

# RACE TO THE TOP

## Illinois Report

Year 1: 2012

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U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, DC 20202

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June 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 2 competition. Also in 2011, the Department made nine 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. Additionally, 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 careers.

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) 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.<sup>2</sup>

## 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 sub-grant 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>.

# Executive Summary

## 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 1 report for Phase 3 grantees highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation from approximately December 2011 through December 2012.

## State's education reform agenda<sup>5</sup>

Illinois was awarded a \$42.8 million Race to the Top Phase 3 grant in December 2011 to improve educational outcomes for all students in Illinois and to bolster Illinois's ongoing work in four areas: adopting rigorous standards and assessments; recruiting, evaluating, and retaining highly-effective teachers and principals; building data systems that measure student success; and building State capacity and support. As of 2012, there are 866 LEAs in Illinois, serving 3,873 schools and 1,994,066 kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) students.

The State's plan focuses on supporting implementation of the new rigorous Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics and English language arts (ELA); using innovative data systems to inform educators to enable them to improve classroom instruction; utilizing a new, comprehensive principal and teacher evaluation system that includes student growth indicators; and improving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education through stronger connections to postsecondary education and training and business and industry.

For the purposes of this grant, 35 LEAs signed memorandums of understanding with the State to serve as participating LEAs in the State's Race to the Top plan. While the State is working to build capacities for statewide implementation of key initiatives and systems, these participating LEAs are charged with building systems and processes to accelerate and sustain improved student outcomes and will serve as leaders of reform for the State. By participating in a comprehensive set of reforms designed to increase student achievement in ELA and mathematics, the participating LEAs are working to decrease achievement gaps between student subgroups, improve high school graduation rates, and increase both college enrollment and the number of students who earn at least one year's college credit toward completion of a two- or four-year degree.

## State Year 1 summary

### Accomplishments

In Year 1, Illinois took steps to build the capacity of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) by creating dedicated teams to implement its Race to the Top plans. After finalizing its list of participating LEAs, ISBE amended its approved Race to the Top budget to include funding for a discrete project focused on providing support, resources, and assistance to participating LEAs to implement the Race to the Top initiatives. In addition, the State has engaged in ongoing communication with participating LEAs through webinars, email, and periodic convenings (see *State Success Factors*).

The State established the Pathways Resource Center (PRC), an initiative designed to support college and career readiness for all students, will begin supporting participating LEAs to pilot at least two STEM Programs of Study (POS) in school year (SY) 2013-2014, and established eight STEM Learning Exchanges to provide instructional resources to support implementation of Programs of Study (POS) (see *Standards and Assessments*). LEAs have begun working with the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE) implementation team to assess their data systems and to begin the data mapping required for integration onto the ISLE platform (see *Data Systems*).

The State created a Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC) to develop and finalize the State teacher and leader evaluation model and inform the development of its support resources; issued guidance to LEAs on the State's Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA, PA 096-0861) and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which the State selected as the observation model; and trained teacher and principal evaluators in the participating LEAs according to required timelines for PERA. The State administered the Illinois 5Essentials survey of learning conditions in every school across the State and entered into a contract for a PERA Research-Based Study (see *Great Teachers and Leaders*).

### Challenges

The State's ongoing adjustments to its staffing structure delayed its timeline for being fully staffed. As of January 2013, the State was not fully staffed but anticipated being so by spring 2013. In addition, due to the lengthy procurement process, the State experienced several delays in executing contracts across many projects of its approved plan. The State's Local Assessment System (LAS) project, teacher preparation program redesign, and mentoring and induction work have also been delayed while the State reevaluates potential changes to these work streams to ensure the best approach moving forward.

<sup>4</sup>Additional State-specific data on progress against annual performance measures and goals reported in the Year 1 APRs can be found on the Race to the Top Data Display at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

<sup>5</sup>This section reflects counts of schools and students reported in the State's Phase 3 application.

# Executive Summary

## Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, the State will hire at least two staff members, including a Director of Strategic Analytics, to help support implementation across all areas of the State's plan. To increase opportunities for communication and collaboration, the State will develop an online collaborative space where ISBE and participating LEAs can communicate best practices, implementation ideas, and request resources and/or support. The State will create a professional development program for educators around functionality of the ISLE system, and the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) leadership team will continue to work on finalizing the statewide research agenda, incorporating

stakeholder feedback. ISBE will roll out guidance to LEAs on how to measure and incorporate student growth measures into teacher evaluations for all grades and subjects and provide the opportunity for vendors to supplement the Year 1 educator evaluator training with a plan for pre-qualifying evaluators.

ISBE must move beyond launching projects in order to develop comprehensive and intentional feedback loops that assess the quality of implementation, and to design data collections that will inform continuous improvement efforts. In addition, the State must finalize its approach to implementing and completing projects that were delayed in Year 1.

## State Success Factors

### Building State capacity to support LEAs

#### ISBE capacity

In Year 1, Illinois took steps to build ISBE capacity and create dedicated teams to implement its Race to the Top plans. ISBE hired Race to the Top staff including a Director for Policy and Planning, Director for Performance Management, Professional Development Coordinator, and Race to the Top Counsel, to manage implementation. Plans for Year 2 include hiring a Director of Strategic Analytics and one other staff member to help support implementation and continuous improvement across all areas of the State's plan.

After several of the Race to the Top staff members were in place, ISBE developed an organizational structure in order to better integrate the Race to the Top work into the long-term work of the agency, rather than operating as separate, time-bound projects. As such, each Race to the Top project was assigned to be managed by a lead person within the appropriate ISBE division outside the Race to the Top office. In fall 2012, the State integrated its Race to the Top office into ISBE's Center for Performance, an office charged with implementing several of the Race to the Top projects, to allow for tighter alignment of projects. The Center for Performance also supports special projects and cross-agency initiatives, a structure the State believes will help ensure that Race to the Top projects are integrated into the mission, vision, and long-term goals of the agency.

To facilitate ongoing internal communication about Race to the Top initiatives, ISBE put in place a number of processes, such as holding monthly meetings and drafting a monthly progress report for project leads, to share progress and address problems. Members of Illinois's Race to the Top staff also engaged with other staff across ISBE to build relationships and raise awareness of the initiatives. State agencies worked collaboratively to release requests for sealed proposals (RFSPs), select vendors, and negotiate contracts for many portions of the Race to the Top grant. As of January 2013, the State had executed fifteen contracts, with several more in the final stages of procurement.

#### LEA supports

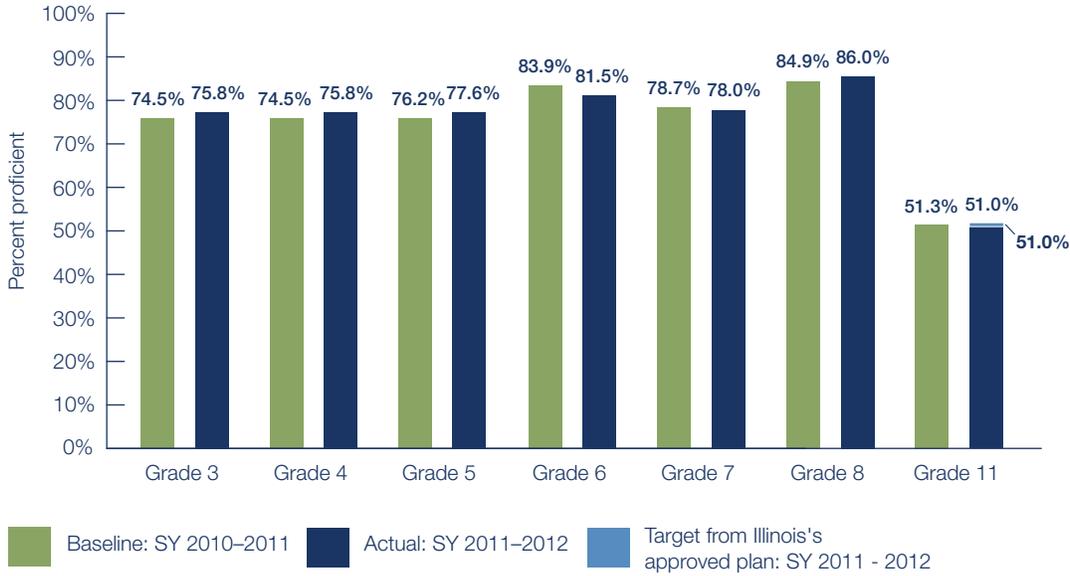
The State also focused on increasing the capacity of its participating LEAs to successfully implement the approved projects. After ISBE finalized its list of participating LEAs, it amended its approved Race to the Top budget to include funding for a discrete project focused on providing support, resources, and assistance. ISBE maintained ongoing communication with these LEAs through regular email and initiated a weekly Race to the Top communication to relay important and timely information. In October 2012, more than 200 educators from the participating LEAs attended the State's first Networking and Support Meeting. The ISBE acquired additional funding from a foundation to convene representatives of participating LEAs in January 2013 to provide more information and opportunities for networking. ISBE collected feedback from participants of both meetings in order to better tailor their support to participating districts. ISBE also hosted several webinars and conference calls with participating LEAs to inform them of upcoming events, grant requirements, and opportunities for collaboration. LEAs have provided positive anecdotal reactions to the webinars, and the State plans to gather more feedback through polls of future participants on the usefulness of each webinar.

#### Monitoring progress

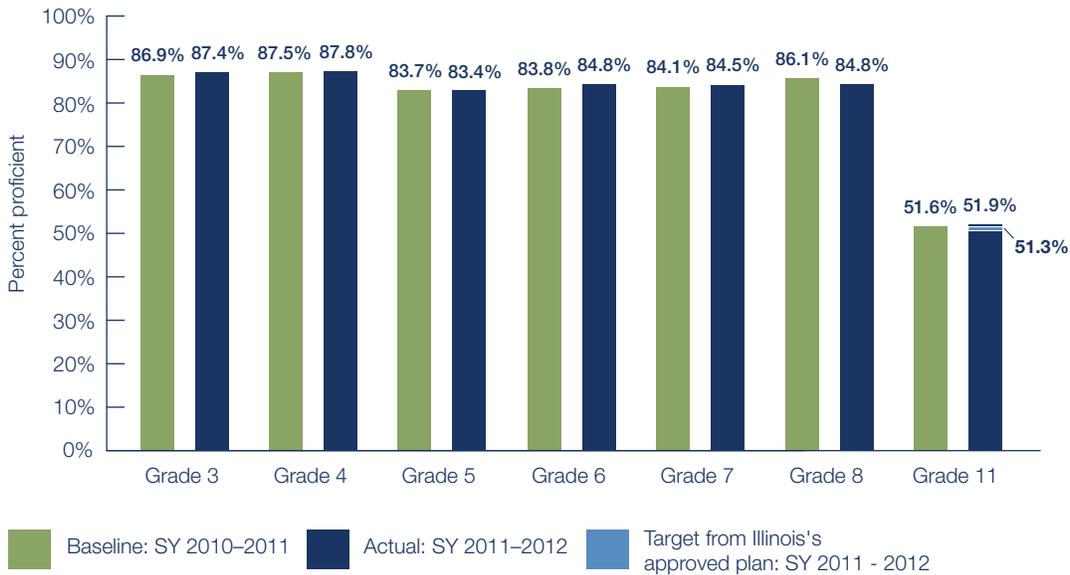
In Year 1, Illinois's Race to the Top staff focused primarily on planning and launching individual projects. The State developed a monitoring plan that will gather information on the progress of each participating LEA towards meeting Race to the Top requirements. This monitoring plan includes quarterly updates to inform Race to the Top staff of LEA progress and areas in need of additional support. In addition, the State developed and communicated an amendment process for LEAs when requesting changes to the timelines, activities, or budgets in their approved Race to the Top plans. The State also developed a monthly reporting process for the Race to the Top State projects and uses this reporting system to stay updated on the progress and quality of the work. Additionally, the Race to the Top

# State Success Factors

## Student Proficiency on Illinois's ELA Assessment



## Student Proficiency on Illinois'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

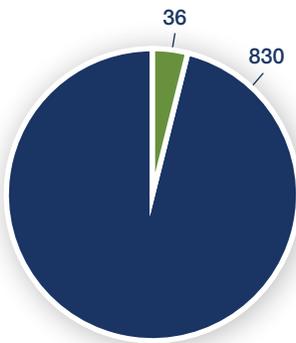
staff has periodic calls with individual Race to the Top project leads to review the quality of the implementation, accomplishments, and challenges. Now that many individual projects have been launched,

ISBE is focused on building comprehensive and intentional feedback loops and designing data collections to inform reflections on continuous improvement.

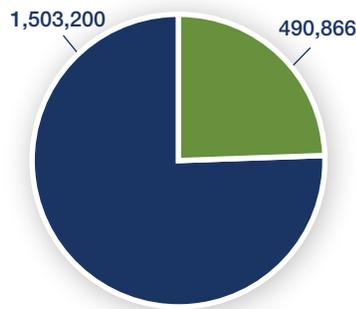
## LEA participation

Illinois reported 35 participating LEAs, including the State's largest LEA (Chicago Public Schools), as of October 10, 2012. This represents 20 percent of the State's K-12 schools, 24 percent of its K-12 students, and 41 percent of its students in poverty.

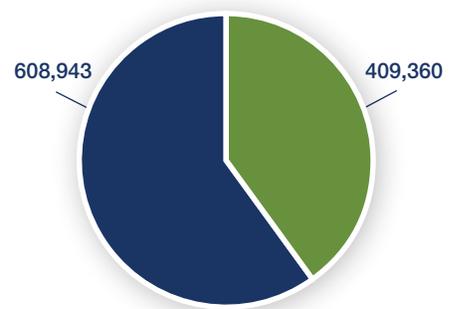
LEAs Participating in Illinois's Race to the Top Plan



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



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



Participating LEAs (#)

Involved LEAs (#)

K-12 Students (#) in participating LEAs

K-12 Students (#) in involved LEAs

Students in Poverty (#) in participating LEAs

Students in Poverty (#) in involved LEAs

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

NOTE: These data are as of June 30, 2012. In September 2012, one LEA withdrew from Race to the Top. Illinois currently has 35 participating LEAs.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

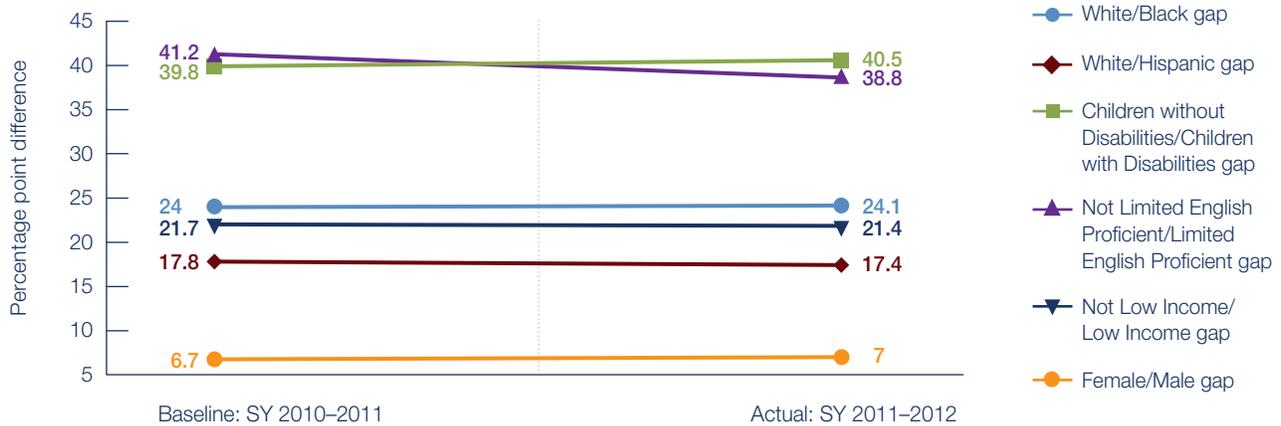
The State developed several internal processes to organize the Race to the Top work, such as establishing ongoing meetings of Race to the Top project leads and scheduling meetings with other offices in ISBE to align Race to the Top efforts with other State initiatives. ISBE established supports for participating LEAs, including frequent and varied communication, an updated webpage, and numerous webinars. In addition, the State's annual review process encourages LEA accountability for implementing approved plans, while its amendment process allows for revisions when appropriate.

There are still several areas that present challenges to the State's implementation. The State is delayed in hiring several Race to the Top staff members, which may potentially hinder the State's ability

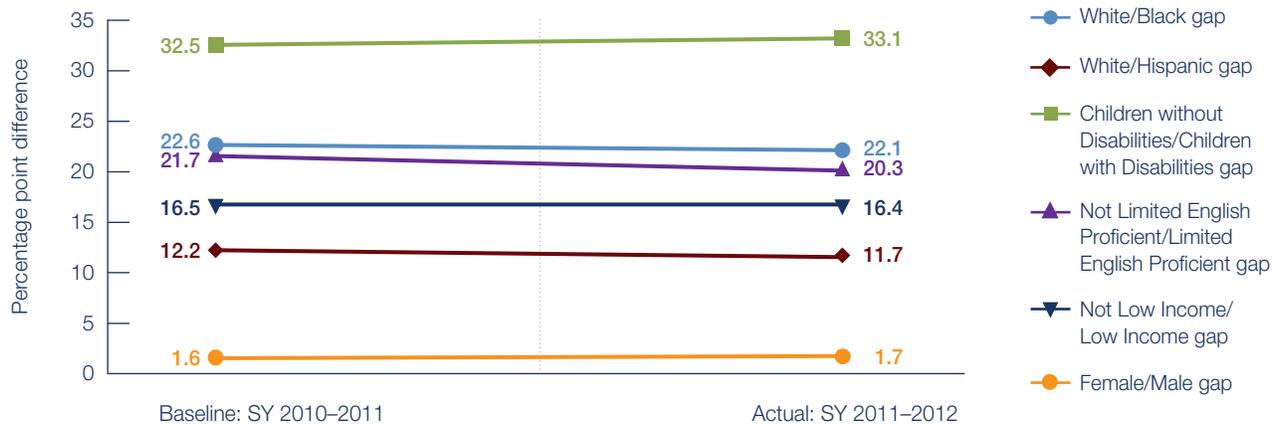
to implement Race to the Top projects. Though the State has implemented ongoing meetings with project leads to ensure clear and consistent communication, more time is needed to determine the quality and usefulness of these meetings for project leads and Race to the Top staff. In addition, the State must continue to build and sustain a strong, solid foundation for implementation after months of ongoing adjustments due to the State amending numerous activities and budgets. The State must work quickly and efficiently to remain on track with its approved timelines and milestones, while assessing effectiveness in implementation, measuring quality, and not focusing solely on completion of activities. To accomplish this, the State must continue to work on identifying and creating feedback loops in the State's communication strategy with participating LEAs and gathering data from consumers of resources, supports, and trainings.

# State Success Factors

## Achievement Gap on Illinois's ELA Assessment



## Achievement Gap on Illinois's Mathematics Assessment



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

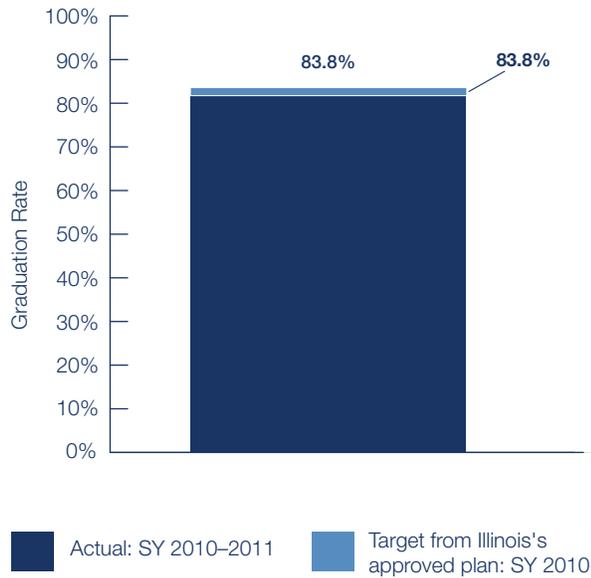
NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

Numbers in the graph represent the gap in a school year between two subgroups on the State's ELA and mathematics assessments. 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

## High School Graduation Rates



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: August 8, 2012.

NOTE: The Department has transitioned to the four-year regulatory cohort graduation rate. Additionally, the Department has transitioned from five to seven racial and ethnic groups used for reporting data. For graduation rates, States will report on the seven racial and ethnic groups for the SY 2010-2011 data.

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 Race to the Top States.

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

Illinois adopted the CCSS in June 2010 and is a governing partner of the Partnership Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium. To support the transition to rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, the State will provide participating LEAs with supports for standards implementation so that educators deliver standards-aligned instruction in every classroom. These supports will focus on providing assessment tools to inform classroom instruction, promote instructional alignment, and deliver high-quality STEM instructional resources.

The State is working to select an LAS management entity to make assessment resources available to LEAs to support the measurement of student growth for performance evaluations. In addition, the LAS management entity will work with ISBE, professional organizations, and teachers to develop local assessment resources that will be made available through a shared resources bank. The State issued a request for vendor proposals for the LAS work in summer 2012 but did not receive any responsive proposals and thus canceled the bid. Currently, this work is delayed as the State reexamines how to proceed.

The State established the PRC, an initiative designed to support college and career readiness for all students. The PRC will be supported by the Illinois Pathways, a partnership between the State of Illinois's lead education and economic development agencies. The PRC will be tasked with supporting local schools and postsecondary institutions to enable learners to explore their academic and career interests in STEM fields and instructional programs, and improve the coordination of public and private investment, including business and industry, to support the development of a workforce that can be competitive in tomorrow's economy. The PRC will provide services and statewide technical assistance and training in implementation of STEM programs. In addition, the PRC will support the development of and communication between each of the STEM Learning Exchanges. Coaches and consultants will be available to work with local LEAs to provide guidance on implementation of STEM POS and use of the STEM Learning Exchanges. Regional meetings will bring stakeholders together to share best practices and provide data where applicable. PRC will also identify funding opportunities to support the sustainability of the STEM POS and Learning Exchanges, and will provide monthly

reports to ISBE demonstrating progress in agreed upon activities. As of January 2013, the State launched the PRC website, conducted introductory webinars for participating LEAs, and held a March 2013 conference. Due to the delayed start of the PRC contract, the vendor provided limited support to LEAs as they began to engage with this work. The State is confident, however, that the project will be back on track within the next couple of months as the work is prioritized and expedited.

Participating LEAs in Illinois's Race to the Top plan committed to implementing at least two POS including STEM courses for high school students in grades 9 through 12. The POS will include sequences of courses, assessments, and applied learning experiences organized around a career cluster through options like dual credit courses, work-based learning experiences, or other opportunities to earn stackable credentials and degrees. The State held focus groups, conference calls, webinars, and face-to-face meetings with participating LEAs to support educators as they plan to pilot at least two POS in SY 2013-2014.

Each POS will fall underneath one of the nine STEM Learning Exchange areas.<sup>6</sup> The Learning Exchanges are organized by career topic areas and work to coordinate planning and investment, aggregate resources, and review talent supply-chain performance. Due to intellectual property issues, the State is having conversations with one of its largest collaboratives that is considering whether or not to participate in this initiative. As of January 2013, the collaborative was still committed to the work.

The State also expanded the Illinois Community College Board's College and Career Readiness (CCR) Project, which is designed to increase alignment between high school and college curricula and support student pathways from high school to postsecondary education. This project seeks to evaluate the State's attempt to align high school and college curricula and enhance students' academic preparation and readiness to transition into college. Seven community colleges and participating LEAs with students that feed into those colleges will participate in the CCR program.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State made initial progress toward developing supports for local assessments by releasing a request for proposals for a contractor to provide a LAS strategy to support standards implementation,

<sup>6</sup>The nine STEM Learning Exchanges areas are Manufacturing, Information Technology, Research and Development, Agriculture, Health Science, Energy, Transportation/Distribution & Logistics, Finance, and Architecture & Construction

## Standards and Assessments

instructional improvement, and measures of student growth but did not receive any responsive proposals. As a result, the bid was cancelled, and the LAS work is delayed while the State determines the best approach moving forward.

The State established the PRC to serve as a centralized resource and assistance center for LEAs engaging in these STEM initiatives. The State made progress implementing STEM POS and establishing STEM Learning Exchanges. In July 2012, the State held an informational webinar for participating LEAs on the definition of and plan for implementing STEM POS, and in October ISBE held informational sessions at its Networking and Support meeting

about the STEM POS. The State entered into contracts for STEM Learning Exchanges in Manufacturing, Research and Development, Agriculture, Health Science, Energy, and Transportation/ Distribution & Logistics. The contracts for two Learning Exchanges, Finance and Information Technology, are currently under review.

In the CCR Project, the State entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the Illinois Community College Board to increase alignment between high school and postsecondary education and support the implementation of POS in key STEM application areas. The State will develop a progress monitoring tool to track ongoing progress of this initiative.

## Data Systems to Support Instruction

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

### Using data to improve instruction

In an effort to make data more useful and effective for improving classroom instruction, the State is building the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), a technology platform that connects teachers and students with content, resources, and applications based on the individual needs of students in order to foster personalized learning. ISLE is also connected to inBloom, a multi-state effort to build a common infrastructure to leverage shared content, collaborative resources, and the education technology marketplace.<sup>7</sup>

In summer 2012, ISBE held an informational webinar for participating LEAs interested in learning more about ISLE. The ISLE development team also agreed on an approach for ingesting and validating data from the participating LEAs using a hosted solution provided by the IlliniCloud, a cooperative of LEAs that have built a cloud infrastructure to provide low-cost hosted services to schools and districts. The State identified members for an interagency ISLE Advisory Committee in November, and ISBE and other ISLE project partners have hosted data representatives from the majority of Race to the Top participating LEAs for data integration kick-off meetings. These LEAs have now begun working with the ISLE team to assess their data capabilities and begin the data mapping required for integration onto the ISLE platform.

In January 2013, the State began developing professional development and training sessions for LEAs using ISLE. The professional development will focus on the effective integration of ISLE-provided tools and resources into the classroom in order to improve teacher efficiency and increase the effectiveness of outside resources so that teachers are able to focus more on personalizing instruction. The State will continue to offer professional development throughout the life of the grant through regional and on-line support networks to assist LEAs with the movement to ISLE and effective use of ISLE applications.

In order to improve the impact educational data can have on policymaking, ISBE established the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) in October 2012 through Race to the Top funding. The objective of ICEPR is to coordinate education policy research being performed around the State and focus this research on answering the questions most important to educational leadership in Illinois. This independent organization will develop and maintain a statewide research agenda, recruit researchers and coordinate their work across multiple institutes, communicate research findings to the field, and seek and secure external funding for projects. In January 2013, the ICEPR leadership team, composed of leaders from all participating research institutions, convened to outline the activities and priorities for the ICEPR initiative. The group will continue to work on finalizing the statewide research agenda, incorporating stakeholder feedback.

<sup>7</sup>inBloom Inc. is a nonprofit provider of technology services for integrating student data and third-party applications to support personalized learning. inBloom began in 2011 as an alliance of States, districts, educators, foundations and content and tool providers. For more information see [www.inbloom.org](http://www.inbloom.org).

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

ISBE enhanced its data systems to connect teacher and student data and began collecting these data in SY 2011-2012. The State developed ISLE to support participating LEAs' use of data and

access to education technology, offered training sessions on data integration and support and will continue to develop the system and provide professional development on implementation of the system throughout the rest of the grant period. The ISBE also established the ICEPR and began collecting stakeholder feedback to inform a statewide research agenda.

## 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

To help ensure that there are effective teachers in every classroom and effective principals leading every school, ISBE is working to build teacher and principal evaluation systems that focus on both effective practice and student growth. Critical to ISBE's efforts are the State's efforts related to the components of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) of 2010, PERA Evaluator Prequalification and Training Program, PERA research-based study, Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) supports, and a statewide survey of learning conditions.

### PEAC and PERA components

To facilitate the development of recommendations for the teacher evaluation system's components and framework for ongoing implementation, the State created PEAC, comprised of 32 education stakeholders who are charged with developing and finalizing the State teacher evaluation model and informing the development of its support resources. The State also secured the services of a contractor to support PEAC's work. The contractor has developed a four-month facilitation and decision-making process for PEAC meetings to ensure structured development of a strategic plan for educator

evaluation implementation. The contractor also provides support at each PEAC meeting, including preparation and follow-up meetings with ISBE staff. They also facilitated the development of guidance documents for LEAs about how to implement PERA.

In SY 2011-2012, the State issued guidance to LEAs on the State's PERA law and the State's selection of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the observation model, endorsed by PEAC to be used as the basis of evaluator training. The State acknowledged that LEAs are eager to know more about the student growth component and thus are prioritizing decisions around this policy question in the next few months. The State is working with its contractor to conduct a deep dive into the technical issues of weighting each component of the evaluation system to inform PEAC's policy position and evaluation guidance for LEAs per the PEAC's Strategic Plan. The State provided guidance to LEAs on how to measure and incorporate student growth measures into assessment results for tested grades and subjects in January 2013 and began drafting guidance for non-tested grades and subjects.

### PERA Evaluator Prequalification and Training Program

In Year 1, the State made progress in meeting the goals of having teacher and principal evaluators in the participating LEAs trained

# Great Teachers and Leaders

under required timelines for PERA. A contract was executed to design, develop, and provide training for the evaluation of teachers and principals. The contractor developed five training modules each for teacher and principal evaluators, specifically built and produced according to the requirements of PERA and related rules. In addition, the contractor included plans for additional training and calibration in the observation of teacher practice and collecting of evidence utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

The State ensured that the training modules were available to teacher and principal evaluators within the PERA-required timeline.<sup>8</sup> Roughly 13,500 educator evaluators have completed the training program to date, with many others mid-way through the process. As of January 2013, 10,802 teacher evaluators and 2,929 principal evaluators had registered for the training. Because the training required for all evaluators is provided from a single vendor, ISBE reports that there is now the opportunity for rich discussions to be held among evaluators from across the State, with evaluators utilizing a similar academic dialogue and common language. The State described anecdotal evidence that discussions that focus on the topics of effective teaching practices and student learning and growth at the LEA and school levels are occurring more than ever before in part due to this common training and framework.

In an effort to retrain and recalibrate educator evaluators and support educators in the field, the State plans to provide support and assistance to LEAs as they implement the initial stages of PERA by leveraging partnerships with a variety of professional organizations throughout the State, including the Illinois Education Association (IEA), Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), Illinois Principals Association (IPA), and Large Unit LEA Association. One example of the mutual work that is taking place is an effort between IEA, IFT, and ISBE to provide online enhanced training for teachers and evaluators on topics related to student assessment and student growth. The use of these online modules is optional. The modules are available to teachers and administrators at either low or no cost. Other endeavors include IASA and IPA providing assessment training to educators, as well as follow-up training on the Danielson Framework. The State also plans to release a request for vendor proposals to supplement this initial training with a plan for pre-qualifying evaluators. The State's intent is for LEAs to access a menu of options to provide the following: support and management of the online training of the current pre-qualification training including technical assistance, remediation, and reporting mechanisms; and training for teachers who would like information and a better understanding of performance evaluations, but do not have the desire to become pre-qualified for evaluations. Consideration will be given to adding

an optional follow-up training and calibration support for evaluators who are already pre-qualified.

## Survey of Learning Conditions

To gain information about the instructional environment within schools, the State entered into an agreement with UChicago Impact at the University of Chicago to administer the Illinois 5Essentials survey of learning conditions in every school across the State. The Illinois 5Essentials survey is based upon research that schools strong on three of the five essentials are more likely to improve student outcomes. As mandated by PERA, all LEAs were required to administer the Illinois 5Essentials survey in SY 2012-2013 to all teachers and students in grades 6 through 12, and could choose to implement a parent survey as well.

The Illinois 5Essentials school survey measures elements of a school's learning and teaching climate, including stakeholder perceptions of trust between students and teachers; school-parent communication; the physical and emotional safety of the facility; the level of support that teachers believe is available and present in the working environment; and how instructional staff is included in learning and decision-making processes. The survey will be implemented across the State, as mandated under the PERA legislation, and will be web-based, allowing the survey to be completed from any location and permitting educators to receive information quickly.

The State's original plan included a pilot for SY 2012-2013 for Race to the Top participating LEAs only, and a statewide pilot in SY 2013-2014. As the State is piloting the survey in all LEAs statewide in SY 2012-2013, it is a year ahead of schedule. The State opened the survey window in February 2013 and received responses from over 500 students, 1,700 teachers, and 2,520 parents in the first couple weeks the survey was available. The State will continue to collect responses through April 2013. Data from this survey will feed into the State's redesigned State Report Card. Additionally, schools and LEAs are encouraged to use data from the survey for continuous improvement in their schools.

The State worked with UChicago Impact at the University of Chicago to develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan to continue to provide information about the survey and resources and tools for administering the survey and analyzing the results. The communications plan includes a survey manual, phone calls to every LEA in the State, and a media plan targeting news outlets across the State. In addition, the State is redesigning its report card to better disseminate the resulting information.

<sup>8</sup>All training that allowed principals or other administratively certified personnel to provide evaluation of teachers and other administrators expired as of September 1, 2012. After that date, any person who provides an evaluation of a teacher must have completed Modules 1-4 of the Teacher Evaluation Training provided by the State, except evaluators in Chicago Public School evaluators, who must have completed Module 5 as well. An observation of a teacher can take place if the evaluator has only completed Modules 1-3 of the training, but the evaluator cannot provide the summative evaluation until they have completed Module 4. Module 5 must be completed by November 1 of the year for which the LEA includes student growth in the teacher evaluation. Principal evaluators must complete the Principal Evaluation Training Modules 1-3 in order to provide an observation of a principal and the final Modules 4 & 5 in order to provide the summative evaluation of the principal.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

To date, much of the State's work in its Survey of Learning Conditions project has been focused around communication about the survey. As of December 2013, more than 440 LEAs (and over 900 people) participated in the first of a three-part webinar series about the Illinois 5Essentials. Communication Toolkits were sent to all LEAs and schools in the State, and the contractor phoned every LEA in the State to raise awareness about the Illinois 5Essentials survey and to gauge their readiness. In addition, announcements were included in the Superintendent's weekly message and the Common Core Implementation Newsletter. A group of learning support specialists were trained and made presentations to superintendents and principals through the Regional Offices of Education. ISBE will continue to work on communication and alignment of Illinois 5Essentials survey content with ISBE's broader strategic initiatives.

## PERA Research-Based Study

The State entered into a contract for the PERA Research-Based Study focused on collecting and using reliable information to strengthen the effectiveness of reforms in the State. The contractor will engage in a four year, three-strand approach reflective of the context of Illinois schools and aligned to PERA legislation. The first strand will focus on assessing the reliability and validity of teacher practice rating measures and student growth measures. The second will focus on the implementation of evaluation systems and experiences of stakeholders within these systems to determine lessons learned from early implementers. The third strand will examine the impact of initial implementation on student performance. The study will examine the correlation of growth as measured by the LEAs with their self-selected assessments and growth if it were to be measured using State assessments.

Using data collected throughout all three strands of research, the vendor will work with ISBE staff and stakeholders to recommend and implement continuous improvement efforts and to provide support and guidance to schools. The data collected through the initial study is due from the contractor in September 2014, and the supplemental study data due in late 2015, will help to refine evaluation systems across the State and ensure that systems for teacher and leader evaluation are designed to be valid and reliable measures of teacher and leader effectiveness.

## Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

As part of its Race to the Top application, ISBE made a commitment to ensuring that a pipeline of highly effective teachers and principals serves the State's neediest schools. In Year 1, the State developed a strategy to redesign its teacher preparation programs to ensure alignment to CCSS and ISLE. Further, the State laid out a grant process for programs to establish partnerships with participating LEAs to support placements of pre-service teachers with extensive training on implementing CCSS in high-poverty, high-minority school contexts.

The State's original plan focused on redesigning curriculum in four content areas (ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies) of elementary and middle school preparation programs, but has since revised its approach to focus on redesigning the ELA and mathematics curriculum of high school preparation programs.

## Providing effective support to teachers and principals

The State's Race to the Top Phase 3 plan required participating LEAs to establish an induction program for all new teachers that is at least two years in duration, uses positive performance evaluations as a factor in the selection of mentors, and meets the standards set forth in the School Code and administrative rules. In addition, participating LEAs must participate in the State's technical assistance and accountability systems to improve the quality of all new teacher induction and mentoring programs. The State will develop and implement a process of ongoing program improvement, developed through an independent external evaluation, by collecting and synthesizing data including teacher effectiveness, teacher retention, student achievement, and teacher efficacy data. ISBE also plans to disseminate and replicate the best induction/mentoring practices identified in participating LEAs throughout the State. As of January 2013, this contract was delayed in going out for bid.

The State's plan includes using the Race to the Top Phase 3 funding to support the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program. This program, in place prior to receipt of the Race to the Top grant, matches experienced principals who can provide on-the-job guidance and support with new principals to help develop competencies in a broad array of leadership skills aimed at improving teaching and learning in their school.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In Year 1, the State set up many processes to support implementation of PERA and PEAC. The State created PEAC and issued guidance to LEAs on the State's PERA law and the State's selection of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the observation model endorsed by PEAC. Roughly 13,500 educator evaluators completed the 5-module educator evaluator training program in Year 1, with many others mid-way through the process. In addition, ISBE leveraged partnerships with a variety of professional organizations to provide support and assistance to LEAs as they implement the initial stages of PERA. While training is underway for educator evaluators, the State acknowledges that it must make critical decisions and provide clear guidance related to student growth components and how to measure and incorporate student growth measures into assessment results for all grades and subjects. The State also entered into a contract with a vendor to complete the PERA Research-Based Study, and finalized the project plan. A contractor began its

first phase of implementation, assessing the reliability and validity of teacher practice rating measures and student growth measures. Finally, the State's participating LEAs began developing and/or implementing teacher and principal mentorship programs, per the requirements of the State.

The State faced some challenges in this work, particularly with its efforts to administer a statewide survey of learning conditions and redesigning teacher preparation programs. Though the State has required LEAs to participate in the Illinois 5Essentials Survey of Learning conditions, ISBE cannot accurately gauge how many people will respond to the statewide survey in SY 2012-2013, or how many schools will receive the minimum level of responses needed to develop a report.<sup>9</sup> The State has made efforts to provide information to LEAs, schools, and the general public and to get a sense of schools' readiness to participate by telephoning every LEA in the State, 866 in total. In addition, the State's work redesigning teacher preparation programs is slightly delayed due to changes in the State's approach to identifying preparation programs and redesigning curricula.

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

### State's STEM initiatives

Illinois's Race to the Top Phase 3 plan includes a focus on the establishment of a rigorous course of study in STEM for all students within participating LEAs, including addressing the needs of

underrepresented groups such as women. The projects encompassing this work include initiatives discussed earlier in this report. They include the STEM Learning Exchanges, the Illinois Pathways Resource Center, and the College and Career Readiness Program (*see Standards and Assessments*).

## Looking Ahead to Year 2

Building on the State's work in Year 1 to develop structures and processes to implement its projects, the State's focus in Year 2 will be on ensuring that it implements projects with fidelity based on defined metrics to measure the success and quality of implementation of the work.

The State will continue to hire staff, including a Director of Strategic Analytics, to help support implementation across all areas of the State's plan. To increase opportunities for communication and collaboration, the State will develop an online collaborative space where ISBE and participating LEAs can communicate best practices, implementation ideas, and request resources or support. ISBE will finalize its approach for and execute a contract to develop local assessment systems, and support LEAs implementing these assessments. ISBE will also continue to support implementation

of STEM POS and STEM Learning Exchanges, as well as develop a progress monitoring tool to track ongoing progress of the CCR Project. The State will begin to offer professional development to educators around functionality of the ISLE system, and the ICEPR leadership team will continue to work on finalizing the statewide research agenda, incorporating stakeholder feedback.

ISBE will provide continued guidance to LEAs about how to best assess student growth and incorporate student growth measures into teacher evaluations for all grades and subjects, and support implementation of PERA evaluation systems for principals in SY 2012-2013 and teachers according to the following staggered timeline: teachers in Chicago Public Schools in SY 2013-2014, teachers in participating LEAs whose student performance ranks in the lowest 20 percent among all school districts of their type (*i.e.*,

<sup>9</sup>Fifty percent of teachers and students from each school must respond in order for the contractor to develop a report.

## Looking Ahead to Year 2

elementary or high school) in SY 2014-2015, and teachers in the remaining participating LEAs in the State in SY 2015-2016. The State will also identify a plan for recalibrating and recredentialing educator evaluators, including releasing a request for vendor proposals for plans to supplement the Year 1 educator evaluator training with a plan for pre-qualifying evaluators. In addition, the State will continue its work with a contractor on the PERA Research-Based Study to use reliability and validity data of teacher practice rating measures and student growth measures to determine

and share lessons learned from early implementers. ISBE will also finalize its approach for and begin implementing its projects for educator preparation program redesign and mentoring and induction supports, which were delayed in Year 1.

Finally, as ISBE moves beyond its Year 1 efforts to launch and begin implementing projects, it must focus Year 2 on developing comprehensive and intentional feedback loops to assess the quality of implementation and design data collections that will inform its continuous improvement efforts.

## Budget

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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>.

# 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) ELA and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including States, governors, chief State school officers, content experts, States, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and careers. As of December 2011, the 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 sub grant 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 sub grant 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."