



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

State Board of Education Progress toward
Implementing the Race to the Top Initiative

S.L. 2012-77

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Section I: Introduction

NC's Race to the Top (RttT) grant is supporting our State's strategic plan to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps, and continue to increase graduation rates. The plan, branded as the READY initiative, is built on the following two key ideas:

- **First**, every student should be held to *high academic expectations*, the achievement of which will enable him or her to graduate ready for life in the global economy.
- **Second**, the adults, specifically *teachers and principals*, in the school building are the most important factor in helping students grow academically and achieve.

Accordingly, all of the work streams supported by the RttT grant focus on ensuring that *every child has a great teacher and every school has a great principal*. As required by section 7(b) of S.L. 2012-77, this second of four semi-annual reports documents the State Board of Education's progress in implementing the following work streams of the RttT initiative:

1) **Transition to New Standards**

Updating the NC Standard Course of Study to reflect a new set of career- and college-ready expectations for all students

2) **Instructional Improvement System**

Establishing a suite of easy-access statewide technology tools that will enable teachers and principals to diagnose student need, design lessons, and collaborate efficiently across district lines

3) **NC Education Cloud**

Providing a world-class information technology infrastructure to support all NC public schools

4) **Educator Evaluation**

Ensuring every educator receives a fair, rigorous, data-based evaluation of his or her effectiveness to guide professional growth

5) **Performance Incentives**

Providing bonuses to staff in low-achieving schools that achieve high student growth

6) **Regional Leadership Academies**

Training leaders to transform low-achieving schools

7) **Teacher Recruitment**

Expanding ways to get more well-prepared teachers into low-achieving schools

8) **Virtual Schools**

Expanding virtual and blended courses for at-risk students in science and math

9) **Professional Development**

Developing local capacity, via summer institutes and ongoing face-to-face and online training, to support continuous instructional improvement

10) **District and School Transformation**

Expanding intensive, on-the-ground support and coaching for low-achieving schools and districts

11) **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)**

Establishing a network of STEM-themed high schools throughout the state

Section 2: Highlights since September of 2012

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has continued to implement the State's detailed scope of work as part of its contractual agreement with the US Department of Education (USED) for the Race to the Top grant. Highlights from the past six months include:

- USED issued its second annual progress reports for RttT grantees (11 states and the District of Columbia). In a press conference associated with the release of the reports, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan identified North Carolina as one of only three states (Rhode Island and Tennessee are the others) who have “overcome considerable challenges and stayed right on track.” In particular, Secretary Duncan noted that NC is fully implementing its statewide teacher evaluation system.
- NCDPI awarded two contracts for the development of the new Instructional Improvement System, now called Home Base. Work is underway to develop and implement the core functionality of the system. NCDPI will make portions of the system available statewide at the start of the 2013-14 school year, and will continue to add content and functionality over time.
- NCDPI, through a partnership with the SAS Institute, has enhanced the NC Educator Evaluation System to include a dashboard that will allow teachers to see all of their evaluation data in one place online. In spring 2013, all school districts and participating charter schools will administer Measures of Student Learning/Common Exams for subjects and grades not currently tested for State and federal school accountability. The student growth data produced through the Measures of Student Learning: Common Exams will not be used for school accountability, but will be included in each teacher's and principal's evaluation for the 2012-13 school year.
- In November and December of 2012, NCDPI senior leadership conducted fourteen outreach sessions in eight locations across the State meetings to update teachers, principals, and other district and school personnel about the READY initiative. These meetings provided an opportunity for deeper discussion about READY/RttT initiatives such as the Common Core and Essential Standards, Home Base, and the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System.

“North Carolina has set a clear path forward on comprehensive education reform that will better support teachers and principals and enable student growth for years to come. They have overcome challenges and proved what's possible when everyone works together. We look forward to seeing their continued progress and strong execution of key efforts that will empower educators to transform their classrooms into models of 21st century learning.”

-Arne Duncan, United States Secretary of Education, 2/1/2013.

Section 3: RttT Work Streams

1. Transition to New Standards and Assessments

Background

North Carolina's updated Standard Course of Study now includes Common Core Math & English Standards and NC Essential Standards in all other content areas; this means that new standards are in place in all content areas and at all grade levels. The State Board of Education's (State Board) goals for a successful transition to the new standards and the statewide assessments used to measure achievement related to them are as follows:

- Building and reinforcing educators' support of the new standards and belief that the new standards will improve student outcomes
- Ensuring that educators understand the new standards and are equipped with strategies and tools to help students meet them
- Ensuring that educators and other stakeholders understand and use summative assessments and data effectively to measure students' attainment of the standards
- Helping educators transition to the use of online assessments

In order to meet these goals, the NCDPI has developed a variety of trainings, tools, and resources that are being provided to educators through regionally-based face-to-face meetings and online modules, comprising a year-round cycle of support.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished each of the following:

- NCDPI has expanded the size of the materials related to the new standards and assessments on the Department's Wikispace. Work on additional resources such as professional development materials and sample performance tasks that can be used in the classroom will be completed in the spring of 2013.
- NCDPI has continued to provide face-to-face trainings, virtual trainings, and training materials related to the new standards and assessments through the regional professional development meetings (described in section nine of this report) and through statewide webinars and online professional development modules.
- NCDPI is planning to move existing resources and trainings related to new standards and assessments into Home Base when it becomes operational in the summer of 2013.
- NC schools have continued to shift to using online assessments; over 40% more assessments were administered online in the fall of 2012 than in the fall of 2011.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Tools, Training, and Resources

Between September 2012 and February 2013, NCDPI continued to expand the availability of instructional support tools and materials to help teachers implement the new standards and assessments. While initial documents and resources focused on how the new standards linked to previous standards, NCDPI has shifted focus toward providing teachers with resources, such as model lesson plans and instructional scheduling guides that offer concrete examples of how to address the new standards in classrooms. These new resources are in the development and evaluation phase during the spring of 2013 and will be available for use in the summer of 2013.

NCDPI staff members have also continued to provide training and formative support on all content areas of the new NC Standard Course of Study to local teams from every district and participating charter school. Along with the focus on teaching the standards, topics within the professional development sessions have also included the following:

- Data literacy (the ability to use data about student performance to guide instruction)
- Instructional technology (using technology tools to support instruction)
- Universal design for learning (making learning accessible for all students)
- Digital and global learning (developing 21st Century teacher and student learning opportunities)
- The enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (which now includes a standard, objective measure of the extent to which a teacher's students have demonstrated growth in a given year).

NCDPI has delivered this training and support through face-to-face, webinar, and online sessions with district and charter professional development teams (in accordance with the professional development cycle described in section nine). NCDPI officials will use feedback from these sessions to plan additional support activities related to standards and assessments for the 2013 Summer Institutes, which are currently in the planning stages.

NCDPI will transfer existing resources and training modules to be accessible through *Home Base* (see section three) when it becomes operational this summer. Having these resources in *Home Base* will enable teachers to access them in one location, along with other tools to help them implement the new standards and assessments.

Additional information regarding the trainings, tools, and resources is available on the NCDPI Wikispace (<http://wikicentral.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/NCDPI+WikiCentral+Page>), and the professional development Wikispaces for each education region (<http://rt3nc.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Regional+Wikispaces>).

Preparing for New Assessments

NCDPI is working to ensure that by the 2014-15 school year all state assessments will be administered online rather than through traditional paper and pencil administration. School districts are continuing to move to that mode of operation; schools administered a higher percentage of End-of-Course exams online in the fall of 2012 than in the fall of 2011-12 (see Table 1 on the following page).

Table 1: Percentage of End-of-Course Tests Administered Online

	Fall 2011-12	Fall 2012-13	Difference (percentage point increase)
English I/English II	11.9%	70.3%	+ 58.4
Algebra I	15.6%	53.8%	+ 38.2
Biology	24.9%	57.3%	+ 32.4
Total Online	18.1%	61.5%	+ 43.4

North Carolina is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which is developing the national assessments that will be available to measure students' achievement of Common Core Math & English Standards beginning with the 2014-15 school year. The State is currently participating in the pilot phase of development of new assessments and continues to serve on the working teams that are planning for sustainability beyond the consortium grant.

Additional information about the State Testing Program can be found on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/>) and the latest information from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium can be found on their website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org>).

2. Establishment of a Statewide Instructional Improvement System (IIS)

Background

The Instructional Improvement System (IIS) is a statewide technology system that will provide teachers, students, administrators, and parents with access to information and resources to enable them to make better-informed decisions related to instruction, assessment, and career and college goals.

The IIS will integrate with NC's Student Information System (SIS) to become one complete platform called Home Base. Some highlights of the integrated system include:

- Portals for students, parents, and educators to access information
- Standards-aligned instructional resources that have been developed and/or vetted by content experts and NC teachers
- Assessment tools that can be used to diagnose student needs and track progress
- Tools to record and organize NC Educator Evaluation System observation and evaluation data
- Tools to connect key data sources to give educators the information they need to improve their instructional practices

Some of these functionalities reflect a consolidation or streamlining of tools currently being used in districts and schools, while others reflect tools that are currently not available in all districts and schools. Home Base brings these together in one place to allow users to link data and resources quickly.

For instance, through Home Base a teacher will be able to search for or build lessons plans with standards-aligned resources available right in the system, create classroom assessments based on the content of the lesson, analyze the resulting data to adjust instruction, and then communicate student progress to parents. Likewise, a principal could monitor ongoing benchmark assessment data, compare it to mid-year observation ratings for teachers, and then find professional development modules or activities to address identified staff needs.

A cross-functional team of technology and program staff is working to make sure that the IIS meets the needs of the diverse user population described above. Working groups consisting of teachers, administrators, and local technology specialists provide continuous feedback on the IIS design and implementation plans.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI awarded two contracts for the development of the Home Base (one to Pearson and one to the Public Consulting Group/Truenorthlogic); a NCDPI/vendor project team is now working through detailed project plans for development and rollout of the system, which will begin in year-round schools in July of 2013.

- NCDPI continued communication and stakeholder engagement efforts to prepare districts and charter schools for the transition to Home Base and to continue gathering input regarding educator needs and preferences related to Home Base functionality and content; this communication and stakeholder engagement took the form of face-to-face meetings, webinars, and providing website materials and other materials.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Home Base Development and Implementation

NCDPI awarded the contract for the core functionality of the IIS components of Home Base to Pearson in December of 2012, and their work plan was completed in February of 2013. Also in February 2013, NCDPI awarded a second contract to The Public Consulting Group (PCG) and Truenorthlogic to develop the educator evaluation and professional development (EE/PD) components of Home Base.

Home Base is on track for a statewide rollout to year-round schools in July of 2013, and to all schools, including charters, at the start their 2013-14 school year. The Student Information, Curriculum and Instruction, Classroom and Benchmark Assessment, and Educator Evaluation components will be available first; Summative Assessments, Professional Development, and Principal Evaluation components will arrive later in the school year.

Curriculum, assessment, and professional development content will be available when the system comes online, though additional content will be added on a rolling basis as it is developed or purchased.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

NCDPI staff members featured Home Base as a part of eight regional “READY” meetings held across the state in November and December of 2012 (see page 4). These sessions introduced “Home Base” as the name for the combined IIS and SIS platform and provided an overview of the functionality for its major components so that districts knew what the system would be able to do. A second round of web-based READY meetings in the spring of 2013 and the 2013 Summer Institute will feature Home Base and provide districts with an overview of the look and functionality of the actual system.

NCDPI also developed a web page to host up-to-date information on the implementation of Home Base and webinars and face-to-face presentations to superintendents, administrators, technical directors, teachers, and LEA/charter staff designed to provide more information about the system. NCDPI also created and widely distributed a bi-weekly newsletter to highlight work on Home Base and upcoming events related to implementation.

NCDPI continues to hold monthly meetings of the Home Base User Group and the Home Base Resource Consortium to get district and school staff involved in the development of the system and vision for shared content. In addition to these monthly meetings, NCDPI has been holding webinars for district and school staff to demonstrate Home Base functionality and gather feedback on the planned features and content resources.

Recently, representatives of the Home Base team have visited a small number of school districts who have been actively involved in the Home Base development to discuss transitioning to

Home Base. NCDPI will use information gained in these small focus group meetings to develop tools that all districts can use to compare the software and content they are currently using to what Home Base will provide. NCDPI will also use information from the focus groups to guide development of training and roll-out strategies.

Additional information related to Home Base can be found on the NCDPI website:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/>.

3. Establishment of the North Carolina Education Cloud Technology Infrastructure

Background

The primary objective of the NC Education Cloud is to provide a world-class information technology (IT) infrastructure as a foundational component of the NC education enterprise.

To that end, the Cloud Team will facilitate migration from *local education agency (LEA)-hosted* server infrastructure to *provider-hosted* application and infrastructure services. The cloud-based model allows for the delivery of more reliable, more efficient, and more cost effective IT services across public schools in NC.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The Cloud Team released the request for proposals (RFP) for Identity Access Management (IAM) Services and presented a recommendation to award the contract in January of 2013; the recommendation is awaiting action by State Information Technology Services (ITS).
- The Cloud Team has continued its work with the NC Community College System to develop the Learning Objects Repository (LOR) for use in concert with *Home Base*.
- The Cloud Team has continued its efforts to modernize school business services, such as migrating school districts to cloud servers, internet telephone services, and mobile device management.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

IAM Services Contract

The Cloud Team released the RFP for IAM services in the fourth quarter of 2012, and presented a recommendation to award at the beginning of January 2013. This recommendation is awaiting action by State ITS, and once this is obtained the Cloud Team can begin to execute against the contract to have services ready by the target of the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

Learning Objects Repository (LOR)

Work on the LOR continues to move forward in collaboration with the NC Community College System. This project develops a sustainable model for the management of digital content, and will potentially enhance the long term viability of DPI's *Home Base* initiative that aims to deploy significant digital content to students, teachers, and parents.

Modernizing School Business Services

One of the five strategies discussed during the last update focused on the modernization of school business systems. This project continues to move forward; four school districts have been successfully migrated to the AS400 service and the Cloud Team anticipates that they will exceed

their original projection of 20 school districts migrated to this cloud solution before September of 2013. The Cloud Team initiated a call for more districts beyond the original 20 to migrate, and the provider of finance systems for over 60 school districts has announced that they intend to quickly move away from the iSeries platform, which could help meet the goals of this strategy much sooner.

The Cloud Team also developed RFPs for Internet Telephony services and Mobile Device Management Services. State ITS made the decision that, rather than allowing release of the RFP for IP Telephony services, existing ITS convenience contracts would be used to meet this need. The Cloud Team and ITS are in ongoing discussions related to moving forward on the RFP for Mobile Device Management Services.

Additional information regarding the NC Education Cloud is available at:
<http://cloud.fi.ncsu.edu/>

4. Full Rollout and Enhancement of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System

Background

To ensure that every child has a great teacher and every school has a great leader, the State Board is using RttT funds to enhance the statewide evaluation instrument to include standard, objective data regarding the extent to which each teacher and principal contributes to the academic growth of his or her students.

The statewide Educator Evaluation System that was in place prior to RttT offered a standard evaluation instrument aligned to the five NC Professional Teacher Standards. Principals and district leaders used the system to gather information about observed practices and then to improve teacher and principal performance. The enhanced system adds a new standard (sixth for teachers and eighth for principals and assistant principals) based on student academic growth to the evaluation system. This addition will make it possible for every educator to receive a fair, rigorous, *data-based* evaluation of his or her effectiveness that includes specific feedback to fuel professional growth.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The State Board made progress towards determining the exact components and weights for the new sixth and eighth standard; they will make final decisions about this in April of 2013.
- The State Board heard presentations on the results of the student perceptions survey pilot and is examining the cost, feasibility, and potential uses for statewide implementation of the survey.
- The Educator Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) team at the SAS Institute completed work on a dashboard for teachers to make it easier for them to view and access data on their effectiveness; a similar dashboard for principals and assistant principals will be available in the spring of 2013.
- NCDPI and its partners (including teachers) continued to develop Measures of Student Learning/Common Exams. NC's Common Exams have been completed for all but a handful of courses, and Common Exams are being administered in the current school year. The development of the remaining Measures of Student Learning (including creation of processes for measuring student growth in courses, such as the arts, for which Common Exams are not practical) will be piloted this spring of 2013, and the final process for measuring student growth will be implemented in the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI has been conducting validation studies for new evaluation instruments created for use with school-wide personnel (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers). The validation studies will be completed this spring, so that the new instruments will be available for use in the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI published the initial Institute of Higher Education (IHE) Educator Preparation Program Report Cards (available online at <http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ihereportcards>).

- NCDPI continued to conduct statewide webinars and make presentations to teachers, principals, and other district personnel across the state about the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System tool.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Components and Weights in Sixth and Eighth Standards

The State Board had originally planned to make a decision regarding how to integrate student academic growth in the sixth standard in the teacher evaluation instrument by the end of 2012. To inform this decision, the State Board requested that NCDPI run simulations to demonstrate the impact of the different proposed models. The simulation process was delayed due to issues involved with cleaning of the data (to ensure that teachers were appropriately associated with the student growth values of students they taught); these issues have since been resolved, and the simulations run. The SBE will now consider its options and is scheduled to make a decision in April 2013 regarding composition of the model.

Student Perceptions Survey

In the 2011-12 school year, the NCDPI contracted with Cambridge Education to conduct a pilot of the Tripod Student Perceptions survey. The survey was developed by faculty at Harvard University and is designed to measure student perceptions of specific dimensions (such as the structure or supportiveness) of their classroom environments. Cambridge Education administered the survey to a sample of students in 47 districts across the state, and the SBE received an initial report on the results of the pilot at their December 2012 meeting. The SBE is currently assessing the cost and feasibility of implementing the survey statewide, and how the results of the survey might best be used for purposes of increasing teacher effectiveness. The State Board will make decisions about the use of the survey in the spring of 2013.

Dashboard Development

The EVAAS team at SAS completed development of a dashboard to provide every teacher with access to data on his or her effectiveness, as measured through the NC Educator Evaluation System. NCDPI made the dashboard available first to principals and district officials at the beginning of January of 2013 in order to allow them to plan for professional development for teachers regarding how to use the dashboard. NCDPI then made the dashboard available for 86,000 teachers across the state in February of 2013. The EVAAS team is working on a version for principals and assistant principals, which would allow them to see data related to their own eight-part effectiveness model.

Development of Measures of Student Learning

In conjunction with 800 teachers from across the state, the Department has developed Common Exams for courses and subjects in grades 4-12 English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics that do not have existing State End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) assessments. Common Exams began to be administered in high schools this fall and will be fully implemented in the spring of 2013. Common Exams for a handful of remaining courses (such as discrete math and various social studies electives) will be completed this spring and administered during the fall of 2013.

School districts are assisting with the design of Measures of Student Learning for areas without Common Exams, such as Kindergarten-Grade 2 classrooms and arts (such as music, drama, and visual arts). Selected teachers will pilot these additional measures this spring, and full administration will take place in the fall of 2013.

Validation of Evaluation Rubrics

While NC had had evaluation instruments for teachers and principals prior to receiving the RttT grant, the State Board has used RttT funds to develop instruments for evaluating other school-wide personnel licensed by the State (including school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, instructional technology specialists, and library media coordinators). These new instruments have been created and have are now going through a validation process this spring, so that they will be available for district and school use in the 2013-14 school year.

IHE Report Cards

The first set of Institute of Higher Education (IHE) Educator Preparation Report Cards, based on data from the 2011-12 school year, can now be viewed online (<http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ihereportcards>).

These report cards provide a snapshot of the teacher preparation programs offered by each NC university, and information (from the NC Educator Evaluation System) about the performance of each program's graduates.

In the spring of 2013, NCDPI will conduct a statewide meeting with representatives from IHE educator preparation programs across the state to discuss how to use the data in the report cards to hold programs accountable and to improve teacher preparation in the state.

Communication and Training

NCDPI has continued to provide information and training to district and school personnel about the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System. NCDPI senior leadership discussed the Educator Evaluation System in depth at the eight regional READY meetings in November and December 2012 and have conducted three regional trainings for teachers since then (with additional trainings scheduled for spring 2013). NCDPI also offered four sections of a facilitator-led online module for 125 educators on North Carolina's Professional Teaching Standards; additional sections will be added in the spring of 2013.

In addition to this direct/interactive communication, NCDPI maintains a comprehensive collection of manuals, presentations, and other documents on the Educator Effectiveness website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/educatoreffectiveness-model/>).

The NCDPI also maintains a rapid response email address (educatoreffectiveness@dpi.nc.gov) through which any teacher, principal, or central office staff member can submit a question about educator effectiveness and receive a response within 48 hours.

5. Provision of Performance Incentives to Teachers in the Lowest-Achieving Schools to Improve Recruitment and Retention

Background

One aspect of the state’s effort to improve student achievement is a push to increase retention of effective educators in hard-to-staff schools (both rural and urban). To this end, the State Board is using RttT funds to provide performance incentives for educators in the 118 lowest-achieving schools served through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section 10).

Certified staff working at schools that make *higher than expected* student growth can earn up to a \$1,500 incentive per year, paid the fall after the student data is gathered. If the educator has returned to his or her school that fall, he or she receives the full incentive; payment is reduced by 50% if he or she has not returned. The design of this incentive program adjusts over time as the State Board develops the overall State plan (described above in section 4) to use a standard means of measuring a teacher’s contribution to student growth at an *individual classroom level*.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, teachers and school personnel received incentives based on data from the 2011-12 school year.

In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (prior to establishment of the enhanced system for measuring student growth for all teachers), up to a \$1,500 incentive was provided for all certified staff (teachers, principals, media consultants, counselors, etc.) in schools that exceeded expected school-wide growth on statewide End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments.

In the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, the incentives will be based on individual teacher-level growth data (certified staff without individual growth data will still be eligible based on school-wide growth data). The maximum incentive is \$2,000 for a classroom teacher, while the bonus based on school-wide data remains at \$1,500.

Table 2: School Personnel Receiving RttT Performance Incentives

	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13
Number of Schools	24	35
School Personnel Receiving Incentive	1,096	1,990
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	884.37	1,625.21
Expenditures	\$1,589,878	\$2,971,247

6. Establishment of Regional Leadership Academies (RLA)

Background

The State Board has established three regional leadership academies to increase the number of principals prepared to lead transformational change in NC's lowest achieving schools. These academies provide training and full-year administrative internships for participants who have been selected based on their potential to become effective school leaders. Participants earn credit towards a graduate degree and principal licensure. Participants agree to serve for three years in a low performing school after completion of the program.

Table 3: Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) Program Details

	Administrative Unit	Program Duration	Education/ Licensure	Cohort 3 Participants	# of Districts Served
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	NC State University	2 Years	Master in School Administration (MSA) Program	21	14
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	Sandhills Regional Education Consortium (with UNC-P, FSU, NCCAT)	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	20	12
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	UNC-Greensboro	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	23	4

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, each RLA has continued to provide coaching and professional development to its cohorts as they go through their internships. Recruitment for the next cohort is underway, and each of the RLAs is currently meeting with stakeholders to discuss any programmatic issues that might need to be addressed before summer programming begins for the new cohorts of participants.

Additional information for each of the RLAs can be found on the following websites:

- SLA: <http://www.srec.ccs.k12.nc.us/LeadershipAcademy-2.htm>
- NELA: <https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com/NELA+Home>
- PTLA: <http://elc.uncg.edu/ptla/>

7. Expansion of Teacher Recruitment and Licensure Programs to Support Low-Performing Schools

Background

Using RttT funding, the State Board has expanded its existing teacher recruitment and licensure programs to provide special added support to the lowest-achieving districts and schools. The State Board has increased the number of Teach for America (TFA) teachers in the State, established the NC Teachers Corps program (modeled after TFA), and developed a new Induction Support Program (New Teacher Support Program: NTSP) for novice teachers. Together these programs aim to increase the supply of quality teachers and provide support and training for the newest teachers in the State's lowest achieving districts and schools that NCDPI is serving through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section 10).

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- TFA added 129 new teachers in the 2012-13 school year, meaning that it exceeded its 2012-13 target of adding 125 new teachers.
- The North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC) has made changes to its recruitment and screening processes to increase the cohort size for the summer of 2013.
- The New Teacher Support Program (NTSP) has increased the number of teachers served from 33 in 2011-12 to 533 in FY 2012-13.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Teach for America (TFA)

To address the need for highly effective teachers in NC's low-achieving school districts, the RttT grant increased the number of TFA Corps members placed in those districts. TFA is a national program that recruits highly successful college graduates to become teachers in low-performing schools across the nation. These teachers then receive intensive training in a summer institute before beginning full-time jobs as classroom teachers in partner districts. The TFA organization continues to provide coaching and professional development during each corps member's two-year commitment.

The September report stated that RttT funds would allow TFA to expand the size of its current corps in the 2012-13 school year. They currently have 88 second year corps members and 128 first year corps members for a total of 216 teachers in 11 LEAs and five charter schools across Northeastern NC. TFA is on track to bring in 125 additional corps members to begin teaching in classrooms in the lowest achieving districts and schools in Northeastern NC during the 2013-14 school-year.

NC Teacher Corps (NCTC)

The NC Teacher Corps, modeled on the TFA program (described above), recruits recent college graduates with connections to North Carolina to teach in low-achieving schools in targeted

partner school districts across NC. The program requires a two-year commitment from participants and provides intensive summer training, ongoing coaching and mentoring, and the ability to earn an NC teaching license. Twenty-one teachers from the first NCTC cohort were employed in local school districts in the fall of 2012-13; this is below the program’s initial target of 100 teachers. The small number of corps members employed was the result of factors such as attrition prior to summer trainings and the availability of appropriate employment opportunities for teachers who completed the training. Based on the lessons learned from its first cohort, NCTC has made the following adjustments to the program to increase the size of subsequent cohorts:

- NCTC has added additional requirements to its application process (such as requiring teachers to pass the PRAXIS exam *prior* to attending summer trainings) to ensure that candidates are ready for the classroom/employable.
- NCTC plans to offer a modest stipend to corps members, payable after the completion of their summer training. The stipend will help candidates with living expenses from the completion of the program through the beginning of their employment (a number of excellent candidates dropped out of the initial cohort, citing a need to continue working during the summer prior to employment as a teacher).

NCTC staff members are confident that these changes will lead to larger cohort in the summer of 2013 and more of these teachers entering the classroom.

New Teacher Support Program (NTSP)

NTSP is a partnership between NCDPI and UNC General Administration designed to provided coaching and support for new teachers in North Carolina’s lowest-achieving schools through the first three years of their work. NTSP provides summer training sessions, six days of professional development during the school year, and ongoing coaching in their schools for the participating teachers.

The September 2012 report forecasted that NTSP would serve 339 teachers in 2012-13; as of February of 2013, NTSP reports that it is serving 533 teachers and is on track to serve up to 1,500 in the 2013-14 school year, covering all lowest-achieving schools identified for service through the RttT grant.

Table 4: 2012-13 Participation in NTSSP (as of 2/19/2013)

Teachers	Schools	School Districts
533	82	21

8. Provision of Effective Teachers for Schools through Virtual and Blended Courses

Background

RttT funds are enabling the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to expand its offering of STEM related courses to ensure that students at risk of low performance in core science and math courses have access to effective teachers, quality course content, and innovative instructional practices designed to meet their needs.

NCVPS staff will develop eight new courses over the life of the grant. They will first pilot these in a blended format, which involves a partnership between online teachers and on-site teachers specially trained to support students in using technology to support their learning. By 2014, these courses will be available through the blended format and through the traditional virtual model used by VPS in its other courses.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCVPS piloted three blended courses in the fall 2012 semester, serving 152 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties. The spring 2013 semester is now underway, serving an additional 147 students in the same three courses in the same three counties.
- NCVPS is developing three additional courses, with piloting of the courses scheduled to begin in the fall of 2013.
- Through the pilot courses, NCVPS is developing new, innovative ways for students to access course material through mobile devices.

Piloting and Development of Blended Courses

NCVPS is piloting three blended courses in the 2012-13 school year: Integrated Math I, Earth Sciences, and Forensic Sciences. The courses had a total enrollment of 152 students in fall 2012 and have 147 in spring 2013 spread across schools in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties. The blended approach has been implemented as planned, with online and classroom teachers communicating daily through logs to discuss the individual needs of students and differentiate instruction accordingly.

Following the pilot process, the first three courses will be available statewide as virtual courses through NCVPS in the fall of 2013. Three additional courses are currently being developed: Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, and Biotech and Agriscience. These are on track to be completed by summer 2013, ready to pilot in fall 2013.

Accessing Courses through Mobile Devices

Students and teachers in the blended class pilots are using mobile devices during the current school year to help NCVPS assess their compatibility with NCVPS materials. This work has provided the opportunity to use more STEM related mobile applications (or “apps”) in the courses, and has helped reveal issues students may encounter as they move between a

desktop/laptop (which is the normal equipment used to access NCVPS courses) and a mobile environment. For instance, course material for the three pilot courses is being made available as an iBook that students can download and use to complete assignments in cases where they lack wireless internet connections at home. NCVPS is using experiences such as these to improve their ability to provide students with multiple ways to access their course materials across multiple devices.

These same lessons have allowed NCVPS to better provide professional development to the face-to-face teachers. Training materials have been provided in iBook format to allow teachers to access them at any time through their mobile devices.

9. Provision of Aligned Professional Development and Establishment of Professional Development System

Background

The State Board has used RttT funding to conduct a broad, intensive professional development initiative designed to do each of the following:

- Build school districts' and charters' capacity to prepare all of their teachers and principals for implementing the updated NC Standard Course of Study, new educator evaluation procedures, and new state assessments.
- Ensure that high quality professional development on topics of core instructional importance will be available to all teachers at the local level during the Race to the Top grant period and for many years to come.

To these ends, NCDPI has provided face-to-face and online support to school district and charter school professional development leadership teams through a year-round cycle of activities that includes the following:

- **Summer Institutes.** Each school district and charter school has sent a team to attend a two-day Summer Institute in the summers of 2011 and 2012 to receive training and resources on a variety of topics such as new standards and assessments, *Home Base*, and use of the enhanced educator evaluation system. NCDPI will hold a third round of Summer Institutes in July 2013.
- **Regionally-based professional development sessions.** These are a series of trainings and formative meetings scheduled regularly throughout the school year that allow district teams to build on the Summer Institutes by reflecting mid-stream on the application of what they learned in the summer, problem-solving around issues that have emerged during the school year, and sharing promising practices across districts.
- **Online Tools.** NCDPI provides online resources such as training modules, live chats, and wikis that provide additional training and support to school district and charter school personnel during the school year.
- **Professional Development Leads.** NCDPI has deployed a team of State Professional Development Leads who each work with a portfolio of districts and charter schools to ensure that they get the customized service and support they need to build local capacity, as described above.
- **Feedback Mechanisms.** NCDPI uses continuous feedback gathered through the above scheduled activities, additional formative visits with local staff throughout the year, and formal assessment data from the RttT Evaluation team to examine the work and ensure that services are addressing the needs of districts and participating charters.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI has conducted over 250 regional trainings and workshops across the state to help prepare teachers, administrators, and district personnel for new standards, assessments, and evaluation tools.
- NCDPI has initiated planning for Summer Institutes 2013, which will focus on “Building District and School-level Leadership Capacity to Change Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes.”
- Based on feedback from users, NCDPI has improved navigation for existing online professional development modules and is working to develop twelve additional modules scheduled for release by June 30, 2013.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Regional Trainings

NCDPI continues to implement the 2012-13 professional development calendar, which includes 250 trainings and workshops carried out in collaboration with Regional Education Service Alliances (RESAs). The sessions address a range of topics, including the following:

- Data literacy (the ability to use data about student performance to guide instruction)
- Instructional technology (using technology tools to support instruction)
- Universal design for learning (making learning accessible for all students)
- Digital and global learning (developing 21st Century teacher and student learning opportunities)
- The enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (which now includes a standard, objective measure of the extent to which a teacher’s students have demonstrated growth in a given year).

These sessions provide follow-up on discussions begun in the Summer Institutes, and provide a chance for feedback regarding emerging professional development needs of school districts and charter schools. A schedule of these meetings can now be viewed on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/calendar/>).

Summer Institutes

NCDPI has begun planning for a third set of Summer Institutes, which will focus on “Building District and School-level Leadership Capacity to Change Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes.” Based on feedback from the RttT Evaluation team, the Summer Institutes 2013 will offer a greater variety of topic-based sessions and more opportunities for teams from different districts and schools to connect and participate in discussions facilitated by State staff. The Summer Institutes will continue to focus on supporting the transition to the new NC Standard Course of Study (including extensive resource overviews) and effective use of the enhanced North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). Other areas of focus will include the updated State Accountability System and Data Literacy. Summer Institutes 2013 will also feature an introduction to *Home Base*, NC’s statewide, combined instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators.

Online Resources

Based on feedback from the RttT Evaluation Team, NCDPI has worked to make it easier for teachers to find and access online resources, and interact online with other teachers and NCDPI staff. To make this happen, NCDPI has redesigned access to web materials and created an implementation guide to assist district and charter officials in using these resources more effectively.

NCDPI is currently developing 12 additional professional development modules that will be available to school districts and charter schools by June 30, 2013. These new modules will join the 16 that are already available.

Additional information on the online professional development modules can be found on the NCDPI website (<https://www.rt3nc.org/>).

10. Expansion of District and School Transformation Work to Turn Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (TALAS)

Background

The State Board has used RttT funding to scale up support for NC’s lowest-achieving schools by significantly expanding the NCDPI team that has been guiding successful turnaround and transformation work across the state since 2006.

NCDPI’s District and School Transformation (DST) team has been implementing a comprehensive program that provides targeted coaching support to low performing-schools in response to state and federal legislative requirements, and State judicial and executive direction. RttT funding has enabled that team to expand support to an additional 118 schools (the lowest-achieving 5% of elementary, middle and high schools, and all high schools with graduation rates below 60%) and 12 districts (the lowest-achieving 10% of NC school districts).

The goal of the RttT “Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools” (TALAS) work is to help these schools and districts develop their capacity to increase and sustain student achievement. The primary short-term objective of the TALAS work is to ensure that every school in the state has at least 60% of its students achieving academic proficiency and that every high school in the state has at least a 60% graduation rate. The long term aspiration is for the lowest-achieving 5% of schools to reach proficiency levels far exceeding 60% and for all high schools to have graduation rates approaching 100%. Tables 5 and 6 display the gains that these schools have made over the first two years of RttT implementation.

Table 5: Proficiency of the 118 Schools at RttT Midpoint (2011-12)

Performance Composite	Beginning of RttT	Midpoint of RttT
Above 60%	7 schools	39 schools
50 – 60%	54 schools	52 schools
Below 50%	57 schools	16 schools
Closed		10 schools

* West Charlotte did not test at least 95% of its students and does not have a reported Performance Composite for 2011-12.

Table 6: Graduation Rates of the 9 High Schools at RttT Midpoint (2011-12)

Graduation Rate	Beginning of RttT	Midpoint of RttT
Above 60%		5 schools
50 – 60%	8 schools	2 schools
Below 50%	1 school	
Closed		2 schools

Each of the 118 TALAS schools was required to implement one of four USED-specified reform models (Turnaround, Transformation, Restart, or Closure). To help the schools implement their chosen model strategically, the NCDPI team provides each of the following: comprehensive

needs assessments, on-site coaching for district and school personnel, and a rigorous program of professional development for school leaders.

Additional information on the TALAS work can be found on the DST website at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/overview/>.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI has continued to provide on-site coaching and support at the classroom, school, and district level.
- NCDPI has continued providing ongoing professional development for school leaders.
- NCDPI has continued to work to coordinate with other RttT initiatives such as the Regional Leadership Academies, NC Teacher Corps, and the New Teacher Support Program to ensure these programs work together to benefit the TALAS schools.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

Coaching and Support

To help the schools leverage their chosen turnaround model in order to build staff capacity and improve student performance, the NCDPI team has continued to provide several services to personnel at the classroom, school, and district level.

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** NCDPI staff members collect and synthesize data on a school's processes, procedures, and instructional practices in order to inform a plan for continuous improvement that will impact student learning. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment is conducted collaboratively with the school district and includes self-evaluation, collaborative discussions with school and district leadership, classroom visits, focus groups with teachers, students and parents, and a final, actionable report.
- **Coaching For Transformation.** Transformation coaches work on-site to build the capacity of teachers, principals, and superintendents to implement and sustain reform and innovation and ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and work.
- **District Leadership Coaching.** District Transformation Coaches are assigned to work with the superintendents in each of the twelve RttT school districts. These coaches have had successful experience as a superintendent or central office administrator and have strong interpersonal skills, knowledge about state and federal accountability models, and an understanding of the change process.
- **School Leadership Coaching.** School Transformation Coaches are assigned to work with principals in each of the RttT schools and to develop these principals as instructional leaders, consistent with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Coaches are former principals who have successfully turned around a low-performing school, and who are knowledgeable about state and federal accountability models, understand change management processes, have the capacity to realize potential and provide support to

ensure success, understand alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and have effective interpersonal skills.

- **Instructional Coaching.** Instructional Coaches are assigned to provide on-site support for classroom teachers. Instructional Coaches have successful experiences as classroom teacher leaders, are knowledgeable of state and federal accountability models, demonstrate a thorough understanding of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and have expertise in best instructional practices, classroom management, effective professional development, and curricular alignment.

Ongoing Professional Development

NCDPI's TALAS effort includes a series of 15 targeted professional development sessions for lowest-achieving school leaders over the course of the Race to the Top grant. In the current year, NCDPI is providing opportunities that build on sessions from year one (which focused on understanding the expectations of the grant and the USED models) and year two (which focused on high impact strategies related to improving student achievement).

In the spring of 2013, one quarter of the principals from these schools will enter the Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) professional development program that is also supported by RttT funds. This year-long program is administered by the NC Principals and Assistant Principals Association, and uses a mix of face-to-face and online instruction to help participants reflect on what is needed to be a "distinguished" school leader (the highest rating category in the NC Educator Evaluation System).

Coordination with Other RttT Initiatives

NCDPI has continued to emphasize coordination between the TALAS and other RttT initiatives to ensure strategic alignment and consistency of message and guidance. The coordination effort includes regular meetings and discussions among NCDPI staff administering the various programs (NCTC, NTSP, RLAs) to share information and coordinate efforts to maximize the benefit for schools and their personnel.

11. Establishment of STEM Thematic High Schools and Network

Background

The State Board is using RttT funds to partner with North Carolina New Schools to support districts in establishing a system of 20 STEM-focused high schools (four Anchor Schools and sixteen Affinity Network Schools) across the state.

STEM high schools use a curriculum infused with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to increase students' abilities to meet current and expected NC economic and workforce development requirements. Each STEM high school is a part of a cluster of schools organized around four STEM thematic areas (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability).

Each cluster has an Anchor School that will serve as a "hub" for professional development, curriculum development, technology use, and innovation for that thematic area. The other schools in the cluster are Affinity Network schools that participate in professional development and networking related to their aligned STEM area.

Updates

Since the September 2012 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- All 20 of the Anchor and Affinity Network schools are operating their STEM programs.
- North Carolina New Schools is providing professional development and on-site coaching for the teachers and principals in each STEM school.
- NCDPI, in collaboration with STEM partners (schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions), has developed and is piloting a STEM Recognition program that provides a standard definition for the "Attributes of STEM Education" and a rubric that allows schools to assess their progress towards implementing the STEM program.
- The North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) has completed initial development of level one STEM courses related to the four STEM focus areas; NCDPI is in the process of evaluating these courses and will make them available for use in schools in the fall of 2013.
- The 20 STEM high schools have begun to purchase specialized equipment to help provide instruction in their STEM focus area.

These accomplishments are described in more detail below.

STEM Network Development

As of the start of the 2012-13 school year, all 20 of the STEM Network schools are operating their STEM program; fifteen of the schools (three anchor and twelve affinity schools) were operating STEM programs in the previous school year. Tables 6-9 at the end of this section (pages 28-29) provide an overview of the different schools in each of the STEM focus areas (schools can have a program in more than one STEM focus area).

North Carolina New Schools has provided both instructional and leadership trainings for teachers and principals from the 20 network schools over the past six months, and will continue to provide these services and on-site coaching on an ongoing basis.

STEM Recognition Program

In partnership with representatives from schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions, NCDPI has created a STEM Recognition program that provides a standard definition of the attributes of quality STEM instruction along with a self-assessment rubric. Anchor and Affinity schools will use these to assess their programs on the rubric and identify evidence of accomplishment. Where schools do not meet the criteria they can receive coaching from staff at North Carolina New Schools to improve their programs. The STEM Recognition Program is in the pilot phase now, and will be available for use by the network and affinity schools, along with other interested schools across the state) beginning in the fall of 2013.

STEM Online Courses

The NC School of Science and Mathematics has completed the initial development of first year courses for each STEM area (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability). NCDPI and STEM school personnel will review these courses this spring and summer; following this review NCDPI will make the courses available to schools (both those in and out of the STEM Network) for use in the 2013-14 school year. Additional courses related to each of the STEM focus areas are in development; the eventual goal is provide curricula that schools can implement for four courses in each of the STEM areas (sixteen courses total).

Equipment Purchases

Each of the twenty schools in the network is allotted a set amount of RttT funds to purchase equipment they need to implement their STEM program (such as specialized laboratory or manufacturing equipment). Schools have begun to make these purchases, and have until the end of the grant to use the funds.

Table 6: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the STEM Health and Life Sciences Focus Area

Anchor School	City of Medicine Academy (Durham County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Davie County High School (Davie County) Middle College at UNC-G (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 7: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Aerospace, Security, and Automation Focus Area

Anchor School	Early College East High (Craven County)
Affinity Schools	Surry Central High (Surry County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 8: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Biotechnology and Agriscience Focus Area

Anchor School	Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (Washington County: Beaufort, Martin, Pitt, Tyrell, and Washington Counties)
Affinity Schools	Bertie High School (Bertie County) East Columbus High School (Columbus County) East Duplin High School (Duplin County) James Kenan High School (Duplin County) North Duplin Jr Sr High School (Duplin County) South Columbus High School (Columbus County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Wallace-Rose Hill High School (Duplin County) West Columbus High School (Columbus County)

Table 9: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Energy and Sustainability Focus Area

Anchor School	Wake NCSU STEM Early College High School (Wake County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Avery County High School (Avery County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County)