

## **Alabama Update - October 2002**

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This Fall's gubernatorial campaign in Alabama is proving to be an important battleground on which the issue of school vouchers is being debated. The incumbent, Don Siegelman, a Democrat, is strongly opposed to vouchers. U.S. Representative Bob Riley, his Republican opponent, is equally strongly in favor of vouchers. Indeed, his running mate for Lieutenant Governor has introduced a bill in the Alabama legislature that would allow parents of children in failing schools to transfer their children to another school -- either public or private.

## Arizona Update - October 2002

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A recent study by highly-respected Professor David Berliner of Arizona State University and the State Department of Education, has found that, over the period 1997 to 2000, students taught by fully-certified teachers did about 20 percent better on the SAT-9 than students taught by non-certified teachers. As reported in Education Daily (September 12), a separate study arrived at very different conclusions. The definition of fully-certified teachers meets those requirements for highly-qualified teachers in No Child Left Behind. Some teachers classified as under-certified would also meet the minimal NCLB requirements by having a bachelor's degree but no educational coursework.

In this Fall's election, the question of school vouchers in Arizona is divided predictably along party lines, with all Democratic statewide candidates opposed and all Republican candidates in favor. In the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction (an elected office in Arizona), the only candidate strongly favoring school choice, incumbent Jamie Molera, was defeated in the Republican primary. A voucher proposal, modeled after the A+ program in Florida, has been floated by the current Governor, but is unlikely to be seriously addressed by the State legislature.

In September, the Arizona Board of Education considered which of two classification systems for identifying "underperforming schools" should be used across the State. Under the stricter option about 30 percent of the Arizona schools (approximately 344 schools) would be classified as "underperforming." The more liberal option would drop the total to about 200 schools. The original classification system proposed last Spring would have designated more than 85 percent of the State's schools as "underperforming."

The State Board of Education recently received a report estimating that more than 200 public schools are likely to be in a "failing" status next year. During October or November, test scores which will classify the 1,100 schools in the State as "under-performing" to "excelling," will be released. Under State law, schools failing for two consecutive years would be under state "review and possible takeover." Public schools and charter schools labeled as under-performing will be required to develop a plan for improvement within three months.

## California Update - October 2002

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During the 2000-01 school year, almost 3,500 schools were eligible for bonuses ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 based upon student test scores for that year. Due to large State budget deficits, Secretary of Education Kerry Mazzone, warned districts that such bonuses may not be paid this year. However, in a reversal, the State legislature reallocated \$1.7 billion to the FY 2003 education budget which included \$67 million for bonuses. This amount which averaged \$37 per student who took the State assessment represented only about 50 percent of the level of bonuses originally planned. The legislature also provided \$77 million for bonuses for this current school year. However, future bonuses are not certain. The bonuses can be used by schools to purchase any products or services.

The State's new alternative "pre-intern" program, in which candidates must complete 18 credit hours of coursework in the subjects they are teaching and pass State certification, appears to be out of compliance with the new ESEA "highly-qualified" requirements for newly-hired teachers. A recent report by the Education Trust found that 27 percent of secondary teachers in California have neither a major nor a minor in the subjects they are teaching and about 32,000 of the 300,000 teachers are uncertified. Knowledgeable education policy analysts such as Jack Jennings, National Center for Education Policy, have pointed to the California situation as a "bellwether" indication of whether or not the USED will attempt to enforce the new teacher "highly-qualified" criteria.

After receiving notification of approval of its Reading First allocation, the State Board of Education is in the process of updating the application and other information on its website. One of the activities that is likely to occur is establishment of a procedure to select alternative supplemental materials in the form of a list similar to the core reading program list, which includes products from Houghton Mifflin and McGraw-Hill/Open Court. The application form to be used by eligible districts and the list of eligible districts is available on the SEA website. It is likely that some of the initial funding will be allocated to eligible districts to hire reading coaches following a pattern established in other states. A contact within the SEA on operational Reading First issues is Terri Emmett, 916/323-6269.

The State legislature will be using “advanced funding,” to provide almost \$100 million for FY 2003. Rather than introducing car fees and cigarette taxes, the legislature will borrow money from the 2004 budget and the State’s tobacco settlement fund. While other State agencies had budget cuts, K-12 is to receive a \$3.3 billion increase over last year to \$42 billion. Despite the increase, many education officials believe that the budget is at least \$3 billion less than is needed. As indicated above, the legislature also approved almost \$80 million to pay schools bonuses based upon academic progress which had been achieved over the two years. In order to meet the new NCLB highly-qualified requirements for newly-hired teachers, the legislature proposed, but the Governor vetoed, a measure that would allow retired teachers with almost two decades of experience to teach once again without having to pass the State’s basic skills test.

Under a proposed Comprehensive Master Plan for K-12 Education submitted to the State legislature, the State education department would be directly under the Governor’s office rather than an elected superintendent. Submitted by a special ad hoc committee of the legislature, these recommendations have been resisted by some powerful state legislators as well as the California Department of Education. Several bills related to components of the recommended master plan will be submitted to the legislature in December. Throughout the recommendations are provisions that attempt to tie State funding to student performance, as part of an overall accountability plan.

In June, Republican State Senator Ray Haynes proposed a school choice program allowing schools to retain about half of the estimated \$8,000 per-pupil in State aid that California allocated to local school districts if a student transfers to a private school. The remaining \$4,000 could be used by parents for private school tuition. It is unlikely that the Republican proposal will be considered by the legislature; Democratic opponents have estimated that the voucher program could cost the State \$2.6 billion in private school tuition.

A month before election day, the largest school bond issue in California’s history -- Proposition 47 -- is favored by a majority of voters. The measure would infuse \$13 million into the State’s education system. Also favored by voters is Proposition 49 which would provide \$455 each year

to fund before- and afterschool programs in local school districts.

A recent ruling by the State Department of Education has angered parents who “home-school” their children. The memo stated that home-schooled children will be considered truant if their instruction is not supervised by a credentialed tutor. Although the State’s law has not changed, the State Department of Education’s interpretation could affect an estimated 100,000 California children. The State has given local districts the responsibility for monitoring these cases, but many school districts have neither the resources nor the inclination to pursue home-schooling parents.

The State Department of Education has announced a new \$33 million grant program to fund hardware purchases and attempt to lower the student to multimedia computer ratio in grades 4-8 according to The Heller Report (October). This component is part of a larger \$132 million Federal school renovation grant which passed two years ago requiring that approximately 25 percent of the total should be directed to implementing IDEA or technology activities associated with school renovation. For these competitive grants, priority will be given to high poverty and rural LEAs. Districts also must have completed the 2002 online state technology survey and have an approved E-Rate plan. Funding will be approximately \$2,000 per computer with a maximum amount per district of about \$75,000. Applications are due November 5. The contact is Michele Collins at the State Education Technology Office, 916/323-5112.

A recent survey of the status of funding available for school renovation and purchasing of technology and infrastructure under the Quality Zone Academy Bond program found that the half billion dollars allocated to California since 1998 had no existing balance and that all money had been issued (Washington Update item). The first districts to apply for and to receive these interest-free bonding authorities were the Clovis and Fresno districts. The funds were used to renovate the Center for Advanced Research and Technology and purchase updated technology. Pomona Unified District used its funds to update its technology-centered core curriculum products.

Over half of tenth grade students who took the State’s exit exam last Spring failed it; this was the

first time passage counted toward graduation. About 87 percent of special education students failed the test. The Disability Rights Advocates of Oakland is threatening to sue if the approximately 170,000 high school students with disabilities are not provided reasonable accommodation. It is likely that the State Board will postpone consequences of the most recent test scores.

A recent report by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning which drafts California reform efforts, found that only 12 percent of the State's uncredentialed teachers hold advance degrees and have an average of 3.2 years of teaching. This compares to 40 percent of credentialed teachers who hold Masters or Doctor degrees and have approximately 15 years of experience. Uncertified teachers with advanced credentials are more likely to be teaching in more affluent schools. The report also found that students in low-performing schools are being taught by the least qualified teachers and have few veteran teachers to support their inexperienced counterparts.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that Proposition 227, which mandates that children learning English be taught in one year emersion programs, not bilingual programs, is constitutional. The Mexican-American Legal Defense in Education Fund will likely appeal the case on the basis that it conflicts with the 1997 court decision upholding Proposition 209 which bans racial preferences.

The recently-released "California's Virtual School Report" has found that there are no Statewide virtual high school operations in spite of the State-funded digital High School Program, Federal Technology Literacy Grants, and the Digital California project, which have been funded for several years. It notes that only a few districts, such as Poway, Clovis, and Orange, have developed hybrid or fully-online courses which are available to high school students through members of the University of California system. The Report recommends the creation of a California e-Learning Education Trust (eTrust) which would be responsible for designing specifications and maintaining agreed-upon standards for the development of e-learning in California. For a copy of the report go to [www.ed.path.com/research.htm](http://www.ed.path.com/research.htm).

The California Learning Resource Network (CLRN) is a one-stop, online information source through which teachers can identify supplemental electronic learning resources that meet State curriculum standards. The Network maintains on its website a searchable database of approved instructional resources and provides links to approved online lessons ([www.clrn.org](http://www.clrn.org)). The latest addition to CLRN list-approved products is BoxerMath, a series of self-paced tutorials for Grades 3-12 which incorporates correlations with State standards and tracking of results.

## **Colorado Update - October 2002**

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A referendum will be held in November on a proposal to curtail bilingual education in the State. This proposal would place limited-English-proficient students in an English emersion program for up to one year. A similar measure will be up for referendum in November in Massachusetts.

The election this Fall could well determine the future of vouchers in Colorado. The State Senate currently has a slim one-vote Democratic majority which, earlier this year, defeated a Republican-sponsored school tuition tax credit bill. It has been suggested that a Republican majority legislature would be likely to adopt some form of voucher program.



## Connecticut Update - October 2002

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As of last December, 12.3 percent of students enrolled in public schools receive some form of special education service which reflects a continuing drop from 1995-1996 when the K-12 special education population was almost 14 percent. Although dropping, the percentage of special education students in K-12 is higher than the 11.4 percent national average. Officials feel that one of the major contributors to the high special education service rates, is “over identification.” Alternative pathways have been established, including an early reading assistance program for which an additional \$20 million has been provided to the State’s sixteen largest school districts. According to “Students With Disabilities in Connecticut: An Annual Report On Special Education 2001-2002,” Federal IDEA funds cover only 5.7 percent of total special education spending which is only about one-third of the 16.5 percent nationally. The report identifies several major challenges in the State’s special education programs, including: (a) ways to prevent over-identification of minorities for placement in special education; (b) reducing gaps between special education students’ achievement and other students; and (c) providing greater access for special education students to the general education curriculum.

## **Delaware Update - October 2002**

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The FY 2003 budget will increase almost three percent to \$795 million for K-12 education. The legislature also passed a charter school bill which requires such schools to operate within the same financial system as districts provide for State officials to review charter school finances. The Partners in Technology Computer Refurbishing Initiative, has also been expanded. New public information notification procedures were also passed to allow communities opportunities to comment on the placement of alternative schools for disciplinary students in their communities.

The Delaware House of Representatives has proposed Resolution 95 which creates a task force to study the structure and delivery of education in the State, and particularly to increase the choices in educational delivery available to Delaware families. The Task Force, consisting of State and local educators, officials, and legislators, will explore wide range of issues relating to educational optional and alternative venues.

## Florida Update - October 2002

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The Florida legislature has approved \$13.1 billion for K-12 education, a six percent increase over the initial budget, but only \$600 million more than was spent last year in which a mid-year budget cut occurred due to a billion dollar shortfall in sales tax revenue. The legislature also provided greater flexibility in the use of funds previously earmarked for transportation, teacher training, and related uses.

As reported in Education Week, the number of students from low-performing schools who are attending private schools under the State voucher program, has increased from 45 last year to 575 this year. Recently a State court rendered an opinion that the State voucher program violates the State constitution in that religious institutions receive public funds in the form of vouchers.

The estimated number of students with disabilities to take advantage of parent choice to request the child be transferred to another school or institution will likely double from 4,000 students last year to 8,000 or more this school year. Under the so-called McKay Scholarship Program, somewhere between \$2,500 and \$21,000 of Federal, state, and local funds will “follow the child.” Those with more severe handicapping conditions and disabilities receive more combined funding than those with learning disabilities or other minor impairments. On the other hand, only about five percent of the almost 9,000 students attending the ten failing schools in Florida, based on the most recent test scores, are likely to be transferred to other schools under the new No Child Left Behind parent choice options.

A State court has ruled that parents can see more than just a test score and can have access to their children’s graded booklets and answer sheets relating to the State’s exit exam. The county circuit judge ruled that parents can see such scores to determine in which areas students need specific help. This court ruling is in direct contrast to State laws which do not allow student records such as FCAT test booklets to be provided to parents. The State has argued that it would be too expensive to reveal all test questions as it would force the State to remake tests each year. The new Federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires states not only to provide student scores, but also objective item analysis indicating which interventions should be provided to

students. The National Assessment Governing Board recently announced a policy which would allow individuals to have access to NAEP tests under the condition that they would be guilty of a felony if such information were released to the public.

## Hawaii Update - October 2002

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A U.S. District judge recently ruled that the State had made enough progress improving special education in response to a 1993 class action lawsuit that said oversight by a Federal master could be ended by the year 2004. Under the so-called Felix Consent Decree, significant increases in State funds had to be allocated to special education and other benchmarks, such as increasing the number of qualified teachers are in the process of being met. Pressures on the legislature to reduce State funding continue and if such reductions are made for special education Federal oversight may be continued beyond 2004.

USED has approved the Hawaii application for Reading First funds which during the first year will be \$2.7 million, as part of a six-year, \$17 million allocation, depending upon successful implementation of the initiative and Congressional appropriations. Hawaii becomes the 17<sup>th</sup> state to be funding under Reading First. In December, the SEA plans to hold a competition for 25 eligible schools to compete for subgrants. Also teachers and reading coaches will attend eight-day institutes for Beginning Reading -- intensive professional development on scientifically-based reading instruction.

## Illinois Update - October 2002

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The Illinois Board of Education has picked Robert Schiller as State Superintendent. Previously Schiller was appointed by the Maryland State Board as Chief Executive Officer in the Baltimore City School takeover by the state. He was State Superintendent in Michigan from 1991 to 1996.

On September 5, USED announced the approval of the Illinois Reading First application for \$215 million over six years. First year funding will be \$32.8 million of which about \$26 million will be used to provide grants to about 175 schools that are located in eligible districts and are posted on the State's website. The next year, 58 additional schools will be funded and the following year an additional 78 schools. At the end of the six years, approximately 425 schools will have participated. Illinois was a recipient of Reading Excellence Act funding and is now making the transition to meet Reading First requirements. For each round of funding, eligible schools will participate in application workshops. One of the objectives of these workshops is to train applicants in evaluating a curriculum based upon the Consumer's Guide Critical Elements Analysis. For the first round workshops, applications were due in July. Some of the evaluation instruments and procedures include: classroom literacy instruction observation form, adapted from an instrument developed at the University of Oregon, which has already been used in 100 Reading Excellence Act classrooms in the State; and a recently-designed school portfolio based on information received during the USED Reader Leadership Academies, which is being pilot-tested in 70 REA schools. The State will also contract with a group to conduct the overall evaluation. The Applications were due on September 23, 2002, with a second submission deadline of January 3, 2003. For more information go to [www.isbe.state.il.us/rfps/readingRFP.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/rfps/readingRFP.pdf).

Under the State's Closing the Gap technology initiative which began last year, slightly over 200 school districts have received grants (most in the \$20,000-\$50,000 range) to support and expand community-based technology centers. District grantees had to provide matching funds. For more information call 217/782-4648.

The Illinois Department of Education has established a Statewide task force to explore ways by

which testing and accountability in Illinois may be improved. A series of three public hearings were held around the State in late September and early October, with the results reported when the Legislature convenes in January 2003.

For Fiscal Year 2003, the State has had to cut \$481 million from the K-12 education budget. The Illinois Budget Bureau predicts a State budget deficit that may reach as much as \$2 billion, which is requiring spending cuts across all agencies.

The gubernatorial race in Illinois has been enlivened by a school voucher plan proposed by Libertarian candidate Cal Skinner. Developed by the Heartland Institute, the plan would provide students with private school vouchers equal in value to the per-pupil operating expenses of the students' home school districts. The plan would begin with kindergarten and first grade and would phase in two more grade levels each year. Skinner's Democratic opponent, Rod Blagojevich, has opposed the plan while Republican candidate, Jim Ryan, has made no firm statement on the voucher plan.

## Louisiana Update - October 2002

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Over five years ago, Louisiana earmarked more than \$30 million for purchases of technology -- including hardware, software, and staff development -- to be used in classrooms. Last year, the legislature cut the funding to zero after an annual decline over the previous four years. However, the legislature has now provided \$10 million for this fiscal year which is significant in a fiscal year K-12 budget that increased almost three percent for this coming year after significant declines last year. In addition, \$20 million has been set aside for summer school tutoring and four intervention strategies for students who fail the State assessments, particularly in grades four and eight, and those failing the high school exit exams; \$3.8 million has been appropriated for use by the State to cover the cost of sending distinguished educators in high-performing schools to consult with officials in low-performing schools. As part of its new pre-college initiative, a pilot program costing \$500,000 initially will focus on Algebra I; it will eventually allow many more students to receive high-quality online instruction in algebra. The State's Tuition Opportunity Scholarship program for helping low-income students go to colleges was funded at almost \$94 million. The legislature also appropriated approximately \$30 million for public schools and \$6 million for private schools and, with an equal amount of Federal welfare funding, will double the money to about \$60 million to be spent on public school pre-kindergarten programs. Approximately \$10 million has been provided in bonus grants to nearly 800 schools that met academic performance targets. However, beginning this year, such financial incentive awards will be provided only every two years. Under the State's accountability system, districts will begin receiving single scores based upon district performance on district-wide averages on standardized tests. In addition, an overall index taking into account different factors, including academic performance and the percentage of certified teachers, both in districts and low-performing schools, will be provided on each district.

Last year, Louisiana pilot tested a school voucher program for New Orleans Parish preschool children. The \$3 million program provided parents of qualified preschoolers up to \$4,700 to enroll in an approved private school. Legislators are recommending that the New Orleans pilot program be expanded.



## Maine Update - October 2002

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Maine is finally beginning, two years from conception, to implement the laptop initiative for seventh grade students, one of the largest “one-to-one computing” initiatives to date, even though the State has almost a \$200 million budget shortfall. Approximately \$37 million has been appropriated to fund the program over an extended period. Over 35,000 Apple iBooks will be used by the second year of the contract. For the first year, more than 17,000 students in 236 schools are beginning to receive laptops. By the end of August, two months ago, Governor Angus King briefed a number of software publishers in a meeting sponsored by SIIA, encouraging them to contribute software to make up for shortfalls in State and other funds. Prospects for continued funding of the effort are uncertain as the legislature has proposed a cut, leaving no more than \$16 million to pay for up to three years of the four year contract, according to e School News (October 2002). The Governor is hoping to establish a \$50 million endowment to keep the program running indefinitely.

## Massachusetts Update - October 2002

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A number of Massachusetts school districts are having to face the effects of the McKinney-Vento Act which requires the transportation of homeless children to the schools at which they were enrolled before becoming homeless. In Boston, for example, there are 600 homeless students. The State has received a significant increase in Federal funding for its homeless program -- from \$740,000 last year to more than \$1 million in 2002.

This Fall, Massachusetts became the twelfth state to be funded under the Federal Reading First program. The State will receive approximately \$100 million over the next six years; the \$15.3 million allocation for the current year was announced in early October. The State's plan calls for: (a) subgrants to about 60 eligible school districts through a competition planned for this Winter; (b) convening of a Reading Leadership Team to ensure that an integrated approach is taken to K-3 reading instruction and assessment; and (c) a professional development program through which 70 "master trainers" will be trained by the State and who will conduct summer reading academies for other teachers in ten regions across the State.

## Michigan Update - October 2002

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Governor Engler has appointed Howard Morris, previously Chief Financial Officer of Detroit Public Schools, to oversee the finances of Inkster Public Schools which has refused to pay a \$1.2 million fee to Edison Schools Inc. Unlike the over 100 schools which Edison has taken over, usually through state decrees, Inkster is the only school district which Edison has contracted to manage.

On September 18, Governor Engler unveiled the State's website which allows users to review test scores for all public schools in the State and conduct various analyses. It also has written reports based upon data from the schools. The unveiling is a culmination of a five-year, \$11 million effort the State has been implementing under a contract to Standard and Poor's. The project has undergone some criticism from groups that point out that several alternative systems, such as the one developed by NCREL, fulfill many of the functions for about 5-10 percent of the cost. The data has also been used by various political entities within the State for their own purposes. For example, officials from the Michigan Education Association use data on salaries to show how administrator's salaries over the last several years have increased by several factors over salaries for teachers.

As noted in the August Michigan Update, Phase One of the State's Learning Without Limits demonstration program for piloting wireless technology is underway. Approximately one-third of the funds are coming from the State and two-thirds from Federal Title II D Technology Enhancement Funds. According to The Heller Report (October), funds can be used for purchasing wireless products for students, wireless infrastructure, software, curriculum content, support services, and professional development. Wireless computing devices include laptops, notebooks, tablets, thin client technology, PDAs, e-mail only devices, hand-held configurable computers, and hybrid versions of these. Districts are free to select devices that best meet their goals and needs. Primary responsibility of the demonstration project lies with the Michigan Virtual University which can be contacted for additional information at [lw1@mivu.org](mailto:lw1@mivu.org) or call 517/324-5357. In addition to the demonstration sites in five districts, districts can apply for

grants of \$100,000 for a total of \$1 million to assist schools that have already initiated wireless programs. Grant applications were due in October.

## **Minnesota Update - October 2002**

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The TIES Education Eechnology Consortium in Minnesota has adopted eSchoolMall in order to gain the benefits of electronic group purchasing. For 35 years, TIES has supported education in the State through software development, training, research and development, and other support services including administrative function. The TIES consortium represents 36 school districts and 400 schools. eSchoolMall, and its “Easy Purchase” component, will provide TIES with nationally negotiated consortium prices from both local and national providers of products and services.

## Missouri Update - October 2002

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The State of Missouri has developed a proposed set of accessibility standards for State purchases of IT hardware and software. These standards are derived in large part from Federal Section 508 IT accessibility standards. (Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act goes beyond Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure access for individuals with disabilities.) These standards will be required in any State contract for packaged software or software development. These standards will also require bidders on State contracts to “indemnify” the State agency purchasing the products from “any claim arising out of the bidder’s failure to comply.” The SIIA has written a detailed letter to Missouri expressing its concerns about these proposed standards, which are to be voted on by the Missouri Assistive Technology Council on December 5.

## **Nevada Update - October 2002**

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The Nevada State School Board has agreed to a settlement with Harcourt Measurement totaling \$425,000, as a result of a test scoring error which affected 31,000 high school students who took the State's end-of-course exam in mathematics last year.

The University of Nevada at Las Vegas has received a \$400,000 USED grant and will be developing an assessment tool that can be used by special education and other officials to evaluate commercial software to ensure that instructional software is appropriate for students with certain disabilities. The tool would be provided to an official responsible for evaluating a commercial software product for a 30-day trial period to determine whether it includes important characteristics and omits other characteristics or elements. Two professors, co-directors Kyle Higgins and Randall Boone, are highly respected in the education technology special education community. They can be contacted at 702/893-1102.

## **New Jersey Update - October 2002**

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The Mayor of Jersey City, Bret Schundler, has proposed a Statewide voucher program for the 30 so-called Abbott districts. The plan calls for \$8,000 vouchers for students in these largely urban school systems. The voucher plan would almost certainly be vetoed by Democratic Governor McGreevey who defeated Schundler in last year's gubernatorial election.

Over six years, New Jersey is scheduled to receive slightly more than \$120 million under the recently-approved Reading First State grant. The fourteenth state to be funded under the initiative, New Jersey is this Fall holding a competition for 35 eligible school districts. The State will also use a tiered system to provide Statewide, regional, district, and school-level training in the essential components of effective reading. While the State has not identified any schools that have been targeted for improvement for failing two consecutive years, officials estimate that some schools will be targeted for improvement by September next year. They also recognize that some of the instruments currently used for assessing English language acquisition skills are inadequate and will be developing new assessments for LEP students at the elementary level this year. Staff in the State Reading First office have in-depth experience in early childhood programs for LEP students.



## **New Mexico Update - October 2002**

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The State Board of Education has expanded the number of members of the State's Council on Technology and Education, which is responsible for advising the Board and Legislature on standards, enhanced curriculum, instruction, and appropriations related to technology. One of the new appointees is Smith Frederick, who is with the Intel Teach to the Future Program. The State contact continues to be Steven Sanchez, 505/827-3644.

Proposals were due October 8, for "supplemental education services" for eligible children under the new Title I parent choice and supplemental service provisions. The RFP follows the law in most respects by requiring contractors to provide a variety of services, including high-quality instruction, and to notify parents on a continuing basis of progress being made. However, the RFP appears to give much higher weight to providers that recruit and hire "high-quality teachers" which could imply these teachers would have to meet the rigorous definition of newly-hired teachers (i.e., four-year college degrees and certification in the appropriate core subject area). This is stronger than the draft USED regulations published on August 6 which also indicate that states can not require a service provider to use scientifically-based programs found to be effective and that teachers do not have to meet the high-quality requirements. The RFP does instruct service providers to indicate their mode of delivery, such as online and web-based instruction. However, it also requires the proposed contractors to indicate the location where it could provide services. A bidder's conference was held on September 19.

The State also is embarking upon a unique initiative related to instructional materials which have been adopted by the State in certain categories. Two of the categories include reading remediation and reading intervention strategies. The products that have been adopted or will be adopted include both instructional supplemental materials text as well as technology-based products. The Caravan Project, involving nine regional locations in October and November, will allow publisher reps to make presentations about their products. If a district is interested in using its State instructional material funds for purchasing, they are limited to those products on the State adoption list.

## New York Update - October 2002

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Under a \$7.5 million challenge grant -- the NYTALKS project -- from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, New York's K-12 administrators will receive training and Palm hand-held computers. The training curriculum was developed by the Magellan Foundation. Approximately 70 percent of the 7,000 principals and superintendents across the State will participate, as reported in Education Technology News. For more information, contact the New York State Council of School Superintendents, 518/449-1063.

New York City Mayor Bloomberg recently selected Joel Kline to be the first Chancellor of New York City schools appointed by the mayor under the new government system. Formerly with the Federal Department of Justice where he prosecuted Microsoft, Mr. Kline has also been with Bertlesman AG. His direct education experience includes having taught sixth grade math in New York City public schools.

The United Federation of Teachers in the New York City Public Schools has developed a curriculum for English language arts which attempts to train teachers in customizing lessons to the State standards. The Guide is broken into four levels beginning with K-2 and includes resources as well as approaches to teaching reading and writing. Print and CD ROM versions will be provided by the UFT to New York City districts on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information on the new curriculum go to [www.uft.org](http://www.uft.org).

Since 1997, the New York City Board of Education has been developing a Performance-Driven Budgeting initiative designed to provide educators with greater flexibility to use their resources more creatively to improve student performance. The specific components of PDB are:

- clear student learning standards;
- educational strategies to meet these standards;
- alignment of policies and resources to execute the strategies;
- tracking of results; and

- continued improvement in, and accountability for, student performance.

In each school, a School Leadership Team has been established for planing PDB implementation, but principals are the key school-level decision-makers. A recent evaluation of PDB suggests that student performance has improved in PDB pilot schools.

## North Carolina Update - October 2002

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In July, the North Carolina Title I office received \$64 million, which represented about 30 percent of the State's total Title I allocation. According to State Title I Director Bill McGrady, all of the funds were allocated to districts. Over the last three years, North Carolina districts have had great difficulty in implementing a Title I schedule because of "advanced funding" used by Congress to allocate only a portion of the funds in July, with the majority being allocated in October or November. This year, the problem has been exacerbated as the State budget was only finalized during the first week of October. The remainder of the Title I funds were allocated in mid-October, after which the appropriate amounts will be quickly allocated to districts with the State reimbursing itself for administrative set-asides that were not taken out of the initial allocation. As with many other states, the North Carolina Title I office believes that the draft regulations stipulating that no more than .5 percent of all the students in State are allowed to take alternative tests or be exempt from state assessments, are unreasonable or impossible to meet. Rather, he believes that the final regulations, expected in mid-November, will raise that cap. In addition, the State has recognized the need to maintain special education students and limited-English-proficient students who have "exited" from the program (as their reading and other levels increase or as they become fluent in English) for Title I reporting purposes to reduce the achievement gaps facing these subgroups of students over time. The State is pretty comfortable that its criteria for determining AYP based on "growth" will be continued pretty much as is and that the number of schools targeted for improvement (currently only three) will remain relatively low.

The legislature passed a revised budget for the second year of the biennium which includes \$6 billion for pre-K-12, representing a one percent increase. Approximately \$26 million has been appropriated to hire approximately 600 new teachers to reduce class size in K-1 grades to 18. The pre-K initiative referred to as More at Four, will receive an additional \$6 million, up to \$35 million, to increase the number of children served from about 1,600 last year to over 7,500 this year. Governor Easley has proposed on several recent occasions the creation of a lottery that would fund an estimated \$70 million annually, most of which would be allocated for K-12 programs. Legislative support has been lukewarm.

According to Education Technology News (October 9, 2002), an online pilot project is being implemented to integrate Web-Assign software developed by North Carolina State University professors into Algebra I classes. The Web-Assign program allows teachers to distribute, collect, grade, and record assignments over the Internet, and to help students solve problems. If successful, the pilot program will be expanded to other teachers across the State. For more information, go to [www.webassign.net](http://www.webassign.net) or call 800/955-8275.

## Ohio Update - October 2002

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If a ruling by an Ohio judge holds, all of the State's lottery profits, estimated to be \$41 million, will be allocated to K-12 education. Previously the legislature has earmarked that amount for education but reduced state K-12 education budgets by an equal amount.

The Ohio Department of Education has posted on its website its RFP to solicit proposals from potential supplemental education service providers, as required under Title I, for schools that have been targeted for improvement for two consecutive years. For the most part, the RFP follows closely the provisions and requirements in the legislation. However, under eligibility requirements, the provider must have a demonstrated record of effectiveness for at least three years or be able to demonstrate the capacity to provide services effectively. Also, all staff of an instructional service provider must have two years of college or an associate degree. A review of the RFP suggests that after-school programs could include online tutoring in the home. In after-school environments, the teacher/student ratio of 1:20 must be met, especially if the provider relies heavily on the Internet to deliver instruction. Online schools are specifically noted as being eligible, as are private companies. As noted in the RFP, a "rolling approval process" is anticipated and, thus, there are no due dates for responding to the RFP.

The U.S. Supreme Court's upholding of the Cleveland voucher program has caused Ohio State legislators to consider changes to the program. Republicans are pushing to have the voucher amount raised from its current \$2,250 to the full State per-pupil subsidy -- currently more than \$4,800. They also want to see the program expanded to all grades from the current K-8. There is, however, resistance from Democrats, as well as from the Republican Governor, Robert Taft.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Cleveland voucher program is constitutional. By the submission deadline of July 31, the district had received 2,200 first-time applications for vouchers, bringing the total for the 2002-03 school year to more than 5,500 -- 20 percent more than the prior year. Despite the increase in the number of vouchers, the number of private schools accepting vouchers has not increased, suggesting that seats may not be available in some

schools. Although the Cleveland voucher program has no income restrictions, low-income families are given priority.

## Oregon Update - October 2002

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The Oregon legislature is currently considering a plan to address the State's budget deficit by selling the rights to Oregon's future tobacco lawsuit payments. The plan calls for the State to borrow \$300 million against the tobacco payment rights, \$200 million of which would be set aside for public schools.

A State ballot measure has been passed creating a \$150 million "rainy day" educational fund to be used for State aid to districts. Because of revenue shortfalls under regular school aid programs, many districts have had to reduce the number of hours schools operate or number of staff in schools. Currently, the State's overall budget shortfall is about \$480 million.

On October 10, USED announced approval of the Oregon Reading First grant application for which the State was to receive almost \$50 million over six years, including \$7.4 million for the first year. Oregon is the fifteenth state to be funded under Reading First. Next Spring, the State will hold a competition for 35 eligible school districts; each participating school awardee will hire a trained reading coach to help with implementation. The Institute for the Development of Education Achievement (IDEA) at the University of Oregon will help the State in developing training sessions for two years of professional development for teachers and principals and district leaders across the State. The IDEA has worked closely with the Administration in implementing various aspects of No Child Left Behind, including the development of a list of instruments which meet some of the minimal requirements under the Reading First initiative. Vendors of new assessment instruments, including those that are online, have expressed concern about the IDEA list because the initial criterion was whether or not the test was already widely-used as of February of this year. Secretary Paige recently posted a letter sent to the American Association of Publishers indicating that the IDEA list is not in any way a delimiting or supporting list for Reading First.



## Pennsylvania Update - October 2002

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The process for selecting supplemental education service providers is underway with an initial application deadline on September 22. Applications received after that time will be reviewed within two months and the Department of Education will provide an updated list containing the names of approved providers. The application guidance is very clear that a school in which students are making adequate yearly progress can be an approved service provider. Instructors need not be certified teachers, but must be capable of providing high-quality instruction specifically designed to increase student proficiency in meeting Pennsylvania's academic standards. This requirement is consistent with the law and proposed regulations. Evidence that the approach, program, service is effective may include:

- evidence of positive impact on student achievement on state, district, and national tests;
- evidence of consumer satisfaction;
- database information on student progress;
- letters of recommendation from previous clients, schools, etc.;
- information obtained through provider-conducted studies; and
- third-party research or independent research and observations based upon significant experience.

Through a State initiative which began last year, more than 1,000 individual tutors and groups have been providing tutoring to failing students from low-income families using grants of several hundred dollars to cover part of the cost of the State's parent choice option voucher program. The application and guidance is included on the State department of education's website. For more information contact Gary McCarthy, Director, Bureau of Performance Accountability and Reporting, Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Slightly more than 570 supplemental service providers have been included on a contingent list developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Most of these providers were on a

previous list to provide tutoring services under Classroom Plus, which provides up to \$500 directly to parents to purchase after-school tutoring programs for eligible children. However, unlike the supplemental services requirements under No Child Left Behind, these providers are not held accountable for helping students achieve their goals and are not being paid on the basis of their performance. Providers on the contingent list who wish to provide services under the new Title I supplemental services for the 256 targeted schools, must apply to the State by September 23. For more information contact Jeff McCloud, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 717/783-9802.

The ACCESS PENNSYLVANIA Database project has licensed the NoveList fiction readers' advisory service and the Professional Development Collection database from EBSCO Publishing. These databases are now available to all 2,700 school and public libraries that participate in ACCESS PENNSYLVANIA. NoveList includes information on more than 100,000 fiction titles. The Professional Development Collection provides Pennsylvania's education professionals with full-text access to more than 500 education journals.

Edison Schools has been promoting the results on State assessments of two of its privately managed public schools. The Lincoln Charter School in York and the Renaissance Academy in Phoenixville have shown Grade 5-8 reading and math gains of between eight and ten percent, while Statewide scores for the same grades have remained flat. Both schools also significantly reduced the number of students falling into the "Below Basic" performance category.

The new Philadelphia Superintendent (actually CEO) Paul Vallas, strongly endorses a plan to create homework clubs for at-risk school students who perform below grade level in grades three through eight. If students do not attend these mandatory after-school sessions, they will be required to go to summer school, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer, October 11.

## **Rhode Island Update - October 2002**

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The FY 2003 budget includes \$740 million for K-12 education, almost a five percent increase over the previous year. Funds for charter schools will increase from \$6.4 million to \$10 million. This reflects a 50 percent increase in the number of such schools to nine. However, the State accountability initiative was cut from \$2.8 million to slightly less than \$1 million, which will result in less technical assistance to low-performing schools. New provisions in the budget require schools to use State funds for staff training which is designed to teach literacy in the early grade levels. Set-asides are also provided to districts to serve low-achieving poor students following plans approved by the State.

## South Carolina Update - October 2002

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The South Carolina legislature has increased K-12 education budgets by 3.5 percent over last year by supplementing that budget with almost \$90 million from the State's first-year lottery revenue. During the last school year, a mid-year cut amounting to \$160 million was imposed because of the State's revenue shortfalls. The legislature also passed charter school legislation which is much more flexible in terms of the ratio and composition of student demographics than was included in a previous charter school law, which State courts ruled conflicted with the State constitution.

The State Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children, has undertaken a training initiative for paraprofessionals. The South Carolina Core Competencies for Para-Educators have been drafted and are in line with competency standards written by the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP). A 250-page training manual was developed jointly with the NRCP. Six training sites have been identified at which training will focus on behavior management, legal issues, reading and math content, roles and responsibilities, and communication and teaming skills. This initiative is a direct result of No Child Left Behind which requires all newly-hired instructional paraprofessionals in a Title I schoolwide program to have a minimum of two years college and be certified through a State assessment. The paraprofessionals will also receive training in the area of reading following "Putting Reading First" and the "Texas Reading Initiative: Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers."

## Tennessee Update - October 2002

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The State has passed a large increase in sales tax which would allow the K-12 education budget to be about level-funded at \$2.7 billion for fiscal year 2003. The legislature also provided more power to the State Superintendent to intervene in low-performing schools in order to be in compliance with the new ESEA. However, the legislature did not pass the \$70 million comprehensive reading program proposed by Governor Sundquist.

The Tennessee Valley Authority has donated over \$700,000 worth of used and surplus computers to schools this year. Next year, the TVA estimates that the amount may be close to \$1 million or about 400 surplus computers.

## Washington Update - October 2002

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In early October, the State of Washington received its first year's Reading First allocation of \$13.1 million; the total six-year allocation is expected to be \$86 million. The State expects to hold a competition for district subgrants next Spring. Washington's Reading First application calls for support for approximately 53 schools statewide, as well as for a series of annual summer reading academies to enhance professional development for reading teachers. The district grantees will each be provided with a full-time certified reading coach.

## West Virginia Update - October 2002

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The State legislature has passed legislation which will provide universal access to programs for four-year-olds across the State. Curriculum standards reflect current research and best practices. Funding will come from Head Start, TANF, the West Virginia Building Authority, and ESEA. Counties must submit their plans by August 2003 to be approved by the West Virginia State Board of Education and the Secretary of West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. Implementation will be a major focus of a State conference on February 26-28 in Charleston. For more information contact Ginger Hoffman, 304/558-2696.

With the support of a \$1.6 million grant from Verizon, West Virginia will establish, over the next two years, a comprehensive distance learning network. Called the Digital Bridge Project, the network will link the State's 17 workforce training offices, 12 community colleges, and 176 public libraries. The Verizon grant -- \$536,000 of which is budgeted for this year -- will be largely used to purchase equipment and content to enhance distance learning in West Virginia. The State's community college system is in the process of establishing four centers across the State which will eventually offer more than 3,000 courses and assessment tools for workforce training that may be accessed through the distance learning network.

The West Virginia Department of Education has selected SchoolKit International as a principal provider of teacher professional development and technology curriculum integration as part of its SUCCESS Initiative. Established in 1996, the SUCCESS Initiative is an effort to ensure that information technology is effectively integrated into all aspects of the curricula for West Virginia students. Based in Bellevue, Washington, SchoolKit International, as part of its effort in West Virginia, will provide its Enactz library of K-12 learning activities and its PDPoint online professional development workshops.

## Wisconsin Update - October 2002

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Wisconsin's FY 2003 K-12 budget will be \$5.26 billion, which is an increase of three percent over last year's biennium budget, resulting in an increase of per-pupil expenditures by \$232 to a total of \$8,800. The legislature also agreed to delay the high school exit exam requirements until April 2004 and to reduce funding for State assessment by \$2.3 million.

The Wisconsin Connection Academy, designed to be an online K-8 public school, has had its State charter challenged by the Wisconsin Education Association Council, which is a necessary step before a lawsuit is filed. The virtual school would use a curriculum licensed by Sylvan Ventures. For students who enroll coming from outside the district, approximately \$5,000 per student would be allocated by the State.

A five-year-old, open enrollment plan received nearly 12,000 transfer applications for the 2002-03 school year, 24 percent more than the prior year and twice the number in 1998-99. Milwaukee Public Schools was the source of 2,500 of these applications.

Milwaukee Public Schools has adopted *MY Access!* from Vantage Learning in 45 of its middle schools. *MY Access!* is a writing development package which uses the Internet to give students immediate feedback on their writing skills. Because of its portfolio structure, *MY Access!* can track student writing progress over time and will serve as the districts' annual writing assessment for the 14,000 or so students who use it. *MY Access!* is based on Vantage's automated essay scoring system called Intellimetric.