

# RACE TO THE TOP

## North Carolina Report

Year 1: School Year 2010–2011

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U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, DC 20202

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January 10, 2012

# Executive Summary

## Race to the Top overview

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, of which approximately \$4 billion was used to fund comprehensive statewide reform grants under the Race to the Top program.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded Race to the Top grants to 11 States and the District of Columbia. The Race to the Top program is a competitive four-year grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement; closing achievement gaps; improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers.

Since education is a complex system, sustained and lasting instructional improvement in classrooms, schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and States will not be achieved through piecemeal change. Instead, the Race to the Top program requires that States and LEAs take into account their local context to design and implement a comprehensive approach to innovation and reform that meets the needs of their educators, students, and families.

The Race to the Top program is built on the framework of comprehensive reform in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools.

## Race to the Top program review

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting States as they implement ambitious reform agendas, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top program. The goal of the ISU is to provide assistance to States as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes. Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU will work with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and help States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes.

Grantees are accountable for the implementation of their approved Race to the Top plans, and the information and data gathered throughout the program review help to inform the Department's management and support of the Race to the Top States, as well as provide appropriate and timely updates to the public on their progress. In the event that adjustments are required to an approved plan, the grantee must submit a formal amendment request to the Department for consideration. States may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget provided that such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. In the event that the Department determines that a grantee is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR section 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).<sup>2</sup>

## State-specific summary report

The Department uses the information gathered during the review process (e.g., through monthly calls, on-site reviews, and Annual Performance Reports (APRs)) to draft State-specific Race to the Top reports.<sup>3</sup> The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's Year 1 Race to the Top implementation, highlighting successes and accomplishments, identifying challenges, and providing lessons learned from implementation to date.

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining funds were awarded under the Race to the Top Assessment program. More information about the Race to the Top Assessment program is available at [www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment](http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment).

<sup>2</sup> More information about the ISU's program review process, State APR data, and State Scopes of Work can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Additional State-specific data on progress against annual performance measures and goals reported in the Year 1 APRs can be found on the Race to the Top Data Display at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

# Executive Summary

## North Carolina's education reform agenda

In January 2010, the North Carolina Governor introduced a vision for education, *Career and College: Ready, Set, Go!*, to drive the State toward ensuring that every student graduates from high school prepared for success in a career, two- or four-year college, or technical training program. This framework for reform is reflected in the State's Race to the Top goals. Specifically, the *Career and College: Ready, Set, Go!* plan directs North Carolina to: (1) ensure its standards and accountability system reflect internationally benchmarked standards; (2) establish advanced data systems that measure student success

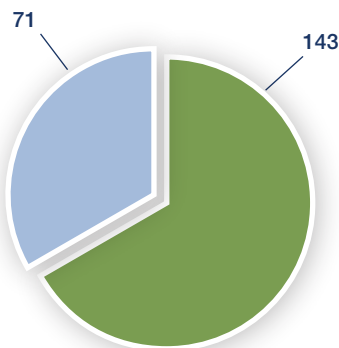
and inform educator practice; (3) increase teacher and principal effectiveness, so that every student has a great teacher and every school has a great principal; and (4) turn around the State's lowest-achieving schools, so that all students get the support they need to be successful.

North Carolina's Race to the Top grant of \$399,465,769 expands on the commitment to education reform set forth by *Career and College: Ready, Set, Go!*. Under the terms of Race to the Top award grants, the State must distribute at least half of the award amount to participating local educational agencies (LEAs).

## Local educational agency participation

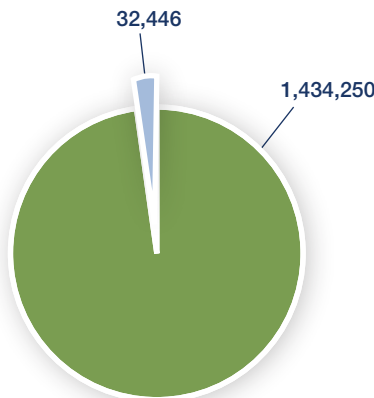
Based on the definition of "participating LEA" in the Race to the Top Notice Inviting Applications, in addition to North Carolina's 115 LEAs, 51 charter schools that received Title I, Part A funding were eligible to receive funds from the LEA portion of the grant.<sup>4</sup> As depicted in the graphs below, as of June 30, 2011, North Carolina reported 143 participating LEAs, which includes all 115 LEAs and 28 of the 51 charter schools that were eligible to participate based on the grant criteria. This represents 97.8 percent of the State's K-12 students and more than 99.3 percent of its students in poverty.

LEAs Participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top Plan



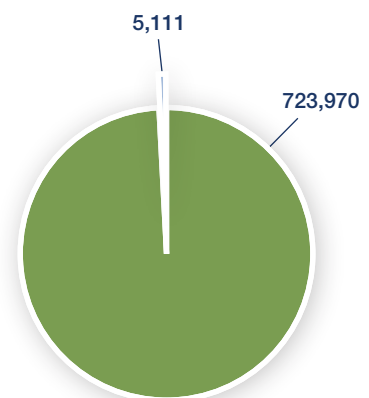
■ Participating LEAs (#) as of June 30, 2011  
 ■ Other LEAs

K-12 Students in LEAs Participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top Plan



■ K-12 students (#) in participating LEAs  
 ■ K-12 students (#) in other LEAs

Students in Poverty in LEAs Participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top Plan



■ Students in poverty (#) in participating LEAs  
 ■ Students in poverty (#) in other LEAs

NOTE: In addition to 115 LEAs, North Carolina has 99 charters. Of the 99 charters, 51 were eligible to receive funds from the LEA portion of the State's Race to the Top grant. Charters were eligible to become Race to the Top participating LEAs (and thus receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that must be subgranted to LEAs) if they were eligible to receive Title I, Part A funding in fiscal year 2010.

The 71 "other LEAs" reported here represents 23 eligible but not "participating LEA" charters and 48 charters that were not eligible to become "participating LEAs." Accordingly, the 32,446 K-12 students and 5,111 students in poverty in "other LEAs" show both students in eligible charters that elected not to participate as well as those in charters that were not eligible to become "participating LEAs."

<sup>4</sup>Participating LEAs are LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plan, as specified in each LEA's agreement with the State. Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year, in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA. Any participating LEA that does not receive funding under Title I, Part A (as well as one that does) may receive funding from the State's other 50 percent of the grant award, in accordance with the State's plan.

# Executive Summary

## North Carolina Year 1 summary

### Accomplishments

North Carolina is transitioning from its current Standard Course of Study to new standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace. The State adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in June 2010 and created the North Carolina Essential Standards for all content areas not covered by the CCSS. The State will implement the CCSS in school year (SY) 2012–2013 and is already taking steps to offer training and support structures to build readiness and understanding for the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards. To provide strategic support to teachers around standards and other education reforms underway, the State also established a framework known as the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). According to the State, the PDI builds on the State's existing regional and statewide professional development programs and resources to provide a comprehensive, targeted, and flexible system to increase the State and LEA's capacity to provide effective professional development. During Year 1, the State's PDI conducted a series of regional trainings on the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards that reached approximately 2,500 educators. The State reports that establishing the PDI was a major infrastructure accomplishment that will inform systems of teacher support beyond the Race to the Top grant period.

In addition, during Year 1, North Carolina began planning and coordinating within the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), among LEAs, and across stakeholder groups and potential vendors to lay the groundwork for statewide technology initiatives, including the North Carolina Education Cloud and Instructional Improvement System (IIS). These statewide technology systems will help LEAs increase efficiency and provide robust digital resources to students and educators through a single-user interface.

### Challenges

A key challenge that North Carolina faced in Year 1 was building capacity within DPI. The State recognized the need to expand its staff to manage and coordinate the multiple new projects and activities. In several of the Race to the Top initiatives, the State underestimated the time necessary to move from planning to implementation, and the State's procurement and hiring processes imposed additional delays, resulting in contract delays and setbacks in hiring key personnel.

### Strategies for moving forward

North Carolina recognizes the need to continue to build capacity at DPI to carry out the initiatives in its Race to the Top plan. As of October 2011, the State has already filled approximately 80 percent of the 118 new DPI staff positions outlined in its approved plan. Given the high level of interest in advertised positions, the State believes that it will be able to successfully recruit for the remaining vacant positions. In addition to hiring new staff, North Carolina will support its Race to the Top initiatives by continuously improving internal coordination across DPI offices. The State will also continue to support LEAs and charter schools through Regional Education Service Alliances (RESAs), which provide targeted, job-embedded, and blended professional development.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>North Carolina has eight Regional Education Service Alliances (RESAs). These alliances serve voluntary district members in eight regional areas.

# State Success Factors

## Building capacity to support LEAs

### Performance management

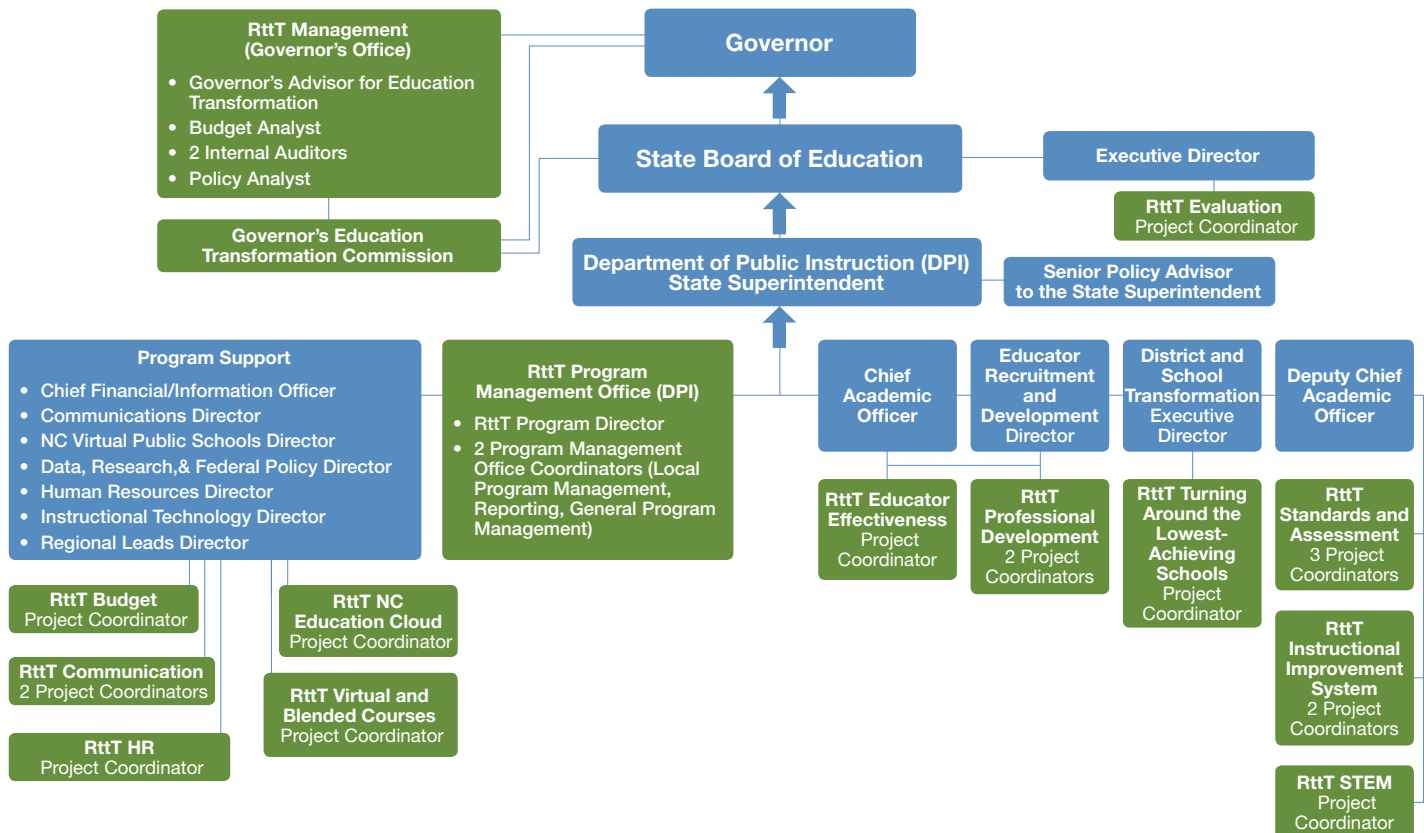
The State Superintendent and her Race to the Top Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring successful implementation of all Race to the Top initiatives. The Leadership Team includes the Race to the Top Director, the DPI senior managers who serve as Race to the Top initiative leads, and staff from the Office of the State Board of Education (SBE). This team meets weekly to drive the work and ensure that it stays well-coordinated.

The North Carolina Race to the Top Program Management Office (PMO), led by the Race to the Top Director, is a new office created within DPI to increase State capacity to manage the Race to the Top implementation. Various initiatives in North Carolina's Race to the Top plan build upon existing work in the State agency. The PMO provides both coordination among State-level initiatives and oversight of local initiatives.

Project coordinators have been embedded in standing DPI divisions including Educator Recruitment and Development and District and School Transformation to oversee projects supported through Race to the Top. The Race to the Top Director convenes this group of project coordinators weekly to discuss progress and address issues. Additionally, the State has embedded additional staffing in each of the DPI support divisions: finance and business services, communications, and human resources. The Governor's Education Transformation Commission, led by the Chair of the SBE, and its subcommittees, provide oversight and guidance to the Race to the Top Leadership Team on a monthly basis.

In accordance with its Race to the Top plan, DPI entered into a contract with a consortium of North Carolina universities to conduct an evaluation that informs continuous improvement of the State's Race to the Top initiatives and guides future policy and funding decisions. The State will use the evaluation to identify projects that could benefit from adjustments or modifications. The Evaluation Team comprises staff from the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North

## North Carolina Race to the Top Oversight and Implementation Organization



As of November 1, 2011

According to the State:

1. This chart illustrates the functional relationships between entities involved in managing NC's RttT Initiative; this is not a subset of or substitute for NCDPI's official agency organizational chart.
2. All RttT Project Coordinators in the NCDPI organization report dually to the RttT Program Director as an extension of the RttT Program Management Office.

# State Success Factors

Carolina State University, and the Carolina Institute for Public Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In Year 1, evaluators created theories of action (or plans) for each initiative area, including developing timelines for reports, highlighting key research questions, and noting potential data sources (surveys, observations of teachers, etc.). Evaluators also collected baseline data that will enable them to track progress on Race to the Top initiatives and guide ongoing evaluation. In Year 2, the Evaluation Team will collect implementation data and begin to provide reports and formative analysis to the State.

## LEA implementation and accountability

Race to the Top grantees were required to evaluate and approve LEA and charter school Scopes of Work within 90 days of their award date. Given the short timetable, North Carolina developed a two-step process for Scope of Work approval. The State approved LEAs' and charter schools' Year 1 Scopes of Work by November 2010. After approving the Year 1 Scopes of Work, the State worked with LEAs and charter schools to create a comprehensive Scope of Work for Years 2 through 4, including a complete budget with planned uses of the Race to the Top allocation as well as additional funding sources, which would be used to achieve Race to the Top objectives. Between fall 2010 and summer 2011, the State supported LEA and charter school planning by providing materials through the NC Race to the Top website, and collaborating with the RESAs to deliver regional face-to-face technical assistance meetings and webinars. As of November 2011, the State had approved the majority of the LEAs' and charter schools' refined Scopes of Work.

During Year 1, the State's technical assistance sessions were well-attended with more than 1,400 members of LEA leadership teams participating. These supports ensured that LEAs and charter schools integrated their Scopes of Work with other State goals and initiatives and that they served as useful tools during implementation. The State also provided individualized attention through a review process during which it clarified information, pointed LEAs to useful resources, and offered feedback on each area of the plan. In addition, the State made detailed instructions, examples, and other resources available on its website.

## Building SEA technology infrastructure to support LEAs

In addition to North Carolina's support to LEAs in developing their reform plans, the State also engaged with LEAs to determine technology priorities and service needs. North Carolina is instituting a technology infrastructure for LEAs known as the NC K-12 Education Cloud (Cloud). Through the Cloud, the State will provide its educators with an information technology (IT) infrastructure that enables their access to important materials. For example, learning management systems hosted through the Cloud will provide online courses and resources for teachers and students alike. The Cloud will also feature blogs, wikis, social networking tools, technological resources, and curricular tools.

In creating the Cloud, the State aims to improve service reliability, increase efficiency, and decrease long-term IT costs. The Cloud infrastructure will reduce overall costs and technical assistance needs, as LEAs will no longer need to maintain their own systems. It will also ensure that all LEAs, regardless of differences in local funding, have access to the same high-quality technological resources. North Carolina envisions that it will provide LEAs with a more cost-efficient and reliable means to host, store, and deliver resources than is currently possible when each LEA purchases and manages technical resources independently.

To ensure that the Cloud project serves educators and students as effectively as possible, North Carolina is engaged in an extensive development process. In order to inventory current systems and identify the needs of educators in the field, the State developed an in-depth survey and conducted follow-up meetings at more than 120 LEAs and charter schools. In addition, the State engaged with vendors regarding the technical aspects of the project. As North Carolina moves forward with this vital component of its education reform infrastructure, its extensive outreach efforts will help mitigate some of the risk associated with creating a system of this scale. During Year 1, the State completed its initial plan for deploying the Cloud and established mechanisms to continue to involve LEAs throughout the development, migration, and full deployment phases.

## Stakeholder engagement

### Key activities and stakeholders

Through the Governor's Education Transformation Commission, stakeholders play a key role in the implementation and oversight of North Carolina's Race to the Top programs. The commission's 26 members include educational representatives, business entities, and State and local government personnel. Its four subcommittees each focus on a key area of Race to the Top: Standards and Assessments, Data Systems, Great Teachers and Leaders, and School Turnaround. The State also includes stakeholders in the oversight process through North Carolina State Board of Education meetings and meetings of superintendents.

In order to cater its professional development efforts, the State solicited and incorporated feedback from educators, business leaders, and national experts. In addition, the State administered surveys to determine its LEAs' present use of benchmark assessments, teachers' use of online assessment tools, and educators' perception of the CCSS trainings. According to DPI, these surveys helped the State gather information about current practices and target the State's professional development offerings to support educators' needs.

The State also implemented a variety of communications strategies to build understanding and support among stakeholders. To specifically inform audiences about Race to the Top, the team created three videos, including a Race to the Top overview video,

# State Success Factors

a “Teachers are the Key” video that describes teachers’ role in the success of the initiative, and an overview of the Summer Institutes.<sup>6</sup> The State also created a Race to the Top Weekly Update email to inform stakeholders statewide about the current and upcoming activities related to the State’s plan. Currently, more than 1,300 teachers, administrators, and other partners receive this update.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to these stakeholder engagement efforts, the State conducted many outreach and engagement activities specific to other reform areas. These activities are described in detail in the following sections.

## Lessons learned

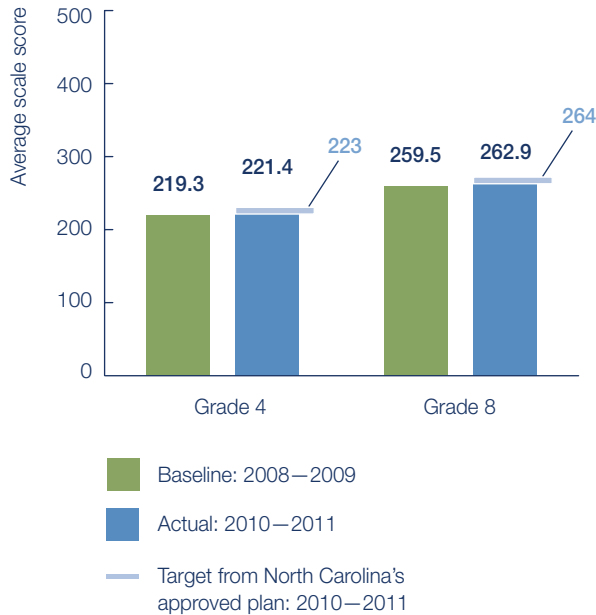
During Year 1 of Race to the Top implementation, the State recognized that more staff was needed to address project management and oversight support needs, in addition to the positions included in its Race to the Top application. North Carolina added three positions in the Race to the Top PMO, one in the SBE, and one in the Office of the Governor to help coordinate and support implementation.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

North Carolina has a better understanding of the amount of staff necessary to implement its Race to the Top plan. As of October 2011, the State filled approximately 80 percent of the SEA staff positions outlined in its approved plan. The State will also continue to support LEAs and charter schools through RESAs and the PDI.

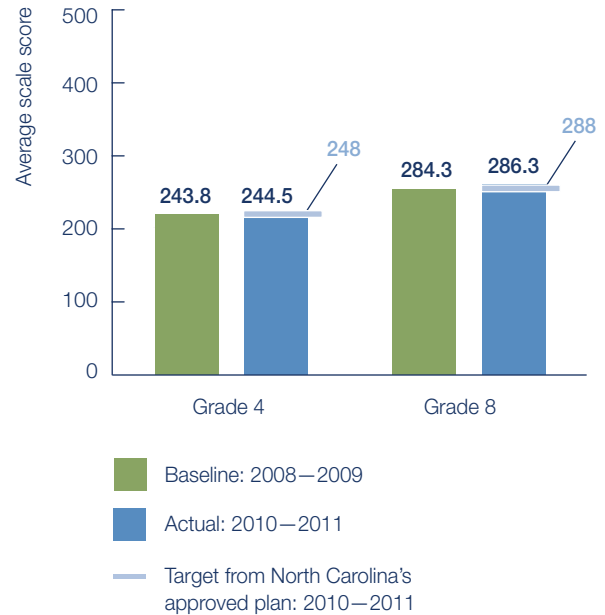
In addition, through the work of the Evaluation Team, the PMO expects to have quantitative and qualitative formative data to inform management decisions and continuous improvement. In Year 1, the Race to the Top Evaluation Team coordinated with initiative leads to develop evaluation plans, establish timelines for reports, and determine key research questions. Evaluators collected baseline data that will enable them to track progress on Race to the Top initiatives and guide ongoing evaluation.

Student Proficiency, NAEP Reading 2011



North Carolina's grade 4 reading score was not significantly different in 2011 than in 2009.  
North Carolina's grade 8 reading score was significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) in 2011 than in 2009.

Student Proficiency, NAEP Mathematics 2011



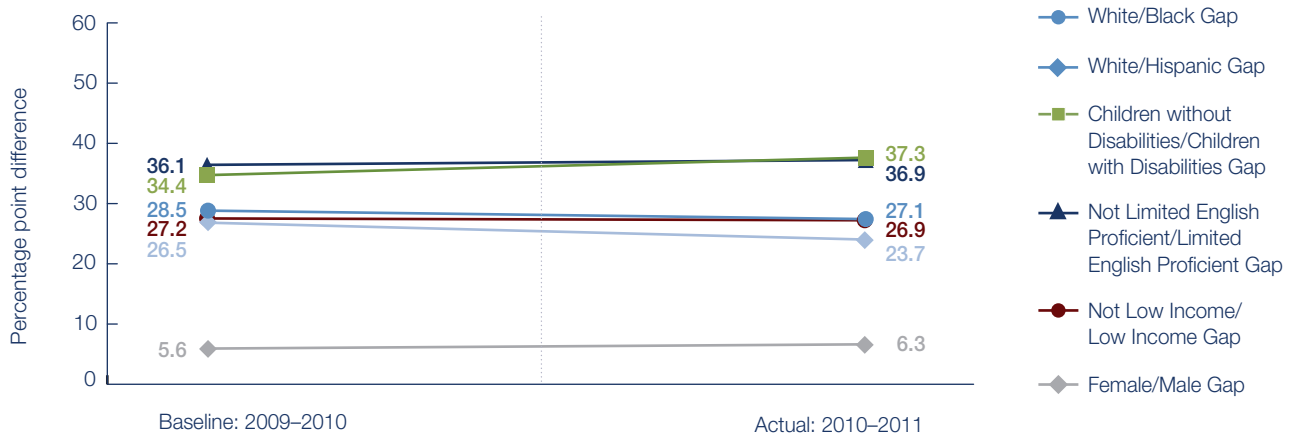
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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/readsetgo/multimedia/>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/rttt/updates/>.

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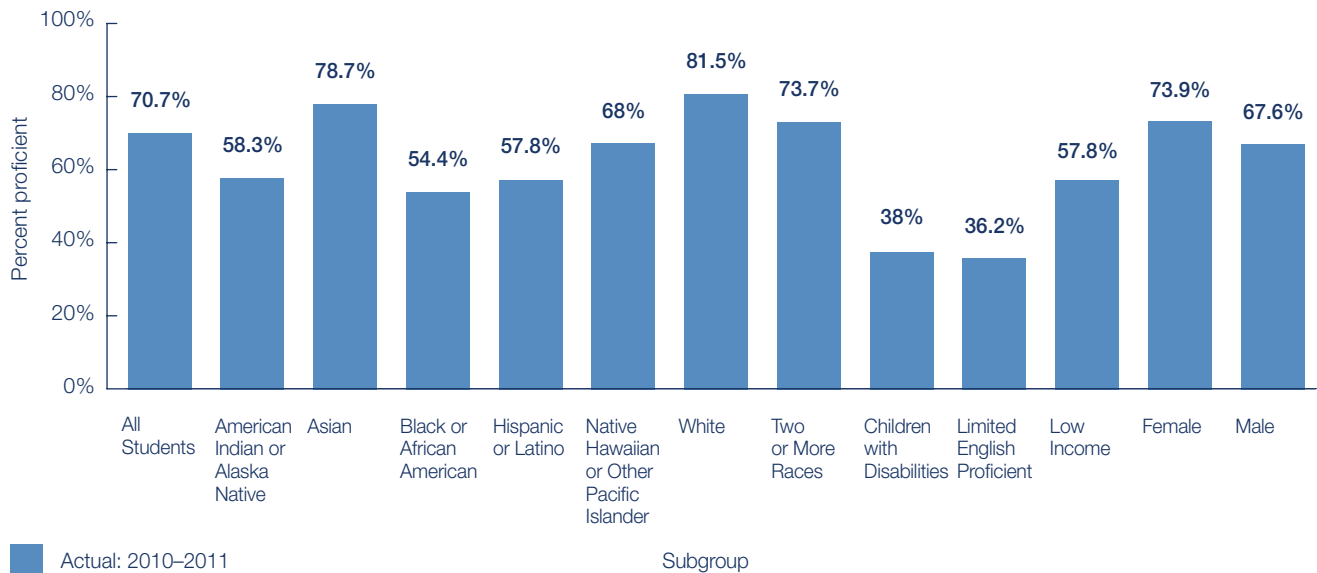
Achievement Gap on North Carolina's ELA Assessment SY 2010–2011



Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: November 14, 2011

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores. For State-reported context, please refer to the APR Data Display at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

Overall Proficiency on North Carolina's ELA Assessment SY 2010–2011

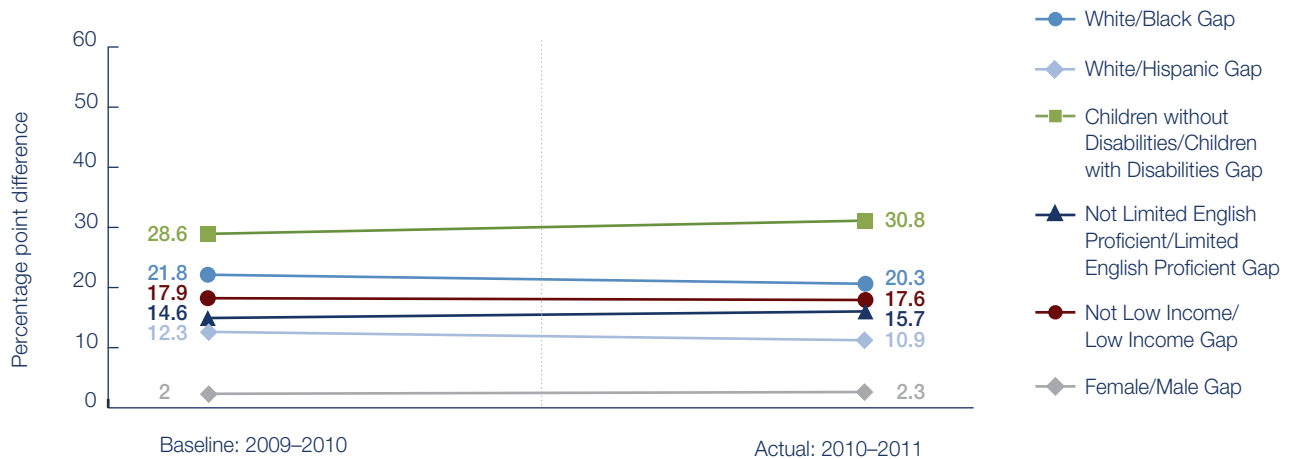


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# State Success Factors

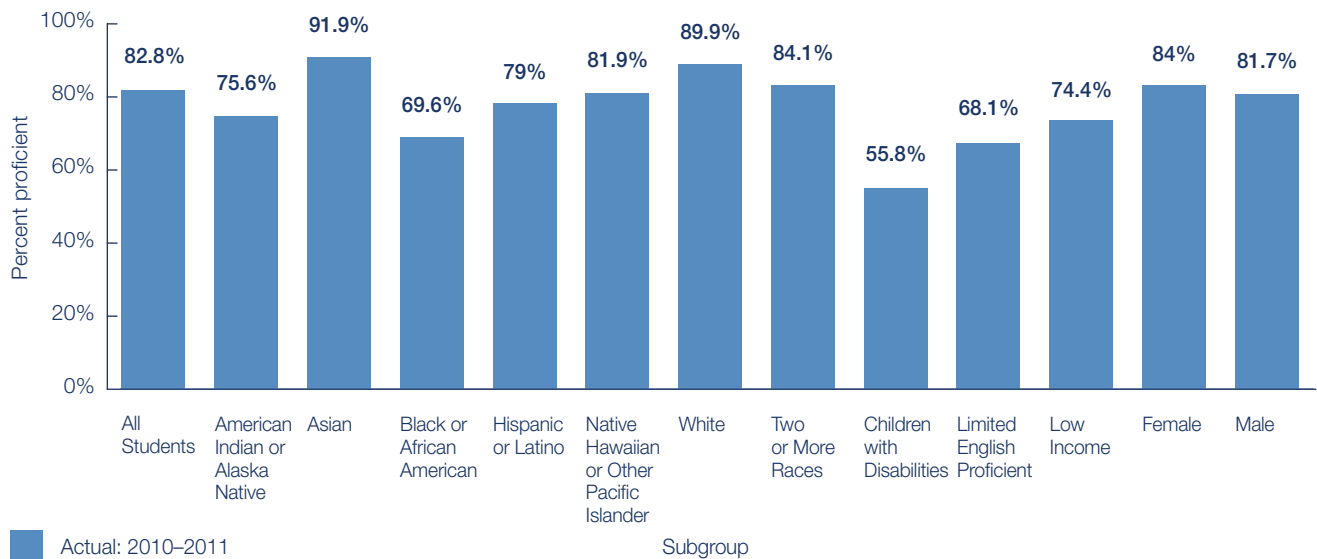
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# Standards and Assessments

Implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and career is an integral aspect of education reform in all Race to the Top States.

## Adoption of college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments

In June 2010, North Carolina's SBE voted to adopt the CCSS. The State will fully implement the standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in SY 2012–2013 and has already adopted Common Core-aligned materials in its ELA classrooms.

## Supporting the transition to college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments

North Carolina is a governing State in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which is developing Common Core-aligned assessments. The consortium's computer-adaptive tests will measure students' attainment of the standards in grades 3–8 and 11, including assessments of writing, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. The consortium is also developing interim and formative assessments that will help teachers assess student progress toward the standards throughout the school year. The State plans to implement the SBAC assessments in SY 2014–2015 and will roll out new CCSS- and North Carolina Essential Standards-aligned summative assessments in SY 2012–2013.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to face-to-face sessions, as part of its blended approach to prepare educators to transition to the CCSS, North Carolina offered a variety of support activities to its educators. In June and July of 2011, the State conducted six regional summer institutes on the CCSS and NC Essential Standards that provided professional development to about 2,500 educators from LEA teams around the State. These LEA team members are working with their local schools and leaders to prepare for the full roll-out in SY 2012–2013. Other trainings were conducted as well, including a one-day session in Cumberland County with 200 educators in attendance. In addition to these trainings, the State offered a series of professional development sessions specifically for school administrators.

North Carolina created five online modules, a best practices guide for online assessments, and *Crosswalk* and *Unpacking Standards* documents to assist LEAs as they transition to the CCSS.<sup>9</sup> The State

provided all LEA and charter schools with online professional development opportunities on the Common Core and Essential Standards and North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process that were developed through collaboration between national experts and representatives from DPI. Additional online resources are in development, including learning maps and a guide to developing local curricula.

## Lessons learned

North Carolina provided opportunities for feedback from various internal and external stakeholders during the development phases of crosswalk documents and modules for the transition to the CCSS. The State recognized the importance of involving stakeholders early in the transition process to ensure a smooth adoption of CCSS. The State plans to continue to provide ongoing support through a train-the-trainer structure at the local level, online resources, and "live chats" between SEA and LEA staff to offer support and fidelity checks.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

To organize the professional development initiatives that support the transition to the CCSS, the State created a SY 2011–2012 professional development schedule for teachers, university teacher preparation faculty, and other educators.<sup>10</sup> In October 2011, the State began outreach with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to help ensure consistency with K-12 and higher education implementation of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards.

Since the State has articulated college and career readiness as a paramount goal of the State's Race to the Top plan, as well as the Governor's *Ready, Set, GO!* initiative, it developed several optional performance measures to track its progress. In Year 2, North Carolina will continue to examine trends in student participation and scores on Advanced Placement (AP) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) exams. The State also will monitor progress against targets related to the percentage of North Carolina high school graduates who need to take remedial level courses at the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina System.

<sup>8</sup> These summative assessments are not funded by Race to the Top.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/common-core-tools/> and <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/support-tools/>.

<sup>10</sup> The schedule is available at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/profdev/district/statewide.pdf>.

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

## Student outcomes data

Statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) and instructional improvement systems (IIS) enhance the ability of States to effectively manage, use, and analyze education data to support instruction. Race to the Top States are working to ensure that their data systems are accessible to key stakeholders and that the data support educators and decision-makers in their efforts to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

## Accessing and using State data

According to the State, North Carolina has had in operation for approximately 20 years, a system through which it has collected, managed, and used education data. The State reported in its Race to the Top APR that, as of June 30, 2011, its system incorporates data from several agencies and data sets and includes all 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act. To improve this system, the State has recently established a tool set known as the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS), which centers on a PK-13 data warehouse that automates labor-intensive manual processes.<sup>11</sup> CEDARS uses a unique identifier system to link students and staff and match data across various sources such as financial systems, teacher licensure programs, student information, and testing data. Analytical tools allow for analyses of trends and relationships over time.

CEDARS helps ensure that SLDS data are more accessible and useful to stakeholders. The State expects the primary users of data from CEDARS to be State- and LEA-, and charter-level staff. The system provides users with a set of data-query tools and standards data views, and produces a variety of standard reports and submissions to the federal government. Based on user roles, different views of the data are available. Although DPI delayed the rollout of the CEDARS warehouse from spring to October 2011, the State was able to preview the capabilities of the enhanced system through a series of webinars in July to approximately 500 LEA- and school-level staff members. In October 2011, DPI provided regional training in 15 locations statewide for CEDARS for representatives from LEAs and charter schools.

## Using data to improve instruction

North Carolina's IIS Leadership Team consists of various members of DPI, including staff from the PMO, Academic Services and Instructional Support, and Learning Systems. The IIS Leadership Team meets frequently to monitor progress and provide guidance and resources on the development of its IIS. The system, which will be accessible via a single sign-on capability, will act as an online repository of various shared tools and applications that will help improve instruction and provide portals for teachers, students, parents, and administrators to access data and resources to inform decision-making related to instruction, assessment, and career and

During Year 1, North Carolina took steps to build a foundation for statewide technology initiatives, including the NC K-12 Education Cloud (Cloud) and the Instructional Improvement System (IIS). By offering services that LEAs currently purchase independently through a single statewide infrastructure, the State envisions that the Cloud will improve reliability and increase efficiency of service delivery, and decrease long-term information technology costs. The Cloud will also house another technology system being developed through NC's Race to the Top plan, the IIS. The IIS will connect resources and data to provide tools to help educators manage assessments, student work, classroom activities, and their personal professional growth. Over time, the State expects that the IIS will serve multiple users including district administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

<sup>11</sup>According to the State, the CEDARS data warehouse is referred to as a "PK-13" because it contains data on all of North Carolina public school students, from pre-kindergarten through high school, including some of the students in North Carolina's early college high school programs who are coded in the data system as "grade 13."

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

college goals. While the primary users will be teachers and students, the State expects to build the capacity for parents to sign on to review student progress.

Having received approval from the Department for an amendment for additional time to translate its high-level description of the project to an implementation plan, the State is developing several documents to guide the development of its IIS. The State has already completed outlines of the specific vision, goals, and objectives of the IIS as well as *A Day in the Life* document to illustrate how teachers, students, parents, and administrators would use the IIS.<sup>12</sup> In Year 2, the State will develop two additional documents to drive the planning and development of the IIS, including a *Using Data for Instruction* guide and a *Roles Matrix*.

In Year 1, North Carolina consulted with other States about their respective IIS plans and contracted with the Center for Educational Leadership and Technology (CELТ) to provide technical expertise and assistance in planning the State's IIS. The State is working closely with various stakeholders to develop the IIS and has engaged in discussions with the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), the North Carolina School Boards Association, and the North Carolina Parent-Teacher Association (NCPTA) about the vision and functional specifications of the IIS. DPI held summer regional meetings and used follow-up webinars and online surveys to engage LEA and school staff in the refinement of those functional specifications. The State is also working with the NCPTA to set up focus groups for parents to inform the business functions of the IIS. The State is maintaining communication with these stakeholders by emailing updates to all stakeholder groups, including superintendents, principals, instructional leaders, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, technology directors, and assessment directors. Using the feedback and opinions of these stakeholders, the State began drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of the IIS that details the planned components of the system. The State anticipates that CELТ will complete the IIS RFP and Implementation Plan in early 2012.

## Lessons learned

In order to continue to engage LEAs and schools to ensure that the IIS aligns with their needs, the State communicates regularly through a variety of email groups representing superintendents, principals, instructional leaders, ESL teachers, technology directors, and assessment directors. To formalize the ongoing feedback and guidance from LEA and school staff, the State established an IIS Stakeholder Advisory Committee and an IIS User Group that began meeting in November 2011.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

The State rolled out its enhanced PK-13 SLDS in October 2011 and continues to provide trainings for various stakeholder groups on how to best use the enhanced system. To monitor how CEDARS is being used to make decisions and boost performance, the State plans to conduct surveys on CEDARS training and routinely check in with educators. Once connected with the State's IIS platform, data contained in CEDARS will become more accessible and user friendly for teachers, students, and parents.

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/improvement/resources/>.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

Race to the Top States are developing comprehensive systems of educator effectiveness by adopting clear approaches to measuring student growth; designing and implementing rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals; conducting annual evaluations that include timely and constructive feedback; and using evaluation information to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, and tenure decisions.

## Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

North Carolina provides several alternative certification routes for teachers. According to its application, 48 percent of State teachers hold at least one license earned through an alternate route. Many teachers hold multiple licenses for different grades, subjects, or specialties. In 2002, the State established a network of Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALCs) to approve alternative plans of study with coursework that can span across multiple colleges and universities. Approximately 1,000 teachers per year are certified through RALC-approved programs. At the time of its application in June 2010, the State had about 400 Teach for America (TFA) teachers, and, in its Year 1 APR, the State reported an increase of 20 teachers in the 2011 TFA Eastern North Carolina cohort that serves classrooms in Durham and surrounding rural communities.

To address teacher pipeline issues unique to the State, particularly in hard-to-staff regions not currently served by TFA, as part of its Race to the Top plan, North Carolina is also developing the North Carolina Teacher Corps program. The program will recruit, train, and support teachers who will be hired by LEAs that commit to using recruited individuals to fill open educator positions. In order to implement the program smoothly, the State amended its original plan to add more planning time and hire three State-level positions to support the program. The State is currently focusing on building partnerships with LEAs and professional development providers, designing and launching a recruitment and selection model, and planning a comprehensive training and support structure for corps members.

Recently, the State approved TEACH Charlotte, a partnership with The New Teacher Project. This lateral-entry program targeting mid-career changers will provide educators to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district. The State also launched three Regional Leadership Academies to provide an alternative route for principal certification. These two-year programs offer initial licenses, specialty add-on licensure for high-needs areas, and continuing education credits as part of the State's strategy for increasing the pool of highly qualified principals for the State's lowest-achieving schools.

## Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

The State is modifying its existing evaluation system, the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System, to align with its Race to the Top plan. DPI first piloted this system in SY 2008–2009. The evaluation system initially required educators to demonstrate proficiency in leadership, establishment of a respectful learning environment, content knowledge, facilitation of learning, and reflection on practice. In July 2011, the SBE formally adopted an additional standard to the evaluation system to explicitly factor student growth data into the evaluation process. Moreover, the SBE voted to require annual evaluations for all teachers in the State. The State is currently analyzing student growth measures to determine a uniform set of acceptable measures for use statewide in SY 2012–2013. To drive this process, the State convened a Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup to study best practices for measuring teacher effectiveness throughout SY 2011–2012. This group, supported by a technical assistance committee, will help form policy recommendations for the SBE.

Although the State has not formally selected a student growth measure, it already has a value-added system in place: the SAS Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). Since SY 2007–2008, EVAAS has projected achievement levels based on previous test scores available to teachers. North Carolina plans to leverage this capacity and its educators' familiarity with the measure, as it moves forward with growth-based evaluations.

North Carolina is also developing measures of student learning for non-tested grades and subjects. In October 2011, the State convened a group of 800 educators (from an applicant pool of more than 1,400) to serve on design teams for these measures. In addition, in Year 1 the State contracted with a vendor to design observation instruments for its support staff, including social workers, psychologists, speech pathologists, guidance counselors, media specialists, and instructional technology teachers.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

## Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

The North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation in 1999 requiring an annual report on undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs. The State plans to redesign and enhance this report by aligning it with the current K-12 School Report Cards, which DPI shares with the public on its website. According to North Carolina, the Educator Preparation Program Report Cards will rate the effectiveness of preparation programs based on their graduates' performance on student achievement and growth criteria. Once implemented, the report cards will be accessible to the public and help drive policy decisions around program effectiveness and preparation program renewal. In accordance with its approved Scope of Work, the State's Year 1 activities focused on engaging key stakeholders and beginning the redesign process. To accomplish this task, DPI established a working group composed of representatives from public and private IHEs to discuss ways to streamline the report and make it user friendly.

## Providing effective support to teachers and principals

As mentioned previously, the State created a Professional Development Initiative (PDI) to provide comprehensive statewide and regional professional development programs and resources across multiple aspects of the State's reform initiative. To build on the existing regional system of support offered through the RESAs, DPI hired 15 professional development leaders to connect schools and LEAs with customized, targeted support. According to the State, the PDI will help the State to cohesively train and support educators around multiple changes to their practice including the CCSS, NC Essential Standards, and the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System. To plan for effective and relevant statewide professional development sessions, the State assessed the specific needs of its LEAs and charter schools. To ensure implementation is on track, regional professional development leaders will convene with local professional development teams at least twice a year to problem solve and identify areas in need of additional support.

To support its educational leaders, the State also implemented Distinguished Leadership Practice (DLP) institutes. Forty principals participated in this leadership development program in SY 2010-2011. DLP utilizes a problem-based, real-world approach to allow participants to critically examine effective school leadership. Ten graduates of these institutes are now helping to facilitate DLP components for the current cohort of 225 principals from across the State.

The State has also developed professional development resources connected to other areas of the Race to the Top grant. For example, the State developed a series of online instructional modules, many of which focus on the transition to implementing the CCSS (see *Standards and Assessments*). The State continues to monitor the

effectiveness of its professional development through surveys completed by professional development participants.

## Lessons learned

North Carolina learned the importance of clear communication around changes to the evaluation system. The State also recognized the need to engage educators both in a Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup and a Measures of Student Learning Design Group to ensure a smooth transition to the new evaluation system.

To further support a seamless transition to the new evaluation system, the State has sought the feedback of other States and national experts. The State has formed a technical assistance committee that includes discussions of teacher and leader effectiveness as part of its quarterly agenda.

The State received approval for an amendment to permit LEAs to use school-level growth data as one of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness for non-tested grades and subjects in SY 2011-2012 until a statewide set has been approved for SY 2012-2013. The State adjusted its approach to this activity, in part, based on feedback from LEAs about the expertise and resources necessary to design valid and reliable measures of teacher effectiveness for non-tested grades and subjects.

In addition, North Carolina originally planned to create the North Carolina Teacher Corps as a stand-alone program run by a contractor. However, realizing the value in building its capacity and investing in a teacher pipeline aligned to the State's needs, the State chose to manage the program at DPI.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

Beginning in SY 2011-2012, DPI will require all LEAs to enter evaluation data into the online North Carolina Educator Evaluation System and to use the system for all aspects of their evaluation cycles. The State is conducting ongoing professional development to ensure that educators understand changes to the process and to promote high-quality implementation of the system. The State also implemented a new roster validation process that allows teachers to confirm the accuracy of class rosters used to determine their evaluation scores. This roster validation program will become an essential tool when student growth based on a statewide set of approved measures is a component of evaluations beginning in SY 2012-2013.

In Year 2, North Carolina will select a value-added model to inform the new student growth standard that was added to the Educator Evaluation System. The State will continue to develop student growth measures for teacher evaluation, based largely on the findings and recommendations of the Measures of Student Learning Design Group and the non-tested subjects workgroup. The two workgroups will continue to work toward the year-end objective of proposing a statewide set of acceptable measures to the SBE in summer 2012 for use in the 2012-2013 school year.

# Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

Race to the Top States are supporting LEAs' implementation of far-reaching reforms to turn around lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of four school intervention models.<sup>13</sup>

In SY 2010–2011, North Carolina identified the lowest-achieving five percent of all schools in each grade span (elementary, middle, and high school) by determining the schools with one or more of the following characteristics: 1) any school with a performance composite<sup>14</sup> under 50 percent, 2) any high school with a graduation rate below 60 percent in the prior year and one of the two previous years, and 3) any school in each grade span with performance composites in the fifth percentile or below.<sup>15</sup> As a result, it began to initiate components of an intervention model in 118 schools.<sup>16</sup>

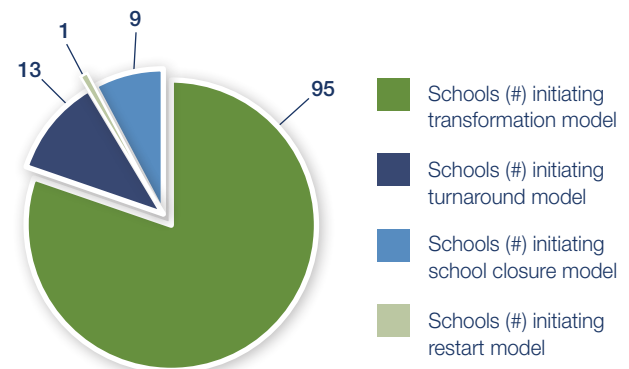
In Year 1, the State engaged in considerable preparation for its efforts to support low-achieving schools, including holding transition meetings with school and LEA leaders. Through Race to the Top, North Carolina expanded its capacity to provide support to low-achieving schools. As of October 2011, the State hired 25 transformation coaches and 33 instructional coaches. Also as of October 2011, the State completed Comprehensive Needs Assessments in 97 of the 118 schools whose improvement programs are funded through Race to the Top. Comprehensive Needs Assessments are a systematic review of practices, processes, and systems within a school. The assessment leads to a school plan that addresses needs and sets priorities. In addition to providing valuable information to the schools, DPI stated that these reviews helped it customize its support by matching transformation personnel to the specific needs of particular schools and LEAs.

The State conducted professional development efforts to assist educators whose schools or LEAs are undergoing an intervention. The transformation and instructional review coaches provide customized support based on their assessment of their assigned school or LEA. At the request of a school or LEA, as of October 2011, instructional coaches worked with 22 schools to “unpack”

Comprehensive Needs Reports that helped those leaders interpret the State's findings and determine how to apply them to improve their schools. North Carolina also developed and conducted four two-day professional development sessions focused on topics related to school improvement and implementation of intervention models for about 350 school leaders in June and July 2011.

As part of its comprehensive statewide effort, in addition to schools served under Race to the Top, North Carolina's District and School Transformation (DST) division also provides targeted assistance to 12 LEAs identified as Transformation Districts, which are those LEAs that are the lowest 10 percent of LEAs in the State for performance composite. DST provides customized support for those LEAs that focus on building district-level capabilities to provide better support to their schools.

School Intervention Models Initiated in North Carolina in SY 2010–2011



<sup>13</sup>Race to the Top States' plans include supporting their LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models:

- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms, (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

<sup>14</sup>North Carolina considers the performance composite for a school as the proportion of individual test scores at or above Achievement Level III (often referred to as “at grade level” or “proficient”).

<sup>15</sup>According to the State's plan, only conventional schools were considered in determining the lowest five percent for each grade span. Conventional schools do not include alternative, special education, charter, or un-graded schools.

<sup>16</sup>According to the State's Year 1 APR, nine of these schools initiated the school closure model in SY 2010–2011.

# Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

## Lessons learned

North Carolina recognized the need for customized support for each individual school. As a result, the State matched district transformation coaches, school transformation coaches, and instructional review coaches to each school's needs and included the school community in the hiring process.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

North Carolina will continue to phase in components of each intervention model and hire support staff in Year 2. According to the State, additional staff will help support school-level human capital decisions, provide job-embedded professional development on topics such as differentiated instruction, and help build a climate of reform by engaging the surrounding community in reform efforts.

## Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

In developing and implementing its STEM reforms, North Carolina engaged with stakeholders in education and STEM industries. The State drafted a STEM Strategic Plan for K-12, informed by extensive research on effective STEM programs. It is currently soliciting input on the plan from its business and higher education communities and has already received feedback from 125 State and national partners. By engaging industry and higher education in all facets of its STEM reforms, the State is connecting and improving its STEM resources.

Expanding on previous work, North Carolina continued to partner with the New Schools Project to develop STEM Affinity Networks and Anchor Schools. Through Race to the Top, the State will support additional schools. STEM Affinity Networks connect schools by helping them to implement and share innovative instructional practices, curriculum development strategies, models of collaboration with external partners, and uses of technology in the classroom. Each network is based around an Anchor School, two of which were established in the 2010–2011 school year. Over the course of the Race to the Top grant period, the State plans to implement four STEM Anchors, each of which specializes in a different area of economic importance: energy, aerospace, health and life science, and biotechnology and agriscience.

As the center of the Network, each Anchor School will serve as a model of good practice, centers for professional development, and test beds for new practices. In addition to the two Anchor schools, one Affinity Network School opened in Year 1, and several more have been identified to join the networks as the program progresses in the coming years.

## Challenges

North Carolina experienced a delay implementing the “Effective Teachers via Virtual and Blended Courses” project, which would expand its virtual course offerings in mathematics and science in low-performing schools. The State initially planned to implement courses with 150 students each year. Under a revised approach and timeline approved in July 2011, the State will begin implementing in three pilot LEAs in 2012.

## Looking ahead to Year 2

The State experienced some delays in identifying new schools to join the STEM Affinity Networks. However, DPI has now identified all four Anchor Schools and 16 Affinity Network Schools. Three Anchor Schools and 12 Affinity Network Schools will serve students in Year 2. Also in Year 2, the State will continue intensive professional development for teachers in the Anchor Schools and Affinity Networks through trainings, peer school reviews, and one-week residencies in national model schools for staff from each of the Anchor and Affinity Network schools.

## Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2011, please see the APR data display at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us). For State budget information see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/awards.html>.

# Glossary

**Alternative routes to certification** means pathways to certification that are authorized under the State's laws or regulations that allow the establishment and operation of teacher and administrator preparation programs in the State, and that have the following characteristics (in addition to standard features such as demonstration of subject-matter mastery, and high-quality instruction in pedagogy and in addressing the needs of all students in the classroom including English learners and students with disabilities): (a) can be provided by various types of qualified providers, including both institutions of higher education and other providers operating independently from institutions of higher education; (b) are selective in accepting candidates; (c) provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support such as effective mentoring and coaching; (d) significantly limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses; and (e) upon completion, award the same level of certification that traditional preparation programs award upon completion.

**Amendment requests:** In the event that adjustments are needed to a State's approved Race to the Top plan, the grantee must submit an amendment request to the Department for consideration. Such requests may be prompted by an updated assessment of needs in that area, revised cost estimates, lessons learned from prior implementation efforts, or other circumstances. Grantees may propose revisions to goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, provided that the following conditions are met: such revisions do not result in the grantee's failure to comply with the terms and conditions of this award and the program's statutory and regulatory provisions; the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal; and the Department and the grantee mutually agree in writing to such revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to approve such revisions or modifications. If approved by the Department, a letter with a description of the amendment and any relevant conditions will be sent notifying the grantee of approval. (For additional information please see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/index.html>.)

**America COMPETES Act elements** are (as specified in section 6401(e)(2)(D) of that Act): (1) a unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system; (2) student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information; (3) student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P–16 education programs; (4) the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems; (5) a State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability; (6) yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)); (7) information on students not tested by grade and subject; (8) a teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to

students; (9) student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned; (10) student-level college-readiness test scores; (11) information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework; and (12) other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA):**

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the ARRA, historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. The Department of Education received a \$97.4 billion appropriation.

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** are K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including States, governors, chief State school officers, content experts, States, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and careers. As of December 2011, the Common Core State Standards were adopted by 45 States and the District of Columbia.

**Effective teacher** means a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). States, LEAs, or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple observation-based assessments of teacher performance.

The Core education reform areas for Race to the Top are as follows:

1. Standards and Assessments: Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
2. Great Teachers and Great Leaders: Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;
3. Data Systems to Support Instruction: Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
4. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools.

**Highly effective teacher** means a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., one and one-half grade levels in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). States, LEAs, or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple

observation-based assessments of teacher performance or evidence of leadership roles (which may include mentoring or leading professional learning communities) that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

**Instructional improvement systems (IIS)** means technology-based tools and other strategies that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with meaningful support and actionable data to systemically manage continuous instructional improvement, including such activities as instructional planning; gathering information (e.g., through formative assessments (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements), interim assessments (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements), summative assessments, and looking at student work and other student data); analyzing information with the support of rapid-time (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements) reporting; using this information to inform decisions on appropriate next instructional steps; and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken. Such systems promote collaborative problem-solving and action planning; they may also integrate instructional data with student-level data such as attendance, discipline, grades, credit accumulation, and student survey results to provide early warning indicators of a student's risk of educational failure.

**Invitational priorities** are areas of focus that the Department invited States to address in their Race to the Top applications. Applicants did not earn extra points for addressing these focus areas, but many grantees chose to create and fund activities to advance reforms in these areas.

**Involved LEAs** are LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement those specific portions of the State's plan that necessitate full or nearly-full statewide implementation, such as transitioning to a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Involved LEAs do not receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that it must subgrant to LEAs in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA, but States may provide other funding to involved LEAs under the State's Race to the Top grant in a manner that is consistent with the State's application.

**P-20 data systems** integrate student data from pre-kindergarten through higher education.

**Participating LEAs** are LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plan, as specified in each LEA's agreement with the State. Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year, in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA. Any participating LEA that does not receive funding under Title I, Part A (as well as one that does) may receive funding from the State's other 50 percent of the grant award, in accordance with the State's plan.

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** is one of two consortia of States awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. (For additional information please see <http://www.parcconline.org/>.)

**Persistently lowest-achieving schools** means, as determined by the State: (i) any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and (ii) any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years. To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a State must take into account both (i) the academic achievement of the "all students" group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State's assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and (ii) the school's lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the "all students" group. (For additional information please see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>.)

**Qualifying evaluation systems** are those that meet the following criteria: rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that: (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.

The **School Improvement Grants (SIG)** program is authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the ESEA. Funds are awarded to States to help them turn around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools. (For additional information please see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>.)

**School intervention models:** A State's Race to the Top plan describes how it will support its LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models:

- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and hire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.

- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms, (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

**Single sign-on** is a user authentication process that permits a user to enter one name and password in order to access multiple applications.

The **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)** is one of two consortia of States awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. (For additional information please see <http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/default.aspx>.)

The **State Scope of Work** is a detailed document for the State project that reflects the grantee's approved Race to the Top application. The State Scope of Work includes items such as the State's specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures. (For additional information please see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/state-scope-of-work/index.html>.) Additionally, all participating LEAs are required to submit Scope of Work documents, consistent with State requirements, to the State for its review and approval.

**Statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS)** enhance the ability of States to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, including individual student records. The SLDS help States, districts, schools, educators, and other stakeholders to make data-informed decisions to improve student learning and outcomes, as well as to facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps. (For additional information please see [http://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/about\\_SLDS.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/about_SLDS.asp).)

**Student achievement** means—

- For tested grades and subjects: (1) a student's score on the State's assessments under the ESEA; and, as appropriate, (2) other measures of student learning, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition, provided they are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.
- For non-tested grades and subjects: alternative measures of student learning and performance such as student scores on pre-tests and end-of-course tests; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

**Student growth** means the change in student achievement (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements) for an individual student between two or more points in time. A State may also include other measures that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

**Value-added models (VAMs)** are a specific type of growth model in the sense that they are based on changes in test scores over time. VAMs are complex statistical models that generally attempt to take into account student or school background characteristics in order to isolate the amount of learning attributable to a specific teacher or school. Teachers or schools that produce more than typical or expected growth are said to "add value."