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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 1, 2010
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke and Blair Curry
SUBJ: Hearings and Guidance on Selecting Third-Party SIG External Providers, New Priorities and Definitions of Scientifically-Based Research, After-School/Extended Learning Time Debates, and State Profile Updates

On August 5th, we sent out a Special Report on the Senate-proposed FY 2011 Budget, which included new language on types of “encouraged” evidence for School Improvement Grant interventions and which would increase Title I and IDEA funding while dismissing some of the President’s proposed priorities, such as expanded uses of competitive grants. On August 19th, subscribers were sent another Special Report on the \$10 billion Ed Jobs Initiative which could free-up local and other funds to be used to purchase products and services.

This TechMIS report includes a number of Washington Update items, some of which would be of high interest to all TechMIS subscribers.

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In what appears to be a well-orchestrated series events by The New York Times, Education Committee Chairman Miller, and Secretary Duncan, hearings are being planned and new USED guidance will be provided shortly on selection of and contracting with external partners under the \$3.5 billion School Improvement Grant fund. All TechMIS subscribers should benefit indirectly, and opportunities could be created for those who wish to take a proactive role, especially in the hearings.

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Secretary Duncan announces nine states and the District of Columbia as winners of the Race to the Top during his August 24th press conference and lobbied Congress for more funding next year to conduct a Phase III competition. Numerous critics chide Secretary Duncan for not including Louisiana and Colorado.

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A major political battle is surfacing, as the ESEA reauthorization heats up, between after-

school advocates (such as the Afterschool Alliance) and Extended Learning Time (ELT) proponents which could affect how more than \$1 billion is spent over time, and who controls how the money is spent with what entities.

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A long-awaited descriptive study of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program has finally been released by USED; it provides some useful information to firms with products and services that can be used in 21st CCLC after-school centers.

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A number of miscellaneous update items are also provided including:

- a) In the August 5th Federal Register, USED announced 13 proposed priorities for appropriate discretionary grant programs for FY 2011 and in future years. Some of the priorities and definitions (strong and moderate evidence) are relatively new and could be important in the Secretary's competitive grant applications and guidelines.
- b) Policy influencers comment on Senate appropriations language operationally defining "strong" and "moderate" evidence for SIG in FY 2011.
- c) In light of the emerging political battle between after-school advocates and Extended Learning Time proponents, another bottom line question is how much of the "required" and "permitted" uses of funds under School Improvement Grants and Race to the Top will be used for extended learning time or for more traditional after-school programs. An alternative put forth by the relatively new National Summer Learning Association could represent a compromise.
- d) The Obama priority, Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, is being embroiled in a political debate fueled by research findings by former IES Director Russ Whitehurst at a time when Congress is experiencing greater concerns about costly new/expanded Obama initiatives.
- e) The Annenberg Institute has created a database of more than 2,100 schools identified as the most persistently lowest performing schools from which the vast majority of Tier I and Tier II schools will be funded this year and next.
- f) Forty-eight State SIG applications are approved with stated implementation schedules, which will likely have been extended in most states.

The state profile updates cover a range of issues including improvement on State assessments, state budget situations, online education, adoption of Common Core State Standards, and Ed Jobs funding.

Washington Update

Vol. 15, No. 8, September 1, 2010

Concerns That States or Districts Are Selecting and Contracting With Possibly Unqualified External Providers for Their School Improvement Grants Is Leading to Congressional Hearings and New FY 2010 SIG Guidance From USED on Screening and Selecting External Providers

In what appears to be a well-orchestrated series of events, Congressional hearings and new USED guidance on School Improvement Grants are being planned to minimize the use of low-quality school turnaround partners to ensure that all SIG funds are used wisely to improve outcomes for students. All TechMIS subscribers should benefit indirectly; for some, good opportunities could be created.

On August 9th, The New York Times published an article entitled “Inexperienced Companies Chase U.S. School Funds” by Sam Dillon, one key reporter of the Administration’s education policy. The article claimed, “...dozens of companies with little or no experience are portraying themselves as school-turnaround experts as they compete for the money,” pointing to a Virginia-based husband and wife team which has never “led a single school overhaul” which is applying as turnaround providers in Virginia and Ohio. The article also called out “offshoots of textbook conglomerates and classroom technology vendors.” According to the article, Secretary Duncan “set off the stampede in a June 2009 speech, saying that only a handful

of groups, nationwide, had any experience in school overhauls,” when he then stated, “We need everyone who cares about public education to get into the business of turning around our lowest-performing schools.”

About a week later, House Education Committee Chairman George Miller announced plans for a hearing on companies which contract with school districts to help turn around schools, stating, “In recent hearings, we’ve heard from expert witnesses and high quality providers with the skills and expertise to help turn around schools. However, with increased focus on school reform under this administration, it seems some companies with little or no expertise in education are purporting to be experts in school turnaround to try and take advantage of available federal money. Companies who are hired to help turn around schools as partners should have the best expertise and the best qualifications. I plan to hold a hearing and use the committee’s oversight authority to investigate the process of hiring providers to help turn around schools.”

On August 18th, Secretary Duncan sent a letter to chief state school officials thanking them for their “hard work and focused collaboration in developing plans for turning around your persistently lowest-achieving schools....One of the challenges facing states and districts is distinguishing between high- and low-quality school turnaround partners. We want to make sure we are all doing our part in providing districts and schools with the support they need in selecting and monitoring the performance of

these external partners so that all SIG funds are used wisely to improve outcomes for students.”

The Secretary’s letter identifies four steps to be undertaken at the Federal level to ensure SEAs and LEAs “have the information and tools they need to make informed about external partnerships.” Perhaps the most important step will be the issuance of new School Improvement Grant guidance. As stated in the letter, “In the coming weeks, we will issue non-regulatory guidance to SEAs to help ensure that LEAs implement an appropriate process for screening and selecting external providers. This guidance will include sample tools and resources from States and districts.”

Other important steps include expanded technical assistance through regional support conferences, webinars, peer networks, and developing communities of practice to support both LEAs and SEAs. Greater emphasis will also be placed on evaluating current SEA and LEA practices regarding recruiting, screening, and selecting external providers through auditing and site visitation.

Another step which is new in the letter specifically states that USED requires SEAs “to post all LEA school applications on their website.” Heretofore, states were required to post only their approved state applications. The August 18th letter also encourages “SEAs and LEAs to post on their respective Web sites all requests for proposals related to external partners.” It is not clear whether these increased transparency requirements or “encouragements,” which have not been followed in states that have thus far selected external partners, will require the states to

“reopen bids.” The letter also reminds the chiefs that they “have responsibility to ensure that SIG funds are spent wisely and that districts have the support they need.” The Secretary stated that SEA’s are “accountable for the high-quality implementation of SIG programs” including, but not limited to:

- Carefully reviewing LEA’s plans to recruit, screen, and select external providers to ensure their quality;
- Fully implementing the SEA’s plans for reviewing and evaluating an LEA’s application and for monitoring an LEA’s implementation of its SIG grant, as outlined in the SEA’s approved SIG application; and
- Ensuring fidelity of implementation of SIG models in Tier I and Tier II schools.

At this writing, it is not clear what will be included in the yet-to-be-published SIG guidance on screening, selecting, and monitoring external turnaround partners. In The New York Times article, Dillon wrote, “Recognizing the risks facing school districts that sign contracts with untested groups, the American Enterprise Institute, a non-profit conservative policy group, issued a report last month urging that districts require performance guarantees, under which contractors failing to meet achievement targets would forfeit payments.” En route to the February AASA Annual Conference during the Washington, D.C. snowstorms, I shared the coach cabin with Secretary Duncan and had a chance to discuss issues related to SES and the new School Improvement Grant initiative. I suggested that external lead partners be placed on “performance-type” contracts with

at least partial payment based on individual student achievement and related performance measures. I also argued that many of the logistical, turf, and related problems which have surfaced between SES third-party providers and school districts could have been minimized if performance-based achievement incentives were provided for both the SES providers and district teachers working for or with them. He listened attentively and politely.

As The New York Times article pointed out, some of the state or district external providers approved thus far have questionable capabilities and certainly inadequate experience in leading school turnaround efforts. Regarding the planned hearings, one can legitimately question whether they will be “balanced” with experienced groups, both “for-profit” and “non-profit,” with proven track records invited or whether they will be favoring one sector. Thus far, as one reviews the i³ grantees selected, the vast majority of the applicants, as well as the “official” and “other partners,” are non-profit entities; it appears that less than five for-profit groups have been identified as partners. Opportunities may exist for firms with a track record and good evidence on programs and practices that work best under certain conditions for testifying or submitting written statements and evidence that could be publicized widely in the Committee hearings and the Congressional Record.

Regarding the forthcoming SIG guidance on selecting and monitoring the performance of external providers, one would hope that the selection criteria to be used by districts or SEAs do not parallel those used in the Reading First guidance in 2002, and subsequently; rather, one would hope that

the process and criteria, encouraged or required, are reasonable. It remains to be seen whether Secretary Duncan will take into account the recent “guarantee performance” alternatives recommended by the AEI (noted in The New York Times article) or by Massachusetts Insight which has recommended the use of performance contracts based on student achievement between districts and external partners. It will be worth watching to see if and how these concepts will be treated. One way or another, the to-be-published guidance will have implications for many TechMIS subscribers.

Secretary Duncan Announces Nine States and District of Columbia as Winners of Race to the Top and “Lobbies” Congress for \$1.35 Billion Funding Next Year to Conduct a Phase III Competition

During his August 24th press conference, Secretary Duncan, accompanied by Joanne Weiss and Joe Conaty (former and current directors of the Race to the Top initiative) released the names of the nine winning states and the District of Columbia, along with the point ratings determined by peer review panels. In Exhibit 1 are the winning and losing states and their rating scores. Secretary Duncan noted that the scores for winning states are approximately 30 points higher on average than Phase I reviews. The ten winning applications exceeding 440 points which was the cut-off before funds were depleted. Recognizing the significant improvements in the quality of applications throughout the conference, Secretary Duncan “wished” USED could have funded more states’ quality applications and “lobbied” Congress for the additional \$1.35

billion the Administration has requested for a Phase III competition next year.

During the press conference, a wide range of correspondents for state as well as national newspapers and other media outlets asked a variety of questions which will likely be posed to the Secretary again and again over the next few weeks by Congressional offices, governors, and officials from losing states.

Responding to a question concerning the low number of winning states that would be classified as rural, Secretary Duncan pointed to specific attention being placed on rural districts in applications from Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio. Another reporter questioned the lack of geographical distribution noting the vast majority of the winning states were on the East Coast and mostly “urban.” The Secretary stated that “geographical location was irrelevant,” and selection was based solely on peer review rankings. He also volunteered that he had talked to all of the winning and losing state governors of and all assured him they would “keep on their reform efforts.”

One reporter asked whether the winning states would be held accountable for implementing the Race to the Top initiatives as proposed in their applications, to which the Secretary stated, “USED will stop funding for states who do not implement their activities with fidelity.” As whether the Secretary had the authority to withhold funding from states that were initially approved if they failed to implement their approved activities, the Secretary answered, “absolutely,” if the state does not implement such activities “in good faith.” Another reporter noted that most of the winning states had “Democrat leanings” and state

officials, to which the Secretary volunteered that such a consideration was “irrelevant.” On several occasions he emphasized that Race to the Top was “not a pilot” but rather a “nationwide reform movement,” and noted that, “states submitted applications not because of the money,” but the effort is about children’s futures.

In a press release, USED noted that budgets would be finalized after negotiations between grantees and USED and that the money would be distributed over time as the grantees meet established benchmarks. Secretary Duncan and the press release noted that all of the winning applicants “have adopted rigorous common college- and career-ready standards in reading and math, created pipelines and incentives to put the most effective teachers in high-need schools, and all have alternative pathways to teacher and principal certification.” During the press conference, the Secretary stated that the several governors participated in the presentation to peer review panels and that the names of all of the individual winning states’ team members would be posted; Phase II peer reviewer’s comments are available on the USED website with videos of state presentations being posted by September 10th.

A Major Political Battle Can be Expected, as Part of ESEA Reauthorization, Between After-School Advocates (Such as the Afterschool Alliance) and Extended Learning Time (ELT) Proponents, Which Could Affect How More Than \$1 Billion is Spent Over Time

What is now a political “skirmish” between advocates supporting after-school programs

(such as 21st Century Learning Community Centers) and proponents of Extended Learning Time (ELT), which includes the Obama/Duncan Administration, will evolve into a major political “battle” during the ESEA reauthorization and FY 2011 Appropriations processes. The fundamental questions relate to:

- Who gets how much Federal funding?
- Who controls how the money is spent and with what entities?
- Which approaches are most conducive to innovation and will result in increased student achievement in academic areas?

The latest skirmish occurred over the proposed FY 2011 budget passed by the Senate. While both House and Senate versions would increase funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which is supported by after-school advocates, the Senate language would follow the Obama proposal to convert the program to competitive grants. It also includes a provision which would allow 21st Century Community Learning Center funds to “help communities establish and expand extended learning time that includes both academic instruction and enrichment opportunities and to support a more systematic restructuring of the school year.” This language clearly supports the Obama/Duncan priority of extended learning time during the day and into the summer. The net effect could be a decrease in the amount of funds for after-school programs. After-School Alliance President Jodi Grant called this language “a major, major policy change,” arguing that after-school initiatives are critical” and that extended learning time should be funded under a separate funding

stream. As reported in Education Week’s Beyond Schools blog (July 28th), the Center for American Progress and the National Center on Time and Learning applauded the Senate language. Noting that ELT places control in the hands of the district, Jennifer Rinehart, Vice President for Policy at the Afterschool Alliance reportedly said, “If folks think that school leaders have a hard time ceding control about what happens after school, imagine how comfortable they will be sharing control of what happens during the newly restructured school day,” according to Education Daily (August 20th). Groups such as AASA support the Senate language especially if a separate funding stream were made available with appropriate levels of funding. Other groups like the Children’s Aid Society have suggested alternative funding streams such as Title I School Improvement Grants or Supplemental Educational Services, according to Education Daily. A recent SRI International study estimated about 15 percent of after-school operators currently provide some SES for districts (see related Washington Update item).

Both after-school and ELT advocacy groups point to findings from a limited number of studies (e.g., Abt Associates 2009 and University of California 2007) which show the positive effects of both approaches; however, prior studies of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers conducted by USED have found small or even negative effects on student achievement in math and/or reading (e.g., Mathematica Research, 2002). The Obama/Duncan proposed use of competitive grants for 21st Century Community Learning Centers is designed to foster innovative approaches. Moreover, School Improvement Grants guidelines strongly encourage ELT activities that

include at least a 300-hour increase in instructional time during the school year. It is interesting to note that the USED Guidance for the recently-passed \$10 billion Ed Jobs Bill, designed primarily to help districts retain teachers and other staff, does allow such funds to be used to establish extended learning time and after-school programs at the district level (see August 19th TechMIS Special Report).

USED Finally Releases a Long-Awaited Descriptive Study of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program Which Provides Useful Information to Firms With Products and Services that Can be Used in Such After-School Centers

In late July, the U.S. Department of Education released its report “21st Century Community Learning Centers Descriptive Study of Program Practices.” Although the study had a large sample of 516 center directors (about ten percent of all such centers) in 2006-07 school year, the study does not provide information on program outcomes or impacts nor was the sample nationally representative; rather the study focused only on centers that offered instruction in reading, mathematics and technology, which represent the subjects/areas in which most sales are made to 21st CCLC programs. While a vast majority of centers did offer reading and math activities, required participation of students varied among centers. About three-quarters of students participated in reading and math activities for less than four hours per week. The average student spent most of the time doing homework in group settings (36 percent). The average center was open about 16 hours per week. The

study reported that the majority of centers serving elementary school students included the five essential components of reading instruction and reading activities (comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, and phonemic awareness) with three-quarters of the centers focusing on reading comprehension in most activities; while about half of the centers were focused on phonics.

Over 70 percent of the centers serving elementary students reported stressing operations with whole numbers in all or most mathematics activities and reported that students were generally engaged in tasks that required simple rather than complex problem solving. Almost 70 percent of centers asked students to practice basic facts in all or most instructional activities in mathematics. Staff was also more likely to use multiple teaching strategies in reading than in mathematics. Twenty-four percent of the centers reported having students use computers to support mathematics instruction or to solve open-ended problems in mathematics, while two percent used graphing calculators to solve problems in most activities. The report cited reviews of experimental research studies that indicated computers and graphing calculators can positively affect mathematics achievement.

The centers reported that they relied primarily on part-time staff which included some individuals who also had full-time teaching positions in addition to working in the 21st CCLC after-school programs. About 60 percent of the centers offered paid training or professional development to full-time staff and about 55 percent did so for part-time staff. For the most part, training was provided through the district. About

two-thirds of staff providing instruction in reading and mathematics had prior experience as certified classroom teachers or instructional specialists in reading or math. Nearly two-thirds of instructors had a bachelor's degree.

In the 2006-07 school year, about 70 percent of the centers reported having access to whole school state assessment data, with more than four-fifths reporting they received state assessment results for individual students at their centers. Almost 50 percent of centers noted that, once or twice a year, instructors used results of tests administered to the students' school.

Fifteen percent of the centers reported that they had been approved to provide SES themselves; while almost another ten percent said they coordinated their activities with other SES providers. The average center that was an SES provider served slightly fewer than 40 students in reading and mathematics.

Regarding coordination between district and center services, about a third of the centers reported that coordination with staff from the regular school day instructional program was a challenge, citing as examples lack of information about school day curriculum; the challenges of coordination were greater in third-party operated 21st CCLC programs.

Overall, the major barriers and problems for the centers were retaining high-quality staff, lack of up-to-date information on student individual needs, and low attendance rates.

According to key analysts from the SRI/Policy Study Associates team, the study report was "under USED review" for a very long time. Past studies -- conducted by

groups such as Mathematica and other USED contractors -- which addressed the impact on students of enrichment activities and academic instruction reported findings which were often contradictory; these have become involved in Congressional and other policy debates about the 21st CCLC program. Whether this descriptive study will affect the ongoing debate (see related Washington Update) is not clear.

For a copy of the report go to: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/after-school/21st-century-community-learning-centers.pdf>

Miscellaneous

- a) USED has proposed 13 priorities which it may use for appropriate discretionary grant programs in FY 2011 and future years; the notice is in the August 5th Federal Register, with comments due by September 7th. While most of these priorities were included in Race to the Top and Innovation Grant guidelines and applications, additional information included in the Federal Register notice, in the form of definitions, are worth noting; some of the 13 priorities are also new or have not thus far been emphasized strongly. Given the increased emphasis Secretary Duncan has placed on competitive grants for more discretionary programs, these priorities and definitions could become increasingly important.

Proposed Priority 4, "Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools," calls for the use of "intensive interventions" without alluding to the four current models included in School

Improvement Grant guidance. Proposed Priority 6, “Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates of Rural and High-Need Students,” clearly emphasizes credit recovery and notes, “In addition, students in rural areas can face specific challenges to learning based on isolation and lack of local resources.”

Several proposed priorities are new. Proposed Priority 8, “Promoting Diversity,” would promote student racial and ethnic diversity and avoiding racial isolation. Proposed Priority 9, “Support for Military Families,” refers only to K-12 and not to college-level activities, which the new GI Bill targets; it should fit in nicely with the Obama college priority of reducing the need for college remediation. This priority is most likely to change somewhat as a result of comments.

Proposed Priority 11, “Building Evidence of Effectiveness,” would add research designs beyond experimental or quasi-experimental, as providing evidence that could be used to judge the relative effectiveness of approaches or practices; the discussion notes that “using such research designs is not always feasible and that, in some cases, other designs are more appropriate to the question being asked.” Priority 11 supports rigorous evaluation studies consistent with the principles of scientific research in order to enable better understanding of the relationship between intervention, implementation, and student outcomes. Under Proposed Priority 12, “Supporting Programs, Practices, or Strategies for Which There is Strong or Moderate Evidence of

Effectiveness.” “Strong” evidence is defined as “evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and studies that in total include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to State, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity).” The notice defines “moderate” evidence as “evidence from previous studies whose designs can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity) but have limited generalizability (i.e., moderate external validity), or studies with high external validity, but moderate internal validity.” These are the same definitions used in the i³ grant competition. And, as noted in our last TechMIS issue, the Senate version of the proposed FY 2011 budget would allow School Improvement Grant funds to be used only for intervention approaches that meet the definition of “strong” or “moderate” evidence in the i³ grant program.

Another new priority is “Improving Productivity,” which would support projects designed to increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, and other resources. As noted, “Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules, use of open educational resources or other strategies that improve results and increase productivity.” The notice defines “open educational resources” as “teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits

their free use or repurposing by others.” Use of open resources in administration policies will continue to be a bone of contention with many education publishers.

For a copy of the notice, go to the Federal Register August 5th, Volume 75, #150.

- b) In our Special Report on the FY 2011 Federal budget for education, we identified specific language in the Senate conference report which “encourages” states and districts to use Title I School Improvement Grant funds (both Part g funded at \$3.5 billion, and Part a the 4% state set-aside funded at approximately \$500 million) for interventions which meet the “strong” or “moderate” criteria required for “validation” and “scale-up” i³ grants. In the August 5th Federal Register’s notice of proposed priorities, the i³ grant guidance definitions of “strong” and “moderate” evidence criteria are referred to in several of the newer priorities (see related above miscellaneous item). I discussed these new definitions as a possible replacement for the NCLB term “scientifically based research” with Sarah Sparks, who recently left Education Daily and is now with Education Week; both of us were somewhat surprised that so few comments had appeared in the media about the Senate’s language.

On August 26th, Sparks reported on a number of interviews which she had conducted with policy influencers and former USED officials who were involved in the “scientifically-based research” (SBR) debates which took

place immediately after NCLB was passed and when Reading First guidelines were published in April 2002.

Former IES Director Russ Whitehurst said that the i³ criteria for strong and moderate evidence reflected the “gold standard” used by the What Works Clearinghouse, which he was responsible for creating, and that the i³ requirements “would be a big upgrade” because few functional evidence requirements exist for programs such as School Improvement Grants. Jerry Sroufe, Director of Government Relations for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) noted, “This is kind of a reflection of the concern that we are raising the stakes very high and we’re not sure we have the kind of evidentiary base to do that.” As we previously reported, shortly after hearings on research-based evidence, House Education Committee Chairman George Miller stated that the reauthorization would focus on “research-based, proven, core elements of successful turnaround” and that he would take into account the presentations of witnesses, many of whom questioned the research evidence for the four required interventions specified in USED’s SIG guidance.

As Sparks noted, “The Senate language, if adopted, would represent the most detailed and rigorous definition to date for what constitutes scientifically based research in school improvement.”

In its report, the Senate committee emphasized that “every effort should be made to utilize the knowledge base that does exist while additional research is

conducted that will inform future activities.” In its FY 2012 budget request, the Senate committee would also require USED to indicate the level of progress which has been made in “beefing up state and district evidence for any education reform strategies paid for with Title I school improvement money, including U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s four recommended turnaround options.” However, as Spark’s article concludes, “The force behind the Senate request remains tenuous, as House appropriators still must agree to the language in the conference report. Mr. Sroufe and Mr. Whitehurst noted that the committee did not accompany its definition for intervention research with additional money to pay for that research.” As Whitehurst reportedly noted, “Unless the department provides a financial incentive for states and local education agencies to use evidence-based programs, the pace at which they begin to do so systematically will be glacial.”

- c) As we noted in our August 5th TechMIS Special Report on the Senate version of the FY 2011 K-12 Appropriations, the proposed Senate language includes changes in the 21st Century Community Learning Center statute allowing such funds to be used to extend learning time (ELT) during school, on weekends, and into summer months. The Senate would increase funding by about \$100 million. Advocates of after-school programs (which are typically funded under 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, and are operated by community-based and other organizations), such as the Afterschool Alliance, oppose such language changes

because they would reduce the amount of funding for after school and regular summer school programs (see related [Washington Update](#) item). As reported in [Education Daily](#) (August 12th), Jodi Grant, President of the Afterschool Alliance stated, “We are very concerned that if this Appropriations Bill is passed, more children will be left alone and lose out on afterschool opportunities despite the funding increase, and we are urging Senator Harkin to find a different funding stream for ELT, as there is no guarantee that only a share of the new money will go to the new program and, in fact, the amount of money going to before school, afterschool and summer learning could see a major cut.” In 2008-09, about 650 schools in 36 states provided extended learning time; about a quarter of these schools are in California and Massachusetts.

Studies of after-school and ELT programs have reported some evidence that both are effective in increasing student achievement in some core subject areas. A May 25th press release from the Afterschool Alliance argued that only 25 percent of U.S. children attend summer learning programs, while almost 50 percent of low-income parents said they were interested in enrolling their students in summer learning programs if they were available. Joining the advocacy of the Afterschool Alliance, the relatively new National Summer Learning Association, mounted a campaign to lobby Congress for additional funding to implement the Association’s “New Vision for Summer School,” which would seek to replace remedial summer school with “comprehensive and engaging

programs.”

While candidate Obama called for a doubling of Federal funding for “after school” programs, he and Secretary Duncan have evidently supported a broader concept of extended learning time through expanded in-school instruction and other initiatives, such as Promise Neighborhoods. Over the next year, the different approaches to extending learning time for students -- particularly those from low-income families -- who are at-risk of failing, will be a topic of debates in Congress and in negotiations between the Administration and numerous after-school advocacy groups.

One bottom line question is how much of the funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers and through “required” and “permitted” uses of funds under School Improvement Grant transformation models and Race to the Top components, will end up being used for: (a) more traditional after school programs versus extended summer school programs that go beyond remediation; or (b) more comprehensive wraparound student and community/parent support activities required under School Improvement Grants or Promise Neighborhoods. We plan to continue following developments in this area.

- d) The Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, one of the priority reform initiatives of the President and Secretary Duncan, is becoming embroiled in political debate fueled by questionable research findings in the context of a Congress which has expressed increased spending/budget

concerns. Promise Neighborhoods is modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone which provides costly wraparound community/school services, in conjunction with several charter schools in a hundred block area of Harlem (New York City). President Obama and Secretary Duncan have called for an increase in funding from \$10 million in FY 2010 to \$210 million in FY 2011. Geoffrey Canada, who is head of the Harlem Children’s Zone, and the Promise Neighborhoods Institute, has reported evidence on the effectiveness of the HCZ using numerous student performance measures including the high college enrollment rates of HCZ’s graduates. A recent report by the former head of the Institute of Education Sciences, Russ Whitehurst, who now heads the Brown Center at the Brookings Institution, questions the cost-effectiveness of Promise Neighborhoods “as a reform initiative.” The Brookings study attempted to parse the effects of the charter school component versus the “costly wraparound services.”

In their report, “The Harlem Children’s Zone, Promise Neighborhoods, and the Broader, Bolder Approach to Education,” Whitehurst and associate Michelle Croft wrote, “What is unique and attention-getting about the HCZ is that it is designed on the assumption that it takes both effective, achievement-oriented schools and strong social and community services to support the educational achievement of children in poverty. The presumption is that effective schools alone are insufficient.” After conducting their analysis, Whitehurst, et. al. argue, “There is no compelling evidence that investments in

parenting classes, health services, nutritional programs, and community improvement in general have appreciable effects on student achievement in schools in the U.S....there is a large and growing body of evidence that schools themselves can have significant impacts on student achievement....The most powerful educational effects over which we have any societal control occur within the walls of schools. They are the effects produced by good teachers, effective curriculum, and the changes in leadership, management, culture, and time to learn that are incorporated into schools that beat the odds, including successful charter schools.” The authors then conclude, “There is considerable evidence that schools can have dramatic effects on the academic skills that disadvantaged children without their providing broader social services. Improving neighborhoods and communities is a desirable goal in its own right, but let’s not confuse it with education reform.”

In his rebuttal, disseminated to the press as summarized by Sara Mead ([Education Week](#), July 23), HCZ President Canada stated, “...we feel that the Whitehurst and Croft report trivializes what we have done in a relatively short time....The report equates the Harlem Children’s Zone with our Promise Academy public charter school as if they were one and the same. This is inaccurate and misleading. Anyone who has even a basic understanding of our work would realize that the Harlem Children’s Zone is a comprehensive place-based strategy that has a goal of working with all children that reside in our Zone, whether

they go to our public charter schools or traditional public schools.” Canada’s statement also attempts to “correct” several misrepresentations by Whitehurst, et. al. such as the report’s use of “incorrect demographic data about HCZ’s charter schools” and the report’s giving “equal weight to each grade without looking at the progress each cohort has made over their time with us.” The statement pointed to previous studies by Harvard researchers Dr. Roland Fryer and Will Dobbie that looked at progress over time and found that Black middle school students close the achievement gap with White students over the first three years and, “If you take this approach you reach a totally different conclusion: you see highly significant progress with our middle school students.”

Without question, the debate over increased funding of the Obama priority Promise Neighborhoods reform initiative is just beginning. Last month, more than 300 community and other organizations submitted applications for this year’s planning grants totaling \$10 million. In the mean time, the FY 2011 Appropriations bill, recently passed by the House, would provide a \$60 million budget for Promise Neighborhoods while the Senate would only increase funding next year to \$20 million, significantly less than the Obama Administration’s proposed increase to \$210 million. The Senate Appropriations Committee report, however, notes, “Awards for the fiscal year 2010 appropriations have not yet been made and the committee intends to reexamine the need for additional funds upon reviewing the plans of the winners

of the current grant competition.” Without doubt, Congress will also take into account the ensuing debate over which components contribute most to the HCZ’s effectiveness -- improvements in the quality of instruction within the schools’ walls versus the availability and quality of wraparound services when compared to the overall implementation cost of the HCZ or its components.

- e) The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University has created a database of more than 2,100 schools that have been identified as the most “persistently lowest-performing” schools from which the vast majority of Tier I and Tier II schools under School Improvement Grants will be funded this year. The database, according to Education Week’s State EdWatch blogger, Lesli Maxwell, was created for the new Communities for Excellent Public Schools which was presented at a Congressional briefing at the end of July. As Maxwell reported, “More than 60 percent of the students attending these schools are concentrated in nine states (California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas).” Using USED demographic data from 2007-08, the Annenberg Institute’s analysis of these schools reported:
- 81 percent of students in the schools were students of color;
 - 85 percent of Tier I schools have more than 50 percent of students eligible for Federal free and reduced lunch;

- Hispanic students are four and half times more likely to be in an SIG eligible school than white students while Black students are seven and a half times more likely to be in SIG eligible schools than white students.

In its report, Annenberg/CEPS faulted the Obama/Duncan approach of using the four prescribed models, saying “limited, top-down mandates are both bad policy and bad educational strategy.” Moreover, the group argues that the approach is “refuted by evidence and research on what types of reforms effectively impact student academic success....None of the four options is premised on gaining collaboration and investment from stakeholders including parents, students, communities, teachers and school leadership.” The report is available at: http://www.ceps-ourschools.org/pdfs/Communities_Left_Behind.pdf

- f) As we most recently reported in July, School Improvement Grants to states have been approved starting in March. As of August 24, 48 states and Washington, D.C. have had their grants approved as seen in the following table. It should be noted that the dates in the table are those given in (or inferred from) each state’s application and will often shift depending on the date of USED’s approval of the state application.

Planned State Timelines for School Improvement Grant Implementation

	Actual USED	Approval of SEA Application	SEA Assistance to LEAs	LEA Tier I/II Application Available	LEA Tier III Applications Due	Tier III Grantees Notified	LEA Tier II Application Available	Tier III Applications Due	Tier III Grantees Notified	Award Amount (millions)
Alabama	4/21	2/11-3/15	2/22	4/15	5/3			6/3		\$58m
Alaska	4/12		3/1	4/1	7/1		5/10			\$11m
Arizona	4/7	2/3-3/23	3/29	5/14	7/1					\$70m
Arkansas	8/11	6/10	7/8	7/30	8/9					\$40m
California	6/24		6/23	7/2	8/1					\$416m
Colorado	4/12	2/9	3/10	4/14	4/30					\$40m
Connecticut	4/15	2/22	3/1-31	5/31	7/1					\$26m
Delaware	6/24		4/19	5/7	6/7					\$11m
District of Columbia	4/2		3/15	4/23	5/14					\$12m
Florida	7/2	6/1-30	6/1-30	7/1-31	8/31					\$170m
Georgia	4/6	2/12-3/1		4/15	6/11					\$122m
Hawaii										
Idaho	8/16	4/23								\$13m
Illinois	8/11	3/10	5/7	6/14	7/30	9/6	10/18	12/10		\$147m
Indiana	3/26	2/1-2/28	4/1	4/30	5/31	4/30	5/31	6/30		\$61m
Iowa	4/6			5/10	5/21					\$18m
Kansas	6/15				5/31					\$27m
Kentucky	4/21	3/30	3/30	4/30	5/30					\$56m
Louisiana	7/2	1/7	4/23	5/10	6/30					\$68m
Maine	7/12	3/18		5/13	6/18					\$13m
Maryland	3/26	3/25	3/26	4/20	6/30					\$47m
Massachusetts	7/12	4/1	5/15	7/28	8/6					\$59m
Michigan	7/7		7/22	9/22	12/22					\$136m
Minnesota	3/17	3/1-5/31	3/31	5/31	6/30					\$34m
Mississippi	8/16	2/1	3/31	4/30	8/31					\$47m
Missouri	4/12	4/27	4/5	6/14	7/23					\$54m
Montana	7/22	2/25	6/1	8/6-9/30	10/15					\$12m
Nebraska	7/12		5/1	6/24	7/7					\$17m
Nevada	4/15	3/1-4/30		4/30	5/31					\$23m
New Hampshire	8/2	4/2		5/7	8/27					\$10m
New Jersey	3/26		3/30		5/15		6/15	6/30		\$66m
New Mexico	4/7	2/1	2/28	3/24	4/30					\$38m
New York	4/30	4/19	4/16	5/14	6/11					\$308m
North Carolina	4/7			4/30	5/15		6/15	6/30		\$91m
North Dakota	7/2	1/22	3/16	5/31	6/30		4/21	6/30		\$9m
Ohio	3/26	3/1-4/30	3/1	4/30	6/1					\$132m
Oklahoma	4/20	4/20	4/16	5/14	5/27					\$39m
Oregon				5/7	7/11					\$34m
Pennsylvania	6/9	4/1-30	6/1-30	6/1-7/15	7/31	8/1-31	8/31	9/1-30		\$141m
Rhode Island	7/2			7/31	8/31					\$13m
South Carolina	4/15	3/4-4/23		5/14						\$51m
South Dakota	4/15		2/19	4/9	5/7	3/19		5/7		\$11m
Tennessee										
Texas	4/2	3/1-4/30	4/10	5/15	5/31			10/1		\$338m
Utah	4/14	3/19	3/19	5/7	5/21					\$17m
Vermont	4/30			6/15	6/30					\$9m
Virginia	4/15	2/1-2/28	4/29	5/29	6/28	6/1				\$60m
Washington	3/26	1/28	1/29	3/5	3/26					\$50m
West Virginia	3/12	3/9	4/21	5/25	7/6					\$22m
Wisconsin	6/16		4/1	5/7	7/31					\$51m
Wyoming	8/9	3/1-31	5/14	7/12	7/30					\$9m

Alabama Update

August 2010

As reported in Education Week, Alabama will receive \$149 million under the Federal Ed Jobs Fund, a program that was sharply criticized by many Alabama politicians. State officials now say, the Ed Jobs money will allow school districts to get through the 2010-11 school year without having to lay off employees, borrowing funds, or dipping into reserves. The State has cut the current year's budget by 7.5 percent because of lower-than-expected revenues and the current level of State tax collections is not sufficient to support the \$5.5 billion budget for the fiscal year that starts on October 1. State officials have said that districts can use the Ed Jobs money to cover such transportation costs as drivers, mechanics, and redirect local money for bus fuel and school utilities.

Arizona Update

August 2010

After finishing almost dead last in the first round Race to the Top competition, Arizona was a surprise finalist in Round 2, although it was eventually not funded. The State's RTTT application cited its open enrollment policy, its leadership in charter schools, and its overall reform agenda. As noted in [Education Week](#), Arizona's new law cracking down on illegal immigration has resulted in fewer Hispanics in the State and in its schools.

Data from the Arizona Department of Education indicate that, as of March 2009, more than 17,800 K-12 students in Arizona were enrolled full time in an online class. The State has recently approved 20 school districts to provide online classes as early as this coming school year. Moreover, the State is evaluating amendments from six charter schools to offer online instruction with approvals expected in September. Another group of applications to provide online classes will be decided in October.

California Update

August 2010

According to [Education Week](#), California's adoption of the Common Core State Standards would mean a major overhaul of the State's reading curriculum, including more multimedia texts, scientific and technical articles, and other non-fiction. Some educators in the State believe California's existing standards are exemplary and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute has given the State's standards an "A" rating.

[Education Week](#) reports that test scores for California students showed improvement across grade levels and subjects for the eighth straight year. About 4.7 million students in grades 2-11 participated in the 2010 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. The percentage of students Statewide that scored at proficient or higher in English-language arts increased from 50 percent to 52 percent. And in math, the improvement was from 46 percent to 48 percent. This represents a significant improvement from the 35 percent proficiency rates in 2003. The STAR continued to show achievement gaps across racial lines. The proficiency rates in English were consistently higher for Asian (75 percent) and white (69 percent) students than for Latinos (40 percent) and blacks (39 percent). Similarly, in math, proficiency rates were higher for Asians (74 percent) and whites (59 percent) than for Latinos (39 percent) and blacks (32 percent).

California's Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL) is a Statewide education technology service designed to improve the technology leadership skills of school superintendents. As reported in [eSchoolNews](#), all TICAL resources are keyed to California State standards as well as to the National Education Standards for Administrators developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). TICAL provides a range of online multimedia resources on such topics as education technology funding, interactive whiteboards, and podcasting, as well as a blog -- *TBLOGICAL* -- that includes posts about education technology from education leaders.

The National Institute for Early Education Research estimates that, nationwide, state-funded preschool program could be cut by \$90 million in FY 2011. In California, the State's \$19 billion budget deficit could eliminate CalWORKS, a welfare-to-work program that includes childcare funding and could cut \$800 million from the State's needs-based child care centers which usually provide full-day preschool. As reported in Education Daily, half of California's 800 early child care contractors are school districts that receive 60 percent of the State's early childhood dollars. Fearing cuts, many California districts are keeping their preschool programs closed.

As reported in the *Rural Education* blog on Education Week, the non-profit California Teacher Corps that recruits alternative-certification teachers, will focus resources on the State's rural, high-need schools. Working with 1,000 California school districts, the Corps operates 70 programs about half of which directly serve rural district that have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers. The Corps' goal is to place a total of 100,000 high-quality, second-career teachers in California schools by 2020.

The New York Times reports that the Los Angeles school district, facing a \$280 million budget shortfall for next year, laid off 682 teachers and counselors as well as 2,000 administrative staff this past Spring. District officials say they might have to cut another 4,500 jobs next year. Despite the influx of money from the Federal Ed Jobs Fund, the district may not be able to hire back any of the laid off staff. Because of the short timeline for Ed Jobs money, the district is more likely to hire support personnel.

The Los Angeles school district will, this Fall, launch its first virtual high school. To be called the Los Angeles Virtual High School Academy, the full-time online school will enroll about 650 ninth- and tenth-graders for the next school year. The district's goal is to have a full K-12 online school within a few years. In 2007, approximately 300 students were enrolled in at least one of the district's advanced or remedial online courses; by 2009, there were 2,500 online students.

Colorado Update

August 2010

Colorado has become the 31st state to adopt the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. As reported in The Denver Post, State education officials believed adoption of the Common Core Standards in reading and math would enhance Colorado's -- ultimately unsuccessful chances of funding under Round 2 of the Federal Race to the Top competition. Critics call the approval a Federal takeover of the State's education system.

Although a favorite to win \$175 million in the Federal Race to the Top competition, Colorado finished 17th out of 19 finalists. Among the reasons for the State's poor showing, according to Education Week, were:

- years of flat achievement data;
- little union buy-in;
- weak teacher preparation, development, and distribution; and
- vague plans to ensure effective educators are placed in the neediest schools.

Up for voter approval this Fall is Amendment 61, a citizens' initiative to limit government borrowing. As reported in Education Week, concerned that Amendment 61 might pass, Colorado has suspended its interest-free school district loan program until after Election Day. About 20 percent of the State's 178 local school districts rely on the loan program to fund operations until property-tax revenue begins arriving in the Spring. Many districts have expressed concern over the effects of Amendment 61 on their cash flow.

Colorado schools will be benefiting from two grants from non-profit organizations designed to put an effective teacher in every classroom. The Denver Post reported that the Colorado Educator Effectiveness Program has received \$200,000 from the New Teacher Project and \$800,000 (over two years) from The Rose Community Foundation. The funds will be used by the State to improve the recruiting, preparation, and retention of effective teachers and principals.

The New Teacher Project will audit Colorado's policies and programs and will help identify ways to support teachers in the State.

Connecticut Update

August 2010

State data indicate that the percentage of Connecticut schools meeting Federal adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmarks in reading and math has risen to 72 percent -- up from only 60 percent last year. As reported in the Hartford Courant, 281 Connecticut schools still failed to make AYP but 125 more schools meet Federal standards than last year. For high school students math is the biggest reason schools failed to meet performance benchmarks. At least part of the reason for the schools' improvement is the introduction this year of alternative assessment which can be taken by up to two percent of a district's enrollment.

The Connecticut Post reports that Connecticut will distribute the \$110 million it will receive from the Federal Ed Jobs Fund using the same formula it uses to allocate State aid to school districts, known as Educational Cost Sharing. Intended to save teaching jobs, Ed Jobs is expected to save as many as 1,500 jobs in Connecticut. State officials have indicated that some districts plan to reserve some of the Federal money for the 2011-12 school year. Bridgeport, the State's largest district, will get \$9.6 million in Ed Jobs money. The alternative allocation mechanism allowed under Ed Jobs is the Title I formula; this would give no money to about ten districts.

Delaware Update

August 2010

As reported in Education Week's *On Special Education* blog, Delaware education officials attribute a drop in reading scores to a change in accommodations for special needs students. In 2009, more than 6,300 students Statewide had portions of the State reading assessment read aloud to them. Based on advice from the U.S. Department of Education, in 2010, only 1,435 received such assistance.

Education Week reports that Delaware has adopted the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and math developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute has rated Delaware's existing English language arts standards as among the worst in the nation. State officials plan to work with school districts to incorporate the new standards into teachers' lessons. Some of the changes could appear in the classrooms in the second semester of the upcoming school year, but most will be seen in 2011-12.

Florida Update

August 2010

As reported in Education Week, Florida has become the 30th state to adopt the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. A recent study by the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has said that Florida's existing English and math standards are comparable in rigor and clarity to the Common Core Standards. The State plans to develop a plan for implementing the standards over time.

As noted in last month's TechMIS, there has been considerable controversy over the results of this year's Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The testing company -- NCS-Pearson -- fell way behind in releasing student scores and many districts across the State expressed concern about testing irregularities. The Miami Herald, however, reports that two independent audits by the Florida Department of Education have found no problems with this year's FCAT scores. Many superintendents Statewide dispute this finding, citing wide variations in some test scores from last year. Auditors say the variations fall within normal ranges.

As reported in the St. Petersburg Times, Florida revised its math standards three years ago in response to a report from the National Council of the Teachers of Math. The new standards, and accompanying textbooks, become effective this upcoming school year. The new standards, in the seventh grade for example, went from 89 benchmarks covered briefly to 25 concepts addressed in more depth. Also incorporated into the curriculum are hands-on activities designed to make the concepts more real to the students. The new standards will be included in this year's FCAT.

As reported in the Palm Beach Post, this Fall Florida is introducing its first State end-of-course reading and math exams and tougher high school graduation requirements. Known as FCAT 2.0, the new tests will include a new reading test in grades 3-10, which will include more historical documents and classical literature, and a new math test in grades 3-8 to be given on computer. Entering high school freshmen, in order to graduate, will have to score a Level 3 out of 5 on the

tenth-grade reading FCAT, pass Algebra 1 including the end-of-course exam, and pass geometry. End-of-course exams in high school science and history will also be phased in.

According to The New York Times, the Broward County school district laid off 1,300 staff in the Spring, including 555 teachers. The district has already rehired 400 of the teachers and plans to use Federal Ed Jobs money to hire back the remaining 155 teachers.

Georgia Update

August 2010

The Athens Banner-Herald reports that 48 percent of Georgia's high school sophomores failed the end-of-course tests in math II, a new curriculum that combines algebra, geometry, and statistics. The State Board of Education is considering whether schools will be allowed to give math credit to students who fail the test but also pass a remedial course. Next year's juniors would be given credit in math III, even if they fail the regular course, if they pass the Math III "support" course. By 2012 Georgia high school students will be required to pass four math courses in order to graduate.

A report from the University System of Georgia indicates that more than 14,000 (about a quarter) of last year's college freshmen took remedial classes. The University system's 35 colleges spend approximately \$22.3 million a year on "learning support" classes in reading, English, and mathematics. Moreover, only about a quarter of those students who take remedial classes actually earn an associate's degree in three years or a bachelor's degree in six years.

As reported in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Georgia will receive \$322 million from the Federal Ed Jobs Fund. The newly-approved program is intended to save teaching jobs across the nation. It is estimated that, in Georgia, 5,100 education positions have been cut from the budgets of K-12 schools and higher education. For many teachers, however, the Federal money is too late because they have already been forced to take jobs in other fields.

Education Week reports that, because of Georgia's tight State budget, the State's HOPE Scholarship program is likely to be discontinued. Since 1993, the HOPE program has provided free college educations for Georgia students graduating with a B average or higher. In 2009, the HOPE program cost the State \$639 million to serve 248,000 students. Funded by the State lottery, the program has seen its costs increase at a double-digit rate while lottery revenues have been flat.

Education Daily reports that a non-profit group called Georgia Families for Public Virtual Education is lobbying the Georgia Charter Schools Commission to increase per-pupil State funding for charter schools and virtual charter schools. With the State facing a budget shortfall for this fiscal year of \$413-\$613 million, the Commission has said it will provide a maximum of \$3,200 per pupil for virtual charter schools -- vs. \$8,000 per student for traditional schools. The non-profit group says applicants for virtual school charters have dropped out of the system because they say they need \$6,500 per student to operate. Currently, Georgia has only one virtual charter school -- the 6,000-student Georgia Cyber Academy -- which has operated at a deficit for the past three years.

Idaho Update

August 2010

In 2007, the Idaho legislature voted to approve a rule that required high school students to pass standardized tests in science in order to graduate, starting with the Class of 2013. According to the Idaho Statesman, however, the State's current testing system -- which tests in science only in grades 5 and 7 before high school -- is not adequate to identify students in need of remediation. The State has, therefore, decided to drop the science test as a graduation requirement although the science exam will continue to be given in the tenth grade.

Illinois Update

August 2010

As reported in Education Week, Illinois will receive \$415 million from the recently-approved \$10 billion Federal Ed Jobs Fund. State officials estimate that the money will save about 5,700 education jobs. State officials indicate that the money is likely to be distributed through the State's school funding formula. About \$100 million of the total will go to the Chicago school district.

The Chicago Tribune reports that, in a pilot effort, the Chicago school district plans to add 90 minutes a day to the schedules of five elementary schools this Fall. Another ten elementary schools will be phased into the program for the second semester. The additional student time will use online instruction and non teachers in order to keep costs down. If the program is successful, it could be expanded in the future to all schools in the district. The projected cost of the program is \$10 million, most of which will go toward capital improvements such as technological infrastructure, wiring, and broadband access.

According to the *College Bound* blog on Education Week, Chicago is reconsidering its "open door" admissions policy at Chicago City Colleges. City officials argue that the City College System spends \$30 million -- about six percent of its total budget -- for remedial classes. Like many community colleges across the country, the Chicago system is looking for places to cut back and has suggested offering remedial programs through alternative high schools.

Indiana Update

August 2010

In early August, Indiana became the 35th state to adopt the Common Core State Standards. As reported in the [Indianapolis Star](#), the State expects to include some of its current standards into the new Common Core Standards. Some educators have said that the new standards include too much material to cover adequately. Interestingly, Indiana was one of only three states cited by a recent report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute as having more rigorous standards than those in the Common Core. State officials have, however, said the new standards are simpler than the more cumbersome State standards.

According to the New America Foundation, Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels has said he expects no more budget cuts as long as revenues remain stable. The Governor had already cut \$300 million from K-12 education funding, but revenue estimates suggest that no further cuts will be necessary, particularly in light of the \$207 million the State expects to receive from the recently-passed Federal Ed Jobs Fund.

As reported in the [Indianapolis Star](#), Indiana State education officials have proposed linking teacher evaluations to their students' academic performance. Specifically, the approach would make year-to-year growth in student achievement the most important factor in determining teacher effectiveness. Such a policy is likely to be introduced in the State legislature during the 2011 session. The [Star](#) also reported that Indiana made only a very small cut in K-12 education spending last year and that higher scores across all grades on the State assessment are a reflection of the importance of the State's new Growth Model.

The [Indianapolis Business Journal](#) reports that, last year, 21,126 Indiana high school students gained college credits through Ivy Tech Community College -- an increase of 27 percent over the previous year. The dual credit courses are generally taught in high schools but are aligned with college standards. Ivy Tech indicates that the dual credit students earned a total of more than 100,000 credit hours last year, the equivalent of more than \$10 million in tuition savings to

families.

Iowa Update

August 2010

Iowa is participating in a partnership with *Bookshare* which has received a five-year, \$32 million grant from the Federal Office of Special Education Programs to provide classroom materials for students with visual impairments and other print disabilities (e.g., dyslexia). The partnership would offer free *Bookshare* memberships to school districts and qualified tournaments.

The race for governor in Iowa has brought out the differing views of the candidates particularly as they relate to early childhood education. Chet Culver, the Democratic incumbent, has cited his success in implementing State-funded prekindergarten available to most four-year-olds Statewide. The challenger, Republican Terry Branstad, has said the State should stop supporting preschool and that such programs should be operated by private organizations.

Massachusetts Update

August 2010

According to the Boston Globe, the Massachusetts State School Board is considering imposing limits on the growth of “virtual schools.” A new State law will allow experimentation with online public schools but will place a number of limits on their operation including an enrollment cap of 500 students per virtual school and a requirement that at least 25 percent of those students must reside in the school district that is operating the virtual school. The International Association for K-12 Online Learning has criticized the limits calling them among the most restrictive in the nation.

As reported in eSchool News, the Nashoba Regional School District has sued E-Rate Exchange LLC for \$115,000, claiming the company mishandled the district’s application to the Federal e-Rate program. The district argued that E-Rate Exchange misrepresented its professional expertise and caused the district to lose a 40 percent discount for a one-time \$288,000 charge for Comcast’s installation of a fiber optic WAN.

Michigan Update

August 2010

The Detroit News reports that, for the third consecutive year, the number of Michigan schools meeting Federal accountability standards has increased, if only slightly. A total of 3,188 schools (86 percent of schools Statewide) made adequate yearly progress -- up from 3,143 schools (85.6 percent) in 2008-09. Approximately 94 percent of Michigan elementary schools made AYP. And 82 percent of high schools made AYP -- up from 71 percent last year and 47 percent the year before. The number of schools Statewide that were identified for improvement declined from 514 schools in 2008-09 to 453 this year. It is noteworthy that the Detroit school district made AYP this year for the first time since 2006. Last Summer, Detroit “reconstituted” 36 of its lowest-performing schools, vacating more than 2,000 positions and requiring staff to reapply for the jobs.

The Detroit Free Press reports that, starting this Fall, Michigan will implement a database that incorporates its three key dropout indicators -- attendance, behavior, and classwork. The State estimates that 70 percent of students who have problems in one of these ABC areas are at risk of dropping out. The new database will allow schools to identify students at risk of dropping out earlier and to formulate interventions that will lower the State’s 25 percent dropout rate.

A study from researchers at Michigan State University says that Michigan could save \$612 million each year if it consolidated or reorganized its public schools along county lines. As reported in The Detroit News, reshaping district boundaries would, after three years of phasing in, save about four percent of total school budgets. As an alternative to a purely county system, the MSU study says Michigan schools could save \$328 million a year by sharing such services as transportation and food service and making greater use of the State’s 57 intermediate units which are, in many cases, organized along county lines.

According to Education Week, the Michigan legislature, citing the State’s economic situation, has not renewed funding for the Michigan Promise Scholarship program. The program would

have provided \$140 million in grants to 35,000 Michigan college students.

According to the Detroit Free Press, there is an ongoing discussion about giving Detroit's mayor authority over the Detroit school district. The City Council will vote whether or not to place on the November ballot a non-binding question about mayoral authority. If Detroit voters approve of such an issue, the State legislature would have to approve the details. Other major cities -- New York, Boston, Washington, D.C. -- have instituted mayoral control with varying levels of effectiveness.

The Detroit News reports that Covenant House Academies, which operates three charter high schools in Detroit, is expanding its program to reach more dropouts and at-risk youth. Dropout rates are 58 percent for traditional public high schools in Detroit, but 78 percent for charter schools. Covenant House receives State funding of \$7,100 per student for school operation with three percent of that going back to the Detroit school district. The district has approved a change in Covenant House's charter, expanding enrollment from 350 to 500 at each of its three schools. A new State law allows the charter schools to enroll dropouts up to age 22 in addition to the typical enrollment of 16-19 year olds.

Minnesota Update

August 2010

The Pioneer Press reports that, for the third consecutive year, Minnesota students have improved their scores on the State science assessment. Nearly half of the 178,500 students tested met or exceeded standards -- up three percent from 2009. Students in the fifth and eighth grades, as well as high school students, took the interactive online science test this Spring. Fifty-two percent of high school students scored at proficient levels, up from 50 percent last year.

Also reported in the Pioneer Press, Minnesota has decided not to adopt the nationally developed Common Core State Standards. State officials say the national standards are inadequate and that education should be locally controlled. The State does plan to use the Common Core English language arts standards as a base in the rewriting of State standards this year. The Common Core math standards are, according to State educators, less rigorous and understandable than the locally-developed math standards. However, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute has rated both the Minnesota English and math standards as inferior to the Common Core Standards. Minnesota's decision means the State will be ineligible for a share of \$350 million the U.S. Department of Education is offering to develop tests keyed to the national standards.

As reported in eSchool News, Minnesota's Technology Information Education Services (TIES) provides technology and information resources to school leaders, teachers, and students. Established in 1967, TIES is a cooperative jointly owned by 40 Minnesota school districts representing 400 schools. TIES operates a Superintendents Technology Leadership Academy funded by a grant from the Federal Enhancing Education through Technology (E²T² program). The Leadership Academy focuses on five themes:

- strengthening district leadership and communication;
- raising the bar with 21st century skills;
- transforming pedagogy with compelling learning environments;
- support for professional development and communities of practice; and
- creating balanced assessments

Missouri Update

August 2010

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports that student scores on the State's standardized test -- the Missouri Assessment Program -- show steady improvement but that 79 percent of Missouri's 438 school districts have failed to make adequate yearly progress under the rising Federal achievement standards. In the St. Louis metropolitan area, for example, 53 percent of students have passed the State assessment -- up from 44 percent in 2006.

According to Education Week, Missouri will receive \$190 million from the Federal Ed Jobs Fund designed to save as many as 3,300 teaching jobs. But State officials are uncertain as to whether the State will be able to distribute the funds this year. Missouri, having cut \$43 million in State school spending at mid-year, expects to distribute the Ed Jobs money using its existing State school funding formula which favors poorer school districts. Ironically, the Missouri districts that have laid off teachers are more often those that get little State support and are, therefore, not expected to benefit much from Ed Jobs.

Nebraska Update

August 2010

As reported by the New America Foundation, Nebraska's newly revised State budget reversed the earlier effort to cut all of the \$2.17 million appropriation for gifted education; the program's budget is now expected to be cut by only ten percent (\$217,000). The revised budget also restores 90 percent of the money for the textbook loan program which had previously been eliminated. To offset these restorations, the State will cut aid to school districts by \$98.7 million instead of the originally estimated \$96 million.

New Hampshire Update

August 2010

Having failed to make the finals through two rounds of the Federal Race to the Top competition, New Hampshire plans to move ahead on some education reforms without Federal money. As reported in Education Week, a State task force is developing a model teacher evaluation system and a tracking system that will follow students through college. The teacher evaluation task force will look at what other states have done and, next Spring, the State will develop a model evaluation to be tested the following year. State officials say student performance will not be part of the teacher evaluation system, largely because 70 percent of New Hampshire teachers do not teach the areas covered by the New England Common Assessment Program test.

New Jersey Update

August 2010

With the passage of the \$10 billion Federal Ed Jobs bill, New Jersey stands to receive nearly \$270 million to save teaching jobs. Approximately 3,000 teachers were laid off last year as a result of cuts in State education spending. According to Education Week, the money would allow New Jersey schools to rehire every laid-off teacher in the State although the State has not committed to rehiring them. Governor Chris Christie has said he plans to apply for the money so the State will retain control of it. The State would be eligible to receive the funds even if the Governor doesn't apply for it; in that case, the U.S. Department of Education would allocate the money to a State agency other than the Governor's office.

As has been widely reported in the education media, New Jersey lost out on as much as \$400 million in the Federal Race to the Top competition because of an error in the funding totals it reported in its application. As a result, Ohio, not New Jersey, won the final slot for RTTT funding. Despite controversy over whether the New Jersey had corrected its initial error -- it apparently did not -- the State's education commissioner was fired.

Governor Christie has supported a school-choice bill that could lead to vouchers in New Jersey. The bill would offer students in "chronically failing" schools scholarships to private schools or public schools in other communities. The 24,000 scholarships would be allotted by lottery and would be funded by donations from corporate donors. However, the legislature has made some major changes in the bill. The bill's new version would eliminate an innovation fund intended to provide grants to improve struggling schools. The new bill would also modify the districts and schools eligible to participate in the pilot program.

State education officials in New Jersey have indicated support for a plan that would allow institutions other than the State to authorize and regulate charter schools. New Jersey is one of only five states in which the state is the only entity who can authorize charter schools. The proposal has been put forth by Democrats in the State legislature who say the State Department

of Education is not equipped to handle the growth of charter schools. Last year, New Jersey had 66 charters serving more than 21,000 students; this Fall, 73 charters will enroll nearly 26,000. Under the legislative plan, Rutgers University's Graduate School of Education would be allowed to approve charter applications and oversee charter operations.

New Jersey's Student Tuition Assistance Reward Program -- NJSTARS -- has reduced its benefits and increased its eligibility requirements in response to the State's budget shortfalls. As reported in Education Week, NJSTARS used to cover community college tuition for students in the top 20 percent of their high school graduating classes; now it's limited to the top 15 percent. Previously community college students with 3.0 GPAs could earn a second scholarship to a State University. Now, students need a 3.25 GPA and the award is limited to a total of \$7,000.

As reported in The New York Times, the Newark school district will establish a special enterprise zone for seven of its low-performing schools. Modeled after New York City's Harlem Children's Zone, the Global Village School Zone will consist of Central High School and six feeder elementary and middle schools. The School Zone will be free of district regulations and will operate like independent charter schools. The 3,500 students in the Zone will see longer school days and summer school classes for struggling students. Despite receiving millions of dollars in State funding for remedial and enrichment programs, Newark has had continuing low test scores and graduation rates. The district already has 13 of New Jersey's 68 charter schools.

New Mexico Update

August 2010

A new report by New Mexico's Legislative Finance Committee has said that, because of the State's budget crisis, it should halt approvals of new charter schools and cut funding for existing charters. The LFC's report noted that charter schools spend an average of \$9,200 per student compared to \$7,300 per student for traditional public schools and that charters spend 23 percent of their operational funds for administration versus 12 percent for public schools. The LFC's recommendations would mean New Mexico's charter schools would lose \$24 million in small school size adjustment funding. Charter school advocates say such reductions could lead to closure of 90 percent of the State's charters.

New York Update

August 2010

As reported in The New York Times, New York's State assessments had become easier to pass in recent years. This year, the State changed the structure of the questions and raised the number of correct answers needed to pass the tests which are given to all students in grades 3-8. As a result, only 53 percent of students passed the English test compared with 77 percent last year. And, in math, 61 percent of students passed, down from 86 percent in 2009.

The Wall Street Journal reports that, Statewide, New York's charter schools, even more than traditional schools, felt the effects of higher State proficiency standards. As indicated above, 77 percent of all New York State schools were rated proficient in English; this year only 53 percent merited a proficient rating. And charter school English proficiency ratings dropped from 76 percent of schools to 43 percent. Interestingly, in New York City, charter schools tend to outperform traditional schools. In English, 70 percent of City charter schools had higher proficiency than their public school competitors and, in math, 81 percent of charters had higher proficiency scores than competitive traditional schools.

The New York Times reports that the New York City school system has prepared a report for all of its high schools, specifying not only graduation rates, but also how many of their graduates who went on to the City's public colleges required remediation and how many remained enrolled after their first semester. Current data show that 46 percent of City public high school graduates who enrolled in one of the City University of New York two- or four-year colleges required at least one remedial course and 40 percent dropped out within two years. This has led many observers to argue that the improvement in the graduation rate at City public high schools -- up to 59 percent from 47 percent in 2005 -- has come as a result of lower graduation standards.

According to BuffaloNews.com, a State review team has recommended major changes in seven of the lowest-performing Buffalo schools; these are among the 57 schools Statewide identified as "persistently lowest-achieving." Among the problems found by the Joint Intervention Team

were:

- inadequate staff development on effective ways to teach;
- staff development that is not required; and
- not sharing test data with schools and teachers in a timely manner.

The team recommended that Lafayette High School be closed and reopened under outside management. The district superintendent has said he does not intend to bring in an outside organization. Similarly, the superintendent has said he will not replace the principal of International School 45 as recommended by the State team.

North Carolina Update

August 2010

As reported in Education Week, Democrats in the North Carolina legislature have reached an agreement that would make an across-the-board 3.3 percent cut in State spending. Additional cuts are likely because of an expected \$518 million reduction in Federal Medicaid money, effective next January. The legislative agreement aid, however, call for using money from the State lottery to avoid cutting teacher jobs.

The Raleigh News & Observer reports that performance measures for North Carolina students showed dramatic gains this year. Nearly 88 percent of schools Statewide met or exceeded academic growth expectations -- up from 81 percent last year. And the number of low-performing schools declined from 75 in 2009 to only 16 this year. Overall high school graduation rates also increased -- from 71.8 percent last year to 74.2 percent. Part of the reason for the increases is undoubtedly the State's allowing retests for high school students to count in performance calculations -- an estimated five to eight percentage point improvement in passing rates. Despite the improvement, the percentage of North Carolina schools making adequate yearly progress under Federal education law dropped from 71 percent to 57.8 percent this Spring.

As reported in the *Rural Education* blog of Education Week, North Carolina's \$5 million Targeted Reading Intervention program allows literacy consultants at the University of North Carolina to work with kindergarten and first-grade teachers and struggling students in rural areas of North Carolina and three other states (Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas) using webcams. Researchers, citing evidence of effectiveness, say the program is "a national model for delivering professional development to rural schools via webcam technology."

The *Rural Education* blog also reports that North Carolina has received \$75.8 million grant under the Federal stimulus (ARRA) package, specifically from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) directs money toward rural communities intended to erase gaps in service and communication

speed that limit many rural schools. Combined with \$24 in matching money from the Gold Leaf Foundation, the BTOP grant will provide broadband service in 69 of North Carolina's most economically disadvantaged rural counties, reaching 170 community institutions. The funds will expand the purview of the North Carolina Research and Education Network which provides broadband serve to education institutions across the State.

North Dakota Update

August 2010

The Bismarck Tribune reports that a North Dakota committee is comparing the State's existing academic standards with the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Working with Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), the committee expects to have initial draft recommendations available for public comment in September. Further drafts will be developed over the next six months. The recent report from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute rated North Dakota's current English/language arts standards at a D (compared with B+ for the Common Core Standards) and the State's math standards at C (compared with A- for the Common Core Standards).

Ohio Update

August 2010

The Columbus Dispatch reports that Ohio's successful application in Round 2 of the Federal Race to the Top competition will result in a four-year grant of \$400 million. Under the application, 53 percent of Ohio's 613 school districts and 66 percent of its 322 charter schools have agreed to participate in RTTT programs. The State will distribute RTTT money using the Federal Title I formula, with school districts receiving a minimum of \$100,000 and charter schools getting at least \$25,000.

As reported in the Dayton Daily News, more than 29,000 Ohio students attend K-12 schools online -- a fivefold increase over 2003. According to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, Ohio ranks behind only Pennsylvania and Arizona in the number of enrolled e-learning students.

Oregon Update

August 2010

According to the *State EdWatch* blog on [Education Week](#), twelve Oregon schools will receive Federal School Improvement Grants. All of them will use the transformation model.

Although only one percent of Oregon students are enrolled in online public schools, the issue has been under discussion for nearly five years. According to [OregonLive.com](#), the Oregon Department of Education has come up with a general agreement on how to handle the funding and quality of virtual schools. Most Board members support parent choice with respect to online schools as long as there is a cap on the number of students allowed to leave an individual district. The details of the plan will be left to legislative debate during its 2011 session.

Pennsylvania Update

August 2010

The New America Foundation reports that Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell has proposed cutting \$280 million from the State's FY 2011 budget. The cut is in response to lower-than-expected allocations of funds from Federal Medicaid reimbursements and the education jobs fund. The State's budget had projected a total of \$850 million from the two Federal sources; only about \$600 million will be forthcoming. Included in the proposed cuts is \$50 million from State funding for school districts.

As reported in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit has agreed to a one-year contract with the teacher's union for the operation of the Unit's PA Learners Online Cyber Charter School. The contract includes incentive bonuses for teachers if the school makes adequate yearly progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment exams. Under the contract, teachers will have a 200 day work year and a 41 ¼ hour work week plus ten hours of professional development. Teachers will get bonuses if the school meets AYP requirements; but they will have to attend an additional ten hours of professional development if the school misses AYP.

The Philadelphia Daily News reports that 158 of Philadelphia's 267 schools made adequate yearly programs (AYP) under Federal academic standards -- up from only 119 schools making AYP last year. Moreover, 32 of the district's 95 "empowerment" (historically low-performing) schools made AYP on the PSSA tests. Half of the City's 28 middle schools made AYP as did 43 percent (26 of 61) high schools. District officials credit the improvement to a number of factors including greater student support services, smaller class sizes, parent ombudsmen, lower truancy, and a decline in school violence.

A new organization, known as Philadelphia Charters for Excellence, has been established to represent the City's 74 charter schools. As of mid-August, 19 schools had signed on. According to the Philadelphia Inquirer, the group will require its member schools to adhere to strict

standards and will create a website by which parents can compare the performance of charter schools. It is expected that, at the start of school this September, 39,000 Philadelphia students will attend charter schools; seven underperforming traditional public schools will become charters this Fall. It should be noted that 17 City charter schools are under Federal criminal investigation.

South Carolina Update

August 2010

Although South Carolina is eligible for \$143 million as part of the newly-approved Federal Ed Jobs Fund, it may get shut out of the money because the State does not meet Federal higher education funding requirements. Schools in South Carolina have cut between 4,000 and 6,000 jobs over the past two years. The Ed Jobs program, which would save between 2,000 and 2,300 education jobs in South Carolina, requires the State to apply for the funding within 30 days of the Bill's passage. State officials are not prepared to rewrite the State budget to meet the eligibility requirements, but are hoping they can work out an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.

Tennessee Update

August 2010

As one of the two successful states in Round 1 of the Federal Race to the Top competition, Tennessee has established a new website, called First to the Top (www.TN.gov/FirstToTheTop), to keep people informed about the State's RTTT implementation. As reported in The Chattanooga, the website includes details about RTTT programs and activities and resources for educators and vendors.

Tennessee will receive \$2.3 million in grant money from a Federal Department of Commerce program intended to expand broadband access in the schools. The money will go to a non-profit organization known as Connected Tennessee for its *Computers 4 Kids* (C4K) program. Tennessee's share of the grant funds will be used to extend C4K by three years, providing 700 computers per year to foster children. The rest of the money will go toward a new initiative that would put ten computers in every Boys & Girls Club in the State.

As reported in Education Week, funding for the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program is in question because of the State's tight economy. The Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, which administers the State's college scholarship and loan programs, is slated to meet soon to make recommendations for changing the program's eligibility requirements.

Texas Update

August 2010

The U.S. Congress, responding to Texas' use of last year's stimulus money, included in this year's Ed Jobs Bill a provision that would require the State to maintain education spending levels through 2013. Last year, the State used ARRA funds to replace spending which was against the intent of the Federal stimulus law. Governor Rick Perry has said the provision should be eliminated because the Texas Constitution prohibits committing future legislative spending. If the Ed Jobs bill is not changed, Texas could lose \$800 million, enough to save 13,400 education jobs in the State (according to estimates from the National Education Association).

The Dallas Morning News reports that the number of Texas public schools rated as "exemplary" or recognized" under the State accountability system has increased dramatically this year. Statewide, 74 percent of the schools and districts were rated as "exemplary" or "recognized" -- up eight percentage points over last year. The controversy over the use of the Texas Projection Measure to adjust scores will continue, however. The Measure allows schools to record students who fail the State assessment as having passed if they are projected by formula to pass in the future. The State is considering whether to reexamine the use of the Projection Measure.

The Austin American-Statesman reports that this upcoming school year, for the first time, Texas school districts have had the option of using State textbook money to purchase electronic textbooks, electronic devices, and Internet-based educational materials. But many in Texas believe that a number of factors will preclude purchases of e-textbooks including inadequate computer and Internet access for students, weak e-textbook content, and the costs of electronic conversion. State officials have suggested that schools could save money by distributing educational materials through "open source" licenses by which the State could pay a publisher once and distribute it as often as needed at no additional cost. The issue of Internet access is also critical; while nearly two-thirds of white and Asian homes in Texas have high-speed Internet, only 40 percent of Hispanic and 46 of black homes have such access.

The Dallas Morning News reports that Texas has implemented a new online program that provides free, supplemental coursework that can be accessed anywhere. The State is partnering with the Smithsonian Institution, the National Archives, and PBS to upload content to the site. The State education agency will review all posted material to see that they correlate with State-approved textbooks. The website will allow teachers to post tips and advice about lesson plans; as of late August, 146,000 teachers have signed up to participate and have created 5,000 project groups.

The Houston Chronicle reports that the number of Texas families home schooling their children has grown by 20 percent over the last five years -- to 120,000 families and 300,000 children. The difficult economy has caused many families to take their kids out of private schools but not trust the public schools. In Texas, home-schooling parents are not required to register or have their curriculum approved. State rules say simply that they must have a curriculum that teaches reading, spelling, grammar, math, and good citizenship.

As reported in The New York Times, should Governor Perry change his mind about accepting Federal Ed Jobs money, the Houston school district proposes to use \$40 million to \$70 million in Ed Jobs funds to extend the school day and school year, and to hire tutors. The district does not plan to hire back 414 staff laid off this year.

The Plano school district is considering offering financial incentives to former district students who agree to come back as teachers. As reported in The Dallas Morning News, the district would begin recruiting students while they are still in high school. Among the possible incentives could be no-interest loans to help students pay for college; \$600,000 has already been set aside to fund the loans. Teachers who return to the district would repay their loans, replenishing the loan fund.

Utah Update

August 2010

The Salt Lake Tribune reports that Utah budget analysts are projecting a budget shortfall of as much as \$150 million next year. Utah is eligible for \$101 million under the Federal Ed Jobs program, money which could save as many as 1,800 jobs and which could be spent through September of 2012. However, there is controversy about whether the State should apply for the funds. Republicans in the Utah legislature argue that the Federal money usurps State authority and that the legislature must vote on whether to take the money. It is estimated that it is about 80 percent likely that the money will be approved in the legislature.

As reported in Education Week, Governor Gary Herbert has said the State will apply for the money, but State legislators have put forth a proposal that would send only about \$50 million to schools for the hiring of teachers. The proposal calls for the other half of the Ed Jobs money to be used to fill a State budget shortfall, which is not permitted in the Act. If the full amount went to the schools, an estimated 1,800 more teachers could be hired. With only half of the funding available to the schools, an estimated 750 teachers would have jobs.

As reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, Utah has adopted the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute rated the State's current language arts standards as a "C" -- versus "B-plus" for the new Common Core Standards. In math, the two sets of standards both were rated as "A-minus." A new language arts curriculum keyed to the new standards is likely to be adopted next year; a math curriculum in 2012. It is estimated that implementing the new standards and curricula, and training teachers, will cost approximately \$6 million over the next four years. State officials indicate that in new standards in language arts and math could mean less professional development for teachers in subjects like social studies and science.

Virginia Update

August 2010

As reported in The Washington Post, Virginia ended FY 2010 with a surplus of \$404 million -- nearly twice the \$220 million estimated in July. Governor Robert McDonnell has indicated that at least \$18 million will be allocated for education, making only a small dent in the deep cuts previously made in K-12 programs.

Also according to The Washington Post, this year, average scores on Virginia's State assessment -- the Standards of Learning -- remained about the same in reading and rose slightly in math. But because of higher standards, only 12 Virginia school districts -- compared with 60 last year -- met all benchmarks. And only 60 percent of schools -- versus 71 percent last year -- met State testing goals. A total of 41 high schools failed to meet standards because of a new requirement that at least 80 percent of students graduate with a standard or advanced diploma -- up from 61 percent last year. The State is currently considering whether the portfolio-type test used for students with disabilities in many districts is appropriate. The State plans to phase in a more objective online test in the 2011-12 school year.

Washington Update

August 2010

A study from Gonzaga University suggests that dropout prevention programs in the Spokane school district, starting in middle school, should include an early warning system for identifying potential dropouts, a wider variety of academic opportunities, and additional funding for community-based social support programs. Among the study's more specific recommendations, according to [The Spokesman-Review](#), are extended summer and after-school programs, career and technical opportunities, and individual instruction/tutoring. The district has already begun a program this summer, known as Jump Start, that offers math tutoring for incoming seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-graders.

West Virginia Update

August 2010

The Charleston Daily Mail reports that West Virginia has raised the “cut scores” on every section of the State assessment -- the Westest 2. State officials believe the change brings the Westest more in line with other measures of academic progress. When the Westest 2 was introduced last year, scores went down. Educators had expected scores to rebound this year as teachers and students became accustomed to the new assessment. But the higher cut scores make this unlikely. In the State’s largest school district -- Kanawha County -- seven schools (Cedar Grove and Malden Elementary Schools; Cedar Grove, East Bank, Hayes, and Stonewall Jackson Middle Schools; and Riverside High School) were identified as “persistently low achieving” making them eligible for a share of the State’s \$33 million in School Improvement Grant money.

Education Daily reports that West Virginia has been given a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to reduce its special education spending by nearly \$500,000. This represents approximately two percent of the State’s FY 2010 education budget. West Virginia is one of only three states (along with Kansas and Iowa) that have received permission to miss their maintenance-of-effort (MOE) requirements.

According to The Charleston Gazette, West Virginia plans to revise its GED diploma policy to allow students to earn a GED diploma while still enrolled in high school. Current policy requires students under 18 years old to withdraw from school before they can take the GED exam. The new GED Option program, that allows GED students to take career and technical education courses, will be pilot-tested in 26 county school systems during the upcoming school year.

Education Week reports that West Virginia’s budget situation has caused the State to make changes in its Promise Scholarship Program. Funded through video-lottery machine revenues and general funds, the program originally (starting in 2001) provided students who had 3.0 GPAs with full tuition and fees at in-State colleges. Since its inception, the program has capped its award at \$4,750 per year (in 2008) and incrementally increased its ACT score requirements for

eligibility.