

# Education TURNKEY Electronic Distribution, Inc.

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 21, 2013  
**TO:** TechMIS Subscribers  
**FROM:** Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle  
**SUBJ:** Sequestration Update; Common Core Standards and Assessments Survey Findings; State Waiver Survey; and State Profile Updates

This TechMIS report includes another update on sequestration and FY 2013 budget developments, including Secretary Duncan's comments during the Council of the Great City Schools and Council of Chief State School Officers annual legislative conferences in mid-March. It appears that the sequestration cuts will likely take hold, at least in the short term. USED will likely allow states to provide blanket waivers for districts to carry over much of their unspent Title I funds beyond the 15 percent limit to next year, thereby reducing the amount of purchases in Title I, beginning in April through September 30<sup>th</sup>. However, overall Title I purchases will still increase more than over the last three months.

The Washington Update includes the following:

- **Page 1**  
A new report by the Center on Education Policy identifies why states applied for waivers and states' perception about what conditions will make the transition to ESEA reauthorization more smooth or difficult. Discussions with chiefs and seasoned education policy observers indicate that the transition will be challenging. A second round of state waiver guidance will be available shortly to reduce problems created by sequestration (e.g., in school improvement programs).
- **Page 3**  
Washington insiders expect that more states are likely to drop out of Common Core Assessment consortia this year, following Utah and Alabama (tentative), a development about which Secretary Duncan said he "would not lose any sleep."

- **Page 4**  
A survey conducted in October 2012 finds teachers feel “moderately well prepared” to teach most students Common Core standards, but less ready to teach them to English language learners and students with disabilities.
- **Page 5**  
The National Center for Education Statistics has released a follow-on report recommending best practices to ensure testing integrity with planned use of computer-based testing in 2014-15 as part of Common Core assessments. Recently, a key member of the team of experts and practitioners emphasized that adoption/implementation will depend on each state.
- **Page 7**  
Three different recent surveys present findings regarding the potential use of digital devices in public schools, but the perception of the opportunities, as well as challenges, vary among different types of education staff ranging from technology advocates (e.g., ITO’s) to math and science teachers.
- **Page 8**  
Key U.S. Senators have introduced legislation to reauthorize the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program with a \$1.2 billion authorization level. In the meantime, USED is planning to provide new guidance in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document on the existing program, most likely encouraging districts to use such funds to extend learning time and related matters.
- **Page 9**  
The National Governors Association Panel on Teachers and School Leadership was recently urged to use online, technology-delivered services to increase the quality of teaching and school leadership.
- **Page 10**  
New regulations will require school districts to get written consent form parents only one time in order to receive Medicaid funds to serve eligible students with disabilities for “related services,” which will free up local and IDEA to purchase “instructional” materials and services.
- **Page 11**  
The Grad Nation Report finds graduation rates increased -- 78.2 percent in 2010 up from 71.7 percent in 2001.
- **Page 11**  
A number of miscellaneous items include:
  - a) The Center on Education Policy released findings comparing traditional schools

to charter schools regarding types of civic education programs used and found only a few differences.

- b) According to Education Week, separate studies from Columbia and Harvard Universities conclude that the way colleges use standardized placement tests can misidentify students and that secondary schools/universities should develop more comprehensive profiles of students' strengths and weaknesses when projecting college performance levels.
- c) A Pew Research Center survey of middle and high school teachers of Advanced Placement and related high-level programs have found that the Internet has had a major impact on their ability to access content and resources.
- d) The College Board has released data showing that approximately 25 percent of the Class of 2012 passed at least one Advanced Placement exam, continuing a steady increase over the last three years; about 12 percent of the class of 2002 did so.
- e) Elementary school teachers and principals feel technology competence among peers is more important than do high school teachers and principals.
- f) Education Week highlights an MDR report which found educators seek, as potential business partners, firms with more effective and engaging materials and have staff which have good communications and listening skills.
- g) University of Missouri research scientists have identified 69 studies of 33 different character education programs that had scientific evidence which supports the effectiveness of character education programs in enhancing academic goals of schools.

The state profile updates address a range of issues including state funding/budgets, Common Core State Standards, charter schools, voucher programs, and early childhood education.

**Sequestration Update:  
Duncan to Fight Cuts, But a Possible Blanket Title I Carryover Waiver  
USED Fallback Position Could Hurt Traditional End-of-Year Sales,  
Which Appears Likely After Further Policy Developments Occur,  
Including the Passage of the Continuing Resolution (CR)**

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

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*March 21, 2013*

During the Council of the Great City Schools Annual Legislative Conference (March 9-12), Secretary Duncan pleaded with his former counterpart district superintendents to help him fight the sequestration cuts and caps. Other USED officials added that, as a fallback, USED is discussing possible “waivers” to soften the blow by increasing the allowable 15% carryover limitation, which could reduce Title I and other traditional high spending on products and services in certain states significantly before the end of the fiscal year.

Secretary Duncan has been criticized by Republican leaders, for using “scare tactics” to generate public opposition to the GOP’s hard line sequestration positions. Even so, he has asked big city district superintendents, board members, and Federal program coordinators to give him “objective” ammunition (e.g., how many and when teachers and other staff have received job termination notices and what reform initiatives have been cancelled, etc.) to help him generate even more “outside pressure” to change the current sequestration mandates. “Let us know” so we can change GOP political positions. He noted that he was too optimistic over a year ago, and “didn’t think sequestration would occur.” He emphasized the need for his former counterparts to “not be quiet”; active efforts will be necessary to turn around the sequestration hardliners. Moreover, educators need to “educate the public” about the effects of sequestration already occurring in programs such as Impact Aid.

On Monday, Assistant Secretary Deb Delisle, whose office is responsible for Title I and School Improvement Grants, fielded questions on various topics directed to Secretary Duncan during the legislative meeting a day earlier. She was asked how the sequestration across-the-board cuts will affect district funding in the immediate future. According to Education Week’s District Dossier blog, who covered the session, “Some urban leaders raised concerns about how sequestration might impact their ability to ‘carry over’ Title I and other federal funds from the current fiscal

year to the next fiscal year, and if the Education Department would be able to loosen its rules on that issue as long as sequestration is in effect. Delisle said that department officials are discussing how they might handle requests for such carry-overs.”

In an earlier session, attendees were reminded that Secretary Duncan had provided districts with a waiver to carryover up to 25 percent of Title I and School Improvement Grant funding during the implementation of the ARRA stimulus funding a couple of years ago partially because USED was over a year late in allocating SIG funds and did not feel districts should lose Title I ARRA Federal funds over the 15 percent limitation that were not spent. The law states that districts can not carry over more than 15 percent of Title I funds from one year to the next more than once every three years. As we reported in February, if the Secretary were to use his waiver authority now to provide such a “blanket waiver” to states and districts, many districts, which last year carried over more than the 15 percent Title I limitation, would be allowed to carry over all such unobligated funds from this year to next year. Our estimate of district Title I funds being withheld in district-level Title I reserves is about \$3 billion, most of which -- without a waiver -- would likely be obligated/spent, before the end of each state’s fiscal year, on products and services. If a blanket waiver would be allowed and taken advantage of by districts, this amount would significantly be reduced.

For its conference attendees, the Council also prepared a detailed analysis of the amount of FY 2013 Title I fund which would be received by member districts for next school year, based on the most current Census data on poverty rates, taking into account the current 5.1 percent sequestration estimated cuts. Unlike the USED-published impact of sequestration on the 100 largest districts, the Council’s estimated impact of sequester cuts on next year’s allocation also takes into account the hold harmless provisions which protect member districts with 30 percent or more poverty enrollment from receiving a subsequent year cut of more than five percent. The hold harmless percent protection is ten percent for districts between 15 percent and 30 percent poverty and down to 15 percent for those with poverty enrollments of 15 percent or less. A comparison in the attached Council’s allocation estimates the member districts’ Title I allocation with and without the projected 5.1 percent cuts (see attachment). Readers are cautioned that these current estimates could change as a result of the negotiated Continuing Resolution (March 27<sup>th</sup>) for the FY 2013 budget through September 30<sup>th</sup> and/or a full-fledged FY 2013 budget which could be negotiated between the White House and Congress, as noted in our March 11<sup>th</sup> TechMIS Sequestration Update.

Several days after Secretary Duncan’s speech during CGCS’s annual conference, further developments unfolded during the Council of Chief State School Officers March 18-19 legislative conference which have important implications for most TechMIS subscribers. Joel Packer, Executive Director of the Committee for Education Funding reiterated that the March 1<sup>st</sup> sequester as far as the Department of Education is concerned, would likely remain intact in the 2013 Continuing Resolution (CR) which could be passed by March 22<sup>nd</sup>, but which must be passed by March 27<sup>th</sup>. The picture for 2014 could be even worse unless the House and Senate come up with a negotiated settlement for the upcoming debt ceiling debate or FY 2014 Budget Resolution compromise. Education will have to live with the 5.1 percent across-the-board (or

about \$2.35 billion) cut. The “cap” on discretionary Federal budget components, which make up slightly less than 20 percent of the overall total budget, has taken the brunt of the cuts nationwide. Some of the highlights and other critical points in Packer’s presentation included:

- An attempt by Senator Harkin, et. al., to restore about \$233 million in the FY 2013 CR for Title I and IDEA was defeated.
- The FY 2014 House budget proposal by Congressman Ryan would double the 2013 sequester cuts for FY 2014, while the Senate version by Chairwoman Murray would raise revenue but do away with the sequestration; the two positions remain far apart.
- The President’s FY 2014 budget is slated to be submitted on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- The FY 2013 CR will likely not have any impact on maintenance of effort, comparability, supplement not supplant, and other fiscal requirements, as far as districts are concerned.
- One bit of good news: there is a projected surplus in the Pell grant program of about \$9 billion, which next year would not be exempt from the sequester cuts. The surplus could possibly be used as a cushion for K-12 programs, if sequestration continues next year.

A major question on the minds of most state leaders regarding the sequester was posed by State Superintendent Tom Luna of Idaho who wanted to know whether states will be given waivers to carry over funds from this year to next year, especially in programs like Title I. He noted that some districts had only recently finished spending their FY 2011 appropriations since they had previously been given carryover waivers. Moreover, most were still spending some FY 2012 Title I funds while several districts have yet to begin spending any of their FY 2013 allocations, which suggests a large amount of Title I funds have yet to be obligated in Idaho. Two state department federal liaison individuals indicated that they have had a telephone conference call with USED officials who told them they would be provided an opportunity to get specific waivers or would be given blanket waivers to carry over (as USED did last year) more than 15 percent of Title I funds from this year to next year in spite of the 15 percent limitation. The rationale was that the waivers provided last year related primarily to Federal stimulus ARRA funding, which was a “one shot” deal, and that the three-year timeframe would begin with this year.

Another major concern among state leaders related to the impact of sequesters on the SEA 4% set-aside for school improvement which, over the last few years, has been between \$500 and \$550 million. As noted earlier, for many districts, especially large urban districts, the full sequester cut would be reduced by “hold harmless provisions,” especially among districts with more than 15 percent poverty enrollment. As a result, the amount of funds which could be withheld from these districts to constitute the 4% SEA set-aside would be reduced significantly such that, in some states, the 4% set-aside for school improvement could even be reduced to zero. In these states, the total state funds for school improvement, which could be used for Tier 1 and Tier 2 or Priority Schools under the waivers, would be reduced significantly; and the SIG (g) funding under the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program would be the only funding these states would be able to provide to SIG schools. This would also tend to reduce the amount of funds for Tier 3 schools in states which use the 4% to fund Tier 3 schools. A CCSSO spokesperson did note that new Federal guidance would be published shortly regarding School

Improvement Grants (SIGg) and state waivers which are affected by sequestration. Most of the state leaders and presenters acknowledged that the uncertainty surrounding sequestration in FY 2013 and 2014 budgets is likely to have a larger impact on funding than the actual amount of funding cuts and that, in the end, sequestration will actually cost more than it will save.

*doesn't include - h.h. - 40% set aside*

### Estimated Title I Allocations – FY 2013

The table below compares the Title I allocations that each Great City School district received in FY 2012 (school year 2012-13) with preliminary estimates of the amount the district could potentially receive in FY 2013, both with and without a sequester reduction. The amount of a district's loss in Title I funding may be limited by Title I's hold-harmless provisions, which are established according to the district's percentage of Census poverty children. (Please note: The entry for each district continues on the opposite page; all funding numbers are preliminary estimates only; they do not include state set-asides and do not represent final allocations by the U.S. Department of Education.)

*OSGP*

CGCS District	2011 Percent of Poverty	Final FY 2012 Title I Grant	Estimated FY 2013 Title I (No Sequester)	Change from FY 2012 to FY 2013	
				Funding	Percentage
Albuquerque	24.62%	32,605,749	34,309,605	1,703,856	5.2%
Anchorage	11.43%	12,176,099	14,592,331	2,416,232	19.8%
Atlanta	39.14%	36,741,529	34,935,749	-1,805,779	-4.9%
Austin	28.30%	31,797,731	31,458,967	-338,764	-1.1%
Baltimore	34.25%	53,777,462	57,288,598	3,511,136	6.5%
Birmingham	44.02%	16,688,165	15,888,835	-799,329	-4.8%
Boston	32.45%	41,402,262	43,991,225	2,588,963	6.3%
Bridgeport	29.66%	11,467,829	12,654,318	1,186,489	10.3%
Broward County	18.77%	65,258,413	63,857,388	-1,401,026	-2.1%
Buffalo	38.96%	31,657,049	30,074,197	-1,582,852	-5.0%
Caddo Parish	29.75%	19,904,337	19,151,488	-752,849	-3.8%
Charleston	22.68%	15,152,277	13,776,631	-1,375,646	-9.1%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	21.82%	38,736,943	43,158,045	4,421,102	11.4%
Chicago	33.20%	286,651,611	281,988,705	-4,662,906	-1.6%
Cincinnati	38.89%	32,154,517	30,603,666	-1,550,850	-4.8%
Clark County	21.69%	84,780,705	90,341,522	5,560,817	6.6%
Cleveland	47.18%	60,603,049	57,572,897	-3,030,152	-5.0%
Columbus	39.73%	52,166,604	49,549,348	-2,617,256	-5.0%
Dallas	36.90%	93,524,243	89,507,876	-4,016,367	-4.3%
Dayton	43.75%	15,942,192	16,616,718	674,526	4.2%
Denver	24.51%	33,480,582	30,124,041	-3,356,541	-10.0%
Des Moines	25.94%	9,547,438	12,683,904	3,136,466	32.9%
Detroit	51.01%	162,894,609	154,749,878	-8,144,730	-5.0%
District of Columbia	30.19%	46,617,802	44,613,929	-2,003,873	-4.3%
Duval County	23.55%	37,238,400	37,803,787	565,386	1.5%
East Baton Rouge	30.98%	24,216,457	27,001,234	2,784,778	11.5%
Fort Worth	35.31%	39,673,548	37,689,871	-1,983,677	-5.0%
Fresno	40.76%	45,708,936	43,423,489	-2,285,447	-5.0%
Guilford County (NC)	21.78%	23,517,930	21,185,356	-2,332,574	-9.9%
Hillsborough County (FL)	21.19%	54,411,951	52,823,495	-1,588,456	-2.9%



Factor  
 FY 2013 level  
 Change in poverty  
 Fiscal 5-7-77 act  
 Title 1 "hold harmless" provisions

HH  
 Poverty is 30% - 95% A A  
 15-13 - 90% h h  
 "below 15% - 85% h h

USED

some to be help  
 cities

Estimated FY 2013 Title I (With Sequester)	Impact of Sequester on FY 2013 Amount	Change from FY 2012 to FY 2013 with Sequester		CGCS District
		Funding	Percentage	
30,728,201	-3,581,404	-1,877,548	-5.8%	Albuquerque
13,761,033	-831,298	1,584,934	13.0%	Anchorage
34,935,749	0	-1,805,779	-4.9%	Atlanta
28,732,094	-2,726,873	-3,065,637	-9.6%	Austin
52,567,244	-4,721,354	-1,210,218	-2.3%	Baltimore
15,818,658	-70,178	-869,507	-5.2%	Birmingham
40,801,746	-3,189,479	-600,516	-1.5%	Boston
11,591,124	-1,063,194	123,295	1.1%	Bridgeport
58,854,386	-5,003,001	-6,404,027	-9.8%	Broward County
30,074,197	0	-1,582,852	-5.0%	Buffalo
18,909,120	-242,368	-995,217	-5.0%	Caddo Parish
13,637,049	-139,582	-1,515,228	-10.0%	Charleston
38,984,922	-4,173,122	247,979	0.6%	Charlotte-Mecklenburg
272,319,031	-9,669,675	-14,332,581	-5.0%	Chicago
30,546,791	-56,876	-1,607,726	-5.0%	Cincinnati
82,037,676	-8,303,847	-2,743,029	-3.2%	Clark County
57,572,897	0	-3,030,152	-5.0%	Cleveland
49,549,348	0	-2,617,256	-5.0%	Columbus
88,848,497	-659,379	-4,675,746	-5.0%	Dallas
15,145,082	-1,471,636	-797,110	-5.0%	Dayton
30,124,041	0	-3,356,541	-10.0%	Denver
11,545,708	-1,138,196	1,998,270	20.9%	Des Moines
154,749,878	0	-8,144,730	-5.0%	Detroit
44,080,561	-533,368	-2,537,241	-5.4%	District of Columbia
34,463,900	-3,339,886	-2,774,500	-7.5%	Duval County
24,465,000	-2,536,234	248,543	1.0%	East Baton Rouge
37,689,871	0	-1,983,677	-5.0%	Fort Worth
43,423,489	0	-2,285,447	-5.0%	Fresno
21,166,137	-19,219	-2,351,793	-10.0%	Guilford County (NC)
49,382,194	-3,441,301	-5,029,757	-9.2%	Hillsborough County (FL)

USED

attempt to ↑ 25% the 15% limitation  
on carry-over

CGCS District	2011 Percent of Poverty	Final FY 2012 Title I Grant	Estimated FY 2013 Title I (No Sequester)	Change from FY 2012 to FY 2013	
				Funding	Percentage
Houston	35.99%	109,175,154	104,833,965	-4,341,189	-4.0%
Indianapolis	44.63%	34,691,811	32,915,737	-1,776,074	-5.1%
Jackson	39.59%	16,368,578	15,550,318	-818,260	-5.0%
Jefferson County (KY)	23.68%	36,415,914	39,278,946	2,863,032	7.9%
Kansas City (MO)	39.29%	15,919,321	15,123,355	-795,966	-5.0%
Little Rock	23.07%	9,451,025	8,505,922	-945,102	-10.0%
Long Beach	26.07%	33,518,659	30,166,793	-3,351,866	-10.0%
Los Angeles	29.32%	331,883,561	328,821,043	-3,062,518	-0.9%
Memphis	35.07%	57,690,289	54,805,774	-2,884,514	-5.0%
Miami-Dade County	27.90%	120,950,443	134,650,943	13,700,500	11.3%
Milwaukee	37.81%	83,624,269	79,423,867	-4,200,402	-5.0%
Minneapolis	29.35%	25,929,613	24,632,162	-1,297,451	-5.0%
Nashville	27.62%	32,175,551	30,545,423	-1,630,129	-5.1%
New Orleans	40.19%	40,130,473	38,418,071	-1,712,402	-4.3%
New York City	29.82%	770,221,600	736,801,311	-33,420,289	-4.3%
Newark	33.34%	33,064,097	31,532,019	-1,532,078	-4.6%
Norfolk	27.71%	15,827,602	14,244,842	-1,582,760	-10.0%
Oakland	26.29%	20,002,956	18,002,029	-2,000,927	-10.0%
Oklahoma City	31.65%	22,128,824	21,028,551	-1,100,273	-5.0%
Omaha	21.87%	25,362,755	23,444,271	-1,918,484	-7.6%
Orange County (FL)	24.09%	49,020,959	55,317,950	6,296,991	12.8%
Palm Beach County (FL)	21.95%	48,733,814	50,756,770	2,022,955	4.2%
Philadelphia	37.92%	187,354,850	185,345,359	-2,009,491	-1.1%
Pittsburgh	29.85%	19,861,231	18,868,170	-993,062	-5.0%
Portland	19.80%	14,731,362	14,450,302	-281,060	-1.9%
Providence	37.85%	22,442,655	21,335,685	-1,106,969	-4.9%
Richmond	33.12%	18,696,822	17,761,981	-934,841	-5.0%
Rochester (NY)	46.10%	26,169,564	26,898,998	729,434	2.8%
Sacramento	30.88%	21,925,581	20,829,302	-1,096,279	-5.0%
San Diego	22.16%	40,934,853	38,058,990	-2,875,863	-7.0%
San Francisco	16.93%	12,491,954	14,071,607	1,579,653	12.6%
Santa Ana	27.66%	17,562,051	17,522,457	-39,595	-0.2%
Seattle	13.34%	11,197,280	10,402,990	-794,291	-7.1%
St. Louis	35.58%	33,621,405	31,940,335	-1,681,070	-5.0%
St. Paul	29.50%	25,485,025	24,210,774	-1,274,251	-5.0%
Toledo	39.27%	25,372,748	24,170,521	-1,202,227	-4.7%
Wichita	24.59%	21,466,413	21,363,479	-102,934	-0.5%
<b>CGCS</b>		<b>3,942,097,484</b>	<b>3,869,448,106</b>	<b>-72,649,378</b>	

★ See 'discretion in CR: GOP off hook - Sec cut your program - we didn't. Congress gets an mt. Obama already turned down earlier

Estimated FY 2013 Title I (With Sequester)	Impact of Sequester on FY 2013 Amount	Change from FY 2012 to FY 2013 with Sequester		CGCS District
		Funding	Percentage	
103,713,063	-1,120,902	-5,462,091	-5.0%	Houston
32,915,737	0	-1,776,074	-5.1%	Indianapolis
15,449,789	-100,529	-918,789	-5.6%	Jackson
35,392,169	-3,886,777	-1,023,745	-2.8%	Jefferson County (KY)
15,123,355	0	-795,966	-5.0%	Kansas City (MO)
8,505,922	0	-945,102	-10.0%	Little Rock
30,166,793	0	-3,351,866	-10.0%	Long Beach
315,289,383	-13,531,660	-16,594,178	-5.0%	Los Angeles
54,805,774	0	-2,884,514	-5.0%	Memphis
122,260,851	-12,390,092	1,310,408	1.1%	Miami-Dade County
79,093,550	-330,317	-4,530,719	-5.4%	Milwaukee
24,625,423	-6,738	-1,304,190	-5.0%	Minneapolis
28,958,077	-1,587,345	-3,217,474	-10.0%	Nashville
38,123,949	-294,121	-2,006,524	-5.0%	New Orleans
721,102,803	-15,698,508	-49,118,797	-6.4%	New York City
31,357,501	-174,518	-1,706,597	-5.2%	Newark
14,244,842	0	-1,582,760	-10.0%	Norfolk
18,002,029	0	-2,000,927	-10.0%	Oakland
20,796,424	-232,127	-1,332,400	-6.0%	Oklahoma City
22,826,479	-617,791	-2,536,275	-10.0%	Omaha
50,208,294	-5,109,656	1,187,334	2.4%	Orange County (FL)
46,096,855	-4,659,915	-2,636,960	-5.4%	Palm Beach County (FL)
176,916,294	-8,429,065	-10,438,556	-5.6%	Philadelphia
18,786,814	-81,356	-1,074,417	-5.4%	Pittsburgh
13,479,892	-970,409	-1,251,469	-8.5%	Portland
21,320,522	-15,163	-1,122,133	-5.0%	Providence
17,761,981	0	-934,841	-5.0%	Richmond
25,176,835	-1,722,163	-992,729	-3.8%	Rochester (NY)
20,829,302	0	-1,096,279	-5.0%	Sacramento
36,842,119	-1,216,871	-4,092,734	-10.0%	San Diego
12,588,186	-1,483,421	96,232	0.8%	San Francisco
15,912,448	-1,610,009	-1,649,604	-9.4%	Santa Ana
9,558,601	-844,389	-1,638,679	-14.6%	Seattle
31,940,335	0	-1,681,070	-5.0%	St. Louis
24,204,253	-6,521	-1,280,772	-5.0%	St. Paul
24,104,111	-66,410	-1,268,637	-5.0%	Toledo
19,607,558	-1,755,921	-1,858,855	-8.7%	Wichita
<b>3,734,593,941</b>	<b>-134,854,165</b>	<b>-207,503,543</b>		<b>CGCS</b>

# ***Washington Update***

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## **New Center on Education Policy Report Identifies Reasons Why States Applied for Waivers and State Perceptions About What Conditions Will Make the Transition to ESEA Reauthorization More Smooth or Difficult**

A new Center on Education Policy (CEP) survey identifies reasons why 32 states with approved waivers, and six with waivers pending, sought waivers over the last 18 months and what states believe must be included in the ESEA reauthorization to make the transition from waivers run smoothly.

Almost all states agreed that NCLB goals were unrealistic and mandated actions with unproven consequences for schools in improvement that did not increase student achievement generally. Most states anticipated that the flexibilities in their waiver applications would satisfy their concerns about NCLB accountability while providing more local control. Twenty-seven states also felt that no ESEA reauthorization was going to happen in the near future. As CEP notes, a large majority of states expect that waiver requirements will improve student learning, particularly college- and career-ready standards and growth-based teacher/principal evaluations. A lesser number agreed that differentiated accountability systems could increase learning at least to some extent, but only 13 states felt this would actually occur.

CEP also reports that waivers “have shaped

state policies and accelerated some reforms.” Thirty-three states reported having already adopted policies for college- and career-ready standards and the other five intended to do so, regardless of whether they have received a waiver. While all of the state respondents have put in place or intended to implement teacher and principal evaluations and support systems that included student growth components, among other elements, about a quarter of the states amended their principal and teacher evaluation plans as a result of the waiver which helped shape policies in this area. It should be noted that, more than two years ago, as a result of an initiative by the CCSSO, most states bought into a set of “principles” which Secretary Duncan and his staff took into consideration when formulating the state Flexibility waiver process. Somewhat surprising, 29 states indicated that their waiver application required no changes in state law or regulations; of the remaining nine states, three have made all necessary changes, and in six states such changes in legislation are pending. At least one state -- Iowa -- had its waiver request denied because of a waiver provision that conflicted with a state law regarding teacher evaluations.

According to CEP, states believe that the waiver provision related to teacher and principal evaluations which takes into account student growth as well as other measures, will cost more than under NCLB requirements. Somewhat surprisingly, only nine states felt that the new system for assessments, development, and

implementation, which are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and measure growth, would cost more. Eleven states felt the cost would be about the same as under NCLB, but 13 states felt it is too soon to tell.

Having tracked the implementation, under NCLB, of the SES/school choice 20% set-asides, CEP also surveyed states on this waiver issue, finding that “nearly all of the states surveyed sought relief from the NCLB requirement to reserve funds for school choice and tutoring. Their reasons for doing so included a desire to give districts more flexibility in the use of funds and a belief that these requirements were not effective in raising student achievement.” CEP notes that, in their waiver applications, only two of the 38 states did not eliminate the 20 percent SES/choice set-aside requirement. The most common reason states gave for dropping the set-aside were:

- allowing districts additional funding flexibility to conduct school improvement activities (30 states); and
- failure of SES/choice to effectively raise student achievement (22 states).

Interestingly, states also reported one of the major reasons for going with waivers was that they were significantly better for identifying schools in need of improvement than were requirements under NCLB. On the other hand, when asked the extent to which challenges arose in establishing interventions or actions that states would follow when a school is designated as a Priority or Focus School, ten states felt the instruction selection was “Very challenging,” while 25 felt they were “Somewhat challenging.” This finding most

likely explains why state action in developing and implementing interventions or providing guidance to districts has taken much longer than initially expected.

The CEP survey also asked state officials about the development/implementation of principal and teacher evaluation systems. As expected, principals in virtually all states indicated collaboration with principal and teacher unions, while 30 states collaborated with non-profit organizations; only 12 states reported collaborating with for-profit research organizations in the development of evaluations, and only seven during their implementation.

CEP also asked the question which we raised two years ago: “What will happen to programs and policies in state waiver plans if ESEA is reauthorized?” Most states were “apprehensive about the confusion the transition to amended ESEA requirements would cause, the costs and disruption involved in implementing yet another accountability system, and the loss of credibility that might ensue among educators, parents, and other stakeholders.” Of the 35 states that responded to an open-ended question, 19 states expressed general concern. Two respondents “expressed explicit concern that a new accountability system might negate the unified state and federal system that were able to attain under the NCLB waiver.” Fifteen states felt the impact would depend on the policy details of the reauthorization; if the reauthorization provides states with the flexibility to continue waiver provisions, the impact would be positive.

Among the states interviewed by CEP staff, Texas officials said that it would request a waiver under the Secretary’s broad waiver

authority because Texas is an Ed Flex state. The goal of their alternative waiver plan is to create a streamlined, understandable accountability system that would eliminate the dual Federal and State systems currently in place; however, if USED denies its request, Chief Deputy Commissioner of the TEA Lizette Gonzalez-Reynolds said the State would continue to work with Congress to influence ESEA reauthorization. On February 28<sup>th</sup> Texas did submit its waiver application, along with Pennsylvania and Wyoming.

### **Survey Finds More States Are Likely to Drop Out of Common Core Assessment Consortia During This Year**

A recent survey of Washington insiders, a small group of current and former education policymakers, influencers and observers, conducted by White Board Advisors, found that almost 90 percent believe more states will drop out of the PARCC and SBAC Common Core assessment consortia during this year, following withdrawals by Alabama and Utah. In addition to inadequate technology infrastructure to administer computer-based testing, other reasons for dropouts given by insiders include:

- lack of Federal or state funding for conducting assessments and professional development;
- lack of local implementation support and opposition from some state legislatures; and
- desire of some states to chart their own accountability destiny in combination with emergence of the “not invented factor.”

As an indication of lack of local support, the most recent Met Life Survey of the American Teacher reported that nine out of ten teachers said they already have academic skills and abilities to implement the Common Core State Standards, but only about 20 percent of teachers and principals said they are “Very confident” the standards will improve student achievement, or better prepare students for college and careers.

As we have previously reported, another reason for states leaving the Common Core assessment consortia will be the current acceptance and use of competitors’ assessments, especially by postsecondary institutions, to assess college- and career-readiness (e.g., assessments from College Board and ACT). Andy Rotherham, one of the founding members of White Board Advisors, speaking before the 2012 SIIA Government Forum said at that time that about half of the states would end up implementing Common Core Standards and Assessments. A high-level official representing CCSSO said he would be pleased if about half of the states did implement Common Core Standards and assessments in 2014-15. The recent White Board Advisors report noted that the number of insiders felt that PARCC was on the “right track” declined from 55 percent to 48 percent in the last month; the decline for SBAC was from 27 percent in January to 23 percent between January and February. Most insiders believe that neither consortium would meet deadlines, which could be an accountability disaster. One of the most pessimistic respondents felt that “the astonishing successes of Duncan’s first term unravel in the second as implementation of teacher evals, common core, and common assessment fail.”

In a related question, more than half of the insiders think that the lack of bandwidth and devices pose a significant risk as schools prepare for implementation. One respondent felt the risk is high, but that old technology will continue to be supported. Another believes that, without upgrading bandwidth and district and school capacity, computer-delivered assessments will give way to paper-and-pencil.

Some, including Secretary Duncan , have argued that economies of scale, using a combination of online instruction and computer-based assessment, would result in overall cost savings. In response to a related question as to whether cost savings would occur through the use of blended learning, the report found, “The majority of insiders think that advocates and policymakers are over-estimating the cost savings we can expect from blended learning.” Sixty-eight percent felt savings are overestimated, while only 23 percent found such potential savings to be realistic. Most felt that while the savings potential exists, others believed such savings would not be realized because online instruction will be built on top of existing structures and there first needs to be a major cultural shift. For example, as we have previously reported, for the realization of potential savings in the use of technology to occur, a number of bureaucratic, organizational and other barriers need to be overcome including moving away from “seat time” to mastery or competency assessments.

As a closing note, Education Week’s *Politics K-12* blog (February 21<sup>st</sup>) reporting on Secretary Duncan’s interview with a small group of national reporters, said that when asked for his response to states like Alabama dropping out of a common testing

consortium, the Secretary reportedly stated, “I’m not losing sleep over it”; if states that decide to go another direction, “more power to them.”

### **Survey Finds Teachers Feel “Moderately Well-Prepared” to Teach Most Students Common Core Standards, But Less Ready to Teach CCSS to English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities**

A survey conducted last October by Education Week’s Editorial Projects found that, on a scale of 1 (not at all prepared) to 5 (very prepared), about half of teachers rated themselves as a 1, 2, or 3 for teaching their own students, but more than two-thirds felt they were not adequately prepared to teach English language learners or students with disabilities. As the Education Week lead article notes, “Even teachers who have had more rather than less professional development in the common standards reported that they were the least ready for those subgroups of students.” Fewer than one-third of the teachers said their schools were well-prepared or very well-prepared for the standards. Moreover, “Turning their eyes to their own students, teachers showed grave concerns about the children’s prospects for mastering the standards.” Only 23 percent believe students would be prepared or very prepared. The latter finding is similar to the recent Met Life survey findings which found a similar percent of teachers felt Common Core Standards would actually help their students. About four in ten teachers who have received five or more days of professional development felt they were adequately prepared to teach students with disabilities and English language learners, while less

than 14 percent of those with less than a day of training said they were ready. The report notes that, as of October 2012, the respondents typically had spent less than four days than four days of training related to CCSS, with most training focusing on alignment between CCSS and prior state standards and collaboration with colleagues. Such professional development was typically delivered in structured, formal settings like workshops and seminars.

Typical training providers were from their own schools and districts. Only about 28 percent received training in best practices for implementing CCSS, with about 20 percent received training in assessments or teaching strategies for specific student subgroups. Fifteen percent indicated receiving professional development from professional associations and seven percent received professional development from “other providers,” which one assumes were outside consultants or firms. About three-fourths of respondents wanted more access to aligned curriculum resources and aligned assessments would help them feel better prepared to teach CCSS.

While almost 30 percent of respondents said their teaching assignments were English and language arts, only 14 percent indicated their assignment was mathematics, while 12 percent reported they were assigned special education. As the Education Week article notes, the sample was drawn from 600 K-12 educators who are registered users of EducationWeek.org and is not nationally representative of U.S. teachers.

## **The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Has Released Recommendations for Best Practices to Ensure Testing Integrity With the Planned Use of Computer-Based Testing in 2014-15 for Common Core Assessments**

The NCES report, entitled "Testing Integrity: Issues and Recommendations for Best Practice," draws on the opinions of experts and practitioners including recommendations for preventing, detecting, and responding to cheating and irregularities in regular or standardized tests, particularly computer-based testing (CBT). It follows test cheating scandals in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and El Paso over the last year and addresses an issue that has become increasingly important (as we have noted in previous TechMIS reports). Experts agree that the problem will increase as teachers and principals receive part of their evaluations and bonuses based on student test scores. As noted in Education Week's District Dossier blog, school district reputations have been increasingly tied to performance on standardized tests. An earlier report on testing integrity was criticized by the Government Accountability Office for not including best practices.

The last section of the report focuses on testing integrity practices and procedures for online and technology-based assessments, and provides tips on best practices, which necessarily will be evolving over time. As stated in the report, the panelists “identified processes to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the results of CBT are accurate and free from tampering. Finally, they discussed likely opportunities for tampering and testing irregularities within the context of computer-based assessments.”



Participants agreed that CBT would reduce or eliminate some test security threats compared to paper-and-pencil tests, but in the words of one participant, CBT "does not make cheating and test piracy problems go away. They merely take a different form." Districts must build capacity to ensure secure administration of CBT, because schools lack sufficient computers, electrical hookups, or other capabilities to administer CBT assessments to all students simultaneously, factors which have been reported widely in the media. An "extended testing window" could present the largest risk to CBT, according to a College Board participant. Training of district personnel, including teachers and substitutes, will be critical and districts "should prepare administrators with simulated CBT, and provide clear protocols and help-desk support," because technology "provides students and adults with the platform to widely and rapidly disseminate knowledge about test items 'everywhere-everywhere with Internet access.'" The "chain of custody issues will also be very important and harder to track." Plans should include regular monitoring of the Internet and other media for sharing secure information, routine reporting and regular auditing to assess the effectiveness of district monitoring.

The report recommends that districts develop and implement processes explicitly for CBT, noting that the vast majority of the irregularities are mistakes caused by a "lack of clear delineation by the state that's providing the assessment." Local internal controls and implementation policies addressing new kinds of data breaches must be developed and should involve staff other than teachers and proctors, such as information technology staff. The CBT

security policies should include a number of components, including:

- disabling web browsers to prevent access to resources on the Internet;
- disabling computer applications, such as spell-check, calculators, and other tools;
- disabling save, copy, and print functions; and
- conducting CBT only in secure classrooms or computer labs.

The report also recommends that CBT be used to detect irregularities during test administration, as CBT provides numerous advantages over traditional paper-and-pencil testing. As the report notes, "CBT provides officials with a 'treasure-trove' of test administration data that paper-and-pencil tests cannot provide, such as response time (how long it takes a student to answer a question), the number of wrong-to-right corrections, the order in which questions are answered, and keystroke patterns. Data can then be analyzed to identify patterns and detect anomalies that occurred during the test administration process, which are 'real clues' that cheating may have occurred."

Regarding CBT transition from paper-and-pencil, the report concludes that the lack of capacity and poor infrastructure magnifies many threats, and SEAs and LEAs will need time to build the capacity to confront them. The report also concludes that while a clear and comprehensive test security policy can prevent many testing irregularities from occurring, the best and most efficient way to handle testing irregularities is by preventing them from happening in the first place.

## Recent Surveys Paint Mixed Picture for Increased Use of Digital Devices in Schools

Three recent surveys address the potential use of digital devices in public schools, but perceptions of opportunities and challenges vary among different educators. During the recent COSN conference, the results of its survey of 2,500 district Information Technology Officials (ITOs), of which about ten percent responded, found that among the top priorities was to put in place “bring your own devices” (BYOD) policies and to prepare schools for the planned online assessments associated with Common Core implementation. While 40 percent and 35 percent, respectively, cited BYOD policies and plans for online assessments, other priorities were: ensuring broadband access (24%), creating cost-effective budgets (23%), and supporting data-driven decision-making (22%), as reported by Education Week’s Digital Education blog (March 12<sup>th</sup>). Around two-thirds of respondents felt one of the major challenges was to change the culture of teaching and learning to one that is student centered.

In the most recent National Science Foundation (NSF) “National Survey of Science and Math Education,” to which more than 7,500 science and math teachers responded, teachers expected less than five percent of their classes would have students who would be providing their own laptop computers or handheld computers in both math and science at the elementary and middle school levels, while the percentage of such classes at the high school level would be slightly higher but less than ten percent. The survey also found that Internet is available at all three levels -- elementary (84%), middle school (85%), high school

(86%), and handheld computers such as PDAs, smart phones, and iPads are equally available now, but a much lower percentage -- elementary (20%), middle school (19%), high school (20%) of the classes (additional findings from the NSF survey are in a related Washington Update item).

Also cited in the *Digital Education* blog was a recent survey, conducted by the Pew Research Center, which found that three-quarters of youth ages 12-17 are mobile users of the Internet who go online via cell phones, tablets, and other mobile devices at least some of the time. The Pew survey also found that 37 percent of such youths have a smart phone, an increase from 23 percent in 2011. It also found that, among teenage smart phone owners, a much larger proportion compared to adults use cell phones primarily to access the Internet.

While the above survey findings present “apples/oranges” comparison problems, one conclusion that might be inferred is that Information Technology Officers feel that BYOD can reduce school costs, as the COSN survey also found that the most important challenge was budget and the lack of resources. However, about two-thirds of the COSN respondents felt that budgets would be about the same as last year, while the remaining responses were that budgets would be worse and would improve. Without question, the Pew survey results clearly indicate that teens will increasingly have the “capacity” for “BYOD” in schools; however, for districts/schools to take advantage of the increased BYOD capacity among students, the third major priority of ITO’s, expanding bandwidth, not only has to be met, but also ensure that the planned online assessments can take advantage of the increased capacity of digital devices to be

used in online assessments.

### **Legislation to Reauthorize the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) Program Introduced by Key Senators With \$1.2 Billion Authorization Level**

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) who chairs the Senate After-School Caucus Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) who chairs the Senate Budget Committee and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) have introduced the After School for America's Children Act (S.326) which would reauthorize the CCLC which would expand access to high-quality after-school programs. In the joint press release, Senator Patty Murray argued, "After school programs are a proven way to improve academic performance and we know that students who attend them are more likely to go to college and start off their lives on the right track."

While more than 1.6 million children enrolled in CCLC after-school programs in 2011, the most recent report from the After School Alliance found that approximately 18 million children not participating in after-school programs would likely go if programs were available, according to their parents and while providing a safe, well-rounded and enriching environment until the end of their parents' work day, children receive enrichment activities to compliment regular academic activities, especially those attending high-poverty and low-performing schools. The proposed legislation would:

- modernize the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program to improve the state's ability to effectively support quality in after-school programs;

- run more effective grant competitions and improve struggling programs;
- enhance communications between local schools and after-school programs to ensure after-school activities compliment the academic curriculum;
- encourage parent engagement in student learning; and
- improve the tracking of students' progress.

Over the last three years, the current Administration has lessened its support for after-school programs where providing greater encouragement and use of freed-up waiver funding to support "extended learning time" (ELT). In spite of Secretary Duncan's continuing encouragement of districts to extend learning time during school hours by approximately 300 hours annually, he has admitted on several occasions extended learning time is here to stay, but will take more time for the movement to grow quickly. As we have reported on several occasions, many of the districts who have received waivers to no longer set aside the 20 percent of Title I for supplemental educational services (SES) instead have opted to provide freed-up funding for new or expanded after-school programs which has provided numerous opportunities for many TechMIS subscribers. As Senator Murray has correctly noted, a growing body of literature and survey findings supports anecdotal evidence that after-school programs are effective in increasing student academic achievement.

It is interesting to note that a number of associations support the new Senate bill to

reauthorize CCLC including After-School Alliance, National PTA, National 4H Council and YMCA of USA. Conspicuous by its absence are associations which support extended learning time. Similar legislation was submitted by Senator Murray among others last year which was not passed. Without question, reauthorization of CCLC will be included in hearings and debates regarding reauthorization of ESEA generally.

### **National Governors Association Panel on Teachers and School Leadership During the Annual Winter Conference Urged to Use Technology to Improve Teaching**

Chaired by Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy, the NGA Education and Workforce panel addressed how to improve teaching and school leadership, after which governors were given a chance to discuss directly-related initiatives in their states. The panel heard from Bryan Hassel of Public Impact and Frederick Hess of American Enterprise Institute, who shared their views on the topic.

Hassel, who is known for identifying practical best practices for turning around low-performing schools, mentioned specific actions governors should take or otherwise support to improve teaching, in addition to increasing teacher pay. He felt that teacher pay, which has been very stable over the last 40 years, has increased only 11 percent, in real terms, and the amount of teacher time has also increased 11 percent; pay should be carefully focused in such a way to get the greatest impact on students from good teachers and rewarding them appropriately. Moreover, governors should recognize that

having one excellent teacher for every classroom is impossible. Here, technology can provide the opportunity to maximize the impact of excellent teachers through online and other types of instruction and support. States should be even more selective in deciding who should go into education, providing incentives to ensure the growth of a cadre of “excellent teachers;” bad bureaucratic and other policies should be done away with. Hassel agreed with Secretary Duncan, who felt good teachers should receive salaries in the six-digit area.

Hess of American Enterprise Institute said, “Instructional leadership is only half of good school leadership” and, referring to “cage busting” (addressed in his new book), effective leaders should do what they feel works best despite endless rules and traditions. Hess suggested that too many education leaders are trained in education leader environments, courses, etc.; rather, there’s a need for more outsiders, such as individuals trained in business or public administration, to enter education. He particularly pointed to the need for outsiders to be given free rein in turning around low-performing schools. Hess recommended that governors ensure that state policies and procedures are updated to indicate clearly what leaders can do, not what they can’t do, and that resources and flexibility be provided so leaders can take advantage of new technology-based opportunities. Here, he felt that there exists a great need for more outside talent in the area of technology and related areas.

In response to the Hassel and Hess comments, a number of governors on the panel took advantage of the opportunity to describe best practices that they have undertaken in their states in the area of

improving teaching and school leadership. Governor Malloy pointed to a recent Connecticut initiative where state funding has been targeted on 30 low-performing schools and another initiative to expand best practices among Connecticut teachers. He also felt that teacher colleges are not doing a good job and don't track the progress their graduates are making in public schools during their first three or four years of employment. He also said that some education majors, during their junior year, feel they are trapped in education and only go into education while they are looking for better opportunities in other fields. Iowa Governor Terry Branstad pointed to initiatives which he spearheaded in the area of competency-based education and early childhood initiatives and an executive coaching initiative for principals. Financial incentives have also been created for new Iowa teachers who go into math and science. Virginia Governor Robert McDonnell summarized a number of initiatives underway in Virginia and pointed to his recently passed legislation creating a new district for schools classified as "D" or "F," which would likely convert them to charter schools or otherwise bring in new management. He also pointed to a new third-grade initiative providing more funding for tutoring and related activities while reducing social promotion at that level. Utah Governor Gary Herbert asked the presenters how competition, which is so prevalent in private industry, could be used to improve quality in education. Hassel suggested increased pay for teachers going into STEM fields to compete with the private sector where the demand is very high. Hess reiterated his theme of paying teachers and principals based on performance measures. Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie, who was a former union

contract negotiator for the AFL-CIO mentioned the difficulty he has had in implementing Race to the Top in Hawaii because of resistance from teachers' unions. He thought two good solutions for improving student achievement are to increase funding for early childhood education and to provide a laptop or tablet to every elementary student, especially if states are truly interested in challenging low-performing students, particularly in those failing schools.

### **New Regulations Will Require School Districts to Get Written Consent From Parents Only One Time in Order to Receive Medicaid Funds for Serving Eligible Students with Disabilities for "Related Services," Which Will Free Up Local and IDEA to Purchase "Instructional" Materials and Services (e.g., Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Counseling)**

Previously, schools had to get permission from parents each time the district attempted to get a Medicaid payment for serving a poor student, which has been both expensive and time-consuming for districts. The American Association for School Administrators (AASA) has been lobbying for such a change since 2006 when a ruling required that parents need to be notified and provide consent every time a service for their eligible child is provided and for which the district can be reimbursed under Medicaid -- also referred to the S-CHIP program. With this change, many districts will take greater advantage of Medicaid reimbursements which will "free up" more funds which can be used to provide for IDEA and local and state funded special education "non-related services" to students.

In the past, such freed-up funds have been used to purchase instructional materials and directly-related technology. In the *On Special Education* blog (February 12<sup>th</sup>), John Hill, of the National Alliance for Medicaid in Education (NAME), which supported the change along with AASA, stated, “We were naively hopeful that it [the regulatory change] would be completed at the beginning of the school year. But it’s done, and we’re excited that it’s done.”

### **Grad Nation Report Finds Graduation Rates Increased to 78.2% in 2010, Up from 71.7% in 2001**

The fourth annual *Building a Grad Nation* report has found that national graduation rates have increased from 71.7 percent in 2001 to 78.2 percent in 2010, which suggests that the national goal of reaching a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020 can be met. As Anne Hyslop of the *Ed Money Watch* blog notes, “The recent gains are largely due to improved graduation rates for Hispanic students (10.4 point gain) and for black students (6.9 point gain).” The report also noted that the overall number of dropout factories -- where twelfth-grade enrollment is 60 percent or less than ninth-grade enrollment three years earlier -- has dropped by nearly 600 schools. In 2002, almost half of Black students attended a dropout factory, but in 2011 only a quarter did so.

The blog also notes that the *Grad Nation*’s reported 78.2 percent graduation rate was based on the average freshmen graduation rate (AFGR) rather than the four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, which states were supposed to begin using in 2008. The Cohort Rate would enable states to use

a more consistent measure and to identify precisely the strategies that are preventing dropouts. The difference between the old AFGR and the new Cohort Rate calculation methods was more than five percentage points in nine states. The *Ed Money Watch* blog has previously reported that states which recently received waivers have “backtracked on commitments to graduation rate accountability” and have violated the 2008 regulations regarding the Adjusted Cohort calculation methodology by counting students taking more than four years to graduate or counting GEDs or other certificates rather than regular diplomas.

### **Miscellaneous (a)**

The Center on Education Policy has recently released its findings based on an analysis of 2010 NAEP results, comparing the nature and types of civic education in traditional schools to charter schools. The study addressed whether charter schools typically offered different types of civic instruction than traditional schools. Only a limited number of differences were found between traditional public schools and charter schools as noted below.

Overall, civics achievement was similar for students in charter and traditional schools at most grade levels and for most racial/ethnic student groups. Hispanic eighth-graders in charter schools scored significantly higher in civics compared to those in traditional schools; male twelfth-graders in traditional schools scored higher than those in charter schools. More eighth-graders in charter schools, compared to traditional schools, reported studying the U.S. Congress, how laws are made, the court system and the U.S. Constitution. About equal percentages of

twelfth-graders in both types of schools reported taking Advanced Placement government and politics courses. More eighth-grade charter school students reported taking part in role play, mock trials and dramas one to two times per month than did eighth-graders in traditional schools, while a greater share of charter school eighth-graders reported responding to short-answer questions in their social study classes almost every day. Also, charter school twelfth-graders wrote long answers to questions more often than peers in traditional schools. Fourth-graders in both types of schools reported equal use of state curriculum standards in social studies. Students in both charter and traditional schools reported the availability of similar resources at home that could contribute to civics knowledge.

For a copy of the report, go to: [www.cep-dc.org/](http://www.cep-dc.org/)

### **Miscellaneous (b)**

According to Sarah Sparks' article in Education Week, separate studies from Columbia University and Harvard conclude: "The way colleges are using standardized placement tests such as the College Board's Accuplacer, ACT's Compass, and others can misidentify students, and secondary schools and universities should work to develop a more comprehensive profile of students' strengths and weaknesses in performing college-level work." The blog cites recent NCES data which reported that more than three million new students entering higher education have taken at least one catch-up or remedial course, at a total annual cost of nearly \$7 billion for the non-credit bearing classes. Other projected cost estimates for

college remediation are less, but still very significant and have increased from about \$1.5 to \$2 billion over the last decade.

According to research by Judith Scott-Clayton, assistant professor at Teachers College, presented at the January American Economics Association meeting in San Diego, "Remediation is the typical experience now." Based on her research, "She found that 20 percent of students placed in remedial math and 25 percent of those placed in remedial reading were 'severely misidentified,' meaning that not only could they have passed the entry college course in that subject, they could have done so with a grade of B or better." Officials from the College Board and ACT Incorporated, publishers of Accuplacer and Compass, respectively, accepted Scott-Clayton's research methodology; and, the two officials argued that both tests "include tools to allow colleges to weigh test results along with other academic indicators, such as high school grades and course credits, and work with colleges to use broader measures of student readiness than just the test. Neither testing representative, however, knew how many of its client colleges actually use those tools."

Researchers at Harvard have also found that approximately 30 percent of students assigned to remediation in several Texas community colleges were, in fact, "college-ready" based on their scores on the ACT, SAT, and state assessment. As a result of high remediation placement in Texas community colleges, the State legislature is requiring all State colleges to move to a new State-developed placement test which -- to be rolled out this Fall -- for which any student could receive tutoring while in a credit-bearing class.

## Miscellaneous (c)

A Pew Research Center survey of middle and high school teachers involved in Advanced Placement and related high-level programs has found that the Internet has had a major impact on their ability to access content and resources. The survey also found that teachers of such programs as Advanced Placement are heavier users of digital technology, not only at work but also at home; they use more smart phones, e-book readers, and social networking tools, such as LinkedIn and Twitter. Moreover, 62 percent of the respondents said their school does a good job supporting efforts to bring digital tools into the learning process and 68 percent said their school provides formal training in this area. About two-thirds of the teachers under age 35 describe themselves as “very competent” using digital technology compared with 44 percent of teachers ages 55 and older. Teachers in the survey also reported striking differences in access to the latest digital technologies between lower and higher income students and school districts. The report is available at:

<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Teachers-and-technology>

## Miscellaneous (d)

The College Board has released data showing that approximately 20 percent of the class of 2012 passed at least one Advanced Placement exam, continuing a steady increase over the last few years; about 12 percent of the class of 2002 did so. As reported by *Education Week's College Bound* blog (February 20<sup>th</sup>), about 950,000 public school students took at least one AP exam last year. About 60 percent scored “3”

or more and the 14 percent that scored a “5” which was the highest in the last decade. The College Board also reports that more than 300,000 students scored well enough on the preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test to have a 60 percent or greater chance of getting at least an AP score of “3,” but did not take the test. Among students with high potential, just 30 percent of Latino or African-American students took such a course, while four in ten white students and six in ten Asian students did so. Sixty-two percent of 2012 test takers were white, 16 percent were Latinos, and 4.4 percent were African-Americans (the same as the previous year). In order to promote equity in Advanced Placement test-taking, the College Board recommended that districts provide more counseling services at the middle and high school levels, provide targeted mentoring, and host summer bridge programs.

The College Board report also notes that 5,400 college faculty members are engaged in designing AP courses. David Hawkins of the National Association for College Admission Counseling was quoted in the *College Bound* blog as saying, “It’s very important for counselors to know about any curriculum that is college preparatory and be prepared to explain to parents and students the significance of it in the college transition.”

The *College Bound* blog cites another new report from the National Center for Education Statistics which says that 82 percent of public high schools enrolled students in dual-credit courses and almost 70 percent reported enrollments in IB or AP courses during the 2010-11 academic year. According to the report, this “translates into 2 million enrollments in dual-credit courses



and 3.5 million in AP or IB courses.”

### **Miscellaneous (e)**

Elementary school teachers and principals feel that their peer’s competence in using technology is more important than do high school teachers and principals, according to the most recent, widely publicized Met Life Survey of the American Teacher. The *Digital Education* blog on Education Week reports that, buried in the study’s findings, a finding that the importance of technology competence varies by the grade levels teachers and administrators serve. The blog pointed to the finding that 54 percent of elementary school principal respondents said that effective use of technology is important for effective school leaders, compared to just 39 percent of high school principals. Fifty percent of elementary school teachers regarded technology skills as an important principal skill, compared to only 39 percent of high school teachers. The survey findings reveal that other skills were perceived as being of greater importance; 85 percent of educators felt principals should be competent in using data about student performance to improve instruction, while only 53 percent felt it was very important for teachers to have the same skill. About the same percentage of educators considered it important for principals to understand how to use technology to improve instruction (50 percent) compared with teachers having the same level of competence in this area (46 percent).

Other findings from the Met Life survey which have been more widely reported included responses from principals in which three out of four said their job had become too complex, and about a third report they

will likely leave their job within the next five years. Reasons for such low morale among principals included spending cuts, implementation of Common Core Standards, and implementation of State waivers. Seven out of ten principals reported that their jobs have changed dramatically over the last five years which, according to Education Week’s *District Dossier* blog explains why “three out of four say their jobs have become more complicated.”

### **Miscellaneous (f)**

The *Marketplace K-12* blog on Education Week provides highlights Market Data Retrieval’s *State of the K-12 Market 2012* report which find that educators seek as potential business partners firms with more effective and engaging materials and staff which have better communications and listening skills. In addition to pointing out key qualities that make educators see businesses as potential partners, responding district technology officials see increased demands in areas of strengthening wireless networks and the use of tablets. Development of wireless networks was identified by 85 percent of respondents as a top priority -- up from 71 percent last year. This perceived increased need can be attributed to the requirement for reliable service and sufficient bandwidth for online testing. More than 90 percent of respondents said modifying curriculum and assessments in preparation for Common Core Standards and tests is a high or medium priority.

## Miscellaneous (g)

University of Missouri research scientists have identified 69 studies of 33 different character education programs that had scientific evidence which supports their effectiveness in enhancing the academic goals of schools, as reported by Education Week (March 1<sup>st</sup>). Professor Marvin Berkowitz and researcher Melinda Bier published the results of a 2011 meta-analysis of school-based social and emotional learning programs published in Child Development, which found significant improvements in academic achievement, behavior, and attitudes compared with control groups. According to the article, Professor Berkowitz argued that the primary

traits that schools promote are respect, responsibility, caring, fairness, and honesty which are more likely emphasized in elementary school rather than high schools.

Partially in response to the recent Newtown, Connecticut massacre of 26 students and faculty, Russell Sojourner who directs the Character Education Partnership advocacy group, feels USED is investing more in character education. As we have previously reported, increased priority has been placed on support for improvement of school culture. As the article notes, “Some advocates also point to the Common Core State Standards as a selling point for character education.”

# Alabama Update

## March 2013

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According to [AL.com](#), the Alabama Department of Education has presented a \$4.1 billion budget request for FY 2014 -- a \$405.5 million increase over FY 2013. State financial officials say only about half that increase could be considered. Among the requested increases are:

- \$10 million for the Alabama Math Science Technology Initiative (AMSTI);
- \$5 million for Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators & Students Statewide (ACCESS), a distance learning project to allow rural students access to classes not available at their schools;
- \$3 million for Advanced-Placement programs (State officials say Alabama's AP program saved parents \$16 million in college tuition over the last three years); and
- A bond issue for career-technical education in partnership with local workforce development councils.

According to the *State Ed Watch* blog (March 13<sup>th</sup>), the Alabama Senate Education Committee has put on hold legislation that would require the State to withdraw its adoption of Common Core State Standards and assessments which, for the time being, kills the anti-Common Core proposal. State Superintendent Tommy Bice had urged lawmakers not to withdraw. When it was announced that Alabama would drop out of the Common Core assessment consortium, Secretary Duncan said he would not "lose sleep" over that decision as each state has such a right. Alabama opponents of the Common Core Standards have vowed to "still fight."

A proposed new law, approved by the Alabama legislature, expands tax credits to include parents who move their children from failing public schools to private schools. The measure has been approved by both houses of the legislature with Republicans voting for it and Democrats opposed. It is expected to be signed into law by Governor Robert Bentley, although the State's Superintendent of Education has withdrawn his support for the measure. Moreover, the courts are considering a lawsuit filed by the State teachers union that would enjoin the Governor from

signing.

As reported in Education Week, the Alabama legislature is in the process of approving a \$50 million bond issue intended to provide equipment for technical programs in the State's public schools. State officials say new technical equipment was last purchased in 2005 and much of the teaching is on outdated equipment.

# Alaska Update

## March 2013

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The Alaska House Finance Education Subcommittee has reduced Governor Sean Parnell's proposed \$357 million education budget by 1.6 percent, cutting the pre-K and early childhood development programs, which funded six pilot programs across the State, from almost \$3 million to \$2 million. It also reduced technology upgrades by \$3.2 million because the Committee felt that insufficient teacher training had occurred and questioned the State focus on training teachers, according to [Fairbanks Daily News-Miner](#).

# California Update

March 2013

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As was expected, nine California school districts -- known as the CORE consortium -- have requested a waiver from requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act (which the State Board of Education has approved). As noted in Education Week, the districts decided to seek the waiver after California's State-level waiver request was denied by the U.S. Department of Education last year. If the districts' application is approved by USED, the individual districts could regain \$110 million in Federal funding that has been redirected elsewhere. The consortium districts seeking waivers are: Los Angeles, Long Beach, Fresno, Oakland, Sacramento City, Santa Ana, Sanger and Clovis.

A coalition of school districts and education groups has filed suit against the State of California arguing that the State legislature violated the State constitution by shortchanging public schools and community colleges in the 2011-12 budget. Education Week reports that a San Francisco District Court has dismissed the claim that more than \$2 billion in State funding should be redirected to education. This means that California public schools will have less money this year.

In his budget plan for next year, California Governor Jerry Brown has proposed that State funding for community college students be based, not on enrollment, but on course completions. According to the Ventura County Star, the approach, to be phased in over five years, is intended to provide incentive for colleges to get more students to complete courses and to redirect money lost in a college's base funding toward tutoring, counseling, and other student services. State officials note that, with an average course completion rate of about 85 percent, many students are unable to register for courses they want and the State is "paying for community colleges for students who aren't there."

# Colorado Update

## March 2013

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The Colorado Department of Higher Education's annual report for 2011-12 shows that the number of the State's high school students who enrolled in college classes or dual enrollment was up about 15 percent in 2011-12. About 85 percent of dual enrollment students entered college and were likely to complete their freshman year, according [The Denver Post](#) (February 21<sup>st</sup>). Approximately 24,000 students are participating in dual enrollment in more than 300 schools, with 18 higher education institutions taking part in the program.

# Florida Update

## March 2013

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An article in The Tampa Bay Times observed that some SES providers were headed by “cheaters and criminals” and were ripping off districts’ SES programs using Title I set-asides. USED is already taking some action regarding misuse of Title I funds, according to Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog (February 13<sup>th</sup>). Even though Florida was provided the opportunity for a State flexibility waiver of the NCLB 20% set-aside for SES before the State officially requested one, SES lobbyists were able to get the Florida State legislature to re-enact a State law which required between ten and 15 percent of Title I funds in “identified” districts/schools to continue the NCLB-mandated SES requirement in spite of Secretary Duncan’s critical comments targeted at the State legislature. According to USED official Daren Briscoe, “The department has already been in contact with the Florida State Department of Education, and is discussing potential implications with our attorneys.” The final decision and actions by USED could establish important precedents for other states such as Colorado, South Carolina, among others which have continued certain levels of the set-aside as mandates or options for districts. Last year, the Florida SES case was a major topic during the Council of the Great City Schools’ Annual Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. on March 9-11.

Florida’s new education Commissioner, Tony Bennett, has called for a “Plan B” to address the possibility that Common Core replacement tests being developed by the PARCC do not materialize or are delayed. The replacement tests are scheduled to begin within the next 18 months, but the Commissioner told the State Board that complexities could occur, including the adoption of a common scoring system and higher costs to implement the computer-based assessment. Another issue he raised was whether school districts will have the technology to implement the test. While the Board has included \$500 million in technology funds for the new test, the Governor has included only \$100 million in his proposed budget to the legislature, according to The Miami Herald. In a recent interview with Education Week’s Curriculum Matters, Bennett said, “It’s in no way an indication of any deep fear that PARCC is going to fail.



No one wants this to succeed more than I do, and no one believes it ultimately will succeed more than I do. But I would be in remiss in my duties as the state commissioner...if I don't have a Plan B for that." Bennett also indicated he wanted to conduct a survey of districts' current infrastructure and availability of computers and any needs for further teacher professional development.

# Georgia Update

## March 2013

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution notes that nearly 60 percent of Georgia students who took the new end-of-course high school math test tied to the Common Core State Standards failed to pass. The State's new math course -- called Coordinate Algebra -- combining algebra, geometry, and statistics, was offered to ninth-graders for the first time last Fall. Counting 20 percent of students' course grade, the Coordinate Algebra exam replaces the Math 1 test that counted for 15 percent. In 2010, 52 percent of students met standards on the Math 1 test and, in 2011, 45 percent did so.

The *Charters & Choice* blog on EducationWeek.org notes that a Georgia legislative committee has passed a "parent-trigger" bill that would allow parents to petition to change a traditional public school to a charter school. Under the proposed measure, 60 percent of parents or 60 percent of instructional staff could petition to school board for such a change. The board could only reject the petition if two-thirds of its members vote in opposition. In low-performing schools, parents and teachers have greater options including replacing principals.

# Hawaii Update

## March 2013

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Education Week's *Politics K-12* blog notes that Hawaii's \$75 million Race to the Top grant has been removed from "high-risk status" after showing progress in developing data systems and establishing standards and assessments. The State is still considered "high-risk" in four RTTT areas: teachers and leaders, low-performing schools, STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), and "state success factors." Hawaii's RTTT award was put on "high-risk status" in 2011 when it failed to reach agreement with its teachers union on new evaluations that incorporate student growth.

# Idaho Update

## March 2013

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In his January State of the State address, Idaho Governor Butch Otter proposed elimination of the State's \$140 million personal property tax paid by businesses. Opponents of the Governor's plan, including associations representing municipal and education interests, objected saying it could shift \$40 million in tax burden to other taxpayers. It would also mean the State would have to raise \$90 million in replacement funding for local governments.

As reported by Education Week, the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation has provided \$1.5 million in startup money for a project by which academic content from the Khan Academy will be available in 47 Idaho schools. Students will be able to log into math, physics, and history classes, using a "flipped learning" method by which students use video instruction as homework to learn new lessons and class time for one-on-one instruction. The Khan Academy has previously partnered with more than 40 schools in Northern California, but Idaho represents the first coordinated Statewide effort.

According to Education Week, the Idaho legislature is considering a measure, approved by the State Senate that would make permanent a pilot program that provides college scholarships worth about \$1,400 to high-achieving students who graduate early from high school. Lawmakers say the State saved \$150,000 last year through the pilot program. School districts also benefit because some of the savings are available for other expenses.

# Indiana Update

## March 2013

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It appears that an attempt to suspend implementation of Common Core Standards in Indiana has fizzled out and that the rollout would “proceed as planned,” as reported in *State Ed Watch*.

Earlier, State Senator Scott Schneider introduced Senate Bill 193 which would require the State to drop the English/language arts and math standards this year. Later, the measure was changed to suspend implementation of the new standards. As the blog notes, Senator Schneider and new State Superintendent Glenda Ritz believe that Common Core implementation should be studied further before they go full speed ahead in Indiana. However, in February, the Indiana Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution reaffirming the State’s commitment to the Common Core State Standards. The CCSS are now being used in Indiana’s kindergarten and first-grade classes; all grades will start using them in the 2014-15 school year.

As reported by Education Week, the Indiana legislature has scaled back a proposal that would have allowed thousands of more students to participate in the State’s largest-in-the-nation school voucher program. Under the revised plan, kindergarteners and some other students would be immediately eligible for vouchers if their families meet income limits. Current private school students would have to spend at least one year in public schools before applying for vouchers. The price tag on the expanded program is \$63 million over the next two years -- about a 65 percent funding increase.

# Iowa Update

## March 2013

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Education Week reports that education budget battles in the Iowa State legislature are becoming more heated. Governor Terry Branstad and the Republican-controlled House have urged lawmakers to approve the Governor's \$187 million education reform plan. Because the legislature did not approve a school funding amount last year, the Democratic-controlled Senate passed a bill increasing funding for the 2013-14 school year by four percent. Then the Senate approved another four percent -- \$114 million -- increase for 2014-15 and a bill calling for an additional \$15 million, mostly for teacher compensation.

# Louisiana Update

## March 2013

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Louisiana's State Superintendent, John White, recently announced "Louisiana Believes," the second stage of the State's reform initiative, which began with the major expansion of vouchers last year, including:

- "pilot networks" to educate all four-year-olds and train teachers, which are designed to cover all preschool kids by 2015;
- to train 2,000 teacher leaders to help teachers learn new Common Core Standards through the use of a "toolbox" which will utilize online resources teachers can access;
- a Career Diploma initiative that allows students to get "workplace-based" education or two years at a technical college for which a plan will be released in April;
- a special education initiative to be unveiled this Summer which would change State funding for special education and "school choice"; and
- creation of new partnerships to expand alternatives to "F" schools which are currently enroll approximately 60,000 students.

According to *State Ed Watch* blog on [Education Week](#) (February 22nd), some changes and tinkering may occur, but because the State legislature is dominated by Republicans, hard opposition is not likely.

As noted in [The Advocate](#), Louisiana has proposed making a number of changes in the way it supports special education students. Under the proposal, special education funding would recognize that different disabilities require different levels of special State aid which currently totals \$313 million. Each special education student would be placed in one of three categories that could range from speech/language impairment to autism. Moreover, State aid would be partly based on whether special education students meet or exceed State academic improvement targets. The overhaul, if approved, would be phased in over several years.

Louisiana is initiating a pilot program intended to allow school districts to establish seamless

early childhood education programs. According to Education Week's Early Years blog, as many as five pilot networks will be chosen by April and will operate from July 2013 to June 2015. Based on 2012 legislation called Act 3, the program expects to represent a collaboration among districts, Head Start, nonprofit agencies, and child-care providers and to create academic standards for kindergarten readiness for three- and four-year-olds. Applications for grant funding of between \$80,000 and \$350,000 for each pilot are due by March 22, 2013.

As reported in The Shreveport Times, the University of Louisiana higher education system has initiated an online, two-year Bachelor's degree program for individuals who left college with at least 60 credit hours and a solid "C" average. The first eight-week term will begin May 1<sup>st</sup>, with tuition costing \$325 per credit hour and taking approximately 60 hours. Each participating university will have a specialty field including:

- Grambling State University -- Human Relations
- Nicholls State University -- Food Service
- Southeastern Louisiana University -- Disaster Relief Management
- University of Louisiana at Monroe -- Financial Services
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette -- Health and Wellness
- Louisiana Tech University -- Project Team Leadership
- Northwestern State University -- Public Safety Administration
- McNeese State University -- Strategic Global Communications

Officials estimate that about 600,000 Louisiana residents have college credits but not degrees.



# Massachusetts Update

## March 2013

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As reported in the *Charters & Choice* blog on Education Week (February 28<sup>th</sup>), the Stanford University Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) has released a study which found that charter schools in Massachusetts outperformed regular public school counterparts in reading and math. Charter school students gained an additional one and a half months of learning per year in reading and two and half more months of learning per year in math, compared to academic progress in regular public schools. The study also found that Boston's charter schools gained 12 months of additional learning per year in reading and 13 months in math, which according to CREDO researchers was the largest average growth rate seen in any city. More than 80 percent of Boston charter school students outperformed their regular counterparts. According to the blog, "The researchers used a 'virtual control record' in which students in charter schools are compared with their 'virtual twins' who attend regular public schools that charter school students would have otherwise attended."

# Minnesota Update

## March 2013

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As reported by Minnesota Public Radio (February 15<sup>th</sup>), Governor Mark Dayton has proposed increasing, by 12 percent over current levels (an additional \$4.5 million) funding for programs providing English language instruction. Designed to support 6,500 English language learners (ELLs), the current \$40 million a year program provides English language instruction, as well as instruction in math, reading, writing, and other subjects. The Dayton proposal is part of a \$640 million increase in pre-K-12 and higher education budgets. English language learners make up eight percent of the State's K-12 enrollment, but their numbers are increasing. State funding supports ELL services for up to five years; however, practitioners say many ELLs require more time to learn English.

# Missouri Update

March 2013

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As reported by [stltoday.com](http://stltoday.com), Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has reversed an \$8.5 million funding cut to public colleges and universities based on improved State tax revenues. Last June, when the budget was approved, the Governor placed spending restrictions on about \$15 million out of concern that the Missouri Lottery would not generate enough new money. The Governor still has a block on approximately \$6 million in budgeted expenditures, including several K-12 education and social services programs.

# Montana Update

March 2013

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The wrangling over charter schools in Montana continues. According to Education Week's *Charters & Choice* blog, the Montana legislature approved three Republican-supported bills that would have: (1) allowed charter schools to operate in the State; (2) created tax credits for private school vouchers; and (3) set aside school funds for special needs students to attend private programs. The charter schools measure was immediately struck down by Democrats with the approval of Governor Denise Juneau.

# New Mexico Update

## March 2013

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Education Week's *Charters & Choice* blog notes that two Democratic members of the New Mexico State legislature have introduced a bill that would ban virtual charter schools from partnering with schools in the State. The measure is intended to stop for-profit online companies like K12, Inc. and Connections Academy -- both of which currently operate virtual school programs in New Mexico.

Another bill, introduced by Representative Mimi Stewart (Albuquerque-D), would ban education entities from contracting with for-profit companies to operate or manage school operations, according to the *Marketplace K-12* blog on Education Week (February 25<sup>th</sup>). Last year, when New Mexico's education commission rejected Connections Academies' application, Hanna Skandera, the State Education Secretary designee, overruled the decision, referring to a legal opinion which she said supports her position. Stewart's House Bill 460 states that administrative control and management of local school boards of schools must remain with the local school board and that charters overseen by governing boards cannot contract with a private entity to "manage or administer a public school or school district or its educational program." The measure also says that members of charter governing boards must be New Mexico residents, thus limiting out-of-state company officials or others without local connections from becoming members of charter governing boards.

# New York Update

## March 2013

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According to the *Digital Education* blog on [Education Week](#), the Microsoft settlement would provide the New York State Department of Education with approximately \$87 million to districts for upgrades for K-12 schools serving low-income families. This is part of the New York Technology Voucher Program, for which 1,800 schools qualify, including 1,000 in New York City. The SEA website said vouchers would be offered to schools to improve readiness for computer-based testing and to support a technology-rich learning environment for implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Eligible schools must have at least 50 percent of their student population in the free or reduced lunch program as of 2012. Schools can buy hardware, infrastructure upgrades, and specific types of educational software in order to be ready for CCSS assessments in 2014-15.

According to a new study by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) (Stanford University), the average charter school student in New York City earned the equivalent of one month more of additional instruction in reading each year than their traditional public school counterparts. The average charter school student's one-year gains in mathematics were five months more compared with students in the district's regular schools. Students in charter schools in Harlem outperformed students in the traditional district schools, gaining an average of seven additional months of learning in math as reported by [Education Week's Charters & Choice](#) blog. Tests were a combination of standardized achievement tests in math and reading and end-of-course exams (including Algebra I in the ninth grade and Algebra II in the tenth) between 2005-06 and 2010-11. According to the blog, "The researchers used a 'virtual control record' in which students in charter schools are compared to their 'virtual twins' who attend regular public schools the charter students would have otherwise attended." Other recent studies by CREDO have been criticized for using flawed methods by such organizations as the Center for Education Reform, whose founder and president for two decades, Jeanne Allen, recently announced her retirement.

# Ohio Update

## March 2013

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Governor John Kasich has proposed Richard Ross, his K-12 education advisor, as the new Ohio State Superintendent; he was supported by a 10-6 vote of the State Board of Education.

Education Week's *State Ed Watch* blog reports that he will take over from acting superintendent Michael Sawyer who has participated in several SIIA government forum sessions on Race to the Top and the Ohio State waiver initiative which he headed. Ross has been involved in the expansion of the proposed private school voucher program in Ohio and was previously superintendent at Reynoldsburg Public Schools.

# South Dakota Update

March 2013

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In November, South Dakota voters rejected Governor Dennis Daugaard's education reform plan which called for performance-based teacher bonuses, a new evaluation system, and removal of some teacher job protections. The new education agenda incorporates four Statewide goals: (1) proficiency in reading by grade 4; (2) proficiency in math by grade 9; (3) making sure high school graduates are ready for college and careers; and (4) closing the Native American achievement gap. South Dakota's new teacher/student data system helps to identify which initiatives are effective.

The South Dakota legislature is considering a bill that would provide scholarship money to home-schooled students. Education Week notes that Opportunity Scholarships are currently available to high school students who carry a rigorous course load and who score a 24 or higher on the ACT. The proposed measure would allow scholarships to students who have lower course load requirements (like most home-schooled students) but who score a minimum of 26 on the ACT.



# Texas Update

## March 2013

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The Texas State Senate Finance Committee has proposed to increase by \$1.5 billion the State's basic school allocation, partially to make up for a \$5.4 billion reduction school districts experienced two years ago. According to the [Austin American-Statesman](#), Republicans are reluctant to increase education funding until the State's Supreme Court rules on pending school finance litigation in which a district judge found the existing system unconstitutional. The Student Success Initiative which provides remedial tutoring to help students pass the State's standardized test was reduced from \$276 million two years ago to \$41 million. It would likely get \$50 million based on the Committee's vote; \$200 million grant program for districts to provide full-day pre-K classes was eliminated in 2011, but the Committee voted to add \$40 million back to that program which would be added to the \$800 million to provide half-day pre-K programs already funded. According to Committee leaders, additional funding would be provided for career training, charter school oversight, and Teach for America.

Texas finally submitted its formal request for waivers to get out from under some NCLB provisions. As we reported earlier, Texas in the past had said that it would attempt to obtain waiver permission that would allow the State no longer to allocate Title I funds in accordance to the Federally mandated formula; essentially, this would convert Title I into a Texas Education Agency-directed block grant. As Anne Hyslop recently noted in her *Ed Money Watch* blog posting, the State's original proposal would have made its waiver request dead on arrival; "To their credit, Texas officials removed this request, bringing their final proposal much closer to what the Department is offering." However, Hyslop did critique the Texas waiver request in several areas, including:

- the lack of detail about how the accountability system presented in the waiver would match the State's own overhaul of its State accountability system because many provisions have yet to be finalized;
- the lack of specificity of how its performance index would translate into specific

interventions for Focus and Priority Schools; and

- the protection of minority groups under its proposed “super-subgroups.”

However, as she noted, the Texas waiver application does have certain strong points, such as an alternative to adopting Common Core Standards which has an advantage of buy-in at the college level and it is “strong enough in other areas to provide for productive negotiations with the Department.”

# Utah Update

## March 2013

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According to the Pew Charitable Trust's [Stateline.org](http://Stateline.org), Utah is one of only a handful of states which rely on incentives to ensure better performance of students participating in their online education programs. Utah's Online Choice initiative allows students to pick online courses from a variety of providers and builds in incentives to ensure better performance for students and accountability for providers. In Utah, per-pupil funding from the State depends on whether the student completes the course; funding is deducted from what the State would have funneled to the students' neighborhood public school. Providers are paid based on course completion. Utah also provides incentives for the providers of online college courses who also receive payment based on the number of students taking publishers' online courses who actually complete them.

# Virginia Update

## March 2013

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The Richmond Times-Dispatch reports that Governor Robert McDonnell's proposal to create a statewide school division (district) to take over struggling schools has passed the Assembly and will likely be signed by him even though the Senate did not include the \$600,000 that the Governor sought to implement it. The division would not take effect until after the 2013-14 school year. Currently four schools would be involved in the takeover. Schools would likely become charter schools or college laboratory schools; once they reach full accreditation, the schools could return to local division control. Critics argue that the bill allows the State to take local tax dollars when it decides to take over a school, according to The Times-Dispatch. For the plan to become effective, funding which the Governor is planning to attempt to raise -- would have to be provided in the budget.

# Washington Update

March 2013

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Last July, the U.S. Department of Education gave Washington State a conditional waiver from some requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. The two conditions specified that the State must: (1) finish development of a new teacher and principal evaluation system; and (2) complete a school accountability system. State officials have notified USED concerning the State's progress toward meeting the conditions. The State expects to implement its new evaluation system -- which incorporates improvement in students test scores -- by the start of school this Fall. The new school accountability system focuses on schools' progress in meeting objectives.

# West Virginia Update

## March 2013

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West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin has proposed an education reform plan -- Senate Bill 359 -- which would expand preschool to all-day programs, allow Teach for America teachers to be employed in “critical need” areas, and would strengthen teacher education in reading. It would also require 180 days of instruction which could include extended summer school or after-school programs. According to the *State Ed Watch* blog on Education Week (February 27<sup>th</sup>), teachers unions in the State are opposed to the Governor’s plan. The unions had strongly opposed dismissal by the Governor and State Board of former State superintendent Jorea Marple last year.

According to Education Week, West Virginia is reconsidering the planned locations of high-capacity Internet routers purchased with Federal stimulus money. The \$24 million deal with Cisco was slated to place the routers in schools, libraries, and other community institutions. Legislative auditors questioned the purchases of routers for sites that would never need their capacity. Cisco has agreed to exchange unneeded routers and to extend all warranties by three years.

# Wisconsin Update

March 2013

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According to Education Week, Wisconsin's Republican Governor Scott Walker included no increased funding for public schools in his budget proposal. Republicans in the State legislature, as well as Democrats, have countered with an alternative plan that would increase spending by \$150 per student in each of the next two years. The lawmakers' plan combines the existing school money in the Governor's proposal with \$153 million in additional property tax revenue. The Governor's office has indicated it could live with a small property tax increase.

According to the *K-12 Marketplace* blog on Education Week (February 20<sup>th</sup>), Skyward Incorporated is protesting a recent bid decision that would award Infinite Campus, a Minnesota-based company, a contract to develop a State data warehouse in Wisconsin. Approximately \$50 million was included in the State Department of Education's two-year budget to develop the information system which, the State argued, would reduce cost, improve efficiency, and create more equity across districts. A spokesman for the State Department of Education said the State would review the company's objections and complaints, after which Skyward could appeal any decision to move ahead in awarding the contract to Infinite Campus.

# Wyoming Update

## March 2013

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According to Education Week, the Wyoming State Senate has approved a measure -- House File 72 -- that would develop a system to evaluate the performance of educators in the State. The bill now goes back to the House for consideration of changes made by the Senate, including elimination of the requirement for identifying specific teachers tied to student performance. Under the bill, the administrator evaluation system must be implemented beginning in 2015 and the teacher evaluation system by 2016.

According to Education Week's Charters & Choice blog, the Wyoming Senate has approved a measure that would establish a tax-credit voucher system. Favored by Republicans and criticized by Democrats, the bill would give individuals tax credits on their State income taxes for up to 40 percent of their contribution to a scholarship organization that would then distribute the money to needy students. Corporations could receive a 20 percent tax credit on their donations. Capped at \$2.5 million per year, the program would allow parents to choose the private school for their child and apply to the scholarship organization for a voucher.