

# RACE TO THE TOP

## North Carolina Report

Year 2: School Year 2011–2012

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U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, DC 20202

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February 1, 2013

# Executive Summary

## Race to the Top overview

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. 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 Phase 1 and Phase 2 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, and improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers.

Since the Race to the Top Phase 1 and 2 competitions, the Department has made additional grants under Race to the Top Phase 3, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, and Race to the Top – District. In 2011, the Department awarded Phase 3 grants to seven additional States, which were finalists in the 2010 Race to the Top Phase 1 and Phase 2 competitions. Also in 2011, the Department made seven awards under the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge to improve quality and expand access to early learning programs, and close the achievement gap for children with high needs. In 2012, four more States received Early Learning Challenge grants. Most recently, in 2012, the Department made awards to 16 applicants through the Race to the Top – District competition to support local educational agencies (LEAs) implementing locally developed plans to personalize and deepen student learning, directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness, close achievement gaps, and prepare every student to succeed in college and career.

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

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

Since education is a complex system, sustained and lasting instructional improvement in classrooms, schools, LEAs, and States will not be achieved through piecemeal change. Race to the Top requires that States and LEAs participating in the State's Race to the Top plan (participating LEAs)<sup>2</sup> take into account their local context to design and implement the most effective and innovative approaches that meet the needs of their educators, students, and families.

## 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 also designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU works with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and helps States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes. In partnership with the ISU, the Reform Support Network (RSN) offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to Race to the Top grantees. The RSN's purpose is to support Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.

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 grantees, 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 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>3</sup>

<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> Participating LEAs are those 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 Memorandum of Understanding 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.

<sup>3</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>.

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## State-specific summary report

The Department uses the information gathered during the review process (e.g., through monthly calls, onsite reviews, and Annual Performance Reports (APRs)) to draft State-specific summary reports.<sup>4</sup> The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's annual Race to the Top implementation. The Year 2 report for Phase 1 and 2 grantees highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation from approximately September 2011 through September 2012.

## State'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 and in the State's new READY initiative that 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 supports the State's commitment to "remodel" the public education system to provide every child with great teaching and opportunities to pursue college and a career. In keeping with the terms of the Race to the Top grant, North Carolina is using half of its grant funds to drive State-level work, and distributing the other half of its award to support work aligned with the State's goals at participating LEAs.

## State Year 1 summary

North Carolina's Year 1 work focused on preparing educators to implement the updated statewide Standard Course of Study, which is composed of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the North Carolina Essential Standards for all content areas not covered by the CCSS. To introduce educators to the full set of new standards and lay the groundwork for leadership teams to support full implementation in school year (SY) 2012-2013, the State

designed regional trainings that reached about 2,200 educators representing every one of the State's LEAs and many of the State's charter schools. Building upon existing regional and statewide professional development programs and resources, North Carolina also established a framework known as the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) to provide a comprehensive, targeted, and flexible system to increase the State's and LEAs' capacity to provide effective professional development to teachers and school leaders. Additionally, the State (a) provided support services to 118 low-achieving schools identified for support through Race to the Top; (b) began to develop requirements for the North Carolina K-12 Education Technology Cloud (the Cloud) and Instructional Improvement System (IIS), which is now known as "Home Base" (see *Data Systems to Support Instruction* for more information); and (c) executed contracts with partner organizations to develop schools leaders and teachers for high-needs schools.

## State Year 2 summary

### Accomplishments

In Year 2, North Carolina continued the progress it made in Year 1 in all areas of its comprehensive reform plan and reached several implementation milestones.

North Carolina made progress in implementing a qualifying evaluation system for teachers and principals by modifying its existing statewide evaluation system, the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). All participating LEAs used the online Educator Evaluation System, a single electronic portal, to complete all steps of the evaluation process in SY 2011-2012. The State also officially adopted a statewide growth model for tested subjects and began publicly reporting aggregate teacher and principal evaluation data at the school and LEA level.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the State worked with more than 800 educators from across the State to design and develop evaluation measures, known as the Measures of Student Learning (MSLs), for use in non-tested grades and subjects.

The State also continued to prepare its educators to fully implement the updated North Carolina Standard Course of Study in SY 2012-2013 by providing professional development and disseminating curricular materials. More than 2,800 educators from district-level teams attended the second round of annual regional Summer Institutes. The 2012 training focused on addressing diverse student learning needs in each content area covered by the new standards and provided collaborative planning time for each local team.

<sup>4</sup> Additional State-specific data on progress against annual performance measures and goals reported in the Year 2 APRs can be found on the Race to the Top Data Display at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

<sup>5</sup> North Carolina's teacher evaluation system includes six standards: (1) demonstrate leadership, (2) establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, (3) know the content taught, (4) facilitate learning for students, (5) reflect on practice, and (6) contribute to academic success. Data on standards one through five was reported in the aggregate in SY 2010-2011. SY 2011-2012 will be the first year including standard six based explicitly on student growth data. For more information, including the standards included in the principal evaluation system, see <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/effectiveness/>.

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North Carolina also worked to prepare LEAs and educators for the transition to the use of online assessments through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) in SY 2014-2015 as well as other State formative and summative assessments already available online. The State provided sample transition plans to guide LEAs in their preparation and developed and disseminated a Best Practices Guide for Online Assessments, highlighting successful practices from schools in the State that have already made progress in this area.

The State continued its efforts to personalize support for and build the capacity of educators in low-achieving schools in Year 2. Seventy-two district, school, and instructional coaches provided customized support to low-achieving LEAs, schools, and classrooms, helping them to make progress in improving student achievement and graduation rates. Regional Leadership Academies trained 62 school leaders, 90 percent of whom had been placed in high-needs schools for SY 2012-2013 as of October 2012. The State also recruited and trained its first cohort of 29 North Carolina Teacher Corps members in Year 2. As of fall 2012, 21 of the corps members were employed by local school systems.

During Year 2, North Carolina continued to develop the technological infrastructure to support its Race to the Top grant. The State completed the design process and began to implement several shared services for the Cloud and fully implemented reporting capabilities for the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS), the State's PK-13 statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS). It also finished developing IIS requirements and reviewed potential vendor proposals for the IIS. In addition, 12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Affinity Network schools were in operation in SY 2011-2012 and the State launched its third STEM Anchor school.

The State made efforts to continuously refine its Race to the Top project implementation through the Program Management Office (PMO) and the Evaluation Team, which issued nine reports on implementation quality in Year 2. Through READY outreach meetings (see *State Success Factors*), attended by 4,100 educators, North Carolina reinforced expectations about the State's reform agenda supported by its Race to the Top plan and offered resources to support its implementation.

## Challenges

Delays impacted several of the State's Race to the Top initiatives. The IIS and Virtual Blended STEM Courses projects were delayed in order to refine project plans and requirements and as a result of lengthy procurement processes; these projects now have condensed implementation timeframes. In addition, contract-related delays impacted the implementation of the professional development, coaching, and curriculum development activities in the STEM Anchor School and Network project. Another challenge North Carolina faced is providing sufficient support for implementation of reforms at the local level. The State has made efforts to engage and provide support to participating LEAs and charters throughout the planning process, but ongoing, consistent communication and performance management structures are increasingly important as reform efforts continue. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) ability to provide differentiated support based on real-time assessments of local needs will be important for initiatives like the CCSS and educator evaluation, as each initiative requires rigorous and consistent implementation.

## Looking ahead to Year 3

The State's extensive Year 2 preparations laid the groundwork for full implementation of the CCSS and NCEES in Year 3. The State's comprehensive professional development offerings, including more than 90 regional face-to-face sessions and online resources, will support educators as they implement these and other key initiatives. North Carolina will also continue to support teacher and leader pipelines through its Regional Leadership Academies, Distinguished Leadership in Practice program, Teach For America partnership, and the North Carolina Teacher Corps.

North Carolina will continue to build readiness in the field for and begin implementing components of its two major technology initiatives, the Cloud and Home Base. Additionally in Year 3, the State will focus on data integration of the Cloud and other systems and continue to build the Cloud infrastructure. Coaches will continue to provide support to the State's lowest-achieving schools and the State will target resources to those schools based on their needs and progress in raising proficiency and graduation rates. In addition, the State will continue to consider how to address the challenge of sustainability around the investments in its Race to the Top plan, particularly the deep and personnel-intensive supports provided to low-achieving schools and LEAs.

# State Success Factors

## Building capacity to support LEAs

The North Carolina DPI created the Race to the Top PMO to manage Race to the Top implementation. The PMO facilitates and monitors local implementation as well as implementation of the 15 State-led Race to the Top initiatives. DPI project coordinators associated with each initiative are embedded within standing agency divisions (*e.g.*, Educator Recruitment and Development and District and School Transformation). The Race to the Top Director convenes DPI senior leadership, division directors, and project coordinators regularly to discuss progress, address issues, and foster collaboration across initiatives. The DPI also engages local leaders and other external stakeholders as partners in the implementation process through statewide trainings and awareness-building events, regional focus and advisory groups, and webinars.

North Carolina is instituting a technology infrastructure for LEAs and charter schools known as the Cloud. Once deployed, the Cloud will support a wide array of district- and school-level shared technology infrastructure functions, including email, filtering, and data collection and storage. Through the Cloud, the State aims to improve service reliability, increase efficiency, and decrease long-term information technology (IT) costs for all LEAs and charter schools. DPI completed a planning and development process in Year 2. Through LEA working groups and focus groups, as well as a survey that reached all participating LEAs and charter schools, DPI assessed local technology infrastructure and built LEA and charter school understanding of the Cloud. A 16-member advisory committee composed of two members (*e.g.*, superintendents, assistant superintendents, chief technology officers, instructional technology directors, and charter school IT directors) from each of the State's eight regions provided further input into the business and technical requirements for the system.

In the second half of Year 2, North Carolina procured the physical infrastructure for the Cloud and executed contracts for system features. As of fall 2012, the State reported that more than 60 LEAs and charters are utilizing the Cloud email services. In June 2012, the State executed a contract to develop a shared environment for financial, human resources, and licensure applications. Twenty pilot LEAs and the State will have access to this service through the Cloud in Year 3.

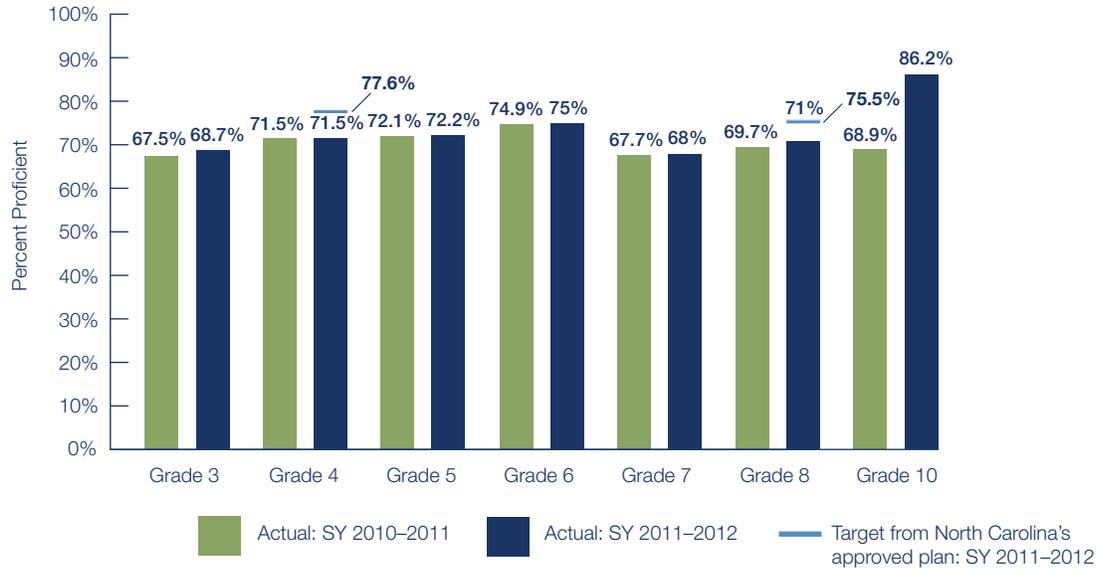
## Support and accountability for LEAs

During Year 1, DPI contracted with a consortium of North Carolina universities to conduct an evaluation of the reform efforts overall as well as of specific initiatives in key program areas such as LEA and regional professional development, educator pipelines, and turning around the lowest-achieving schools. Initially, DPI delayed the evaluations by several months due to a longer-than-expected planning process. By the end of Year 2, the Evaluation Team released nine reports on topics that included value-added models, professional development, school interventions, and STEM initiatives. The evaluations are intended to inform continuous improvement of Race to the Top initiatives and guide future funding and policy decisions.

DPI's interactions with LEAs transitioned from supporting the development of LEA plans to supporting and monitoring implementation in Year 2. DPI posted an approved four-year Scope of Work for each participating LEA in Year 2 and required LEAs to submit annual Progress Reports to document the activities completed in accordance with their local Scopes of Work. DPI also worked to develop monitoring routines that take into account the State's review of these locally-submitted reports. The State piloted processes for onsite visits and desk monitoring with eight participating LEAs in summer 2012.

# State Success Factors

## Student Proficiency on North Carolina's ELA Assessment

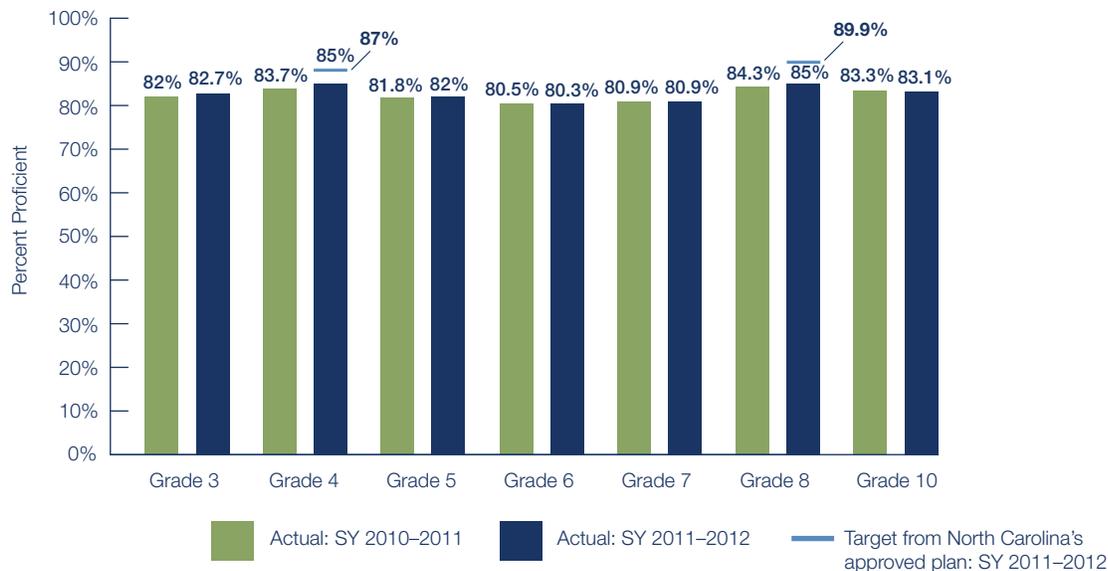


Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: September 17, 2012

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 Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

## Student Proficiency on North Carolina's Mathematics Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: September 17, 2012

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

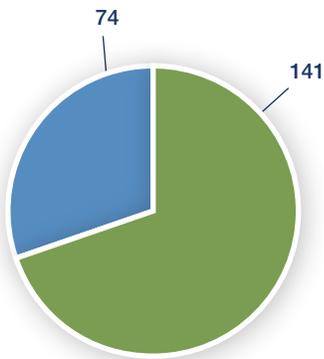
For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

# State Success Factors

## LEA participation

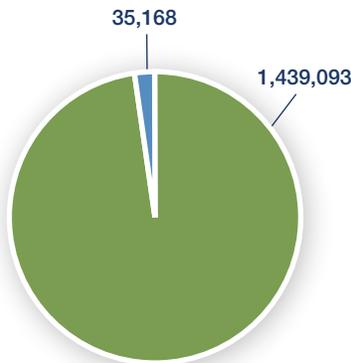
Based on the definition of “participating LEA” in the Race to the Top Notice Inviting Applications, in addition to North Carolina’s 115 LEAs, 51 charter schools that received Title I, Part A funding were eligible to receive funds from the LEA portion of the grant. As depicted in the graphs below, as of June 30, 2012, North Carolina reported 141 participating LEAs, including all 115 LEAs and 26 charter schools. This represents 97.6 percent of the State’s kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) students and more than 99.1 percent of its students in poverty.

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



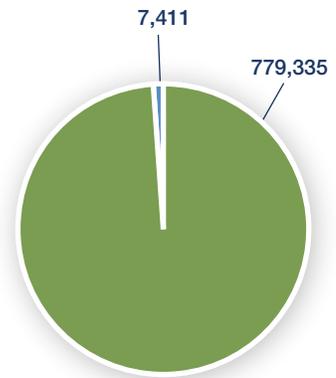
■ Participating LEAs (#)  
 ■ Other LEAs

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

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

## Stakeholder engagement

DPI’s READY communications initiative aims to provide educators with a cohesive understanding of North Carolina’s Race to the Top reform agenda. More than 4,100 educators representing over 80 percent of the State’s schools attended READY outreach meetings in Year 2. The meetings for local teams of educators provided information about Race to the Top reforms, including the CCSS, technology that supports learning, and educator evaluation. Other regular communication efforts included weekly emails and newsletters, quarterly superintendent meetings, and a State Race to the Top website that features a variety of resources. Project-specific outreach also plays a key role in DPI’s communication efforts. For example, a total of more than 2,800 educators from local teams attended six regional Summer Institutes on the CCSS and the State conducted outreach activities to LEAs and charter schools around the instructional technology system currently under development.

Stakeholders played a key role in the development of a number of initiatives, including the Cloud, the IIS, and the NCEES. For example, approximately 800 educators participated in MSL workgroups in Year 2 to assist in the design of student growth measures for non-tested subjects. North Carolina also engaged stakeholders in the process of developing IIS requirements to ensure that the IIS will meet users’ needs.

## Continuous improvement

The State used the Evaluation Team’s nine reports, described above, to inform continuous improvement in all major project areas. For example, the State used information from the report on “Building LEA and Regional Professional Development Capacity” to identify which practices showed promise and should continue and what changes could improve the effectiveness of future sessions. The State also used recommendations in the baseline report on “District and

# State Success Factors

School Transformation” to further reinforce its training and support investments at the district level. Surveys also informed North Carolina’s efforts to continuously improve in many project areas. For example, the State used the analysis of 2011 Summer Institute feedback to inform plans for the 2012 Summer Institute.

Additionally, project-specific mechanisms also target improvement in individual Race to the Top initiatives. District Transformation Coaches (DTCs), School Transformation Coaches (STCs), and Instructional Coaches (ICs) create regular summary reports (see *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools*). Data on the State’s educator evaluation system helps DPI formatively assess implementation (see *Great Teachers and Leaders*). LEA Advisory Groups provided feedback on data quality and functionality for the Cloud and IIS (see *Data Systems to Support Instruction*).

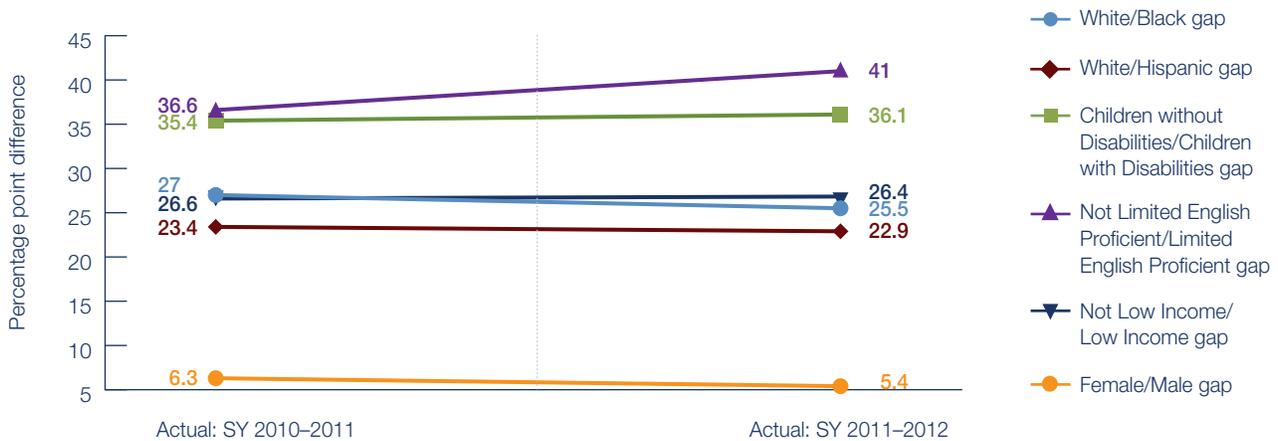
cross-project collaboration, and the PMO continued to use communication and monitoring routines for oversight of local implementation and engagement with external partners. Additionally, the State used feedback from the Evaluation Team’s reports to assess project implementation. Finally, through outreach to education stakeholders via the READY meetings, the State worked to build enthusiasm and awareness around the changes being put in place in North Carolina to help better prepare students for college, careers, and adulthood.

The DPI’s ability to provide differentiated support for implementation at the local level, based on LEAs’ and charters’ needs, will be important to the success of initiatives like the CCSS and NCEES, as each requires rigorous and consistent implementation. As implementation advances, the State is working to ensure that its outreach and support mechanisms are adequate to ensure that LEAs have sufficient capacity to implement initiatives with fidelity.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

North Carolina transitioned from building capacity and developing its Race to the Top project plans to supporting and monitoring implementation in Year 2. DPI’s strategy of embedding PMO personnel within other DPI divisions continued to promote

Achievement Gap on North Carolina's ELA Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: September 17, 2012

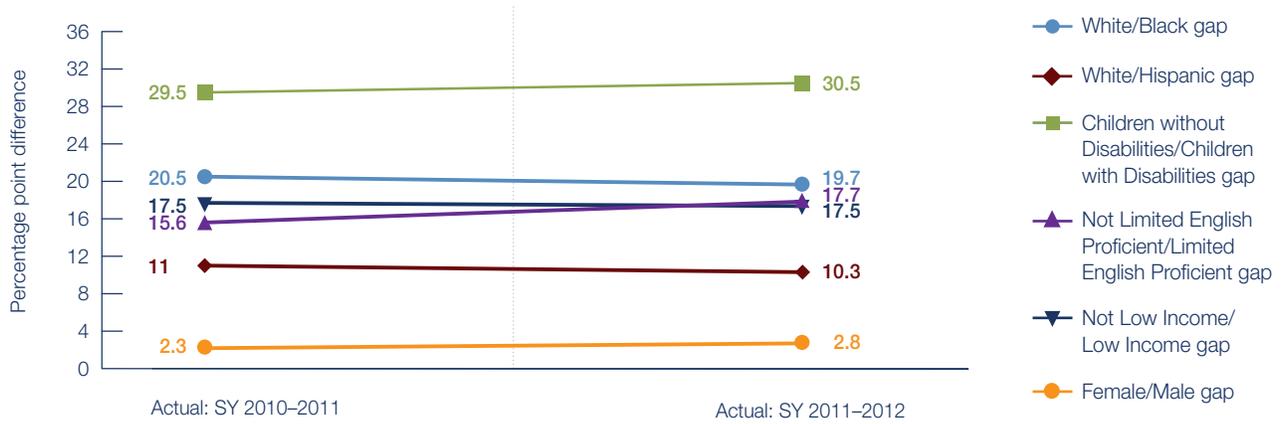
NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

Numbers in the graph represent the gap in a school year between two subgroups on the State’s ELA assessment. Achievement gaps were calculated by subtracting the percent of students scoring proficient in the lower-performing subgroup from the percent of students scoring proficient in the higher-performing subgroup to get the percentage point difference between the proficiency of the two subgroups. If the achievement gap narrowed between two subgroups, the line will slope downward. If the achievement gap increased between two subgroups, the line will slope upward.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

# State Success Factors

## Achievement Gap on North Carolina's Mathematics Assessment



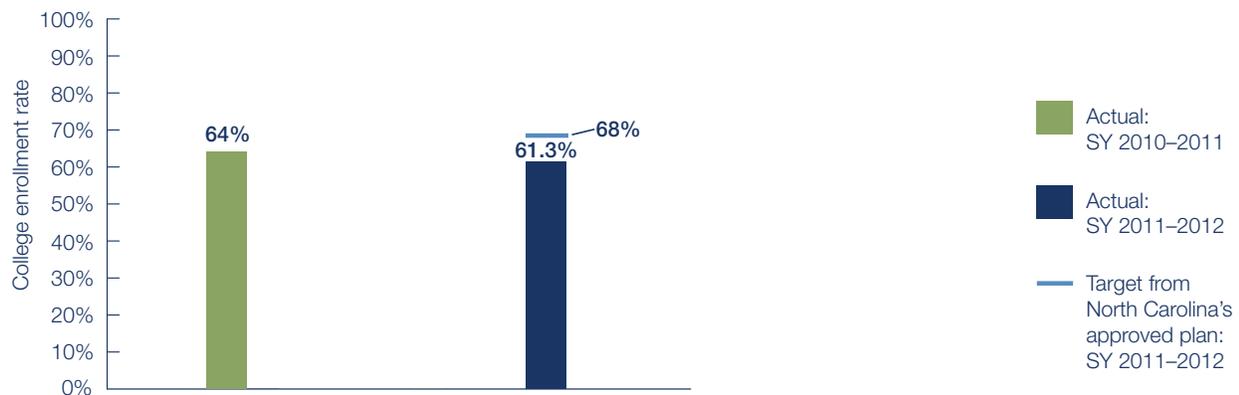
Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: September 17, 2012

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For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

## College Enrollment Rates



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: September 27, 2012

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

# 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.

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

In June 2010, North Carolina's State Board of Education (SBE) voted to adopt the CCSS. In SY 2012-2013, the State plans to fully implement the standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and the North Carolina Essential Standards for subjects not included in the CCSS.

North Carolina is also a governing member of Smarter Balanced and plans to implement the CCSS-aligned Smarter Balanced assessments in SY 2014-2015. The State took steps to prepare for the shift to online assessments, including making existing State end-of-year assessments available online and by distributing a Best Practices Guide for Online Assessments. The guide includes best practices for administrators, teachers, test administrators, test coordinators, and technology and instructional staff as well as case studies highlighting successful practices from schools in the State that have already made progress in this area. The State also provided sample transition plans to guide LEAs in their preparation for online assessments. Once operational, the State's IIS will play a critical role in implementing the CCSS, serving as the single location for instructional materials and delivery of online assessments.

North Carolina also collaborated with other Race to the Top States through the RSN to guide its CCSS implementation efforts. In January 2012, the State convened with 11 other Race to the Top States to discuss strategies to align educator effectiveness initiatives with CCSS implementation. It attended a similar convening in April 2012 that specifically focused on professional development.

DPI has devoted significant attention to LEA outreach and support to build local capacity for the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards transition. Throughout SY 2011-2012, the State implemented a monthly cycle of professional development offerings, including regional face-to-face professional development sessions held in conjunction with Regional Educational Services Alliances (RESAs) and customized professional development sessions designed and delivered by DPI Professional Development leads based on needs identified in the field. The State also began holding bi-annual fidelity checks, which are face-to-face workshops facilitated by DPI and held in each region of the State, to offer LEAs support and planning time as they prepare for local implementation of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards.

## Dissemination of resources and professional development

In Year 2, DPI provided professional development opportunities designed to ensure that educators in every region have a deep understanding of the CCSS and the North Carolina Essential Standards. DPI held six regional Summer Institutes, two-day, face-to-face sessions which were attended by over 2,800 participants. The State adjusted the Year 2 Summer Institutes based on feedback from Year 1; the Year 2 Institutes featured more hands-on sessions, content area-specific guidance, and time for facilitated local team planning.

The State developed professional development calendars for Years 2 and 3 to make educators aware of DPI's ongoing cycle of support. In Year 2, DPI provided professional development through regionally-deployed staff, monthly professional development opportunities, webinars, and online instructional modules. Year 3 professional development will focus on strategies for implementing the standards, LEA implementation, and training for higher education faculty who work in teacher and principal preparation programs.

DPI also made curricular and instructional resources available to educators in Year 2, including unpacking standards documents, crosswalks between the old and new standards, and wiki spaces for collaboration and sharing of resources among LEAs. The State prioritized the development of tools that educators requested, such as middle and high school mathematics tools, sequencing for high school content areas, and sample texts aligned with the CCSS.

North Carolina's LEAs and charter schools are working together through regional consortia to develop curricular tools such as scope and sequence documents. The State believes that this work will be essential for long-term sustainability and is working to link these consortia with RESAs to ensure that they receive the necessary support. DPI plans to help LEAs benefit from one another's work by selecting "exemplar" LEA-developed tools to serve as models for other LEAs.

# Standards and Assessments

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

Throughout Year 2, DPI took steps to ensure that all State educators, administrators, and professional development leaders have a deep understanding of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards and the instructional strategies needed to implement them effectively. To prepare for full CCSS implementation of the new statewide Standard Course of Study in Year 3, DPI disseminated a variety of resources and professional development opportunities to educators and LEAs through Summer Institutes, webinars, and instructional

modules. The State also continued to prepare its educators for the use of online assessments.

The State reports that feedback regarding the quality of the State's efforts to build readiness and support local team planning in preparation for implementation of the CCSS in SY 2012-2013 has generally been positive. However, the full extent to which the State support will prove effective will not be clear until LEAs implement in Year 3. The extent to which DPI continues to differentiate support and respond to LEA needs will be an important determinant of the State's CCSS implementation quality.

## Data Systems to Support Instruction

SLDS and 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.

### Fully implementing an SLDS

North Carolina's PK-13 SLDS, CEDARS, contains data from more than 30 sources.<sup>6</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 launched in October 2011, but did not achieve full functionality for reporting purposes until March 2012 due to unexpected issues with data quality and the quantity of data loaded into the system. To mitigate these issues, the State established new processes to improve data quality and reloaded a substantial amount of data into the system. In Year 2, the State finished loading data from SYs 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 and began to load SY 2011-2012 data into CEDARS. The State offered train-the-trainer sessions to LEA staff members who will, in turn, train educators about how to utilize the system. The State also began offering ongoing annual training for LEA CEDARS users in fall 2012.

### Accessing and using State data

In its Year 2 work on the IIS, North Carolina moved from gathering feedback and determining requirements to releasing a request for proposals (RFP) and reviewing vendor proposals. As part of the transition from planning to implementation, in fall 2012, the State integrated the IIS concept and its updated student information system (SIS); together, the two systems are referred to as "Home Base." Once complete, Home Base will connect resources and data to provide tools to help educators manage assessments, student work, classroom activities, and their professional growth. It will also serve other key users. For example, Home Base will provide dashboards for students to access their schoolwork and instructional activities; for parents to view their child's attendance and progress; and for administrators to monitor data on students, teachers, and schools. North Carolina released an RFP to build the system in February 2012 and at the end of Year 2 had not yet selected a vendor or vendors.

To develop the IIS requirements, DPI engaged educators and technology specialists through monthly working groups, as well as an IIS Stakeholder Advisory Group that meets approximately five times a year. North Carolina also communicates with other Race to the Top States through the Race to the Top IIS Network to exchange information and explore the possibility of sharing IIS content.

<sup>6</sup>The State refers to CEDARS as "PK-13" because it contains data on all public school students from pre-kindergarten through high school, as well as students in early college high school whom the system codes as grade 13.

## Data Systems to Support Instruction

North Carolina encountered delays with contracting and revising its approach to development and implementation of the IIS in both Years 1 and 2, which condensed the time period for piloting and fully deploying the system during the Race to the Top grant period. The Department approved an amendment in Year 2 to allow the State to begin working with a vendor or vendors to pilot and phase in the rollout of the IIS beginning in SY 2012-2013, with full implementation in summer 2014. The State intends to gradually pilot and roll out components of Home Base functionality in Years 3 and 4 as it works toward full implementation, which North Carolina is committed to accomplishing by the end of the grant period.

North Carolina's leadership, including the superintendent, continues to explore ways to share content that will be accessed through Home Base ahead of the system's launch. The State executed a contract in March 2012 to begin gathering, aligning, and tagging content for placement in Home Base, including developing new content and aligning existing content to the State's new educational standards and teacher effectiveness initiatives (see *Standards and Assessments* and *Great Teachers and Leaders* for more information). Further, the State Superintendent invited LEAs to join the IIS Resource Consortium, which aims to help LEAs use resources more efficiently by collaborating to share and develop content. At the end of Year 2, the State reported 40 LEAs from across the State were actively sharing, vetting, and aligning resources that will be accessed through Home Base.

In Year 2, North Carolina piloted digital diagnostic assessments for kindergarten through third grade literacy with 6,600 teachers in

480 schools. DPI expects that in the short term, the pilot will boost teachers' skill in using data to inform instruction, inform future Home Base development and rollout, and create a cadre of teachers to promote buy-in for the instructional technology system.

### Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State fully implemented CEDARS' reporting capacity in Year 2, although this occurred later than planned due to unanticipated data quality issues. Data not available until the end of SY 2011-2012 is expected to be loaded in Year 3. North Carolina also provided train-the-trainer sessions for LEAs to ensure that educators know how to use CEDARS.

North Carolina engaged stakeholders in the process of developing IIS requirements and issued the RFP for a vendor or vendors to develop the IIS based on the parameters determined by LEA input. Delays in the IIS design process led to delays in making a vendor award. As a result, there is a condensed timeframe for LEAs to utilize the IIS (now a part of the State's Home Base system) during the Race to the Top grant period, though the State still plans to fully implement the system by the end of the grant period. The State is trying to mitigate the impact of these delays by preparing instructional resources for the Home Base and exploring other ways to provide resources to educators before the system launches.

## 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. In addition, Race to the Top States are providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals, ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs, and providing effective supports to all educators.

### Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

First piloted in SY 2008-2009, NCEES standards require teachers to demonstrate leadership, establish a respectful learning environment, possess content knowledge, facilitate learning, and reflect on practice. Through Race to the Top, the State expanded its existing evaluation system to explicitly include data on student growth.

In Year 2, the SBE formally adopted student growth standards—the sixth standard for teachers and the eighth standard for principals—for inclusion in teachers' and principals' evaluations. Teachers and principals receive separate ratings on each of the standards that comprise their evaluations and will receive an overall effectiveness rating that takes into account their performance on all of the standards. To earn the second-highest summary rating, "effective," educators must meet expectations for each instructional practice

# Great Teachers and Leaders

standard and the student growth standard.<sup>7</sup> “Highly effective” educators must exceed each standard. All teachers not rated at least “effective” must complete a professional development plan.

Additionally, the State selected a model, Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), to measure student growth. North Carolina requires three years of value-added data before it uses those data to rate individual teachers. The State received approval from the Department in Year 2 to use SY 2012-2013 as the first year of the three years of data required for teachers to receive an overall effectiveness rating and consequently, for SY 2014-2015 to be the first year for which such ratings will be provided. Prior to SY 2014-2015, data on each individual standard will inform professional development and other supports for educators. Approval for this strategy was conditioned on the State developing a plan to provide support to LEAs on the implementation of the NCEES which the State has provided to the Department.

During SY 2011-2012, the State took steps to determine how to calculate each teacher’s sixth standard rating, including by piloting the inclusion of student surveys. Selected classrooms across 47 LEAs piloted student surveys to inform the State’s decision as to whether NCEES should include those measures.

As a part of the efforts to develop a student growth measure for teachers in non-tested subjects, about 800 educators participated in MSL workgroups in fall 2011. After completing a training session on the evaluation system and assessment design, participants provided feedback on item types and the quality of drafted materials and advised DPI on how to best assess standards in their content areas. In turn, DPI aggregated educator feedback into a set of assessment blueprints to provide to a vendor who will generate the assessment items. Teacher design groups provided feedback on 6,000 of the resulting assessment items in summer 2012. The items have been assembled into final forms of the SY 2012-2013 MSLs and the first MSL administration of some high school courses took place in winter 2012.

DPI also improved the evaluation process’s efficiency by expanding the functionality of the online Educator Evaluation System. In Year 2, all Race to the Top LEAs used the online system for functions such as self-assessments, professional development plans, and classroom observations. This system enabled DPI to access a wealth of data on ratings and trends within LEAs, across regions, and across different standards. The State intends to use these data to inform assessments of NCEES implementation.

In order to increase educator understanding of the evaluation system, the State’s READY meetings and Summer Institutes included professional development on NCEES. DPI also hosted webinars on summary ratings, the new growth standards, and professional

development plans. Regional trainings on educator effectiveness were held in spring 2012 for approximately 600 teacher leaders.

In Year 2, the State began to participate in the Quality Evaluation Rollout Work Group, composed of Race to the Top grantees that will fully implement their teacher evaluation systems in Year 3. The work group enables States to share lessons and best practices with educators. Further, as part of the RSN, North Carolina shared information with other States regarding its progress on NCEES and contributed to a July 2012 publication that informed peer States about its approach to classroom observations.

North Carolina also provided performance bonuses to certified staff in 23 low-achieving schools based on schoolwide NCEES results from SY 2010-2011. In November 2012, the State announced that teachers in 35 persistently low-achieving schools would receive awards based on SY 2011-2012 performance. All low-achieving schools are scheduled to provide such bonuses through SY 2013-2014.

## Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

North Carolina created three Regional Leadership Academies (RLAs) to increase the pipeline of high-quality principals, particularly for low-performing schools. Each RLA accepts cohorts of about 20 aspiring principals per year and trains them through coursework, site visits, and administrative internships. Two RLAs trained their first cohorts in Year 2 and one RLA launched its second cohort. Approximately 80 potential school leaders currently participate in the program, and 62 RLA graduates will serve in full-time positions in North Carolina schools in Year 3.

### Building Principal Pipelines for Low-Achieving Schools

North Carolina developed three Regional Leadership Academies (RLAs) to provide professional development and an alternative route for principal certification in North Carolina. These two-year field- and mentor-based training 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 its lowest achieving schools. As of October 2012, more than 90 percent of RLA graduates had placements to work in high-needs North Carolina schools in SY 2012-2013.

<sup>7</sup> NCEES contains six total standards for teachers: five instructional practice standards and one student growth standard. It contains eight administrator standards: seven practice standards and one growth standard.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

The two Race to the Top-supported alternative certification programs seek to increase the flow of effective teachers into North Carolina schools. In Year 2 DPI established partnerships with 11 LEAs for the North Carolina Teacher Corps. The North Carolina Teacher Corps trained 29 participants in summer 2012, and as of September 2012, partner LEAs had hired 21 of these teachers. Although this fell below the State's target of having 100 North Carolina Teacher Corps members participate in the first year of the program, the State reports that it plans to make adjustments to Year 3 recruitment strategies and timelines to increase interest in the program. Additionally, Race to the Top supported the State's Teach for America expansion; the State reported 129 additional corps members were placed in eastern North Carolina in SY 2011-2012.

The Strategic Staffing Initiative provided customized support and consultation to the State's 12 lowest-achieving LEAs. In Year 2, the State executed a contract with a firm that analyzed historical human capital patterns and conducted interviews with educators, parents, and community members. This information fed the development of LEA-specific recruitment and retention plans to inform hiring for SY 2012-2013.

## Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

North Carolina will hold educator preparation programs accountable for their performance by publicly releasing information on program graduates' performance through expanded IHE report cards beginning in early 2013. DPI is redesigning its annual report on teacher and principal programs to include graduates' educator evaluation data, including measures of how each program's graduates affect student growth. The reports will also streamline display of data that preparation programs currently report for other programs, such as Title II of the Higher Education Act. The SBE approved an initial revised report design in May 2012 and DPI is developing a strategy to help LEAs build the capacity to effectively use the data contained in the new reports.

## Providing effective support to teachers and principals

The State established the PDI framework to provide strategic support to educators around Race to the Top reforms. The PDI builds on the State's existing regional and statewide programs and resources to create a comprehensive, targeted, and flexible system that increases State, LEA, and charter school capacity to support educators. Although additional time is necessary to determine the full impact of these layered support structures, the State appears to have a promising plan to provide real-time feedback and customized support to LEAs.

In Year 2, the State released a professional development calendar that included more than 90 regional sessions conducted in coordination with RESAs, formative sessions led by NC DPI Professional Development Leads, content webinars, principal training sessions, and online communities. In addition to focusing on the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards, the 2012 Summer Institutes provided information on data literacy, the NCEES, and the State's proposed new school accountability system. The State also developed online instructional modules, webinars, and wiki spaces for collaboration and sharing of resources among local-level teams. DPI requires all Race to the Top LEAs and charter schools to participate in many of these professional development initiatives.

The PDI staff gathers ongoing data and feedback from the field to set professional development priorities. In preparation for the 2012 Summer Institutes, the PDI conducted face-to-face interviews with each participating LEA to determine regional themes and potential connections between LEAs and charter schools. In addition, semi-annual fidelity checks provide DPI an opportunity to assess local progress and prioritize areas for support. The fidelity checks are an opportunity for LEAs and charter schools to assess their progress, collaborate, and receive support from other LEAs and charter schools. In Year 2, the Race to the Top Evaluation Team released a report on LEA professional development capacity that contained recommendations for making professional development more effective and building local capacity. As the State fully implements the CCSS and NCEES in Year 3, the PDI's outreach and support to LEAs will be critical.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In Year 2, the State engaged an 800-educator team to assist in the development of MSLS for non-tested subjects. The State also released a public report containing Year 2 data on each LEA's share of teachers and administrators rated at each performance level on each of the NCEES standards. North Carolina also moved forward with its plans to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders through its RLAs, North Carolina Teacher Corps, Strategic Staffing Initiative, and partnership with Teach For America.

In Year 2, North Carolina further developed and refined the NCEES, formally including a student growth component and determining that EVAAS will be the model used to measure student growth. The State also determined that SY 2012-2013 data will be used as the first of three years of student growth data required for teachers to receive overall status ratings, meaning that teachers will not receive overall ratings until SY 2014-2015. Although teachers will not receive summative statuses until that time, professional development plans and supports will be required for teachers rated as not meeting expectations on any of the individual standards that are a part of their evaluations.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

Moving forward, the State will need to monitor the quality and consistency of MSL administration in LEAs, as well as inter-rater

reliability in educator evaluations. The data available to DPI through the online Educator Evaluation System will support this analysis.

## 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>8</sup>

North Carolina continues to support the persistently low-achieving schools that initiated school intervention models in Year 1. Ten schools used the school closure model, leaving 108 schools to complete implementation of intervention models. Many of these schools have posted student performance gains. North Carolina reported that 84 percent of these schools have increased their performance composite scores since the beginning of the Race to the Top grant period, 39 schools are now performing above the target of 60 percent proficiency, and five of the seven schools identified for having graduation rates below 60 percent now have graduation rates above 60 percent.<sup>9</sup>

DPI continued to provide support to schools implementing intervention models in Year 2. The State completed its hiring of DTCs, STCs, and ICs. These coaches provide customized professional development based on assessed priorities and areas of need. DPI placed all 12 DTCs in LEAs with district performance composites below 65 percent and concentrations of low-achieving schools, and STCs and ICs in schools that were implementing intervention models, also taking into account schools' identified needs.

The structure of the State's initiative to turn around the lowest-achieving schools embeds DTCs, STCs, and ICs in schools and LEAs. Coaches attend meetings and interact regularly with educators, a routine that has enabled DPI and the coaches to build strong, collaborative relationships with LEAs and schools. In Year 2, DPI continued to support these schools' leaders through regional professional development sessions that included content on the framework for implementing intervention models, as well as training on the new accountability system, NCEES, standards, and instructional strategies for improving student achievement.

### Major Gains in Halifax County

DPI's school turnaround efforts were especially visible in Halifax County, where a Superior Court judge ordered State intervention shortly before the State embarked on its Race to the Top reforms. DPI provided intensive support to the school system and implemented a system of near-daily reporting procedures. Since SY 2008-2009, Halifax County's State performance composite score increased by over 25 percent, and graduation rates improved from 54.8 percent to 75.5 percent. All ten Halifax County schools are implementing intervention models.

DPI also established weekly reporting routines with the DTCs, STCs, and ICs. Coaches create summary evaluations of school progress after every site visit. In turn, DPI makes these reports available to all coaches and DPI supervisory staff. The State reported that these routines encourage ongoing feedback and cooperation between field-based and DPI-based staff.

North Carolina made key contributions to two inter-State Race to the Top work groups in Year 2. As part of the RSN, State representatives participated in an all-day convening of school intervention leads in February 2012, and led a discussion of North Carolina's approach to assessing the root causes of persistent low achievement in schools. The State also made critical contributions to the Turnaround Principal Academies/Pipelines Working Group. In February 2012, also as part of the RSN, North Carolina presented on RLA implementation, providing an example for other States in the group that were just beginning to build principal pipelines.

<sup>8</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>9</sup>Initially, nine schools were identified for having graduation rates below 60 percent; however, two of these nine schools closed.

# Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State has established collaborative relationships with LEAs to provide individualized support and build capacity to positively impact North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools. Its 72 coaches were embedded in schools and LEAs to provide specific support based on identified needs and student achievement progress to date. As discussed above, North Carolina reports that its efforts have resulted in improvements in student outcomes in many of the 108 schools currently served through the initiative.

North Carolina has invested significant time, funding, and staff resources since 2007 to support its district and school transformation

efforts. Through its Race to the Top plan, the State committed to expanding the number of schools and districts supported through these efforts. To boost performance and graduation rates at the 108 schools initially identified and reduce the number of schools requiring such intensive support, the State's plan aims to build capacity at the district, school, and classroom level. As discussed above, at this time, the State has reported some initial evidence of progress toward these outcomes. Additional time is needed to fully assess the impact of intensive supports in these 108 schools and the extent to which the State will be able to sustain this model of intensive support for these and potentially new schools identified as lowest-achieving.

## Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

### State's STEM initiatives

Through its Race to the Top plan, North Carolina expanded its partnership with the New Schools Project (NSP) to develop STEM Affinity Networks and Anchor Schools. The STEM Affinity Networks are intended to connect schools and help them implement and share innovative instructional practices, curriculum development strategies, models of collaboration with external partners, and uses of technology in the classroom.

In SY 2011-2012 North Carolina established three Anchor schools and 12 Affinity Network schools. The curriculum in each school focuses on a portion of the State's economy: energy, aerospace, health and life science, and biotechnology and agriscience. One additional Anchor school and four Affinity Network schools intend to participate in this initiative in SY 2012-2013. The State's plan was to establish Anchor schools around which less experienced STEM schools would form an Affinity Network to learn from Anchor schools. However, two of the established Anchor schools are new schools, which may detract from the peer-to-peer leadership component included in the State's initial design.

Due to delays in executing agreements with the primary contractor and identifying schools to participate in the Affinity Networks, professional development supports that the State planned to provide to Anchor and Affinity Network schools were delayed. NSP provided coaching services to participating schools based on their characteristics and identified needs during SY 2011-2012, and delivered professional development to staff in Anchor and Affinity Network schools throughout summer 2012. Educator teams from participating schools also began making two-day visits to model STEM schools in Year 2.

North Carolina also revised its strategy and timeline for developing a STEM curriculum for Anchor and Network schools. STEM curriculum development began in SY 2011-2012 instead of SY 2010-2011 as initially planned and the State established a separate contract to work with curriculum content specialists instead of utilizing its primary professional development contract and extended summer employment contracts with teachers to develop the curriculum.

North Carolina's STEM Learning Network coordinates sharing of STEM resources across the State. In Year 2, it assisted with the development of the North Carolina STEM Strategic Plan for K-12, which the SBE approved in November 2011. During Year 2 the STEM Learning Network continued to develop a web portal that aims to facilitate resource sharing and connections among Anchor and Affinity Network schools as well as other STEM schools in North Carolina.

North Carolina's Virtual and Blended Courses initiative aims to provide access to rigorous and high-quality STEM coursework for students at-risk of low achievement in science and math. In Year 2, the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) completed development of three courses: Integrated Math I, Earth and Environmental Science, and Forensics. During summer 2012, NCVPS provided implementation training for face-to-face teachers in three pilot LEAs and held virtual teacher meetings once a week. Three LEAs began piloting the courses on mobile devices at the beginning of SY 2012-2013. Ultimately, North Carolina plans to launch six courses and reach more than 2,000 students.

# Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

North Carolina's STEM Affinity Networks and Anchor Schools initiative experienced delays that affected the timeline for delivery of professional development and curricular materials. Still, the State

launched its third Anchor School in Year 2 and is on track to meet its target of launching a total of four Anchor Schools. As additional schools are established and STEM schools continue implementation, it will be important for the State to establish mechanisms for assessing the depth and quality of implementation in the Anchor and Affinity Network schools.

## Looking Ahead to Year 3

In Year 3, North Carolina will fully implement the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards in classrooms across the State and DPI will continue to support educators by conducting professional development and developing curricular resources. The State plans to continue educator outreach by holding additional READY meetings in SY 2012-2013.

North Carolina's qualifying evaluation system will also be fully implemented in Year 3 and MSLs will be utilized statewide for non-tested grades and subjects. DPI will continue its outreach to ensure that educators understand the evaluation system. Particularly important will be the extent to which it can help LEAs implement MSLs consistently and rigorously.

The State will continue to develop its key technology initiatives. North Carolina's contractors will build and roll out components of Home Base and the State will continue to provide Home Base resources to educators before the system fully launches. North Carolina will continue development of the Cloud infrastructure and work to integrate the Cloud and other systems in Year 3.

The State will continue to support low-achieving LEAs through the implementation of intervention models and strategically placing coaches in schools based on identified needs and progress in increasing proficiency and graduation rates. Additionally, the State's teacher and leader pipeline work will continue through RLAs, Strategic Staffing, and the placement of Teach For America and North Carolina Teacher Corps members in schools across the State.

## Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2012, please see the APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

For State budget information, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/state-scope-of-work/index.html>.

For the State's fiscal accountability and oversight report, please see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance.html>.

# Glossary

**Alternative routes to certification:** 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: the 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 the revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to approve the 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:** The twelve indicators specified in section 6401(e)(2)(D) of the America COMPETES Act are: (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 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (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.

**Annual Performance Report (APR):** Report submitted by each grantee with outcomes to date, performance against the measures established in its application, and other relevant data. The Department uses data included in the APRs to provide Congress and the public with detailed information regarding each State's progress on meeting the goals outlined in its application. The final State APRs are found at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

**College- and career-ready standards:** State-developed standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time students graduate from high school.

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS):** Kindergarten through twelfth grade (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, 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 CCSS were adopted by 45 States and the District of Columbia.

The **education reform areas** for Race to the Top: (1) Standards and Assessments: Adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and career; (2) Data Systems to Support Instruction: Building data systems that measure student success and support educators and decision-makers in their efforts to improve instruction and increase student achievement; (3) Great Teachers and Great Leaders: Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; and (4) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools: Supporting LEAs' implementation of far-reaching reforms to turn around lowest-achieving schools by implementing school intervention models.

**Effective teacher:** 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.

**High-minority school:** A school designation defined by the State in a manner consistent with its Teacher Equity Plan. The State should provide, in its Race to the Top application, the definition used.

**High-poverty school:** Consistent with section 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii) of the ESEA, a school in the highest quartile of schools in the State with respect to poverty level, using a measure of poverty determined by the State.

**Highly effective teacher:** 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):** 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:** 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:** 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.

**Participating LEAs:** 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 at the time of the award, 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):** 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:** 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:** Educator evaluation systems 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.

**Reform Support Network (RSN):** In partnership with the ISU, the RSN offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to grantees of the Race to the Top education reform initiative. The RSN's purpose is to support the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.

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 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.

**Single sign-on:** 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 (Smarter Balanced):** 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:** 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):** Data systems that 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:** For the purposes of this report, student achievement (a) for tested grades and subjects is (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; and (b) 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:** 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):** A specific type of growth model 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."