a “very careful process that takes into account the specific facts and circumstances of each situation being reviewed” and that decisions would be made on a “case-by-case basis.” The decision to maintain local effort equal to the effort prior to the decision to take advantage of Section 613 is up to the LEA. Most knowledgeable observers with whom we talked feel that SEAs are not going to encourage or require LEAs to do so. Regarding the SEA MOE, waivers that are approved are only for one year with states being required to maintain the level of effort of the year preceding the year the waiver was in effect. In any case, both the LEA and the SEA are required to ensure that free appropriate public education (FAPE) mandates are met in serving students identified and placed in special education programs and in ensuring that previous levels of quality services are provided.

As several knowledgeable observers have noted, USED has attempted to hold SEAs and LEAs to the rigorous performance rating criteria in Annual Performance Reports. However, in light of the grim and even worsening fiscal outlooks in many states this coming year and the fact that 38 governorships are on the ballot in November, we believe USED is likely to approve waiver requests submitted by certain states, and will otherwise “back off” using the most rigorous set of criteria/factors. In addition, some of these observers noted that the waiver requests by four states and approval for two is likely to cause waivers to spread like “wildfire” among state legislatures because numerous

conferences are being held at this time and increased pressure from this quarter can be expected.

Three State Consortia Apply for \$350 Million to Develop New High-Quality Assessments Aligned to Common Core Standards

The two state consortia applying for funding (approximately \$160 million each) to develop a “comprehensive” new assessment aligned to the Common Core State Standards include the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (31 states led by Washington), and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (26 states led by Florida). If both are funded, which is very likely, there will be several implications for many TechMIS subscribers.

Both consortia would include the use of “performance-based tasks” in addition to end-of-year measures for accountability reporting. Firms with instructional materials and simulation/tools which prepare students for such performance tasks/portfolio assessments should benefit. Both consortia would also rely heavily on computer-based, year-end assessments which should increase the availability of computers or other devices which can be used with such assessments and/or for instruction in more grade levels than most states currently require. The SMARTER Balanced Consortium also proposes to rely heavily on computer-adaptive testing, which was not allowed for AYP reporting purposes under NCLB. Similarly, both consortia would rely heavily on formative assessments, along with data-driven decision-making tools, to help teachers inform instruction. In

combination, these thrusts should benefit publishers with products and tools which can be used in differentiated instruction. The SMARTER Balance Consortium would develop formative evaluation tools which teachers can use to look at learning progressions and professional development for teachers would occur as teachers participate actively in the test scoring process. The Partnership Consortium would use formative benchmark assessments primarily to determine whether students are progressing in a trajectory to make them college/career-ready. And, according to Education Week reporter Stephen Sawchuk (June 24th) based on his interviews/discussions with key leaders of the two consortia, both would “explore the use of ‘technology-enhanced’ items that gauge higher-order critical-thinking abilities, rather than rely solely on multiple-choice questions that don’t lend themselves to measuring those skills.” The demand for instructional materials that focus on the development of critical thinking skills and their applications should, therefore, increase.

A third group, the State Consortium on Board Examination Systems, consisting of 12 states with project management under the National Center on Education and the Economy, would adapt -- rather than create - - alternative board examinations used in other countries which would be aligned to the Common Core Standards. If students could pass such exams, beginning during the sophomore year in high school, these students could enroll in colleges or continue taking college courses while in high school. The board exams would also be linked to their respective curricula which would also be adapted and would use student proficiency and mastery tests rather than “seat time,” as a criterion, which should also

provide a major boost for online instructional delivery. (See related Washington Update item)

Analyst Thomas Toch Assesses the Impact of the Common Core Initiative and State Consortia Assessment Development Approach on the Testing Industry

In a recent paper prepared for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute as part of a compendium of papers entitled “Common Education Standards: Tackling the Long-Term Questions,” Thomas Toch, co-authored with Peg Tyre, an analysis of the impact on the testing industry of the Common Core and New Assessments initiatives and policies, which could influence the direction of the impact. Toch, a founder of the Education Sector, has tracked the impact of Federal education policies, such as NCLB, on the testing industry over the last decade and has been very insightful in previous reports, including “Margins of Error: The Education Testing Industry in the No Child Left Behind Era.” According to Toch, the two related initiatives “are likely to spell major changes for the testing industry.” Critical to the success of the assessment initiative develop a new generation of high-quality assessments; Toch notes, “policymakers must give educators the incentive they’ve lacked under NCLB to measure advanced skills. And states must be willing to pay for higher quality tests once the federal funding ends.”

As noted in a related Washington Update item, applications have been submitted by two consortia of states to develop “comprehensive” high-quality assessments with estimated budgets of \$160 million each

and another consortium has submitted a plan to adapt “board examination systems” used in other countries and align them to Common Core standards while also adapting the countries’ curricula. Although billed as a “competition,” most observers feel that all three consortia’s applications will be funded. The two consortia developing the comprehensive assessment, according to Toch, will have Federal funding to spend on test development and, over the long-term, will have enough market share to “make substantial demands on the industry.” Because there would be no need, as under NCLB, for every state to create tests, cost of development -- which is about 20 cents of each state’s testing dollars -- could be reduced, freeing up funds to improve test quality. As he notes, psychometricians in testing firms could focus on “coming up with deeper tests of knowledge that are well-aligned with the common core.” Compared to the cost of traditional standardized tests -- about \$55 per student -- the cost of such new tests could drop to about \$40 per student for states participating in the national consortia. He also predicts that considerable consolidation within the industry will occur as “Most industry insiders believe that one or two large firms will prevail in a consolidated marketplace, very likely including Pearson, the dominant company in today’s market.” Survival of smaller niche companies will depend on how much “state test customization” will be demanded (i.e., the number of states which avail themselves of USED’s allowing individual states to customize 15 percent of their tests) for which there could be “sufficient additional work for companies that are not developing the core consortium tests.” Other opportunities could exist among firms that develop and administer tests for subgroups such as special education or ELL students.

Toch also echoed the opportunities that have been suggested by CCSSO officials involved with Common Core initiatives and assessments (see [TechMIS Washington Update](#) April 29, 2010), by noting, “Companies large and small might find opportunities offering additional interim and diagnostic assessment to schools and school districts on top of what is required by the Department of Education’s testing RFP. Currently states have different rules for disclosing what is on their tests -- some make the whole test publicly available, others release portions or individual questions. Depending on who actually owns the consortia tests and questions -- and if and to what degree the material is made public -- small companies might sell supporting products such as tutoring materials.”

In a concluding section, Toch questions the viability of the overall initiative and some of its conflicting goals. For example, the RFP calls for use of one form or another of computer-based assessments; however, as he notes, “Experts suggest that a move to technology-driven assessment is only a matter of time....But we’re not there yet. Not even close....the testing industry doesn’t yet have a strong online presence.” He also notes that at least one testing industry “insider” stated that the consortia’s budgets of \$160 million are more than enough to develop a new generation of tests, but experts believe it’s not enough to sustain them. Based on his discussions with experts, he calls the overall set of goals and objectives a somewhat conflicting and “overly ambitious” agenda. For example, the USED RFP calls for consortia testing of every student in many grade levels and to provide real-time results to inform instruction, but he notes, “it also wants more

performance test questions and a greater role for teachers in scoring tests, features likely to add time and cost to the testing enterprise and that would thus be easier to achieve if there were less testing, not more.”

In closing, he argues that some of the disincentives of NCLB must be removed and, in the ESEA reauthorization, the primary focus should be on individual student growth: “If Congress incorporates the Obama changes into its reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, there may well be sweeping changes in education testing and in the testing industry. If it doesn’t, the impact of the emerging common standards and state testing consortia that are designed to support the standards is likely to be much diminished.”

The Toch report is at: [http://edexcellence.net/doc/201006 EducationGovernance TochTyre.pdf](http://edexcellence.net/doc/201006_EducationGovernance_TochTyre.pdf)

Online Delivery of Instruction for Different Forms of “Remediation” Will Likely Continue to Grow Significantly

The online or blended instructional delivery in various areas of “remediation” will continue to grow significantly over the next few years. One such area is online credit recovery options, as addressed in a June 21st Education Week article: “Interest in online credit-recovery courses continues to surge, prompting some policy experts and educators to consider whether traditional rules requiring students to spend a certain number of hours in the classroom, rather than simply demonstrate their proficiency in subject matter, are increasingly outdated.” The article highlighted initiatives underway

in New York City, Chicago, and Boston. High priority on increasing graduation rates with regular diplomas is one of several policy driving forces. Three or four years ago, surveys conducted for the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) reported that credit recovery had begun to outpace advanced placement and related online courses in terms of numbers of students.

About ten years ago, USED surveys identified significant use of online delivery in college remediation courses, particularly at two-year colleges. At that time about 25 percent of students in remediation were taking full or partial online remedial courses, particularly in the area of mathematics. Such use of online instruction was predictable because faculty resistance was minimal. Even though no statistics have been gathered, one would expect that online college remediation received another boost when, last August, the GI Bill went into effect allowing up to \$100 per Gulf War veteran to cover the cost of tutoring for up to 12 months. The Veterans Affairs Department projected that most of the tutoring would be conducted online because of convenience and other factors. In August and September, more than 900,000 returning veterans sent applications to enroll in college -- the cost of which would be covered by the new Bill -- but during the first two months, fewer than 50,000 were processed. Groups, such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, have estimated the cost for college remediation to be between \$2-3 billion. Within the credit recovery and college remediation areas, according to blogger Mary Ann Zehr (*Learning the Language/Education Week*), English language learners represent a large portion of students enrolling in credit recovery

programs and require different ELL instructional strategies. The Washington-based Pew Research Center reported a 15 percent increase in college enrollment of Hispanic students between 2007 and 2008, possibly suggesting significant growth opportunities in the college remediation market.

In a related area, largely as a result of the growth of graduation exams, including end-of-course exams in 20-25 states, over the last decade, online tutoring and test retaking grew rapidly. However, most surveys conducted during that timeframe in areas such as one-to-one computing, etc. counted only the number of students officially taking courses not test preparation or test retaking efforts.

Earlier this year, the Obama administration proposed a community college initiative which would have provided millions of dollars for the development of online courses to prepare college enrollees for successful completion of courses to be made available through “open source” formats. Even though funds were not appropriated in the amendment that was attached to the Health Reform Act, several instances have arisen over the last year which suggest the Administration is willing to “push the envelope of unfair government competition” with the private sector, including publishers with online instructional materials. While these policies could create problems for online publishers and content owners, growth of online delivery to be an expanding market niche.

E-Rate Update on Districts With “Potential” E-Rate Refunds for Purchasing Non-eligible Products and Services

As we attempt to do every quarter, we have included a list of districts that recently received funding commitments from the SLD for applications submitted over a year ago. We believe that most of the funding commitment letters represent appeals that were filed by districts when they were notified that certain requests in their applications were denied. In many cases, these districts went ahead and purchased the product in question, paying the whole pre-discount price. Because the SLD eventually found many of these appeals to be meritorious, these districts can request a check instead of a credit through the so-called BEAR process. Those districts doing so can use the discount refund to purchase non-eligible E-Rate products and services such as instructional software and professional development. If a district staff person is interested in purchasing a non-E-Rate eligible product or service, then he or she should contact the district E-Rate office to determine whether a check was requested for the refund amount through the BEAR process and, if so, whether some of that money can be used to purchase the desired product or service. The accompanying chart shows the funding commitments greater than \$50,000. It is noteworthy that a number of large districts have received commitments for more than one year. These include: Albuquerque (NM), Florence County (SC), Jasper County (SC), Laredo (TX), Morrow County (OR), and Edgewood (TX).

E-Rate Funding Year 2010, Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar) Commitments (greater than \$50,000)			
Applicant	City	State	Amount Committed
2005 Commitments			
ALBUQUERQUE SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALBUQUERQUE	NM	\$3,930,920
UNION COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	UNION	SC	\$2,331,401
WILLIAMSBURG CO SCHOOL DIST	KINGSTREE	SC	\$290,404
FLORENCE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 3	LAKE CITY	SC	\$213,658
PORTALES MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	PORTALES	NM	\$175,627
HAMPTON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 1	VARNVILLE	SC	\$115,126
UNIVERSAL/STAR INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIES	DEARBORN HEIGHTS	MI	\$61,528
2006 Commitments			
DALLAS INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	DALLAS	TX	\$19,031,640
FLORENCE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 3	LAKE CITY	SC	\$166,776
JASPER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	RIDGELAND	SC	\$194,918
LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BISHOPVILLE	SC	\$1,036,782
MARICOPA CO REGIONAL SCH DIST	PHOENIX	AZ	\$20,343
MORROW COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 1	LEXINGTON	OR	\$21,734
PEORIA SCHOOL DISTRICT 150	PEORIA	IL	\$961,784
WILLIAMSBURG CO SCHOOL DIST	KINGSTREE	SC	\$108,417
2007 Commitments			
LAREDO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LAREDO	TX	\$13,284,619
COLLETON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	WALTERBORO	SC	\$1,208,607
JASPER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	RIDGELAND	SC	\$1,025,592
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	CHARLESTON	SC	\$984,956
ALBUQUERQUE SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALBUQUERQUE	NM	\$975,136
WHITFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	DALTON	GA	\$957,057
EDGEWOOD INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	SAN ANTONIO	TX	\$464,959
MORROW COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 1	LEXINGTON	OR	\$397,529
ABBEVILLE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	ABBEVILLE	SC	\$302,346
LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BISHOPVILLE	SC	\$113,023
FLORENCE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 3	LAKE CITY	SC	\$111,293
WILLIAMSBURG CO SCHOOL DIST	KINGSTREE	SC	\$79,380
WAYNE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	MONTICELLO	KY	\$58,446
2008 Commitments			
EDGEWOOD INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	SAN ANTONIO	TX	\$24,882,459
LAREDO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LAREDO	TX	\$14,547,255
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUB SCHS	WASHINGTON	DC	\$6,181,245
V.I. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	ST THOMAS	VI	\$6,157,966
ALBUQUERQUE SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALBUQUERQUE	NM	\$3,728,250
ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL DISTRICT	New Orleans	LA	\$1,991,524
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	CHARLESTON	SC	\$1,283,485
MASTERY CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$941,349
TORNILLO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	TORNILLO	TX	\$760,833
CITRUS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	INVERNESS	FL	\$723,831
LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BISHOPVILLE	SC	\$705,147
ELMORE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	WETUMPKA	AL	\$547,777
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OHOLEI TORAH	BROOKLYN	NY	\$442,316
ECKERD YOUTH ALTERNATIVE	CLEARWATER	FL	\$368,655
LAUDERDALE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	FLORENCE	AL	\$351,493
ASBURY PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT	ASBURY PARK	NJ	\$340,971
CHOCTAW NATION INTERLOCAL	DURANT	OK	\$337,415
COFFEE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM	DOUGLAS	GA	\$324,191
PADUCAH INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	PADUCAH	KY	\$317,521
RIVERDALE UNIFIED SCHOOL DIST	RIVERDALE	CA	\$281,487
FAIRFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	WINNSBORO	SC	\$251,706
JASPER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	RIDGELAND	SC	\$226,184
FLORENCE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 3	LAKE CITY	SC	\$221,882
HIGHLAND PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT	HIGHLAND PARK	MI	\$217,538
E. SHLOM (1)	KEW GDNS	NY	\$214,895
HARLAN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	HARLAN	KY	\$201,203
BECLABITO DAY SCHOOL	SHIPROCK	NM	\$198,171
TEMPLE CITY UNIF SCHOOL DIST	TEMPLE CITY	CA	\$193,896
CHEDER LUBAVITCH HEBREW DAY SCHOOL, INC.	SKOKIE	IL	\$190,441
PORTALES MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	PORTALES	NM	\$189,608
BABOVE CENTRAL	KEW GARDENS	NY	\$186,512
TSE II AHI COMMUNITY SCHOOL	CROWNPOINT	NM	\$184,167
YESHIVA TORIAS EMEIS KAMENITZ	BROOKLYN	NY	\$172,514
RATTAN INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT 1	RATTAN	OK	\$168,500
SUMTER SCHOOL DISTRICT 17	SUMTER	SC	\$166,520
A.W. BROWN FELLOWSHIP CHARTER SCHOOL II	DALLAS	TX	\$162,796
POSEN-ROBBINS SCH DIST 143 1/2	POSEN	IL	\$152,949
SPARTANBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 7	SPARTANBURG	SC	\$151,913
CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 1	GAFFNEY	SC	\$138,148
CUBA SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUBA	NM	\$133,930
ST JOHN EVANGELIST SCHOOL	TUCSON	AZ	\$131,650
SPRINGER MUNICIPAL SCHOOL DIST	SPRINGER	NM	\$131,261
COLLETON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	WALTERBORO	SC	\$109,316
NEWBERRY COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	NEWBERRY	SC	\$99,202
SPARTANBURG COUNTY SCH DIST 7	SPARTANBURG	SC	\$98,378
LUBAVITCHER YESHIVA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	BROOKLYN	NY	\$90,518
ALLENDALE COUNTY SCHOOL DIST	ALLENDALE	SC	\$84,450
CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR ARCHITECTURE AND DES	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$83,682
LAKE VALLEY NAVAJO SCHOOL	CROWNPOINT	NM	\$80,832
GREEN TECH HIGH SCHOOL	ALBANY	NY	\$78,590
HUGO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT 139	HUGO	OK	\$77,493
NORTHERN ARIZONA ACADEMY FOR CAREER DEVELO	TAYLOR	AZ	\$74,786
ALPAUGH UNIFIED SCHOOL DIST	ALPAUGH	CA	\$74,503
YESHIVA SHAAREI HATVLUCHA	BROOKLYN	NY	\$73,202
WEST OAKLANE CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$72,959
MILBURN INDEP SCHOOL DIST 29	MILBURN	OK	\$69,962
GERMANTOWN SETTLEMENT CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$61,344
TERRA BELLA UN SCH DIST	TERRA BELLA	CA	\$59,000
CARUTHERS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	CARUTHERS	CA	\$52,574
WEST FRESNO ELEM SCHOOL DIST	FRESNO	CA	\$51,736

Technology-Using Educators Provide Useful Insights on Challenges as Well as Opportunities for Personalizing Education

During an SIIA/COSN “feedback forum” at the Annual ISTE Conference (formerly NECC), 12 high-technology using educators from across the country provided their insights on some of the barriers to “personalizing learning,” as well as opportunities for software publishers and vendors. Participants were technology staff, including Chief technology officers (CTOs), from K-12 education agencies ranging from a BOCES in Colorado to a wealthy suburban district in Pennsylvania to a consortium of 40 districts in Minnesota to a Louisiana parish. Some of their insights included the following:

- One Tennessee district official who has implemented one-to-one computing district-wide defined the difference between “individualized instruction” and “personalized learning” as the former being based on students’ “learning modalities,” while the latter is based on students’ “interests.”
- In developing “personalized learning plans,” one Illinois rural district official indicated that the “Why do I?” issue has to be addressed directly which could constrain widespread use of “individualized instruction.”
- A veteran CTO from a large Pennsylvania district has suggested that his “title” should remove the word “technology,” and instead replace it with “instructional” officer and reminded publishers that technology only provides the “opportunity” (i.e., giving all kids an

iPod) for personalized learning, but does in no way ensure that it happens.

- The Louisiana parish CTO reminded everyone that while “money isn’t everything,” “money does talk” and when state cuts, such as in the E²T² program, occur, one has to be prepared to implement Plan B. As an example, he noted that the Louisiana SEA had initially supported increased purchases of computers for assessment purposes, which allowed the parish to make the computers available for instruction as well, but as the budget constraints increased, assessment got the priority with little use for instruction.
- A Massachusetts superintendent in a “mature” technology-using rural district felt one of the major impediments to district-wide application is buy-in of high school teachers which is the “last frontier for one-to-one computing.” She asked firms to figure how to get more teacher “buy-in” from this group of teachers.
- Several participants involved in implementing one-to-one computing, particularly in virtual high schools, identified “seat” time as a continuing problem, while another mentioned finances as a challenge. The letter also noted that increased time is an important cost and that developers should attempt to make software and applications as “teacher-friendly as possible.”
- A technology officer in a small, wealthy suburban Pennsylvania district argued that “differentiation” is impossible in “current school

structures” and that “schools are not set up for either personalized or individualized instruction.” He also argued that the E-Rate program was a “Robin Hood,” stating that his calculation of all of the personal telephone tax fees and administrative costs of implementing E-Rate in accordance with guidelines cost more than the overall benefit to his district.

- An official from a technology-oriented consortium of more than 40 districts reinforced that too many Federal programs have “too many strings tied to their funding.”

In response to a question about what types of software applications these technology officials wanted, several offered the following:

- more flexibility in terms of fair use and copyright permissions to use;
- a call for more interoperable applications;
- site licenses that are more flexible to accommodate the needs of small schools with a small number of participants (an official from a small rural district cited the difficulties in her district of implementing a site license which required at least 500 student participants in the school).
- a willingness to renegotiate licenses on an annual basis because schools populations can change significantly.

In a related session, Tom Greaves and Jeanne Hayes highlighted the major findings of their fourth annual RED survey on the implementation of one-to-one computing. They found that the fidelity of district implementation of “one-to-one” computing

often requires bypassing seat time restrictions, promoting proficiency and mastery tests, and inclusion of dual enrollment; effective implementation is highly correlated to increased student achievement. More detailed results of this important study will be provided in our next TechMIS issue when the final report is available.

Miscellaneous

- a) After two “stalled” attempts, on May 28 the House passed the reauthorization of the America Competes Act (HR 5116) which authorizes \$84 billion in Federal funding over five years to implement the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) initiative. Created by Congress in 2007, many of the initial programs that were authorized have yet to be funded.

The House-passed bill calls for greater input from more than ten Federal agencies on how to overcome challenges and barriers; it would also streamline coordination among the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health, and USED. In 2007, the America Competes Act authorized \$95 million for Math Now to provide elementary and middle school math and science teachers with tools and professional development and a similar amount for secondary math and science teachers; however, no funds for these programs have actually been appropriated. A Math Science Bonus Program, which would provide rewards to six high schools in each state that show the greatest progress in math and science, has also not had any funds

appropriated. The Math and Science Education Partnership at the National Science Foundation and the NSF Teacher Scholarship Program, which have been included as part of the Competes Act but which existed prior to 2007, received about half of the funds authorized for them (about \$80 million and \$110 million, respectively, in regular and ARRA funding).

While the President's FY 2011 budget references the Competes Act and some of its component programs, the proposed budget did contain \$3.7 billion for a one percent increase for "STEM education" according to the White House and a proposed big increase in programs designed to increase student achievement in math and science at the K-12 level. However, these programs, including several professional development efforts, are included as part of proposed consolidated grant programs, such as Effective Teaching and Learning, most of which would be allocated in the form of competitive rather than formula grants. It should be noted that the proposed \$500 million in FY 2011 for the Innovation Fund (i³) would include \$150 million for STEM activities which are now given preference points in the current i³ competition. Competitive preference points are also included in the Race to the Top grants competition with states such as New Mexico, North Carolina, and Louisiana including major STEM related initiatives in their Round 2 applications.

- b) A new report from the National Governors Association and National Association of State Budget Officials

found "Fiscal 2010 presented the most difficult challenge for states' financial management since the Great Depression and fiscal 2011 is expected to present states with similar challenges." As a result of decreases in states' revenue, state expenditures were down in 2010 by eight percent to \$612 billion from \$657 billion the previous year. Thirty-four states cut K-12 expenditures in 2010 and 31 are proposing cuts to K-12 in 2011. States that did not cut K-12 spending in 2010 were: New Hampshire, Vermont, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Florida, Tennessee, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, and Oregon. While 31 states were planning K-12 cuts in 2011, the following states indicated they plan no such cuts: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa, North Dakota, Arkansas, Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Alaska, Washington, and Oregon. Overall state balances (including Rainy Day funds) were 6.2 percent of total expenditures in 2010; such balances are projected to be 5.7 percent in 2011. However, if you remove Texas and Alaska which have large balances, the average state balance declines to 2.2 percent. Fifteen states estimate that their balance will be less than one percent in 2011. States with end-of-year balances for FY 2011 of eight percent or greater were: Delaware, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Georgia, Louisiana, West Virginia, Texas, Oklahoma, Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska.

For a copy of the report go to: www.nga.org/files/pdf/FSS1006.pdf

c) On June 8th, in a speech before the Center for American Progress, Peter Orszag, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, called for a three-year freeze on discretionary spending not related to national security and asked all Federal agencies to propose cutting unnecessary or duplicated programs by five percent. Such a request was also made last year; Orszag indicated that, in the FY 2010 Act, about 60 percent of such proposed reductions actually occurred. Related to education, he gave an example of wasted money on programs that do not work or are duplicative to one another, stating, “And yet, right now, there are over 110 funded programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education across 14 different departments and agencies within the federal government; over 100 that support youth mentoring scattered across 13 agencies; and more than 40 programs located in 11 different departments with responsibility for employment and training.” The same example was cited by the Bush Administration in 2008 and by the Obama Administration last year. In response to questions, he noted that the goal is an overall five percent reduction across all agencies, while in some agencies the reductions may be smaller with funds reallocated to increases in more effective programs. He also noted that the Administration has “put forward a new proposal for expedited rescission authority so that we can act quickly and efficiently to remove unnecessary and wasteful programs.” As noted in Education Daily (June 10th) staff writers Frank Wolfe and Emily Ann Brown stated, “It is unclear which programs will be cut, but the Obama

administration has made clear that phasing out low-performance projects could free up resources to be put to better use elsewhere. OMB expects agencies to respond by September 13 with the list of programs or subprograms proposed for termination or reduction.”

This announcement comes shortly after the House passed reauthorization of the America Competes Act which includes funding for many of the STEM programs operated primarily by the National Science Foundation, USED, and DHHS; the House version calls for greater coordination among agencies and streamlining of programs (see related item).

d) Mass Insight’s The School Turnaround Group has just released “Building a State Turnaround Office” with recommendations and guidance based on their experience in working with six states who are beginning to implement the \$3.5 billion School Improvement Grants program. It is recommended that the State Turnaround Office (STO) should “play an important role in cultivating a marketplace of preferred external providers which includes creating an RFP process for school management and support providers and selecting providers based on their ability to deliver student results. The STO should also identify local district needs and fill them with outside contractors as necessary and create incentives to attract partners. The Mass Insight report describes the organizational structure and responsibilities of Turnaround Offices created within the Colorado Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Education

(through its Breakthrough Center). It also provides, as an example of district turnaround offices, the one created in Chicago Public Schools. The Mass Insight press release indicates that two additional publications will become available this summer including “Building a District Turnaround Office” and “When it works: Promising district- and school-level turnaround examples from the field.” For a copy of the report go to: turnaround@massinsight.org.

- e) A new report, released on June 22nd, concluded that gains made by students in math after three years in KIPP charter middle schools would reduce achievement gaps among poor and minority students. The report concluded, “For the vast majority of KIPP schools studied, impacts on students’ state assessment scores in mathematics and reading are positive, statistically significant, and educationally substantial....Compared to national norms during this grade span, a 0.48 effect size after three years represents 1.2 years of accumulated extra growth in mathematics over the three year period.” The report also found that, over three years, half of the KIPP schools showed an effect size of .28 standard deviations representing an estimated 0.9 years of additional instruction in reading. The report compared the significant growth in KIPP middle schools as closely resembling “results from studies of Boston charter schools and the Harlem Children’s Zone’s Promise Academy charter schools.”

The report also suggests that the higher achievement gains of students in KIPP

schools could not be attributed to “creaming” or losing students at higher rates and replacing them by more able students. It did note that KIPP middle schools are not likely to enroll proportionately as many special education students or LEP students as are the districts from which KIPP students left. As reported by Education Week, a large number of prominent evaluation critics have praised the study and its findings, including Robin J. Lake, Associate Director for the Center on Reinventing Public Education in Seattle, Washington, who stated that the Mathematica study is strong methodologically and showed that KIPP has been able to scale-up on “a reasonable level, and that’s remarkable.” Lake also stated that KIPP is replicating schools faster than most charter school management organizations, “so they’ve got to be doing something right in terms of organizational growth.” Skeptics such as Gary Miron, Professor at Western Michigan University, said that, After reading the study, a question remains: “Could this be a viable model for traditional public schools that have to take all kids?... KIPP schools have a rigorous curriculum, longer school day and year and don’t have as many special education students as regular public schools.”

This study was conducted by Mathematica Policy Research (one of the largest evaluation contractors funded by USED/Institute of Education Sciences) and was funded by several private foundations. It should also be noted that KIPP is one of 19 applicants in the \$50 million i³ scale-up grants competition; the name of their proposed

project is “Success is the Norm: Scaling-Up KIPP’s Effective Leadership Development Model.” Other scale-up i³ grant applications include those from Reading Recovery (the Ohio State University), Teach for America, Success for All, and Project Lead the Way.

- f) Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) and former superintendent of Denver Public Schools is sponsoring the Lead Act which would provide training and support for the nation’s best principals to transform lowest-performing schools. Senator Bennet, who political blogger Alyson Klein called the Administration’s “go-to guy on education issues,” calls for the creation of a network of School Leadership Centers of Excellence which would train and support turnaround principals and would be run by partnership between non-profit organizations, higher education, SEAs and districts. It would also bring together experts with stakeholders in the field to collect and develop a core body of knowledge regarding effective practice that is evidence-based and tested over time, and would create an infrastructure to provide open source professional development materials for principals and other school leaders. The senator’s press release dated June 9th states, “The quality of school leadership is second only to teacher quality among school-related factors in its effect on student learning. Currently there’s a shortage of principals who can lead the transformation efforts in our lowest-performing schools, especially in rural

schools. Teachers cite quality principals as critical to their decisions to stay in high-need schools.” A companion bill has been introduced in the House by Representative Donald Payne (D-NJ). Political K-12 also noted that Bennet was “working on legislation aimed at teacher quality.”

- g) On June 22, 2010, policy brief, prepared by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and sent to all its members, estimated that approximately 275,000 educator and 82,000 cross sector jobs would result from the ARRA “funding cliff” and attempts to provide rationale for Congress to pass the \$23 billion Edujobs that is part of the Defense Department supplemental. Citing an analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, if Congress passed the \$23 billion Emergency Jobs Bill, this would translate into a growth domestic product gain of \$32.2 billion and lower the overall deficit by more than \$10 billion. It also argues that 30 weeks of unemployment insurance for those likely to be laid off would cost more than \$3 billion which would result in widespread significant cuts in personal income which would undermine the fragile economic recovery. For more information go to www.aasa.org.

Alabama Update

June 2010

Alabama education officials say that, last year, the State drew down \$222 million from its Education Trust Fund to prevent school cuts and predicted that 2010-11 would be even worse. The \$5 billion Trust Fund consists primarily of sales and income tax revenues which have taken a big hit because of a drop in tourism and other industries as a consequence of the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico. State Officials have said the State will try to recoup from BP tax revenues lost and, if an agreement cannot be reached with BP, court action is threatened.

Arizona Update

June 2010

As reported in Education Week, the U.S. Supreme Court will look at the constitutionality of Arizona's 13-year-old program that offers tax credits to organizations that provide private school scholarships. A Federal Appeals Court has ruled that the program advances religion in violation of the First Amendment because a majority of scholarship recipients go to religious schools. The program has been ruled constitutional by the Arizona Supreme Court. State data show that, in 2009, more than 73,000 donations totaling \$50.8 million were made. Nearly 28,000 scholarships, totaling \$52.1 million, were given to students attending 370 private schools.

According to eSchoolNews, the new Arizona law targeting illegal immigrants has concerned the State's non-native educators after the State education department suggested that teachers with heavy accents be reassigned. State education officials are reported as saying that students with limited English proficiency should be taught by teachers who are highly qualified in fluency of the English language and that those whose spoken English is heavily accented or ungrammatical should be removed from classes for English language learners.

THE Journal reports that Arizona State University has expanded its online degree and certification programs for school teachers. Starting this Fall, there will be six new education programs available fully online. Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers can fulfill their early childhood education certification online. There will be a new 15 credit-hour credential for online teaching that covers web-based instruction, theory and practice in online learning, instructional design and course development, and the application of online teaching in field-based experiences. The online graduate program will cost \$355 per credit hour.

California Update

June 2010

Education Daily reports that, as part of its efforts to close a \$19 billion budget deficit, California has proposed a temporary suspension of the requirement that county mental health departments serve children with disabilities. The State would save \$52 million but school districts could be put in the difficult position of having to provide mental health services called for in student IEPs. If mental health care is deleted from IEPs, legal entanglements are very likely.

A recent survey conducted by Californians Together found that 59 percent of English language learners (ELLs) in California secondary schools had been in U.S. schools for more than six years and were not yet considered fluent. The study also noted that very few school districts have programs designed specifically for long-term ELLs. The study report argues that the large number of long-term ELLs is attributable to a lack of English language development programs and inconsistency in providing special help.

The New York Times reports that 20 percent of California's 872 charter schools provide some or all of their classes online. Operated by K12, Inc., the California Virtual Academy (CAVA) has 11,000 students in California. For its schools, K12 lends its students computers, printers, software and books, and pays part of their Internet access costs. Typical of CAVA virtual charter schools, CAVA San Mateo has an enrollment of 900 and is growing at a rate of 20 percent a year.

A study published by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) used a longitudinal database to determine the effectiveness of California's *Governor's Teaching Fellowships* in attracting talented teachers to work in the State's lowest-performing schools. Instituted in 2000, the Fellowship program, which offered \$20,000 to teachers who would commit to four years at hard-to-staff schools, was terminated by the State legislature in 2002. The study found that fellowship recipients were 28 percent more likely to teach in hard-to-staff schools. Moreover, 85 percent of fellowship recipients stayed in their low-performing schools more than two years and

nearly three quarters stayed for the full four years.

As reported in the *L.A. NOW* blog of the Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles school district has opened bidding for the operation of eight low-performing schools and nine new campuses. The schools are Huntington Park and Los Angeles High Schools; Audubon, Clay, Harte, Mann, and Muir Middle Schools; and Woodcrest Elementary School. This is the second round of bidding for school operations; in February 12 low-performing and 18 new campuses were awarded mostly to teacher-led groups. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa sharply criticized the district for the awarding contracts for the operation of low-performing schools to teacher groups from the same schools. The Mayor argued that an organization's record of prior performance should be the prime consideration in the second round of awards, basically siding with charter school operators who believed they were treated unfairly in the first round of awards.

The Los Angeles Times reports that the Los Angeles school district, as part of its plan to address a \$628 million budget deficit, will make across-the-board cuts in all areas. Among the programs affected will be special education which will see 200 classes closed next Fall and the students put in regular classrooms (saving \$24 million). The district will also close the West Valley Special Education Center and reduce transportation for special education students (saving another \$7.4 million).

The Los Angeles Times reports that Jon Deasy, a top official with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been selected as Deputy Superintendent of the Los Angeles school district.

Colorado Update

June 2010

The Denver Post reports that, next year, Teach for America (TFA) plans to nearly double -- to 270 -- the number of its teachers working in Colorado schools. If the State is successful in its \$175 million application for Federal Race to the Top funding, TFA expects to add 400 teachers each year by 2013. The TFA teachers, who must commit for at least two years, will be located in the Denver, Aurora, Sheridan, Mapleton, and Harrison school districts next year. If Colorado wins in the RTTT competition, TFA teachers will be sent Statewide.

As reported in The Denver Post, many Colorado school districts are offering remedial and enrichment programs this summer supported by private contributions or Federal stimulus funds. The Denver school district is planning to use \$5.2 million in stimulus money, over three years, for summer programs including two-week school prep academies for incoming sixth- and ninth-graders. In addition, Denver runs its Summer Scholars literacy and enrichment program at 18 schools and a private donor has given \$400,000 a year for a month-long program for English language learners. The Jefferson County school district is offering a six-week program for struggling students at a cost of \$175 per student and the Aurora district added a block of instruction in June for students who needed additional learning time.

A recent report from the University of Colorado at Boulder has found that the Denver school district's ProComp pay program may have brought more effective teachers to district schools and improved teacher retention in hard-to-staff schools. According to the study, all district teachers seemed to have seen increased student achievement but there is little evidence to indicate ProComp teachers are more effective. The study analysis was based on data from 2001-02 to 2008-09; ProComp began in 2005-06.

Connecticut Update

June 2010

According to The New Haven Register, Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell has signed into law an education reform bill intended to improve public education in the State and improve its chances of funding under the Federal Race to the Top competition. Among the important elements of the new law are:

- a requirement that school districts create evaluation models for principals and teachers that incorporate student achievement;
- empowering the State to replace local school boards in low-achieving schools and to convert lowest-achieving schools into “innovation schools” which would have greater flexibility in scheduling, staffing, budgeting, and curriculum;
- establishment of “parent governance councils” and a requirement for at least two parent-teacher conferences each year;
- removal of barriers to the expansion of charter schools;
- allowing students to earn graduation credits for online coursework; and
- a requirement that schools with a dropout rate of eight percent or greater to establish online credit recovery programs.

Delaware Update

June 2010

As one of the two Round 1 winners in the Federal Race to the Top competition, Delaware was initially awarded \$100 million over four years; the grant has since been increased to \$119 million. Half of the State's award will go Statewide programs and the other half will be given to local school districts based on the Title I funding formula. However, each participating district must submit a local spending plan that has to be approved by the State and USED. Delaware education officials are also in the process of collecting and reviewing information from providers of education products and services that could be used in RTTT schools.

District of Columbia Update

June 2010

In early June, D.C. teachers ratified a new contract that, for the first time, uses classroom results as the basis on which teacher salaries are determined. According to The Washington Post, the new contract, along with a new teacher evaluation system will use growth in student test scores as one benchmark of job performance for purposes of salaries and staff reductions. The contract incorporates a five-year, 21.6 percent increase in base pay to an average of \$81,000 a year.

Florida Update

June 2010

As reported in Education Week, teacher unions in 54 of Florida's 67 districts -- one district (Calhoun County) is not unionized -- signed onto the State's Round 2 application for \$700 million under the Federal Race to the Top competition. In RTTT Round 1, only five district unions participated largely because the State's application linked teacher pay to student test scores. The Round 2 application gives unions some say in developing the relationship between teacher compensation and test scores. After losing out in Round 1, Governor Charlie Crist appointed a commission of educators, union representatives, parents, and business leaders to help develop the State's Round 2 application. Only two school districts -- Baker and Palm Beach Counties -- declined to endorse the new application. Not noted in the application was the existence of several side agreements that said districts would not impose the changes in teacher pay and evaluations called for in RTTT if unions object. Some of these side agreements further suggest that such changes would end when RTTT money runs out which, if true, would countervail USED's goal of long-term reform. The State teachers' union estimates that there are at least 12 such side agreements.

State data from the 2010 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) show that 72 percent of Florida's third-graders scored at grade-level or better in reading compared with 71 percent last year. Math scores showed 78 percent of third-grade students at grade-level or better, the same as in 2009. Students who fail the reading exam -- scoring at Level 1 on the five-level test -- can be held back in third grade. Last year, 34,000 Florida third-graders failed the reading FCAT but only 13,340 were retained in the third grade.

According to Education Week, there have been delays in the reporting of some student scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests. State education officials say the problem rests with the testing firm, NCS Pearson. Local school officials say the delays will make it difficult for them to prepare for staffing decisions for the upcoming school year.

Georgia Update

June 2010

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports that student scores on Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) showed improvement in nearly all areas. Of the 34 subject-area tests with historical data, 25 showed an increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding State standards. Only three tests -- Grade 2 Reading, Grade 2 English/Language Arts, and Grade 1 Mathematics -- showed decreases. Among the big gainers were Grade 7 Science which showed a four percentage point increase -- from 76 percent to 80 percent (and a 17 point increase from four years ago when the State's new science curriculum was introduced) and Grade 8 Math which also increased four percentage points (from 70 to 74 percentage points) and a total of 12 points since 2008. Grade 8 Social Studies went up seven percentage points to 70 percent. Some of the gains from the previous year have been questioned and an independent State agency is conducting an audit of those results.

Also reported in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Georgia has created a new program -- known as Move on When Ready -- that will allow high school juniors and seniors to complete their graduation requirements while at the same time earning college credits. Although many local school districts currently have dual enrollment programs, most students take only one or two college courses, often online. The new program requires high school students to take at least 12 credit-hours on campus. The program's admissions criteria are rigorous. The University of Georgia, for example, requires students to have at least a 3.9 high school grade point average and score at least 1400 on the SAT. Colleges will receive State funding in the amount the local high school would have received for each student -- estimated at \$2,500 per year.

As reported in Education Daily, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue has signed into law a measure that will allow the Governor to intervene when a school district's accreditation is in danger of being revoked. SB 84, according to the Governor, "strikes the appropriate balance between local control and state intervention." The law is in response to the 2008 incident by which the Clayton County district lost its accreditation.

Back in 1993, Georgia established its HOPE college scholarship program that made higher education free for Georgia high school graduates who had at least a B average in high school and who maintained at least a 3.0 average at an in-State public college or university. Last year, according to Stateline.com, 103,000 students had HOPE scholarships totaling nearly \$400 million. Funded by proceeds from the State lottery which have leveled off, the HOPE program is facing serious financial troubles having to dip into its reserve fund this year. If no changes are made, the reserve will be depleted by 2013.

According to the *State EdWatch* blog on [Education Week](#), Brad Bryant has been appointed by Governor Perdue to replace Kathy Cox as State Superintendent. Cox is resigning to operate a new national education non-profit organization. Bryant has said he plans to run for a full, four-year term in the next election.

Former Georgia Governor Roy Barnes is apparently planning to run again for the position this year. As Governor from 1999 to 2003, Barnes antagonized the State teachers' union which led in part to his re-election loss in 2002. This time around, according to the *Teacher Beat* blog from [Education Week](#), Barnes is cultivating union support although he has not been endorsed by the State teachers' union. Barnes co-chaired the Aspen Commission on No Child Left Behind, one of whose recommendations was to deny Title I school positions for teachers who were rated ineffective on test-score growth measures.

Hawaii Update

June 2010

The Honolulu Star Advertiser reports that Hawaii has a new law, intended to counteract the furloughs of teachers required last year, that requires the State's public schools to have at least 180 days of instruction each year starting in 2011-12. Specifically, in the 2011-12 school years, elementary schools must have at least 915 hours of instruction (about five hours a day) and secondary schools must have a minimum of 990 hours (5 ½ hours a day).

Illinois Update

June 2010

As reported in the Chicago Tribune, Illinois has joined the list of states to approve the nationally developed Common Core State Standards. The new grade-by-grade guidelines will replace the State's current standards first established in 1997. Although the new standards will begin to be felt in classrooms this Fall, a new national exam to measure how students do relative to the standard is not likely to be in place in Illinois until 2014.

Illinois is trying to help students retain academic skills over the summer vacation by providing the free *Find a Book* search tool (www.lexile.com/findabook). Find a Book offers an easy way to build a book list that matches a student's reading level and interests and locates a nearby public library that has each title. The tool uses each student's Lexile measure (derived from standardized tests) to match students with books. Information on the program can be found on the State's website: www.isbe.net/htmls/summer_reading_2010.htm

The Chicago Tribune also reports that, in late June, Illinois cut nearly \$300 million from its budget. Among the programs to see the effects are principal/teacher mentoring and after-school programs. The Chicago Alternative Schools Network is expected to lose \$3.6 million, meaning the school will be able to serve between 700 and 800 fewer potential high school dropouts.

The Chicago Sun Times reports that serious student behavior problems in six targeted Chicago schools have dropped 77 percent largely because of the district's \$60 million anti-violence initiative. Funded by Federal stimulus money, the "culture of calm" program started with six high schools -- Farragut, Robeson, Harlan, Julian, Clemente, and Manley. These schools adopted a number of effective strategies including rewards for positive behavior, "non-negotiable" rules (e.g., no cursing), clearly written and posted student expectations, and replacing out-of-school suspensions with in-school suspensions or community service. As a result, in these schools, 46 percent fewer students have been shot, 14 percent fewer have received grades of D or F, and attendance is up seven percent.

Indiana Update

June 2010

The Indianapolis Star reports that four struggling Indiana schools have received grants to develop innovative approaches to improving student achievement. The awardees are Glenwood Middle School (Evansville), Hammond High School (Hammond), Indianapolis Metropolitan High School, and Challenge Foundation Academy (Indianapolis). The two Indianapolis schools are charter schools. The Challenge Foundation Academy will institute the Summer Advantage program for students and implement a teacher pay system based on student performance. Indianapolis Metropolitan will shift to a year-round 200-day school year (instead of the current 180 days) in which student will have five weeks of classes and one week off all year. Indy Met will also implement a teacher pay plan under which teachers rated as “highly effective” will split an \$80,000 pool of bonus money and rated “effective” teachers will split \$20,000.

Also according to the Indianapolis Star, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels says that unused school buildings should be transferred to charter schools in need of facilities. Calling for a law to that effect, the Governor argues that withholding empty buildings costs the State money because charters have to buy or build new schools. Many local school district officials believe the buildings should be sold.

Again according to the Indianapolis Star, Indiana education officials have said that at least a quarter of the State’s high school students should pass at least one Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam -- or earn at least three semester hours of college credit -- before they graduate. It is currently estimated that only 12 Indiana schools meet that benchmark.

Indiana has established Western Governors University Indiana, the first state branch of the nationwide Internet-based university designed for adults who live in rural areas or who have work schedules that make regular classes impossible to attend. Available at <http://indiana.wgu.edu/>, WGU Indiana will offer -- only to Indiana residents -- bachelor’s and master’s degrees in a range of fields including education, information technology, business, and

health care. As reported in the Evansville Courier Press, the university will begin enrolling students in July with some classes beginning in August. Because it receives no State aid and is fully supported by tuition (\$5,800 per year), WGU Indiana is technically a private school; it will, however, operate under the Indiana Higher Education Commission and is considered to be the State's eighth public university.

Kansas Update

June 2010

Kansas Governor Mark Parkinson has issued an executive order establishing a commission to address the State's high school dropout rate. State data indicate that, in the past decade, 38,700 Kansas students have dropped out of school at a cost to the State's economy of \$10 billion in lost earnings and taxes and \$479 million in Medicaid and uninsured health care costs. To be called the Kansas Commission on Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery, the panel will meet monthly and issue a report by January.

Kentucky Update

June 2010

Kentucky expects to adopt the nationally developed Common Core standards during the 2011-12 school year according to [Education Daily](#). Beginning this Summer, the State will conduct professional development on the standards through new Kentucky Content Leadership Networks. State officials believe that many teachers will begin incorporating the standards in the upcoming (2010-11) school year. Initially, the Leadership Networks for reading and math will be the first to be created with later expansion to five additional subjects. Kentucky is working with the founder of the Assessment Training Institute on the use of formative assessments for learning.

In order to enhance its chances of winning up to \$175 million in Round 2 of the Federal Race to the Top competition, Kentucky plans to link principal and teacher evaluations to their students' performance. According to the [Louisville Courier-Journal](#), Kentucky lost points in RTTT Round 1 for failing to base principal and teacher effectiveness on student performance and for not having charter schools. To be operational by the 2013-14 school year, the new evaluation system could include such student measures as end-of-course tests, student portfolios, and student growth on Statewide exams. The State plans to use value-added analysis to identify, not only individual student progress, but also the contribution of individual teachers and schools to that progress. State officials have said that if Kentucky wins in the RTTT competition, \$75 million will be used for State programs and \$100 million will go to local districts based on Title I allocations.

According to [Education Daily](#), Kentucky has established a new scholastic auditing program intended to measure the capacity of a low-performing school to improve and to select an appropriate turnaround strategy. Consisting of five auditors led by a trained turnaround expert, each audit team examines parent involvement surveys, working conditions, the principal's effectiveness, and the school council. The audit provides recommendations for which improvement strategy best suits the school's reform capacity and whether the school leadership should be retained. Each of the ten schools audited this year will be assigned an administrative

manager to help the school implement its improvement plans.

As reported in [eSchoolNews](#), Kentucky has adopted *Live@edu*, a cloud-based service from Microsoft. *Live@edu* is a suite of online communication and productivity software hosted on Microsoft's servers and delivered to 700,000 Kentucky school users via the Internet. Through the service, students and educators can access files and other information at anytime and anywhere, using any Internet-connected computer, mobile device or cell phone. Kentucky is the second state to implement a Statewide, cloud-based model for school communication. In April, Oregon became the first to use *Google Apps* in K-12 schools Statewide, saving an estimated \$1.5 million in IT costs. Kentucky State officials estimate that they will save \$6.3 million over four years by not having to maintain their own software.

Louisiana Update

June 2010

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has signed into law a bill that overhauls the State's teacher evaluation system, according to [The Times-Picayune](#). House Bill 1033, which requires that student test scores be included in the evaluation of public school teachers, was pushed through the legislature so that it could be highlighted in Louisiana's Round 2 application under the Federal Race to the Top competition. During the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, 27 local school districts will voluntarily implement the new "value added" evaluations.

The Louisiana Senate is considering a proposal, backed by Governor Jindal, to give the State's public schools the same flexibility with respect to scheduling, staffing, and budgeting that charter schools now have. Local school districts would have to apply for waivers of State education laws and regulations either for the district as a whole or for individual schools. Low-performing schools with waivers would have to demonstrate improved student test scores or be subject to State takeover. Opponents of the bill say it gives too much authority to the State and compromises protections for students and teachers. It is likely the bill will go to a legislative compromise committee to develop a final version.

Since 2007, Louisiana has been operating a program called the Louisiana School Turnaround Specialist Program that is designed to help chronically underperforming schools. The program seeks to strengthen the leadership skills of principals and teachers and to incorporate a more business-like approach to school administration. Actual training occurs at the University of Virginia where participants -- usually teams of principals, assistant principals, and selected teachers -- learn to assess leadership qualifications, set goals, and establish action plans. Participating schools must be rated "academically unacceptable" or "in academic assistance" and must commit to three years in the program.

Maryland Update

June 2010

The Washington Post reports that Maryland has adopted the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. The State is planning to rewrite its curriculum to correlate with the national standards over the next year. At least some of the Common Core Standards will be seen in classrooms in the 2011-12 school year.

According to Education Daily, Maryland's Round 2 Race to the Top application proposed spending \$14 million of its award to provide three years of "face-to-face" professional development for 5,800 educators. The proposed Educator Instructional Improvement Academies would train reading and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) coaches from 1,400 schools. Requiring two days during the school year and five summer days, the Academies would focus on using "new formative, interim and summer assessments" and "an instructional improvement system and online instructional toolkit." Because there is no alternative funding stream, implementation of the Academies is contingent on an RTTT award.

A report from the National Council on Teacher Quality has said that teachers in Baltimore City should have higher pay but should also work longer hours. Funded by the Abell Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the report also concluded that it should be easier for the district to dismiss underperforming teachers. Earlier this year, the Maryland legislature passed a law that makes student performance a "significant" factor in teacher evaluations; "significant," while not defined in the law, is likely to be interpreted as 50 percent.

The Baltimore Sun reports that the Baltimore City school district has overhauled its summer school program, adding classes in robotics and forensics and incorporating summer jobs and sports activities. Last year, about 13,000 students were enrolled in the district's summer school which included only a "watered-down" version of school year instruction. This year, the district will use \$2.1 million in Federal stimulus funds to address summer learning loss in math and

science at the middle and high school levels.

As reported in The Washington Post, the Montgomery County school district, one of the nation's wealthiest, will receive \$2.25 million from Pearson to develop an elementary school curriculum that Pearson will then market worldwide. School district officials say the Pearson money will allow them to double the curriculum's development staff and to speed its completion. The district will receive a three percent royalty on the curriculum sales (the \$2.25 million is an advance on royalties). The curriculum's original development schedule called for completion through grade 5 by 2015. With the Pearson money, it will be finished by 2013.

Massachusetts Update

June 2010

A new report, commissioned by the non-profit Strategies for Children, calls for a “major, comprehensive refocusing” of Massachusetts’ efforts to improve children’s language and literacy development from birth to age 9. As reported in the Boston Globe, the report includes five core recommendations:

- improving the intensity and effectiveness of reading and language interventions;
- conducting ongoing, early assessments of children’s language and literacy skills and of the quality of the services they receive;
- redefining professional development adults’ capacity to assess and support children’s language and literacy development;
- incorporating rigorous and engaging reading curricula into early education and child care settings; and
- expanding efforts to engage families across learning settings and within communities.

State education officials have said the report is a “very important call to action.”

Michigan Update

June 2010

Education Week reports that the Michigan legislature is considering using the State's healthy K-12 school aid fund to fill shortfalls in the State's budget for higher education. Faced with a total budget deficit of \$300 million, Michigan has had higher-than-expected sales tax revenues which help the public K-12 school fund. Moving funds from K-12 schools to colleges is likely to be a politically difficult strategy given the significant cuts in State aid that have taken place over the past few years.

Operated by Connections Academy, the new Michigan Connections Academy (MICA) will enroll 400 K-12 students this Fall with a projection of 1,000 slots the following year. MICA will be a tuition-free, online public school with Connections Academy providing participating families with a computer, printer, and Internet access. As reported in THE Journal, online time will vary among elementary students (10 percent), middle school students (30 percent), and high school students (50 percent). The online instruction will include LiveLesson sessions, a virtual classroom with real-time interaction among teachers and students. Parents of MICA students will sign a Learning Coach agreement and will be offered training to help them guide their children's daily learning.

As reported in the Detroit Free Press, Michigan expects to receive funding under the Federal School Improvement Grants program. As many as 108 Michigan Title I schools will be eligible for up to \$2 million each in SIG funding. Of the 108 schools, 47 are in the Detroit (although 30 of these schools are already scheduled to be closed), six are in Grand Rapids, and four are in Saginaw. Thirteen of the schools are charter schools. The school must apply for the SIG money by August 16 including an improvement plan showing how they will help student academic performance.

The Detroit Free Press reports that, as a result of falling birth rates and an economy that has caused families to move out of the State, the number of school-aged children in Michigan has

decreased by nearly 62,000 in the last three years. Because of this, an estimated 75 schools in 40 school districts will be closed this year; nearly half of the closures will be in the Detroit school district. And State officials say the number of closures may double next year.

The school closings in Detroit reflect a number of major cost cutting initiatives according to the Detroit Free Press. Among the changes will be consolidation of programs for alternative and special education students and expanded grades at single-gender schools. Despite the district's decreasing enrollment and financial woes, it will continue work under a \$500.5 million bond to construct or renovate 22 school buildings.

Minnesota Update

June 2010

The Pioneer Press reports that about eight percent of Minnesota's high school seniors may not graduate on time because they failed the State's reading graduation exam. Three percent failed the math graduation exam. Overall, students performed slightly better than a year ago; 78 percent passed the reading exam on their first try, the same as last year. The first-try passing percentages in writing (90 percent) and math (58 percent) were each one percentage point higher than the year before. Many school districts offered support services for students who did not pass the graduation tests. St. Paul, for example, offered intervention classes during the school day and on Saturdays and will continue classes throughout the summer (students have two opportunities to retake tests they failed). Each St. Paul high school will also increase its staff of curriculum/intervention specialists and instructional coaches.

An independent study of Minnesota's 32 lowest-performing schools has found "inconsistent instructional practices, poor leadership and a lack of community and parent involvement." According to the Pioneer Press, the evaluations are part of the process by which the schools will apply for a total of \$34 million in Federal School Improvement Grants, applications for which were due on July 1. A listing of the schools and a link to individual school reports is available at: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/about_mde/news_center/press_releases/017536

Education Week reports that a new Minnesota law is causing controversy among the State's school districts and charter schools. The home of the nation's first charter school, Minnesota now has 152 charter schools, authorized by 50 organizations (school districts, universities, non-profits), serving 33,000 students. Responding to concerns about charter school oversight, the State legislature passed the law which shifts accountability for charter schools from the State to the authorizers. The State, instead of approving each charter school, will now approve the authorizers who, in turn, will be accountable for the academic and operational performance of the charters. In the first round of applications, six authorizers were approved. The deadline for authorizer applications is June 30, 2011. The new law is causing some school districts, notably

St. Paul, to consider getting out of the business of authorizing charter schools.

Mississippi Update

June 2010

The *State EdWatch* blog from Education Week reports that Mississippi education officials are concerned about the drop in State revenues as a result of the BP oil leak. Although the oil has not yet hit Mississippi's beaches, fewer travelers are visiting casinos in the State which means less funding for education. In anticipation of possible court action, State officials have told local superintendents in the Gulf Coast area to document carefully any effects of the leak and any actions they have taken.

Missouri Update

June 2010

As reported in the St. Louis Globe Democrat, Missouri has approved adoption of the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. State education officials say the sequence of knowledge and skills in the Common Core Standards is similar to that in Missouri's existing grade-level expectations (GLE) curriculum guides.

Montana Update

June 2010

The Billings Gazette reports that Montana plans to use its School Improvement Grants (SIG) funding, not for grants to individual schools, but rather for *Schools of Promise* through which experts and other technical assistance will be provided to help districts adopt and implement individual strategic plans. As a framework, Montana has adopted the Transformation model; one of four allowed under SIG requirements. One rural district, for example, Lame Deer, had already instituted a school improvement program consistent with the Transformation model; working with the State, it is involving parents, students, tribal leaders, and educators in an effort to gather and provide information.

The Great Falls Tribune reports that Montana has created the Digital Academy, a Statewide virtual high school that, beginning this Fall, will offer 45 online courses. Looking to enroll 1,500 students in its first year, the Digital Academy was established last year using \$2 million in Federal stimulus funds. Currently, the Academy is in the process of hiring Montana-certified teachers in local districts who will receive additional compensation for their Academy duties. Based at the University of Montana in Missoula, money for the Digital Academy after stimulus funding runs out in 2011 is considered a priority of Governor Brian Schweitzer in his next budget cycle.

New Jersey Update

June 2010

New Jersey's Round 2 application for as much as \$400 million under the Federal Race to the Top competition had the support of more than 290 of the State's 600 local education agencies (school districts and charter schools). Each participating district will be guaranteed a minimum of \$100,000 if New Jersey is selected, according to [The Newark Star-Ledger](#).

[Education Week](#) reports that, just before submission, Governor Chris Christie made changes in New Jersey's Round 2 RTTT application, more closely linking teacher pay and evaluations to student achievement. The new application also makes it easier for districts to fire ineffective teachers. The changes have received expected reproach from the State's largest teachers union which signed off on the application before the changes were made.

According to [Education Week](#), Governor Christie has proposed a budget for FY 2011 (which began July 1) that cuts State aid to schools by \$820 million. He has also called for teachers to accept a wage freeze and to contribute to health insurance and pension costs. In addition, he has proposed that older, more highly paid teachers could keep their full pensions if they retire this year. The Governor's proposal has met with the expected union opposition.

In February, Governor Christie froze \$475 million in State aid to schools and at least one school district sued. In mid-June, a State appeals court ruled that the State did not have to allocate the money and that New Jersey schools would have to spend the funds out of their own reserves. According to [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#), Governor Christie and the State legislature have reached a compromise that will restore \$74 million for education programs in the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The budget plan would put more funds into developmental disabilities, sheltered workshops, and education services for blind children, as well as restoring \$1 million to the NJ STARS tuition program and \$3 million to the NJ After 3 program. Overall, the FY 2011 budget of \$29.38 billion maintains a surplus of about \$300 million.

The Wall Street Journal reports that voters in 315 of 538 New Jersey school districts rejected spending plans, many of which called for raising property-tax rates to offset lower State funding for schools. Moreover, the State legislature is considering a bill that would allow New Jersey school districts to charge tuition for remedial and enrichment classes offered this Summer. The expected fee would be \$100-\$200 per student but would include a sliding scale based on family income.

As reported in Education Week, the Education Law Center, an advocacy group for New Jersey's poorest school districts, has asked the State's Supreme Court to restore funding for K-12 schools that Governor Christie has proposed cutting. According to the Center, the Governor's plan would give schools \$820 million less during the upcoming school year than this past year. The Center also argues that the Governor's proposal does not honor an approach, approved by the court, to give extra funds to schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families.

New Mexico Update

June 2010

According to the Albuquerque Journal, the Albuquerque school district is one of six districts nationwide to pilot test the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of the Great City Schools. The other pilot districts are Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, St. Paul, and Philadelphia.

New York Update

June 2010

The New York Times reports that, in May, the New York State legislature voted to raise the State's cap on the number of charter schools from 200 to 460 in hopes of winning as much as \$700 million in Round 2 of the Federal Race to the Top competition. New York City would be allowed a maximum of 214 charters; it currently has nearly 100. To be phased in over four years, the charter school increase will be accompanied by increased oversight and more regulations regarding charter school formation and operation. The new law also bans any new for-profit charter schools, a provision which has been strongly opposed by charter school advocates. The new law also requires charter schools to enroll more students in need: disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners; it is unclear, however, how such requirements are to be enforced.

Using self-reported data, New York State has ranked the selectivity of charter schools in New York City. Overall, charter schools are becoming harder to get into despite the growth in the number of available slots. In 2004, an applicant had a 41 percent chance of admission to a charter school according to The New York Times; last year, it was 20 percent. The hardest charter schools to get into were not the best known. Rather, they were small schools that accepted fewer than seven percent of applicants. These included a charter founded by a local billionaire (the Carl C. Icahn Charter School), another established by the City's teachers union (the United Federation of Teachers Charter School), and still another created by two former teachers (Community Roots Charter School).

Education Week reports that New York City will cancel salary increases for principals and teachers in order to avoid having to lay off as many as 4,400 teachers. Unions representing principals and teachers praised the plan to avoid layoffs, but argued that rescinding the bargained-for two percent annual raises over the next two years are subject to collective bargaining.

A new study, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has found that New York City students in small high schools are more academically successful than those in larger, more traditional schools. As cited in Education Week, the research focused on the City's effort between 2002 and 2008 to close 20 large, low-performing high schools and replace them with 200 smaller schools. Data show that, by the end of ninth grade, 58.5 percent of students in small schools were on a four-year graduation track, compared with only 48.5 percent of students in control schools. And, after four years of high school, 68.7 percent of small school seniors graduated vs. 61.9 percent of control group students. Some researchers argue that difference in graduation rates is relatively small given the additional financial and technical assistance given to the small schools.

The New York Times reports that the New York City school district plans to develop a new admissions test for its gifted and talented programs to go into effect for the 2012-13 school year. The district currently uses a mixture of the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment, both of which, district officials believe, can be prepared for by parents "gaming" the system. The current testing program for gifted kindergarten and first grade students was intended to increase racial and economic diversity; it did not, with the programs becoming less diverse. City officials will explore research that would result in a more diverse gifted program.

North Carolina Update

June 2010

One house of the North Carolina legislature has voted in favor of a bill that would eliminate the requirement that the State's high school seniors complete a graduation project in order to graduate. Last year, according to [The News & Observer](#), the full legislature approved a one-year delay in the implementation of the project requirement until 2012. The bill gives districts the option of requiring such projects.

In late May, the North Carolina legislature gave initial approval to a law that would adopt Federal guidelines by allowing local school districts to use the "Restart" model under the Federal School Improvement Grants and Race to the Top programs. Although the measure would not raise the State's cap of 100 charter schools, it would permit districts to establish "charter-like" schools that would be exempt from many rules faced by traditional schools, according to the *Schools and the Stimulus* blog of [Education Week](#).

According to [THE Journal](#), 86 independent schools that are part of the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools (NCAIS) are expanding their instruction to include online learning and online credit recovery for students who have fallen behind. In concert with distance learning provider Aventa Learning, NCAIS will offer 140 online middle and high school courses, 19 of which will be Advanced Placement classes. Aventa is a unit of KC Distance Learning.

North Dakota Update

June 2010

According to the Fargo Forum, Federal stimulus money has brought about a great increase in early childhood education programs in North Dakota. For the past three years; only seven North Dakota school districts had prekindergarten programs. The availability of ARRA funds has allowed 40 districts to establish preK programs. Although the stimulus aid will only last for two years, State officials are hopeful that the State will fund preK Statewide.

Ohio Update

June 2010

In early June, Ohio became the seventh state to adopt the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. As reported in [The Columbus Dispatch](#), the State Board also approved new State-developed science and social studies standards, although some argued that the new science guidelines are less rigorous than the ones they replace. State officials say they plan to replace the science and social studies guidelines with those developed through the Common Core Initiative when they become available.

The [Cincinnati Enquirer](#) reports that the Cincinnati school district is overhauling its career training program such that the best teachers will be assigned to the lowest-performing schools. The plan will involve only eight teachers in the 2010-11 school year, but in the future could affect up to 426 teachers as they move through the training program. The revamped training program is expected to save the district \$1 million next year. Union officials have argued that the plan violates their existing labor contract.

Officials in the Cincinnati school district are considering a number of alternative school options including a national education strategy called a “Portfolio School District,” a concept formulated by the Center for Reinventing Public Education. Geared toward low-income, urban districts, the Portfolio strategy allows an assortment of non-traditional schools such as a college-prep boarding school. According to the [Cincinnati Enquirer](#), the college-prep school for at-risk students is modeled after the SEED school in Washington, D.C.; it would enroll 80 sixth-grade students in its first year and expand over five years to 400 students in grades 6-12. Under another strategy, the district would partner with the Harlem Children’s Zone to create a network of community programs.

Oklahoma Update

June 2010

The Oklahoma legislature has approved a bill that would suspend a number of school improvement initiatives in the State in order to help schools deal with budget shortfalls. Education Week reports that, among the programs rolled back are requirements for teacher and administrator professional development and penalties for schools that do not meet media materials requirements. The bill also allows districts to spend textbook money for general operations and suspends for two years a program that offers \$5,000 for teachers who earn National Board certification.

Having finished well back in pack during Round 1 of the Federal Race to the Top competition, Oklahoma has made a number of major changes that it hopes will enhance its chances in Round 2. In early June, Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry signed into law Senate Bill 2033, known as the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Act, which calls for a new educator evaluation system to be in place by December 2011. The new system will rate principals and teachers who will face remediation or dismissal if they are rated below “effective” for two or three consecutive years. According to the Tulsa World, the law also calls for the development of five model plans for incentive pay although local districts are allowed to develop their own plans. The rating scale includes:

- 35 percent based on student academic growth using multiple years of standardized test data;
- 15 percent based on other academic measures; and
- 50 percent based on such qualitative measures as organizational and classroom management skills, continuous professional growth, and interpersonal and leadership skills.

As reported in Education Week's *Teacher Beat* blog, this change has been met with far less opposition from teacher unions than in other states.

According to Education Week, a political battle is being waged in Oklahoma over State Question

744, known as the Helping Oklahoma Public Education (HOPE) initiative. To be contested on the November Ballot, HOPE would amend the State constitution to require that, within three years, the State meet the average per-student education spending in surrounding states.

Supporters of the measure -- including the State teachers union -- say it is necessary to improve Oklahoma schools. Opponents -- including business, agriculture, and transportation groups -- argue that HOPES's estimated cost of \$850 million to \$950 million would require a tax increase or major cuts to other State programs. Those in opposition are planning a well-financed effort to defeat the initiative.

Oregon Update

June 2010

Data from the Oregon Department of Education show that only about two-thirds of Oregon's Class of 2009 graduated from high school in four years; that represents more than 14,000 dropouts. This is only the second year that the State has used its new, more accurate measure for graduation rates. Under its old calculation method, the State's Class of 2009 graduation would have been shown as 85 percent. Portland, the State's largest school district, graduated only 53 percent of its students on time. On the other hand, the Tigard-Tualatin district (the tenth largest in the State) graduated 81 percent of the Class of 2009, including 56 percent of students with disabilities. District officials cite, as reasons for its success, a prevention-oriented core reading program and schoolwide behavior programs from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

As reported in Education Week, Oregon students who took the State writing assessment online scored lower than those who completed the pencil-and-paper version. State officials are analyzing the test data in an effort to determine the cause of the discrepancy. Among the reasons given by students and teachers were:

- proofreading on screen is more difficult than editing a print copy;
- students have become used to word-processing programs that check spelling and grammar, so they are not as rigorous in their proofreading;
- students tend to work more slowly and thoughtfully when they handwrite something; and
- students are used to reading small items on the Internet as opposed to longer, more sustained pieces of writing.

Incumbent Oregon State Schools Superintendent, Susan Castillo, has finally been declared the victor in the May election. Winning a third term, Castillo got 50.2 percent of the vote; a slim majority that allowed her to avoid a November runoff. Challenger Ron Maurer conceded in large part because he could not afford to pay for a recount.

Pennsylvania Update

June 2010

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports that Pennsylvania is analyzing the nationally-developed Common Core State Standards to determine if they are at least as rigorous as the standards already in place in the State. State officials have said that expect the Common Core standards will be approved for Pennsylvania, but each state is allowed to enlarge the standards by up to 15 percent in each subject area. Pennsylvania's standards are available at: www.education.state.pa.us under the State Board of Education tab.

Pennsylvania is in the process of developing a data system -- known as the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) -- that will track students from preschool through high school and post secondary education and into the workforce. As reported in The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pennsylvania is one of 20 states using Federal stimulus funding to develop statewide longitudinal data systems. Under development for the past four years, PIMS -- with the new Federal grant -- is expected to: connect to workforce and adult basic education data; expand the postsecondary database; expand existing student and teacher data; link kindergarten assessment results and demographic data; link Federal Head Start data into an early learning network; and implement electronic student record exchange.

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reports that, beginning in 2012, Pennsylvania will experiment with a concept advocated by the National Center on Education and the Economy, that would allow high school students to graduate in as few as two years. Pennsylvania would be one of eight states participating in the pilot program, coursework for which could cost districts \$500 per participating student. Under Pennsylvania School Code, students are not required to take a fixed number of courses to graduate; rather, they must demonstrate that they have learned certain information. Opponents of the plan argue that 15- and 16-year-olds are not socially or emotionally ready for college.

The Philadelphia Inquirer also reports that Philadelphia's Mastery Charter School at Thomas will

send 93 percent of its seniors to college, a sharp contrast with district-operated high schools in the area which typically send only 16-24 percent of their seniors on to college. Of the school's Class of 2010, 80 of 87 members will go to college with nearly two-thirds attending four-year schools. Operated by Mastery for five years, Thomas is one of 22 charter schools in the nation that have been cited for achieving dramatic academic gains with low-income students.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reports that, for the first time since 2002, at least half of Philadelphia students met State standards in reading and mathematics; 51 percent met goals in reading (up three percentage points), and 57 percent met them in math (up five points). This is also the eighth consecutive year in which City scores have increased. The reported scores are for this Spring's testing in grades 3-8 and grade 11. District officials noted that "empowerment" schools -- the 107 lowest-performing -- made even greater gains than the district as a whole -- up five percentage points in reading and six points in math.

The *Teacher Beat* blog on Education Week reports that the Pittsburgh school district and its local teachers union have agreed on a contract that includes performance-based pay for teachers starting in the 2011-12 school year. A school-based plan will give bonuses to the staff of schools showing largest gains in student achievement. A voluntary pilot program would award individual teachers up to \$8,000 a year in bonuses based on: (1) student growth as calculated by value-added measures; and (2) other evaluation factors such as demonstrated leadership and providing professional development. It has been suggested that Intensive Partnerships for teacher Quality, an initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, played a role in the development of this agreement.

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports that, in early May, Gerald Zahorchak stepped down as Pennsylvania's education secretary to become superintendent of the Allentown School District. Prior to his five-year tenure as the State's education secretary, Zahorchak had been superintendent of the Greater Johnstown School District.

Rhode Island Update

June 2010

In mid-June, the Rhode Island legislature approved a new school financing formula that, State officials say, will allocate \$850 million in State to school districts more fairly and consistently. As reported in [The Providence Journal](#), the new formula directs more education funding to the State's poorest communities and steadily increases the State's share of education costs up to 50 percent by 2013. Currently, the State covers only 37 percent of school costs, far less than the national average of 50 percent. Under the new formula, a total of about \$15 million has been added to State aid with all districts except six (Charlestown, Jamestown, Lincoln, Narragansett, Newport, and New Shoreham) seeing increases.

South Carolina Update

June 2010

Education Daily reports that South Carolina schools are using the concept of virtual jobs shadowing to give students the opportunity for an extended learning experience. State officials believe virtual job shadowing provides advantages in location (particularly rural areas with few businesses), access, and costs (transportation). The State provides each school district with a recommended list of shadowing opportunities. Student accountability measures include pen-and-paper questionnaires about the job site visited and software systems like Microburst Learning that have built-in modules that track student time and responses.

Tennessee Update

June 2010

Having been one of the two states selected for funding under the Federal Race to the Top competition, Tennessee officials are trying to figure out exactly how to meet its RTTT promises with respect to teacher and principal evaluations. According to The Tennessean, at least half of a teacher's evaluation must be based on student achievement. But only ten of the 334 subject areas taught in Tennessee schools are measured by standardized tests. Educators in the State are meeting to develop ways by which student performance in such subjects as art or physical education can be measured.

Tennessee school districts are also developing their plans for spending their half of the \$500 million the State won in the first round of the Federal Race to the Top competition. District plans for the money -- to be spent over four years -- must be approved by the State. Among Tennessee's larger school districts, Metro Nashville (\$30.3 million in RTTT funding) will:

- invest in teacher training by creating a new model to identify and develop teachers into principals;
- install new technology in classrooms for video conferencing and online training; and
- hire 12 data coaches to help educators use academic data to guide lesson plans.

Rutherford County, with its \$3.6 million RTTT award, plans to:

- establish a "parent portal" that will allow parents online access to their children's grades;
- hire a data coach; and
- invest in teacher development.

The Tennessean also reports that the Metro Nashville school district will open its first virtual high school this Fall. With the school still under construction, the district has not yet determined the classes that will be offered and the number of students it will enroll. It is expected that the online school will serve home-schooled students and youthful offenders transitioning from incarceration, as well as regular students taking classes that are not available at their schools. The district's long-range goal is that all students take at least one online class before they

graduate. Metro Nashville has allocated \$556,000 to implement the virtual high school.

Texas Update

June 2010

The [Houston Chronicle](#) reports that, this Spring, 82 percent of Texas' high school juniors passed all four sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) -- up from 75 percent in 2009. The math TAKS showed the lowest pass rate at 89 percent -- up from 81 percent the year before. This year's eleventh-graders are the first class to face the State's requirement that, in order to graduate, they must earn four credits each of English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Statewide Texas middle school students showed improvement in their passing rates on the TAKS, but many educators are questioning the validity of the test scores because the threshold for passing was lowered this year to as low as 44 percent. This year's eighth-grade social studies test was passed by 95 percent of students -- up from 92 percent last year and 91 percent in 2008. However, in order to pass this year, student had only to answer 21 of 48 questions (44 percent) correctly, compared with 25 of 48 (52 percent) last year. State officials argue that, because the questions were more difficult this year, they followed standard statistical processes by lowering the number of required correct answers.

The conservative-dominated Texas State Board of Education has approved the State's controversial social studies standards. [The Dallas Morning News](#) reports that some critics of the Board believe the standards could be revised in January when two of the more conservative members will leave office, but others think the standards will change only if a Democrat wins the governorship. From a practical standpoint, Texas' budget situation is likely to mean adoption of new social studies textbooks matching the standards will be delayed. As noted in [Education Week's Curriculum Matters](#) blog, some critics are arguing that the Board's authority to write standards should be constrained.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reports that college remediation reading, writing, and math (known as developmental education) in Texas for the 2010-11 biennium will

cost a total of \$392 million, \$167 million of which comes from State appropriations. Ninety percent of the developmental work is done by community colleges. But very few college students who require developmental courses actually earn degrees. The Coordinating Board found that 16 percent of community college students who enrolled in 2005 and did not require remediation earned an associate degree within three years; only 7.6 percent of students who did require a developmental class did so. According to the Houston Chronicle, among the strategies for changing developmental education are college-readiness tests for high school students and required classes in student skills and time management.

Education Daily reports that the Plano school district is using a mobile family services lab to involve parents who often do not have the time or transportation to get to their children's school for meetings and conferences. The lab is being supported at \$300,000 from Federal stimulus (ARRA) Title I funds. The lab is equipped with 13 computers that allow parents to access student records as well use software for English language instruction, career assistance, and a host of other parent education purposes. It also gives parents access to a number of social services agencies such as Medicaid, food pantries, etc. The district plans to expand the lab's service to include hybrid classes by which parents can attend half the sessions at school. Some Plano parent involvement programs have been taken to market.

Utah Update

June 2010

According to the Deseret News, Utah has developed a new accountability strategy for the State's charter schools. Each charter has an achievement contract with the State, but the State had no way to ensure that the schools' commitments were being met. The new assessment approach will analyze student progress over time, readiness for post secondary education, exam performance, and community engagement, among other factors. Training for the new system will begin this Fall and it is expected that the system -- which has generally been approved by the charter schools -- will be fully implemented within two years.

Virginia Update

June 2010

According to the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Virginia declined to submit a Round 2 application under the Race to the Top competition because RTTT is “overly prescriptive and disregards individual state initiatives and progress.” Governor Bob McDonnell said that the Federal emphasis on adoption the nationally-developed common core standards would necessitate that Virginia drop its long-standing Standards of Learning (SOL) framework.

Education Week reports that Virginia is one of 20 states that will receive Federal stimulus money to develop a longitudinal student data system. Using \$17.5 million in grant funds, Virginia’s data system is designed to track students throughout their public school years and link to college and workforce data. The Federal money is specifically intended to pay for additional staff, a web portal, and a mechanism for State universities and community colleges to receive school transcripts electronically.

Washington Update

June 2010

This Spring, high school students in Washington State were the first to take the new State assessment, the High School Proficiency Exam. Ninety percent of the State's 12th-graders passed the reading and components, but math results were less encouraging. About 88 percent of 11th-graders passed reading and 90 percent passed writing, but only 57 percent passed math. Similarly, among 10th-graders, 78 passed reading, 84 percent passed writing, and 43 percent passed math. This year's ninth-graders (the class of 2013) will be the first students required to pass four Statewide exams -- reading, writing, math, and science -- in order to graduate. Some middle school students took the exams online and the State hopes to have all testing done online by the 2013-14 school year.

The Seattle Times reports that Washington State education officials, along with 14 schools and two Indian tribes, have for the past two years been developing a curriculum covering tribal history, culture, and sovereignty. A partnership between the tribes and local school districts will make available this Fall an online program that presents a Native American perspective on events and a validation of their place in the State. It is unclear how many teachers will use the new curriculum; supporters are hoping to open six teacher training centers around the State.

West Virginia Update

June 2010

West Virginia is considering allowing students at risk of dropping out of high school a number of new paths to graduation, according to The Charleston Gazette. The first approach requires at-risk students to: (1) attend GED preparation classes and pass the GED tests; (2) complete a 21st Century job preparation program or another certification program; and (3) meet standards on the Work Keys job skills test. These students would earn a full high school diploma. Option 2 for students in their senior year struggling with a class assessed by GED tests; the students could earn a diploma if they continue to attend school, pass all their other classes, and take prep classes and pass appropriate portions of the GED. For students at the highest risk of dropping out, the third graduation route would encourage students to pass practice tests and GED tests to receive a GED diploma. In all three cases, students must volunteer and be recommended by a team of teachers.

A recent report by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that, by 2018, only 49 percent of jobs in West Virginia will require more than a high school education -- compared with 63 percent nationwide. The Center report estimates that the State will have 328,000 jobs for individuals with a high school education and 79,000 jobs for high school dropouts. The State is expected to see job growth through 2018 with 13,000 new jobs requiring no more than a high school education and 20,000 new jobs for those with post-high-school education.

Wisconsin Update

June 2010

As reported in the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), Wisconsin has committed to adopting the Common Core State Standards for English and math developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The State plans to revise its existing standards to reflect the Common Core Standards and will partner with local school districts to provide curriculum models and online resources to help with the transition.

According to [eSchoolNews](#), Wisconsin has distributed nearly \$80 million in technology reimbursements stemming from the 2006 Microsoft antitrust settlement. A total of about 810 schools with poverty enrollments of at least 33 percent will get reimbursements.

According to the [Boston Globe](#), the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin is considering a plan by which the State's public two-year colleges could offer limited four-year degrees. Emphasizing such skills as communication and problem-solving, the degrees would be geared toward students -- mostly in rural areas -- who had earned associates degrees but who could not transfer to four-year universities. The plan would be limited to five campuses (UW-Baraboo/Sauk County, UW-Barron County, UW-Marshfield/Wood County, UW-Richland, and UW-Rock County) each of which would team with a partnering four-year university to deliver the coursework through a combination of face-to-face and online instruction.

The [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) reports that the State's new licensure system for public school teachers kicks in this year. First approved in 2000, the new system requires teachers to pass tests of basic knowledge and skills, to work with mentors during their first year, and to demonstrate professional growth. Before the new rules took effect, teachers had only to earn six college credits to renew their licenses. Now teachers with initial licenses are required, in their first five years, to identify a set of professional goals and undertake activities in pursuit of those goals. Teachers must also demonstrate to a three-member panel that they have developed professionally under their plans. License renewal is based on continued professional competence ultimately by

advancing to a ten-year “master educator” license representing certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

As reported in [eSchoolNews](#), the Southeastern Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) No. 1, along with a 45 of its local school districts, is planning a number of innovative strategies for teaching and learning in the districts. Covering about a third of Wisconsin’s student population (including Milwaukee), CESA No. 1 is: (1) moving from age-based groups of students to progress-based groupings; (2) eliminating standardized practices in favor of customized learning plans; (3) phasing out print textbooks to be replaced by dynamic digital resources; and (4) moving from teacher-led instruction to a combination of face-to-face and online approaches. In support of the CESA’s efforts, the State has applied for a partnership grant with the Council of Chief State School Officers.