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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 2, 2014
TO: TechMIS Subscribers
FROM: Charles Blaschke, Suzanne Thouvenelle, and Blair Curry
SUBJ: Social and Emotional Learning Funding; AEP/AAP Conference Highlights on State Funding and OEM; AASA Survey of CCSS Implementation Challenges; Indian Education Reform; \$2 Billion “Donations” from Ten Firms Under ConnectEd; and Sequestration Impact Last Year

One Special Report focuses on a new guide on Federal ESEA programs which can be used by districts and other eligible groups to fund social and emotional learning (SEL) activities and “prevention” programs, which can be helpful to firms which have related products and services for joint proposals with district applicants for grants. On June 24th, USED announced SEL as a new high-priority across Federal education grant competitions (to be addressed in upcoming Special Alert).

Another Special Report includes highlights of the June 2 - 4 annual Content in Context AEP/AAP conference which addressed Common Core standards and assessment initiatives, state appropriations for digital devices/instructional materials, and open education resources (OER).

The Washington Update includes a number of timely items of interest which TechMIS subscribers should review as follows.

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A number of miscellaneous items are also addressed including:
 - a) A recent Government Accountability Office report (May 28th) on the impact of sequestration on Title I reports that all three Title I district programs included in the study “reported that Title I reductions contributed to decisions to defer maintenance or technology upgrades.”
 - b) USED has announced priorities for the \$75 million GEAR UP grants competition; GEAR UP funds 87 programs serving 420,000 middle and high school students and is designed to improve college readiness and to ensure students graduate from high school and maximize their success in college.
 - c) According to Education Week’s Curriculum Matters blog (June 6th), currently less than half of K-12 students are scheduled to take assessments provided by PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia; for the remaining 58 percent of students, states plan to use other tests or are undecided about what assessments will be used (this includes New York State’s 2.7 million students).
 - d) The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that as of May 15th, lawmakers in 46 states sessions this year introduced more than 340 bills addressing college and career-readiness education standards, including Common Core.
 - e) A policy brief by the Center on Reinventing Public Education has found that funding uncertainty/reductions have “undermined” personalized learning programs in charter schools.
 - f) Preliminary data from a survey produced for the Joan Ganz Cooney Center finds 513 of 494 teachers surveyed report using games in the classroom, and nearly half of

- teachers who use games rely heavily on word-of-mouth of other teachers in selecting games which they use.
- g) Large after-school programs based on a “connected learning approach,” which combines in-school academics and out-of-school interests, will be initiated in Dallas, Columbus, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C. this summer.
 - h) According to a new study by the Institute of Education Sciences, during the 2011 year, in all study schools implementing School Improvement Grant turnaround efforts, the needs of English language learners received “only moderate or limited attention.”
 - i) In order to scale-up extended learning time projects in a school district, the Wallace Foundation report, “Scaling Up, Staying True,” includes recommendations from Christopher Cross and Associates.
 - j) During the fourth White House Science Fair, President Obama announced several new STEM initiatives.

This TechMIS issue does not include any state profile updates, which will be included in the next issue and will focus primarily on funding and directly related policies and procedures. As always, please contact Charles Blaschke directly if you have any questions (703-362-4689).

Special Report:
**A New Guide on ESEA Federal Programs Which Can Be Used by
Districts and Other Eligible Groups to Fund Social and Emotional
Learning (SEL) Purchases, Activities, and Prevention Programs Can
Be Helpful to Firms Which Have Related Products and Services**

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

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July 2, 2014

The new guide developed by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) and the Milken Institute of Public Health identifies 15 Federal programs along with specific authorizing legislation and/or regulations allowing school districts and other eligible parties to use such funds for prevention and social and emotional learning (SEL) activities. The guide is available at no cost on the CEP website (www.cep-dc.org) and could be extremely useful to many TechMIS subscribers with appropriate products and services when they approach school districts or other eligible parties to discuss potential funding sources which districts can use to purchase their products.

Past TechMIS reports have addressed in detail some of these programs such as Title I, as well as School Improvement Grants (SIGs) and Promise Neighborhoods. Other smaller programs such as Neglected Delinquent and At-Risk Youth programs as well as Title II Part A Teacher Quality are also included and highlighted below in some detail. IDEA programs, particularly guidance encouraging the use of SEL in Response to Intervention (RTI)/Coordinated Early Intervention Services (CEIS), which we have also covered in-depth in previous TechMIS reports, are not addressed, but also represent another major funding opportunity for prevention and SEL products and services. In behavioral and emotional support interventions, which have grown in use rather dramatically since 2005. Highlights of specific programs are presented below with funding levels and key provisions, some of which are relatively new and not widely-known by LEAs.

Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
Title I, Part A, ESEA
(\$14.4 billion in FY 2014)

As previous TechMIS reports and updates have reported, the best SEL opportunities are new provisions/regulations for schoolwide programs which in waiver states include all SIG schools

and Priority and Focus schools, which are/can be designated as schoolwides. Section 1114 requires that schoolwide programs include strategies addressing needs of all students, but specifically targeted for low-achieving, at-risk students. These include counseling, pupil services, and mentoring services. Although not covered in the CEP guide, it is important to emphasize that Title I is a state-administered program and even though USED guidance allows funds to be used for relatively new activities (e.g., SEL and school climate interventions) and purchases of related products and services, the SEA Title I office for a number of reasons (e.g., ranging from past modus operandi or relationships to other SEA funded programs) might resist allowing districts to actually implement the new USED guidance. In addition, the September 2, 2009 Title I ARRA provisions and most recent regulations (see April 15 TechMIS Special Report on new flexibilities) state that Title I funds can be used to implement interventions, which improve school climate include SEL activities and products, if the required schoolwide needs assessments identifies this need and it is documented in the schoolwide plan.

As we reported in the past, one of the first comprehensive surveys of SEL activities being implemented in districts and areas of increased demand as perceived by principals and teachers found that teachers' perception of the greatest needs were in high-poverty Title I programs, specifically mentioning schoolwide programs. While many district officials felt that SEL activities were already being conducted in a moderate fashion in their schools, most of the teachers perceived a much greater need for SEL activities to meet needs for at-risk students which were unmet and increasing.

Teacher and Principal Training

Title II, Part A, ESEA **(\$2.3 billion in FY 2014)**

Funds can be used to recruit and provide professional development to teachers and principals. While SEAs can reserve five percent of the state allocation, 95 percent is distributed to LEAs based on a formula which includes poverty factors. In Sections 2122-23, each LEA must describe how it will provide training and enable teachers to address the needs of students with disabilities and those with limited English language proficiency, who have different learning styles. The Law and non-regulatory guidance (NRG) also in Section 2123 allows LEAs to provide professional development, which improves the knowledge of teachers and principals and, in appropriate cases, paraprofessionals, concerning effective instructional practices and that "improve student behavior in the classroom and identify early and appropriate interventions to help students...and provide training in methods of improving student behavior in the classroom."

21st Century Community Learning Centers

Title IV, Part B, ESEA **(\$1.1 Billion for FY 2014)**

Eligible entities include LEAs and community-based partners for competitive grants from the SEA for after-school program, and for extended learning time (ELT) activities in states with waivers. In addition to providing opportunities for academic enrichment, Section 420 states that a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities can be offered "...such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, park

music and recreation activities, technology education programs, and character education programs that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students.”

School Improvement Grants
Title I, Part A, Section 1003 (g), ESEA
(\$506 million in FY 2014)

The CEP report addresses prevention and SEL funding opportunities under the four prescribed SIG models, but does not address the newly-allowed use of two additional intervention models -- the whole school reform strategy and SEA “homegrown” model, for which USED is developing guidance. However, many districts are proceeding without formal USED guidance. The USED March 1, 2012 non-regulatory guidance provides details for the four intervention models. For the most widely-used “transformation” model, guidance states that other activities beyond those, which are required under the model, could include activities to “create safe school environments that meet students’ social, emotional, and health needs -- improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment.” In addition, creation of safe school environments such as community engagement and family literacy components are allowed.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act
Title IV, Part A, ESEA
(\$90 million in FY 2014 for National Programs)

Eligible applicants for the National Programs competitive grants typically include SEAs, LEAs, non-profit entities and community-based organizations. For-profit firms which have appropriate products and services which can be purchased by grantees can participate but not directly apply for grants. As the CEP report notes for the FY 2014 National Programs competition, applications are currently not available and interested parties should check the USED website (<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grants-apply>) and go to “Ed Grants Forecast.” Section 4121 allows the Secretary to “carry out programs to prevent substance abuse and promote safety and discipline of students “...through grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements with public and private entities and individuals or through agreements with other Federal agencies and shall coordinate such programs with other appropriate Federal activities.” Following the “principles of effectiveness,” allowable activities under the National competition, include the development and demonstration of innovative strategies for training school personnel and community members, as well as evaluation and dissemination of high-quality practices. An allowable activity is the use of alternative education models within the school or separate from the LEA to, among other things, reduce disruptive behavior and enable students to return to regular classrooms as soon as possible after suspensions or expulsions. The development of education and training programs, curriculum, instructional materials, and professional development and directly-related areas including violence and hate preventions, as well as SEL activities are allowed.

Promise Neighborhoods

Title V Part D of the Fund for the Improvement of Education

(FY 2014 funding at \$56.7 million)

While previous TechMIS reports have covered many aspects of the Promise Neighborhoods program, which supports a wide-range of “wraparound services,” non-profit organizations are eligible for competitive grants which involve an LEA and at least one low-performing school located in “a distressed area.” Federal regulations and non-regulatory guidance (NRG) published in May 2010 require applicants to address one of three absolute priority ones:

- implementing one of the four SIG prescribed models;
- improving one or more low-performing schools by implementing ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive interventions in low-performing schools that are not SIG eligible;
- supporting and sustaining an effective school which provides academic programs and a continuum of solutions that significantly enhance and expand current efforts to improve academic outcomes of the children in the neighborhood.”

In addition to having academic programs, “family and community support is required in areas such as mental health and schoolwide behavioral interventions such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports” and programs to “improve emotional security of the school setting [e.g., school climate].”

Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk Youth

Title I, Part D, ESEA

(Funding levels to be determined by SEAs; total funding for FY 2013 was \$49 million)

The overall purpose of this program is to prepare students in institutions to transition to further education and support LEA programs serving at-risk children and youth. USED funds competitive grants to SEAs, LEAs, Indian tribes and organizations and consortia of these and other eligible entities. In section 1424, funding can be used for dropout prevention programs and “the coordination of health and social services for such individuals if there is likelihood that the provision of such services, including daycare, drug and alcohol counseling, and mental health services will improve the likelihood such individuals will complete their education.”

The CEP guide also includes a number of other programs which represent funding sources for prevention and SEL products and services, including:

- School Dropout Prevention (FY 2014 funding \$46 million) in which CEP states “It seems reasonable that prevention activities with a social and emotional component could be part of a dropout prevention program ;”
- ESEA Counseling program (\$49 million for FY 2014), which funds “the most innovative and promising approaches and show the greatest potential with their approach to be replicated and disseminated,” including work and self decision-making, or academic and career planning to improve peer interaction. Also, “professional development for school personnel to implement both early intervention techniques by school counselors, school

social workers, school psychologists, or other qualified psychologists and child and adolescent psychiatrists” is allowed;

- McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act (\$65 million in FY 2014 funding) which provides competitive grants to LEAs “ to assist homeless children and youth in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school, including after-school programs and mentoring and summer programs, and providing violence prevention counseling which allows funds to be used for substance abuse prevention activities;”
- Small Rural School Achievement Program (FY 2014 funding \$170 million) which provides formula grants to rural LEAs which allows such rural LEAs with high rates of poverty enrollment to consolidate which typically small competitive grants under this program with many of the above programs including Title II, Title IV, and Title IV Part B and Title IV Part A for maximum impact.

The CEP report also provides recommendations for exploring options for seeking funding for prevention and SEL activities, including monitoring USED’s website (www.ed.gov) and communicating directly with the appropriate Program Office for updated guidance and reviewing Frequently Asked Questions, which usually accompany new regulations. When applying for funds, one must also make the connection between the proposed approach, supporting research and past results, and program requirements and desired outcomes. Use of relevant and current research citations is critical.

Special Report: Highlights of Content in Context AEP/AAP Conference June 2 - 4

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

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The annual conference entitled “Content in Context” for supplemental education publishers, previously sponsored by the Association of Educational Publishers (AEP), which has now been merged with the Association of American Publishers (AAP), was held in Washington, D.C. It attracted the largest attendance since 2008. Attendees included supplemental educational publishers and supplemental education/technology divisions/groups within the more traditional large-scale textbook/digital learning firms such as Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and Houghton-Mifflin, among others. The agenda covered issues and challenges confronting the industry as highlighted below. AEP Executive Director Tom Allen summarized the major challenges confronting the industry.

Tom Allen, former Maine Congressman and current President and CEO of AAP, provided his insights on challenges confronting publishers as they adapt to the evolving education environment. Both the traditional textbook and digital core instruction publishing side, including the supplemental firms need to define themselves “by their work rather than the media in which they publish, with the highest emphasis on quality of content and how it promotes learning.” Increasingly complicated challenges exist and include: “Political and public voices clamor for all digital schools, vowing to get rid of paper...new studies about e-reading, for example, indicate a potential negative influence on literacy skills.” One lunch speaker, researcher Vicky Rideout, President VJR, pointed to the rapid growth of screen reading. In an offline conversation, she agreed with Allen’s comment that in certain areas such as comprehension, the effectiveness of screen reading versus prints remains questionable in spite of its rapid growth.

Another challenge confronting publishers is that even though Common Core standards in math and English/language arts have been adopted by more than 40 states, AAP has found in its monitoring of state legislatures, numerous bills have been introduced to delay or divorce themselves from CCSS. This in turn has created uncertainty for publishers in deciding if and when to align their products with new standards. Moreover, as several leading publisher representatives have been noted in previous TechMIS reports, this uncertainty has created a

degree of market paralysis.

Adding to the challenges confronting publishers is the increased demands to ensure a skilled U.S. workforce based largely on international test scores. Allen argued that many of the same advocates have begun “crying out for schools to stop over-testing students forcing another re-evaluation by the states.” Many of these same advocacy groups are also calling for personalized learning; however, “the conversation gets confused between the capture of data for education purposes versus commercial use creating a dichotomy in the public over how to achieve initial goals.”

And finally, “while educators, parents, and students want and deserve the best learning resources, there’s a large contingent that expects to get them for free.” Allen concluded that the state of the industry “is opportunity” in which AAP can provide an important voice, as state legislatures advocate “for funding that protect schools’ abilities to buy materials, they need to effectively educate their students and for copyright laws that reflect the growth of digital media.” Pointing to other emerging opportunities, CEO Allen concluded that not only are publishers confused about the state of standards, but so are teachers and parents and lawmakers. His solution is “We can talk with them about what alignment to standards means, how that doesn’t change the basis of our materials: the proven pedagogy and research... We understand how to make materials that help students learn.” However, as **Catherine Gewertz**, *Education Week’s Marketplace K-12* blogger noted, “But his [Allen] comments land amid increasing criticism that the publishing industry has largely failed to create new materials that reflect the complexity and demands of the Common Core standards. The industry is also under strident attack from activists who oppose what they see as an over-emphasis to teaching to high-stakes tests.”

In moderating the session on Open Education Resources (OER), Frank Catalano of Intrinsic Strategy referred to OER as “get it, adapt it, share it.” The session included Dan Caton, former AEP President and President McGraw-Hill Schools. Several significant highlights include:

- Publishers cannot prevent “sharing” especially of supplemental programs; however, when CORE instructional programs are shared this could be a “disaster” for the industry.
- State adoptions (which are becoming more flexible), which are designed to “control for uniformity” will be strengthened if, as a result of Common Core assessments, students’ scores drop dramatically.
- However, Tim Hudson of Dreambox said a major challenge to firms posed by the OEM movement is helping sell products that add value and answer the question “what can teachers do that isn’t available for free under OER?”

The attendees’ interest level in OER was high. Some groups, such as Common Sense Media in a sidebar discussion, argued that the movement is here to stay and will continue to grow; however, AEP tracking of state legislative action has found that the number of legislative bills promoting OER is significantly less than the number submitted between 2009-2011. For example, only one bill (i.e., Alabama) was submitted in 2013.

The policy and funding keynote session was presented by Jay Diskey, Executive Director of the AAP Pre-K-12 Learning Group (which includes the merged AEP membership). He provided a number of very interesting statistics and data compiled by AAP which are most often quoted in the press regarding publishers' sales and recent trends. Diskey served as a key staff person for former Chairman of the House Education Committee Bill Goodling during the 1990s and early 2000 period and also assisted AEP members and a number of us in providing language included in House Education Conference Reports in 2002-03 to ensure that new programs, such as Reading First created in 2002, would allow supplemental education publishers products to be purchased with Reading First and related funding, even though such supplemental materials were not "officially approved" by USED (i.e., its contractor University of Oregon identified so-called "effective" reading programs). Highlights of his presentation along with predictions should be heeded by many TechMIS subscribers.

Diskey highlighted some of the major topics which have been addressed thus far this year in state legislatures, two of which were of major interest to education publishers... Common Core legislation, particularly opposition, and instructional materials legislation/funding. In 2014, Common Core opposition bills were introduced in 41 states compared to 14 states in 2013, totaling about 300 separate specific bills in 2014. Opposition has come from parents and other anti-testing groups, conservative activists, and teacher unions, especially in New York and California. Most bills would delay implementation, limit assessment activities, or in most cases curtail funding. As of late May, while opposition legislation was enacted in Indiana and Alabama, it was vetoed in Arizona. Other states pending final approval include Colorado, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Bills still remaining in this year's legislative sessions exist in California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, and New York. He predicted that by the end of legislative sessions, about seven of the 46 states in which opposition legislation has been introduced, will likely have passed and Common Core implementation will be dropped or otherwise seriously impacted, beyond changing the "Common Core name," which more than 20 states are currently doing or have done according to our analysis.

The most recent CCSS assessment analysis conducted by AEP using internal sources, as well as recent reports by Education Week, has found that 17 states are planning to use Smarter Balanced and nine states using PARCC, which according to Education Week (June 9th), cover only 42 percent of all students taking required tests next year. Eighteen states will use other assessments, and six states are currently undecided (Missouri, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina). It should be noted that state legislative action relating to assessments is much more of a moving target than actual dropping/revoking adoption of Common Core standards. While union opposition will increase with attempts to cut assessment funding, state implementation of planned assessments are likely to occur in 25+ states.

Actual implementation of Common Core standards and assessments will vary significantly predicted Diskey. For example, California passed early legislation affecting the adoption and implementation, as well as funding, for Common Core standards. About \$1.25 billion has recently been allocated for Common Core implementation, and another \$550 million for

continuation is very likely, according to AAP lobbyists. Most of this funding will be for instructional materials and professional development.

Washington Update

Vol. 19, No. 6, July 2, 2014

The Administration's ConnectED Initiative Is Underway With Ten Major Technology Firms Having Committed \$2 Billion in Donations, for Which Districts Have to Submit Applications Due Shortly; Updates Will Be Provided Based on Briefings and Interviews We Are Conducting

ConnectED, which is designed to facilitate the availability of free hardware/software, educational content, and wireless connectivity amounting to over \$2 billion in value from ten “committed” firms, is supposed to be supplemented by an additional \$2 billion (for two years) under the new E-Rate modernization initiative. (See October 2013 TechMIS Special Report)

While the details of how the initiative will be implemented (e.g., the selection process and criteria and donor “conditions”), the White House blog announcement (June 13th) states, “This investment is the shot of adrenalin our schools need to surge into the 21st century.” Some observers have questioned whether the initiative provides mostly long-term opportunities for the ten “committed” firms, but paralyzes much of the market for other medium and smaller companies which sell technology products and services to the K-12 environment. Some cite examples over the last two decades such as the Microsoft so-called “giveaway” which began a decade or so ago.

In the meantime, a follow-up lead article in Education Week (June 17th) entitled

“Schools Must Act Fast to Apply for ConnectED Donated Goods, Services” states that “some of the donor companies’ deadlines to apply are only four or six weeks away and require compiling significant amounts of information for application packages. Following an analysis, the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) has provided a “Cliff Notes” guide to help districts; it includes some details on the types of products and conditions that have been outlined in the recently-announced ConnectED Hub and donor firms’ websites and summarizes key information about the “terms and conditions of the corporate donors’ expectations for successful school applicants.” The SETDA report entitled “What Educators Need to Know About ConnectED School Technology Donations” is available at: <http://www.setda.org/2014/06/14/what-educators-need-to-know-about-connected-school-technology-donations/>. Highlights of the SETDA report which illustrate the varying conditions and eligibility requirements of firms are listed below.

- Apple (\$100 million) in iPads, MacBooks, content and professional development tools for disadvantaged schools with at least 96 percent Title I eligible students; letters of intent are due June 20th with final applications for “invited” parties due July 25th.
- Microsoft’s “substantial affordability” program includes deeply discounted prices for Windows and devices, and products

from partners including Acer, Asus, Dell, HP, Samsung, among others.

- O'Reilly Media, with Safari Books Online (\$100 million in educational content and tools) initially for high school students; applications limited to the first 500 who register.
- Verizon -- multi-year program (\$100 million in cash and in-kind commitments); eligible applicants to be announced.
- Sprint free wireless service (\$100 million) for 50,000 low-income high school students over four years; eligible applicants include charter schools and districts, and "other eligibility" entities; districts have to describe their technology plans and educational goals and student outcomes.
- Other firms with commitments of their products and in-kind services include ESRI, AT&T, Autodesk, Adobe, and Prezi.

Additional information is provided in the SETDA report including committed firms websites that will have more information about the program and copies of applications, among other information.

AASA Survey Finds More Than 85 Percent of Districts Have Adopted Common Core Standards and Most Have Already Implemented Them; Most Feel Major Challenges Are Professional Development, Aligned Materials, and Online Assessments

According to the survey of more than 500 district superintendents and designated administrators in April 2014, "The biggest

obstacles are assessments (73.3%), teacher training/professional development (65.2%), finding instructional materials (58.2%), and state support (52.3%)." Helping districts overcome some of these obstacles may point to possible opportunities for many TechMIS subscribers.

About 80 percent of superintendents and teachers and about the same percentage of curriculum and technology staff were reportedly prepared and involved. Almost 60 percent said professional development has "changed a great deal" and that the biggest assessment barriers are technology issues, especially online assessments, which should be addressed with professional development; and 45 percent reported technology already has a major "role" in professional development.

Eighty percent of respondents argued that finding materials that are aligned to the standards is difficult, even though publishers claimed alignment has been made. Respondents felt that the "aligned" materials were not greatly different from previous materials and pre-CCSS texts, and that most materials fail to cover higher-level thinking skills and tend to cover only 10-15 percent of materials stipulated in CCSS. About 70 percent of respondents said they had thrown out some or all materials that were not CCSS-aligned with new standards.

The new assessments are the major problems, according to respondents already field testing (64.8%); most (60.3%) reported "some" or "great difficulty" associated with dealing with the technology. Respondents see such technology issues being multiplied when full testing occurs next year. Forty percent of respondents say schools are not ready to implement the online assessment.

Another problem reported by respondents is the need to help the community understand the standards, with only about 30 percent reporting community support for assessments. Such misunderstandings by parents and other community stakeholders “are damaging the chances of a smooth transition to the new standards.” Over three-quarters of superintendents say their districts are informing stakeholders; however, “only 52 percent are allowing opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback, and only 43 percent for the assessments. To get the message out further, almost 60 percent are preparing school-level staff to answer questions on implementation and 53 percent on assessments.” The report also notes that the least active groups in the implementation of the standards are district non-instructional support staff (16%), and community leaders (17%), while the most active groups are teacher unions and organizations (63%).

The report also attempted to analyze responses from low-poverty versus high-poverty districts. Respondents in high-poverty districts see the standards as a more significant change (55.8%) than respondents in low-priority districts (23.2%) and also feel their staff is less prepared for implementation (e.g., 22% fewer say technology staff are “very prepared”). As the report notes, “This lack of preparation can make the implementation much more difficult...This is especially troubling for high-poverty districts which also have more technology issues and a more difficult to educate student population. More time and professional development are especially crucial for these districts.”

It is interesting to note that respondents in high-poverty districts are more likely not to be a part of the two testing consortia

(PARCC or Smarter Balanced); relatively fewer of these districts have begun testing and high-poverty districts respondents are more likely to evaluate teachers on reading and math scores whether they teach those subjects or not. In addition, high-poverty district respondents say they are less directly involved in community support and teacher evaluation when compared to low-poverty schools.

From the above analysis, it is clear that districts with relatively large Title I programs serving a higher percentage of poverty students are the least prepared for effective implementation of Common Core standards and assessments, have a greater need for professional development and support in the assessment area, and a greater need for developing community support for implementing standards and assessments with the focus on using technology.

An article in Education Week (June 11th) also reports the survey conducted by Gallup-EdWeek conducted online with about 1,900 superintendents replying. The findings of the online survey conducted last October-December were similar to those in the AASA report, with some differences noted below:

- about 55 percent of superintendents felt their schools had the technology infrastructure to handle a large increase in technology use (30% strongly agree); and
- thirty-seven percent strongly agreed that teachers in their district were well-prepared to teach Common Core standards, while an equal percentage felt they were at least somewhat prepared.

As the two reports note, neither survey constituted a national sample; as we have

noted in the past, most of the AASA respondents reflected AASA's membership which is most likely small to medium size districts, including many rural districts.

The full report on "Common Core and Other State Standards: Superintendents Feel Optimism, Concern and Lack of Support" is available at: www.aasa.org (703-528-0700).

The President's New "Blueprint for Reform" Proposes to Redesign the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Reflecting "It's Evolution from a Direct Education Provider to an Expert Service and Support Provider," Which Will Be a Difficult Reform to Implement; However, the Proposed New Initiative Could Create Some Opportunities for Technology Firms Targeting the Indian Education Niche Market, Especially Related to E-Rate Funds

Converting the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), which operates 57 schools and oversees 126 others run under contract by tribes will be a daunting challenge, according to Education Week (June 13th). The BIE has increasingly been viewed by tribal school leaders as a vehicle for introducing policies through a "top-down approach," while skimming off Federal funds (30-40%) which are "directed" for locally-controlled tribal schools. A seven-member study group which developed the Blueprint for Reform not only called for a redesign of the BIE, but also recommended several other program initiatives be implemented to ensure "all BIE students receive a world-class education delivered by tribes and supported by the Department of the Interior."

As Education Week (June 13th) notes, the new ConnectED initiative (see related item) which links tech companies with schools and other agencies states "...the President is also unveiling an effort to improve technology, including access to high-speed internet in Bureau of Indian Education schools through the Federal E-Rate program." According to the Blueprint, the study group recommends an increased investment in broadband for all BIE-funded schools, "as most schools only have a T1 level of connectivity...to ensure that BIE students have equal access to college and career-ready [materials] and aligned computer-based online assessments -- either Smarter Balanced or the Partnership for Reading for College and Careers (PARCC) - - this study group proposes a critical one-time startup investment on a sound IT infrastructure." Additionally, the schools' technology infrastructures need improvements across the board -- new wiring, switches, routers, wireless access devices and more need to be purchased so schools have well functioning networks." Finally, "teachers need professional development so they can effectively use new tools and technology."

The study group suggests a one-time startup investment to: "(1) procure the type of computers and software necessary to administer online assessments; (2) increase bandwidth in schools to ensure digital delivery of these assessments; and (3) provide the resources and training that staff need to assess these online assessments effectively and efficiently."

According to Education Week's Marketplace K-12 blog (June 13th), a specialist will be appointed to "provide technical assistance to make applications for

the Federal E-Rate program from bureau schools more competitive.” The blog also notes that the new E-Rate specialist will be funded “in coordination” with the Broad Foundation, a major philanthropic player in the K-12 world. As a side note, the Broad Foundation, during the early days of Reading First more than a decade ago, played a similar role in funding portions of that initiative and subsequently was active in working with several groups which develop data systems to compare districts and states to each other in terms of test scores in reading and language arts.

The Blueprint also recommends that consortia of tribal schools be created to apply for E-Rate discounts, particularly as a result of the planned E-Rate modernization initiative which places a high priority on Indian education. *Politics K-12* also noted that three telecommunication companies have agreed to chip in modest financial support for some of the technology upgrades to BIE schools. However, most of the more than \$2 billion funding increase for facility repairs and upgrades would require congressional approval, which is not very likely. As *Politics K-12* notes, Obama flagship initiatives such as Race to the Top flag reforms, “did not make it into the final blueprint; however, the blueprint urges the development of incentive grants that would encourage tribal schools to adopt best practices that the BIE would help local tribes identify.”

The Blueprint also calls for increased “comprehensive supports” through partnerships, which provide not only academic, but also emotional and social supports for BIE students. The study group also recommends that more “agile organizational environments” be created at

the local tribal BIE school level, including modification of procurement procedures and practices to ensure efficient use of resources.

The Blueprint can be viewed at: <http://www.doi.gov/news/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=537280>

USED Releases Audit Report on Problems/Challenges Confronting Seven States’ Progress Meeting Race to the Top Milestones, Which Could Provide Opportunities for Firms With Possible Solutions in Helping the Respective States

According to USED officials, during a reporters’ conference prior to the release of the report, the seven states which were funded during Phase 3 (the second round) of Race to the Top made some adjustments to their plans, “but all are making significant progress,” as reported in *Education Week’s Politics K-12* blog (June 13th). Below are the states which received a total of \$200 million which range from about \$17 million for Colorado, Kentucky, and Louisiana, to nearly \$43 million for Illinois.

- Arizona, according to USED’s audit report, has had delays in setting up procedures for evaluating instructional resources and is behind schedule in implementing an electronic clearinghouse to help teachers share instructional resources.
- Colorado, like many states, has yet to develop “multiple measures on student growth to be used for teacher evaluations.”
- Illinois’ problems have been “finding a contractor to help districts develop

tests to gauge students' growth and improve classroom instruction;" procurement problems have slowed down the process of getting mentoring programs for beginning teachers up and running. According to *Politics K-12*, teacher prep problems for Priority and Focus schools are also behind schedule.

- New Jersey is behind schedule in implementing a statewide instructional improvement system and the development of a model curriculum in social studies.
- Kentucky and Louisiana have generally been more successful than other states in meeting Phase 3 deadlines, but both are having problems related to providing access for at-risk students to advanced placement courses and developing test item banks for formative assessments.

As reported in *Fritzwire*, USED acknowledged "a number of states have continued to take steps in the past few months since the data were collected to address the challenges that arose during that year [second year], and expand upon the progress they've made."

Individual state-specific year two reports are available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance.html>

FY 2015 Budget Update: Senate Action

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, headed by Chairman Tom Harkins who has

announced his retirement, has zero-funded President Obama's Race to the Top proposal and the proposed \$200 million for technology-related teacher professional development, while increasing slightly funding for early childhood programs (e.g., Head Start) and in Title I and IDEA formula programs.

The Appropriations Subcommittee's action was one of the first steps toward preparation of the FY 2015 budget proposal which is likely to be passed after the November midterm elections following Continuing Resolutions beginning in October. The action by the Senate Democrats on Obama flagship projects is significant as the new Race to the Top proposed funding would have been used to reduce achievement gaps by increasing at-risk level, minority and other lower-achieving students' access to effective teachers, which civil rights and other advocacy groups have been pushing. On the other hand, the FY 2014 funding for the Obama preschool development grants, funded through the back door of Race to the Top, would receive an increase from \$250 million to \$350 million, probably as a gesture to Chairman Harkins, a major pre-K advocate.

Other flagship programs would be level-funded, including Promise Neighborhoods (\$56.8 million) and Investing in Innovation (i³) (\$141.6 million), both of which the President had requested increases. School Improvement Grants and teacher incentive funds would be level-funded at \$505.8 million and \$230 million, which according to Education Week (June 10th) would provide only continued funding for existing grantees. Title I grants would receive a small increase of \$50 million to \$14.4 billion, while state grants for IDEA would increase by \$40 million up to \$11.5 billion,

which however, House Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN) has called for a \$1.5 billion increase over last year's funding level, reflecting his priority placed on special education. In addition to preschool development grants increase, Head Start would receive an additional \$145 million to \$8.7 billion, while the Childcare and Development block grant program will receive \$2.5 billion, reflecting a \$100 million increase.

The next step will be up to the full committee and then to the Senate floor, after which time House action is likely to occur. It is important to note, as we did in our March TechMIS Special Report, the House and Senate levels for all education are not far apart in terms of limits and will not include any sequestration sanctions for FY 2015.

Unexpectedly, the full Committee on Appropriations, headed by Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski, failed to mark up the Senate subcommittee bill which, according to *Politics K-12*, angered Republican leadership, particularly Senator Lamar Alexander who argued that such inaction prevented him from proposing several important amendments including: a) one which would prohibit USED from "influencing academic standards such as Common Core and the aligned tests states would have to use;" b) remove any requirements or incentives for states to adopt Common standards and tests as conditions states must meet for state waiver extensions or in competitive grant rounds in the future.

Bills with similar intent have also been introduced by House Education Committee Chairman John Kline and Senator Lindsay Graham. A spokesman for Senator Tom

Harkin, Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee which passed the earlier bill, wants to have a full Committee markup this year.

Miscellaneous (a)

A recent Government Accountability Office report (May 28th) on the impact of sequestration on Title I reports that all three Title I district programs included in the study "reported that Title I reductions contributed to decisions to defer maintenance or technology upgrades." For example, officials from three districts said their district delayed technology upgrades, with one official describing the district technology as aging." A footnote also states officials from two districts said, "The reductions to Title I grants caused them to shift available funds according to the districts' needs which may have contributed to the effects district officials described to us." Other impacts which were reported by district officials included:

- in one district, the number of reading and math specialists and coaches were reduced;
- two districts reported reductions in professional development opportunities for existing staff; and
- two districts reported reductions contributed to delays or cutbacks of some academic or after-school programs.

As the GAO report emphasizes, "The results of our analysis of selected school districts cannot be generalized to other school districts nationwide. Our selected districts included three Title I districts located in Mississippi, Ohio, and Texas." It is

important to emphasize that while the number of districts surveyed is very small and non-representative, the GAO basically works for Congress and when Congress debates future sequestrations, or even ESEA reauthorization, one can assume that the results from this report will be cited. Sequestration is scheduled to be up for consideration once again in the FY 2016 budget debates.

Miscellaneous (b)

USED has announced priorities for the \$75 million GEAR UP grants competition; GEAR UP funds 87 programs serving 420,000 middle and high school students and is designed to improve college readiness and to ensure students graduate from high school and maximize their success in college. One of the new priorities is to fund grants which are located in Promise Zones, which is a multi-departmental effort to provide Federal funding to such communities to create jobs, increase economic activity, and improve education opportunities. As Education Week's Politics K-12 blog (June 3rd) notes, Promise Zones differ from Promise Neighborhoods funded by USED which currently includes rural districts in Kentucky, Choctaw Nation in Oklahoma, San Antonio, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. Another priority is being placed on projects that improve non-cognitive skills and behaviors through interventions which are designed to master social and emotional skills, develop perseverance, and increase student motivation. Several new commitments were made by the President during the Administration's College Opportunity Summit held earlier this year to increase mentoring resources and financial aid for

additional support for participants.

Applications are due on July 7th with awards at the end of September. More information will be provided at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html>

Miscellaneous (c)

According to Education Week's Curriculum Matters blog (June 6th), currently less than half of K-12 students are scheduled to take assessments provided by PARCC and Smarter Balanced consortia; for the remaining 58 percent of students, states plan to use other tests or are undecided about what assessments will be used (this includes New York State's 2.7 million students). About half of the states actually plan to use PARCC or SBAC tests, but as the Education Week article notes, "Of course these figures could change, as more states make up or change their minds." The number of students required to take currently planned tests include PARCC (8.4 million), SBAC (12.3 million), other tests (2.9 million), and undecided states (7.7 million). Without question, the CCSS state assessments are a "moving target," as noted in the attached report on the recent AEP/AAP conference.

Miscellaneous (d)

The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that as of May 15th, lawmakers in 46 states sessions this year introduced more than 340 bills addressing college and career-readiness education standards, including Common Core. Stateline.com (June 13th) reported that about 30 bills would delay implementation of

standards, while more than 35 would revoke them implementation only. About a dozen have dropped out or delayed use of tests from one of the two assessment consortia include Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Iowa, North Carolina, and Wyoming.

States that have decided to develop “homegrown standards/assessments” or have delayed implementation include:

- Indiana, because of “fuzzy math, the emphasis on informational texts over classic literature and what parents saw as pornographic texts in the recommended reading selections;”
- South Carolina, which will develop a homegrown version for implementation in 2015-16;
- Oklahoma, which repealed Common Core and will develop new standards by August 2016;
- Stateline.org notes that North Carolina, Missouri, and Louisiana are likely candidates for some changes with Common Core standards and assessments.

See Special Report on the AEP/AAP “Content in Context” conference with additional explanatory information.

Miscellaneous (e)

A policy brief by the Center on Reinventing Public Education has found that funding uncertainty/reductions have “undermined” personalized learning programs in charter schools. Preliminary findings from the two-year study of eight charter schools found where tight budget cuts occurred, the charter

schools cut technology and “ended up using their resources like schools they were trying to differentiate themselves from.” About 34 percent of their budgets planned for “human capital” and 27 percent on technology; however, as a result of budget cuts, the school spent nearly 60 on human capital and ten percent on technology.

The policy brief highlighted in [Education Week’s Charters & Choice](#) blog (May 29th) recommends charter schools aggressively seek to increase enrollments, develop work use scenarios, and figure out minimum hardware and software requirements to deliver personalized learning. Among other things, they should use performance requirements and negotiating trial periods.

Miscellaneous (f)

Preliminary data from a survey produced for the Joan Ganz Cooney Center finds 513 of 494 teachers surveyed report using games in the classroom, and nearly half of teachers who use games rely heavily on word-of-mouth of other teachers in selecting games which they use. The preliminary results from the survey, conducted by Games and Learning Publishing Council, reported that games that include tracking data about student progress that allowed teachers to manage class use were an important selection criteria for teachers, with media reviews not playing a major role.

According to [Education Week’s Digital Education](#) blog (June 10th), the survey reported 72 percent of K-8 teachers who use digital games delivered those games to students via desktop computers; 41 percent used interactive whiteboards; 39 percent

used tablets; nine percent used Chromebooks or netbooks; and nine percent used mobile or smartphones. More than half of the teachers using games said the greatest benefit was helping to motivate special education students and other at-risk low-performing students.

Miscellaneous (g)

Large after-school programs based on a “connected learning approach,” which combines in-school academics and out-of-school interests, will be initiated in Dallas, Columbus, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C. this summer. According to Education Week’s Time and Learning blog (June 12th), digital badges will be provided to youth earning them to document their learning and other accomplishments. These will be provided through online “backpacks.” According to an initiative press release from Dallas, participating youth will have greater access to jobs, college admissions through digital badges data that documents their mastery of the skills acquired, and previous work. The Dallas initiative is expected to reach 10,000 youth during the pilot test this summer. The Los Angeles Unified School District effort, which is headed by former USED Assistant Secretary Thelma Melendez, will also initiate the use of “digital badges.” According to Education Week’s On California blog (April 22nd), participating foundations and funders include the McArthur Foundation, DePaul University, Mozilla Foundation, and Badge Alliance, along with local funding, philanthropic groups, and other partner organizations including Boy Scout and Girl Scout clubs. The pilot tests in the new sites are based upon the model used in Chicago last

summer in which 60,000 students participated.

Miscellaneous (h)

According to a new study by the Institute of Education Sciences, during the 2011 year, in all study schools implementing School Improvement Grant turnaround efforts the needs of English language learners received “only moderate or limited attention.” Moreover, none of the 11 schools’ strategic plans addressed ELL’s needs. Seven of the schools used the transformation intervention model, while four had opted for the turnaround model which called for replacement of at least 50 percent of teaching staff. ELL enrollments in the 11 schools in the study ranged from 35 percent to 90 percent and schools were located in four states. It would appear that new schools receiving SIG grants would have a need for instructional software/materials and professional development that meet the needs of ELL. Initial findings from USED’s study of the early implementation years of the SIG program found that two-thirds of the schools made some progress, while student results regressed in about a third of the SIG schools.

Miscellaneous (i)

In order to scale-up extended learning time projects in a school district, the Wallace Foundation report, “Scaling Up, Staying True,” includes recommendations from Christopher Cross and Associates.

Such programs need to be “harmonized with the Common Core in their programs to build 21st century skills such as evidence-based

writing and problem-solving.” As reported in Education Week’s Time and Learning blog (April 28th), former Assistant Secretary of Education Christopher Cross of Cross & Jofus said that all lessons need not be with every state standards, but a better case for scaling-up can be made if the alignment in the above certain areas can be demonstrated. Larry Cooley, President Management Systems International, advised the Wallace Foundation sponsored conference last November that intermediary organizations be used to adapt programs to work in settings that are different from those in which they were first developed, identifying certain parts of the program that can be scaled-up more quickly. However, officials from other groups noted that expanded learning time is typically considered supplementary, which creates problems for continued funding and finding new sources.

Miscellaneous (j)

During the fourth White House Science Fair, President Obama announced several new STEM initiatives including:

- the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Competition funded at \$35 million to support the training of 100,000 STEM teachers over the next decade; and
- a new mentoring effort involving companies to mentor students on STEM education to keep youth engaged in after-school programs.

Education Week (May 27th) reports that Chevron and Discovery Communications have joined the group of U.S. firms participating in private sector STEM initiatives. The New York Academy of Sciences is also launching the Global STEM Alliance which impacts students worldwide.

The \$35 million competitive grants are for teacher colleges, districts, and non-profits to establish residency programs or reform undergraduate teacher education courses and will focus on translation of initiatives into classroom practice.

