

# Education TURNKEY Electronic Distribution, Inc.

256 North Washington Street  
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549  
(703) 536-2310  
Fax (703) 536-3225

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 31, 2012  
**TO:** TechMIS Subscribers  
**FROM:** Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle  
**SUBJ:** Approved State Waiver Briefs; Sequestration Updates; GOP Proposed FY 2013 Appropriations; New AASA Survey; STEM in Urban Afterschools; New CEP/SIG Reports; and State Profile Updates

On July 18<sup>th</sup>, we sent TechMIS subscribers a State Waiver Update addressing states that received USED approvals for “freeze” waivers, including the confirmation of “freed-up” accumulated 10% professional development set-aside for Washington State and pre-implementation allowable uses of Title I and other funds. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, an update on USED Sequestration Guidance was sent, based on USED’s policy letter of July 20<sup>th</sup> indicating that FY 2012 appropriations would not be affected by sequestration in January (should that occur). Rather, possible sequestration would only affect FY 2013 budgets being allocated beginning in July 2013. Included in this TechMIS issue are one Special Report on additional waiver updates, including states receiving “comprehensive waiver approval” -- Arkansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Mississippi. Additional sequestration related developments are updated in another Special Report.

Washington Update items include:

- **Page 1**  
The House Appropriations Subcommittee passed its proposed FY 2013 education budget which would zero-fund the Administration’s flagship programs, including Race to the Top, i<sup>3</sup>, and School Improvement Grants, and cut \$1.1 billion from USED’s \$68 billion FY 2012 budget. The proposed Senate version, included in the last TechMIS issue, has resulted in an \$8 billion difference between the House and Senate proposals. A continuing resolution at current levels through March, 2013 is likely, according to Politico (July 31).

- **Page 2**  
 The most recent AASA survey (May-June) of more than 1,000 member districts identifies the most likely areas of budget cuts next year, with more than half of the districts having already taken into account the seven to nine percent sequestration reduction of Federal funds in January 2013. Eighty percent of districts faulted USED for providing “no” or “poor” information about the sequestration impact; guidance was finally provided in a July 20<sup>th</sup> letter, as noted in our July 24<sup>th</sup> TechMIS Special Report. The real question is how and when will respondents to the AASA survey revise their FY 2013 budgets, if at all.
- **Page 6**  
 The Council of the Great City Schools could have a major impact on Common Core implementation, especially in urban districts, based on its research findings, guidance to member districts, and recently announced procurement policy agreement of 30 urban LEAs to purchase only products aligned with their Common Core standards.
- **Page 7**  
 The Center on Education Policy’s three most recent studies on implementation of School Improvement Grants reflects SEA/LEA practitioners’ perceptions of challenges in implementing teacher-principal replacement, school climate and extended learning time reform initiatives and suggests policy recommendations which Congressional leaders and the Administration will take into account, especially surprise findings related to improving school climate.
- **Page 9**  
 A recent national survey finds more students in urban districts are participating in STEM-related afterschool programs than students in other community settings, which suggests Title I carryover and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds are being used to support these efforts; this trend should continue to increase dramatically in states receiving approved waivers, as predicted in previous TechMIS reports.
- **Page 11**  
 The Publishers’ Criteria for K-8 Common Core Mathematics Standards/Curriculum, which is now available, is designed to help publishers develop instructional materials as well as districts to select materials aligned to Common Core Standards.
- **Page 12**  
 Updated Education Sector survey of teachers finds more teachers wanting unions to support and protect them and to engage in reform, while NEA reports it has lost more than 100,000 members and revenues of \$65 million since 2010. Former NEA President says NEA must “reinvent its mission and vision.”

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A number of miscellaneous items address:

- a) The new 13-state STEM network, referred to as STEMx, sponsored by Battelle Memorial Institute, could provide opportunities for firms with directly-related products.
- b) Even though the Administration has been vocal in supporting new STEM initiatives, most funding for STEM activities continues to be set-asides/priorities within larger USED and other agencies' large competitive grant programs (e.g. Race to the Top, i<sup>3</sup>, and TIF).
- c) The What Works Clearinghouse approves as "rated highly" a study that finds simplifying language in math tests helpful to English language learners in demonstrating their understanding.
- d) The Johns Hopkins School of Education Center for Research and Reform in Education "Best Evidence in Brief" has found that inquiry-oriented science programs which incorporate science kits are not as effective as some technology-based K-12 and other science programs.
- e) The renewed National Transportation Act includes a one-year extension of Secure Rural Schools Act, which is a potential funding source for education technology, and distance learning, especially in Northwest districts/counties with national forests.
- f) Under USED's Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program, almost \$30 million will be provided in grants to districts and eligible non-profits.
- g) E-Rate update on districts with "potential" E-Rate refunds for purchasing non-eligible products and services

The State profile updates include summaries of news items regarding individual state waiver approvals (which are not included in the enclosed State Waiver Brief) and final state K-12 education appropriations for this coming school year, as well as items relating to school accountability, student assessments, charter schools, extended/afterschool programs, and teacher evaluation.

# Special Report: State Briefs on Waiver Requests Approved During the Second Round

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)  
Special Report*

*Prepared by:  
Education TURNKEY Systems, Inc.  
256 North Washington Street  
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549  
(703) 536-2310 / (703) 536-3225 FAX*

*July 31, 2012*

This report provides state waiver updates of eight Round 2 states which were approved by USED under the ESEA flexibility waiver guidance. In our March 29<sup>th</sup> Special Report, these and the other state application requests for waiver approval were highlighted. This Special Report focuses primarily on flexibility related to the SES set-aside and the ten percent set-aside for professional development, Option 11 to free up 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds to be used in a more flexible manner, an update on most recent SIG grants and district application competitions, states requesting extensions to extend SIG funding deadlines. Relevant information regarding interventions for Priority and Focus Schools and anticipated pre- and full-implementation dates are also noted. This update also highlights reviewers' comments and concerns that were expressed to individual states which could indicate potential problem areas for the state during implementation and possible opportunities for firms.

## **Arkansas:**

**Waiver Information:** Districts in Arkansas will receive flexibility with Title I set asides as an incentive based on performance. Districts with Needs Improvement Priority and Needs Improvement Focus Schools will receive greater levels of intervention and support. Progress in turning around student performance, improving instructional effectiveness and closing achievement gaps will determine whether the flexibility for decisions and use of Title I, Part A funds remains in the hands of local leadership or whether it shifts to ADE oversight, state direction, District Academic Distress Status and/or state sanctions. (p. 69 of approved waiver application)

Priority Schools will undergo a diagnostic analysis needs assessment and the findings will be used to develop a 3-year Priority Intervention Plan (PIP). ADE will approve the use of Title I set aside funds to support implementation of its PIP. (p.89)

The waiver of set asides under ESEA Section 1116(b) will provide districts with flexibility to target funds to ensure effective teachers and leaders in Priority School(s) that may include incentives for effective teachers to transfer to or remain in Priority School(s), funds to support extensive job-embedded professional development through coaching and model classrooms. (p. 90)

Consistent with its draft application, it is important to note that SES and public school choice are required under Arkansas state law and funded through local use of state categorical funding and will continue to be part of the academic instruction required in the second year of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. However, The ADE is requesting ESEA flexibility to waive the mandatory set asides of Title 1, Part A funds for transportation, professional development and SES. Districts with Needs Improvement Schools, Needs Improvement Focus Schools, and Needs Improvement Priority Schools are expected to engage in capacity building in these schools by ensuring these funds are redirected to support the interventions and strategies identified by the schools to address specific concerns within these Needs Improvement schools. The level of district autonomy in determining the allocation of these redirected set aside funds is delineated in Sections 2.A. (pp. 66 -- 69), 2.E. (p. 102), 2.F. and (p. 119); districts with Needs Improvement Focus Schools and Needs Improvement Priority Schools have the highest level of ADE involvement and lowest level of district autonomy. The waiver of the set asides for Title I, Part A funds will provide districts with greater flexibility in aligning state and federal resources to strategies for addressing the needs of schools in Needs Improvement, Priority School and School status. (128, 136)

Since the approval of the ESEA Flexibility proposal results in different accountability consequences, AR will seek changes to address the SES state legislation during Arkansas General Assembly of 2013. During the transition period, ADE will work with schools to incorporate required SES into their improvement plans.

**Implementation Timeline:** Priority and Focus School intervention activities will be initiated during the 2012-2013 school year, with diagnostic assessments being conducted and analyzed in order for Priority Schools to implement PIP beginning in 2013-2014.

**SIG:** Arkansas did receive \$5.7 million in SIG funding as per the March 30, 2012 announcement from the US Dept of ED.

This announcement about a redistribution of funds (dated 5/23/12) was published on the Arkansas Dept of Ed website: “The Arkansas Department of Education Federal Programs Unit is announcing the award of \$1.23 million in SIG 1003(g) funds. The availability of these funds is due to the turn-back of monies from a SIG school that is being reconfigured to an alternative school and the rescindment of 1003(g) funds to a school making inadequate implementation efforts.”

Following guidance provided by the United States Department of Education School Turnaround Office, these funds will be redistributed to cohorts one and two SIG schools. The amount of

redistributed money, when added to the original grant award, must not exceed the 2 million dollar yearly maximum amount per school.

For the 2012-2013 school year, redistribution amounts will be as follows:

Little Rock School District

\*Hall High School - \$26,349

\*J.A. Fair High School - \$70,010

\*Cloverdale Middle School - \$347

Osceola School District

\*Osceola Middle School - \$227,467

\*Osceola High School - \$227,467

Fort Smith School District

\*Trusty Elementary School - \$227,467

Helena/West Helena School District

\*Central High School - \$227,467

Marvell/Elaine School District

\*Marvell High School - \$227,467

Source document:

[https://www.google.com/url?q=http://arkansased.org/programs/word/Redistribution%2520media%2520release5.15.12.docx&sa=U&ei=urIKUMabGMemrQGQ8LW\\_Cg&ved=0CBMQFjAH&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNGn\\_d6UrQ0GzWdEAeAwW8U\\_log-cw](https://www.google.com/url?q=http://arkansased.org/programs/word/Redistribution%2520media%2520release5.15.12.docx&sa=U&ei=urIKUMabGMemrQGQ8LW_Cg&ved=0CBMQFjAH&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNGn_d6UrQ0GzWdEAeAwW8U_log-cw)

Arkansas did submit a request for a SIG waiver to permit the SEA to extend the period of availability of FY 09 SIG 1003(g) administration funds, to September 30, 2014” and another to “permit the State Education Agency to extend the period of availability of FY10 SIG 1003(g) carryover funds and FY11 SIG 1003(g) funds to September 30, 2015.”

Information regarding a current or future SIG competition was not readily available on the Arkansas Dept of Ed website.

**Option 11:** Arkansas DID request flexibility of 21st CCLC funding. Information regarding a future competition was not readily available on the Arkansas Dept of Ed website.

### **Arkansas Miscellaneous**

The peer reviewers felt Arkansas had a strong plan for transitioning to and implementing college and career-ready standards and impressive professional development activities. The plan set targets for both proficiency and growth for all students and all subgroups which the reviewers felt would hold schools accountable for students above and below the proficiency bar.

Consultation with teachers and principals was also a strength. However, the reviewers felt that the initial application lacked rigor and specificity for Arkansas’ proposed interventions for Priority and Focus Schools and wanted to know how the new accountability system would differentiate among “other Title I schools” and provide incentives and supports to ensure increased performance of all subgroups and close achievement gaps.

## **Mississippi:**

**Waiver Information:** SIG Priority Schools are bound by the turnaround principles through SIG awards. Non-SIG Priority schools will also receive technical assistance and continuous monitoring services, based on SIG turnaround principles. Rather than requiring school districts to utilize 20% set-asides for choice and SES, state and local funds, along with up to 20% of the districts' Title I, Part A budget and portions of the 1003a 4% SEA set-aside, will be leveraged to implement the turnaround principles in the non-SIG funded schools. (page 74)

Rather than utilizing 20% ESEA set-asides for SES and school choice, the following provisions will be made: Priority schools must set- aside up to 20% of District's Title I basic funds to implement intensive interventions addressing turnaround principles and aligned to the comprehensive needs assessment Transformation Plan. Focus schools must set aside up to 10% of School's Title I basic funds to implement intensive interventions that address all subgroups not meeting AMOs and aligned with the comprehensive needs assessment Action Plan. (86-88)

**Timeline:** Implementation in SIG schools essentially began in 2010 and will continue.

For non-SIG Priority Schools, pre-implementation activities have already begun with large-scale implementation during the 2013-14 school year that at least 90 percent of the indicators being addressed by interventions. During the following year, the interventions must address all of the indicators (p. 83). For Focus Schools, pre-implementation has begun with implementation of interventions beginning in October 2012. It would appear that Mississippi plans to become an early implementer of interventions under the waiver process.

**SIG:** The only available information about a SIG competition found on the Mississippi Dept of Ed website was the renewal application required for previously awarded SIG schools in order to continue funding for 2012 -2013. This application was due in May 2012 and can be found here: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/school-recovery/grant-renewal-application-final-041812.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

A document dated 6/26/12 identified approved SIG Timeline Waivers for the Implementation of Teacher and Principal Evaluations: <http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/school-recovery/approved-sig-timeline-waivers-for-the-implementation-of-teacher-and-principal-evaluation-system-6-26-12.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

**Option 11:** Mississippi DID request flexibility of 21st CCLC funding; however their FY13 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC application for the 2012-2013 school year came out in January and awardees were to be announced in May 2012. It is unclear what impact the ESEA Flexibility waiver approval will have on this cohort of grantees.

### **Mississippi Miscellaneous**

The waiver allows the SEA to distribute its 4% set-aside for school improvement only for use in Priority and Focus Schools. In reviewing the initial application, the peer reviewers expressed concern that Mississippi's proposed interventions and supports for Priority, Focus, and other Title I schools lacked "rigor." Another concern regarding Priority Schools was the need to describe how specific interventions are aligned to turnaround principles, how these interventions will be selected and implemented, especially for English learners and students with disabilities and how the SEA will ensure Priority Schools implement these interventions. Similar detail was required regarding the use and selection of interventions in Focus Schools.

### **South Dakota:**

**Waiver Information:** Under South Dakota's proposed model of accountability, LEAs will have increased flexibility and the ultimate responsibility for improving school and student performance. LEAs with 50% or more of their schools designated as Focus will be required to hold 10% of their Title I Part A funds for professional development activities, approved by SD DOE, for the specific Focus Schools. LEAs with 50% or more of their schools designated as Priority will have a technical advisor, appointed by SD DOE, assigned to them to assist with governance issues. In addition, 20% of their Title I Part A funds must be designated for Priority School interventions. (p. 89)

South Dakota will utilize its Education Service Agencies in various ways including the following:

- To deliver PD around college and career ready standards thereby building a cadre of highly qualified PD trainers to support the implementation of Common Core Standards
- To provide expertise in implementing effective interventions in Priority and Focus schools
- To work with schools to analyze achievement data and differentiate instruction (e.g., MTSS)
- To provide technical assistance and support to pilot sites implementing teacher and principal evaluation systems.

**Timeline:** During 2012-2013, training will be provided on the new accountability system and requirement for Priority Schools. Implementation of SD Multi-Tiered System of Support MTSS) will also begin.

**SIG:** No information about a current or future SIG competition could be located on the SD Dept of Ed website.

SD requested a waiver to the evaluation systems requirements of SIG funding as follows: A school that began implementing the transformational model during the 2010-2011 school year (cohort 1) and that was not able to complete the development and implementation of its



evaluation systems during that year must develop them during the 2011-2012 school year and, at a minimum, pilot them for all teachers and principals no later than the 2012-2013 school year. The piloted systems should be capable of being used for decisions regarding, for example, retention, promotion, compensation, and rewards, no later than the 2013-2014 school year.

A school that begins implementing the transformation model in the 2011-2012 school year (cohort 2) must develop its evaluation systems during that year, pilot them for all teachers and principals during the 2012-2013 school year, and use the system in the school, including for decisions regarding, for example, retention, promotion, compensation, and rewards, no later than the 2013-2014 school year.

**Option 11:** SC did NOT request Option 11 flexibility. Their last 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC competition closed in February 2012. A new competition will be announced in January 2013.

### **South Dakota Miscellaneous**

The peer reviewers expressed a number of concerns and requested clarification or more details including:

- How stakeholders in tribal communities were consulted
- A lack of professional development opportunities for principals, instructional leaders and teachers of English language learners;
- The use of a benchmark for ACT mathematics subjects that is lower than the benchmark for college readiness set by ACT;
- Whether the growth model used by South Dakota accountability system controls for student background characteristics;
- Concerns that LEAs may not have the capacity to implement interventions aligned with all of the turnaround principles in Priority Schools in the 2012-13 school year;
- Clarification of the process for approving external providers;
- By shifting from five SIG schools to 31 Priority Schools in the Fall 2012, whether the SEA had adequate capacity;
- How the SEA would hold LEAs, not just schools, accountable for improving school and student performance.

### **Utah:**

**Waiver Information and Timeline:** Utah has chosen to identify its Cohort I and Cohort II SIG schools as Priority for a total of 15 identified schools, all implementing the SIG transformation model. Utah must also identify a minimum of 28 Focus Schools. LEAs will be required to set aside sufficient Title I funding to continue implementing the Title I Systems of Support while schools are in Focus School status. Focus Schools will be identified by August 8, 2012 based on 2011-2012 end of year test results. Focus Schools will be required to begin implementation of the Focus School Improvement Plan no later than the start of the second term of the 2012-2013 school year.

**SIG:** Utah has had its SIG awardees identified for some time, including those that would receive additional funding should it become available. No plans for a new competition can be located on the Utah Dept of Ed website.

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/fsp/College-and-Career-Ready/School-Improvement/2011/School-Improvement-Grant-Award-grantees2010.aspx>

**Option 11:** Utah DID request 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC flexibility. Their 2012-2013 competition has already closed and awardees were announced prior to waiver approval. The list of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs that will be operating in 2012-2013 can be found here:

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/fsp/21st-Century/21st-Grantees-2012-13.aspx>. It is likely that the waiver will impact the next round of competition.

### **Utah Miscellaneous**

The reviewers' comments on the initial Utah application focused on the lack of evidence that Utah would implement rigorous interventions in Focus Schools that are targeted to the needs of students in those schools, including low-achieving students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. A related concern was the lack of incentives and supports for "other Title I schools" that are not Priority or Focus Schools. It would appear that USED was satisfied with the implementation of SIG grants in the state and the schools that were identified as Priority Schools under the waiver request. Most of the Focus Schools and "other Title I schools" evidently have not received SIG funding and therefore are not limited by the four SIG models in deciding what other interventions to choose and implement. Utah was also asked to describe in more detail the exit criteria for Priority and Focus Schools and what happens to these schools if they do not make progress after full implementation of interventions. Utah was also asked whether interventions in Priority, Focus, and other Title I schools will leverage funds previously set aside (i.e., the 20% SES and 10% professional development set-aside) in the reserve to support interventions identified for schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Evidently, reviewers felt some districts might interpret the application as continuing the requirement for setting aside the 20 percent for SES.

### **Virginia:**

**Waiver Information:** The state provides support to schools missing SOL targets through the academic review process and requires divisions (i.e., LEAs) with Priority and Focus Schools to hire partners to assist in the implementation of improvement strategies. The state will give priority to divisions with Priority schools in the awarding of Section 1003(a) and 1003(g) school improvement funds, as available. To supplement the amount, the state may allow divisions with Priority Schools to also reserve an appropriate portion of their Title I Part A funds, not to exceed 20 percent as currently allowable under ESEA, to implement the requirements of the turnaround principles or one of the four USED intervention models. If 1003(a) funds remain available after awarding funds to divisions with Priority Schools, the state will prioritize remaining 1003(a)

funds for awards to divisions with Focus Schools that have the greatest subgroup performance gaps. These divisions may also reserve an appropriate portion of their Title I, Part A, funds, not to exceed 20 percent, to: 1) hire a state-approved contractor to provide guidance, technical assistance and planning process in the pre-implementation of strategies to improve the performance of proficiency gap groups and individual subgroups; and 2) to carry-out the implementation and monitoring of improvement strategies.

Divisions with other Title I schools, not identified as Priority or Focus Schools, but identified as not meeting Federal achievement benchmarks, may also reserve a portion of their Title I, Part A, funds, not to exceed 20 percent, to support intervention strategies for underperforming groups of students through the school allocation or other allowable federal or state funds, as deemed necessary and appropriate through local planning efforts. (p. 105)

**Timeline:** Schools currently implementing SIG are already implementing interventions and will continue to do so. Newly identified Priority Schools will receive pre-implementation technical assistance in September 2012 and will fully implement the selected intervention strategies or USED model no later than the 2013-2014 school year. Newly identified schools will implement a three year plan consistent with the time commitment and schedule of SIG schools.

Focus schools will begin the planning process to implement intervention strategies in September 2012 and will begin implementation no later than January 2013 and will continue through the conclusion of the 2013-2014 school year. (70-74)

**SIG:** No new information was located on the VA Dept of Ed website beyond Cohort I and Cohort 2 SIG awardees.

**Option 11:** Virginia did request flexibility of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding. Their 2012-2013 grant application process closed in April. It is unclear if/how the waiver provision will affect the 2012-2013 awardees during the first year.

### **Virginia Miscellaneous**

The state is working out the operational details of the two-year waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind school accountability requirements. The biggest changes for non-educators will be new vocabulary and terms. Priority Schools, Focus Schools, annual measureable objectives, and proficiency will become prevalent as these replace terms like Adequate Yearly Progress, Needs Improvement, and School Choice. The first step in this process is operationally defining the new terms, so they clearly represent the concepts they embody. Annual measureable objectives are in development now.

The state is also determining which schools will receive mandatory additional support. Under the waiver, the state agreed to designate 15 percent of its lowest-performing Title I schools for additional support. Every year the bottom five percent or 36 schools will be identified as “priority schools.” The next 10 percent or 72 schools will be called “focus schools.”

Although school choice is gone, students currently using this option will not be asked to return to their old, low-performing schools. They can remain at the school until they've finished the highest grade level there.

The peer reviewers also requested the state to provide more detail on the interventions for Priority Schools to increase the quality of instruction, improve the effectiveness of leadership, improve student achievement and graduation rates for all subgroups of students. It also asked for clarification of exit criteria to be used for Priority Schools before exiting and what would be the meaningful consequences for Priority Schools not making progress after full implementation of interventions. They also asked the state to describe how it would leverage funds previously reserved for SES and professional development set-asides to implement the interventions in Priority, Focus, and other Title I schools.

In a discussion with State Superintendent Pat Wright during a March CCSSO meeting regarding the Washington request to allow districts to retroactively get their waiver approval to use accumulated 10% set-aside for professional development in a more flexible manner, she indicated that if Washington State did receive approval to do so that Virginia would be very interested in doing the same, suggesting that the amount of accumulated professional development set-aside was significant in certain districts. Districts with such amounts should be asked to contact the Virginia SEA to request a waiver to do so unless the state issues a "blanket" waiver on this issue for all districts.

As the *Politics K-12* blog in [EducationWeek.org](http://EducationWeek.org) (July 16<sup>th</sup>) notes, "The notion that states must join the Common Core to get a waiver is 'simply and absolutely a myth,' USED Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a conference call with reporters last month." Hence, the state's SOL and the process for setting standards working with the university systems was acceptable to USED.

## **Washington:**

**Waiver Information:** Washington State was granted its flexibility through the ESEA waiver process with a conditional one year waiver. According to various reports even though Washington's accountability system meets the requirements for waiver approval, Washington is working to finalize a "more sophisticated" accountability system that includes measures of student achievement, student progress and graduation rates. Once this system is finalized, Washington will request continued approval of its waiver from the US Dept of Ed.

The Washington Education Agency (WEA) reports that Washington "applied for the second round of ESEA waivers to recapture \$58 million dollars of Title I set asides that can be repurposed to go back into the classrooms." (See July 18<sup>th</sup> TechMIS Waiver Update)

The Washington Education Agency also went on to say "Working with OSPI, WEA leaders and

staff were true to WEA’s research-based position that using state assessments for such decisions is not an authentic practice and remained committed to supporting the growth of educators and building capacity among the educator workforce. As a result, the USDOE granted the waiver without the requirement that Washington use the state MSP or HSPE in teacher evaluations.”

Washington will no longer mandate public school choice (PSC) or supplemental educational services (SES) currently required under NCLB. Instead of requiring districts to set aside Title I, Part A funds for PSC and/or SES, districts with Focus and Priority Schools will be mandated to reserve up to 20% of their Title I, Part A funds to address identified needs and ensure the school receives resources and supports aligned with the its improvement plan. Districts will have the flexibility to develop interventions and align their supports to the unique needs of their schools. OSPI will review, approve, and monitor the quality and effectiveness of district improvement efforts over time for each Priority and Focus School. (p. 108)

Districts with one or more Priority, Focus, and/or Emerging Schools will be required to set aside and use up to 20% of Title I, Part A funds to serve all of these schools. However, OSPI will review the school improvement plan for each Priority and Focus School to ensure the district has set aside adequate funds to support implementation of the plan. Beginning in 2012 for the 2012--13 school year, Title I, Part A grant applications will require districts (with Priority, Focus, or Emerging Schools) to describe how they will provide meaningful, effective support to identified schools using the set aside of up to 20% of their Title I, Part A funds.

**Timeline:** OSPI will identify two sets of schools as Priority Schools: SIG-Priority Schools and Non-SIG Priority Schools. SIG Priority Schools include the 27 schools currently receiving federal School Improvement Grants to implement one of four turnaround models. Non-SIG Priority Schools will be identified in spring 2012; districts will set aside up to 20% of their Title I, Part A funds to implement turnaround principles in these schools beginning in 2012--13. It would appear that the non-SIG Priority Schools should have already been identified and will begin implementing turnaround principles this year, suggesting an early scheduled implementation date that several other states have agreed to.

**SIG:** Washington’s website does not reflect any new SIG competition information. Cohort I and Cohort II grantees are listed.

**Option 11:** Washington did not request the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Flexibility; however they are opening a 2012-2013 competition that became available online on July 16<sup>th</sup>. They anticipate distributing approximately \$4 million to 10-15 applicants. Applications are due by August 13, 2012. <http://www.k12.wa.us/21stCenturyLearning/default.aspx>

### **Washington State Miscellaneous**

The USED approval of Washington’s request is conditional as the state would use 2012-13 school year to study and define its new accountability index which will be an integral part of new, differentiated recognition accountability and support system. Hence, the state would have to finalize the new index by the end of the 2013 school year. Additionally, due to state law,

Washington has not adopted a method for including student growth as a significant factor in evaluation of principals and teachers, nor is this a part of the professional development support system. In this case, Washington agreed to seek a legislative change to require evaluations to include the consideration of student growth.

## **Wisconsin:**

**Waiver Information and Timeline:** Beginning in 2012-13, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will begin implementation of the proposed system of supports and will waive Supplemental Education Services (SES). Title I schools and districts will no longer be required to set aside 10 percent of funds allocated at the school and district level for the purpose of professional development. DPI will continue to require district level corrective action requirements (CAR) and restructuring as required under the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), if applicable. (p. 81)

Districts implementing a turnaround model may use the 20% set-aside of their district's Title I allocation, their school's Title I allocation, funds transferred from other Titles, SIG grants, and DPI reform funds to secure the services of a turnaround partner. (90) It would appear that districts/schools using a transformation model will not be required to use the freed-up SES and professional development funds to purchase the services of external partners.

Districts with Priority and/or Focus schools will be receive support from DPI for the implementation of meaningful interventions through all available funding sources including Title I, Part A, 1003(a), districts' 20% and 10% set-asides of title dollars and other federal funds as permitted. (This is repeated throughout approved application)

Private Schools: There were various notes added to Wisconsin's latest revision of their ESEA application in red to address the requirements of School Choice Wisconsin. These include the importance of providing equity to private schools along with clarification of many other provisions of the waiver request.

**Timeline:** 2012-2013 will serve as a transition year. While the identification of Schools Identified for Improvement (SIFIs) under current adequate yearly progress (AYP) formula will continue for 2012-13, Title I SIFI schools will no longer be required to provide SES as currently defined in NCLB. Instead, districts may use their 20 percent Title I set aside to provide a broader range of supports to students. While schools and districts will continue to be identified for improvement for school year 2012-13, not only will they not have to provide the 20% set-aside for SES, but they may follow the September 2, 2009 non-Regulatory Guidance which allows districts identified for improvement to use Title I funds to train not only Title I teachers, but all teachers in the district covering topics related to the reason why the district was identified. Some of the other flexibilities such as purchasing identical products for Title I and non-Title I schools will be allowed without violating supplement-not-supplant provisions if the purchases in non-

Title I schools were not made using Title I funds.

**SIG:** Cohort II, Year II grants and Cohort I, Year III grants will be announced and awarded this summer. The funding will run from 7/1/12 to 6/30/13. Application was due in May and is still accessible on the WI Dept of Ed website.

**Option 11:** Wisconsin did not request the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Flexibility. The 2012-2013 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grant applications were due in March. <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/clcgrant.html>

### **Wisconsin Miscellaneous**

The Wisconsin waiver application calls for developing plans for a Center for Standards, Instruction, and Assessment which provides support and centralized resources to help make the new standards accessible for all students. As the application notes, Wisconsin is the lead state in the WIDA Consortia which is working to develop English language proficiency assessments aligned with college and career-ready standards. The reviewers' comments focused on insufficient development of plans for transitioning to college- and career-ready standards and implementing teacher and principal evaluation and support systems. Comments also expressed concern about the criteria to be used for schools to exit from Priority and Focus status.

# Sequestration Brief: Congressional Hearings on Impact and Speculations

*A Technology Monitoring and Information Service (TechMIS)  
Special Report*

*Prepared by:  
Education TURNKEY Systems, Inc.  
256 North Washington Street  
Falls Church, Virginia 22046-4549  
(703) 536-2310 / (703) 536-3225 FAX*

*July 31, 2012*

Following our most recent *Sequestration Update*, sent to TechMIS subscribers on July 24<sup>th</sup>, a number of developments have occurred. In that update, we summarized the July 20<sup>th</sup> letter from Deputy Secretary Miller to Chief State School Officers in which he basically said that no programs with advanced funding (Title I, IDEA, School Improvement Grants, and Career and Technical Education) will have any of their FY 2012 Federal funds sequestered, with the exception of the \$1.2 billion impact aid program. Hence, districts should continue their existing plans and, if Congress fails to pass an FY 2013 appropriations bill with the \$1.2 trillion Budget Control Act reduction benchmark, sequestration would then occur beginning in July 2013, affecting the FY 2013 appropriations.

The non-defense (vs. defense lobbyists) domestic advocacy groups have finally coalesced and sent on July 12<sup>th</sup> a letter to Congress requesting that Congress protect their programs and, at the least, use a balanced approach to sequestration. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, Chairman Tom Harkin of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee held hearings on the impact cuts would have on non-defense agencies and programs should sequestration occur. Education Secretary Duncan has quoted Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projection saying that sequestration would reduce programs by 7.8 percent. He argued:

- A \$1.1 billion Title I funding cut would put at risk jobs of more than 15,000 teachers and aides, closing down 4,000 schools, with 1.8 million students losing access to afterschool programs and other interventions.
- IDEA funding would be reduced by \$900 million resulting in layoffs for 10,000 teacher aides and other staff.
- Up to 100,000 low-income children would be denied access to Head Start programs.

In his report, Chairman Harkin delineated other proposed program-by-program cuts. For example, School Improvement Grants would lose \$41 million, which means 75 fewer schools would be funded. He also reminded the Subcommittee that, if defense budget items are exempted, the estimated cuts for non-defense programs such as education could be as high as



17.6 percent across the board. Senator Richard Shelby, the ranking Republican on the Committee questioned the accuracy of the program-by-program cuts saying, “The only thing we do know is that agencies, programs, and states will have some flexibility to determine how reductions are taken and that all cuts will not necessarily lead to layoffs,” as reported in *Politics K-12* blog.

Shortly after the Senate hearing, George Miller (D-CA), the ranking Democrat on the House Education Committee, sent a letter to Representative John Kline, Committee Chairman, asking him to convene the hearing as soon as possible to “understand the full impact of sequestration on programs within our jurisdiction.”

# ***Washington Update***

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*Vol. 17, No. 7, July 31, 2012*

## **The House Appropriations Subcommittee Once Again Proposes an FY 2013 Education Budget Which Would Zero-Fund the Duncan/Obama Flagship Programs -- Race to the Top, i<sup>3</sup>, and School Improvement Grants -- While Cutting About \$1.1 Billion from USED's \$68 Billion Budget This Year**

On July 18<sup>th</sup>, the House Appropriations Subcommittee passed its FY 2013 budget proposal, which adheres closely to last year's initial House budget proposal. Once again, Race to the Top, Innovation in Education (i<sup>3</sup>) and School Improvement Grants would be zero-funded; however, last year the full Committee would have increased the state 4% SEA set-aside for school improvement to 7% and then later proposed an amendment which would allocate 3% of the 7% for a separate state-administered funding stream to continue SES. The full House Appropriations Committee has yet to consider the proposed FY 2013 bill.

Under the July 18<sup>th</sup> proposed budget, Title I and Career and Technical Education would be level-funded while IDEA, specifically special education state grants, would receive a \$500 million increase to a total of \$12.1 billion, reflecting the priority placed on special education by Education and Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN). Last year, the full Committee voted an increase of \$1 billion each for Title I and IDEA. It is noteworthy that several special education advocacy groups, such as

the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, have spoken out against the increase of the IDEA state grants portion because it came at the expense of other component of IDEA and would pit the special education community against constituencies of other programs such as Title I, according to Education Daily. The Subcommittee would level-fund Promise Neighborhoods and the Comprehensive Literacy Program, funded at \$60 and \$160 million respectively. Under the Literacy initiative, designed to impact all grade levels, SEAs provide eligible subgrantees with funds for activities that "have the characteristics of effective literacy instruction through professional development, screening and assessment, targeted interventions for students reading below grade level, and other research-based methods of improving classroom instruction and practice." The Teacher Incentive fund would once again receive about \$300 million, a portion of which would be set aside for competitive grants to promote STEM-related professional development and activities; at the same time the House panel would zero-fund the Math Science Partnership. One big winner outside of USED would be Head Start which would receive a \$45 million increase to \$8 billion.

Overall, the new House version would contain about \$150 million in discretionary funding for USED, Labor, and Health and Human Services, compared to \$158 billion in the version passed last month by the Senate (see June 30<sup>th</sup> TechMIS Special Report). Following last year's panel, the

Senate's proposed FY 2013 budget would continue at the same levels, funding for the Race to the Top, i<sup>3</sup>, and SIG programs; however, a portion of i<sup>3</sup> would be set aside for ARPA-ED and language would permit the use of a "hybrid fifth" intervention model patterned after "whole school reform" models such as Success for All. The Senate Bill also included several important language changes pulled directly from Guidance under the State ESEA Flexibility waiver initiative, including allowing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds greater flexibility to be used for extended learning time activities, in addition to afterschool programs.

If the full House Committee acts, the next step could be a Conference Committee to negotiate the differences; however, as the Alliance for Excellent Education *Straight A's* brief (July 24, 2012) notes, "Earlier this month, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) signaled that his chamber may not clear any spending bills this year because of the large difference between House and Senate spending levels," referring to the \$8 billion difference. Without an FY 2013 appropriations bill, the alternative appears to be a Continuing Resolution (CR). As the AEE brief notes, beyond the amount in the CR, a major sticking point could be how long it would last. Republicans might accept including the Senate's higher funding level if the CR runs through February or March after the new Congress -- which Republicans would hope to have greater control -- convenes. Presidential candidate Romney has said he would prefer this CR so that a more comprehensive budget solution could be passed in the new Congress; this could likely mean deeper cuts to education.

On July 31, according to [Politico](#), a deal has

been cut to pass a Continuing Resolution in September to "keep government spending at current levels through March 2013." During a "lame duck session" after the elections, sequestration and budget issues could still be addressed. Stay tuned for developments which we continue to follow.

### **Most Recent AASA Report on the Impact of Sequestration on Public Schools Identifies Most Likely Areas of Budget Cuts; More Than Half of Districts Have Already Taken Into Account the Seven to Nine Percent Federal Reduction in their Projected Budgets**

In the thirteenth of a series of reports on the impact of the economic downturn on schools, AASA's most recent survey has identified the most likely cuts due to potential sequestration of seven to nine percent in Federal programs beginning in January 2013. AASA found that "more than half (54.1 percent) of respondents reported that their budget for the 2012-13 school year built in cuts for sequestration." However, as the report notes, the remaining 45 percent of respondents are "waiting to see when/how sequestration unfolds....Additionally, lack of information about the sequester clarifying which programs will be impacted, how deeply, and when means districts are left to plan around a moving target." For the respondents who reported that the sequestration cuts had already been taken into account in preparing their budgets for 2012, 26 percent would apply the full 9 percent sequestration cut for the full school year, while about nine percent would attempt to reduce spending by 9 percent mid-year.

One hidden agenda of the AASA survey/report was to press both the Administration and Congress for more straight talk and “complete information about the impact of sequestration” on specific programs. Forty-five percent of respondents felt the Administration’s information in this area was “non-existent” and an additional 35 percent described the Administration’s effort as “poor/very poor.” Assuming that districts’ planned actions in response to sequestration do occur, the result would be reduced professional development opportunities, elimination of academic programs, and reduced school personnel. These actions are somewhat different in several important respects to responses to similar questions in the March 2012 AASA report in the series (see April 27, 2012 TechMIS Washington Update). Comparisons and analyses are presented below.

In Exhibit 1, we present the July report’s percent of districts responding to similar questions from the March report about anticipated reductions. In the March report, for example, about 52 percent of respondents indicated they planned to defer technology purchases and textbook purchases; however, in the most recent survey, only 38 percent indicated that sequestration would force them to defer textbook purchases, while 53 percent would likely defer technology purchases. In the earlier survey, 35 percent of respondents anticipated reductions in academic programs (including enrichment, afterschool, and interventions) compared to 58 percent in the most recent survey. Interestingly, while 29 percent anticipated eliminating summer school programs in the earlier survey, 35 percent so responded in a most recent survey. At the same time, 26 percent would

reduce extracurricular activities most recently, compared to 41 percent who anticipated doing so in the earlier survey. Hence, it appears that, as budget formulations come closer to deadline, textbook purchases win out over technology purchases, and extracurricular activities win out over other academic programs relating to enrichment, afterschool, and/or interventions. The comparison of the March to July survey findings indicates that anticipated instructional staff layoffs are much greater in July (55 percent) compared to layoffs anticipated in March (36 percent). As the report notes, “As the recession and cuts wore on, budget flexibility has been all but depleted, meaning that the cuts of sequestration put immediate pressure on areas that directly impact student achievement, including personnel layoffs and reducing academic programs.” One can speculate that the instructional staff most likely to be subject to reduction are teacher aides and assistants rather than core subject classroom teachers; this is due to EduJobs stimulus funding being depleted by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

While this most recent survey focused narrowly on the impact of sequestration on districts, the previous (March 2012) survey, to some extent, also addressed sequestration to determine respondents’ perception of the concept and what Congress should do and, in turn, how districts ought to respond. Around 90 percent in both surveys felt sequestration does not take into account the effectiveness of programs being cut and more than 80 percent felt that “Congress should pick up the work of the Super Committee and work to identify the necessary cuts in a manner that impacts mandatory, defense and discretionary programs and considers program

effectiveness.” While respondents are critical of both the Administration and Congress for not providing more complete information on the impact of sequestration, more respondents in the March survey indicated that they had “reached out to my Congressional delegation (Representatives and Senators) to talk about the importance of avoiding sequestration and its impact on education” (48 percent), compared to the most recent survey in which only 39 percent indicated that they had done so.

As we have noted in previous analyses of AASA reports in this series, the respondents are not a representative sample (as AASA clearly states) of districts across the country. AASA also states, “No claim is made that the same individuals responded to each of the survey efforts, though the population sampled through all thirteen *Economic Impact* surveys was drawn -- with very few exceptions -- from the same AASA membership listing.” With this caveat, it is important to note that the percentages of superintendents as respondents in the surveys were 80 percent (July) compared to 84 percent (March). Moreover, about 79 percent of respondents in both surveys were from districts enrolling fewer than 5,000 students, while only around ten percent of respondents were from large districts. About two-thirds of the respondents in the July survey reported that less than ten percent of their operating budget comes from Federal sources; however, as the AASA report notes, the survey sample was very similar to “free and reduced lunch” eligibility rates reported nationwide by the National Center for Education Statistics.

For a copy of the AASA report go to:  
[http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy\\_and\\_Advocacy/files/AASA%20Sequestration](http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/AASA%20Sequestration)

## Exhibit 1

# Impact of Sequestration

(Percent of Respondents to AASA surveys)

<b>Budgetary Approach</b>	<b>Considered March 2012</b>	<b>Implemented July 2012</b>
Reducing Professional Development	53%	69%
Reducing Academic Programs (enrichment, after-school, interventions, etc.)	35%	58%
Personnel Layoffs (non-instructional staff)	58%	57%
Increased Class Size	57%	55%
Personnel Layoffs (instructional staff)	36%	55%
Deferring Technology Purchases	52%	53%
Deferring Textbook Purchases	53%	38%
Deferring Maintenance	56%	37%
Eliminating Summer School Programs	29%	35%
Reducing Extra-curricular Activities	41%	26%

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American Association of School Administrators, March 2012 and July 2012

## **Council of the Great City School's Research Findings, Guidance, and Procurement Power Could Have a Major Influence on Common Core Implementation**

The American Institutes for Research, in conjunction with the Council of the Great City Schools, has conducted the first large-scale analysis to “identify variables that might be contributing to improvement in urban education nationwide, and to explore what is needed to accelerate these gains.” Using assessment scores on the NAEP in math and reading between 2003 and 2009, intensive studies were conducted in four districts:

- one district with consistently high overall performance;
- one demonstrating significant and consistent improvement in reading;
- one that showed such improvements in mathematics; and
- one that lacked improvement overall.

The intensive study investigated alignment of NAEP frameworks with various state- and district-level standards and examined the relationship between this alignment and the district's performance over time. The study then focused on the organizational/instructional practices of districts showing significant improvement or the ones that have consistently outperformed other big city districts to determine how practices might differ in critical ways from the districts not showing substantial progress.

The results, reported by Mike Casserly, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools, in the American

Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research Education Outlook document (July 2012), found that the factors that appear to drive school systems' ability to improve on NAEP were a “comprehensive set of instructional policies and practices, as well as strong leadership and accountability.” As Casserly noted, “...there seemed to be no connection between standards alignment and NAEP performance...” The factors fell into six broad categories including:

- *Leadership and Reform Vision* which unified districts in promoting and sustaining a vision for instructional reform.
- *Goal-Setting and Accountability* which, among other things, created a “culture of shared responsibility for student achievement.”
- *Curriculum and Instruction*, including a well-articulated program of instruction “that defined a uniform approach to teaching and learning throughout the district.”
- *Professional Development and Teaching Quality* including “well-defined professional development or coaching tied to instructional programming” including capacity-building in priority areas.
- *Support for Implementation and Monitoring of Progress*, including strategies and structures “to ensure that reforms were supported and implemented districtwide, and to deploy staff to support instructional programming at the school and classroom levels.”
- *Use of Data and Assessments* including regular formative assessments to gauge student

learning, modify practice, and target resources and support.

One implication of the study, which Casserly emphasized, is that the study “suggests that the greater rigor embedded in the new Common Core State Standards is likely to be squandered -- with little effect on student achievement -- if the standards themselves are not well-implemented, and if the content of the curriculum, instructional materials, classroom instruction, and professional development are not top-notch, integrated, and consistent with the standards.”

As we noted in previous TechMIS reports, the Council of the Great City Schools was one of the first groups to establish a task force-type “entity” designed, not only to refine and adapt Common Core Standards for large cities, but also to address the integration of the factors which Casserly noted drive reform. It is also important to note that the vast majority of member districts in the Council of the Great City Schools do take into account Council recommendations. As we noted in our last TechMIS issue, the Council has taken a leadership role in fostering a coalition among 20 (now 30) large districts, representing more than \$2 billion in purchasing power, to use its procurement policies to encourage publishers to follow the so-called “publishers’ criteria” aligned with Common Core Standards (see June 30<sup>th</sup> TechMIS report).

**Over the Last Month, the Center on Education Policy Has Released Three Studies on the Implementation of School Improvement Grants, Focusing on Teacher and Principal Replacement, School Climate, and Extended Learning Time as on Implementation Challenges Related to These Reforms; CEP has Suggested Policy Recommendations Which Congressional Leaders and the Obama/Duncan Administration Appear to Be Taking into Account, Which Have Implications for TechMIS Subscribers**

Based on its surveys of SEA and district officials directly involved in implementing School Improvement Grants over the last two years, CEP reports -- in *Schools with Federal Improvement Grants Face Challenges in Replacing Principals and Teachers* -- that principal and teacher replacement requirements were “at least somewhat critical to improving achievement in SIG schools, although several [state officials] said its importance varied from school to school.” Not surprisingly, this factor was more critical in schools implementing turnaround models than those implementing transformation models. According to CEP, “...responses suggest that Title I directors generally view principal and staff replacement as necessary components of reforming schools, despite the implementation problems described by state, district, and school officials...” Retaining staff was also a challenge. As the report suggests, there is “a need for greater flexibility in the staff replacement requirements of the transformation and turnaround models to address unique situations, such as schools in rural areas where it is not feasible to replace half the



staff.” The surveys also found that the “short time frame between grant award notifications and expected implementation, as well as the legal and union requirements related to firing and rehiring staff, have also created major challenges for districts and schools.” CEP recommends that policymakers “consider these types of challenges as they design federal programs and provide technical assistance and monitoring.”

The second CEP report, focusing on requirements to change school climate as part of School Improvement Grants, and was based on interviews with 35 state, district, and school officials in Michigan, Maryland, and Idaho and in-depth case studies of six SIG-funded schools. While the above findings CEP regarding teacher and principal improvement and retention challenges had been highly reported anecdotally in several previous surveys, one key CEP finding was surprising, namely, “All six SIG-funded schools participating in CEP’s case studies have taken steps to create a more positive school climate -- often as an initial priority before implementing other reforms.” As CEP reports, “Although none of the four SIG models explicitly requires schools to address issues of school climate, federal guidance notes that as part of implementing the transformation model, districts may partner with various organizations and agencies ‘to create safe school environments that meet students’ social, emotional, and health needs’ and may implement ‘approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment’.” The strategies which were used in the six SIG case study schools included creating a

more positive climate to improve safety, discipline, and student engagement; building a sense of community among teachers and students; and establishing a shared vision centered on student achievement among teachers, parents, and students. The report notes, “Many interviewees characterized this focus on school climate as an integral part of their reform efforts.” Some of these specific activities included:

- hiring positive behavioral specialists or providing social work services and other student supports;
- establishing community outreach programs and partnerships with external providers; and
- providing professional development to improve staff collaboration and morale.

From a policy perspective, according to CEP, “The findings from these case studies suggest that federal and state policymakers should factor in improvements in school climate when evaluating the overall impact of these grants, making decisions about future funding, drafting legislation, and designing school improvement programs.” It is important to note that improving school climate through many of the above activities, which was inherent in the flagship Promise Neighborhood program guidelines three years ago, became a higher priority component in SIG guidance as it evolved from the initial guidance in 2009 to the last interim guidance in 2011.

The third CEP report, focusing on the increased learning time requirement under the transformation and turnaround models, was based on two surveys of SEA officials in 46 states and the in-depth case studies in Maryland, Michigan, and Idaho. Forty-five

of the surveyed states used the transformation model, while 29 used the turnaround model as part of SIG. The survey found, “Officials in a majority of the states surveyed said the strategy of increasing learning time is, to a great extent or to some extent, a key element in improving achievement in SIG-funded schools.” CEP also found that, in the three case study states, using the transformation and turnaround models increases learning time, but focus on the strategy varies at both state and district levels. In the case studies, SIG schools increased learning time but did so by “adding to the overall length of the day or eliminating non-instructional time or both, although some schools reported doing so only for students with the greatest needs. Perceptions about increased learning time and experiences with implementing this requirement varied across the three states and across the case study schools.” As CEP concluded, respondents “generally had positive views about the importance of the increased learning time requirement to improve student achievement, but some said the importance of this requirement varied from school to school or that it was simply too soon to tell how much of a difference it will make....CEP plans to continue to collect lessons learned about increased learning time in future reports on school improvement grants.” In the case of extended learning time, CEP offered no specific policy recommendations at this time.

The studies are at: <http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=406>

## **National Survey Finds More Students in “Struggling Urban Core” Districts Participating in STEM Afterschool Programs Than in Other Communities, Suggesting Title I and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers’ Funds Are the Most Likely Funding Sources; With Many State Waivers Requesting Option 11 to Use 21<sup>ST</sup> CCLC and Freed-Up Title I Set-asides in a More Flexible Manner, Poor Minority Student Participation in STEM Afterschool Programs Will Likely Increase Even More Than We Anticipated in TechMIS Reports a Year Ago**

The survey of 17,000 households with children in K-12, conducted by Nielsen for the Change the Equation organization, a major STEM advocate, found that in September/October 2011, only 19 percent of children nationwide participated in afterschool STEM programs. However, “The response from households in ‘struggling urban cores’ represents a brighter spot in our survey results. Though the intensive need for such programs in urban areas may certainly still outstrip supply, our results suggest that federally- and privately-funded efforts give low-income urban children out-of-school learning opportunities are having an impact. Change is possible.” Participation rates in struggling urban cores was higher than in affluent suburban areas and metropolitan fringes or secondary cities, while lowest participation rates were in “small towns in rural areas with low population density and second lowest income behind struggling urban cores.” Compared to the small towns and rural areas, participation rates in urban cores were double in grades six through eight and in grades nine through twelve,

with significant differences also in grades K through five. The problems of conducting STEM afterschool programs in rural areas include less access to challenging math and science classes, qualified math and science teachers, STEM learning resources, role models in STEM fields, and community resources such as science museums.

As we suggested two years ago that some of the freed-up SES 20% set-aside could have amounted between \$500,000 and \$1 billion in increased afterschool funding. USED waiver guidance particularly encouraged freed-up Title I set-aside funds for SES and now professional development to be used for afterschool and extended learning. Under the ongoing state waiver process, states taking advantage of the waiver option 11 will be able to use 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC's \$1 billion plus funding for extended learning time and introduction of enrichment programs beyond remediation, including STEM programs for, among others, gifted and talented students. Such programs will likely contribute to significant growth when full implementation of waivers in many states begins in the 2012-13 school year. Another factor contributing to STEM growth in afterschool programs are policy priorities and "encouragements" by national afterschool and extended learning associations, beginning about a year and a half ago.

Although the Nielsen survey found, in 2011, only 19 percent of households with K-12 students reported their students participating in STEM afterschool programs, we expect that percentage has increased significantly over the last year and will continue to grow in the immediate future. As indicated in the Change the Equation brief, entitled "Vital Signs: Reports on the Condition of STEM Learning in the U.S. - Lost Opportunity,"

research suggests hands-on experience and connections to real-world problems through afterschool programs "can increase graduation rates and inspire more students to pursue STEM majors in college" and "...are also more likely than schools to expose students to engineering and technology."

The report recommends various broad strategies to extend the reach and impact of STEM out-of-school, including promoting programs that exist and providing better information about program quality. Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog reports another study's findings that indicate parents are an untapped resource to push STEM and suggests "that a fairly simple intervention with parents can translate into their teenage children getting more STEM education." In this field experiment, students in families who were provided two glossy brochures and a link to a STEM website took nearly one semester more of science and math in the last two years of high school compared with the control group of families not exposed to the interventions. "Parents are an untapped resource for promoting STEM motivation, and the results of our study demonstrate that a modest intervention aimed at parents can produce significant changes in their children's academic choices," according to a recent article in the journal Psychological Science. One striking finding, reported by Curriculum Matters, was that the effect of a randomized intervention was nearly as strong as the effect of parents' education level. The study also found that interventions led to a significant difference in the number of advanced math and science elective courses taken such as calculus, statistics, and physics. As expected, a strong indicator of students' course-taking patterns was related to more highly-educated parents,

but the randomized intervention was nearly as strong as the effect of parents' education. The Nielsen survey also found that African-American and Asian households are more likely to participate in out-of-school STEM programs; White households are least likely to do so.

### **Publishers' Criteria for K-8 Common Core Mathematics Standards/Curriculum to Guide Publishers in Developing Instructional Materials as Well as School Districts Select Materials Aligned to Common Core Standards**

As reported by Catherine Gewertz in the *Curriculum Matters* blog for [EducationWeek.org](http://EducationWeek.org), the lead writers of the Common Core Standards have published a 24-page document which highlights issues of focus, coherence, rigor, and “gets pretty specific at times.” It suggests, for instance, that elementary math textbooks should be “fewer than 200 pages in length, and that, at any given grade level, approximately three-fourths of instructional time should be devoted to the major work of each grade” For example, as explained by one of the authors, in grades K-5 the major work generally consists of arithmetic and the aspects of measurement that support it.

Other specifics include assessing probability beginning at grade seven and statistics not assessed until grade six. In Gewertz's interview, Jason Zimba, one of the three lead writers of math standards, noted, “There will be pushback on some of these things, because shifts are not shifts if they're painless. It's going to take a culture shift to achieve the focus and coherence of the standards.” As the document says, “These

criteria were developed from the perspective that publishers and purchasers are equally responsible for fixing the materials market...More generally, publishers cannot invest in quality if the market doesn't demand it of them nor reward them for producing it.” As Gewertz observed, “...the publishers' criteria emphasize three aspects of ‘rigor’ in the major work at each grade level: conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and applications.” The criteria are also designed to shape professional development related to Common Core Standards.

The K-8 math publishers' criteria, developed by Student Achievement Partners of which Zimba is a co-founder, has been endorsed by the Council of the Great City Schools, National Governors Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Association of State Boards of Education. As we noted in our June TechMIS issue, the Council of the Great City Schools not only supports the publishers' criteria, but also has a task force which is “adapting” standards for its member urban districts, 20 (now 30) of which have already agreed to use their purchasing power to further encourage publishers by stating they would only purchase from publishers whose materials reflect the publishers' criteria.

## **Updated Education Sector Survey of Teachers, “Trending Toward Reform,” Finds More Teachers Want Unions to Support and Protect Them and to Engage in Reform; NEA Reports it Has Lost More Than 100,000 Members and Experienced a Decline in Revenue of \$65 Million Since 2010**

In a follow-up to its 2007 survey “Waiting to Be Won Over,” the Education Sector has conducted a nationally representative survey of more than 1,100 public K-12 teachers and reports its top five findings.

As an indication of more teachers wanting unions to protect them, in 2007, 24 percent of the union members were directly involved in local unions, while in 2011, 38 percent were. The report notes teachers are seeking security and “turning to the one place they know they can find it: the union.” However, teachers also want their union to be more engaged in such reforms as negotiating teacher evaluation alternatives. Compared to 2007 survey results, the percent of respondents indicating that their evaluation was useful and effective not just a formality increased by seven percentage points, although 35 percent still felt their evaluation was “well intentioned but not particularly helpful” to their teaching practice. In the context of the growing pay-for-performance movement, the Education Sector reports, “Teachers are most in favor of pay reforms based on factors they control, such as their school and the subject they teach. The less control teachers feel they have over performance measures, like student test scores, the less likely they will support proposals that tie pay to performance.” Higher pay based on principal evaluations has greater support than financial incentives

for teachers based on student performance, which indicates “a pay-for-performance plan that may be more agreeable to teachers.” And finally, the survey found, “Teachers want to keep tenure -- only one-third would consider trading tenure for a \$5,000 pay bonus....75% of teachers think the union should play a role in simplifying the process of removing ineffective teachers instead of leaving it to district and school administrators, compared to 63 percent of teachers in 2007.”

Several days before the release of the Education Sector results, NEA officials told the Association’s Representative Assembly during their annual conference that NEA had lost more than 100,000 teachers and education support personnel and a decline in revenue of about \$65 million, since 2010. By the end of its 2013-14 budget year, it expects to have lost 308,000 members. According to Stephen Sawchuk, *Teacher Beat* blogger for Education Week, “The union anticipates the loss of 140,000 certified members and support personnel in 2012-13 next year alone. That amounts to a hole of \$27 million.” Sawchuk also noted that, even though President Obama did not make an appearance and Vice President Biden did, the NEA clearly supports the re-election of President Obama and has downplayed a resolution, debated last year, calling for the recall of Secretary Duncan. NEA President Van Roekel outlined a list of Obama Administration success stories (such as EduJobs and fixing student loan rates). However, as Sawchuk reported, “It’s worth pointing out two notable omissions from this list: the federal Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants, programs the Administration created that the NEA has strongly criticized.” In his blog in Education Week, John Wilson, former

President of the National Education Association concluded that the NEA “must reinvent its mission and vision to align with a world class education for all children or become irrelevant.”

### **Miscellaneous (a)**

During its first “summit,” hosted by U.S. News, the new 13-state STEM network -- referred to as STEMx -- was announced by its sponsor Battelle Memorial Institute. In the press release, Eric Fingerhut, Vice President for Education & STEM Learning at Battelle, called STEMx a “game changer in education,” saying it “is uniquely positioned to impact STEM teaching and learning at a grassroots level through the sharing of STEM-specific resources and tools across the United States. The Network’s objective is to transform and advance STEM education and workforce development deeply resonates with Battelle’s core education mission and our work at STEM education to date.” The Network’s current member states include Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington.

Battelle ([www.battelle.org](http://www.battelle.org)) has a long tradition of serving as a broker/promoter, usually behind the scenes, of technology-related movements over the last five decades, particularly as a coordinating mechanism for grassroots accountability movements which began shortly after the passage of ESEA and the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity in the 1960s. It is important to note that Fingerhut referred to STEM as a “grassroots” movement. Although the Obama

administration has created coalitions of private sector technology firms, it has “ridden on the coattails” of industry leaders who first brought STEM recognition to the public more than a decade ago. The amount of Federal funding related to STEM has been small and has been relegated to “preferences” and some “absolute” priorities in competitive grants such as Race to the Top, i<sup>3</sup>, Math/Science Competitive Partnerships, NSF Informal Education, and Title II Teacher Quality. The STEMx coalition is one of the first to build on state and local initiatives and developments, using some portions of Federal funds, but mostly state- and locally-generated support initiatives successfully lobbied for by local industry. It is very likely that some opportunities exist for firms with STEM education ideas, tools, and effective practices to partner with the STEMx coalition, an approach which could be effective in “branding” and disseminating information about quality STEM products and practices.

For information go to: [www.STEMx.us](http://www.STEMx.us)

### **Miscellaneous (b)**

The Duncan/Obama administration policy of setting aside or otherwise placing a high priority on STEM in larger USED competitive grant programs continues. Beginning with the second round of Race to the Top state funding, the policy of setting aside funds for STEM projects was the first large-profile case indicating this policy. It was continued under the second and third round of i<sup>3</sup> grants and during the upcoming round of i<sup>3</sup> grants under which 124 organizations were invited to apply for development grants. The largest category of

invited applications, totaling 39, related to STEM; the second largest category, representing 32 applications related to parent and family engagement. During the fourth round of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) competitive grants, two opportunities for applicants exist: (a) the general Teacher Incentive Fund competition which supports districtwide evaluation systems that reward success, offer greater professional opportunities and drive decision-making on recruitment, development, and retention through effective teachers and principals; and (b) a second TIF competition with a focus on improving STEM instruction. As noted in the *K-12 Talent Manager* blog at [Education Week](#), both areas must stress Priority 3, which is improving student achievement in science, technology, engineering and math. Approximately \$285 million is available for 30 TIF grants during Round 4. As we noted in our last TechMIS issue, the Senate's FY 2013 budget proposal includes a last minute reallocation of \$50 million from the Race to the Top line item to the National Science Foundation Math/Science Partnership Program, to be funded as part of Informal Education with a focus on STEM activities.

### **Miscellaneous (c)**

The What Works Clearinghouse reports as “rated highly,” a 2010 study, “Accommodations for English-Language Learner Students: The Effect of Linguistic Modification of Math Test Item Sets” which found that “simplifying language on standardized-test items in math made it easier for English-language learners to demonstrate their understanding of math concepts...” According to [Education Week's Learning the Language](#) blog,

English language learners who completed the simplified language test items had a six-percentage-point gain over similar students from a control group. According to the Executive Summary of the study, “A standardized difference of 0.17 based on the 1-PL model, for example, is more than half the magnitude of growth in achievement that might be expected from *one full year of schooling* (.32), as measured by a standardized test (Hill, et al. 2008).” As the report also notes, “Though a number of questions remain unanswered, this study contributes to the body of knowledge informing appropriate accommodations guidelines for EL students so that we can develop more valid and reliable measures of what these students know and can do.”

As we and other observers have pointed out, the “Achilles heel” for the Common Core assessment could, in fact, be the extent of “built-in accommodations” in the Common Core assessments being developed by the two assessment consortia and/or additional accommodations being developed for cognitively-impaired students with disabilities and English language learners developed by the two other consortia. To the extent customers take into account the simplicity of language in math items on assessments for English language learners, firms may wish to assess their formative and other assessment products in light of the study findings.

To view the study, go to: [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL\\_20094079.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_20094079.pdf)

## Miscellaneous (d)

The Johns Hopkins School of Education Center for Research and Reform in Education “Best Evidence in Brief” has reviewed evidence of the effectiveness of inquiry-oriented programs with science kits and technology programs in grades K through 6. As reported in the brief, “The evidence from studies that met the review’s inclusion criteria supported the uses of inquiry-oriented programs without science kits, such as science-reading integration approaches, but not those with kits (such as FOSS and STC).” Several technology approaches also “showed positive impacts,” according to the Brief, which also concluded “The evidence supports a view that improving outcomes in elementary science depends on improving teachers’ skills in presenting lessons, engaging and motivating students, and integrating science and reading.”

Many education practitioners and district-level officials who make purchasing decisions consider the “Best Evidence in Brief” from John Hopkins University’s Center as a more pragmatic and objective alternative to the What Works Clearinghouse operated by the Institute of Education Sciences.

## Miscellaneous (e)

Included in the renewed National Transportation Act is a one-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools Act which, since its enactment in 2000, has been a funding source for district purchases of telecommunications, distance learning, and related technology. The major beneficiaries of the Secure Rural Schools Act have been

rural counties -- mostly in the Northwest -- in which national forests are located; it is designed to make up for lost revenue because of restrictions on timbering in those counties, which has vacillated from year to year. As the *Rural School* blog on [EducationWeek.org](http://EducationWeek.org) noted (July 11<sup>th</sup>), “...rural areas, especially its schools, have come to depend on the \$3 billion it provided.” Even though a five-year reauthorization request is included in the President’s FY 2013 proposed budget, the one-year extension, along with the \$346 million which will go to more than 700 rural counties in 41 states, may be considered a good short-term source for technology purchases, especially since the future of the Secure Rural Schools Act is uncertain. Representative Greg Walden (R-OR), whose state was the major beneficiary receiving \$100 million, says, “It is getting very, very difficult to fund this program, and frankly the local governments are frustrated at the sort of yo-yo effect they have to go through depending on direct payments from Congress,” as reported in the [Helena Independent Record](http://HelenaIndependentRecord.com). Other states receiving large amounts of Secure Rural Schools Act funding include California (\$39 million), Idaho (\$27 million), Washington (\$21 million) and Montana (\$20 million). The \$346 million included in the one-year extension is 31 percent less than the amount available through the Act in 2010.

## Miscellaneous (f)

USED has announced the availability of applications for competitive grants under the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program -- a combination of the predecessor Library and Reading is Fundamental programs -- which will provide grants totaling almost



\$30 million this year. As the Federal Register notice states, all proposed projects must be “supported by at least one study that meets the definition of scientifically valid research.” The newest version of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program had a similar requirement and definition of scientifically-based research. The Federal Register notice also provides information about the Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program which is similar to the two antecedent programs, but which also identifies competitive preference priorities that include focusing on persistently low-performing schools, use of digital tools to improve literacy, targeting early learning, and rural communities.

As an example of a project which could be supported under this grant program is fostering collaboration and joint professional development in which library and school personnel plan subject-specific pedagogies that are differentiated based on each student’s developmental level and are supported by Universal Design for Learning principles, technology, or other education strategies. Eligible applicants are high-need LEAs and national non-profit organizations or consortia. Grants between one and four to national not-for-profit organizations for up to 24 months could average \$4.5 million. Applications are due August 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **Miscellaneous (g)**

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

As we attempt to do on a regular basis, we have included a list of districts that received

funding commitments from the SLD, during the last two quarters, for applications submitted back to 2004. We believe that most of the funding commitment letters represent appeals that were filed by districts when they were notified that certain requests in their applications were denied. In many cases, these districts went ahead and purchased the product in question, paying the whole pre-discount price. Because the SLD eventually found many of these appeals to be meritorious, these districts can request a check instead of a credit through the so-called BEAR process. Those districts doing so can use the discount refund to purchase non-eligible E-Rate products and services such as instructional software and professional development. If a district staff person is interested in purchasing a non-E-Rate eligible product or service, then he or she should contact the district E-Rate office to determine whether a check was requested for the refund amount through the BEAR process and, if so, whether some of that money can be used to purchase the desired product or service. The accompanying chart shows the funding commitments greater than \$50,000.

It appears that “meritorious appeals” going back to 2004 are “clustering” on certain districts or parts of the country. For example, the April-June quarterly reports included more than \$20 million for Atlanta Public Schools, while the previous (January-March) report focused on South Texas, California, and Arizona, as well as Philadelphia charter schools.

**E-Rate  
Funding Year 2012, Quarter 1 (Jan-Mar) Commitments**  
(greater than \$50,000)

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Amount Committed</b>
<b>2004 Commitments</b>			
NATIVE VOCATIONAL DISTRICT	KAYENTA	AZ	\$4,635,851
LINDSAY UNIF SCHOOL DISTRICT	LINDSAY	CA	\$1,304,176
TERRA BELLA UN SCH DIST	TERRA BELLA	CA	\$170,629
STRATHMORE UNION ELEM SCH DIST	STRATHMORE	CA	\$160,829
<b>2005 Commitments</b>			
NATIVE VOCATIONAL DISTRICT	KAYENTA	AZ	\$2,832,511
TIPTON ELEM SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIPTON	CA	\$80,630
<b>2006 Commitments</b>			
STRATHMORE UNION ELEM SCH DIST	STRATHMORE	CA	\$110,487
<b>2007 Commitments</b>			
RICHARD ALLEN PREPARTORY CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$391,610
LINDSAY UNIF SCHOOL DISTRICT	LINDSAY	CA	\$142,341
<b>2008 Commitments</b>			
TANGIPAHOA PARISH SCHOOL DIST	AMITE	LA	\$968,741
LOTUS ACADEMY	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$176,258
GERMANTOWN SETTLEMENT CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$63,195
<b>2009 Commitments</b>			
UNITED ISD	LAREDO	TX	\$1,552,467
PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO I S D	PHARR	TX	\$1,438,770
TOOMBS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	LYONS	GA	\$1,281,514
TANGIPAHOA PARISH SCHOOL DIST	AMITE	LA	\$1,138,189
LA JOYA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA JOYA	TX	\$1,041,982
IDITAROD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT	MCGRATH	AK	\$772,654
MERCEDES INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	MERCEDES	TX	\$637,315
SOUTHWEST INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SAN ANTONIO	TX	\$322,189
KINGSVILLE INDEP SCHOOL DIST	KINGSVILLE	TX	\$288,625
LA FERIA INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	LA FERIA	TX	\$281,680
EDUCATION SERV CTR-REGION 1	EDINBURG	TX	\$269,383
ROBSTOWN INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	ROBSTOWN	TX	\$206,179
BAIS TZIPORAH GIRLS SCHOOL	BROOKLYN	NY	\$185,895
HIDALGO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	HIDALGO	TX	\$176,993
BROOKS COUNTY INDEP SCH DIST	FALFURRIAS	TX	\$146,248
RIO HONDO INDEP SCHOOL DIST	RIO HONDO	TX	\$108,843
WEST OSO INDEP SCHOOL DISTRICT	CORPUS CHRISTI	TX	\$104,587
SANTA ROSA INDEP SCHOOL DIST	SANTA ROSA	TX	\$99,860
KASHUNAMIUT SCHOOL DISTRICT	CHEVAK	AK	\$85,725
OZARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	OZARK	AL	\$83,951
BROWNSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY	BROWNSVILLE	TX	\$72,360

**E-Rate****Funding Year 2012, Quarter 1 (Apr-Jun) Commitments**

(greater than \$50,000)

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Amount Committed</b>
<b>2004 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$3,824,875
<b>2005 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$2,396,804
<b>2006 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$5,905,926
<b>2007 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$2,645,069
LITTLE LAKE CITY ELEM SCH DIST	SANTA FE SPGS	CA	\$1,698,686
MARITIME ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$395,239
CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	CHESTER	SC	\$385,564
NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NEW LONDON	CT	\$193,591
WILLIAMSBURG CO SCHOOL DIST	KINGSTREE	SC	\$107,949
EARLE SCHOOL DISTRICT	EARLE	AR	\$58,048
<b>2008 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$2,863,751
MATHEMATICS, CIVICS & SCIENCES CHARTER SCHOOL	PHILADELPHIA	PA	\$316,905
NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NEW LONDON	CT	\$98,629
<b>2009 Commitments</b>			
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ATLANTA	GA	\$7,388,544
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUB SCHS	WASHINGTON	DC	\$5,221,785
BALTIMORE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BALTIMORE	MD	\$1,676,565
PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO I S D	PHARR	TX	\$808,550
CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT	CHESTER	SC	\$545,790
SUMTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 17	SUMTER	SC	\$525,971
LOS FRESNOS CONS IND SCH DIST	LOS FRESNOS	TX	\$364,388
UNITED ISD	LAREDO	TX	\$256,252
UNITED TALMUDICAL ACADEMY OF BURGESS PARK	BROOKLYN	NY	\$200,402
KUSPUK SCHOOL DISTRICT	ANIAK	AK	\$169,279
VAN BUREN SCHOOL DISTRICT 42	VAN BUREN	AR	\$114,728
CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 1	GAFFNEY	SC	\$107,726
NEW LONDON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	NEW LONDON	CT	\$106,272
SALUDA COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 1	SALUDA	SC	\$98,374
ST IGNATIUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	CLEVELAND	OH	\$78,828
ST STANISLAUS SCHOOL	CLEVELAND	OH	\$77,406
OUR LADY-MT CARMEL WEST SCHOOL	CLEVELAND	OH	\$72,281
MAPLE HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT	MAPLE HEIGHTS	OH	\$65,660
ZENITH ACADEMY	COLUMBUS	OH	\$57,208
ANDERSON COUNTY SCHOOL DIST 2	HONE PATH	SC	\$55,199
KLAMATH-TRINITY JT UN SCH DIST	HOOPA	CA	\$53,396
DREAM CHARTER SCHOOL	NEW YORK	NY	\$51,872



# Alabama Update

## July 2012

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Education Week notes that Alabama has been given a waiver from requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Under the waiver, State English and math targets will be frozen at 2011 levels, rather than increase as originally called for by NCLB. In 2011, 72 percent of Alabama's 1,383 public schools made adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB, down from 75 percent the year before. The waiver allows the State time to develop its growth model for tracking individual student academic achievement.

# Alaska Update

## July 2012

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As noted in Education Week, Alaska has received a partial waiver -- a one-year freeze -- from requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The one-year waiver will allow the State to use proficiency targets from the 2010-11 school year for 2012-13. These targets call for 83 percent of students to be proficient in English and 75 percent to be proficient in math. Although some Alaska legislators wanted a broader NCLB waiver, the partial waiver has been accepted by the State Board.

Alaska can expect to receive significant benefits from the extension of the Secure Rural Schools Program as part of the recently-passed Federal Transportation Act. The program funds firefighting, police, and school & road construction in districts near National Forests. The extension is for only one year and will provide the State with about five percent less than the \$15 million it received earlier this year. State officials hope for a longer extension in next year's Congress.

# California Update

## July 2012

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California school districts are concerned about the 2013 projected State funding cuts for K-12 education. A ballot initiative includes \$47.7 billion for K-12, according to the State's Department of Education. This assumes voters will approve an increase in the State sale tax and an increase in income taxes for individuals earning more than \$250,000 annually. If approved, this would provide \$6 billion in revenues for 2013; however rejection of the measure would mean a \$6 billion cut in K-12 spending, with about 80 percent made to K-12 schools on January 1. Despite anticipated revenues from Governor Brown's tax increase, the Los Angeles school district has negotiated for all employees to take ten furlough days next year. If the tax increase fails, the district projects a loss of \$738 million in operating funds for fiscal years 2013 through 2015.

With the approval of a new State budget for the next fiscal year, much uncertainty over transitional kindergarten in California has ended. Governor Jerry Brown's original budget plan proposed saving \$223 million by eliminating the transitional kindergarten program which would provide an additional year of kindergarten for children no longer eligible for regular kindergarten because of a new age cutoff date. As noted in the *Early Years* blog on [EducationWeek.com](http://EducationWeek.com), the final budget allows school districts to continue plans to implement the program this Fall.

California remedial interventions may come too late to help students facing high stakes exit exams required for high school graduation according to a study reported in [Education Week](http://EducationWeek.com). Since 2006, California has required that students pass an exam to qualify for a high school diploma. Researchers at the University of California, San Diego have analyzed the effectiveness of three State and local programs designed to help students pass the exit exam. State programs offered: (1) support for district funding for tutoring; (2) support for students who continue to fail the exit exam; and (3) provision of test prep classes for eleventh and twelfth graders who have failed the mathematics or language arts portions of the exam. UCSD researchers found that the number of students taking the test prep classes in San Diego has risen steadily from 449 in 2006

to 1,817 in 2009. Taking the prep course did help students score significantly higher in the subject prepped; in 2008-09, they were 20 percent more likely to pass the math portion and 21 percent more likely to pass the language arts portion of the test; but the students did not increase their chances of passing the overall exit exam. The report noted that students are increasingly looking to take test prep classes earlier in high school, rather than at the eleventh and twelfth grades only. Researchers maintain that interventions to improving exit exam passing rates must be based on thorough content instructions from early grades, not just supplemental help at the end of the student's academic career.

In its recent report, *Some Assembly Required: Building a Better Accountability System for California*, Education Sector has proposed a three-pronged approach to improving accountability in California. The report recommends that the State not only gather better information on student outcomes, but also learn to interpret the data better. The third recommended component is relying on highly trained "inspectors" to make decisions about school improvement, moving away from "the rules-based approach of No Child Left Behind." Education Sector believes the changes can be made with "a significant, but manageable investment."

Thousands of English language learners in California generate State funding for their schools to help them master the language. Once they are classified as fluent in English, however, the money stops. As a result, many schools do not report fluency and fluent students are kept in limited-English classes. Statewide, only 11 percent of the English learners are rated fluent each year; this translates to a ten-year learning period. Experts say five years is more appropriate for most students. The State has no firm definition of "English learner" and no uniform criteria for defining "fluent." State guidelines say fluency should be a score of "early-advanced" or "advanced" skill level in reading, writing, speaking, and listening on standardized tests.

The *Beyond School* blog on [EducationWeek.org](http://EducationWeek.org) notes that a new initiative -- known as Passport to Success -- is promoting family engagement as a strategy to reduce summer learning loss in Los Angeles. Guided by Families in Schools, an L.A. based nonprofit, and supported with a



grant from Target, the initiative will provide families with a resource guide -- in both English and Spanish -- on free or low-cost summer learning activities. Each student will be given a “passport” to be stamped at such sites as museums, libraries, and concerts. Students with stamped passports will be recognized with certificates and educational prizes.

According to Education Week’s *Charters & Choice* blog, a California judge has ruled that a group of parents has collected enough signatures to convert their children’s school to a charter school. By ruling against the Adelanto school district, the court has essentially approved a “parent trigger” policy that gives parents broader authority to revamp academically struggling schools. Although the State approved a “parent trigger” law in 2010, the signature gathering process has never been used.

# Colorado Update

## July 2012

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In Education Week, the Chairman of the Colorado State Board of Education has shared his insights on Colorado's successful application for a waiver from some of the more burdensome provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. He maintains that Colorado has found the right balance in its waiver language on supplemental educational services (SES) -- tutoring for low-income students enrolled in underperforming schools. This balance holds on to what works about SES but uses State standards rather than Federal mandates to give districts the flexibility to make the program work even better. A U.S. Department of Education study showed the SES leads to statistically significant gains in math and reading achievement compared with those of non-participants. Additional research shows that high-impact tutoring is one of the most effective means of improving student achievement he wrote. Additionally, requiring that parents choose their child's tutoring provider demands active engagement on the part of the parent. The Chairman contends that Colorado's waiver approach balances these two concerns: (1) high-quality tutoring for students; and (2) funding for Title 1 schools designated as priority "improvement" and "turnaround."

According to Education Week, a new child literacy law went into effect for Colorado children on July 1. Although full implementation will take a number of years, the measure will bring about major changes in Statewide benchmarks for ensuring students are able to read by the fourth grade. The new law requires schools to provide extra help for students struggling in reading and mandates that third-graders behind in reading be retained in grade (unless given special permission).

As we reported last month, a non-profit organization known as the Blueprint Schools Network has been operating an extensive turnaround initiative in low-performing Denver schools since the Fall of 2010. Education Daily notes that the program provides math tutoring of every student in grades 4, 6, and 9 in small (2-3 student) groups. The Blueprint model is based on five research-

based constructs: leadership, increased learning time, high expectations, frequent assessments, and daily tutoring. Program officials stress that the tutoring program is integrated as a regular class period and that tutors play a key role in creating a culture of college-bound expectations.

# Connecticut Update

## July 2012

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The Hartford Courant reports that Connecticut's recently released high-stakes standardized test scores show incremental improvement of elementary school students, mixed results for high school students, and a slight narrowing of the State's broad achievement gap between low- and higher-income students. The scores show a widening gap between those who speak English and those who are learning to speak it. About 250,000 students in third through eighth grades took the Connecticut Mastery Test in the Spring of 2012. They showed the most consistent improvements in reading and writing. While student performance in math improved in the earlier grades, it declined slightly among older students. The proportion of third graders who performed at or above the State's goal level on the math tests went from 63.2 percent last year to 66.8 percent this year, while sixth graders who performed at or above the goal slipped from 71.6 percent to 69.5 percent. The widening of the gap between students who speak English and English language learners (ELLs) is particularly marked. From last year to this year, the percentage of ELLs who are at or above proficiency declined or stayed the same in most subject areas in third and eighth grades. Among English speakers, the percentage at or above the proficiency level increased in every subject area.

# Florida Update

## July 2012

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According to the Associated Press, Governor Rick Scott is reportedly in discussions with State education officials and teachers around possible revision of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). He maintains that solid measurement data are essential to accountability; however that benefit may be out-weighted by the burden on students, schools, and teachers.

As a result of more rigorous academic standards, the number of highly rated Florida schools declined sharply this year and the number of low-rated schools increased commensurately. This year, 1,124 Florida schools received A grades -- down from 1,481 last year -- a 24 percent drop. The number of D- and F-rated schools increased from 148 to 285. Governor Scott has questions about the amount of student testing but supported the reported school grades.

In a letter to the editor of the Tampa Bay Times, Florida Education Commissioner Gerald Robinson raised concerns about applying the same performance standards to special education centers as to other schools. State officials are working with legislators to ensure that their action will undo some of the concessions the State made in its request for an NCLB waiver, which has been approved. Florida had originally received a conditional NCLB waiver on the basis that its accountability system be changed to include students with disabilities and those learning English. Now that the actual impact of this concession is recognized, Florida districts are concerned that special education centers will be graded F. The alternative is to include test scores of students attending special centers with the scores of the “neighborhood” schools to which they would routinely be assigned. This option appears even less acceptable. Parents and disability advocates point out the potential loophole in a possible legislative change and request for a waiver amendment saying it could encourage Florida districts to send children with handicaps to special schools where their scores would not be counted. The question is whether the U.S. Department of Education will approve an amendment to Florida’s original waiver agreement.

According to Education Week, computer-based testing on GED exams will be available this Fall at centers in Alachua, Citrus, Escambia, Highland, and Walton counties. The new online exam will have the same content as the pencil-and-paper test, but will allow online registration and flexibility scheduling. The State plans to expand computer-based GED testing Statewide beginning in January. In 2011, Florida awarded nearly 33,000 GED diplomas.

# Georgia Update

## July 2012

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The Georgia legislature has approved a scoring system for schools and school districts consistent with the State's approved waiver from requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. According to Education Week's State EdWatch blog, the system would include a 100-point scale to measure indicators of quality of student learning and five-star scales for financial efficiency and school/district climate. The climate indicators would include parent surveys and health and behavioral data. Financial efficiency could include actual student achievement, resource efficiency, and student participation in standardized testing.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution observes that Georgia could lose \$33 million of the State's \$400 Race to the Top grant because of proposed changes to the planned principal/teacher evaluation system. The State is considering eliminating portions of teacher evaluations based on student ratings. Georgia's new State superintendent has said the teacher-effectiveness plan, as written by the prior superintendent, is unworkable and includes challenges that could not have been foreseen. The U.S. Department of Education has said some of the State's RTTT money is "at high risk" because of the planned changes.

# Hawaii Update

## July 2012

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The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reported 27,000 students had taken at least one career technical education course during the 2010-11 school year. Previously identified as vocational education, courses have been revamped to sound more high tech. For example, a course entitled Woodworking has been replaced by Building and Construction, and graphics courses have morphed into Gaming and Animation.

Education Week's Early Years blog notes that Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie has signed new legislation that an Executive Office on Early Learning that will develop a plan for a State-funded preschool program. The new law requires Hawaii students to be at least five years old on July 31 in order to enter kindergarten in the Fall, starting in the 2014-15 school year. The new program would include a “universal network of child care and preschool support” for every four-year-old and would also target children who turn five after the kindergarten enrollment deadline. The State’s plan is to be presented to the legislature before the start of the 2013 legislative session. Hawaii is one of 11 states that has no publicly funded early learning program for three- and four-year-olds.



# Illinois Update

## July 2012

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Faced with a \$700 million deficit for the upcoming school year, the Chicago school district is undertaking a variety of means to save \$144 million. Specifically, the district is:

- challenging and renegotiating vendor costs based on research on market prices (estimated \$11.5 million saved);
- negotiating new contracts for construction projects, transportation, utilities, food, and education supplies (estimated \$20 million saved).
- cutting information technology costs, including migration to a single email system (estimated \$11 million saved);
- cuts to the central office; and
- redirecting central-office funded programs to the school level.

Catalyst Chicago reports that the Chicago school district has reached a tentative agreement with the local teachers' union to add an hour of instructional time to the school day. Under the agreement, teachers would not work additional time; rather, 477 new teachers would be hired to provide additional classes in art, music, and other enrichment subjects. Both sides claim victory with the district extending the school day and the union getting more teacher hires. It is unclear, however, where the cash-strapped district will get the \$40-50 million needed to implement the plan.

# Indiana Update

## July 2012

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An Associated Press article relating to Indiana's testing reports that private Indiana schools which accepted students from low- to middle-income families using State-funded vouchers last year experienced a fall in their passing rates on the State assessment this year. The Journal Gazette of Fort Wayne compared 2011 and 2010 test score data for 189 private schools with voucher students that administered the Statewide test. The analysis determined that schools' passing rate for both math and English fell to 85 percent for 2011, down from 86 percent the previous year. About this same time the public schools' scores rose slightly, with about 71 percent of students passing both the English and math portions of the test this year, up slightly from 70 percent last year, with an overall eight percent gain since the 2008-09 school year.

The Indianapolis Star notes that the reported graduation rate in Indianapolis Public Schools has increased from 48 percent in 2009 to 65 percent in 2011. An examination of data reveals this increase is due to greater use of waivers—a process that allows districts to award regular diplomas to students who do not pass the State's required tests for algebra and English. In 2011, the Statewide percentage of waiver diplomas was approximately eight percent, compared to 27 percent in Indianapolis. Indiana requires students to pass two tests in algebra and one in English; and the waiver process was designed to be used sparingly and in special circumstances, according to State officials. The district defended the use of waivers, claiming that waivers are a legal avenue to a diploma under State law, and students who qualify have every right to use them. District officials, however, acknowledged that the 27 percent districtwide waiver rate was “unacceptable” and said that, in the upcoming school term, students will be considered for a waiver only if they attend the district's extra study programs during Fall and Spring breaks. Further, waiver decisions will no longer be left to principals of individual schools, but will require review by top district administrators.

Indiana Governor, Mitch Daniels, will become President of Purdue University when his term as Governor expires in January.

# Iowa Update

## July 2012

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As we reported last month, Iowa's application for a waiver from key provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act was denied by the U.S. Department of Education. In early July, however, USED approved Iowa's request for a one-year freeze on achievement targets of NCLB. As noted in Education Week, the grace period gives Iowa legislators another session to pass a bill that will satisfy Federal officials with respect to tying teacher and principal evaluations, in part, to student performance.

# Louisiana Update

## July 2012

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Louisiana is in the process of greatly expanding the structure of course opportunities for its public school students. The new “course choice program,” which can be provided in a classroom or online, is primarily intended to provide options for students in low-performing schools in their core courses. It will also help students hoping to graduate early, to earn college credit while in high school, and to take specific career and technical classes. The new courses, which could be provided by colleges or private firms, are expected to be available for the 2013-14 school year. Proposals for courses are due to the State by October 12, with approvals planned in December, a course catalog published on January 1, and registration beginning March 7.

A State court has ruled that a Statewide school voucher plan espoused by Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal can begin in August. The voucher program, which uses State tax money to support students in private schools, was challenged on constitutional grounds by teacher unions and local school districts. While implementation of the program can begin this Fall, the lawsuit on the constitutionality of financing plans will continue; no date has been set for further hearings.

A survey of Louisiana school districts indicates that most schools lack the technology and infrastructure to conduct online testing as called for by the Common Core State Standards to be in place in the 2014-15 school year. Only five parishes (school districts) -- Ascension, City of Bogalusa, Red River, St. James, and FirstLine Schools of New Orleans -- meet minimum device readiness requirements for online testing. And only Ascension and St. James meet device and network readiness guidelines. According to the survey, Louisiana public schools have more than 197,000 computers, but only about 67,000 (39 percent) meet current technology specifications to administer online tests. It is estimated that 37,000 computers would have to be purchased to handle online testing demands.

# Maryland Update

## July 2012

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Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley has signed a new law that will require high school seniors to pass an assessment exam in government in order to graduate, starting with the Class of 2017. As reported in The Baltimore Sun, last year, the State dropped a similar test because of budget cuts and the focus on reading and math in the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Officials believe the new requirement will “help stem the marginalization” of social studies in Maryland. The law will also require middle school assessments in core subjects, including social studies, starting in the 2014-15 school year.

# Massachusetts Update

## July 2012

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According to Education Week, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick has signed into law a new teacher evaluation system. The new system places greater emphasis on teacher evaluations and performance during staffing decisions and calls for the establishment of a data collection system to assess the effectiveness of evaluations.

# Michigan Update

## July 2012

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As reported in The Seattle Times, the American Civil Liberties Union has sued the State of Michigan and the Highland Park school district for failing to educate their students adequately. The complaint is based on a 1993 State law that says public school students who are not proficient in reading (as determined by grade 4 and 7 tests) must be provided “special assistance” to bring them up to grade level within a year. Recent State data show that 65 percent of Highland Parks’ fourth-graders and 75 percent of seventh-graders were not proficient in reading. Michigan appears to be the only state that requires schools to intervene with extra help to bring students to grade level within a year.



# Minnesota Update

## July 2012

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According to the St. Paul Pioneer Press, as many as one-third of Minnesota's high school seniors failed the State mathematics test and would not have graduated without a waiver this year. Due to the lack of tracking by the State on how many waivers are issued, it is difficult to determine precisely their impact on the overall graduation rate. In 2009, the Minnesota Department of Education implemented the graduation waivers that require students who fail the test the first time to take the test two more times and receive remedial help. About 57 percent pass on the first try, but there are no data regarding how many of those who initially fail, succeed when they retake it. There are no alternative benchmarks for those who continue to fail the test. The State has convened a task force to discuss the balance between data reporting requirements and response burden for the districts and perhaps offer recommendations this Fall. Data collection and analysis procedures around the issue of graduation waivers vary widely across school districts.

# Mississippi Update

## July 2012

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The Mississippi State Board of Education has asked the legislature for \$2.34 billion for FY 2014. Last year, the State funding formula -- known as the Adequate Education Program -- received \$2.04 billion, which was \$251 million less than required by the State formula; this is typical as the legislature usually provides less funds than the State Board requests. The request includes \$18.7 million to make up for a shortfall last year, to fund teacher supplies which forced teachers last year to spend their own money to buy classroom items, according to the Associated Press. The State Board will also be voting on a \$2.5 million allocation to fund preschools which would be the first funding for a State-run prekindergarten program in the State. Such programs now are mostly Federally-funded.

The Pew Charitable Trusts notes that the Mississippi legislature has been seeking to replace a 2010 law that allowed persistently failing public schools to be converted to charter schools only if it is requested by a majority of parents. With Republicans in control of both executive and legislative branches, a new broader law passed the Senate but failed in the House. The key issue was whether charters should be allowed in all school districts, not just the worst-performing ones.

# Missouri Update

## July 2012

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Education Week's *Charters & Choice* blog reports that Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has signed a law allowing the expansion of charter schools in the State. As we noted last month, the measure will allow charters to open in any “unaccredited” (low-performing) district, in some “provisionally accredited” districts, and in “accredited” districts if sponsored by local school boards. Before the law, charters were allowed only in St. Louis and Kansas City. The new law also imposes on charter schools new State standards for academic performance, financial transparency, and reporting. It also allows the State to intervene if sponsors are not holding the schools to high standards.

# Montana Update

## July 2012

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In 2011, the Montana legislature noted a 2.43 percent inflationary increase in State funding for public schools, but political wrangling eliminated the increase. A coalition of schools and education groups -- the Montana Quality Education Coalition -- filed suit against the State calling for the reinstatement of \$4.6 million in State funds. In April the State and the MQEC reached an agreement under which the increase is restored and the inflationary adjustment will be included in the schools' new base budget.

# Nevada Update

## July 2012

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The U.S. Department of Education has awarded \$3.5 million to Nevada under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program to turn around the State's persistently lowest-achieving schools. Since the SIG program was redesigned in 2009, Nevada has received a total of \$30.4 million in SIG funds.

The Las Vegas Sun reports that the Clark County school district, despite its financially strapped situation, has chosen not to apply for the Federal Race to the Top program for individual school districts. The district, which currently has about \$20 million in Federal grants (including more than \$8 million in School Improvement Grants), has determined that the RTTT grant would be too restrictive and that there is too high a potential for the district to fail to meet program requirements. District officials also indicate that scaling up the RTTT innovations could require technology and other costs that the district cannot afford.

# New York Update

## July 2012

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According to the New York Times the New York City Council and Mayor Bloomberg agreed to a budget that saved after-school and child-care programs that were at risk of losing 47,000 spots. The budget saved services, avoided tax increases, and saved jobs. Not only were seats in local programs saved, but \$75 million more in total money has been budgeted for the City agencies that support after-school and child-care programs. The approved budget is about \$500 million more than the current year's budget. The Campaign for Children, an advocacy group of parents and community members actively protested the proposed cuts to out-of-school-time services. Had proposed cuts gone through this would have been the fifth consecutive year in which cuts had been made to after-school and child-care programs, and would have meant 90,000 fewer children had access to these programs since 2009.

The After-School Corporation has set forth a framework for high school extra learning time (ELT) and has pilot tested the approach with five New York City high schools during the 2011-12 school year. The core elements of TASC's framework are:

- Principal leadership is critical to ensuring the ELT program supports the schools mission and student needs.
- Significantly more learning time should be offered, including rigorous content and relevant experiences, such as apprenticeships and college preparation activities.
- Schools should partner with community organizations to ensure that the expanded day is staffed with teachers, mentors and others.
- The cost of the program should be sustainable and scalable.

# North Carolina Update

## July 2012

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Education Week notes that the North Carolina General Assembly has approved a measure that extends learning time for the State's public school students. Under the legislation, starting in 2013, local school districts will have the option of extending the school year from 180 to 185 days or having an annual total of 1,025 classroom hours.

Education Week also reports that a North Carolina Superior Court judge has ruled that a Statewide virtual school cannot open because it was not authorized by the State Board. The school, North Carolina Learns, was to operate under the aegis of the Cabarrus County school district. The judge questioned the County's capability and authority to approve a Statewide school. To be managed by K12 Inc., NC Learns was opposed by a lawsuit filed by the State and 90 North Carolina school districts who were concerned the school would draw students and funding from local districts.

Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog reports that Carnegie Corporation has committed \$500,000 to North Carolina's Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience scheduled to open in August. Intended to serve as a Statewide model for more STEM schools, the school will open with a class of 10 ninth-graders, eventually expanding to serve 500 students in five counties. The Carnegie grant will establish a partnership with North Carolina State University to:

- create a strategy to advance a biotech and agriscience network;
- provide a technology instructional coach and lead math teacher for the regional school;  
and
- develop case studies and videos of instructional strategies to inform the planned network of STEM schools.

# Ohio Update

## July 2012

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In late June, Ohio Governor John Kasich signed a new education and workforce measure, according to The Columbus Dispatch. Senate Bill 316 will:

- implement a third-grade reading guarantee;
- put in place, by next year, a tougher evaluation system for schools;
- require that schools provide tutoring and other interventions for struggling readers; and
- change the way teachers are evaluated.

The Dayton Daily News reports that Ohio has experienced record-high lottery sales over the past year. Under State law, lottery profits must go to support public schools. This year's payout of \$771 million exceeds the previous record of \$749 million (in 1997) and last year's total of \$638 million. The lottery profits amount to about six percent of the State's general education budget of \$7.6 billion and could help districts stave off the effects of declining local revenues and cost-cutting.



# Pennsylvania Update

## July 2012

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The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports that Pennsylvania Governor Corbett has signed a no-tax-hike budget package that includes a provision that would alter how teachers are evaluated. Although the Governor did not win support for provisions to open more privately run, taxpayer-funded charter schools, the decision is now in the hands of an appointed State board, rather than locally elected school boards. A program to expand tax credits for businesses that donate to private-school scholarships won approval. This will make \$100 million in tax credits available each year, up from \$75 million, while creating a related program with \$50 million in credits targeted at students whose local schools are among the state's 15 percent lowest-performing institutions.

According to The Patriot-News, the State would gain greater control of financially distressed public school districts under a bill that awaits Governor Corbett's signature. HB 1307 would allow the State Department of Education to appoint a chief recovery officer for each district, who would have broad control over the district's finances. Currently there are four districts -- Harrisburg, York, Duquesne, and Chester-Upland -- that would be subject to State control. Under the bill, the recovery officer would be tasked with developing a financial recovery plan for the district. If the recovery plan is not accepted by the school board, the State may petition the courts for the appointment of a receiver. Further, the bill allows the districts to tap into a no-interest State loan fund, to re-negotiate non-labor contracts, and to convert traditional schools to charter schools.

In early July, the Pennsylvania Department of Education closed the Frontier Virtual Charter High School amid allegations of mismanagement and failing to live up to its charter. The *Marketplace K-12* blog on EducationWeek.org notes, however, that the State has authorized four new virtual charter schools, all of which will be based in Philadelphia but which will serve students Statewide: ACT Cyber Charter School, Education Plus Academy Cyber Charter School, Esperanza Cyber Charter School, and Solomon World Civilization Cyber Charter School.

Pennsylvania virtual charter schools now enroll more than 32,000 students, for which the schools receive \$10,145 per student, an amount consistent with traditional schools.

Education Week notes that, in early June, Philadelphia's new school superintendent will be William Hite, Jr., currently superintendent of the Prince George's County (Maryland) school district in suburban Washington, D.C. The new superintendent's start date has yet to be determined because he must give Prince George's County four months notice.

# South Carolina Update

## July 2012

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Education Week notes that South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley has vetoed \$3.4 million intended to expand the State's special residential schools for gifted/talented and turnaround schools for troubled youth. The schools get no local funding. The Governor's vetoes are among 81 that cut a total of \$67.5 million from the legislature's spending plans. State lawmakers are considering overrides of some of the vetoes.

The South Carolina Senate has restored \$10 million -- vetoed by the Governor -- that will be used by districts to pay for a mandated teacher salary increase. A day earlier, the House also voted by wide majority to override the Governor's veto. If the veto had not been overridden, districts would have to increase property taxes to pay for the two percent required raise of teachers' salaries.

South Carolina schools superintendent Mick Zais proposed creating a new Statewide district for failing schools, arguing that the current options under State law for helping such schools have proven unsuccessful and ineffective. The creation of a "turnaround district" will remove the failing schools from the control of local administrators and school boards. There are seven such schools that have persistently performed in the bottom tier of State rankings for the past eight consecutive years. Currently, State law offers three options: (1) provide more training and monetary support; (2) replacing the school's principal; and/or (3) taking over the school.

According to Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog, the South Carolina legislature has adopted a budget plan that prohibits the State from using the so-called Next Generation Science Standards. Although the budget language is in effect for only one year, it sends a signal about the likely adoption of the new science standards in the State. State offices noted that South Carolina's existing science standards received an A- rating from the Fordham Institute.

*Curriculum Matters* also observes that South Carolina has decided to join the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium for the development of Common Core assessments. Heretofore, South Carolina had been participating in both consortia; now, the only states in both SMARTER and PARCC consortia are Alabama, Colorado, North Dakota, and Pennsylvania.

# South Dakota Update

## July 2012

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South Dakota was one of five states that, in late June, were granted a waiver from many provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The State's approved accountability plan includes student achievement, but also incorporates such measures as academic growth, attendance, teacher/principal effectiveness, school climate, graduation rates and college/career readiness. The plan also tracks the performance of subgroups like low-income students and American Indians. The plan is slated to be phased in between now and the 2014-15 school year. (For more details, see the Waiver Special Report)

As reported in Education Week, South Dakota's merit pay plan for teachers, put forth by Republican Governor Dennis Daugaard, would give bonuses to high-performing teachers, phase out tenure, and recruit candidates for critical teaching jobs. Teacher unions and the Democratic minority in the legislature have opposed the plan, arguing that it will hurt the quality of education and ignores the need to increase general State aid to schools. The opposition has gathered enough petition signatures to refer the measure to a public vote in the November election. Implementation of the plan will be suspended pending the results of the vote.

# Tennessee Update

## July 2012

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Education Week reports that the Tennessee State lottery raised a record \$323 million for the State's education programs. The total is ten percent higher than the year before. Lottery funds have been used to award more than 600,000 scholarships to in-State educational institutions since 2004.

# Texas Update

## July 2012

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The New York Times reports that Texas school districts have, for the fourth consecutive year, seen rising graduation rates; the Statewide average has climbed steadily since 2007. These Statewide gains play out across all ethnic groups; Hispanic and black populations each beat the Statewide average increase by about two percent. As districts release their 2011 rates, the positive trend appears to be continuing. Austin Independent School district reports that its numbers have risen by six percentage points since 2008. Houston and Dallas, which have the highest enrollments, say they have improved their rates by 12 and 14 points, respectively, since 2007.

The Texas Tribune reports that, due to anticipated 2014 changes to the GED, the Texas Education Agency is exploring the costs for a new State-based high school equivalency exam. Changes include implementing a two-tiered scoring system: (1) performance levels based on traditional high school equivalence; and (2) a second level based on college and career readiness. Computer administration and online scoring will increase the costs. One of the concerns with for-profit organizations joining the development is that there is a financial incentive for them to attract students to take the equivalency exam instead of completing high school courses. Texas is second to California in the number of adults eligible to take GED tests and this challenges the system to ensure that students stay in school and complete their traditional K-12 education. California and New York have similar concerns and are also investigating possible moves to a state-based equivalency exam. The State Board of Education would have to approve any contracts after an official bidding process, but in the meantime, the State has maintained its contract with GED Testing Services.

As reported in the Huffington Post, the Texas Republican Party has expressed regret that its platform (adopted June 9<sup>th</sup>) includes language opposing Higher Order Thinking Skills (values clarification). This has been clarified, although, since the platform was approved, the platform

cannot be corrected until the 2014 State convention. A spokesman for the Party said that the “critical thinking skills” language should not have been included in the document; however, the platform maintains its opposition to mandatory pre-school and kindergarten.



# Virginia Update

## July 2012

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Virginia is beginning implementing the State's two-year waiver from some provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, according to the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#). Under the waiver, Virginia must establish accountability plans that set new targets for:

- raising student achievement;
- advancing teacher effectiveness; and
- improving the performance of low-achieving schools.

State officials say the most important initial project is developing methods for tracking student progress. The biggest changes for non-educators will be new vocabulary and terms. *Priority schools, focus schools, annual measureable objectives, and proficiency* will become prevalent as these replace terms like Adequate Yearly Progress, Needs Improvement, and School Choice. The first step in this process is operationally defining the new terms, so they clearly represent the concepts they embody. Annual measureable objectives are in development now. The State is also determining which schools will receive mandatory additional support. Under the waiver, the State agreed to designate 15 percent of its lowest-performing Title 1 schools for additional support. Every year, the bottom five percent (36 schools) will be identified as “priority schools.” The next ten percent (72 schools) will be called “focus schools.” Although school choice is gone, students currently using this option will not be asked to return to their old, low-performing schools. They can remain at the school until they have finished the highest grade level there. In actuality, few students used the school choice option—1,472 of 67,266 in 2010-11, the latest year for which data are available -- and those who needed it the most, such as Petersburg, didn't have higher performing schools to which students could transfer. More details on the Virginia waiver is included in the accompanying Special Report on state waivers.

# Washington Update

## July 2012

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According to the *Charters & Choice* blog on Education Week (July 5<sup>th</sup>), Microsoft cofounders Paul Allen and Bill Gates are contributing more than \$1 million to a campaign which would include a measure calling for the creation of charter schools in Washington State on the November ballot -- an approach that has been rejected on ballot measures three times in the past. The Washington Education Association has consistently opposed charter school legislation, which helps make Washington one of nine states that does not allow charter schools. Supporters of the ballot measure include Netflix CEO Reed Hastings, a past president of the California State Board of Education, and other individuals associated with high-tech ventures. According to the blog, of the \$2.3 million collected for the campaign thus far, less than \$60,000 has been spent.

See also Special Report on Washington's waiver approval.

# Wisconsin Update

## July 2012

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As reported in Education Week, new more rigorous standards have resulted in a sharp drop in the number of students achieving passing scores on the Washington State assessment. During the past school year, only 36 percent of students were rated proficient or advanced in reading -- down from 82 percent the year before. In math, the passing percentage fell from 78 percent to 48 percent this year. The new standards, as well as new tests to replace the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations, represent changes that were part of the State's waiver from some provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (see Special Report on waiver approvals). New school report cards, to be released in the Fall, will include individual school 0-to-100 ratings based on student achievement, growth, graduation rates, and closing of achievement gaps.

# Wyoming Update

## July 2012

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According to the Star-Tribune, Wyoming has asked the U.S. Department of Education for a waiver from some provisions of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Specifically, the State wants to freeze the State's language arts and math standards, established by NCLB, at 2011 levels, rather than allow them to increase for the upcoming school year. The waiver would free the State from NCLB procedures for setting annual measurable objectives and allow it to develop new English and math standards. Wyoming's waiver request is similar to the joint request filed by Maine and New Hampshire in February. In 2013-14, the State plans to begin implementation of Wyoming Accountability in Education Act, approved by the State legislature this Spring.

Beginning in the upcoming school year, nine Title I schools in Wyoming's Natrona County will participate in "The Casper Project," a program that teaches families to teach their children to succeed. Based on Judy Zerafa's "Seven Keys to Success Program," the Casper Project will be evaluated by researchers from the University of Wyoming. UW will track how the program affects student behavior from grade to grade over five years and perhaps suggest the relationship to academic achievement.