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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 26, 2013  
**TO:** TechMIS Subscribers  
**FROM:** Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle  
**SUBJ:** FY 2014 Proposed Budget; Race to the Top Competition; SIIA Ed Tech Forum Highlights; SIG Guidance; IDEA District Spending Database; and State Profile Updates

Following up the Special Report on “flexibilities” and Title I carryover limit waivers sent on April 15<sup>th</sup>, this TechMIS issue includes a large number of Washington Updates and Miscellaneous items of interest to most TechMIS subscribers. During the last month, education developments moved (but frequently in different directions), which has required some Washington Update items to be updated, as noted below.

The Washington Update includes:

- **Page 1**  
The President’s FY 2014 education budget proposal includes some new priorities announced in the State of the Union Address and several other consolidation and other proposals included in the proposed FY 2011 budget, which suggests that these priorities will have to be incorporated into existing programs using reallocated funding because most of the proposed FY 2014 numbers should be considered “dead on arrival.” Subscribers should be on the lookout for new competitive grant announcements, which will include some of these priorities and preferences and new guidance/addenda (e.g., Frequently Asked Questions) in large competitive grant and other programs such as SIG, TIF, state waivers, and Race to the Top.
- **Page 4**  
USED has announced proposed changes in the next round of Race to the Top with most funding going to previously funded states and perhaps some new ones related to early learning opportunities, with the remaining funds going to RTTT-District competitions, which must address the new priority of improving school climate.

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Highlights and takeaways from the SIIA Ed Tech Forum suggest a few new opportunities in the midst of a gloomy Federal policy and funding picture, including: a likely priority grade 11-12 remedial high school program, a new STEM-funding source under the immigration bill; and additional funding/state law changes creating opportunities for online digital learning.
- **Page 8**  
USED publishes new state waiver and School Improvement Grant guidance changes suggesting more Title I funds be reallocated to successful SIG schools, Priority and Focus Schools for interventions and expanded learning opportunities.
- **Page 11**  
The Continuing Resolution (CR) through September 30<sup>th</sup> for FY 2013 includes a provision which limits state penalties for violating Maintenance of Effort (MOE) provisions under IDEA, which could provide a limited amount of additional unexpected funding for some states to allocate to district special education programs, which in turn could provide some “windfall” funding to purchase products and services.
- **Page 12**  
The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) reports that the number of students taking online courses has increased 400 percent between 2005 and 2011, but the number of state-run virtual schools has dropped from 15 to 12, as the number of districts providing online options has increased significantly.
- **Page 13**  
Head Start recompetition preliminary results announced without any official details, but rumors suggest only a few new “outside” providers are in the mix.
- **Page 14**  
USED awards this year’s SIG grants to states to turn around their lowest-performing schools which include some new, likely competitions for unfunded eligible schools.
- **Page 15**  
Senate legislative proposal to increase school safety does not include the President’s proposal to train school guidance counselors, support positive behavioral interventions, and facilitate early identification of mental illness services to increase quality of teaching and school leadership. (Update: proposed amendment to include President’s initiatives is “pulled” after “background check” bill was defeated in mid-April, but will likely be reconsidered later).

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Under the three-year, \$37 million Student Safety and Engagement grant initiative, 11 states have developed a “scorecard” to measure school climate regarding student safety and engagement which will be made available for use by any district, which should be taken into account by any TechMIS subscribers with school climate type products and/or services.

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The most recent AASA survey reports that three-fourths of district respondents said their districts would have to eliminate jobs as a result of sequestration, including, for the first time, special education. Previous surveys of sequestration impact reported deferrals of education technology purchases have occurred.

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A number of miscellaneous items include:

- a) On March 14<sup>th</sup>, USED sent a letter to each state chief indicating that USED would consider granting a one-year extension of their Race to the Top scope of work agreement with USED.
- b) A new “developmental” math program developed by the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching more than tripled the rates at which remedial students earned college math credit.
- c) The National Catholic Education Association reports that more than two million students currently attend Catholic schools, approximately 30,000 fewer than in the 2011-12 school year.
- d) The After-School Corporation (TASC) recommends that students who participate in out-of-school education and learning experiences should be able to earn credit based on their performance.
- e) The *Early Ed Watch* blog reports the estimated additional Federal cost of Obama’s plan to expand pre-K to be between \$10 to \$15 billion per year.
- f) According to Jobs for the Future, students enrolled in an early college high school/dual enrollment programs have a 93 percent graduation rate, while the national average is about 78 percent.
- g) The Federal Education Budget Project (FEBP), the parent of *Ed Money Watch* at the New America Foundation, has updated its database on district-level IDEA special education Federal funding for 2010 and 2011.
- h) The Multi-State Learning Technology Initiative, led by Maine with Hawaii and Vermont as partners (and likely to expand to additional State partners) will facilitate future technology procurements.

The state profile updates address: state budgets, Common Core State Standards, charter schools, school turnaround initiatives, parent trigger activities, and teacher evaluation news.

# ***Washington Update***

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***Vol. 18, No. 4, April 26, 2013***

## **President's Proposed FY 2014 Education Budget Indicates Some New Priorities, but Proposed Numbers Are Likely Dead on Arrival Suggesting that Most Proposed New Initiatives Will Have to Be Funded by Reallocation from Current Programs and as Preferences/Priorities in Competitive Grants**

Reflecting some of the President's old priorities in the ill-fated FY 2011 Education Budget Proposal and a few new emerging priority initiatives, the proposed FY 2014 education budget points to a number of initiatives that the Administration will have to attempt to undertake by "robbing Peter to pay Paul" from existing programs. The proposed \$3 billion increase over the FY 2012 levels is misleading because it does not take into account the 5.2 percent sequester cut included in the 2013 Continuing Resolution; moreover, the new initiatives requiring new funding are very likely to be shot down by the House. Even the Senate has expressed concern that large formula programs, such as Title I and IDEA, are only proposed for level funding, while the vast majority of proposed increases are in the form of competitive grants. The proposed budget Summary acknowledges the phony numbers: "The bottom line is that the final 2013 level is approximately 5.23 percent less than the 2012 level, but this final 2013 level is not reflected in the 2014 request." Virtually all of the "numbers" will be dead on arrival, not only due to House opposition, but also the fact that the House and Senate have already voted on budget resolutions for

FY 2014 with only the Senate including a limited number of requests included in the President's proposed FY 2014 budget and doing away with the sequester cuts, which if not passed, will doom all FY 2014 requested increases. However, the narrative in the proposed budget does provide a roadmap of the direction the Administration will likely follow by providing additional flexibilities in the use of current Federal funded programs such as Title I, through the use of the Secretary's Waiver Authority and/or through the use of additional "preference" or "competitive" priorities and other mechanisms which would be included under several large-scale competitive grant programs. Some of these are noted below.

Under Title I (i.e., College- and Career-Readiness priority), additional flexibilities would be provided along with financial incentives for Title I Rewards schools. For Priority and Focus Schools "LEAs would be required to implement one of the four rigorous school turnaround models in the lowest-performing five percent of schools in each state as well as research-based locally determined strategies in schools that fall between the fifth and tenth percentiles in performance." In addition to greater flexibility under state waivers for Focus Schools, during the recent SIAA forum, a former legislative assistant for ranking Republican George Miller, indicated that flexibility is already being provided also for Priority Schools, contrary to what is stated in SIG and NCLB Flexibility State waiver guidance which confirms the direction the Administration is pointing to, which has

direct implications for some TechMIS subscribers.

Under the School Improvement Grant program, eligible districts could receive an additional two years of funding, if a SIG school showed progress. In addition, additional funding of \$125 million would be provided in new competitions for district-wide capacity-building. Over the last three years the Administration has increasingly recognized the need for SIG funds to be used for district-wide reforms to assist/sustain implementing school-level reforms; this will likely occur even if no new funding for competitive grants are provided through increased flexibility and “encouragements.” SEAs would also be allowed to set aside additional SIG funding to, among other things, assist LEAs in implementing the intervention models and “reviewing and ensuring the effectiveness of external partners.”

Mentioned in the President’s State of the Union address, the proposed new High School Redesign initiative which would be funded at approximately \$300 million would transform high schools with “smarter curricula” and personalized learning through competitive grants to LEAs in partnership with universities, employers, non-profit, and community-based organizations. Schools would help students learn not only academic content, but also pertinent career-related competencies and technical skills. Priority preferences would be for partnerships in rural areas or in concert with high-poverty inner-cities. Dual enrollment and AP courses and other post-secondary learning opportunities would be provided. A primary focus would be placed on science, math, engineering, and technology (STEM) and if not funded, “redesign” provisions could

become higher priorities in the next Race to the Top-District grant competition.

According to the budget Summary, an effective cohesive national STEM education strategy is “a top administration priority.” Specifically the budget calls for \$150 million for the new STEM Innovation Network Program, which would provide competitive grants to LEAs to develop and evaluate evidence-based practices in “platform schools.” A STEM Virtual Learning Network would also be created to share best practices while the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) would expand a joint USED-NSF initiative to assist high school-college transition in the area of mathematics. Other reformed STEM-related initiatives have been proposed in the past and most have had to rely on existing or reallocated funds for some degree of implementation. Some of the \$273 million increase for STEM could be funded in existing programs. One possible funding source which is outside the Federal appropriation process in Congress would be included in the immigration proposal now being considered by Congress -- firms who hire immigrants under H-1B visa cards would pay a fee which would be dedicated to STEM education, similar to the E-Rate program which is funded by fees/surcharges paid by telecommunication carriers. Wherever possible, the Administration will likely continue earmarking or placing priority preferences in competitive grants on STEM-related activities such as occurred during the last TIF competition where almost half of the total \$290 million amount provided funds to grantees for STEM-related activities.

Another continuing priority of the Administration is Promise Neighborhoods

would receive \$300 million, up from \$60 million last year. Even if all of the increased funding proposed for Promise Neighborhoods is not appropriated, the inclusion of “school climate” and “wraparound services” (which include social, health, and behavioral interventions) will continue to be integrated and expanded into other programs (e.g., Race to the Top-District and SIG). As noted in our last TechMIS Special Report, school climate interventions are now allowed and are encouraged to be used in Title I schoolwide programs as an allowable use of Title I funds, if school climate-type interventions are “identified” in the schoolwide needs assessment.

Most of Secretary Duncan’s testimony introducing the FY 2014 budget on April 11 focused on the President’s preschool plan which he argued, “If you are looking for a good bang for your educational buck, high-quality preschool is the place to look.” It would be funded by a new Federal/state partnership and be available to all four-year-olds from low-income/moderate-income families and provides incentive for states to serve additional children from middle-class families. As the *Politics K-12* blog in Education Week noted, the \$75 billion mandatory initiative over the next ten years would be paid for through a new tax on tobacco products which would bring the total Federal tax to nearly \$2 per pack. Tobacco spokesperson David Sutton stated in an email to *Politics K-12*, “We think it is patently unfair to single out adult tobacco consumers with another Federal tobacco tax increase to pay for a broad new government spending program claiming to have benefits for everyone.” During the recent SIIA conference, one of the panelists said House Speaker John Boehner, an avid cigarette

smoker, would likely have some new spending concerns for this new initiative. The budget would also include \$1.4 billion for Early Head Start childcare partnerships with a significant increase in new funding for evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk children. Without new funding for this proposed priority initiative, one might expect a greater emphasis on pre-K initiatives to be encouraged using Title I funds and be a priority in a number of large-scale competitive programs such as Race to the Top and possibly the new SIG district-wide initiative!

One of the President’s top priorities which is gaining traction in Congress relates to school safety, mental health, and counseling support resulting from the Newtown, Connecticut mass shootings. For example, the Senate Committee recently passed a measure that would provide for school-based mental health services that was proposed jointly by Senate Education Committee Chairman Tom Harkin and ranking Republican Senator Lamar Alexander which passed easily because it does not contain new funding (S.689), according to Education Week (April 17<sup>th</sup>). The committee bill (S.689) renews a program to train school staff to recognize signs of mental illness and connect students and others with services their need. In addition, it makes clear that schools can use Title I money for schoolwide intervention services. The budget calls for \$50 million for a new School Climate Transformation grants program to reduce behavioral problems and \$25 million to help schools to combat violence through counseling, conflict resolution and related programs. In addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services would be provided at an additional \$130 million to train educators in

identifying mental health illnesses, to train mental health professionals, and to provide health services for 16-20-year-old individuals. Such initiatives would be introduced into current legislative proposals in the form of amendments, riders, etc. One was the Harkin-Alexander amendment which was “pulled” when the gun control “background check” was defeated. The amendment authorized the above grants. As *Politics K-12* noted, the bipartisan backed school safety and mental health bills will have to find another legislative vehicle for their programs. Opportunities here could be created for firms with behavioral, social, and school climate type interventions.

As several observers have noted, the proposed FY 2014 budget is based on “fuzzy numbers” and too late suggesting it will be considered “dead on arrival.” However, TechMIS subscribers should be aware of new flexibilities reflected in USED waiver guidance, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), addenda guidance in School Improvement Grants, and competitive and preference priority additional points in forthcoming large grant competitions. For example, as the April 16<sup>th</sup> *Politics K-12* blog reported, about \$370 million of the next \$490 million competitive round for new Race to the Top grants will go for early learning initiatives, some of which would go for new state competitions that “pitch early learning improvement ideas.”

## **USED Announces Changes in Next Round of Race to the Top from Previous Competitions, Including Expanding Access to Early Learning Opportunities and Other Changes for Public Comment**

Announced in the April 17<sup>th</sup> Federal Register are USED’s proposed priorities for the next Race to the Top grant competitions. The April 16<sup>th</sup> press release states that about \$370 million will be available this year for states to develop new approaches to increase high-quality early learning opportunities and close the readiness gap. The bulk of the early learning funding will provide for both a new competition and to provide supplemental awards for six state grantees (California, Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin), who had only received 50 percent of their initial requests during the last competition. According to the press release, “About \$120 million of the 2013 funds will be used for a second round of Race to the Top-District competition which supports locally developed plans to personalize and deepen student learning, directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness, close achievement gaps, and prepare students to succeed in college and careers.” In the previous round, 16 grantees received \$383 million representing 55 districts.

As the *Politics K-12* blog noted, “It’s unclear how much funding would go for early learning in new states and whether the Department will conduct an entirely new Race to the Top-District competition or make awards to districts that came close but did not win last year.” As the blog notes, for the Race to the Top-District competition added to the priority of personalized teaching and learning and is a new priority

emphasis on behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students and families. The Federal Register notice states, “The two more substantive changes are the removal of the opportunity to apply for an optional budget supplement and the reduction of the minimum and maximum grant period for which an applicant may apply...Finally, we’ve proposed one additional priority to support applicants that propose to extend their reforms beyond the classroom and partner with public and private entities in order to address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students, particularly students who attend a high school.” In order to meet this new priority, applicants must describe the coherent and sustainable partnership that it has formed with public or private organizations including before school, after-school, and social service providers; integrated student service providers, businesses, philanthropies, and civic groups and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and post-secondary institutions to support the plan or to implement a personalized learning environments priority. Public comments are due May 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **Takeaways and Highlights from SIIA Ed Tech Government Forum Which Includes a Few Opportunities in the Midst of Gloomy Federal Policy and Funding Picture**

During the annual SIIA Ed Tech Government Forum which was co-sponsored with COSN and ISTE, several takeaways from panelists and speakers indicate some opportunities for many TechMIS subscribers over the next couple of years, despite the gloomy Federal policy and funding picture. Mike Cohen, President of Achieve, a leading

advocate and “cog in the wheel” of Common Core implementation, painted a fairly rosy picture of CCSS implementation, including assessments, over the next couple of years, but also addressed a number of “vulnerabilities” such as right wing political opposition, especially on issues such as Federal control and too much testing. He did identify one opportunity which was also suggested by a CCSSO spokesperson, stating that assessments at the eleventh-grade level will determine if students are college-ready and, if not, provide an opportunity over the next year to provide remediation support such that the student will, at the end of the twelfth-grade, graduate being college-ready. After the session, another attendee and I asked whether the demand for remediation support at the end of the eleventh grade through the twelfth-grade would be increased and whether some other joint effort between colleges and high schools would be needed to ensure that student graduate without the need for further remediation or developmental work during the freshman year in college. In a later session, Peter Zamora, Director of Federal Relations at the Council of Chief State School Officers echoed earlier comments by Cohen that a great deal of “pushback” in some states can be expected after the first CCSS assessment administration when 30 or 40 percent more of students fail to meet the new proficiency levels. Zamora said that his organization and the National Governors Association, are seriously considering studying the need for a “big investment in technology for remediation when Common Core assessment scores first drop 40 percent or so.”

In another session, Joe Williams of the Democrats for Education Reform



organization also noted that some states, such as Tennessee, are preparing parents and educators for big drops, whereas in other states such preparation has not been adequate resulting in recent major assessment policy changes such as Florida. The bottom line is that the demand for upper-high school remediation support and other directly related activities could be created which could provide opportunities for many TechMIS subscribers.

I also inquired as to whether plans are underway to provide alternative assessments for some types of students with disabilities or English language learners. Cohen indicated that accommodations are being developed for use with severely cognitively impaired students as occurred under NCLB (i.e., the so-called Level One alternative assessments). The problems with ELLs have been addressed by another contractor, Cohen noted.

Cohen also noted that the vast majority of publishers' new curriculum materials are being promoted as being aligned with the Common Core Standards when they are not. The PARCC consortium of 23 states is promoting the use of rubrics based on Student Achievement for Progress' "publishers' criteria" and other groups that are proposing evaluation systems to diagnose curriculum to determine alignment. However, as several attendees noted, some of these groups developing so-called efficacy curriculum evaluation systems have yet to determine appropriate measures for efficacy. If districts or states wait until these systems are in place, market paralysis will occur and little purchasing of curriculum will occur.

During another session, the question was

raised as to whether the required use of online computer-based testing (CBT) will receive enough state funding for infrastructure to ensure reasonable implementation of the CCSS assessments even though some states would still have the option to use paper and pencil for a while. Representatives from the two assessment consortia -- PARCC and Smarter Balanced - - argued that the primary rationale for increasing the number of computers/devices would be justified by their use for instruction, and secondarily for assessment.

Several attendees and I questioned whether instruction or assessment will be given priority where there are limited numbers of computers and devices in the LEA. When Secretary Duncan announced awards to the assessment consortia in 2010, he emphasized that online computer-based testing would also generate a greater demand for computer-based instruction. Cohen noted that, in the end, states will realize that it will be up to them to ensure that the infrastructure for computer-based testing will be available in their state. However, over half of all of the state legislators have been in office for less than two years and very likely were not involved or even knowledgeable about the Common Core assessments when their then governor agreed to adopt them might not want to fund such technology infrastructure purchases/upgrades.

In another session, Victor Klatt, former Chief of Staff for then Chairman of the House Education Committee Bill Goodling, addressed the growing issue among numerous quarters about state waivers and how unruly -- almost impossible -- it will be for USED to manage all the negotiated changes between USED and individual

states questioned whether it will be possible to transition NCLB state waiver flexibility provisions into a new ESEA, passage of which is possible by 2015 at the earliest (*Washington Insiders/Whiteboard Advisors* almost unanimously felt would be 2015). As we have previously reported, other education pundits have pointed out that Secretary Duncan has established a precedent of bypassing Congress through extensive use of the Secretary's Waiver Authority such that under another administration, a new Secretary of Education could essentially recall all current waivers and come up with a new set which could be diametrically opposed to the intent of the current waiver initiatives and provisions.

In another session, John Bailey, former education technology czar within USED under the Bush Administration, and co-founder of Whiteboard Advisors and Executive Director of Digital Learning Now/Foundation for Excellence in Education (a Jeb Bush founded organization) summarized results of their recent publication "Digital Learning Report Card 2012" which identifies the states with laws, regulations, traditions, etc. which are most conducive to the implementation and expansion of online digital learning (see related [Washington Update](#) item). One of the findings which he addressed is the growth of "course choice" initiatives, citing Louisiana and Utah as examples. As we have previously reported, Louisiana has approved about 50 providers of online courses, in about 90 topics, which students can take for credit. In response to a question how course choice initiatives differ from SES, Bailey indicated that care has been taken by the governors and SEAs in both of these states to ensure that a high quality of

service is being provided, through careful evaluation by the SEA/state virtual schools, of the courses following a rigorous approval process. Referring to SES as a program where providers were paid based on "seat time" or attendance during tutoring sessions, I asked whether he felt this was a deficiency of the NCLB SES provision and whether heavier emphasis should have been placed on provider pay based on actual student performance. He noted that, in the two states, providers were given some funding upfront with the remainder paid upon student course completion -- graduation or other performance measures. In another session, Klatt, in response to a question regarding anti-profit-making biases in education, noted that when his group (Penn Hill) represents a for-profit organization, it observes an initial withdrawal by Congressional Democrats or even the current Administration. Several attendees agreed that lack of performance-based pay under SES and scandals (such as felons operating SES programs in Florida) have contributed greatly to the anti-profit-making attitude in education over the last few years. Bailey also noted that SES was perceived by districts as a punishment which diverted Title I funds to third-party providers, whereas the current course choice initiatives provide "true choice" for students and parents with a separate funding stream. A number of attendees agreed.

The representative from the National Governors Association (NGA), Ryan Reyna, addressed governors' priorities and technology trends. Governors increasingly tend to be supporting: (a) initiatives for transitioning from print instructional materials to digital/online resources; (b) a greater emphasis on effectiveness in cost-effectiveness analysis, scrutinizing whether

or not online delivery results in greater student proficiencies and what types of blending or other online means are most effective; (c) increased funding for and use of data systems; and (d) partnerships within and among states in areas such as procurement (see Maine multi-state collaborative procurement efforts in related item). Future issues that governors are beginning to think about seriously include the quality and quantity of professional development for implementing the new technology and creating sustainable funding sources for technology and related services; investments in technology beyond CCSS assessment infrastructure; and, as noted earlier, the use of technology in expanded remediation and support activities at the upper high school level as student proficiency scores drop (by as much as 40 percent) after implementation of eleventh-grade CCSS assessments.

Peter Zamora also noted some “issues” to be on the lookout for in the President’s FY 2014 budget proposal (on which the CCSSO has consulted with USED) including: a new competition for about \$150 million under the School Improvement Grant program for capacity-building at the district level for turning around low-performing schools; and the high school “smarter curriculum design” project, which the President proposed in his State of the Union address, which would provide \$300 million for competitive grants to personalize learning and implement quality STEM-related initiatives.

Another notable takeaway from the SIIA sessions include John Bailey’s comments that the most recent survey of *Washington Insiders* by Whiteboard Advisors found that, for the first time, the majority of insiders felt both the Smarter Balanced and PARCC

consortia were on the “wrong track.” This, he noted, was a more pessimistic interpretation than Mike Cohen’s earlier presentation on CCSS assessment implementation, Andy Rotherham, co-founder of Education Sector and former Clinton education advisor, noted that a new administration could change “everything which the waivers are requiring or encouraging in terms of reforms. Victor Klatt felt that the proposed FY 2014 budget was too late and that the proposed numbers would pretty much be “dead on arrival,” although the budget does provide a sense about new priorities of the Obama/Duncan administration. Moreover, many of the programs which have key Congressional supporters and sponsors would “continue to run on autopilot,” even though no successful progress in meeting goals were evident. Klatt also argued that the current immigration bill, which is being formulated in Congress, could have significant implications for STEM as one version would provide a funding source for STEM using earmarks from companies which would benefit from allowing more H-1B visas. This could be a stable source of funding, like the E-Rate, not dependent upon annual Congressional appropriations.

### **USED Publishes State Waiver and School Improvement Grant Guidance Changes as an Addendum to the August 3, 2012 ESEA Flexibility Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document**

The new March 5<sup>th</sup> Guidance in the form of an addendum to some questions and answers in the August 3, 2012 State Waiver guidance includes a number of changes which have direct implications for many TechMIS

subscribers. Our August 2012 TechMIS Special Report addressed some of the new supplement-not-supplant guidance in the August 3<sup>rd</sup> FAQ which appear unchanged by this new addendum. Most of the changes with direct implications for TechMIS subscribers -- rather than for districts -- attempt to facilitate the transition of SIG schools in their third year to become Priority Schools under state waivers and to facilitate the expansion of extended learning time by adding additional instructional hours -- one of Secretary Duncan's personal priorities. Overall, the changes "encourage" the allocation of existing Title I and SIG funds to lowest-performing schools, particularly Priority (versus Focus) Schools under State Waiver Flexibility.

Up front, the FAQ (B-23a) makes it clear that an SEA cannot award SIG funds to an LEA for use in Focus Schools that are not otherwise eligible for SIG funds as Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 schools. The Guidance does cite an exception, "However, if an SEA is able to demonstrate that implementing those comprehensive reforms in its focus schools is consistent with both the goal of the SIG program and the SEA's approved system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support, the Department will consider the SEA's request for an additional waiver to permit it to award SIG funds to an LEA for use in focus schools that are not otherwise eligible for the funds." It then notes that SIG Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools are Priority Schools under state waivers and may use SIG funds only to implement one of the four SIG intervention models.

Under C-35a, the Guidance attempts to explain the difference between "redesigning the school day, week, or year to include

additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration as required by the turnaround principles and providing increased learning time as required by the transformation and turnaround models under SIG." Basically, the difference is "redesigning the school day" does not necessarily require adding to the total number of school hours -- for example, by moving to block scheduling. On the other hand, providing increased learning time under SIG requires adding actual time to the school day, week, or year; an additional 300 hours annually is encouraged by the Secretary. However, extending learning time into the before- and after-school hours is permissible, as long as these programs are available to all students in the school. The Guidance reinforces that an LEA receiving SIG funds to implement the transformation or turnaround model in a Priority School must continue to meet the requirement of "providing increased learning time."

In question C-41a, the Guidance clarifies that if a Priority School is considered to be "implementing meaningful interventions aligned with the turnaround principles," the Priority School interventions must be aligned with all, not some, of the turnaround principles at one time. USED did not contemplate that all Priority Schools would implement interventions aligned to all of the turnaround principles during the first year and will now give an SEA until the 2014-15 school year to begin full implementation of interventions in all of its Priority Schools. C-41b also allows schools to "roll in" all interventions, but only when all interventions aligned with turnaround principles are being implemented at the same time can it be considered that "full implementation" in that school has occurred. In any event, as the Guidance says, "The

school would be required to continue full implementation of all interventions for two additional school years to receive credit for completing the priority school intervention requirements of ESEA flexibility.” C-41c clarifies that if an LEA begins its full implementation of one or more Priority Schools over the two-year period (2013-2015), it can use “the time between now and then to conduct planning and pre-implementation activities to ensure it has in place everything necessary to begin full implementation at the very beginning of the relevant school year.” The Guidance cites a number of pre-implementation activities which could affect TechMIS subscribers, including purchase of new instructional material, and developing a new data system. It does note that most Priority Schools are still subject to requirements to implement a schoolwide reform strategy based on a needs assessment.

Under C-43a through C-43d, the transition of SIG schools to become Priority Schools is addressed. If a SIG school has had its grant terminated, the one, two, or three years in which the school received SIG funding but did not implement interventions with fidelity, that school cannot count any of the years it receives SIG funding toward full implementation of three years if it is designated as a Priority School. Rather, the school must begin again implementing a set of “comprehensive interventions” aligned to the turnaround principles for a full three-year period. If an SIG school that is in its third year of implementing an SIG intervention in 2012-13 and has not yet satisfied the SEA criteria for exiting, that school cannot apply for another three-year grant if it is designated as a Priority School. The Guidance appears to say that that particular school cannot compete for

additional SIG funding; however, while unsaid, it probably could receive other types of funding as a Priority School. Moreover, the Guidance once again emphasizes that a school, after three years, must meet SEA’s exit criteria in the state’s ESEA flexibility request. It recommends that an LEA, whose SIG schools have completed three years of implementation but have not met that criteria, should review the SEA’s request and consult with it to determine what additional action is required. However, an SEA can request an additional waiver after being granted state waiver flexibility to replace its existing Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 list under SIG with its list of Priority Schools. The conditions are addressed in C-43d; hence, it would appear that it is up to the State to determine whether it will seek a waiver to allow an LEA with SIG schools in their third year of implementation to become Priority Schools and hence receive additional funding to continue. This provision may provide an opportunity for firms providing products and services to such Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools to continue to receive funding once the school completes its third year of SIG funding.

As the March 5<sup>th</sup> Guidance FAQ addendum states, the Department will be posting revised guidance on the ESEA flexibility webpage. Additional guidance on questions C-43 through C-43d will be also published as an addendum to the non-regulatory guidance for School Improvement Grant programs.

## **New Continuing Resolution (CR) Includes a Provision Which Limits A State's Penalty for Violating Maintenance of Effort Provision Under IDEA, But Could Provide Unexpected Reallocated Funding for Other States to Reallocate to District Special Education Programs, Thus Providing Some Increased Opportunities for Sales of Some Products and Services**

Included in the most recent Continuing Resolution (CR) which sets limits on Federal expenditures for special education programs through September 30, 2013 -- taking into account sequestration effects beginning in July -- is a provision which has implications beyond state penalties for violating IDEA maintenance of effort (MOE). As reported by the *Politics K-12* blog in Education Week (March 25<sup>th</sup>), a state which violates IDEA MOE requirements would still be penalized by an amount equal to the funding level which the state failed to maintain. As in the case of the widely-reported South Carolina battle (see October 2012 TechMIS issue), the state would still be penalized for the amount the USED withheld in IDEA funding -- about \$36 million -- last October. However, once the state is approved for a MOE waiver and allocates state and local money to make up for the penalized amount, then the Federal penalized amount would no longer be deducted the next year from the state's annual IDEA allocations and regular IDEA funding levels would continue.

While the penalized state remains under the penalized level of IDEA funding until the problem is fixed, the amount of the penalty for that state would then be reallocated to all other states which have not violated state

IDEA maintenance of effort funding levels. Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Michael Yudin said regarding the compromise, "Without this language, these funds for special education and related services would lapse and be unavailable for the children with disabilities they are intended to serve." As the blog notes, Kansas was penalized \$2 million in IDEA funding for MOE failure and New Mexico and New Jersey could be in similar "straits" if their pending request for waivers from MOE are not approved. As a result of the new CR provision, some IDEA state allocations for the 2013-14 school year, to be made shortly, could be increased by some of the penalized states' MOE penalty amounts. These additional funds are supposed to be allocated to districts which could be used to purchase products and services since they will be considered a one-year "windfall."

A recent discussion with a former South Carolina State education policymaker indicates that the \$36 million in State funds which was recently "proposed" to fix the State's MOE effort, in order to receive the additional \$36 million of Federal funds next year, could be in jeopardy, particularly if the State Senate makes an "adjustment"; however, if no adjustment is made, then it appears that special education programs in South Carolina next year could receive a significant increase from a combination of State and Federal IDEA funds. This would also be considered a windfall that is not likely to continue the following year. We will continue to follow developments.

## **The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Reports that in Its 16-Member States the Number of Students Taking Online Courses Has Increased 400 Percent Between 2005-11, While the Number of State-Run Virtual Schools Has Dropped from 15 to 12 Since 2009, But the Number of Districts Coordinating or Providing Online Options Has Increased from 55 Percent in 2010 to 67 Percent**

The latest SREB report on online learning identifies a number of important trends, especially regarding state-run virtual schools that have occurred over the last seven years. Online enrollment in state-run virtual schools has grown from 32,000 in 2004 to 378,000 in 2010 with a 400 percent growth between 2006 and 2010. As the *Digital Education* blog in Education Week (March 28<sup>th</sup>) and the SREB press release report, the number of state virtual schools has declined and district provided online courses has increased. The decrease in state-run virtual schools “is expected to decrease further in current coming years.” According to *Digital Education*, “At first glance, this decline in state-run virtual schools might look like a signal that online education is losing momentum, but in reality, experts say what it really signals is a shift from state-oriented approaches to district programs that emphasize blended learning.” It would appear that a state role is changing to address the growth of district-run online courses by becoming a monitor and “judge” of the quality of online courses and their providers and is becoming a resource for online learning for district leaders.

The growth of the districts as coordinators and providers of online learning can be attributed to the growth of blended learning.

According to the report, “Many SREB states have passed legislation to ensure that students in all districts have access to quality online courses regardless of whether the state or the district provides them.” As *Digital Education* notes, “Many of the companies that provide online courses now seek blended learning, not full-time virtual education, as the key growth area for their companies.” Another factor is state requirements to require or strongly encourage K-12 students to take online courses, including such states as Alabama, Florida, Virginia, and West Virginia that require students take at least one online course to graduate, a trend which is expected to continue to grow. Still another contributing factor is state legislative support for “stable funding for virtual schools and online courses in the future” according to the blog. Also contributing to the growth of online instruction has been legislative action to change the definition of “textbook” to include “digital” or “electronic” resources as a learning tool.

Other interesting trends, noted in the SREB report, between school year 2006 and 2009 relate to reasons why students have taken online courses. For example, in 2006, state-run virtual schools reported that the major reasons high school students used online courses at the K-12 level were schedule conflicts, courses unavailable at students’ schools, graduation on-time, and credit recovery. Remediation which is related to credit recovery was not felt to be a major reported reason. The reasons that have grown significantly were practical and personal reasons, as reported by state virtual schools, including the desire to graduate early and to try an online course.

The SREB report also summarizes

legislation which is affecting state-run virtual schools that was passed between 2010 and 2012 and makes recommendations how states should proceed with online learning.

### **Head Start Recompetition Preliminary Results Announced Without Any Official Details But “Rumors” Suggest Few New Outside Providers in the Mix**

The final results of the first cohort of Head Start Designation Renewal System (DRS) competitions will be announced by July. Applicants’ proposals were subjected to extensive review by early education experts and Certified Public Accountants to determine each potential grantee’s ability to implement Head Start’s mission and the standards in their community. Out of the 125 existing providers required to compete for continued funding, 64 percent (80) submitted proposals that demonstrated a strong plan to provide quality services and will continue to receive Federal funding. The Office of Head Start (OHS) will be closely monitoring these 80 grantees to be sure they are following through on their promises. (See the list of agencies currently in negotiations: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/dr/prelim-1st-cohort-awardees.html>)

A total of 25 providers will be replaced by new agencies that developed better plans for delivering Head Start services in their communities, and an additional 14 existing grantees will see their grants split up between new and existing providers. In 16 communities, where no competitive submissions were received, Head Start services will continue while a new

competition begins this Spring to find new providers. But, the Office of Head Start has steadfastly refused to identify the providers that would lose funding.

The 25 awards to new agencies and the 80 agencies that are under negotiation for continuation offer opportunities for firms with products and services in the following areas:

- safety improvements, especially in outdoor spaces where many local programs are moving to more naturalized environments that enhance children’s connections with nature;
- classroom equipment and instructional materials, including the areas of curriculum and assessment that promote achieving school readiness goals; and
- services targeted on staff development of teachers and aides, in particular training that includes promoting positive teacher/aide child interactions, classroom organization and instructional support, and that are designed to raise observation scores based on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

Below average CLASS scores is one of the criteria that put some Head Start programs on the list for recompetition (see February TechMIS).

The 80 agencies that successfully recompeted, because they will be closely monitored to determine their continued funding, will be looking for products and services that support systems which generate data and provide reports that inform and



track progress toward goals of program improvement.

UPDATE: As reported in the April 18<sup>th</sup> *Early Education* blog at the New America Foundation, of the 60+ “new providers” less than five are organizations not involved in Head Start services before. As a result, firms that have products that could be used in Head Start programs to improve quality should focus on the providers with some previous Head Start experience who want to improve the quality of child development and education services in the areas of the former Head Start grantees that had to re compete but lost.

### **USED Awards States This Year’s SIG Grants to Turn Around Lowest-Performing Schools**

During March, USED announced awards of School Improvement Grant Part (g)funding to 21 states which are implementing the four prescribed intervention models. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, it announced the SIG grant awards to the following states: Connecticut (\$3.6 million), Kentucky (\$7.7 million), Maryland (\$6.8 million), Minnesota (\$5.8 million), Mississippi (\$6.1 million), New Mexico (\$4.1 million), Ohio (\$20.2 million), South Carolina (\$7.1 million), South Dakota (\$1.5 million), Utah (\$3.4 million), and West Virginia (\$3.3 million). On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Department also announced that ten additional states will receive funding under the School Improvement Grant program. Four of the states will receive awards to run a new competition for previously unfunded schools and six states will receive continuation funds for their third year of implementing a SIG model. The states receiving new awards are: Indiana (\$9.2

million), Nebraska (\$2.6 million), Colorado (\$5.2 million), and Louisiana (\$9.6 million). The states receiving continuation awards are: Alaska (\$1.5 million), Iowa (\$3.0 million), North Dakota (\$1.2 million), Oklahoma (\$5.5 million), Texas (\$49.7 million), and Wyoming (\$1.1 million). Some of the best opportunities for TechMIS subscribers most likely are in the states receiving funds to conduct new competitions for previously-unfunded schools.

The vast majority of these grants will be used to make competitive subgrants to those LEAs “that demonstrate the greatest need for funds and the strongest commitment to use them to provide resources required to substantially raise student achievement in their lowest-performing schools.” Most of these schools will be in their second or third year of implementation; however, in some cases, states may decide that specific Tier 1 or Tier 2 schools have not made substantial progress and will terminate the schools’ SIG funding. It should be noted that recent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) addenda will generally not allow an SEA to provide any additional funding beyond the third year to any SIG school which has not fully implemented its intervention model. On the other hand, it would appear that USED will encourage the states to seek waivers to put such Tier 1 or Tier 2 SIG schools that have not made substantial progress on the states’ list of priority schools or that allow those schools to continue receiving some funding under state waiver initiatives. Also, it is important to note that in some states which also allocated Federal Title I funds under the state SEA 4% set-aside may have to reduce substantially the amount of such set-aside funding for FY 2013 for next school year as a result of the sequestration initial impact (as noted in our last TechMIS Sequestration

Update).

**Senate Legislative Proposal to Increase School Safety Does Not Include President's Proposal to Train School Guidance Counselors/Social Workers, Support Positive Behavioral Support Interventions, and Facilitate Early Identification of Mental Illnesses (Update: Amendment to Include President's Initiative "Pulled" After Background Check Bill Was Defeated in Mid-April)**

When the Senate returned after its recess, the first proposal it will address related to gun control measures and school safety in response to the Newtown mass killing did not include many of the President's priorities which he announced earlier this year (see February TechMIS). Many TechMIS subscribers have expressed interest in Obama's proposed initiatives to train teachers and counselors, and to implement behavioral supports which are not included in the Senate bill, but which could be introduced later in the form of amendments or the integration of other bills already introduced in these omitted areas (e.g., the measure introduced by Senator Al Franken, D-MN, among others, according to the *Politics K-12* blog in Education Week on April 2<sup>nd</sup>). The pending legislation, introduced by Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME), however, is supported by national education groups because it would upgrade security infrastructure (such as expanding surveillance equipment) and would provide money to train teachers and administrators on security efforts and to set up hotlines. Approximately \$40 million would flow through the United States Department of

Justice to local governments, but require a 50 percent match.

It is interesting to note that, in 2007, then-Senator Obama and then-Senator Hilary Clinton co-sponsored legislative proposals to expand services, particularly at the middle-school level, related to improving school climate and wraparound type services such as social, behavioral and related interventions which subsequently have been integrated into the Promise Neighborhood initiative and major components in School Improvement Grants. One might anticipate that, at the President's urging, some of the 20+ amendments which Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) mentioned on a Sunday talk show that would likely be proposed would include those Obama priorities relating to mental health and behavioral interventions, along with the ban on assault weapons which, according to the *Politics K-12* blog is something "the Obama Administration has been pushing." As *Politics K-12* also noted, such amendments would likely be a "pretty tough load" especially in light of House opposition to any programs costing more money.

Around the same time the Senate proposal was made known, the National Rifle Association held a press conference led by Asa Hutchinson, who heads the NRA's School Safety Initiative, as reported in the *Rules for Engagement* blog in Education Week (April 2<sup>nd</sup>). Bolstering its National School Shield program created after the Newtown, Connecticut incident, the NRA task force recommends that schools either hire armed security officers or arm selected school employees, make improvements to buildings, and add mental health resources to schools, all of which the Senate proposal does not address. Hutchinson reportedly

said that bolstering mental health resources at schools and improving building security alone are inadequate steps to ensure school safety. He argued that armed security in the school is a layer just as important as a mental health component.

As the *Rules for Engagement* blog notes, a number of education groups and the American Civil Liberties Union have also unveiled their recommendations for improving school safety by advocating adding counselors and mental health providers and working on the relationships between students and adults at schools which would provide opportunities for counseling. In the mean time, as the President proposed in January, the USED and other agencies have until May to come up with their own model for providing high-quality emergency management plans for schools and best practices and ways to train students and staff.

Update: See related FY 2014 Proposed Budget [Washington Update](#) -- the amendment was “pulled” when the “background check” amendment was defeated; the President’s proposed initiative will likely be submitted again when the whole gun control bill is reconsidered.

**Under a \$37 Million Grant, Approximately 400 High Schools in 11 States Have Developed a Scorecard to Measure School Climate Regarding Student Safety and Engagement, Funded Under the Safe and Supported School Program (ed.gov)**

According to [Education Week](#) (March 27<sup>th</sup>), the scorecard, in the form of a set of indices,

is intended to provide a balance between addressing conditions necessary for students to learn and what students are actually learning with respect to the mathematics and reading/language arts Common Core State Standards. The indices are based on a combination of student, staff member, and parent perceptions of school climate, in combination with hard data relating to graduation attendance, dropout rates, and more traditional student support measures. Anonymous surveys address a number of items such as whether students feel there is an adult to connect with on campus or whether students have experienced bullying or have used drugs or alcohol recently. Based on these indices, most of the grant money now is being used to implement specific evidence-based interventions to address problems highlighted by the survey, at least for the next year after which the grant runs out. The surveys are now available for any school to use. Rather than using data to help school officials determine what types of activities should be stopped, the new indices are designed to help officials to take more proactive interventions.

The grant is being overseen by the National Center on State Supportive Learning Environments which is operated by American Institutes for Research. The amounts of the 11 states’ S3 funding range from Michigan and Arizona which received about \$6 million to South Carolina, West Virginia, and California which received about \$2 million. Eighty percent of the grant money is to be used to develop and purchase interventions at low-performing high schools to address the concerns raised by the school climate surveys.

## **The Most Recent AASA Survey Reports More Than Three-Quarters of the District Respondents (77.9%) Said Their Districts Would Have to Eliminate Jobs as a Result of Sequestration, Including for First Time Special Education**

The most recent AASA survey, with nearly 400 responses from 42 states, details the impact of sequestration on local school districts. Calling the sequestration cuts Draconian, more than three-quarters of the respondents (77.9%) said their districts would have to eliminate jobs as a result of sequestration. On the average, AASA districts -- primarily small- to medium-sized and rural districts -- making cuts due to sequestration will eliminate approximately 4.8 instructional positions. As reported in previous AASA surveys, the biggest effects will be on LEAs receiving Impact Aid. The recent survey confirms that the sequestration cuts will be to areas most likely to impact student learning -- reducing academic programs, personnel layoffs, increased class size, reducing professional development, and deferring technology purchases.

The AASA report states a new harsh reality: "...for the first time in four years and 14 surveys AASA has administered relating to the impact of the recession on the nation's schools, there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that special education funding will take a hit." Districts will be "left to cover the federal shortfall stemming from Congress' perpetual failure to meet its statutory funding commitment. School districts use local budget funds to cover this shortfall, sacrificing local budget authority and priorities. Statutory requirements related to maintenance of effort meant that the cuts of

the recession were concentrated on non-IDEA dollars." Although the March 2013 Continuing Resolution includes provisions reducing the number of years penalties apply to districts failing to meet maintenance of effort (see related TechMIS item), AASA calls the cuts of sequestration "hypocrisy," as the Federal Government "habitually underfunds and considers cuts to IDEA, local school districts are left not only without flexibility to adjust their budgets to changing local fiscal realities, but are also 'on the hook' to cover a significantly larger federal shortfall."

The summary of the survey findings were reported out on February 26<sup>th</sup> on the AASA website (email Noelle Ellerson [nellerson@aasa.org](mailto:nellerson@aasa.org)).

### **Miscellaneous (a)**

According to the *Politics K-12* blog in Education Week, on March 14<sup>th</sup>, USED sent a letter to each state chief which indicated that USED would consider granting a one-year extension of their Race to the Top scope of work agreement with USED. This would be done on a case-by-case basis as a result of many delays and negotiations, which have occurred during the first three years of RTTT grants, resulting in a number of unintended consequences. According to USED records, grantees have drawn down less than half of their portion of the \$4 billion grants. The USED letter would give states until July 1, 2015 to spend their money; without an extension, the deadline would be the summer of 2014. As the article states, "In giving states more time, federal officials are trying to walk a fine line between making sure states deliver on their promises, but also wanting to see them

succeed -- while making sure they don't blow through their cash just to meet a deadline.”

The implications for firms currently working with states' and/or districts' Race to the Top implementations will vary from state to state depending on the specific activities that may be extended for one additional year. On the other hand, because the one-year extensions allow for no additional costs to be provided, states will be under pressure to cover salaries for SEA/LEA staff hired specifically for Race to the Top activities which could mean pressures to renegotiate contracts with vendors. We will continue to monitor additional guidance that is expected to be provided by USED.

### **Miscellaneous (b)**

A new “developmental” math program developed by the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching more than tripled the rates at which remedial students earned college math credit. In addition to tripling rates, students earned college math credit and also got there twice as fast, according to the Carnegie Foundation. The “Statway” program focuses on statistics and data analysis, replacing remedial math sequences as part of an intensive year-long program where students complete remedial requirements and earn credit for college-level statistics. According to Carnegie, 51 percent of students who finish the “Statway” program went on to earn college math credit with a “C” or better compared to only 5.9 percent of “developmental” math students at pilot colleges. According to Carnegie, a disproportionate number of students were minority from families whose primary language is not English or had parents who

did not attend college. Keys to the program's success were making math relevant and interesting and the program's emphasis on student motivation, tenacity, and success skills. Financial support for the “Statway” pilot program came from the Gates, Hewlett, and Kresge Foundations, as reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education (March 25<sup>th</sup>).

### **Miscellaneous (c)**

The National Catholic Education Association reports that more than two million students currently attend Catholic schools, approximately 30,000 fewer than those attending in the 2011-12 school year. Moreover, while 28 Catholic schools opened during the 2012-13 school year, almost 150 were closed or consolidated. Between 2000 and 2013, slightly more than 2,000 Catholic schools closed and the number of students has declined by 650,000. According to the *Charters & Choice* blog on Education Week, the decline can be attributed to declining financial support, higher operational costs, flight of middle-income families from urban areas, and the rise of charter schools offering parents other choices. According to the NCEA, almost a third of the U.S. Catholic schools have waiting lists for admission, particularly in areas of the country which have seen population increases, but new school construction has not kept pace with population growth.

### **Miscellaneous (d)**

The After-School Corporation (TASC) recommends that students who participate in out-of-school education and learning

experiences should be able to earn credit based on their performance. This new report recommends a number of initiatives to be undertaken in New York State, including one-hour credit for out-of-school learning at the high school level. Other recommendations which were designed to facilitate flexible, personalized, and real-world learning experiences in partnership with business, museums, libraries, and other local community entities, include replacing seat time requirements with competency-based assessment metrics. Teachers should be trained in out-of-school learning techniques and skills and communities should build and support digital connectivity through increased technology access. Recommendations are based on TASC's experience in implementing project ExpandedED, in which it is working with 25 New York City schools and six community organizations to provide 150 high school student credits for learning outside the classroom through internships and apprenticeships. The new TASC report was summarized in the *Beyond School* blog in Education Week (March 25<sup>th</sup>).

### **Miscellaneous (e)**

The *Early Ed Watch* blog estimates the additional Federal cost of Obama's plan to expand pre-K to be between \$10 to 15 billion per year. This is beyond the \$9 billion the feds and states currently spend on pre-K for four-year-olds. Full-funding for the universal pre-K initiative is estimated to cost Federal and state governments a total of \$19 to 24 billion, which is two to two-and-a-half times the current cost of pre-K. The additional funds would cover a total enrollment of 3.1 million four-year-olds for one year.

State-funded full-day pre-K programs of decent quality costs \$2,640 to \$11,699 per child. Although per-child costs vary by state due to availability of staff and general cost of living, the average of \$8,000 per child per year is a reasonable estimate. This is between the \$7,581 Head Start cost for comprehensive services and the \$12,442 per-pupil cost of K-12 students nationally, according to the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER). Using a per-pupil cost of \$8,000, it is estimated that universal pre-K would cost \$24.6 billion per year, which is closer to the high end of the estimate of an additional \$10 to 15 billion/year and includes the \$9 billion already spent by Federal and state governments on pre-K. The authors of these estimates consider them "back-of-the-envelope" calculations for a number of reasons, including that there are certain fixed costs that simply cannot be multiplied by a percentage, nor do they reflect efficiencies that are only achieved by economies of scale.

### **Miscellaneous (f)**

According to Jobs for the Future, students enrolled in an early college high school/dual enrollment programs have a 93 percent graduation rate, while the national average is about 78 percent. Jobs for the Future, which has 75,000 students in its network of 246 early college schools, reports that, during the first semester after graduating from early college programs, 76 percent of its graduates in the network enroll in college versus the national rate of 68 percent. The early college graduates in Jobs for the Future schools in 2011 earned an average 36 college credits along with their high school

diploma. More than half of JFF students are from low-income families, and 77 percent are minorities. Moreover, if high school students take even one college-level class, their chances of completing college increase significantly. The evaluation, conducted by the American Institutes for Research, found that students in the JFF network outperformed their peers on state assessments and have higher on-time graduation rates than counterpart students in surrounding districts.

### Miscellaneous (g)

The Federal Education Budget Project (FEBP), the parent of *Ed Money Watch* at the New America Foundation, has updated a database on district-level IDEA special education Federal funding for 2010 and 2011. Unlike Title I, funded at approximately \$15 billion, the \$11.6 billion Federal IDEA funding per LEA is not determined and reported at the Federal level, but rather is determined at the state level taking into account not only the Federal formula for IDEA, but also state allocation procedures for IDEA Part B funds. The IDEA funding formula takes into account the level of IDEA funding in 1999, the number of children ages three through 21 enrolled in the district, and the percentage of students living in poverty, which is a large part of the Title I formula also. States then use different formula and procedures for finalizing district allocations.

As *Ed Money Watch* (April 5<sup>th</sup>) notes, the FEBP collects district-level data directly from the states which are displayed at [www.edbudgetproject.org](http://www.edbudgetproject.org) which displays district-level data on IDEA Part B funding for 2010 and 2011 and student poverty rates

for the two years. It also includes the number of students enrolled in special education programs in each district for 2010 and 2011.

As we and others have reported in the past, IDEA special education is an unfunded mandate because the actual amount of the Federal portion which is supposed to be 40 percent of the total cost of special education has hovered around 18 percent over the last decade with a slight tick up during the \$11 billion ARRA stimulus funding increase in 2009 and 2010. Federal IDEA funds are supposed to cover excess costs above regular local district spending from non-IDEA sources on special education students. The FEBP found that the most recent survey estimates schools spent 1.9 times more in total expenditures and 2.08 times more in current operating expenditures on students with disabilities than spent on non-special education students. It also notes that the increase in special education funding is primarily the result of student populations identified as disabled, although during the last five years the actual number of students placed in certain groups such as specific learning disabilities has declined, probably as a result of the expansion of response-to-intervention approaches.

The FEBP database can provide some answers to questions raised by TechMIS subscribers over the last decade as to how much Federal IDEA funding is being allocated to specific districts. For such data and related information about the IDEA formula go to: [www.edbudgetproject.org](http://www.edbudgetproject.org)

### Miscellaneous (h)

The Multi-State Learning Technology

Initiative, led by Maine with Hawaii and Vermont as partners (and likely to expand to additional State partners) will facilitate future technology procurements. As reported in Education Week (March 13<sup>th</sup>), a new collaborative multi-state effort is being driven by a combination of emerging developments and is likely to attract additional state partners in the future. One driving development is the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and related online assessments. As Education Week noted, “In their invitation to technology companies bidding to provide them with services, the initial state partners said that the technology supplied by vendors must meet the guidelines given to states by a pair of consortia for the common-core tests, which will be given online.”

Paul Stembler, coordinator for the WSCA/NASPO Cooperative Purchasing Organization, affiliated with the National Association of State Procurement Officials, stated that the multi-state proposal would allow districts and other government entities, such as charter schools, to participate. Such cooperative state purchasing ventures have grown more widespread, according to Stembler, and some have involved personal computers and servers. Arguing that large-scale purchasing power can result in lower prices, Stembler also noted that vendors are expected to provide devices such as iPads, tablets and laptops, and also wireless services, professional development, and continued support and guaranteed maintenance and repair.

No stranger to volume purchasing of technology, Maine initiated its one-on-one

computing program over a decade ago, providing laptops to all seventh and eighth-grade students, a program which continues in about half of the State’s high schools to date. When its Statewide contract had to be rebid, Maine invited Hawaii and Vermont to help craft the solicitation won by three companies -- Apple, CTL, and Hewlett Packard. Education Week notes that Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and South Carolina have also shown interest in participating while other states, according to leaders of the consortium, indicated they are also intrigued by the project. Stephanie Shipton of the Hawaii Department of Education indicated that her State is planning a rollout of its one-on-one computing initiative, having requested almost \$30 million from the State legislature over two years to create a digital curriculum aligned to the common core. During the last National Governors Association panel on education and workforce education, Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie said his state would be putting any new education money into early learning and providing laptops for every elementary student. Other states may want to wait to see how the Maine-led multi-state project fares before jumping in. As noted in the article, the Los Angeles Unified School District has embarked on a similar massive procurement by including not only devices for its one-to-one computing program, but also directly-related services.



# Alabama Update

## April 2013

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The Alabama State Board of Education has approved a resolution making Alabama the first State to adopt a new standardized testing system aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Reportedly “fully aligned” with the CCSS, the *ACT Aspire* exam will become effective in August as the State’s reading and math assessment for grades 3-8. State officials say the new tests align K-12 instruction with the requirements of higher education and industry. According to [AL.com](http://AL.com), *ACT Aspire* will provide more meaningful feedback to parents including projections of student scores on the ACT college-entrance exam. *ACT Aspire* is currently being pilot-tested in more than 400 schools (across eight states), 240 of which are in Alabama. Alabama State Superintendent Thomas Bice reportedly said that the new assessments will help educators across grades to begin preparing students for college or career before they reach high school. The test would be administered in grades three through eight beginning in August. A task force on assessment and accountability also recommended that *ACT Aspire* be used in science grades five through seven during the 2015-16 school year, even though science standards are not part of the CCSS. The state legislature recently failed in its attempt to repeal Alabama’s Common Core Standards which is part of the Common Core State Standards adopted by 45 other states.

# Alaska Update

## April 2013

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Alaska school districts will have an additional two months before notifying tenured teachers in writing about whether they would not be retained. New legislation was passed so that districts could better assess their funding situation properly as a result of sequestration and other Federal funding uncertainties and State funding.

Alaska has joined the Smarter Balanced CCSS consortium even though it has not formally adopted the CCSS. USED has approved the arrangement because the State demonstrated that it has “substantially similar” State standards to the CCSS.

# Arizona Update

April 2013

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Education Week notes that Arizona Governor Jon Brewer has signed into law a bill that will replace the State's current assessment (AIMS) with a new achievement test based on the more rigorous Common Core State Standards. The measure will eliminate the existing requirement that high school students pass the AIMS test in order to graduate.

# California Update

April 2013

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The Sacramento Bee notes that California Governor Jerry Brown's community college spending plan includes efforts to increase graduation and transfer rates by discouraging students from taking courses without an academic plan. The Governor's proposal would have limited community college students to 90 units at the current in-State rate of \$46 per unit. However, the plan has been rejected by the legislature based on concerns that unit caps could hurt double majors or laid-off workers returning to school for a new skill set.

A new report from the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teacher College addresses a three-year, dual-enrollment program developed for low-income California students, English language learners, students who are struggling academically, and those at risk of dropping out of college. The report found more California students participating in the program stayed in college and earned more credits than similar students who did not participate. Running from 2008 to 2011, the program involved nearly 3,000 students and cost almost \$5 million. It used "concurrent courses" in which students conduct research on three careers that interest them, create an online career and education plan, learn how to use government databases for financial planning, and conduct Internet research. During the second year, students in the tenth- and eleventh-grade take courses in local high schools including English, algebra, calculus, foreign language, political science, and environmental horticulture.

# Colorado Update

April 2013

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Using Federal Race to the Top funds, Colorado has established a new State-level position to oversee science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. At the same time, a group called the Colorado Legacy Foundation, in conjunction with the Governor's office, is working on a project to define more clearly criteria for quality STEM initiatives. The Denver Post notes that, among the established initiatives are a framework for replicating successful programs and an online portal to help students and educators to see STEM pathways through school to the workforce. The St. Vrain Valley school district, in partnership with the University of Colorado at Boulder and IBM, has established a "STEM Academy" that extends from preschool through six elementary schools and two middle schools feeding into Skyline High School. Funded by \$16.6 million in RTTT money and \$3.6 million from the Federal Investing in Innovation program, the STEM Academy offers guaranteed admission to CU's engineering school for students who complete the required courses.

# Florida Update

April 2013

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According to the Miami Herald (April 4<sup>th</sup>), the Florida legislature has passed and the Governor will likely sign a bill to change high school graduation requirements and provide more opportunities for online learning in universities. Two types of high school diplomas would be provided for students -- one for college-bound students and one for those heading into the workplace. The bill would also designate a “preeminent research university” status to certain institutions based on student performance and retention rates and other factors which will allow the university to receive additional money to create online learning institutes. Florida district superintendents reportedly support the bill because of the difficulties freshmen would face with the new graduation requirement; some feel students will be more engaged if they can connect their academic work to potential careers. Dade County superintendent Albert Carvalho called the bill a “thoughtful, measured, and balanced approach to ensuring accountability,” while reducing the amount of high stakes testing. Among the courses that students could drop in favor of industry certification is Algebra II. Some Florida legislators have argued that it is important to prepare students with the job skills of today and that Algebra II is not necessary. Others, including the Jeb Bush-founded Foundation for Florida’s Future, have advocated for retaining the Algebra II requirement. Students would still have to pass an end-of-course exam in algebra and standardized tests in March, but will no longer have to pass end-of-course exams in geometry and biology. Students can also add a “merit” designation to their diploma by earning industry certification.

As reported in Education Week, the National Education Association, on behalf of three of its Florida affiliates, has sued the Florida education department, arguing that the State’s new formula for evaluating teachers violates their Constitutional rights. The Florida action is the first in the nation to challenge “value added” formulas for assessing teachers. If an injunction is granted, it would throw out evaluation results from 2011-12 and future years until a new system is developed. Florida’s current formula requires all teachers to be evaluated, in part, based on

student progress. The specific growth formula was developed for teachers of subjects in which the State administers standardized tests: reading/grades 4-10 and math/grades 4-8. However, teachers of other subjects and grades, which are not tested, are evaluated based on schoolwide scores or students' scores on tests in other subjects that might be only tangentially related to their field. The Florida legislature is considering a bill that would require teachers to be evaluated only on the progress of their own students, but the union argues it does not include enough detail. Other states are using a variety of methods to assess teachers of such subjects as arts, science, health, and physical education, including new subject-specific standardized tests and teacher-developed goals and exams. NEA officials suggest that the Florida lawsuit will not be the last on the evaluation issue.

According to The Orlando Sentinel, a Florida legislature committee has approved a parent-trigger bill that would allow parents of students in low-rated schools to participate in decisions about school improvement. The measure was supported down party lines with all Republicans voting in favor and all Democrats against. Last year, a similar bill passed the House but died in the State Senate.

# Georgia Update

## April 2013

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According to the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), the Georgia Department of Education has rolled out a new system for grading schools and school districts. Known as the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), the system was integral to the State's request for a waiver from performance measure requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. Unlike NCLB which measures whether a school or district did or did not make "adequate yearly progress," the CCRPI assigns grades on a 0-100 scale. Grades are based on such elements as graduation rates, student attendance, student performance on standardized tests, academic growth, and reducing achievement gaps.

The Georgia legislature is considering a parent-trigger bill that would allow parents and teachers to petition local school boards to convert low-performing regular schools to charter schools. Under the measure, if 60 percent of parents or 60 percent of school staff petition for a change to charter status, it can only be rejected if two-thirds of the local school board opposes the petition.

The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute has conducted an evaluation of students enrolled in Georgia's State-funded universal preschool program in 2011-12. According to [Education Week's Early Years](#) blog, the study showed that children made significant growth in language/literacy skills, math skills, and general knowledge/behavioral skills, with the greatest gains occurring with limited-English-proficient students. When compared with a similar sample in 2008-09, the latest group of students scored higher on instructional support, which could be attributed to recent effort to improve professional development among early-childhood educators. The study suggests further improvement could come from reducing class sizes. Governor Nathan Deal has proposed extending the State pre-K program to 180 days, its original length.



# Hawaii Update

April 2013

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Education Week's Politics K-12 blog notes that the Hawaii State Teachers Association, after two years of wrangling, has approved a contract that ties teacher evaluations and salaries to student test scores. The new contract is expected to allow the State to retain \$75 million Race to the Top grant which has been identified by the U.S. Department of Education as "high-risk." The new teacher evaluations -- under which student growth counts for half of a teacher's rating -- are currently being pilot-tested in more than 30 schools. The results of the pilot will be reviewed by the State and union to decide on any needed changes.

# Idaho Update

## April 2013

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The Idaho House approved a \$1.3 billion public school budget, according to Education Week. The FY 2014 spending plan would increase minimum teacher salaries by 1.6 percent and would provide \$13 million for districts to award educators who improve student achievement. However, the “grand bargain” for funding the State’s public schools has fallen apart. The education budget plan, supported by the State superintendent, local school boards, and the State teachers union, was defeated by an 18-17 vote in the State Senate. Among the reasons given by opponents for the bill’s rejection was \$13.4 million for school technology, \$3 million of which was designated for pilot projects in schools experimenting with technology.

Beginning next Fall, charter schools in Idaho will receive increased funding of \$1.4 million for facilities and maintenance costs, with an additional \$2.1 million during the second year. Each charter school should receive about \$34,000 during the first year as reported by the *Charters & Choice* blog in Education Week (April 1<sup>st</sup>). Only a small portion of states with charter schools have passed laws to dedicate facilities funding for charter schools.

# Illinois Update

## April 2013

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The Illinois State Board of Education has approved Superintendent Christopher Koch's proposal to raise cut scores on State math and reading exams in order to prepare for the more rigorous Common Core State Standards and new assessments. The proficiency cut in reading will be increased from 13 to 17 points and from 21 to 30 points in math.

Called the largest coordinated summer learning effort in the country by City officials, Chicago is implementing -- with 142 community organizations -- a new effort dubbed the "Summer of Learning" Initiative, as reported by the *Beyond School* blog on [Education Week](#) (March 19<sup>th</sup>). Focusing on STEM learning, the initiative includes a digital badging component which would allow students to receive digital recognition for their summer learning and will involve development of other new skills that can be applied to school day/year learning. The MacArthur and Mozilla Foundations will support the project. During a recent meeting of state superintendents, a CCSSO official indicated that a new FAQ will be issued by USED on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers which is expected to emphasize, to a much greater degree, extended learning time beyond after-school programs. Another recent article in the *Beyond School* blog (March 11<sup>th</sup>) highlighted an Afterschool Alliance study that found after-school program providers are unaware of STEM's potential and asks them to build into their after-school "curriculum" student awareness of the value of STEM learning.

# Kentucky Update

April 2013

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Over the last three years, Kentucky State Superintendent Terry Holliday and his SEA staff have led turnaround efforts in eight of 41 low-performing Kentucky schools. According to The Courier-Journal, 16 of 18 school turnaround efforts in Jefferson County Public Schools have made little progress and may be the next target for SEA takeover. The lowest-performing schools showing little progress are Shawnee, Valley, Western, Doss, Iroquois, Seneca, Southern and Waggoner high schools, and Frost, Western, Knight, Olmsted Academy North, Myers, Stuart, Thomas Jefferson, and Westport middle schools.

# Louisiana Update

April 2013

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The Advocate notes that the Louisiana's standardized tests for public school students -- LEAP for grades 4 and 8 and iLEAP for grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 -- will end after the 2014 administration. Those tests, as well as high school end-of-course exams, will be overhauled in 2015 as part of testing for the national Common Core State Standards.

# Minnesota Update

April 2013

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According to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, an administrative law judge has mediated a dispute between the Minnesota Department of Education and a group of conservatives who have argued that the State's new social studies standards have an "anti-American" and liberal bias. On each point, the judge ruled that the new standards are "needed and reasonable" and can, therefore, be adopted for the 2013-14 school year. The new standards emerged from the State's old standards -- called the Profile of Learning -- and include four subject areas -- history, geography, economics, and citizenship.

As noted on Minnesota Public Radio, more than two years ago, the Minnesota legislature approved alternative teacher licensure pathways. Yet, to date, no organizations have applied for approval to start training under the program.

# Mississippi Update

April 2013

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Passed by both Mississippi legislative chambers with expected signature of the Governor, a new bill requires charter schools to be run as not-for-profits or managed by non-profit charter management organizations. Higher achieving districts with an A, B, or C rating can veto charter school proposals in their districts and no student can cross district lines to enroll in charter schools, according to the *Charters & Choice* blog in Education Week (April 3<sup>rd</sup>). Up to 15 charter schools each year can be authorized by a board appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State Superintendent. The blog notes that, under a previous charter school law, no charter schools have been operating in the State.

According to the Clarion-Ledger.com, eight public universities in Mississippi will receive State funds based on a performance model that looks at completed courses and graduation rates, among other considerations. Commissioner of Higher Education, Hank Bounds, said this was the “first-ever allocation model based on actual performance for the Mississippi college system.” Although the amount colleges will receive using the performance model will vary during FY 2014, no university will receive less than it did the previous year (i.e., a hold harmless provision). The formula measures include degrees awarded, numbers of students graduating in STEM fields, and how many at-risk students are served by each university.

# New York Update

April 2013

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According to Education Week, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and the State legislature have reached a budget deal that would include:

- expansion of pre-kindergarten programs in low-income schools;
- funding to extend the school day and school year; and
- merit pay for top-performing teachers.

The Wall Street Journal reports New York City education officials have launched an ad campaign to forewarn parents and students that new tougher State tests are likely to result in much lower student scores. In April, students in grades 3-8 started taking exams, based on the Common Core State Standards, that are intended to measure, not only basic reading and mathematics skills, but also critical thinking. State education officials have said that the number of students rated as proficient in English or math could drop by as much as 35 percentage points, as has happened in other states that started testing students on the CCSS.



# Oklahoma Update

April 2013

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The House Education Committee in the Oklahoma State legislature has passed a bill delaying by one year full implementation of the State's proposed teacher and leader effectiveness evaluation system. Only the component requiring classroom observation will be implemented next year, while other components, including test scores and other qualitative measurements, would be delayed by a year, as reported in [Education Week](#).

The Oklahoma State Senate has approved, generally on party lines, a parent-trigger bill that would allow parents of children in a low-performing school to petition to change the school into a charter school or replace administrators. Known as the Parent Empowerment Act, the measure says that, if the parents' petition is denied at the district level, the Oklahoma State Department of Education will make the final decision.

# Oregon Update

## April 2013

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As part of his 2011 overhaul of Oregon's education system, Governor John Kitzhaber abolished the State's elected K-12 schools superintendent and appointed a chief education officer to oversee every stage of education, from preschool to college. The Governor also established an Education Investment Board (OEIB) to improve connections among decision-makers at all levels. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, under this year's budget proposal, the State Department of Education would funnel early childhood money to community-based "hubs" that would then distribute it among local preschools and child-care providers. The Governor has also proposed a new Department of Post-Secondary Education to oversee public universities and community colleges.

As reported by the Associated Press, enrollment of students in Oregon's special education programs continues to increase, reaching 13.3 percent of the overall student population (85,000 students) -- an increase of more than 700 students over last year. The fastest growing disabilities group is autism which has increased from 317 students diagnosed in 1990-91 to 2,650 in 2001 to almost 9,000 this school year.

# Rhode Island Update

April 2013

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The *Providence Talks* program has been awarded a \$5 million grant from the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge to improve literacy rates by providing poor families with recording devices to encourage communication with young children. The proposal recognized that children from low-income families hear far fewer words than higher-income peers. The project calls for attaching the small recorders to under-4 children and logging how many words are spoken to the child and how many interactions they have with adults. Participating families will receive coaching visits as well as information about community literacy programs.

The Rules for Engagement blog on [EducationWeek.org](http://EducationWeek.org) notes that chronic absenteeism in the Providence schools is being addressed by a public-private voluntary Attendance Work Group. Among the approaches being considered by the Work Group are:

- a “walking school bus” that uses volunteers to accompany elementary school children on their walks to school;
- Latino Voices, a group of Latino community leaders that seeks to use the faith-based community to improve educational outcomes for Providence children; and
- focus groups to learn from families where children have strong attendance records.

# South Carolina Update

April 2013

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According to Education Week, action by the U.S. Congress has allowed South Carolina to avoid continuation of a \$36 million Federal penalty over the State's failure to meet "maintenance of effort" requirements in special education spending. State officials are hoping to recover the \$36 million in Federal money lost to the State in the current fiscal year -- \$140 million compared to \$176 million in 2011-12. To offset the expected loss for this year, the State legislature put an additional \$36 million into the State budget. The Continuing Resolution (CR) means the State has an "unexpected" \$36 million for the 2013-14 fiscal year unless the State Senate makes any "adjustments."

# Texas Update

April 2013

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As noted in the Houston Chronicle, two years ago, Texas public schools lost \$5.4 billion in State funding. New spending plans being considered in the Texas legislature would restore about half of that funding loss. Democrats and teachers unions argue that even more money is available, including \$12 billion in the State's Rainy Day Fund. Republicans and Governor Rick Perry oppose using that Fund for recurring expenses. Further legislative consideration is expected in coming budget deliberations. Discussions with LEA school board members recently suggest heightened opposition to the Governor will prevail and increased funding will occur in the end.

Recently approved Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner Michael Williams has announced changes in the State's accountability system without waiting for legislative approval. Asked if he had authority to do so, he said, "I believe I do," according to the Associated Press. In addition to accepting the A through F grading system, like the one used in Florida, Commissioner Williams says that his main job would be to evaluate districts on the State's new accountability standards, as well as on other three areas, including student achievement on standardized tests, students' academic improvement as they move through school, and college- and career-readiness. He indicated that the goal of having 55 percent of disadvantaged and minority students reading at grade level would be acceptable. Many details and cut scores in the accountability system have yet to be established. In the mean time, the State Senate and House have proposed legislation that would reduce the current high school requirement that students pass 15 standardized tests in core subject areas to graduate to five, as reported in Education Week.

As reported in Education Week, a coalition of 22 trade organizations -- known as Jobs for Texas -- has expressed strong support for a bill that would reduce standardized testing and increase the emphasis on career training in Texas high schools. If approved, the measure would allow students to graduate if they pass only English, Algebra I, U.S. history, and biology. The bill

would also modify graduation requirements to allow students to select one of five coursework pathways to graduation, ranging from college preparation to technical education.

The [San Antonio Express-News](#) reports that the Texas State Senate has approved a bill that would improve the availability and accountability of charter schools in the State. The measure slowly raises the cap on the number of Texas charters from the current 209 to 305 by 2019. Not included in the cap would be district-operated charters or charters designed to serve dropouts. The pending legislation also establishes guidelines for closing charter schools that fail to meet State accountability standards. Specifically, the State can revoke the charter of any school that receives the lowest performance rating for three out of five years.

In a posting on the *Homeroom* blog on USED's website (April 9<sup>th</sup>), entitled "Texas Turnaround Becomes a Model for Success," Assistant Secretary Deb Delisle points to efforts, made in Houston using SIG funding, at Lee High School's Apollo 20 Turnaround model as a national SIG model for the nation. As we have previously reported, the project, partnered with Professor Roland Fryer of Harvard University, is using a performance-based turnkey approach to transfer successful practices from some of Fryer's earlier work with charter schools into low-performing schools, particular intensive tutoring and the use of data for decision-making. Delisle notes that the results at Lee High School are speaking for themselves; daily attendance has reached 95 percent on average and the dropout rate has fallen from 14 to 6 percent. Not only does the Lee High School success support the catalyst role of charter schools for transferring effective charter school practices into low-performing schools, but it also may be an important factor if USED turns down the Texas request for state waivers thus allowing individual Texas districts to apply for waivers.

Several days after Assistant Secretary Delisle's article on the Houston District Apollo Program, the April 19<sup>th</sup> [Houston Chronicle](#) posted an article saying that district Superintendent Terry Grier was fighting to keep the Apollo Program alive by proposing a tax hike to raise \$17 million to expand the program. The extra money would be used to hire more tutors to work with small

groups of students, to extend the school day by an hour, and to expand the project from the nine schools that started in 2010 to 16 middle and high schools. It would also be continued in 11 elementary schools that have been forced to implement a “scaled-down” version. The middle and high school programs would cost roughly \$42 million over three years; for the elementary school effort, the district budgeted \$8 million. A recent report from Professor Fryer, who was instrumental in spearheading the project, found significant gains in math, with more limited progress in reading during the second year. One change recommended by the most recent study finding would be to reduce cost by doing away with starting school two weeks earlier in the summer, largely because students did not show up.

# Wisconsin Update

April 2013

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Superintendent Tony Evers has won his second term as State Superintendent with the backing of several unions representing teachers and Democratic office holders, according to the Associated Press.

Education Week reports that Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has proposed a spending plan that would freeze funds for public schools and expand funding for vouchers and charter schools. But State Superintendent Evers has called on the State legislature to allocate more money for the public schools. Specifically, Evers opposes the Governor's plan to spend \$64 million on incentive payments for the highest-performing schools and says the voucher program for special-needs students is "a dangerous experiment with our most vulnerable students." The Superintendent, up for reelection on April 2, is being opposed by a strong supporter of vouchers.