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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 28, 2014
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke, Blair Curry, and Suzanne Thouvenelle
SUBJ: FY 2014 Education Appropriations Act; State Budgets; Unspent Race to the Top Funding; Race to the Top Competition Results; SIG State Funding; Common Core Assessment Updates; and State Profile Updates

As a follow-up to our January 15th Funding Alert, the enclosed TechMIS Special Report addresses FY 2014 appropriations in more detail, it restores much of the FY 2013 sequester cuts, postpones immediate future sequester cuts for at least the next two years, and will provide some opportunities for most TechMIS subscribers, especially in Title I and Head Start/preschool funded programs. Because most concerns over immediate sequester cuts will be allayed, district Title I officials will begin obligating/spending about \$2 billion of previously carried over Title I funds from FY 2011 and FY 2012 by June 30th or September 30th. Priority districts include those highlighted in our May 22nd Special Report which received relatively large increases for this 2013-14 school year.

Washington Update headlines include the following:

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The *Fall 2013 Fiscal Survey of States* Concludes that State Budget Volatility is Declining, But Growth Remains Slow, While General Funding for K-12 Education in 42 States Shows a Net Increase of \$8.8 Billion, but an Expected Slowdown in 2014
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A number of miscellaneous items are also addressed including:
 - a) USED has announced that seven states will receive collectively more than \$43 million under the School Improvement Grant program to continue their efforts to turn around the lowest-achieving schools, including two states with new competitions.
 - b) Having released in November its report on the achievement impact of SIG schools (first cohort funded), USED is revising the analysis because the outside contractor “erroneously left out too many schools that should have been included in the mix,” according to Education Week’s *Politics K-12* blog (December 11th).
 - c) Education Week reports a pledge by Vice President Joe Biden, on the anniversary of the Newtown Connecticut shooting, for a Federal funding increase of \$100 million to boost mental health services.

- d) Education Week (December 11th) reports that companies would be required to pay annual fees to ensure compatibility of their devices with Common Core State Standards assessments being developed by the two testing consortia.
- e) A new Center for American Progress (CAP) report finds that 24 of more than 40 waiver states have been provided ESEA flexibility to use 21st CCLC funds for in-school expanded learning time (ELT); less than ten have taken the option seriously.
- f) USED announced in the December 3rd Federal Register -- with comments due on January 2nd -- proposed priorities for charter school grantees in the next round of applications.
- g) USED has announced that the 25 highest-rated i³ grant applications (HRA) have obtained a commitment for the 15 percent matching requirement which was the last step for their winning grants in the current \$134 million i³ program.
- h) Education Week reports that the newly designed College Board SAT, which has been realigned with Common Core State Standards, will become available in Spring 2016 - a year later than previously predicted.
- i) Two state superintendents have joined Chiefs for Change in December.

Also included in this TechMIS issue are state profile updates which address: Common Core State Standards/assessments, state education funding, teacher evaluations, and early childhood education.

**Special Report:
FY 2014 Appropriations Restores Much of
the FY 2013 Sequester Cuts,
Postpones Immediate Future Sequester Cuts for Two Years,
and Will Provide Some Opportunities for Most TechMIS Clients,
Especially in Title I and Head Start/Early Childhood Funded Programs**

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

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January 28, 2014

As promised in our January 15th Funding Alert highlights, we have included more details (some preliminary) on the language changes and program funding levels in the FY 2014 appropriations act that have become available to us. While neither the official USED budget nor the final bill language have been published, we have included below funding levels which have been made available in the House Manager's report (which includes handwritten notes) and other media and other sources which have been provided preliminary information on specific programs. It is important to note that the program budgeted levels discussed below and in the enclosed chart will likely change after USED applies "their interpretation" of Congressional intent in several ways:

- Flagship Administration programs such as Race to the Top, Promise Neighborhoods, etc. will be expanded under the Secretary's discretionary authority to incorporate components of other proposed programs (e.g., Universal pre-K) that were not funded;
- Other Administration priorities in the President's proposed budget which were not funded will be incorporated into other competitive grants, such as the inclusion of STEM-related priority activities into Teacher Incentive Fund grant program in 2012-13.

Some of these changes may be reflected in USED's official publication of its FY 2014 budget document, which is not available. Below we summarize the numbers, estimates, etc. for the Department of Education and other agencies with relevant programs, such as Head Start.

Of particular interest to most TechMIS subscribers should be the Title I program for which most of last year's sequester cuts were restored and, perhaps more critically, immediate sequester cuts have been postponed for at least the next two years. As a result, most districts which have withheld in district Title I "reserves" about \$2 billion of "carried over funds," will be

obligating/spending such funds between now and June 30th or September 30th, depending on each SEA's guidance. Overall, the FY 2014 budget will be about \$15.553 billion compared to \$15.721 billion in FY 2012, with total LEA Part A grants to states funded at about \$14.4 billion compared to \$14.5 billion in FY 2012 (see chart). Of the four Title I funding components, most of the funding that was not restored was in the Basic Grants. The amount of funds in Targeted and Incentive components, which benefit large urban LEAs, are close to FY 2012 levels. About half of Title I will be allocated in July 2014 and the remainder, which is "advance funded," after October 1, 2014. In terms of language changes, a new provision "clarifies" use of Title I funds for transportation of homeless children and youth, and support for homeless liaison staff.

The School Improvement Grant program would receive basically the same level as it did in FY 2013 -- \$506 million; however, according to the House Manager's report, "The bill includes new language under the School Improvement Grants (SIG) programs that allow funds to be used to implement a research-proven, whole-school reform model; enables State education agencies, with the approval of the Secretary of Education, to establish an alternative State-determined school improvement strategy that may be used by LEAs; and provides flexibility to LEAs eligible to receive services under the Rural Education Achievement program." SEAs will also be allowed to make five-year awards to LEAs rather than the current three-year awards to allow more time for planning and for effectively implementing and sustaining school turnaround efforts. While this extension is not intended to delay deadlines for improving outcomes, USED will be required to provide oversight related to the provision.

The expansion of two additional acceptable SIG models, compared to the current four which are prescribed, are similar to provisions in the Senate ESEA reauthorization bill that passed last summer. The new whole school reform strategy model (e.g., *Success for All*, *Reading Recovery*, etc., among others), would require that partnerships be developed with entities with proven track records. Under whole school reform, the language states that whole school reform is a strategy which has a "moderate level of evidence that the program will have a statistically significant effect on student outcomes." The other intervention model would have to be recommended by the SEA and approved by USED. However, it is not clear whether the SEA will be limited to recommending one additional type of alternative intervention for the entire state or whether it will be allowed the flexibility to recommend an alternative intervention strategy for an individual district.

The Title II Teacher Quality state grants program will receive \$2.3 billion, down from \$2.4 billion in FY 2012. However, as Stephen Sawchuk has reported in Education Week, the SEED grants program under Teacher Quality had its set-aside raised from 1.5 percent to two percent, or about \$50 million. In the past, these grants have gone to groups such as Teach for America and the National Writing Project. The House Manager's report also states that Title II Teacher Quality funds "may be used to support such activities in civic learning." The Math/Science Partnerships area will receive \$150 million, the same as the FY 2012 appropriations level. The Teacher Incentive Fund (which funded some STEM activities last year) would be funded at \$289 million, \$10 million less than the FY 2012 appropriations. The English Language Acquisition Title III program would receive \$723 million, which is four percent over FY 2013, but is less

than the FY 2012 allocation of \$732 million.

One casualty in the budget is Race to the Top which would receive \$250 million (down from \$520 million last year) for obligation through December 31, 2014. The funds would be made available for state competitive grants to enhance or expand high-quality preschool programs for children from low-income and moderate-income families. Two types of grants would be made to the states: “to low-capacity states with small or no state-funded preschool programs and another to high-capacity states that have a larger state-funded preschool program,” according to the Manager’s report. Language also specifies that high-quality preschool programs should include comprehensive services of family engagement.

In addition to Race to the Top-Early Childhood funding, Head Start would receive \$8.6 billion in funding, which not only restores the cuts which occurred last year, but increases funding by \$612 million more than the pre-sequestration level. Nearly \$8.1 billion would be allocated under the existing Head Start formula to grantees; \$500 million would be used to support expansion of Early Head Start services for infants and toddlers; and \$25 million would be available to the Secretary for supplemental allocations related to the implementation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System.

The 2014 Act, according to Sarah Mead, Education Week (January 14th) may use competitive grants to make subgrants to districts or early childhood providers to expand preschool services, which is very similar to the Obama Administration’s pre-K proposal; however, the \$250 million Race to the Top grant pales in comparison to the \$750 million proposed under the Obama’s universal pre-K proposal, which was not funded. As Mead notes, it would be very “interesting” to see what kind of requirements and priorities the Department of Education puts forward for the program later this year. In addition, the 2014 Act also includes an increase in Federal funding for childcare subsidies to \$2.36 billion.

IDEA special education grants to the states would receive \$11.5 billion, which would be about a \$500 million increase over sequestration levels last year, but not meet the pre-sequestration level of \$11.6 billion. However, according to the House Manager’s report, “The bill includes new language clarifying that the level of effort under Part B that an LEA must meet in the year after it fails to maintain its fiscal effort is the level that it should have met in the prior year. This language clarifies congressional intent and is consistent with the Office of Special Education Program’s April 4, 2012, and formal guidance letter on this issue.” However, as Education Week’s On Special Education blog notes that while an increase in funding of \$497 million for IDEA is welcomed, IDEA “is not written to handle swings in funding,” according to Candace Cortiella of *IDEA Money Watch*. *On Special Education* notes, “For example, the law allows school districts that see an increase in federal funding to reduce their local funding by half of the increase -- so, for example, a \$1 million increase in federal funds would allow a local district to reduce funding by \$500,000.” It is likely that further clarification in the language will be forthcoming from USED.

Career and technical education was, according to Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog, another

“big winner,” it would see a \$53 million boost from last year to \$1.1 billion. Language in the House Manager’s report calls for a strengthening of adult education programs with an increased focus on adults with lowest literacy and numerous skills.

Impact Aid would be another winner, funded at \$1.3 billion, which is a \$64 million increase over last year’s level and restores all of last year’s cuts. Such funding would be made available shortly to districts since this program, unlike Title I and IDEA, are not “forward-funded,” with most of the \$64 million increase being spent before September 30, 2014. Another winner would be the TRIO Program, funded at \$838 million which is very close to the FY 2012 appropriations level, restoring virtually all of the cuts made under the sequester.

As new USED budget “interpretations” and expanded priorities under the Secretary’s discretion become available, we will include them in TechMIS updates, alerts, etc. Call if you have any questions.

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FUNDS AVAILABLE TO
PURCHASE SUPPLEMENTAL/TECHNOLOGY
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

(millions of dollars)

	FY 2012 Appropriations	FY 2013 Appropriations	FY 2014 Appropriations
Title I (Total)	15,721	14,922	15,553
Total LEA Grants (Part A)	14,516	13,760	14,385
Basic	6,578	6,233	6,459
Concentration	1,362	1,294	1,362
Targeted Grants	3,288	3,117	3,282
Finance Incentive Grants	3,288	3,117	3,282
Migrant	393	373	375
Striving Readers	160	151	158
High School Graduation Initiative	49	46	46
School Improvement Grants	534	506	506
Race to the Top*	549	420	250
Investing in Innovation (i ³) Fund	149	142	142
Improving Teacher Quality (Title II)	2,467	2,338	2,350
English Acquisition	732	694	723
State Assessments	389	369	378
Math Science Partnerships	150	142	150
Advanced Placement	30	28	28
Teacher Incentive Fund	299	284	289
Promise Neighborhoods	60	57	57
Special Education (EHA/IDEA) State Grants	12,393	11,748	12,265
Adult Education	606	575	578
Career/Technical	1,123	1,064	1,125
21st Century Community Learning Centers	1,152	1,092	1,149
Charter Schools	255	242	248
Statewide Data Systems	38	36	35
College Mentoring (GEAR-UP)	302	286	302
HEA TRIO Program	840	796	838

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Washington Update

Vol. 19, No. 1, January 28, 2014

The Fall 2013 Fiscal Survey of States Concludes that State Budget Volatility is Declining, But Growth Remains Slow, While General Funding for K-12 Education in 42 States Shows a Net Increase of \$8.8 Billion, but an Expected Slowdown in 2014

The most recent National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) survey (December 10th) found that 42 states enacted higher general funding levels in FY 2014 compared to FY 2013, with aggregate spending levels expected to increase, although less than historical averages. Spending growth will be very limited with few additional budget dollars available, according to the NASBO. FY 2013 spending surpassed the pre-recession highs for the first time, reaching \$696 billion. In 42 states, K-12 spending increased for a net of \$8.8 billion; however, five states enacted budget cuts for K-12 education between FY 2013 and FY 2014. The report also notes that mid-year budget cuts continue to decline resulting in less volatility. In FY 2010, 39 states made \$18 billion in mid-year budget cuts; however, only eight states made \$1.7 billion in mid-year budget cuts in 2012.

After a 5.7 percent percentage gain in general fund revenues in FY 2013, such general fund revenues are projected to increase by less than one percent in FY 2014. Total state budget balances are expected to decrease in FY 2014, reducing the growth rate of rainy day funds. The report explains that states have made

progress rebuilding budgetary reserves since the revenue declines in FY 2009 and 2010 (when the Federal stimulus funds were appropriated and allocated), but by FY 2012 revenues had increased by 8.4 percent. In FY 2013, revenues outpaced projections resulting in balance increases to 9.6 percent of general fund expenditures and enacted FY 2014 budgets show balances declining to 8.2 percent of expenditures. However, the report notes that Alaska and Texas account for 44 percent of total reported balances; the remaining states have balance levels of about 5 percent of general fund expenditures for FY 2014.

One might infer from the above report that state expenditures for K-12 education may have bounced back but not to the previous, pre-recession levels if one takes into account inflation for the nation as a whole. However, K-12 state spending in FY 2014 cannot be expected, on the average, to increase significantly. As always, large national averages mask both opportunities and gloomy pictures for individual states.

Forty-Five Percent of Allocations for the First 12 Race to the Top Winning States Still Available and Not Drawn Down from USED; Details Could Point to Opportunities

The first 12 Race to the Top states, which have received \$4 billion under the first two competitive rounds, have yet to “spend” \$1.8 million -- more than 45 percent of their allocations -- as of the year’s end.

According to USED information provided to Education Week (December 30, 2013), the state with the largest share of “unspent” money (59 percent of its \$700 million) is New York, with Delaware having 31 percent remaining. The four-year Race to the Top program has been extended, under a no-cost-increase funding amendment for one additional year in certain areas of implementation, for Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee.

As we and *Politics K-12* have noted in similar stories about “unspent” money, states’ “available balances” can be very misleading as the state might have obligated funds under contracts or other instruments but have yet to actually spend the money by drawing down from USED the amount on the state’s account. Every state has different quirks in their allocation, obligation, spending, and drawdown procedures. For example, in Wisconsin, districts actually have to spend their own money on certain products/services for Title I before they can request a drawdown from USED on its state allocation. In many other states, as Education Week notes, there are delays between when funds are actually spent and drawn down (hence reported).

As noted above, some states, on a case-by-case basis, have received no-cost extensions for implementing certain initiatives required in their Race to the Top plan which have provided them additional “breathing room.” However, most states have until the end of FY 2014 (September 2014) to actually obligate, and then to spend by December 31st, remaining unspent Race to the Top funds.

The percentage of Race to the Top fund balances in the Education Week article for

the 12 states includes funds which have not been drawn down. To get specific information on the amount of “obligated” but unspent funds, one usually has to contact individual districts which were supposed to receive 50 percent of their state’s allocation and the SEA which is conducting its own activities that are included in the individual state plan, which has been amended in some states many times over the last three years.

USED Announces Results of the Most Recent State Monitoring Findings Which Must Be Addressed by Each State in Applying for Its One-Year (Previously Two-Year) Extension of State Waivers Under ESEA Flexibility

The findings on six of the 12 states which received on-site USED monitoring visits are highlighted below. According to Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog, the six states in this latest (Part B) round of monitoring can be considered “fairly representative of the problems likely to be uncovered in other states.” USED desk audit/monitoring of waiver states in Part A monitoring, conducted in 2012, are available on USED’s interactive waiver map at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html>. Part A monitoring was primarily related to lower priorities being placed on graduation rates by states and teacher evaluation requirements. Highlights of the Part B monitoring audits include:

- Connecticut:
 - Lack of compliance with School Improvement Grant program requirements in lowest-performing Priority Schools.

- Inadequate SEA monitoring of professional development and testing for English learners.
- Inadequate inclusion of student growth measures in pilot tests of its new teacher evaluation system.
- Colorado:
 - The need to improve plans to monitor subgroup performance in accordance with school- and district-level implementation plans.
- Delaware:
 - Failure to ensure Focus Schools implement interventions for most at-risk subgroups of students and lack of details how interventions will address specific student problem areas.
 - Inadequate monitoring of English language learners' progress.
- Idaho:
 - Failure by the SEA to properly identify reward schools.
 - Failure to ensure Federal turnaround principles and interventions are being implemented in Priority and Focus Schools.
 - Failure of school report cards to contain required data.
- Mississippi:
 - Inadequate plan for supporting teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities to transition to college- and career-readiness.
 - Failure of Priority Schools to implement turnaround principles.
 - Failure to hire specialists to monitor Focus Schools as planned.
- The need for better SEA monitoring.
- New York:
 - Inadequate consideration of replacing principals in Priority Schools as planned.

As *Politics K-12* noted, to receive a one-year extension for their waivers, states would have to “fix these problems.” Previous Part A and subsequent monitoring have placed four states -- Oregon, Washington, Kansas, and Arizona -- on high-risk status due to inadequate implementation of Federal teacher evaluation requirements.

AAP Reports Sales of Instructional Materials Up in 2013

The American Association of Publishers has estimated that education sales for K-12 print and digital instructional materials were up seven percent over 2012, with sales in September 2013 up 25 percent over last year's September sales. AAP's Jay Diskey, Executive Director of pre-K-12 Learning Group, called the last eight years “pretty much a drought,” as reported by [Education Week's Marketplace K-12](#) blog (January 6th). While instructional material sales in 2010 increased about one percent, they plunged 12 percent and 15 percent in the next two years due primarily to the continued economic downturn and, most likely, the end of ARRA economic education stimulus funding in 2011 and 2012. Factors contributing to the increased FY 2013 spending on instruction and materials are improving state revenues in more than 40 states and demands for materials meeting Common Core Standards and Assessments. “In addition, school officials have also become increasingly

focused on finding and buying resources that can provide ‘personalized’ learning for students through digital means, as well as blended learning,” Diskey explained in his presentation. Diskey estimated that the overall market for K-12 instructional resources is about \$9 billion.

As we have reported in numerous TechMIS updates and reports over the last couple of years, Title I and IDEA funds have paid for around \$4 billion of instructional materials purchases and directly-related professional development, including those which are technology-related. Title I purchases should increase through June 30 due to the new FY 2014 Appropriations (see TechMIS Special Report).

Most Recent Race to the Top-District Competition Primarily Benefits Rural Districts, Which Received Almost Three-Fourths of \$120 Million Grants

The latest round of Race to the Top-District competition awards most of the \$120 million to four (of five total grantees) rural grantees or grantees involving a number of rural districts. According to Education Week (January 8th), Secretary Duncan "made a strategic decision to invest a large chunk of the \$120 million in grants in rural America." During a conference call with reporters, the Secretary said he wanted to "get a mix of innovation in very different communities." However, as we and other observers believe, this use of the Secretary's discretion was, in large part, designed to reduce opposition from rural district supporters, including those in Congress, to the competitive Race to the Top grant initiative. Opponents have argued that rural districts could not compete

on a level playing field because of the lack of resources, few competent grant writers, and other reasons. Indeed, the big budget battle in Congress will be to support more education funding for formula programs, such as Title I and IDEA special education, versus competitive grant programs such as Race to the Top, which groups representing rural districts, such as AASA, vehemently oppose.

The one urban district among the five winning grantees was Houston, a two-time winner of the Broad Prize for Urban Education, which will receive \$30 million from RTTT. Education Week notes, "This year, however, Mr. Duncan deliberately passed over applications that were given higher marks" (e.g., Winston-Salem in North Carolina and Team Academy Charter School in New Jersey, which is part of KIPP) in order to fund two lower-scoring rural applications. The five winning districts "are taking similar approaches to personalized learning for students, with a heavy emphasis on putting devices in the hands of students." However, within the parameters of increasing "personalized learning," there are differences across the approaches, including:

- Houston HISD will stress project-based learning beginning at the elementary level and explore aptitudes and life interests in middle schools.
- Clarendon County School District 2 (South Carolina) will receive \$25 million to expand web-based digital content and increase school enrollment options while providing Internet access for all students.
- Springdale School District (Arkansas) will receive \$26 million

to expand career academies, require online courses for ninth-graders, and create new environmental science labs.

- Kentucky Valley Education Cooperative to receive \$30 million, will expand distance learning and train mentors for middle and high school students, along with improved general technology training.
- Clarksdale Municipal School District (Mississippi), receiving \$10 million, will create personalized learning academies in fifth and sixth grades using instructional coaches.

While some Congressional opposition to Race to the Top might be reduced by funding this round for rural districts, others may argue even more vehemently that the entire Race to the Top program provides too much discretion for the Secretary of Education to impose his perception of best innovative approaches to education.

ECS Report Summarizes New Legislation in 25 States Enacted in 2013 Legislative Sessions Include Bills Addressing New Redirected Funding Into Reading/Literacy Priorities for Pre-K-Grade 3 Students

A new Education Commission of the States (ECS) report provides summaries of 38 bills from 25 states which “illustrate the breadth and depth of P-3 policies enacted in 2013 legislative sessions.” Some of the bills affected P-3 funding such as a new pre-K scholarship program for low-income families in Minnesota, and creative ways to finance early childhood programs through K-12 funds reallocations in Texas and North Dakota. A number of states also passed

legislation requiring interventions for literacy and grade retention for struggling students in grade 3.

The number of bills which affected funding for early childhood programs, particularly pre-K, have been increasing over the last two years, include the following:

- Arizona S.B. 1447 which permits charter schools to provide and receive state funding for a preschool program for students with disabilities.
- Minnesota H.F. 630 which, in addition to establishing an Early Learning Scholarship program for low-income children, sets a minimum of 850 hours of instruction for a full-day kindergarten program and permits districts to use funds generated by all-day kindergarten pupil counts to offer pre-K opportunities for 3- and 4-year-old children.
- Texas H.B. 1112 which allows the TEA Commissioner to provide full-day funding to the Dallas Independent School District pilot program for pre-K programs.

A number of state legislatures also passed bills promoting student reading comprehension. The report notes that in 2012 alone, 14 states passed legislation geared toward the identification, intervention, and retention of K-3 students struggling to read. These states have continued to focus on school accountability, raising teacher expectations, and expanding early identification efforts under these third-grade literacy retention priorities. Specific efforts include:

- Mississippi S.B. 2347 which established the Literacy-Based Promotion Act designed to improve reading proficiencies for K-3 students and requiring districts to provide intensive reading instruction and intervention while banning social promotion of students whose reading deficiency continues by the end of grade 3.
- Ohio S.B. 21 which requires each district to develop reading achievement improvement plans for districts which are low-performing on K-3 grade literacy progress measures or which had 40 percent of more students failing the third-grade English language arts assessments proficiency exam.
- Ohio S.B. 21 which also requires all new reading educator licenses, credentials and training to be aligned with newly-adopted reading competencies and new teacher licenses to be based on passing rigorous exams on principles of scientifically-based reading instruction.
- Oregon H.B. 3232 which would require that funds for strategic investments to improve reading readiness for students up to the third grade be allocated to develop materials and curriculum also require the State to expand reading opportunities for at-risk students and to develop Statewide approaches to early reading readiness.
- Utah S.B. 260 which includes data-driven intervention components in the reading achievement plans of each school serving grades K-3, with funding contingent based on

district performance in achieving literacy benchmark assessments; it also reduces from three to two consecutive years the threshold for districts and charter schools failing to meet goals to be eligible to receive K-3 Reading Improvement Program funds.

- Virginia S.B. 2068 which requires districts to provide early intervention services not only from grades 3, but to pre-K-3 students who demonstrate deficiencies on diagnostic reading tests.

Some of the other areas in which bills were passed by state legislatures include home visits, teacher preparation and certification, parent involvement, and governance. For a copy of the ECS summary by Emily Workman (November 2013), go to: www.ecs.org

A New Report From The After School Corporation Estimates the Wealth Inequality Impact on the Amount of Learning Time and Resources Allocated Between Wealthy and Poor Families Influences the Wide Achievement Gap Between Students from Wealthy and Poor Families

According to Education Week, “By age 12....disadvantaged children have received about 6,000 fewer hours of learning time than their more-affluent peers, and their families have been outspent by about \$90,000 on learning and enrichment activities.” As Lucy Friedman, President of the After School Corporation (TASC), the largest after school provider in New York City states, “Families of means are so determined to help their kids acquire skills

for lifelong success that they'll spend what they can, opening up a skyrocketing gap between what parents in the top income bracket and those in the bottom spent on their kids' educational enrichment. As children grow, those gaps widen significantly." She argues that the gap in learning time has grown over the last 40 years, while school day learning (approximately six hours a day) has hardly changed. In addition to streamlining public funding requirements and reporting processes to provide easier access to resources, she argues that increased per-pupil allocations for schools that expand extended learning time with community partners is critical.

The timing of this attempt to quantify the family wealth inequality disparities in the amount of dollars and time devoted to learning for children is apropos as the President, in his last 2013 news conference, argued that reducing income inequality and closing gaps would be a major thrust during the remainder of his Administration. Secretary Duncan has pushed extended learning time during the school day -- as much as 300 additional instructional hours per year -- as a major priority. In addition, extended learning time has become an even higher priority in Promise Neighborhoods, School Improvement Grants, Race to the Top, and other initiatives. For the most part, however, no additional funding streams for extended learning time (ELT) have been created; rather amendments or "rules" have made 21st CCLC programs eligible to fund extended learning time. In a few cases, school districts have implemented ELT using additional funding from foundations.

It is interesting that, as President of one of the largest after-school program initiatives,

Friedman calls for increased funding, especially to expand learning time with community partners, as well as planning after-school programs, not necessarily just extending learning time during the school day. Perhaps this represents a compromise between the after-school advocates, such as the Afterschool Alliance, and other associations promoting extended learning time (ELT). This could become important if the President's new proposed priority to address inequalities is implemented.

National Joint Powers Alliance Has Provided Four-Year Contracts With Firms for Pre-K Curriculum and Related Products Which Will Allow Member Districts (Almost 10,000) to Purchase Off the Contracts Rather Than Issue RFPs

Earlier this year, more than 30 companies participated in a conference call to announce the availability of a pre-K curriculum consortia procurement. As reported Education Week's Marketplace K-12 blog on December 18th, following an unsuccessful call for proposals two years ago -- to which no publishers officially responded -- contracts have been awarded under the new solicitation. The companies that would receive contracts under this "group buy" include: Carolina Biological Supply Company, a North Carolina science and math curriculum and products vendor; K-12 Incorporated, which provides online courses and services; Middlebury Interactive Languages, partially owned by K-12 Incorporated; and Pearson Inc. According to Gordon Johnson, Director of the National Joint Powers Alliance, companies that win contracts under this "group buy" need to

have a “solid footprint nationally” to serve schools across the country. As we reported on the proposed changes in the E-Rate discount initiative suggested by the FCC, a new USED policy initiative includes a major thrust to encourage districts and libraries to apply for E-Rate discount purchases of eligible products through “consortia” or other mechanisms which offer group purchasing power with vendors of eligible products to increase efficiency. On one hand, a group purchase may reduce prices to districts and libraries and drive down prices due to competition; on the other hand, competition from smaller firms, which do not have “national footprints” and thus cannot bid on such group buys, could be minimized. It appears that the Administration, through a number of mechanisms, is attempting to facilitate the creation of such consortia, especially in emerging technology industry sectors, from which school districts can purchase.

For a district to purchase from the National Joint Powers Alliance, it must join the 10,000 member school districts, for which there is no fee. However, the Alliance receives a one to four percent fee of the total value of a contract or a negotiated amount which is paid for by the vendor. About 40 percent of the Alliance’s contract usage is by non-profit education entities which purchase a wide range of furniture, supplies, and other products under 175 contracts. For more information about the NJPA, go to: www.njpacoop.org/

Miscellaneous (a)

USED has announced that seven states will receive collectively more than \$43 million under the School Improvement Grant

program to continue their efforts to turn around the lowest-achieving schools, including two states with new competitions. In two states -- Arkansas and Kentucky -- there will be new competitions for low-performing schools that were previously unfunded, while five states (Missouri, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Wisconsin) will receive continuation grants for a third year to implement one of the four models. The states receiving third-year continuation grants or grants for new competitions are Arkansas (\$5.0 million), Kentucky (\$7.5 million), Missouri (\$7.5 million), North Carolina (\$13.6 million), Rhode Island (\$1.6 million), Tennessee (\$9.2 million), and Wisconsin (\$9.2 million). Additional information about the individual states can be found at: www.ed.gov

Miscellaneous (b)

Having released in November its report on the achievement impact of SIG schools (first cohort funded), USED is revising the analysis because the outside contractor “erroneously left out too many schools that should have been included in the mix,” according to *Education Week’s Politics K-12* blog (December 11th). USED reportedly gave a host of reasons for the exclusions, including a number of schools which were deleted because they changed their assessments or schools which merged with other schools or schools where proficiency ratings were missing. As we reported in our last TechMIS issue, about two-thirds of the schools improved “on the average,” while a third saw student performance remain the same or even decrease after two years of receiving SIG funding. According to USED officials, USED is hoping to release an

updated analysis in January.

Without seeing the results of the re-analysis, one can argue that USED has hopes that the further analysis will show more positive results as the SIG initiative under Obama/Duncan is one of their flagship projects which the House has already zero-funded in its version of ESEA reauthorization. The overall SIG program in its existing form (e.g., the use of four prescribed intervention models) has received major criticism from Congressional and other quarters and has been expanded in the FY 2014 Appropriations (see TechMIS Special Report). We will be following developments in this area.

Miscellaneous (c)

Education Week reports a pledge by Vice President Joe Biden on the anniversary of the Newtown Connecticut shooting a Federal funding increase of \$100 million to boost mental health services. Evidently, \$50 million could be made available through the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for community health centers to expand services. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will finance \$50 million for the construction, expansion, and improvement of mental health facilities in rural areas over the next three years. Loans will be provided for the expansion of television broadband internet connections for practitioners and patients to consult with specialists around the country.

Miscellaneous (d)

Education Week (December 11th) reports that companies would be required to pay

annual fees to ensure compatibility of their devices with Common Core State Standards assessments being developed by the two testing consortia. The Smarter Balanced assessment consortium, consisting of 25 states, will require hardware manufacturers and operating system developers to pay annual fees to have each of their products which are proposed to be used in the CCSS statewide assessment to be tested for compatibility with the online test. For Smarter Balanced, the “testing” would occur shortly before the field test this Spring.

The PARCC consortium is not using a certification process. As the article notes, “Instead, the organization plans to establish a list of requirements that devices must meet to be used.” If the device is not compatible with PARCC tests, students would have the option of taking paper-and-pencil versions. The PARCC consortium consists of 18 states and the District of Columbia.

In our November 2013 TechMIS Washington Update, we reported on a Brookings study which estimated the cost per-pupil in states using either of the two consortia’s assessments if “a few states” dropped out of each of the consortia. The report estimated that the increased cost of a “few states” dropping out of each consortium would be minimal, perhaps ranging from five to ten percent per pupil. However, it is not clear whether the total cost of implementation includes cost of contract services for each of the two consortia for specific activities such as scoring, etc., and the cost incurred by companies to “get certified,” as noted above. This Administration is notorious for making contractor support and other use of contracted services for some of its major initiatives the first in line to suffer dollar

cutbacks when states or local agencies override their Federal allocation limits.

Miscellaneous (e)

A new Center for American Progress (CAP) report finds that 24 of more than 40 waiver states have been provided ESEA flexibility to use 21st CCLC funds for in-school expanded learning time (ELT); less than ten have taken the option seriously. This is up from only 11 states which requested and initially received ELT flexibility approval using criteria based on Principle 2 (State Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support) section of state waiver guidance. However, CAP reported that only four states met CAP's most rigorous criteria as having a strategy to use ELT to turn around its lowest-performing schools or to redesign the school day to reach student achievement goals. Those states were: Connecticut, Colorado, New York, and Massachusetts. CAP also reported that six states demonstrated a commitment to increase learning time, but did not provide enough detail. And last, as the report notes, "The majority of states -- 32 out of 42 -- did not think strategically about how to increase learning time could complement school turnaround plans and increase academic achievement."

In order to expand learning time in schools and to ensure it is well planned school redesign for turning around low-performing schools, CAP recommends that states develop guides for districts and principals and encourage schools to add 300 additional hours to the standard school year schedule, allowing more time for academics, enrichment programming, and teacher collaboration. Districts and schools should

also provide additional time for a one-year planning period where possible and use data analysis to strategically implement more time.

Without question, the Center for American Progress has been a major supporter of extended learning time and related initiatives to improve turning around lowest-performing schools under SIG and state waivers. The CAP support for these initiatives, along with others, will undoubtedly influence the overall Obama/Duncan education reform movement, now even more, as CAP Founder and President John Podesta has agreed to serve as Chief Domestic Policy "advisor/counselor" at the White House supporting the President and the Office of the Chief of Staff. Other CAP staff and senior officials, such as Cynthia Brown, are considered expert veterans of major USED programs such as Title I. Their influence on policy is likely to increase even more.

Miscellaneous (f)

USED announced in the December 3rd Federal Register -- with comments due on January 2nd -- proposed priorities for charter school grantees in the next round of applications. Following USED's recent trends, once USED formulates proposed priorities, they usually do not change significantly when final priorities are issued. It should be emphasized, as Education Week's Politics K-12 blog notes, between 2006 and 2009, charter schools submitted their applications without any guidance in the form of USED proposed priorities.

One of the proposed priorities is "personalized technology-enabled learning."

The Federal Register states, “Learning models that blend traditional, classroom-based teaching and learning with virtual, online, or digital delivery of personalized instructional content offer the potential to transform public education and create significant improvements in students’ achievement, growth, engagement, and non-cognitive skills...In light of the operational autonomy that charter schools possess and the focus that many of these schools have on serving high-need students, charter schools are uniquely positioned to contribute to the development and implementation of instructional models that effectively incorporate technology-enabled personalized learning tools and supports for high-need students.” Reinforcing two of the other five proposed absolute priorities (Priority 3 and 4), the Federal Register states, “Moreover, it is of great importance to ensure equitable access to and use of these tools and supports by high-need students.”

Under proposed Priority 1, “Improving Efficiency through Economies,” the Administration is essentially seeking charter school use of group or mass purchasing which is consistent with the USED priority to use consortia and other mechanisms to facilitate such buys to reduce costs (i.e., under USED’s Connect Ed in our September TechMIS Special Report). Such purchasing may reduce price per unit; on the other hand, the use of such consortia could also preclude competition from smaller firms who cannot fulfill the demand of purchase orders for all members of the consortia, this can, over time, reduce potential cost reduction efficiencies.

Priorities 3 and 4, respectively, would support designs to improve charter school capacity through a variety of methods to

recruit and serve students with disabilities and English language learners. In these areas, USED encourages programs which propose promising or best practices to improve achievement among these groups of students.

Miscellaneous (g)

USED has announced that the 25 highest-rated i³ grant applications (HRA) have obtained a commitment for the 15 percent matching requirement which was the last step for their winning grants in the current \$134 million i³ program. Seven were “validation” grants and 18 were “development” grants. Evidently, no “scale-up” grants were announced, even though Education Week reports that the “scale-up” application from *Success for All* was very highly rated. However, it also noted that *Success for All* had been the recipient of large “scale-up” grants in previous i³ rounds, which USED probably took into account. Education Week’s Politics K-12 blog notes that it was not easy for highly-rated i³ applicants to receive private sector matching grants during earlier i³ grants competitions. However, it appears that the most recent winning applicants were able to reach matching requirements relatively easy. All of the 25 winning applicants this round, which had to be funded by December 31st, were non-profit organizations.

Miscellaneous (h)

Education Week reports that the newly designed College Board SAT, which has been realigned with Common Core State Standards, will become available in Spring 2016 -- a year later than previously

predicted. According to Education Week's College Bound blog (December 4th), the change will provide SAT higher education members with two years to plan for the redesigned exam. New College Board President David Coleman indicated, over a year ago, that he wanted to make major changes to the SAT. More than 1.7 million students in the Class of 2013 took the SAT.

Scandara, who was formerly with the Jeb Bush Administration in Florida.

Miscellaneous (i)

Two state superintendents have joined Chiefs for Change in December. As Education Week's State Ed Watch blog notes, Tom Luna from Idaho is a natural fit for Chiefs for Change which is an affiliate of the Jeb Bush Foundation for Excellence in Education that favors the A-F school accountability system, online learning, and parent choice. He and Governor Butch Otter have been strong supporters of Common Core State Standards and digital learning. Another new member is Delaware Chief Mark Murphy who joined the group in early December. Other chiefs who are members include Louisiana State Superintendent John White, an ardent supporter of Secretary Duncan, and New Mexico Chief Hanna

Alabama Update

January 2014

According to Education Week, Alabama Governor Robert Bentley says he has recommended an increase in funding over the \$28 million spent last year for early childhood education. Early childhood advocate groups, such as the Alabama School Readiness Alliance, are seeking a \$12.8 million increase which would add more than 2,000 children to the 5,500 already served under Alabama's voluntary program for four-year-olds. Auburn University recently conducted a study showing that early education programs of all types in the State served 53 percent of the children up to age five and has a direct economic impact of \$567 million.

Education Week reports that the Alabama Department of Education has identified failing public schools from which students can transfer to other non-failing public schools or private schools. Among schools added to the new list are Barbour County Intermediate, Lafayette High School, Abbeville High School, Jeremiah A. Denton Middle School, and Bessemer Middle School. Four schools have been dropped off the list; also off the list are three schools that have been closed.

Alaska Update

January 2014

According to Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog (January 15th), Alaska is opting out of the Smarter Balanced assessment consortium and will hire the University of Kansas to design its own new State assessments. As we have noted, Alaska was provided an exception to the rule by USED to join Smarter Balanced consortium even though it did not adopt the Common Core Standards. Rather, USED ruled that Alaska State Standards were “substantially similar” to Common Core, and as such, would qualify it to become a member of one of the two testing consortia. Even though the State has pulled out of Smarter Balanced, the Anchorage school district did adopt the Common Core Standards, but apparently will be having to use the University of Kansas tests developed for the State.

Arizona Update

January 2014

As reported in Education Week, the Arizona SEA has asked the State legislature to institute a one-year moratorium on implementing its A-F school rating system and on retaining third-grade students with low reading skills at grade level. The request for a transition period follows similar transition requests from leading states such as Massachusetts, among others. This year will be the last that Arizona uses the AIMS State assessment test before moving to a different test for 2014-15. State officials believe it would be ill-advised and invalid to measure growth between two very different assessments.

California Update

January 2014

The California State Board of Education has approved new regulations governing the Local Control Funding Formula that was signed by the Governor last year. The regulations will require schools to spell out how their increased or improved services are proportionate to their increased funding from the State, according to [Education Week's State Ed Watch](#) blog (January 14th). While the formula eliminates many traditional categorical funding programs, it will provide additional funds for districts with differing percentages of students who are English language learners, from low-income families, or foster care children and will gradually phase in funding until 2020. LEAs will have to show that their higher funding received under the formula is leading to “proportionately higher services for needy students, such as low-income students and English learners.” The districts will also have to complete a template requiring increased community participation and involvement. Districts in county offices will have to complete a State template which will describe priority areas the district or county office will address. Entities with higher percentages of target populations will have to meet priorities in a more rigorous manner. Individual schools that have over 40 percent of students falling into different target categories will have to target funds on a schoolwide basis.

According to [Education Week](#), the Los Angeles Public Library is teaming up with a private online company to help dropouts earn a credited high school diploma. The program is believed to be the first of its kind in the country. It is offering 850 online courses for continuing education and running a program for immigrants to complete requirements for U.S. citizenship. According to the library's Director, John Szabo, it will also prepare adults to take the GED, with about 150 adults participating in the first year. The L.A. Public Library Career Online High School, provided by Smart Horizons Corporation, has been accredited and is expected to expand to other public library systems in the country. The L.A. public library system has 72 branch libraries and 22 literacy centers.

Colorado Update

January 2014

According to [A+ Denver](#), USED has invested \$4.7 billion into turning around schools, including \$58 million in Colorado's lowest-performing schools. Some of the key findings of the Colorado SIG experience over the last five years were identified in the report, including:

- For every student, of the first three cohorts of students that moved into "proficiency," \$132,800 SIG dollars were spent;
- 36 percent of SIG schools in the three first cohorts performed worse than before funding, based on "proficiency" rates;
- All Cohort 2 schools performed better in reading and math after funding;
- A handful of schools, mostly new schools, experienced enough growth to make a significant impact on college readiness; and
- Few consequences for poor results were applied; however two schools had their funding pulled for two years of low performance.

The Evaluation Center at University of Colorado Denver has released findings from the third-year evaluation of 19 innovation schools compared to 12 comparison schools in Denver public school district. Similar to Year 2 analyses, findings show that the innovation schools had stronger student growth and higher levels of teacher empowerment than comparison schools. However, proficiency levels in the innovation schools were below State averages and teacher turnover at innovation schools was 11 percent greater than in comparison schools. As reported in *Fritzwire* (January 14th), the study reported, "Correlations were found between student achievement and two factors in theory of change: teacher empowerment and teacher turnover."

Connecticut Update

January 2014

The Hartford Courant (December 5th) reports that more than half of Connecticut schools met their achievement targets under the new State performance index which rates schools and districts with a single number based on Connecticut's Mastery and Academic Performance tests and high school graduation rates. Under the new index, schools are classified in five tiers ranging from "excelling" to "turnaround." The score for a school is based on a number of factors including student performance on standardized tests, graduation rates, and progress in test scores. It also takes into account the performance of students who are black, Hispanic, disabled, English language learners, and students eligible for free and reduced-price lunches. Schools may be dropped a level if gaps between groups are more than ten points. Under the current ESEA flexibility waiver, of the 55 low-performing schools that were "focus" schools last year, 13 improved enough to be dropped from the classification.

Florida Update

January 2014

According to the Advocacy Institute, the performance of students with disabilities in Hillsborough County, Florida was unique among the 20 urban districts analyzed as part of the Tribal Urban District Assessment (TUDA) component of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As reported in Education Week's On Special Education blog (December 24th), in Hillsborough County, 43 percent of students with disabilities scored basic or above in fourth-grade reading compared to 31 percent of students with disabilities nationwide; Hillsborough's performance levels in the eighth-grade reading was 51 percent compared to the national average of 40 percent. Similar increases occurred at fourth and eighth-grade in math. It should be noted that Hillsborough County's Title I office and Special Education office joined forces a decade ago in implementing response-to-intervention (RTI) programs using a district-updated version of the 40-year-old DLM special education interventions which is currently owned by McGraw-Hill. Hillsborough continues as a major leader in the implementation of RTI approaches nationwide.

According to the Tampa Bay Times (January 6th), five companies have submitted proposals for the Florida State testing contract to replace the FCAT and to the transition to Common Core State Standards. The new test, which Florida officials say is on schedule, will replace the FCAT within 18 months. Florida will not be using tests from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium, for which Florida was until recently the fiscal agent. PARCC did not submit a proposal because it is funded by Race to the Top money "which cannot be used to win state contracts," PARCC spokeswoman Leslie Muldoon said. In addition to the American Institutes for Research, other companies submitting proposals for the State testing contract were Pearson, ACT, and CTB/McGraw-Hill. The situation in Florida suggests that, if a State decides to withdraw from one of the two consortia and/or decides not to use its assessment and goes out for bid, the two consortia apparently are precluded by their Federal contracts from competing.

Georgia Update

January 2014

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal has proposed a \$42 billion budget for the fiscal year starting in July, including a three percent increase over last year. For K-12, he is proposing \$547 million in additional funds which would allocate \$314 million in new funds for districts to decide how to use the dollars. According to Education Week, the Governor's desire is to restore previous cuts and charter school days and increase teacher salaries. His expected Democratic opponent in the next general election, former President Carter's grandson, has proposed restoring student instruction to 180 days a year and having the legislature set the education budget first and then pass a second spending plan for the rest of the State government. Governor Deal's opponent in the primary will be the current State Superintendent; if he wins, he will run against Democrat Jason Carter in the general election.

As reported by White Board Advisors, Georgia has withdrawn from the PARCC assessment consortium, largely because of the cost of the new test which could be as high as \$27 million -- more than the State's entire current K-12 testing budget. The State is hoping to work with counterpart states in the region that are developing a regional test.

Indiana Update

January 2014

In a speech to the Indiana legislature, Governor Mike Spence proposed to expand the State's voucher program, allowing families to send preschoolers to public or private pre-K education providers using State funds. Vouchers would be available to families earning up to 185 percent of the Federal poverty level. The Governor is hoping to allow charter schools to operate in unused school buildings and to provide subsidies to teachers who work in low-performing district-run schools or charter schools serving disadvantaged students, as reported in Education Week's *Charters & Choice* blog (December 6th).

Kansas Update

January 2014

Governor Sam Brownback has proposed \$80 million over five years to fully fund all-day kindergarten; funding for half-day kindergarten is currently provided partially by the State, with the remaining funded by local districts. Key Democratic legislators have called for the Governor, a Republican, to fully fund K-12 and restore previous cuts. The State's Supreme Court is considering a lawsuit which would restore funding by more than \$500 million per year. Most districts currently offer full-day programs for five-year-olds with only 15 of the State's 286 districts not offering full-day programs. The funds will be reallocated from State money to districts for at-risk student populations. The Brownback proposal would increase full-day kindergarten funding by \$16 million annually over five years so the State would eventually take over full funding.

Kansas recently decided to pull out of the Smarter Balanced testing consortium. As an alternative, State Commissioner Diane Debacker indicated that the State will continue its contract with the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation (University of Kansas) which has designed State tests for more than 30 years. The State will use its Common Core aligned assessment which will be field-tested this Spring.

Louisiana Update

January 2014

The Baton Rouge Advocate reports that Governor Bobby Jindal's initiative to tie teacher job reviews to student growth "has been sidelined until after he leaves office." Passed in 2010, a State law would connect 550,000 annual teacher evaluations to student performance, an approach which has been opposed by teacher unions until the Governor leaves office in January 2016. About a third of the public school teachers were reviewed by tying half of their job evaluation to student achievement growth -- referred to as the value-added model -- while the other half of reviews were tied to classroom observations. Four percent of teachers during the first year were rated as ineffective which means they could be eventually dismissed. State superintendent John White reportedly said the moratorium is needed to give teachers time to adjust to Common Core Standards in math, reading, and writing. Under the new evaluation model, half of the evaluation of public school teachers for the next two years will be based on whether they meet academic goals agreed to by teachers and principals at the start of the year -- goals that are called student learning targets. The other half of the review will consist of observation by principals and others.

NOLA.com reports that at least \$6 million in technology upgrades for Louisiana schools will be required to administer tests aligned to Common Core. While two-thirds of the State's districts have adequate numbers of computers, according to State Superintendent John White in his legislative presentation on January 15th, districts will need to invest between \$6 million and \$20 million to ensure improvements are made before tests can be administered. This does not take into account ongoing maintenance costs. A minimum of seven students to one computer is the required ratio to meet the guidelines under the PARCC consortium's test guidelines. Twenty-two districts have yet to meet this ratio and eleven continue to struggle with Internet access, according to the article. Delays have been approved for grade school and middle schools that do not meet the technology requirements and high schools will not have to take tests in 2015 under a testing delay approved by USED. Possible funding for technology would require local or

Federal funds or use of the 1998 Tobacco Settlement Fund.

Maryland Update

January 2014

Enacted in July 2013, Maryland's "Completion Law" is designed to increase college completion rates. It requires high schools to test students on their college readiness in both math and English before they finish their junior years. By 2015, high schools will be required to create transition courses for students who are deemed unprepared for college-level courses in those subjects, according to Education Week's *Inside Higher Education* blog (January 7th). Colleges and universities must require students to complete at least one credit-bearing, non-remedial math and English course as part of the first 24 credits they earn. Each undergraduate student must file a degree plan outlining a pathway to completion before earning 45 credits. Local school districts must pick up large portions of the cost of dual enrollment for up to four college courses in which the student is enrolled.

Michigan Update

January 2014

Governor Rick Snyder, in his State of the State address, proposed expansion of the State's preschool program for low-income and at-risk children. According to a recent ECS report, Michigan led the country in increasing preschool funding last year when the legislature approved \$65 million to expand the "Great Start Readiness Program" which would add almost 19,000 seats to the program. The Governor also proposed establishing a pilot program to help schools move to year-round classes. A \$10 million fund would be provided to help at-risk schools transition to shorter summer breaks by installing air conditioners and other infrastructure costs.

New Jersey Update

January 2014

As reported in Education Week (December 4th), the New Jersey State Board of Education has approved the use of three different vendor tests starting in January to replace the State's GED exam, which has been available to dropouts and others seeking GED diplomas for more than a half a century. The three vendors are Pearson, VUE Education Testing Service, and McGraw-Hill. Other exams may be approved as they become available. The State justified the change based on price reductions and the fact that paper/pencil testing is expected to continue through 2016 rather than the State shifting to a GED online testing assessment.

New York Update

January 2014

Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog reports that New York's request for double-testing waiver has been approved by USED and makes New York the second state, following Montana, to receive a "double-testing" waiver from NCLB provisions. Unlike the Montana waiver, which applies to all students of the State, the New York waiver only applies to 60,000 middle school students. Without the approved waiver, these students would have had to take the State's math assessment for their grade. According to the New York State press release, "School districts would now be allowed to administer only the Regents examination in Algebra (Common Core) to these students, eliminating the need for double-testing in grades seven and eight." This provision also applies to students in grades seven and eight who received instruction in geometry and who take the Regents exam in geometry.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, in his State of the State address, called for Statewide, full-day pre-kindergarten programs, but, according to the AlbanyTimesUnion.com, he did not address how it would be funded. He also called for a \$2 billion "Smart Schools" bond referendum for technology which would provide districts with funds to build higher tech classrooms. Another proposal would provide scholarships to SUNY or CUNY students in the top ten percent of their high school class to pursue STEM-related activities if they agree to work in-State for five years after graduation. An incentive system for teachers that would reward the most effective teachers, who would be eligible for bonuses up to \$20,000, was also proposed.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has appointed former Deputy Chancellor Carmen Farina, who until 2006 served as Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, to be the next school Chancellor. According to Education Week, Ms. Farina, who came out of retirement, is viewed to represent "a major departure from the policies that have been the hallmarks of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's education policies: rapid expansion of charter schools, the closing down of under-performing schools, and an increased use of student-test scores to grade the performance of

teachers in schools.” Most observers feel she will be a staunch supporter of implementation of the Common Core, relying on her curriculum background and her experience as a former English learner and a supporter of English language learning initiatives.

North Carolina Update

January 2014

According to the NewsObserver.com (December 15th), State funding for textbooks in North Carolina has been cut by nearly 80 percent in the past four years in the midst of a transition to a new curriculum with new textbooks. By 2017, districts will be switching to digital texts. However, no State funds have been set aside for computer and other related purchases. Parents are being forced to decide whether to buy books for their children to take home. According to the News Observer, in 2009-10, the State provided \$111 million for textbooks which was cut to \$2.5 million the following year, a reduction to \$14.26 per student for textbooks compared with \$67.15 in 2008-09. The State Education Agency estimates that purchases handled by the State textbook warehouse have dropped from \$74 million a year to \$14 million a year.

The North Carolina State Board of Education recently approved 26 charter schools that plan to open later this year with nine in Mecklenburg County and four in Wade County, according to Education Week (January 9th). The 26 charter schools have been authorized to operate for five years and to continue based on academic results during that timeframe. Education Week notes that “North Carolina could have more than 200 charter schools open in 2015 -- double the number that existed before a state limit was lifted in 2011.”

Pennsylvania Update

January 2014

Politico's Morning Education (January 10th) reports that nearly \$16 million of a \$40 million grant awarded by the Gates Foundation to the Pittsburgh public schools in 2009 is at risk of being pulled. Politico states that the grant was made on the condition that the district move forward with more rigorous teacher evaluations and if Pittsburgh does not deliver, the Gates Foundation could withdraw its money. Superintendent Linda Lane told Politico that, if Gates withdrew its funding, other donors might consider doing so and that the district's relationship with the union would be further strained. Under the rating system approved by the superintendent, on a 300-point scale, only nine percent of teachers were rated as failing in 2013 and six percent were judged to need improvement. The union feels that the number of failing and needs improvement teachers is too high and the cut for should be lowered.

South Carolina Update

January 2014

According to Education Week's *State Ed Watch* blog (January 17th), South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley recently told the Greenville County Republican Woman's Club that the State would drop Common Core Standards and that, if Senate Bill 300 reaches her desk, she will "absolutely sign it." According to the blog, the bill is a straightforward move to remove the Common Core Standards from the State. South Carolina adopted Common Core before Governor Haley was elected and State Superintendent Mick Zais, a Common Core opponent, will not run for re-election this year.

Texas Update

January 2014

Texas Democratic gubernatorial candidate Wendy Davis recently made her first policy announcement calling for guaranteed college admission for prospective teachers and loan forgiveness. In 2011, she fought the \$5 billion school funding cuts proposed by the Republican-controlled legislature which were supported by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, her expected Republican rival. Her proposal would allow the top 20 percent of high school students guaranteed admission to four-year State colleges and universities if they take a job teaching in schools after graduation. For each two years of teaching after graduation, every teacher would be given one year of loan forgiveness.

Virginia Update

January 2014

Outgoing Virginia Republican Governor Robert McDonnell included a \$400 million increase for K-12 funding in his proposed State budget. Funds would be used to cover cost increases related to the State standards and quality requirements. Almost \$250 million was put into a rainy day fund for the next fiscal year and \$60 million the following year.

The Virginia Virtual Academy will no longer continue to serve Virginia students as a result of a decision from the school board in Carroll County (Southwest Virginia) which had previously sponsored the program. While 350 students Statewide are enrolled in the online school, only five students were from the district itself. According to Education Week, the Carroll County School Board felt that problems have been created for the district in developing IEPs for students with disabilities served by the Virtual School (about 11 percent) who lived in 25 different school districts. The article also notes that satisfaction among parents with the program has been high and that according to the Carroll County Superintendent, K-12 Inc., the online provider, has a waiting list of students wanting to be served by the program.

Washington Update

January 2014

Washington Governor Jay Inslee is proposing increases in the State's 2013-15 operating budget including:

- \$1 million to support the STEM alliance to develop technology-based teacher training materials in math and science to drive relevant curriculum and real-world learning;
- one-half million to coordinate State curriculum implementation of math common core standards and adoption of the next generation science standards; and
- one-quarter million to implement district early warning dropout systems.

Wyoming Update

January 2014

As reported in the Wyoming news source www.Trib.com, the Executive Director of the Wyoming Community College Commission, Jim Rose, testifying before a joint appropriations legislative committee, proposed a new \$12 million funding initiative for the State's seven community colleges to begin in FY 2015. Funding would be allocated based on the number of students who pass courses rather than the number enrolled. With only 30 percent of first-time full-time students graduating from two-year colleges in three years, the new plan is designed to provide incentives for colleges to invest in ways to help more students graduate. Funds would be allocated proportionately across the colleges, as most have similar graduation rates. Legislative action will be required to implement the \$12 million effort.