



Progress Education is an achievement management, professional services company helping educators raise the performance of the students they serve.

We Optimize Student Performance

Volume 1 Issue 3

Dear Education Enthusiast,

Greetings! It's that time of year again, and the hustle and bustle of the end of school is upon us. During this busy time, staying up to date on current education issues is not an easy task.

Our third newsletter focuses on some clarifications to NCLB that provide greater fiscal flexibility for districts; how a comprehensive analysis of district needs can improve operations; and, some of the recent successes Progress has had at the national, state, and district levels.

We thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for the solutions offered by Progress Education Corporation.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Jandris, Ph.D.
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Progress Education Corporation

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NCLB Update – Reallocate SES / Staff Development Funds for Title I



At the end of May, the U.S. Department of Education issued Non-Regulatory Guidance on Title I Fiscal Issues including the conditions under which unspent earmarks for supplemental educational services (SES) and staff development can be reallocated by districts for purchasing other Title I allowable products and services. Other issues addressed are: (a) under "consolidation" of Federal programs in Title I schoolwide programs, there is no requirement to report how such funds are spent; (b) requirements that districts identified for improvement must set aside ten percent for staff development each year when under improvement; and (c) limitations on what other funds provided to Title I programs are allowed under the 15 percent carryover provision.

The new Guidance requires that districts which have schools in which choice and SES must be provided must take -- and document -- various efforts to ensure that all eligible students participate thereby spending the total 20 percent set aside. If the district can do so, and it still has leftover Title I funds in the 20 percent set aside, the Guidance states, "the LEA may use those funds for other allowable activities during the year in which the reservation was made or carry over the unexpended balance and use those funds for any purposes for which carryover funds may be used." If the district cannot demonstrate and document the initiatives that were undertaken and part of the 20 percent set aside is unspent, then that portion must be carried over to the next year and once again set aside and reserved for SES or choice, but the district cannot count these funds as part of the 20 percent set aside for the next year.

The new guidance treats the ten percent staff development earmark for districts identified for improvement in a similar vein. Previous guidance for schools identified for improvement for the first time would not require them to earmark at least ten percent for professional development if the district could clearly demonstrate that teachers in a given school meet the “highly qualified” requirements under NCLB and justify that there was no need for professional development. This new Guidance should generate a much larger demand for professional development in districts identified for improvement, especially for firms that have partnered with districts which operated their own SES programs in prior years.

The Guidance restates that a schoolwide program can consolidate other Federal funds with Title I, use them to serve all students in the school not just those which are Title I eligible, and does not have to demonstrate that the services provided with Title I funds are supplemental to services that would be otherwise provided (i.e., supplement-but-not supplant provisions). In addition to clarifying how much of IDEA funds can be consolidated in a schoolwide program, the Guidance states that a schoolwide program may consolidate funds it receives from discretionary or competitive grants in addition to formula grants, with the exception of Reading First funds. Competitive grants could include E²T² Title II D and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, among others. Even though the Guidance gives examples of how a schoolwide program can demonstrate that it supplements and does not supplant state and local funds, in a schoolwide program, Federal funds can be considered to be more of a “block grant” and will increasingly be treated as such by Federal auditors and monitoring teams.

The Guidance also clarifies what Title I funds fall under the 15 percent carryover limitation and clarifies that 15 percent or more cannot be carried over from one year to the next more than once every three years. However, if 15 percent is carried over to the next year, the district has an additional 15 months to obligate that amount. In calculating the 15 percent limitation, the district must include only Title I Part A funds and any funds from other Titles transferred into Title I under the 50 percent transferability provision. It specifically states that no carryover funds from the previous year, nor funds allocated to the Title I program under the four percent state set aside for school improvement, can be included as part of the base. Hence, there are additional pressures on many districts to expend as much of the four percent set aside and previously carried over funds by the end of the fiscal year.

Article Source: Education Turnkey Systems, Inc. and U.S. Department of Education
For a copy of the Guidance go to <http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/fiscalguid.pdf>.

Progress Solution: The Data Locker – Enterprise Data Management Tool

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Progress Solution Spotlight – District Performance Reviews

In an environment where State education budgets are shrinking and Federal mandates regarding student performance such as NCLB are increasing, districts are struggling to make ends meet. Districts want to maximize the amount of funding to reach the classroom for teaching and learning so that children will learn more now and in the 21st century. However, in many school districts across the nation, only a little over half of the total budget is actually spent in the classroom. There is a clear push across the country to put in place the 65% rule which will mandate 65% of all dollars are tied directly to the classroom. School districts must provide a broad range of services beyond face-to-face teaching, including teacher and student support services, facilities operation, transportation, and both building-level and district-wide leadership.



These non-instructional services are a vital part of creating and sustaining a successful educational environment. However, in an era when educational expectations are rising faster than revenues, it is critical that school districts focus resources on their core mission: the teaching and learning of children.

The district performance review philosophy is based on three key premises:

- School districts must be open to innovation and willing to constantly challenge themselves and their methods of delivering services to respond to the changing demands of today's society.
- Districts must be change-oriented, continually seeking opportunities for meaningful improvement.
- Districts must focus on results and seek to understand the reasons behind successes and failures. This approach requires constant evaluation and analysis of the processes used in delivering services.

Management processes and practices link directly to school districts' core mission of teaching and learning. Management's effectiveness and efficiency affects the availability of instructional time and materials, the condition of the instructional facilities, and the cost-effectiveness of support services. Some recommendations in the report will cost nothing to implement, but will have an enormous impact on communication, morale, and the ability to monitor effectiveness and efficiency. Others will require some investment, but will have important future benefits.

District performance reviews are designed to help districts respond to this challenge by identifying ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The savings identified by these reviews can then be reallocated to the classroom for teaching and learning. The Focus on Performance report presents specific recommendations on how the school district can improve its operations in support of its core mission.

Step 1: Scope Design — Targeting Processes for Improvement

The areas to be covered by the district performance review are different in each district. The review process is customized in a scope design meeting between the school district management team and the Progress Education review team. In an effort to target areas where substantial process improvements and potential financial savings can be realized, the school district management team members draws upon their own experiences and concerns; whereas the review team from Progress Education draws upon various data sources to present suggested areas for review.

Step 2: Fieldwork — Research and Evaluation

The review team conducts fieldwork interviewing individuals associated with each process and reviewing appropriate documentation. In addition, review team members consult a number of data sources to verify information received during interviews and to conduct independent evaluations.

Step 3: Developing and Quantifying Recommendations — Planning for Our Children's Future

The information collected is analyzed to find areas needing improvement in the processes selected for review. Specific recommendations are developed to directly address the root causes and are organized into planning modules. Within each planning module, the review team also presents the estimated savings or investment associated with each recommendation over a three-year period. These modules and the detailed explanations included in our report provide the management of the district with a blueprint for progress.

Step 4: District Response — Implementation of the Blueprint

The strategic blueprint includes recommendations to address the process areas identified at the scope design meeting. These recommendations are organized into separate planning modules according to the underlying problem being addressed.

Progress Solution: Instructional Strategies and Solutions Consulting – District Performance Reviews

Visit us online at http://www.progresseducation.com/consulting_page6.html

Progress Wins U.S. Department of Education SBIR Grant

Progress Education Corporation has been awarded an Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Grant for the *“Development of a Process Methodology to Determine the Total Cost of Ownership of Instructional Resources in Relation to the Benefits of Improved Student Performance.”*



Progress Education will support the U.S. Department of Education's efforts in providing solutions that stimulate technological innovation in the private sector; strengthen the role of small business in meeting the DOE research or research and development (R/R&D) needs; increase the commercial proposal of ED-supported research results; and, improve the return on investment from Federally-funded research for economic and social benefits to the Nation.

Over the next six months, Progress Education will develop a specific process methodology that enables administrators to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources in ways that are meaningfully linked to student learning. In order to do this effectively, districts must be able to answer the following questions

– What works over time? For which students? and At what cost? The ability to provide valid, reliable answers to these questions for educators has the ability to transform the outcomes of our educational efforts for all students by ensuring that scarce resources are making their way to the classroom.

Progress Education's efforts will be focused on identifying the specific activities and tasks that a district should follow to determine the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of instructional programs and the methodology used to evaluate the "cost" of these programs in relation to the "benefit" in terms of measurable student learning outcomes. The methodology identified will then be validated with a cohort of districts using their instructional programs and state test scores to ensure that the data / reports enable administrators to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources in ways that are meaningfully linked to student learning.

Progress Success Stories – Delaware DoE, M-DCPS, and TUSD



In April 2006, Progress Education was selected as the third party evaluator of the Delaware's Performance Appraisal System Second Edition (DPAS II) Pilot. The main objective is to determine the efficacy of the DPAS II Pilot program in achieving both of its core purposes: quality assurance and professional growth. Progress has surveyed and conducted focus groups with the schools that have participated in the pilot and is currently working on its recommendations.



In May 2006, Progress Education Corporation was selected to conduct needs assessments, develop evaluation plans, collect data, analyze data, interpret results, and prepare recommendations and reports.



In May 2006, Progress Education Corporation was selected to provide professional development services to the teachers, administrators, and classified personnel of the Tucson Unified School District.

For more information about our company, products, or services, please contact:

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