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MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 28, 2013
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle
SUBJ: Title I Schoolwide Flexibilities; Proposed E-Rate Reforms; Final Title I District Allocations; Common Core Implementation Opportunities; Evidence-Based Priorities; Preliminary Race to the Top District Findings; and State Profile Updates

One attached TechMIS Special Report compares final USED Title I district allocations to preliminary increases and finds that nearly all districts which received a \$100,000 or 20% or more increase for school year 2013-14 in our May 22nd Special Report remain very similar, differing by less than a few percentage points. However, SEA adjustments which will be made soon could be greater than in the past due to sequestration (e.g., the amount which the SEA can allocate to the 4% set-aside for school improvement). Most of the 600+ districts noted in our report will likely expend/obligate withheld Title I funds by September 30th, thereby offering good prospects now and over the next year. Thus far, USED has not posted final district Title I allocations, but have made them available to SEA Title I offices.

A new report published by Mass Insight written by a highly-respected "Title I lawyer team" highlights new flexibilities allowed in schoolwide programs without violating Title I supplement-not-supplant provisions, which will very likely be published in USED official policy guidance soon. This "schoolwide flexibility guidance," along with USED guidance for NCLB waiver renewals for more than 35 states, is also expected to be announced August 30th, according to high-level USED officials during the annual State Title I Directors Washington July meeting. TechMIS subscribers' marketing/sales staff should be aware of these new flexibilities which will be critical to successful meetings with many districts whose staff might not be aware of them to facilitate purchasing products/services.

The third TechMIS Special Report addresses the FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for modernizing the E-Rate program which seeks comments on alternative ways to increase consortium purchasing and making direct BEAR reimbursement to districts of E-Rate discounts

if the districts paid the full price to service providers for eligible products. As the FCC notes, the increased use of consortia could reduce competition from small firms which cannot serve all large consortium members. Direct BEAR reimbursement to districts of E-Rate discounts, rather than their having to go through the service provider, could not only reduce time, but also increase opportunities for purchases of non-eligible E-Rate products and services by districts, thus leveraging the total amount of E-Rate funding. TechMIS subscribers who wish to provide comments to the FCC may call Charles Blaschke directly (703-362-4689) if any questions exist.

The Washington Update addresses a number of items which have direct implications for most TechMIS subscribers even though on the surface during the August recess, little appeared to be happening.

- **Page 1**

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) conducted a survey of state leaders which found that the majority of state officials feel it is unlikely that their state would reverse, limit, or change its direction to adopt Common Core Standards during the 2013-14 school year. However, without ESEA reauthorization occurring, many states that received waivers see the need for additional regulatory and non-legislative actions to help them implement Common Core Standards and assessments, for which USED guidance is expected shortly.

- **Page 2**

Two companion CEP reports based on the above survey identified progress, but most importantly challenges facing states and districts in implementing Common Core activities, which could provide opportunities for some TechMIS subscribers in the areas of professional development, curriculum, and other support services for both SEAs and districts with limited capacity and expertise.

- **Page 4**

On August 13th, USED published final revisions of the Education Department General Administration Regulations (EDGAR) which are designed to increase the priority of using “evidence-based” criteria in competitive grant applications, and most likely in the future could indirectly encourage the use and incorporation of evidence-based practices and research in formula programs such as Title I.

- **Page 6**

The first analysis of challenges/problems identified among the 16 Race to the Top winning districts which are implementing personalized learning, mastery testing, and blended learning environments has been published by the American Institutes of Research (AIR). TechMIS subscribers which are working with districts preparing applications for the current Race to the Top competitive grant round should take the AIR findings into account citing applicable AIR findings.

- **Page 7**
 While the waiver approval for the eight California CORE districts has major implications for K-12 education general policy governance (e.g., USED working directly with districts bypassing SEAs), the substantive changes proposed by the districts (e.g., placing a high priority on school climate improvement interventions and related innovative approaches) could have significant implications if they establish precedence and result in expanded adoption in California and other districts seeking waivers.
- **Page 8**
 In order to improve summer school programs, the RAND Corporation in its first report of a multi-year study recommends the use of evidence-based curriculum which is tailored to meet individual student needs and abilities, but is anchored in a commercially available and tested curriculum. The study, funded in part by an independent foundation, is noteworthy by recommending the use of a tested, commercially available curriculum.
- **Page 9**
 IESD has released its results of its new national survey of mobile technology in K-12 which found a steady surge in the adoption of such technology over the last year, with continued growth very likely in the next two years. The IESD survey is the best on this topic, which has been addressed in surveys by other groups with certain vested interest recently, and is available from IESD.
- **Page 10**
 The pros and cons of including achievement data in teacher evaluations in preK-3 was addressed by a recent New America Foundation panel with several recommended approaches, which could have implications for some TechMIS subscribers in the way products are positioned and designed.
- **Page 12**
 According to officials, USED will be placing a higher priority on measuring outcomes of students with disabilities rather than the current focus on compliance with IDEA provisions and will likely support the use of statewide interventions following a three tier framework used in implementing Comprehensive Early Intervening Services/RTI.
- **Page 12**
 The U.S. Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA) recently awarded 15 school districts a total of \$20 million to implement STEM and directly related activities and, according to a press release, intends to award additional grants to other districts serving relatively large numbers of students from military families on nearby installations across the country.

The state profile updates address a wide range of issues, including: Common Core State Standards, district/school accountability systems, instructional materials acquisition, NCLB

waivers, virtual education, and college participation/remediation.

Special Report:
**Final Title I Allocations to Districts Receiving Moderate/Significant
Increases Beginning in School Year 2013-14 (Updated August 8, 2013)**

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

Prepared by:
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August 28, 2013

On May 22, all TechMIS subscribers received a TechMIS Special Report that provided preliminary 2013-14 Title I allocations for school districts receiving significant increases over the previous year. In that Special Report, we detailed many of the adjustments and set-asides made by SEAs which affect the portion of the allocations that actually reach the school districts.

This TechMIS Special Report provides updated versions of the May 22 preliminary tables based on final district Title I allocations provided to us by the U.S. Department of Education. The data is not available on the Department's website, but was provided to all Title I State Title I directors in early August. It is noteworthy that, despite Federal budget cuts, many districts should receive sizable Title I increases after state sequestration adjustments. The revised Exhibit A lists about 350 districts which will receive increases of \$100,000 or more in Title I, Part A funds for the 2013-14 school year. Exhibit B shows about 300 school districts which will get increases of at least 20 percent (with a minimum increase of \$50,000).

Both of these exhibits include an added column that shows the percent increase cited in the May 22nd preliminary tables (Prelim Percent) to compare with the final allocations. As can be seen, differences between the preliminary and final percentages are minimal.

In some states, there are very slight reductions in most districts' increases between the USED preliminary and final Title I allocations. However, in a number of states, the final Title I allocations to some districts on one or both exhibits are slightly higher, and in some cases specific districts which were not on the May 22nd list based on preliminary data, have now been included because their allocation has increased beyond our cutoff points (i.e., \$100,000 or more or 20%). In Michigan, for example, 11 districts met this criteria, so were added to the Final Title I allocations list. Having discussed the final allocations with knowledgeable Title I observers, we believe most of the increases were due to increases in state per-pupil expenditures which were submitted to USED in June-July for incorporation into the "incentive" component of the

Title I formula. In other cases, the differences can be attributed to mistakes in Census counts and other data previously incorporated by USED into the Title I formula used to determine preliminary district allocations.

During the recent National State Title I Directors July-August conference, USED officials stated that additional guidance would be provided to states on how to adjust allocations for districts with new charter schools within a district's school attendance area that have been classified as LEAs in order to receive Title I funds directly. Hence, some additional adjustment could be made by SEAs for these districts/LEA charter schools in September-October.

The bottom line is that the districts in Exhibit A and B should now be aware of their final Title I district allocation before SEA adjustments, or can request such information from the state Title I office. Even though some adjustments in some states may be significant, for the most part, the vast majority of these 600 plus districts are likely candidates to expend/obligate withheld Title I funds from last school year by September 30th -- the end of the Federal fiscal year -- rather than carry over such funds to the 2013-14 school year. In addition to districts listed in Exhibit A and B being good prospects immediately and over the next year, certain districts -- particularly those with large numbers of Priority and Focus Schools which are not on the list because many of them received the maximum five percent cut due to sequestration under "hold harmless" provisions -- could be receiving portions of the SEA 4% set-aside for school improvement in those states which have funds to reallocate under the SEA 4% set-aside. District notification of these allocations will be made by the SEA early in the Fall.

Now that final Title I district allocations before adjustments have been made by USED, TechMIS subscribers should continue to focus on the districts receiving increases and refer skeptical districts to their State Title I offices for confirmation and additional information about what adjustments they may expect. We urge TechMIS subscribers to review the narrative in the May 22nd Special Report regarding legitimate adjustments which the SEA can make, along with other variables which could affect final district allocations after adjustments.

If anyone has any questions regarding the development of marketing/sales strategies, please call Charles Blaschke directly (703-362-4689).

**Special Report:
New Report Highlights New Flexibilities Allowed in Schoolwide
Programs Without Violating Title I Supplement-Not-Supplant
Provisions, Which Will Most Likely Be Detailed in Official Policy
in New USED Guidance Expected Shortly**

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

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A new report, published by Mass Insight, prepared by the Federal Education Group, and authored by Melissa Junge and Sheara Kronric, summarizes expectations about forthcoming USED Title I guidance for schoolwide programs. The report highlights flexibilities which schoolwide programs now have using Title I funds for the purpose of maximizing the improvement for school turnarounds but which apply to all Title I schoolwides (which constitute about 70 percent of all Title I schools). Since our September 15, 2009 TechMIS Special Report on the official USED ARRA guidance and as we reiterated in numerous other TechMIS reports and Washington Updates culminating in the April 15, 2013 report on “New Flexibilities,” this Mass Insight report confirms much of our earlier TechMIS interpretations and its details will likely be published as official USED guidance shortly. During the early days of implementation of School Improvement Grants, Secretary Duncan more than once referred to Mass Insight as having written the “Bible” on turning around low-performing schools. Also partnering with Mass Insight in developing this document were EducationCounsel and SEAs involved in the State Development Network which was convened in February 2013 before the March 15th CCSSO legislative conference. At that meeting, Assistant Secretary Deb Delisle and other USED staff reviewed many of the new flexibilities which, according to Delisle, would be included in new guidance; as described below, these were reaffirmed at the July 2013 meeting of State Title I Directors in Washington D.C.

The report, referred to as a “toolkit,” recites some of the examples of Title I allowable activities in schoolwide programs (SWP) included in the September 2, 2009 Title I ARRA guidance, particularly those related to improving student achievement and overall school performance, including:

- **Turning around low performing schools** (such as implementing rigorous interventions, preparing low-achieving students to participate successfully in advanced coursework, partnering with external providers where appropriate)
- **Upgrading the curriculum** (such as improved instructional materials, access to online learning opportunities)
- **Teacher support activities** (such as comprehensive induction or support programs for teachers including mentoring, observation opportunities, adding time to the day to support collaborative planning time for teachers, job embedded professional development, time and/or assistance in using data in effective ways to drive instructional decisions)
- **School climate interventions** (such as attendance incentive programs, anti-bullying programs, service learning, peer tutoring, or school safety initiatives)
- **Formative or interim assessments and/or screening** (such as early warning systems to alert the school to struggling students)
- **Expanded learning opportunities** (such as additional learning time, preparation for advanced coursework, before or after school tutoring to students struggling with coursework)
- **Family and community engagement activities** (such as family literacy programs, parent leadership academies, in-home visits, transportation or child care costs to enable parents to participate in parental engagement programs)
- **Implementation of community school model** (such as hiring a coordinator to facilitate delivery of health, nutrition, and social services to students in partnership with local service providers)

As Assistant Secretary Delisle noted in her presentation during the March 15th CCSSO legislative meeting and as the Mass Insight report emphasizes, Federal funds permit a schoolwide school “to spend Title I funds on a wide range of activities, as long as the school can demonstrate a need for the activity and the approach is generally described in the schoolwide plan.” Delisle emphasized the need for schoolwide plans to be based on specific school’s needs assessments. Junge et. al. highlighted Delisle’s emphasis during the March 15th meeting that Title I funds could be spent more flexibly in schoolwide programs regardless of whether the school consolidates funds or not.

The Mass Insight report argues that, while traditional supplement-not-supplant provisions apply to non-schoolwide programs, “The traditional supplement, not supplant rule, however, does not apply to schoolwide schools. Instead schoolwide programs are governed by a *supplemental funds* test. This is different from the test that applies to targeted assistance schools... Under the supplemental funds test that applies to schoolwide schools, schools do not have to show a specific service or cost is ‘extra.’ Instead, to show that Title I funds are supplemental, a school district needs to demonstrate that its Title I schoolwide schools were not denied access to state and local funds simply because they received Title I funds. In short, a district must be able to show its method for allocating state and local funds is neutral with regard to Title I funds and does not reduce state and local allocations in light of Title I funds.” Moreover, the authors

emphasize, "...In addition, districts must continue to comply with Title I's maintenance of effort and comparability requirements."

In 2002, then Chairman of the Senate HELP Committee, Ted Kennedy (D-MA), called for eliminating supplement-not-supplant requirements for schoolwides and suggested that only comparability requirements should be required to ensure that the total amount of state and local funds were equally distributed to Title I and non-Title I schools before Title I funds are expended. During the most recent Title I State Directors Conference in Washington D.C., Title I regulations guru Charles Edwards of the recently-sold "Title I Monitor" asked the newly-appointed National Title I Director Monique Chism whether the major compliance requirement for Title I schoolwides is to determine comparability only, rather than supplement-not-supplant requirements as a result of the September 2, 2009 Title I ARRA guidance. She indicated that she would look into the matter which would be reflected in the new USED guidance. As Edwards reported in Education Week (August 8th), Chism announced that Federal guidance is likely to be issued by the end of August for states to renew their waivers from NCLB provisions. According to Edwards, Chism stated that the document "was undergoing final clearance by the Office of Management and Budget. This is the last step before the department can release it to the states." The Education Week article also quotes Chism as stating, "We anticipate submission [of renewal applications] would occur in January and March. We are going to have two windows for that. Our intent is to do this quickly and early, so if there are any legislative changes or policy changes required, you guys [State Title I Directors] have enough time to work on that. We are working to make this a 'light lift.'"

The publication of the Mass Insight report is, we feel, an unofficial preview of what is likely to be included in the upcoming sorely-needed waiver guidance. As Junge et. al. noted, many of the current flexibilities are not available in all states because state Title I offices have the authority to impose rules more stringent than Federal minimal requirements. Indeed, we have had numerous phone calls from TechMIS clients complaining that SEAs' current policies and practices, whether official or unofficial, have taken more strict interpretations with little regard for some of the new flexibilities. And as Junge et. al. notes, "Although the supplemental test was authorized by Congress and is contained in the Title I law, many in the field -- including auditors and monitors -- are not aware of it." The report recommends that, if SEAs do not opt to use the supplemental funds test, districts should work with the state to better understand and explore possible changes in state policies which address concerns that the states had and how the districts might ameliorate those concerns.

As we have noted in previous TechMIS reports, it also appears to be appropriate for firms who wish to sell products and services to Title I schoolwides under the newly allowed flexibilities to be willing to work with districts/schools in conducting objective needs assessments and developing plans which help justify the use of their solutions in the context of the specific needs of individual schoolwides.

The report is available at: www.massinsight.org

Special Report:
**FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Modernizing the E-Rate
Seeks Comments on Increasing Consortium Purchasing and
Direct BEAR Reimbursement to Districts of Discounts Which
Could Provide Opportunities for Firms With Products/Services
That Are Not E-Rate Eligible**

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In its July 19th Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on a host of proposed changes, the FCC is soliciting comments from stakeholders, including firms with products/services that are both eligible and ineligible for E-Rate discounts. Two areas in which reforms could have significant implications for firms with ineligible products/services are: (a) direct reimbursement using the BEAR form for discounts to LEA/library applicants that have paid the service provider the full amount for discounted eligible products; and (b) increasing the use of consortium or other group buys to reduce prices for LEA applicants without reducing competition from smaller firms not large enough to serve all consortium vendors.

As described in Sections 259-265 in the NRPM, currently LEAs and other applicants have two choices in seeking reimbursement for E-Rate eligible products and services. An LEA may pay their service provider the full cost of an E-Rate supported service and then submit to USAC (the FCC administrative unit responsible for E-Rate) Form 472 Billed Entity Application for Reimbursement (BEAR) form or the LEA may pay the service provider the LEA's discounted portion of the E-Rate eligible product/service and then the service provider must provide a Form 474 Service Provider Invoice Form (SBIF) in order to receive reimbursement. In any event, the discount payments are provided to the service provider. If the BEAR method is used, the service provider reimburses the applicant thus requiring an additional coordination step in order for the applicant to receive payment. As the NPRM states, "We seek comment on adopting a revised disbursement process that allow applicants, paying the full cost of services under the BEAR process, to receive direct reimbursement from USAC. Under this proposal, the service provider would no longer serve as the pass-through for the reimbursement of funds where an applicant has paid the service provider in full for the services." While the NPRM seeks comments on whether

the recommendation would simplify the reimbursement process and increase efficiencies or whether there would be other consequences for stakeholders in such changes, it is important that firms with non-eligible E-Rate products/services (instructional materials, assessment tools, and other in-classroom applications/software) are aware of the possible implications because the amount refunded under the BEAR to districts can be used to purchase non-eligible products and services.

When the E-Rate initiative began in the late 1990s, application review and approvals/disapprovals faced numerous delays in reimbursements made to districts. To reduce uncertainty and encourage more applicants to apply for E-Rates, a number of key districts and E-Rate advocates pushed for creation of the BEAR process. It allowed many LEA applicants to leverage the E-Rate by paying the full pre-discount price to the service provider and then having the service provider to provide a credit or a reimbursement for the discounted amount later during the process. This was particularly important for situations in which the LEA or other applicant was initially turned down for a portion of its E-Rate discount, but as much as two to four years later an appeal was found to be “meritorious,” in which case the district then could receive the credit or discounted refund, which could be used to purchase non-eligible products. During the period 1999-2002, the amount of funds leveraged annually beyond the E-Rate cap of \$2.25 billion was about \$1.5 billion. In most cases, the LEA requested that the service provider provide the discount in the form of cash once the service provider received the reimbursement or an appeal was found to be meritorious. In some cases, however, the LEA/applicant E-Rate office would request a credit because the superintendent or other high-level district official might want to direct the discounted cash amount to the district’s general fund, money the district E-Rate office felt should be used for non-eligible products/services such as professional development, instructional materials, etc.

We realize that E-Rate processes have been greatly streamlined, and to some extent simplified, over the last decade; however, with all of the proposed changes and additions to, as well as deletions from, the E-Rate eligible product/service list, we suspect that once the final notice is published and the reforms become effective, similar delays, appeals, etc. will occur. Hence, we anticipate that firms with non-eligible products and services will have opportunities to sell their products/services to applicants who would use the E-Rate discount funds to pay for them. In such situations, the direct reimbursement from USAC of such funds directly to applicants, under the BEAR process should shorten the sales cycle. On the other hand, the option of allowing the reimbursement to be made to the service provider who then could provide a credit to the LEA could increase the probability that such funds would be used to purchase non-eligible technology-related products/services. Providing LEAs/applicants the option of receiving direct USAC reimbursement under the BEAR process appears to be positive and, as an option, having the provider provide a credit to the applicant could also increase purchases of ineligible technology-related products. In either case, firms with non-eligible products and services should begin dialogues with LEA (and other eligible applicants) E-Rate officials, sooner rather than later.

Increasing consortium or group purchasing could have direct implications for many TechMIS

subscribers. As we expected in our July 24th TechMIS Washington Update, the President's proposed ConnectEd initiative is reflected in the proposed E-Rate changes, including increasing consortium and other group buy alternate models. In 2011, according to the NPRM, only \$300 million, or thirteen percent of E-Rate funds committed by the USAC, were reimbursed to consortia. The NPRM seeks comments on whether the FCC should adopt additional incentives or mechanisms to facilitate the use of consortium purchasing in the E-Rate program, which could produce benefits in the form of reduced prices and increased cost effectiveness in the use of E-Rate funds on the part of the applicants. The NPRM also states, "We seek comment on whether service providers who would compete to serve some of the entities in a consortium might not bid if they could not serve the entire consortium. As a result, a larger consortium could leave a single bidder facing little pressure to pass on any reduced costs to applicants. We seek comment on what the Commission might do while encouraging cost-saving consortia so as to minimize, if not avoid, negative effects on competition."

Several E-Rate observers have commented that if consortium or group buys are established for E-Rate eligible products, it is likely that under the BEAR process, similar consortium purchasing or group buys would also apply to non-eligible products and services.

It is interesting to note that in the August 9th Marketplace K-12 blog on Education Week, the National Joint Powers Alliance, a Minnesota-based government service cooperative with about 10,000 school districts as members, is planning to release on September 1st an RFP for K-12 and higher education curriculum. According to the blog, this is the second time this cooperative has issued an RFP to the education publishing industry for "curriculum," rather than other products purchased by school such as furniture. According to the blog, "Once the RFP is out, businesses that provide curriculum on a national scale -- with representatives who can serve school district customers anywhere in the country -- will have an opportunity to respond by setting prices on their products."

If anyone has any questions or concerns about this guidance or his response to the NPRM, which is due September 16, please contact Charles Blaschke directly (703-362-4689).

Washington Update

Vol. 18, No. 8, August 28, 2013

Center on Education Policy Survey of State Leaders Finds Majority Believe “It Unlikely that Their State Would Reverse, Limit, or Change its Decision to Adopt the [Common Core] Standards During 2013-14”; However, if no ESEA Reauthorization Occurs Many States that Received Waivers See the Need for Additional Non-Legislative Actions on ESEA to Help Them Implement the CCSS

These findings, reported by CEP in its large comprehensive survey, of State Deputy Superintendents or their designees conducted between February and May, addresses how state officials view the Federal role to assist in implementing CCSS. Subsequent reports addressed states’ program/challenges (see related items). Two previous CEP publications reported on the first and second year of planning related to Common Core implementation.

While CEP issued cautions concerning the above findings related to state perceptions during the Spring 2013, it also found that few respondents said “overcoming various types of resistance to the Common Core posed a major challenge in their state,” most respondents viewed such opposition at that time as a minor challenge or no challenge. The majority of CCSS-adopting states indicated that certain legislative changes to ESEA would help states and districts ease the transition to Common Core without a reauthorization, and that the NCLB waivers appear to have helped some states, but many states showed a need for additional non-

legislative actions.

CEP cautioned that some of the states that declined to participate in the survey, completed by 40 states, are among those that have faced challenges to the standards “so their experiences are not captured in the survey. Nonetheless, our survey respondents do include some of the states that were dealing with opposition to the standards during the time of survey administration.”

It should also be noted that slightly more than half of the respondents’ said minor resistance came from sources outside K-12 (other than higher education) from within the K-12 systems, while a lesser number felt resistance presented minor challenges from the higher education community.

Even though the vast majority of state officials felt Federal legislation and funding would help CCSS implementation at both the state and district levels in areas such as professional development for teachers and principals, implementation of aligned assessments, and changes in Title I, Title II, and Title III. Without much hope of ESEA reauthorization, state leaders identified a number of non-legislative changes which could help with CCSS implementation, some of which have direct implications for many TechMIS subscribers.

Sixteen states, of which 13 are waiver states, called for guidance or policy documents “illustrating how ESEA funds, such as Title I, Title II, and/or Title III, can currently be

used to support state and district efforts to implement the CCSS.” The report also notes that such guidance would be needed and very helpful for addressing how Title I, Title II, and Title III could be used to provide funding for professional development for both teachers and principals which was a major issue addressed among state chiefs during their March 15th meeting. USED officials cautioned about limitations in use of Title II funds for professional development directly related to implementing CCSS and assessments. At that time, Assistant Secretary Deb Delisle noted that such guidance would be forthcoming, perhaps in the second round for state waiver renewals for two years or through other means (now expected in August-September).

Regarding additional flexibility needed in state waiver guidance, 22 of the 29 waiver states participating in this survey said waiver flexibility helped them transition to CCSS, with 14 of these 22 states not indicating the need for support or any other non-legislative changes that were listed in the survey question. As CEP notes, this signifies that, in these 14 states, the waiver alone could be sufficient to help them. Four of the waiver states called for additional guidance in how to ensure CCSS complied with Title I accountability requirements and another four said it would be helpful to have such guidance for ensuring compliance of CCSS-aligned assessments with Title I accountability. Eight states called for guidance or public documents outlining how funds under ESEA can be used to support CCSS implementation.

In its concluding discussion, CEP notes, “As implementation progresses, however, the costs and impact of changing curriculum,

professional development, and assessment to align with the standards will become more evident, and the consequences for schools that are not adequately preparing students to master the content in the standards will become more decisive. It remains to be seen whether limited brush fires of opposition will flare up into more widespread threats that could halt the course of implementation.”

Center on Education Policy Identifies Progress and Challenges Facing States and Districts in Implementing Specific Common Core Activities Which Could Provide Opportunities for Some TechMIS Subscribers

In two companion reports to the above CEP report, CEP identifies progress being made, and most importantly some of the major challenges in specific activity areas confronting states and districts which could provide opportunities for TechMIS subscribers.

As the CEP survey found, the vast majority of states surveyed have already taken steps toward CCSS implementation in several areas including:

- revising or creating curriculum guides or materials aligned to CCSS (29 states);
- revising state assessments to better reflect CCSS content (18 states), with 15 more states to do so in 2013-14 or later; and
- recommending or requiring the use of specific CCSS-validated textbooks or other materials (11 states), with six more planning to do so in the future.

In the area of professional development for teachers and principals, more than 30 states have begun to: develop and disseminate professional development materials and aligned guidelines (37 states); carry out statewide professional development initiatives (36); and encourage schools and district professional learning communities to be created (33). In a short separate report on professional development challenges, CEP found that 22 states reported more than 50 percent of their math and English/language arts teachers have received some professional development, but only ten states said more than 75 percent of their teachers had received this type of training. SEAs are providing the bulk of professional development directly (37 states), through “training the trainers” (33 states), or by state regional service agencies (34 states). Thirty-four states reported school districts are providing “Some” or “Nearly All” professional development; 22 states reported the use of non-profit organizations to provide some training. Twenty-six states reported for-profits provided only “Some” professional development, but none reported they are providing “All” or “Nearly All” of the training, which implies “for-profits” provide only special or targeted types of professional development.

Thirty-seven states reported that providing professional development and other support “insufficient quantity and quality to ensure that teachers are able to implement CCSS instructional activities” was “major or minor” challenges. “Providing all social studies and science teachers with professional development services on the CCSS” was a “major or minor” challenge in 39 states. Similar challenges existed for providing professional development for principals. As the report states, “One of the

most urgent challenges is to not only provide adequate amount of CCSS-related professional development, but also ensure the services are of high quality. These challenges will likely become even more pressing as more states begin implementing their CCSS-aligned curricula and as students begin taking the common assessments aligned to these standards in 2014-15.”

Another set of challenges relate to CCSS assessment planning and implementation. CEP found that 18 states had modified current state assessments to reflect the content of CCSS in 2012-13 or earlier, with an additional 15 states to implement such changes in 2013-14. At least 17 states will have recommended or required the use of specific materials (such as textbooks or digital curriculum materials) that have been validated by the SEA as aligned to CCSS by 2013-14 or later. It is interesting to note that 16 states said this activity is not within the SEA’s authority. Twenty-six states reported that identifying and/or developing curriculum materials necessary to implement the CCSS were major or minor challenges, while eight states said such activities are not within the SEA’s authority. CEP also reported that, in a number of areas, SEAs reported they had adequate staff expertise, but that the adequacy of staff and fiscal resources were much less. For example, 17 states reported adequate staff expertise in providing technology support for the aligned assessments, but only eight reported adequate staffing levels. Seventeen states reported adequate expertise for developing curriculum materials, but only five had adequate staffing levels; and 24 states reported having adequate staff expertise for professional development, but only 11 indicated adequate staffing capacity.

Interestingly, CEP reports that cuts or freezes in state funding for K-12 education had negatively affected CCSS implementation in some states, but other states have been able to protect the CCSS transition efforts. For example, six states have reduced or eliminated certain technology expenditures related to CCSS-aligned assessments, six have reduced or limited statewide meetings, and five have cut CCSS-related technical assistance to districts or schools.

The CEP report concluded, “with 34 states reporting that adequate resources are a major (22 states) or a minor (12 states) challenge to CCSS implementation, it is not yet known whether SEAs will have the fiscal capacity to maintain assistance for implementing the standards. Further, less than a quarter of the SEAs in our survey report having an adequate staff expertise, staffing levels, and resources to implement various aspects of CCSS. State education agencies’ general lack of capacity, combined with concerns about adequate funding, may create greater implementation challenges as the adopting states move closer to administering the CCSS-aligned assessments in school year 2014-15...With 36 gubernatorial elections slated for 2014, political will may well complicate the ability of SEAs to provide leadership on the Common Core.”

On August 13th, USED Publishes Final Revisions of the Education Department General Administration Regulations (EDGAR) Which Are Designed to Place a Higher Priority on “Evidence-Based” in Competitive Grant Applications and, Most Likely in the Near Future, Indirectly, on Formula USED Programs Such as Title I

While the new regulatory amendments are designed to be incorporated into competitive grant programs operated by all Federal agencies, USED’s new emphasis in EDGAR was based on the criteria and processes used in the Investing in Innovation (i³) program, according to the *Politics K-12* blog on Education Week (August 14th). The blog notes that the amended regulations will “serve as an umbrella over all the department’s competitive programs, potentially governing more than \$2 billion in grants. They will not apply to large, hallmark grants -- such as Title I -- that are given to states under a formula set by law.”

While the amendments to EDGAR have direct implications for internal USED administration of competitive grants to, for example, improve the Department’s ability to evaluate the performance of discretionary grant programs and grantee projects, several of the changes have direct implications for TechMIS subscribers and external groups that work with grantees in preparing their proposals. These are noted below.

One set of rules would authorize grantees to procure implementation sites without regard to existing procurement procedures requiring competitive bids, and could use small purchase procedures to procure evaluation service providers and providers

of other services including partners that are “essential” to the success of a proposed grant provided that the site or service provider is identified in the grant application.

The amendment to EDGAR also would add one new selection criteria which is assessment of the extent to which a proposed project could be brought to scale. New factors among selection criteria would also be added, including how well a proposed project evaluation would produce evidence about the project’s effectiveness. It would also authorize the program officers responsible for competitive grants to consider the effectiveness of proposed projects under a new priority which would be used as an absolute, competitive preference, or invitational priority. By adding new rules regarding subgranting in competition exceptions, regulators argue that these rules “will reduce costs, increase benefits, and potentially improve project quality by removing barriers that impede grantees from working with either through a contract or subgrant implementation partners and service providers identified in funded applications. These regulations will relieve grantees of the cost of administering competitions without reducing accountability or increasing the risk of improper use of or accounting for grant expenditures.” It would appear that if a third party partner or implementation site worked with the applicant in developing the proposal, it will be much easier to justify the continued use of such partners, including some TechMIS subscribers during the implementation phase without raising “conflict of interest” or competitive bid situations.

Following the i^3 model, the new EDGAR

changes would create different levels or tiers of evidence, operationalize definitions of the strength of evidence, and define the level of evidence that would meet What Works Clearinghouse standards. As Education Week stated (January 29, 2013), “They can now be applied to any competitive grant program without having to go through the cumbersome rule-making process each time a new competition is launched.” In line with the Administration’s extensive use of the Secretary’s waiver authority, such changes in EDGAR would appear to give the Secretary more discretion in placing different levels of priority (e.g., absolute versus preference versus competitive priorities) on certain high-priority activities, which the Administration might have proposed for separate legislation, but was turned down by Congress for funding. This happened in certain competitive grant programs such as TIF and Race to the Top.

In perhaps a portent of things to come, the White House last month issued a memo to all agency heads on how to further advance an “evidence and innovation” agenda. That memo from OMB provides guidance to agencies in developing their FY 2015 agency budget submissions, which have to be approved by OMB. It states that agencies should draw upon credible, existing evidence in developing and formulating their budget proposals and performance plans and in proposing new strategies to develop additional evidence relevant to addressing important policy changes. The requests that show a widespread commitment to evidence and innovation will likely be funded with limited resources to be allocated in the FY 2015 budget request.

The OMB memo emphasizes that agencies are also encouraged to include new

proposals for developing evidence that can be used to inform decisions about new programs. It also states, “Agencies may also propose new investments in evidence-building infrastructure for high-priority areas in cases where the benefits substantially outweigh the costs. Agencies may wish to consider new financing approaches, set-asides that designate a small fraction of funding for evaluation and evidence -- development; and partnerships with other federal agencies, state and local governments, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions.” According to *Politics K-12*, “small slices of formula-grant programs (which would include Title I and special education grants) could be set aside for states to award competitively to recipients.”

In Attachment A of the OMB memo, examples of evidence and innovation strategies and tools are provided in a section which focuses on using competitive grants to promote use of evidence in formula grants. The memo states agencies can improve the effectiveness of formula grant programs by using competitive grants to encourage the adoption of evidence-based approaches within formula programs: “For instance, agency competitions can give preference points to State and local applicants implementing evidence-based practices with their formula funds.” The Attachment also emphasizes agency reliance on What Works Clearinghouses as “repositories” that can provide useful tools for understanding what interventions are ready for replication or expansion and disseminate results. It also refers to registries of evidence-based programs and practices maintained by several agencies, including USED.

While it is unclear as to how USED will implement the new EDGAR amendments, the President of the Knowledge Alliance, Michele McLaughlin, is quoted in *Politics K-12* as stating, “It now enables the department to integrate the use of evidence into the discretionary grant process in a way that makes it clear what they mean when they say evidence. It could be a big step toward infusing evidence in how grants are awarded.”

It should be noted that some of the rationale for the new EDGAR amendments is also infused into the proposed ConnectED initiative which would complement proposals to reform the E-Rate program.

New Analysis by American Institutes Research (AIR) Identifies Challenges Which Confronted the 16 Race to the Top Winning Districts in Implementing Personalized Learning, Mastery Testing and Blended Learning Environments Which Should be Considered by Applicants, Including TechMIS Subscribers, Who Assist Districts in Developing Proposals for Upcoming Race to the Top/District Competition

Some of the challenges identified by AIR which have occurred which should be taken into account or at least referenced in any proposals for the next Race to the Top-District competition include the following:

- Implementing personalized learning, digital platforms, and related initiatives called for in Race to the Top could be difficult to implement simultaneously with the states rollouts for Common Core State Standards and tensions may emerge

between state-adopted standards and the teaching methodologies, practices, technologies, and curriculum being used in blended learning classrooms.

- Finding a balance between individualized learning pathways to college- and career-readiness with the flexibility for students not to get “tracked” too early into college career plans that may end up limiting their opportunities and may not allow for changes in academic interests.
- Engaging and empowering key stakeholders groups as required in Race to the Top applications can present difficulties when relying on coaching, teacher collaboration, and professional learning communities and training the trainer models may be constrained inadequate capacity, availability of appropriate staff; and inadequate time to engage parent and other community groups.
- Avoiding disadvantages of allowing students to progress based on mastery alone could reduce depth of understanding, reflection, and engagement with content that could occur through extended seat time and allowing students to complete high school more quickly could result in the lack of maturity to be successful in college or in a career.

In a concluding section, AIR identifies two key challenges which are:

- assuring the commitment, motivation, and capacity of key stakeholders; and
- avoiding unanticipated consequences including tracking and sacrificing

rigor for expediency in efforts to personalize and accelerate student learning.

The report also notes, “With these cautions in mind, we encourage the education community to closely watch, monitor, and support and learn from the work of these grantees.” The report also cites numerous research reports, articles, and other documents justifying identifying some of the pitfalls as well as opportunities for personalizing learning as called for in the Race to the Top applications.

Beyond Major Implications for K-12 Education Governance Policy, Waiver Approval for Eight California “CORE” Districts Could Also Be Significant for TechMIS Subscribers in Certain Areas

While many education groups (such as the CCSSO) and most “Washington Insiders,” as noted in Education Week (August 20th), argued that Secretary Duncan’s August 6th approval of NCLB flexibility waivers for the eight California CORE districts is bad policy, several implications could become significant for many TechMIS subscribers should some of the substantive initiatives undertaken by the districts expand nationally, especially in states for which state waivers have not been approved (e.g., Texas).

One significant implication is the heavy emphasis the eight districts place on improving school climate. While 60 percent of the districts’ ratings would be based under the one-year piloted waiver on academic measures, 20 percent would be based on social/emotional factors including

absentee rate, suspension and expulsion rates, and 20 percent on school climate and directly related factors as measured by student and parent surveys and other means. The emphasis placed on school climate is in line with expected USED guidance which was announced in March by Assistant Secretary Deb Delisle for allowing school climate interventions to be implemented in Title I schoolwide programs paid for by Title I and other combined Federal funds as long as the school needs assessments identified school climate improvement as a priority and it is included in the schoolwide plan (see related TechMIS Special Report). The second implication is that with minor exceptions, most of the eight districts would “free-up” all of the 20 percent set-aside for SES and school choice which amounts to about \$150 million with some of the districts using the freed-up money to provide after-school or extended learning time programs operated by districts and non-SES providers. In some districts, certain SES providers will continue providing tutoring services under SES and transportation for school choice might be continued.

During Secretary Duncan’s August 6th reporters’ conference, he indicated that he was not aware of any other districts that were planning to submit similar requests for district waivers even those in non-waiver states such as Texas. Each of the California district superintendents with whom I talked during the June ERDI meeting indicated that they had their proposed waiver request already written and ready for submission either to USED or the California State Department of Education whose request for a state waiver was turned down last year by USED. It remains unclear how much tacit/unofficial support of the eight CORE district waivers is coming from the

California SEA whose new statewide accountability model as implemented will reflect a movement toward some of the goals in the proposed CORE district waivers such as reducing the N size for determining AYP from 100 or 50 to 10 or 20 minority and other sub-groups students.

We will be following these developments as planning and implementation get underway in the California districts and reactions by other districts.

To Improve Summer Programs, RAND Corporation Study Recommends Use of Evidence-Based Curriculum Tailored to Meet Individual Student Needs and Abilities Which is Anchored in a Commercially Available and Tested Curriculum

The highly respected RAND Corporation study entitled “Getting to Work on Summer Learning” is based on case studies in six pioneer districts providing free voluntary summer programs for elementary students. One of the key recommendations based on numerous types of data and observations of the programs operational in the summers of 2011 and 2012 was to anchor the program in a commercially available and tested curriculum. As the report states, according to the external reviewers, the districts in the study “with the strongest curriculum had selected a commercial program...in most of these districts, staff augmented the purchased curriculum with district developed lessons and activities...although it is not necessarily the case that a commercially available curriculum is preferable to a program developed by a district, curriculum development is time

intensive and best done by curricular experts. In our observation, curriculum planning added another layer of responsibility that was difficult for program staff to manage.”

The report also found “in most of the districts we studied, there was one centrally purchased or developed curriculum that all teachers across the district followed in the summer. These districts had the strongest curriculum. Teachers received training and ongoing support; and found lesson plans clear and easy to follow. To ensure consistent instruction, all students throughout the program were exposed to the same amount of instruction targeted toward the same knowledge and skill development.”

The report also found that selecting a curriculum with features associated with improved learning is challenging. One reason is that “there are few summer specific commercial products from which to choose; many districts therefore adapt a school year curriculum for the summer, which entails significant work to ensure the learning goals aligned to the summer timeframe subjects topics and credits. Even when a summer specific curriculum is selected, district staff augments it with district-specific learning goals and supplemental activities.” Other recommendations related to curriculum and instruction include: implementing strategies for differentiation for students based on needs; serving students in small classes or groups; and providing support to students with special needs. The RAND study also recommends that enrichment activities that are integrated should be different from those during the regular school year.

The study’s recommendation and rationale

for using a standard commercially available curriculum with features that have been proven to be effective in improving learning in math and English/language arts is relatively unique among recent studies.

Among the private funding sources which constituted 17 percent of the summer school remedies was the Wallace Foundation as a sponsor. Title I funds contributed more than 50 percent of the project’s revenues. Look to next summer’s RAND report on specific program impacts on student math and reading scores.

New National Survey on Mobile Technology in K-12 Reports Steady Surge in Adoption Over the Last Year, With Continued Growth Very Likely in the Next Two Years

In the first of two reports from a national survey of K-12 district technology and media leaders, conducted in May 2013 by IESD and STEM Market Impact found that more than 80 percent of districts currently use, or plan to use, iPads over the next year or two. Google Chrome Books were in a distant second, followed by “mixed technology” supplied by students, as reported by the *Marketplace K-12* blog on [Education Week](#) (July 22nd). The IESD/STEM report found, “Many districts look to mobile technology to make learning more engaging and personalized. However, before this technology can reach its potential, many districts must solve mobile device management issues and will need to provide strong professional development and implementation support for teachers.” Almost 60 percent of survey respondents reported that mobile technology had been adopted in 25 percent or more of the schools

in their districts, with an additional 16 percent reporting districts were “very likely” to adopt mobile technology in the next one to two years. Other findings include:

- Very few districts reported that classrooms have a one-to-one ratio of mobile devices to students; however, a large majority of respondents expressed interest in implementing or expanding a one-to-one solution using mobile devices, if budgets allowed.
- A large majority expressed interest in purchasing tablets for student use.
- Significant hurdles to mobile technology adoption in “low-level adopting” or “non-adopting” districts most often identified were cost and lack of technology infrastructure.

Funding sources used to purchase mobile technology included: district technology funds (66% of respondents); general school funds (54%); state funding and grants (43%); and Federal funding (37%), as reported by *Marketplace K-12* blog.

Presented with a list of 18 types of apps, respondents were asked to identify those which would be most beneficial for student instruction:

- 77 percent identified apps that offer digital textbooks;
- 54 percent wanted apps focusing on student productivity, such as those offering student file storage, note-taking, and scheduling information;
- 52 percent favored tools to create documents, images, and video;
- 35 percent felt apps for special education would be beneficial;
- 32 percent selected apps to help conduct research and reference; and

- 25 percent selected apps facilitating the use of education games.

In addition to the major challenges of mobile device management, teacher professional development and support, and technology infrastructure issues, other challenges included those relating to maintaining mobile devices, such as breakage, repair, theft, and security. The above challenges identified in the May online survey appear to be similar to those identified in a “focus group” type session during the June ISTE conference sponsored by SIIA and COSN, as reported in the June TechMIS [Washington Update](#).

Pros and Cons of Including Achievement Data in Teacher Evaluations in PreK -- 3 Discussed by NAF Panel, Which Should Be Taken Into Account By Some Subscribers

New America Foundation convened a panel in July to discuss the opportunities and risks with each of the three current approaches most commonly used in PreK—3rd Grade for including student achievement measures as part of teacher performance evaluations. These approaches include:

- Student learning objectives (SLO)—measuring students’ progress toward meeting pre-identified objectives across curriculum areas of domains of development;
- New or shared assessments—district or state required assessments that are used for other purposes; and
- Shared attribution—base previous teachers’ performance (including PreK and Kindergarten) on

evaluation measures administered at the 3rd grade

Examples from five state case studies and two school districts offer pros and cons of different example models for addressing the issue of teacher performance and student achievement results. The panel included representatives from EDUCARE, IMPACT in Washington, DC Public Schools, and the Council of Chief State School Officers who commented from perspectives of national, state, and district levels on the viability of implementation of approaches.

Laura Bornfreund, NAF childhood policy expert and author, recommends the Student Learning Objectives approach, because it holds the most promise for actually moving the field forward in a direction that in the future effectively ties the quality of instruction and learning opportunities for young children to the teacher evaluation system.

The following are ways clients might consider using results summarized in this policy paper:

- Carefully explore ways to address teacher performance through student learning objectives reflected in your curriculum and/or assessment offerings;
- Focus product outcomes on visible evidence of student growth or progress toward learning outcomes;
- Provide educator focused professional development on clear articulation of student learning outcomes and defining the criteria for meeting these; and
- Identify banks of SLO's across grade levels and curriculum areas and

correlate these SLO's with rubrics or measurements that help determine when these SLO's are achieved;

Read the full report: http://newamerica.net/publications/policy/an_ocean_of_unknowns

The Foundation Strategy Group (FSG), with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has published a report, [*Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education*](#) (July 2013) by Hallie Preskill, Nathalie Jones, and Afi Tengue. The report identifies a synthesized set of 48 early childhood indicators that reflect healthy development of young children. **These indicators should map with curriculum and assessment products offered by clients to school districts and Early Childhood programs.** The indicators were synthesized and prioritized with input from over two dozen expert advisors after reviewing over 1,100 indicators from 11 existing early childhood indicator sets. The authors also identify gaps where more research is needed, particularly to develop indicators that reflect the increasing diversity among young children and their families in the U.S. The indicators can be used to support the healthy development of young children, to better understand and address inequities across racial and cultural groups, and to provide a common language that facilitates communication and coordination on behalf of all young children. Access this document at: http://www.fsg.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/PDF/Success_Markers_Early_Learning.pdf

USED to Place Higher Priority on Measuring Outcomes of Students With Disabilities Over Current Focus on Compliance With IDEA Provisions

During the IDEA Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. on July 29th, Melody Musgrove, Director of the Office of Special Education at USED, said that her office “is moving to a system that will require states to demonstrate how they’re working to improve the education outcomes for students with disabilities,” as reported in the *On Special Education* blog (August 6th). Citing the reports from The National Center for Learning Disabilities which identified gaps in graduation and dropout rates between students with disabilities and the general student populations, she noted that some states have met compliance requirements, but have major gaps in graduation and dropout rates. In her presentation entitled “Results-Driven Accountability,” Musgrove reportedly said that the Department plans to create a pure model of interventions for states, much like the Response to Intervention framework used in classrooms. Results of USED monitoring visits and desk audits of reports would increasingly take into account whether the states are implementing tier models of interventions focusing increasingly on student performance and outcomes in order to differentiate the amount of technical assistance to be provided to states and districts.

It is interesting to note that during the same conference, Secretary Duncan also emphasized that under the large-scale proposed preschool initiative announced earlier this year by the President (highly promoted by Secretary Duncan across the country), that some of the practices that have

worked in special education programs over the last few years need to be focused on the preschool area. Indeed, the Special Education Preschool Program in the President’s proposed FY 2014 budget calls for a slight increase to over \$400 million to implement Coordinated Early Intervening Services (substantially the same as RTI) into preschool programs. As we noted in our last TechMIS report, this appears to be similar to the 15 percent IDEA set-aside in districts with “significant disproportionality” to be used with at-risk students who are not placed in special education programs to determine whether indeed they have, for example, reading problems which need to be addressed before deciding whether to place them in costly special education programs. To challenge state attendees, Musgrove argued during the conference that in an era of limited resources “...to move that needle we’ve got to be more targeted and more focused in our efforts.”

The Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA) Recently Awarded 15 School Districts a Total of \$20 Million to Implement STEM and Directly Related Activities

These school districts have relatively large enrollments of military family students from 23 installations across the country. Some of the larger grants are: \$2.5 million to Academy School District, Colorado Springs to increase STEM programming through the use of online and blended learning; \$1.7 million for Manhattan/Ogden District, Kansas to motivate students to explore and succeed in STEM related fields; Madison County, Alabama which would receive about \$950 million to increase the number of middle school students who are college-

ready in math and science; Lawton, Oklahoma School District to initiate problem-based learning and technology to improve student performance in math. Other relatively large grants included Killeen ISD Texas which received \$1.8 million; San Diego Unified School District which received \$2.5 million; and Anne Arundel County School District in Maryland which received \$2.3 million.

According to the *Curriculum Matters* blog on Education Week (August 14th), additional grants are scheduled to be announced in August. The blog includes a press release and more detailed summaries of all grants.

Alabama Update

August 2013

As reported by Education Week, the Business Council of Alabama has created a new education reform foundation intended to unite the business and public education communities in the State. Known as the Business and Education Alliance, the nonprofit group will be headed by former State Superintendent of Education, Joe Morton. The Alliance will provide research and support for education programs to serve parents and teachers better and to guarantee employers a trained and effective workforce.

Alaska Update

August 2013

As reported by Education Week, Alaska has released the first school ratings calculated under the State's new public school accountability system. Known as the Alaska School Performance Index, the system ranks schools from one to five stars based on a 100-point scale that measures a complex formula. Of the 503 schools rated last year, 52 received five stars, 190 got four stars, 162 got three stars, 49 received two stars, and 50 got one star. Individual school ratings are available on the Alaska education department's website (<http://education.alaska.gov/akaccountability/>). The Index calls for every school to reduce its percentage of non-proficient students by half over the next six years.

California Update

August 2013

The State Instructional Materials Review Association reports that California is in the process of developing Curriculum Frameworks for mathematics and English Language Arts/English Language Development -- in support of the Common Core State Standards -- to be adopted by the State in November 2013 and March 2014, respectively. The State has also begun the adoption process for primary instructional materials for math, with State action expected in January 2014. This plan will provide school districts with access to State-adopted instructional materials prior to implementation of the SMARTER Balanced assessments, scheduled for the 2014-15 school year.

Colorado Update

August 2013

According to [EdNews Colorado](#), Colorado has approved specifications for an “endorsed” high school diploma that would guarantee students admission to some State colleges and universities.

To earn an endorsed diploma, a student must:

- demonstrate readiness in English language arts and math;
- complete an individual career and academic plan;
- demonstrate proficiency in 21st century skills; and
- demonstrate mastery of academic content in three subject areas.

Last year, Colorado approved legislation that will allow public four-year colleges to put borderline students into regular, credit classes and provide them with extra academic support.

[The Pew Charitable Trusts](#) notes that, previously, colleges were required to send struggling students to remedial classes in community colleges.

Connecticut Update

August 2013

As reported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, last year, Connecticut adopted a new law that requires public colleges to incorporate remedial education into credit-bearing courses by the Fall of 2014. The law also restricts separate remedial courses to one semester per student and requires public colleges to use multiple measures to identify students who need extra support. The State has allocated \$2 million to community colleges to support the effort and lawmakers hope to find an additional \$8 million next year.

Delaware Update

August 2013

A recent study from the Federal Strategic Data Project has found that only about a third of Delaware citizens have some kind of post-high school degree. Moreover, more than 15 percent of students who are academically qualified to go to college do not enroll and such students from poor families are even less likely to go to college. Governor Jack Markell said the State needs more technical programs and cited the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math camp (Brandywine) which teaches rising seventh-graders skills in computer programming, robotics, and other engineering projects. State officials mentioned other new State programs including:

- a “summer nudge” program to encourage qualified students to go to college;
- expanded college application events at schools; and
- new data systems to help teachers identify struggling students before they fall too far behind.

District of Columbia Update

August 2013

Education Week reports that D.C. public and charter school students have shown the largest achievement gains since 2008. Student proficiency in both reading and math were each up by close to four percentage points, science proficiency was up two percentage points, and writing proficiency increased five percentage points. Earlier gains in D.C. test scores were tainted by charges of cheating and, according to Education Week, testing security has been tightened.

Florida Update

August 2013

The Tampa Bay Times (August 20th) quotes leaders from the Tea Party and Florida Parents Against Common Core as mounting attacks on the Common Core; however, as the article states, “Few observers think the pressure will make the Florida legislature or the Board of Education reverse course on the standards, which kick in across all grade levels when school starts this week.” The benchmarks still have broad support among Republican lawmakers and a tireless champion in former Governor Jeb Bush, but the backlash could be enough to prompt Florida’s exit from a national consortium creating the test to accompany the new standards. Former State Commissioner Tony Bennett announced several months ago, before his resignation, that Florida was considering a Plan B under which the state would develop its own assessment and withdraw from PARCC. The article also states, “Moreover, 90 percent of [Washington] insiders felt that if Florida were to pull out of the PARCC assessment consortium it would have significant implications for Common Core.” That survey was conducted before former Commissioner Bennett’s resignation.

Part of Florida Governor Rick Scott’s education funding package, which included teacher pay raises and a \$1 billion increase in K-12 funding, is a debit card initiative by which teachers would receive a State-funded \$250 debit card to spend on classroom supplies. However, because the cards will not be distributed until mid- or late-September (a month after schools open), only seven of Florida’s 67 school districts have agreed to participate in the program. Teachers in other districts will still receive the \$250 from the State through a reimbursement mechanism.

According to the State Instructional Materials Review Association:

- For the 2013-14 fiscal year, Florida has allocated \$217.3 million for instructional materials, library media materials, and science lab materials (\$202.3 million of that amount is specifically for instructional materials).
- During 2013-14, the State is reviewing instructional materials for grades 6-12

English/language arts and grades 6-12 mathematics in support of the Common Core State Standards.

- By 2015-16, all adopted materials must be provided in digital format and districts must spend at least half of their instructional materials allocation on State-adopted digital materials.

A new statute, created this year, authorizes school districts, or consortia of districts, to implement their own instructional materials adoption program.

The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), the largest State-operated virtual school district in the country, is expecting to see a net reduction of \$17.6 million in State funding for this year -- a 12.4 percent cut in total FLVS revenue. The funding reduction is the result of a change in the way the Florida legislature funds virtual schools and a 32 percent decline in student enrollment. As noted in Education Week, FLVS has announced the layoff of 177 full-time staff and 625 part-time instructors, as well as not filling more than 250 open positions.

As noted by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Florida legislature has approved a measure that will allow many students at the State's public colleges to skip remedial (known as developmental) classes and enroll directly in college-level courses. Many higher educators expressed shock at the decision; one argued that "...unless we have some other kind of massive tutoring support which they've not funded...[students are going] to struggle and then flunk out, and then they're wasting their money twice."

Georgia Update

August 2013

According to the *Politics K-12* blog on EducationWeek.org, the U.S. Department of Education plans to withhold a portion of Georgia's \$400 million Race to the Top award because the State has been unable to implement its proposed teacher-evaluation plans. USED will hold back \$9.9 million by the beginning of the upcoming school year, that the State had proposed to spend on a performance-based compensation system. The money will be set aside for the State if it decides to implement such a system.

[The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](http://TheAtlantaJournal-Constitution) reports that public school class sizes in Georgia have increased at the same time as school funding has declined. Nearly 80 percent of the State's 180 school districts have approved plans to exceed State class size caps. In terms of funding, Georgia has cut \$4.7 billion in school funding between 2008 and 2012. The State also gave districts permission to exceed the class size caps which were instituted before the recession. During the same timeframe, Georgia saw a three-percent increase in its student population but a ten-percent drop in its number of educators.

Hawaii Update

August 2013

After a year and a half on the U.S. Department of Education’s “high risk” list under the Federal Race to the Top program, Hawaii has been given a reprieve. As noted by Education Week’s *Politics K-12* blog, the State was cited in December 2011 for its failure to achieve an agreement with the State teachers’ union that would allow student test scores to be part of teacher evaluations. In late July, Hawaii received approval from USED for its progress in meeting new timelines and demonstrating that it could “meet critical milestones in the last six months in a way they were unable to prior to December 2011.”

Idaho Update

August 2013

The Idaho State Board has approved a proposal to allow computer science and engineering courses to count as math or science credits instead of electives. As reported in Education Week, the goal is to give students greater exposure to STEM fields.

The *Digital Education* blog on EducationWeek.org notes that Idaho has awarded a five-year, \$10.5 million contract to Education Networks of America to bring wireless Internet to every 9-12 school in the State. The program is optional for the schools, but, for the first year, 249 of 333 eligible schools have opted in. The contract has created some controversy because, some legislators argue, they did not intend the appropriated funds to be used for a long-term contract. Although the contract is for five years, with an option to renew for ten more years, it contains a non-appropriation clause that allows the State to terminate the agreement without penalty if the legislature does not authorize the necessary funds.

Indiana Update

August 2013

Education Week reports that former Indiana education chief, Tony Bennett, sanctioned a change in the State's school grading system to benefit a prominent Republican contributor. Evidence suggests that an Indianapolis charter school operated by Christel DeHaan should have received a "C" on the State's A-F grading system due to poor algebra test scores. Bennett's staff reportedly altered the grading structure to give the school an "A" grade.

The Pew Charitable Trusts notes that the Indiana legislature has approved a measure that would direct high schools to identify students who may be in need of remedial classes when they reach college and to provide appropriate help while they are still in high school.

Kansas Update

August 2013

Kansas has been notified that its waiver status is at “high risk,” largely because the State has not piloted its new teacher evaluation system which incorporates student performance into teacher evaluations. According to *Politics K-12* on EducationWeek.org, instead the State has only convened a task force. It has 30 days to reply in writing how it will rectify the situation in order to get into compliance or face consequences.

Louisiana Update

August 2013

As we have observed in previous TechMIS issues, Louisiana has a new Course Choice program which allows students to choose face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid courses from a variety of providers. Education Week's Charters & Choice blog notes that the program has become extremely popular with a waitlist growing to more than 1,000 students. The State has recently allocated \$2 million to the Course Choice pilot program allowing the inclusion of 2,000 student course enrollments. A total of 92 providers have applied to deliver courses through Course Choice; 41 have been approved with 21 of them prepared to offer courses for the upcoming (2013-14) school year.

A new study by Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes indicates that Louisiana charter school students gain two more months of learning in reading and three more months in math compared with traditional public school students. Looking at performance data for grade 3-8 students between 2005-06 and 2010-11, the study found that only 14 percent of Louisiana charter schools have students who perform significantly worse than comparable students in public schools. The results are even more pronounced in New Orleans where students gain an additional four months in reading and five months in math over traditional students. Moreover, only six and four percent of New Orleans charter schools underperform traditional schools in reading and math, respectively.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune reports that, in 2013, Louisiana high school students earned college credits on more than 5,100 Advanced Placement exams -- the largest number in State history. The number of students taking AP tests increased from about 6,600 last year to more than 10,500. However, the percentage of students who passed the AP exams dropped from 44 percent to 33 percent. High school students took a total of 23,435 AP courses.

Maine Update

August 2013

According to Education Week's *Politics K-12* blog, Maine is the 40th state, along with the District of Columbia, and eight California school districts to receive a U.S. Department of Education waiver from many requirements of the Federal No child Left Behind Act.

Maryland Update

August 2013

The Baltimore Sun reports that more than half of Maryland's high school graduates now take Advance Placement class and nearly 30 percent have passed at least one AP exam -- the highest rate in the country. The article reports that Maryland schools have become a laboratory for the nation. However, analysis of test scores by The Baltimore Sun found that, in at least 19 high schools throughout the Baltimore region, more than half the students who earned an A or a B in an AP class failed the AP exam.

Massachusetts Update

August 2013

The Boston Globe observes that, for the first time, Massachusetts is tying a large portion of the budget for each of the State's community colleges to outcome measures such as graduation rates, meeting workforce needs, and helping minority students. Known as "performance funding," the system -- when fully implemented in a few years -- will base about half of each college's allocation on such factors. The impetus of the change was, in large part, poor performance by the schools; most of the community colleges have three-year graduation rates of 18 percent or less. To facilitate the new funding system, the State legislature provided a \$20 million increase so that no campus would lose money this year while they adjust to the new standards.

Michigan Update

August 2013

The Michigan legislature has held hearings concerning the State's three-year-old decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards. The new SMARTER Balanced assessments are scheduled to replace the current Michigan Educational Assessment Program and the Michigan Merit Exam in the 2014-15 school year. Many Republicans consider the CCSS to be an intrusion into local control of public schools. A legislative subcommittee has held a third hearing over the past six weeks concerning the CCSS which the State adopted in 2010. Republican lawmakers have blocked State funding for implementation of the Standards despite support for the Common Core from Republican Governor Rick Snyder and many in the business and education communities. According to Education Week, at least one more hearing is expected. The legislature must affirmatively authorize State money for CCSS implementation.

The Detroit News reports that, while enrollment in Michigan's traditional public schools has fallen over the past two decades, charter school enrollment has increased dramatically since the first charter in the State opened in the mid-1990s. In 1995, Michigan enrolled fewer than 4,500 students in 41 charter schools. Last school year, more than 130,000 students attended 277 charter schools.

The new Michigan School Accountability scorecards rate districts and schools with five colors -- green, lime, yellow, orange, and red -- based on most recent test scores among other factors. Of the 3,400 schools ranked, three percent received a green score card while 15 percent were red.

Minnesota Update

August 2013

According to the Minnesota Star-Tribune, for the eighth consecutive year Minnesota students had the best scores on the ACT college admissions test compared to other states in which at least half of the students took the exam. Minnesota students also made progress in the percentage of high school graduates who were college-ready based on the test scores in each of the four ACT subject areas. While 39 percent of Minnesota seniors were proficient compared to 36 percent last year, large, persistent gaps continue to exist between white and minority students taking the ACT.

Mississippi Update

August 2013

According to the Miami Herald, a Mississippi State auditor has determined that school districts in the State routinely violate a State law that requires them to issue a textbook to every student to take home. The audit found that, during the 2012-13 school year, more than 19,000 did not have books assigned and that two-thirds of students in the 35 audited districts had no book of their own. Some districts are buying only enough textbooks to keep one set in each classroom; others are using photocopied materials or even using State-issued sample tests as their main instructional material. The problem, in some cases, is bad record-keeping or lack of funds. But, in others, teachers use a combination of resources, including softbound workbooks and online programs.

As detailed by the Hechinger Report, Mississippi students have some of the lowest scores in the country on national science exams. During the 2011-12 school year, only 54 percent of fifth-graders and 57 percent of eighth-graders scored at proficient or advanced on State science tests. And only 59 percent of high school students met State requirements in biology. State education officials note that, over the next five years, 46,000 jobs will become available in Mississippi in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, but that there will not be enough qualified adults to fill those jobs. Currently, only 62 percent of Mississippi students graduate within four years. And, of those that go on to college, only ten percent earn a degree in STEM fields.

Missouri Update

August 2013

The Missouri State Board of Education voted to give the State Department of Education the authority to monitor district performance, classroom interaction, and finances more closely and to allow state intervention earlier than the two-year waiting period that was removed by legislation passed earlier this year. As reported in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (August 20th), the State Board also hired the Cities for Education Entrepreneurship Trust to conduct a \$385,000 study of the Kansas City Public Schools which lost accreditation last year. The study will attempt to identify effective practices from across the country which could work specifically for Kansas City and which could also work in other unaccredited districts, such as Riverview and Normandy, which have allowed over 2,500 students to transfer to accredited districts.

Nebraska Update

August 2013

Education Week notes that the scores of Nebraska students on the 2013 State assessment showed a universal increase over the previous year. According to State data 77 percent of students were proficient in reading this year -- up from 74 percent in 2012. Similarly, proficiency rates were higher in math (69 percent compared with 68 percent in 2012) and science (70 percent compared with 67 percent).

As part of a three-year, \$5.5 million grant from the Sherwood and Lozier foundations, more than 250 Omaha mathematics teachers will take graduate coursework intended to improve their instruction. The project will build upon several initiatives at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln developed with support from the National Science Foundation. Specifically, the Nebraska MATH Omaha Public School Teacher Leader Academy will offer several programs for teachers including:

- Primarily Math which provides coursework and professional development for K-3 teachers;
- Math in the Middle that leads to a graduate degree for teachers in grades 4-8; and
- Fellowships for K-12 math teachers to take graduate courses.

The grant will also support six K-3 and two middle school math coaches in Omaha.

New York Update

August 2013

Results from New York's new State assessments, aligned with the Common Core State Standards, showed the expected drop in student performance. Statewide proficiency rates on the 2012-13 tests were only 31 percent in both English/language arts and math -- down from 2011-12 rates of 55 percent and 65 percent, respectively. As noted in Education Week's *Learning the Language* blog, the results were particularly striking for English language learners (ELLs), only 3.2 percent of whom were proficient in ELA and 9.8 percent in math, compared with 2011-12 ELL scores of 12 percent in ELA and 34 percent in math.

North Carolina Update

August 2013

Having taken control of the Governorship and both houses of the legislature, North Carolina Republicans are making serious waves with respect to K-12 education. According to Education Week, they have:

- created a new \$10 million Statewide voucher program;
- ended teacher tenure;
- cut teacher bonuses for masters degrees; and
- expanded Teach For America funding by more than \$5 million.

The Pew Charitable Trusts reports that North Carolina, as part of its new budget agreement, has decided to do away with its teacher tenure rules. Before the change, all North Carolina teachers with five years of experience were eligible for tenure. Now only the top 25 percent of teachers (ranked by effectiveness measures yet to be defined) will receive four-year contracts. Other teachers will receive one- or two-year contracts.

Also according to The Pew Charitable Trusts, North Carolina has been conducting two-day summer institutes to train teams of up to 18 people from each of the State's 115 school districts on Common Core implementation. State officials say they will continue to follow up on the teams after they return to their districts, developing support webinars, blogs, or Twitter sessions, as needed, on particular issues.

Oregon Update

August 2013

In mid-October, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber signed four bills intended to ensure that, by 2015, 40 percent of Oregonians will hold a bachelor's degree and 40 percent will have another form of post-secondary certificate. As noted in The Statesman Journal, the four measures allocate \$75 million toward the State's education goals:

- House Bill 3231 establishes a youth development division within the State education department to provide supports for educational success, reduce high-risk behaviors, and focus on crime prevention.
- House Bill 3232 provides funding (\$26.8 million for the current biennium) for programs to improve the reading skills of children before the end of third grade, increase the number of students who earn high school diplomas, and improve students' proficiency in science, technology, engineering, and math.
- House Bill 3233 creates a network to improve teacher training and quality.
- House Bill 3234 establishes an early learning division to administer the State's prekindergarten and other programs.

Pennsylvania Update

August 2013

The USED has granted Pennsylvania a state waiver from requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act which, according to several sources, the State has unofficially already begun implementing. Under the State's new accountability system, there are several groups of annual measurable objectives (AMOs), including a 95 participation rate of students taking the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) in grades three and eight and the end-of-course Keystone exams for Algebra I, biology, and literature, which in the Spring of 2013 replaced the eleventh grade PSSA. Another AMO is closing achievement gaps among groups of students by 50 percent within six years. California, Texas, and Illinois remain the other large states which have not been approved or continue to be in a negotiating situation with USED for final waiver approval.

The *Curriculum Matters* blog on EducationWeek.org notes that Pennsylvania has decided to remain as a member of the two consortia developing Common Core assessments but will not use the assessments produced by either PARCC or SMARTER Balanced. The State plans to develop its own tests but will maintain "participating" membership in the two consortia in order to participate in their discussions.

According to [Education Week's On Special Education](#) blog, the Education Law Center has filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice arguing that minority students and students with disabilities in Pennsylvania are being disproportionately placed in alternative schools. Focusing on Pennsylvania's Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth programs, the Center's complaint says:

- Sixteen percent of Pennsylvania's public school students are identified as students with disabilities; the percentage of students with disabilities sent to alternative education programs is 44 percent.
- In 82 school districts in 2010-11, more than half of alternative school placements were

students with disabilities.

- Only 15 percent of Pennsylvania students are African-American, but in 2010-11 they represented 35 percent of alternative school placements.
- In 45 school districts, there was a disparity with 20 percentage points or more between the percent of African Americans in the district and the percent placed in alternative education programs.

As we have noted in previous State Profile Updates, the Philadelphia school district has been operating with a budget deficit of more than \$300 million. This summer, it issued pink slips to 3,800 non-teaching employees and severely cut back athletics, arts, and other extracurricular activities. The district has requested additional funds from the City of Philadelphia (\$60 million), the State (\$120 million), and union givebacks (\$133 million). Education Week reports that, in order to open schools this Fall, the district has received \$50 million in emergency funding from the City, but it is unclear what form the money will take. State lawmakers have earmarked \$45 million in aid for the district but will not release the funds until Philadelphia teachers agree to significant monetary concessions and work rule changes.

As noted by Education Week's *Digital Education* blog, the Philadelphia Virtual Academy (PVA) will begin serving students in September. As of mid-August, the district-operated PVA had enrolled 118 students, far short of the 1,000 estimated for this year but more than the 85 students needed to break even. The district has been seeking to recruit students from Pennsylvania's 16 existing cyber charter schools and thereby recover State funding that largely "follows the child." This year, Pennsylvania's cyber charter schools will enroll a combined 35,000 students and receive at least \$366 million in public funds.

Tennessee Update

August 2013

The Pew Charitable Trusts reports that Tennessee will be implementing the Common Core standards for all K-12 students in the 2013-14 school year. Last year, the State identified and trained 200 teachers to serve as Common Core math coaches for grades 3-8. Then, last summer, the coaches trained nearly 12,000 teachers. This year, Tennessee had a total of 700 Common Core coaches in English and math who trained 25,000-30,000 teachers over the summer. State education officials estimate that about half of the State's 70,000 public school teachers have attended voluntary, week-long Common Core training workshops.

Education Week reports that the Tennessee Senate Education Committee plans to hold a hearing in October to review the State's textbook selection process for K-12 schools. Tennessee's Textbook Commission has recently been criticized by a group of parents for adopting textbooks containing controversial interpretations of historical facts and inappropriate language. The Commission recommends an official list of textbooks for approval by the State Board. Local school districts select from the list for a six-year adoption period.

Education Week also reports that Tennessee has approved new teacher licensure rules but delayed their implementation until 2015. Currently, teacher licenses are renewed for ten years without regard to effectiveness. Under the planned new system, 50 percent of license renewal would be based on value-added data from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVASS). The State teachers' union has strongly opposed the plan, arguing that qualified teachers could lose their licenses because of flawed scores.

A new study from Vanderbilt University's Peabody Research Institute has found that children participating in Tennessee's voluntary pre-K program (TN-VPK) made significantly greater gains in language, literacy, and math over the pre-K year than did similar children who did not attend TN-VPK. TN-VPK students were also rated by their teachers as better prepared for

kindergarten. However, the study also found that the differences in achievement, academic preparedness, and classroom behavior were no longer significant by the end of first grade. In some non-cognitive aspects -- retention in kindergarten and school attendance -- the differences remain significant. The study will follow TN-VPK participants as they progress through school.

The Chattanooga Times Free Press reports that the Tennessee Virtual School in Union County, operated by K-12, Inc., has shown low first-year student performance. As a result, State officials have declined to approve K-12, Inc.'s plan to open the Tennessee Cyber Academy in Campbell County, citing concerns about the company's ability to open and operate the school successfully for the 2013-14 school year.

Texas Update

August 2013

According to the State Instructional Materials Review Association, Texas' Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA) has changed how districts acquire instructional materials. Now, the IMA can be used to obtain non-adopted instructional materials, technology services, and technology equipment. Instructional materials for Science K-12, Math K-8, and Technology Applications have been reviewed for curriculum alignment during the Summer of 2013 and will become available to school districts in the Fall of 2014.

Utah Update

August 2013

As reported in The Salt Lake Tribune, the Utah Office of Education has approved a new rule that says, if for two consecutive years a school district fails to make strides toward reaching the State's goal of having 90 percent of third graders reading proficiently, the district will lose State money. The money districts could lose is their share of \$30 million in reading intervention funds available to districts to pay for reading coaches, materials, and specialized teacher training. According to State data, 79 percent of Utah's third-graders were reading at grade level; no district had reached the 90 percent target. State officials estimate that to reach the goal would require:

- special training for up to 600 elementary principals (\$1.8 million);
- increased collaboration time for 7,000 kindergarten through third-grade teachers (\$7 million);
- training on how to handle non-proficient readers for up to 7,000 teachers (\$14 million);
- smaller class sizes, including 326 new teachers (\$22.8 million per grade); and
- summer school for struggling readers (\$63 million).

Washington Update

August 2013

Washington State has been notified that its current waiver status is at risk because, according to the USED, its new State law regarding teacher evaluation allows individual districts to decide whether to include test scores and teacher ratings. The waiver was provided on the basis that all districts would include State test scores as a portion of the teacher evaluation ratings. As a result, the State will have to come up with a change in State law in order to retain its waiver.

West Virginia Update

August 2013

Only one-third of West Virginia students who took the ACT in 2012 performed as ready for college-level mathematics. Education Week's *Digital Directions* reports that the U.S. Department of Education has funded SRI International to conduct a \$3.5 million study of a new digital math curriculum in West Virginia. The fully digital curriculum, created by the non-profit Reasoning Mind, will be used in more than 50 second- and fifth-grade math classes. Schools in Marion and Cabell Counties are already using the programs. SRI will investigate how computer-based learning affects students progress and how it compares with traditional textbook approaches.

Wisconsin Update

August 2013

As we have noted over the last few months, Wisconsin is expanding its voucher program currently operating in Milwaukee and Kenosha. According to Education Week, 48 Wisconsin private schools have registered to be part of the expanded program; six of them are in Green Bay and four in Sheboygan. A total of 500 students can be in the program next year and only the 25 schools that receive the most applicants can participate.

Wyoming Update

August 2013

The Casper Star-Tribune reports that standardized test scores for Wyoming elementary and middle school students declined for every grade and in every subject from 2012 results. The lower scores on the Performance Assessment for Wyoming Students (PAWS) is likely the result of the State's transition to the Common Core State Standards. State officials believe that the lower scoring is primarily caused by a misalignment between what is being taught and what is being tested. It is expected that the PAWS will be fully aligned with the Common Core by 2015.

The Star-Tribune also reports that Wyoming has become a voting member of the SMARTER Balanced assessment consortium, one of the two groups developing tests to accompany the Common Core State Standards. Unlike the State's current, pencil-and-paper PAWS system, the new assessment will be administered entirely online and will be adaptive, generating harder questions for students performing well. It will be scored according to both performance and difficulty. Current Wyoming law limits standardized tests to multiple-choice questions; State officials are urging the legislature to change the statute to permit long-answer items.