

# RACE TO THE TOP

## New Jersey Report

Year 1: 2012

---



U.S. Department of Education  
Washington, DC 20202

---

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 both a plan and budget, provided such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plan. In the event 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>

To help ensure that all children, regardless of life circumstances, graduate from high school ready for college and careers, New Jersey has established education reform goals that include closing the achievement gap and improving the academic achievement of all cohorts and sub-groups of students; producing high school graduates who are ready to succeed in college and careers; and substantially improving college attendance rates for students statewide.

In a reorganization that directly aligns with Race to the Top priorities, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) created four divisions, each corresponding with a basic building block of the State's reform plan. The four divisions include: Academics (standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction); Talent (educator effectiveness); Performance (targets, measurement, analysis, and accountability); and Innovation (high-quality, nontraditional methods of delivering K-12 schooling and technology). These divisions focus on the State's priority initiatives for implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments, developing a statewide framework for educator evaluation, increasing the number of effective charter schools, and leveraging the effective use of data to improve instruction. New Jersey's \$37,847,648 Race to the Top grant, half of which is allocated to participating LEAs, has bolstered the State's efforts to implement this reform agenda.

## State Year 1 summary

### Accomplishments

Since reorganizing the State educational agency (SEA) and receiving the Race to the Top grant in December of 2011, NJDOE created a Race to the Top Office, co-managed by two project managers who are responsible for overseeing Race to the Top activities and

monitoring participating LEAs for fidelity to their Race to the Top plans. The State also put in place various project management and communication structures including a sub-recipient monitoring plan, a web-based Scope of Work management system for LEAs, and a State-level Race to the Top website.

Beginning in January 2012, the State recruited 300 volunteer educators to write and review model curricula, student learning objectives (SLOs) and formative assessments aligned to the CCSS. Aligned curricula for kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) mathematics and English language arts (ELA) along with the first three formative assessment modules were completed, vetted and made available to educators by December 2012. In addition, the State completed parts of a complementary model curriculum aligned to the New Jersey Common Core Curriculum Standards (NJCCCS) for those subjects not covered by the CCSS.

The State's science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) work is closely connected to its work in implementing the CCSS. To promote its efforts in bolstering STEM education in the State, the NJDOE wrote and released the CCSS-aligned mathematics model curriculum and also began a partnership with the New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning's (CTL) Progressive Math Initiative (PMI) and Progressive Science Initiative (PSI) to provide professional development to teachers in STEM subjects.

While currently posted on the State's model curriculum website, the model curriculum and other resources will also be made available through the State's Instructional Improvement System (IIS). With guidance from its IIS steering committee, the IIS advisory team, and an external contractor the State determined the technical and programmatic requirements of its IIS and drafted a request for proposals to secure a vendor to create the system. The State launched a smaller-scale, interim version of the IIS in fall 2012 to deliver model curricula and formative assessments to Priority schools.

In the area of *Great Teachers and Leaders*, the NJDOE launched the second round of a teacher evaluation system pilot (the first pilot took place in school year (SY) 2011-2012 with ten LEAs participating), and the first round of a principal evaluation system pilot. Nineteen LEAs applied and won grants to participate in the teacher evaluation pilot, while 15 LEAs signed on to the principal evaluation pilot. The pilot districts began training on and implementing an approved teacher or principal evaluation system, aligned with the State's evaluation framework in SY 2012-2013.

### Challenges

New Jersey faced challenges in maintaining the staff support and internal capacity to complete projects in its Scope of Work by established deadlines. During the first year of the grant, the Race

<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

to the Top Lead as well as one of the two Race to the Top project managers left the team. The State also experienced delays in hiring key personnel, including two educator evaluation implementation managers who will provide district and school level support to LEAs participating in the pilots, and struggled with filling vacancies in the Chief Academic Officer and Social Studies Director positions.

Some of these staffing issues contributed to delays in the State's Standards and Assessment work. While the model curricula for CCSS ELA and mathematics were completed in a timely manner, the State experienced setbacks in completing some of the model curricula, SLOs and assessments aligned to the NJCCCS, particularly in social studies and science. At the end of Year 1, the State submitted an amendment request to the Department to amend the timeline for completing these tasks.

## State Success Factors

### Building State capacity to support LEAs

In Year 1, New Jersey focused on managing its overall Race to the Top effort, ensuring communication across the State and local levels, and monitoring and supporting local implementation. The State goals included hiring State project managers, establishing contacts at each LEA, tracking State and LEA progress in implementing their respective grant scopes of work, and providing technical assistance to participating LEAs.

In 2011, NJDOE reorganized the agency around the education reform areas of Academics, Talent, Performance, and Innovation, creating an operational foundation for managing the key deliverables in its Phase 3 plan. In early 2012, NJDOE created a Race to the Top Office, with two project managers responsible for monitoring State- and local-level Race to the Top implementation. The project managers, who report directly to the State's Director of Project Management under the Chief of Staff, ensure communication and collaboration between the NJDOE, participating LEAs, and the Department. They work with the NJDOE Grants Management Team to monitor the expenditure of funds and are responsible for measuring and reporting on progress and effectiveness. The Race to the Top project managers hold regular meeting with leads and staff from the programs teams responsible for implementing the activities in the Race to the Top plan. During these meetings, which often include departmental Chiefs and program directors, challenges are identified and solutions developed.

New Jersey launched a State-specific Race to the Top website to maintain updated information and guidance for LEAs. The website also houses an open comment section to collect feedback from the field on Race to the Top initiatives and implementation. The State also created a dedicated Race to the Top email account, monitored regularly by the project managers, to communicate with LEAs about LEA-level implementation. The State Race to the Top office does not communicate directly with school-level staff; however, educators do receive information directly from the State program offices, in addition to important e-mail updates from the Commissioner of Education.

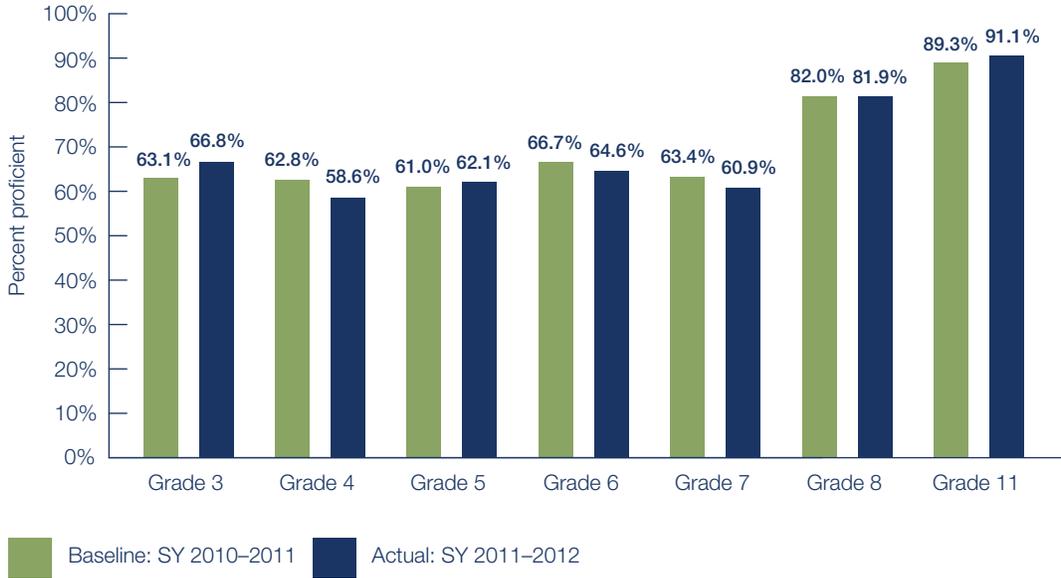
The NJDOE uses external stakeholders and experts to help inform and guide Race to the Top projects. For example, the State has convened a 180-member IIS Advisory Team composed of teachers, principals and superintendents from across New Jersey. This team provides advice and feedback to the State on the critical components of the IIS. An IIS steering committee composed of State-level academic and technology administrators, meets monthly to set priorities, make decisions and provide overall direction for the IIS project.

Similarly, the Office of Evaluation has created an Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee (EPAC), which meets once each month to discuss and address key successes and challenges in implementing the educator evaluation pilot programs. The role of the EPAC is to relay feedback from the pilot LEAs back to the State and make recommendations on key issues such as measuring effectiveness in non-tested grades and subjects. The guidance and advice from the EPAC will ultimately inform the statewide implementation of an educator effectiveness evaluation system.

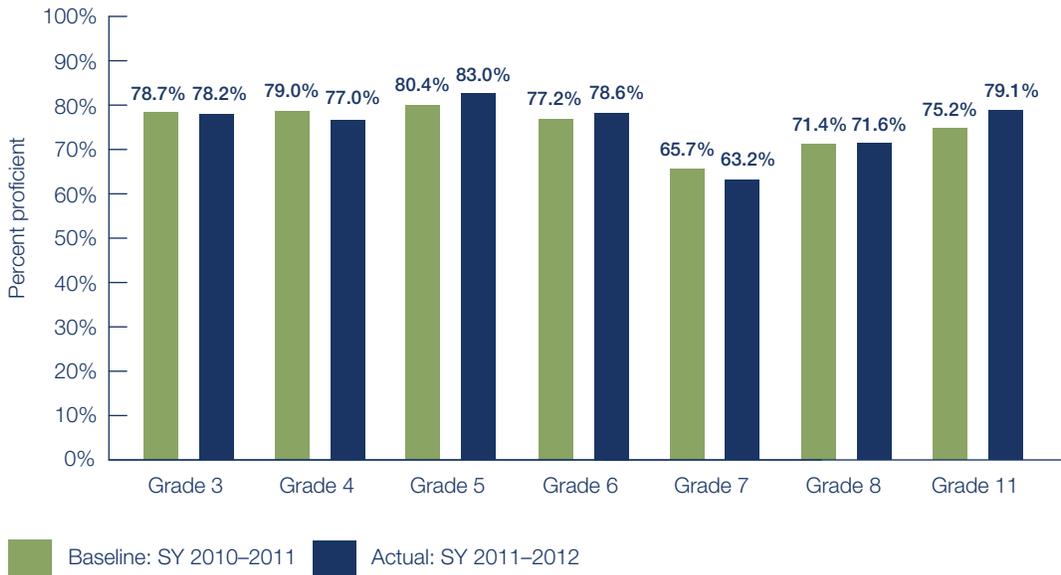
The State plans to oversee LEA implementation and assess progress against their Scopes of Work primarily through its Scope of Work amendment process and its monitoring of grant sub-recipients. Each participating LEA will submit programmatic and fiscal reports to the State annually, biannually, or quarterly, depending on the amount of its allocation. Those LEAs with allocations over \$150,000 will also participate in annual onsite reviews during which the State will assess the LEAs' progress and whether their efforts are resulting in the intended outcomes.

# State Success Factors

Student Proficiency on New Jersey's ELA Assessment



Student Proficiency on New Jersey's Mathematics Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: October 31, 2012.

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

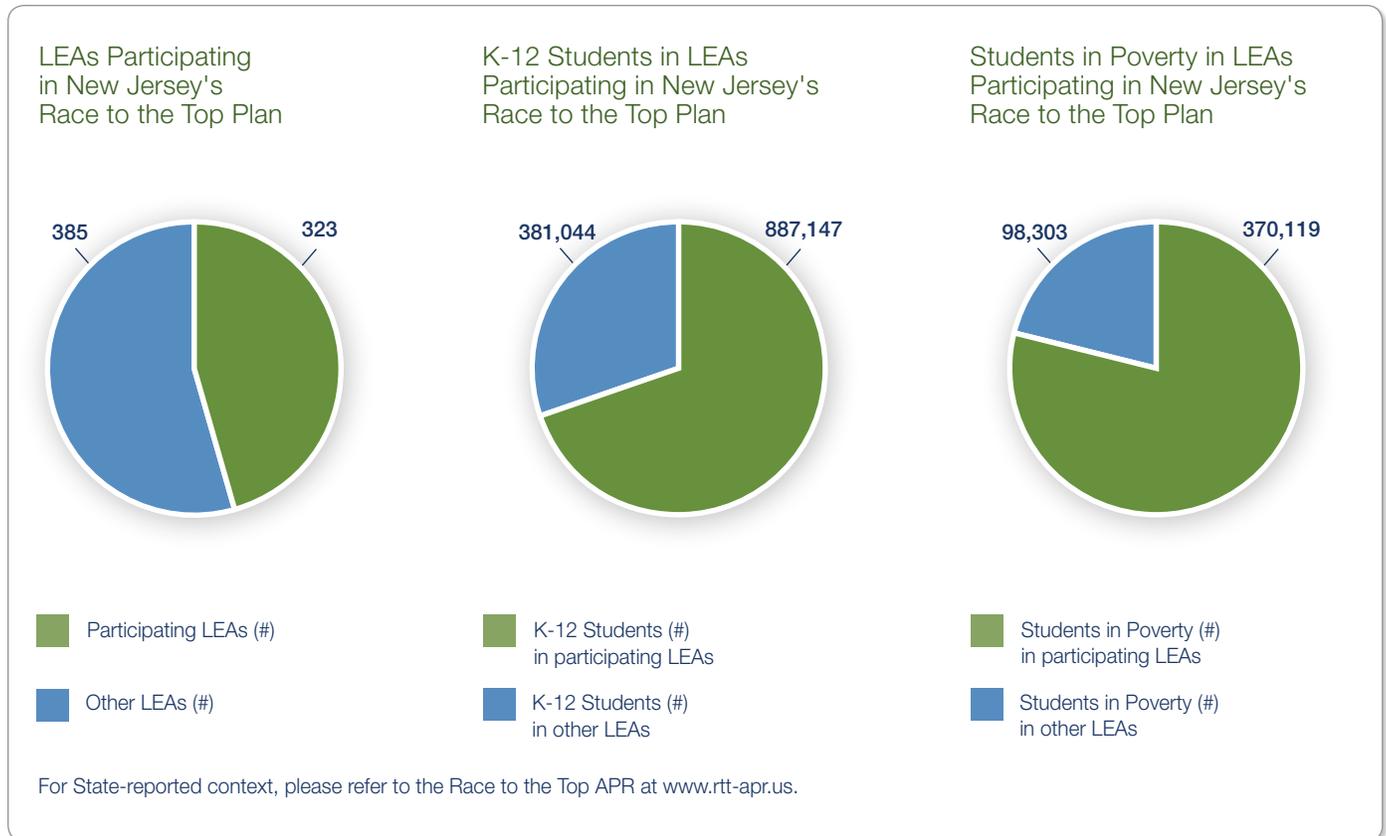
For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at [www.rtt-apr.us](http://www.rtt-apr.us).

# State Success Factors

## LEA participation

In spring 2012, the State released a Notice of Grant Opportunity to LEAs wishing to participate in Race to the Top, which provided guidance on Race to the Top projects and allowable uses of the funds. The State also held a technical assistance webinar on the Scope of Work approval process in March 2012. During the approval process the State reviewed each LEA Scope of Work, provided conditional approvals, offered programmatic and fiscal feedback, and worked with LEAs to make any necessary revisions before granting final approval.

New Jersey reported 323 participating LEAs as of June 30, 2012. This represents 70 percent of the State's K-12 students and 79 percent of its students in poverty.



## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

By reorganizing the entire NJDOE into divisions that aligned with the Race to the Top education reform areas, the State integrated Race to the Top into the State's broader reform effort, rather than creating a stand-alone program. To ensure that timelines for specific Race to the Top deliverables are met, the two project managers monitor the program offices and, in some cases, serve on work teams to help guarantee that objectives are achieved on time and according to plan.

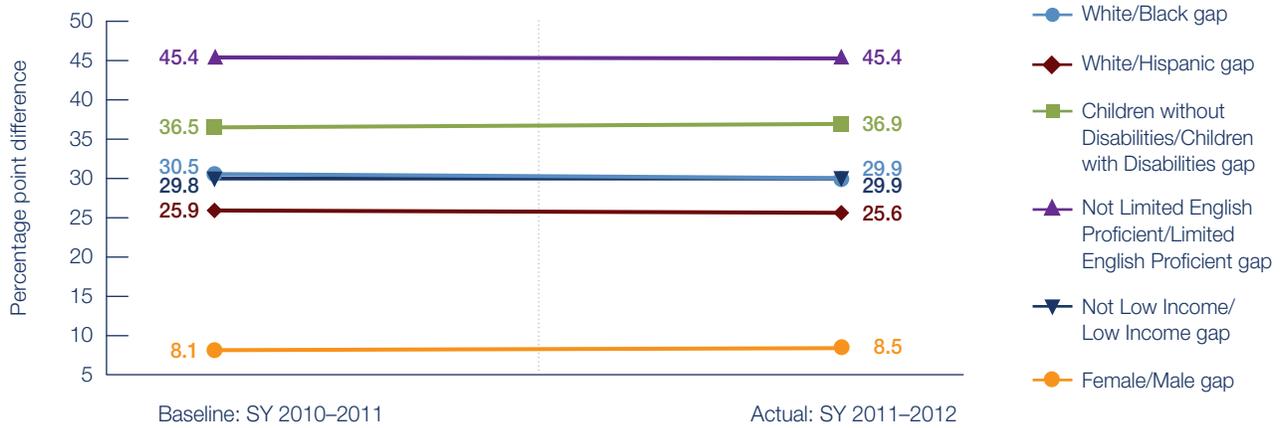
The Race to the Top Office relies heavily on the implementation of the sub-recipient monitoring plan to assess the quality of implementation at the LEA-level. However, given the scope of the monitoring plan, and the sheer number of participating LEAs,

determining the quality of activities taking place in LEAs and schools proved difficult in Year 1. For some projects in its plan, the State employs surveys to determine the quality of implementation of State initiatives at the LEA level. The State has plans to create a more comprehensive LEA communication plan in Year 2, including methods to communicate directly with and gather feedback from school principals and teachers.

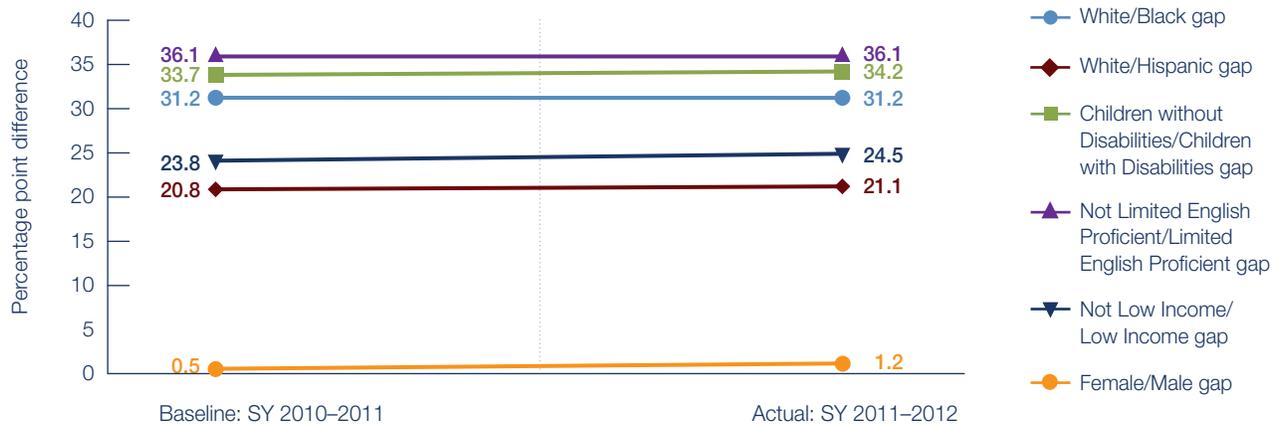
Also, in the first grant year, the NJDOE Race to the Top Office experienced staff turnover, including the Race to the Top lead and one of two project managers. NJDOE worked to maintain continuity of State-level operations, hiring a new project manager in November 2012. However, the State indicated that managing this turnover and transitioning new staff into roles in the midst of implementation was challenging.

# State Success Factors

## Achievement Gap on New Jersey's ELA Assessment



## Achievement Gap on New Jersey's Mathematics Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: October 31, 2012.

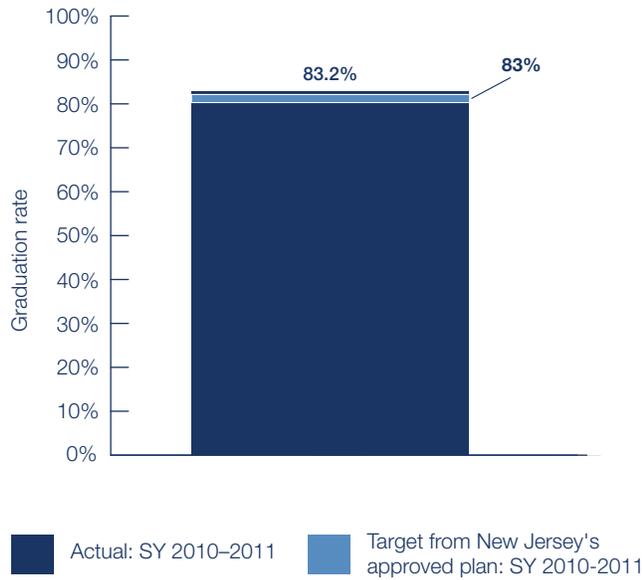
NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

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 all Race to the Top States.

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

New Jersey is using Race to the Top funds to support the development of model curricula that are aligned to State standards, and that include SLOs, units of study, and high-quality formative assessments housed on a statewide website.

Beginning in January 2012, the State recruited and engaged over 300 volunteer educators, including principals, teachers, LEA leaders and higher education faculty, to develop model curricula and SLOs aligned to the CCSS in mathematics and ELA. The model curricula and SLOs were then reviewed by additional teams of educators, along with NJDOE leadership, to ensure alignment with the CCSS. The model curricula for K-12 mathematics and ELA were completed by the end of August 2012, and posted to NJDOE's model curriculum website.

Volunteer educators also collaborated to write formative assessment items and review others that were created by external vendors to ensure alignment to the CCSS. Each formative assessment unit is designed to be delivered by classroom teachers at six-week intervals in conjunction with the model curricula on a rolling timeline. While the State's intent was to complete all five formative assessment units by November 2012, only the first three units were completed and posted to the State's model curriculum website in Year 1. The final two assessment units were delayed until spring 2013, but will be available by the time teachers teach the corresponding lessons.

In summer 2012, the State hosted information sessions and professional development for all LEAs – including principals and instructional leaders - on the transition to and implementation of the CCSS. Some of the sessions were a joint venture between the NJDOE and three professional organizations – the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey School Principal Association, and the New Jersey Association of School Administrators – with the goal of better aligning professional development efforts in the State. Based on the experience and results of this partnership, the State anticipates collaborating with the same organizations on future CCSS and educator evaluation professional development. In addition, NJDOE's Chief Academic Officer and Director of Standards collaborated to create an additional professional

development series for Priority school leaders called Reflecting on Assessment Data. The sessions, which began mid-November 2012, focused on the implementation of the model curriculum and using formative assessment data to improve instruction.

In Year 1 the State also worked on developing a complementary model curriculum and aligned assessments for those subjects included in the NJCCCS. These subjects include K-12 standards for: visual and performing arts; comprehensive health and physical education; science; social studies; and world languages. While the kindergarten through eighth grade physical education and health units were completed on time, all other subjects are in progress and the timeline for completing the entire NJCCCS and aligned assessments is delayed. The State has submitted an amendment request to the Department to amend the timeline.

New Jersey engaged internal and external experts in the fields of special education and English learners to review the model curriculum SLOs and consider the accommodations and developmental factors necessary for students with special needs and English learners. The State will scaffold supports – including presentation of materials and instructional practice – to determine how students with different needs can demonstrate their learning on CCSS and NJCCCS standards. This work, due to be completed by the end of August 2012, has also been delayed.

The State engaged a vendor to create the Formative Assessment Network, also known as the School Accountability Management System (SAMS), an integrated software system to house model curricula and assessments specifically for Priority schools. According to the State's approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request, Priority and Focus schools are required to implement an NJDOE approved curriculum aligned to CCSS prior to the statewide launch of the IIS.<sup>6</sup> As such, SAMS was delivered to the schools at no cost.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

New Jersey established an aggressive timeline for creating and delivering its CCSS and NJCCCS model curricula and assessments. The State mitigated some potential timeline risks by, for example, recruiting volunteer educators to write model curricula as opposed

<sup>6</sup>On September 23, 2011, the Department offered each interested SEA the opportunity to request flexibility ("ESEA flexibility") on behalf of itself, its LEAs, and its schools, regarding specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. For more information on ESEA flexibility, see [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility).

## Standards and Assessments

to procuring contractors thereby saving time and helping to ensure school and LEA buy-in of the model curriculum. This coordination allowed for the timely completion of the ELA and mathematics model curricula and SLOs. By the end of Year 1, however, the State had not yet gathered quantitative feedback on the quality of the curricula or how teachers were utilizing the documents in the classroom.

Creating and maintaining in-house capacity proved to be a challenge in completing all portions of the Standards and Assessment work on time. In particular, vacancies in the Chief Academic Officer and Social Studies Director positions significantly delayed progress in the development of portions of NJCCCS model curriculum

and assessments. As such, components of the NJCCCS model curriculum were delayed up to one year, and were not available to educators during SY 2012-2013, as the State originally intended.

Using lessons learned from completing the first phase of the model curricula – specifically, the importance of structure, efficiency, and communication across agency divisions – and, having increased NJDOE’s capacity, the State is making plans to adjust the timelines in its Scope of Work. It submitted an amendment request to the Department that proposes to revise the timelines for delivering the CCSS assessments, the NJCCCS model curriculum and assessments, and the accommodations for special education students and English learners.

## 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 support educators and decision-makers in their efforts to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

### Using data to improve instruction

New Jersey is committed to developing its IIS according to a four-stage plan. First, the State will oversee the development of an instructional improvement system that educators can use to access model curriculum aligned to the CCSS, 6-week unit-aligned formative assessments, teacher-rated instructional resources, student-level reports to inform and drive instruction, and online professional development resources. Next, the State will use Race to the Top funds to support the implementation of the IIS in all Priority schools, and in Focus schools where the State has identified a great need for quality curriculum, assessment, and data-driven instruction. Third, NJDOE will provide grants to participating and involved LEAs to use in implementing the IIS. Finally, all participating LEAs will be able to use some or all Race to the Top funds to support the implementation of the IIS in any or all of their schools. The State has also committed to make ongoing professional development on the IIS available for school and district-based staff.

In Year 1, the State sought support from the RSN to determine the components necessary for the IIS Scope of Work. The RSN provided NJDOE with best practices from other Race to the Top States that are implementing similar systems. The State completed a sealed bid process to find a vendor with specific skills and expertise in IIS development and management to assist in developing the RFP for the IIS contract. The selected vendor provided additional perspective on the important technical and programmatic areas of IIS implementation.

NJDOE also recruited an IIS Advisory team – a representative group of 180 educators from the State – to provide input to the NJDOE and its vendor on the essential requirements for the IIS. The State also convened an IIS Steering Committee composed of the four assistant commissioners, the statewide and agency IT representatives, the State’s education technology group, and the purchasing and property team. This committee provided overall guidance and direction for the development of the IIS. These collaborations focused the IIS development on three main aspects of instructional practice and support: assessments, data analysis and aligned professional resources. By the end of Year 1, the State had completed a final draft of the RFP for an IIS contract that meets both the technical and programmatic needs of the State and its educators. After an internal review process, the State intends to release the IIS RFP in spring 2013.

The IIS is scheduled for release in fall 2013. In the interim, the NJDOE released a more limited resource: the School Accountability Management System (see *Standards and Assessments*). SAMS includes two main components: formative assessments delivery and storage with data analytics; and project management software to create and track progress of school intervention plans. For SY 2012-2013, the network is available for the State’s Priority and Focus schools.

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In creating the initial requirements for the IIS, the State gathered stakeholder feedback, expert insight and best practice exemplars to design a system that meets local educators' needs and efficiently integrates with existing data systems in the State. Because of the size and scope of the IIS project, the State expressed concerns that its internal contracting and procurement processes may delay its progress. To control for this possibility, the State worked against an expedited timeline that took into account delays that may have occurred during the contract and procurement processes.

The State's implementation of the interim IIS, the SAMS, prior to designing the full system, proved to be valuable. During this time, the State was able to address technological capacity issues at the LEAs and prepare them for the teacher-course-student data collection. The State also realized that it would require greater in-house and contractor capacity to fully design, implement, and support the IIS in Year 2. The State submitted an amendment request that proposed adding additional personnel and contractual support for the IIS project.

## 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

Before receiving Race to the Top funds, the State had already embarked on a five-year plan to ensure that all LEAs had teacher and principal evaluation systems in place. In October 2010, New Jersey's Governor appointed an Educator Effectiveness Taskforce that researched model educator evaluation systems across the State and the country and ultimately recommended a framework for evaluating teachers based on instructional practice and student learning. Based on the recommendations of the taskforce, the NJDOE launched Excellent Educators for New Jersey, an initiative to pilot a new teacher evaluation system. Ten LEAs and 19 School Improvement Grant-funded schools participated in the pilot in SY 2011-2012.

The State's complementary Year 1 Race to the Top efforts included hiring dedicated staff for this effort, launching cohort 1 of the State's principal evaluation pilot program, launching cohort 2 of its teacher evaluation pilot, and analyzing the impact of both pilots.

In early 2012 the State informed all LEAs that grant funding would be available to participate in principal and expanded teacher evaluation pilots in SY 2012-2013. In March 2012, NJDOE released a Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) to LEAs wishing to

participate in the second phase, cohort 2, of the teacher evaluation pilot program. The State provided guidance and descriptions of the approved framework and qualifying evaluation systems for LEAs that planned to apply. Nineteen LEAs were awarded grants. The LEAs receiving grants were announced in July 2012. An NGO announcing the funding opportunity and guidelines for the principal evaluation pilot was released in April 2012. The NGO included key guidance on the criteria for a high-quality principal evaluation framework as well as a timeline for launching the pilots. Fifteen LEAs, including 14 participating LEAs and one involved LEA, were selected to participate and began their pilot programs at the beginning of SY 2012-2013.

Districts participating in the teacher and principal evaluation pilots chose to implement evaluation systems from an approved list of systems that met the State's framework for qualifying evaluation systems. They were also tasked with finding professional development opportunities that supported those systems. All of the pilot districts implemented professional development activities by the end of Year 1.

Throughout the remainder of SY 2012-2013, the State will consider various aspects of the evaluation system such as frequency of classroom observations, length of observations, and whether observations should be announced or unannounced. The State will also seek to identify best practices in evaluating teachers of non-

# Great Teachers and Leaders

tested grades and subjects. The feedback on the outcomes of the pilots will inform revisions to the educator evaluation system and complementary legislation before statewide implementation in SY 2013-2014.

By the end of Year 1, the State had filled all six positions described in the State's plan and budget for this project: a communications manager, two project managers and three implementation managers. The implementation managers are tasked with providing field-based support to LEAs and schools that are piloting the educator evaluation systems. They troubleshoot problems that arise and help to ensure that LEAs are meeting the expectations of the program. The implementation managers are able to relay to the State what successes and challenges are occurring in the pilot districts. For example, early feedback indicated that pilot LEAs struggled with defining student growth as a part of teacher evaluation and that principals found it challenging to implement educator evaluation along with their many other responsibilities in the school building. This initial feedback was considered when, in August 2012, the NJDOE submitted to the State Board of Education revised regulations that identified steps all LEAs must take during SY 2012-2013 to build capacity in preparation for statewide implementation of teacher and leader evaluation systems in SY 2013-2014.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State made timely progress in implementing its teacher and principal evaluation pilot programs in Year 1, due in large part to the coordination between the Race to the Top office and the Office of Educator Evaluation. The teams worked together to plan the pilots, manage the application process, determine qualifying evaluation systems and plan research questions for forthcoming program evaluation efforts to be conducted by Rutgers University. After the first semester of the expanded teacher evaluation and new principal evaluation pilot programs, the State identified areas of that framework that will need additional attention, including issues of school-leader capacity, inter-rater reliability and calibration, and evaluating effectiveness in non-tested grades and subjects. Tackling these issues will inform forthcoming educator evaluation legislation and statewide implementation in SY 2013-2014. By SY 2014-2015, the State will use educator effectiveness data to make decision regarding compensation, promotion and retention of teachers and principals.

## Charter Schools and Other Initiatives

### Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charters and other innovative schools

New Jersey has committed to increasing the number and diversity of new, high-quality school options, particularly in the State's most distressed urban areas. Two major components of this strategy are the development of new charter schools, and the expansion of existing high-performing charters. State law empowers NJDOE as the sole charter authorizer; the agency has worked to maintain a high bar for charter school quality across the State, and to use charter schools strategically, as part of its comprehensive reform plan.

In Year 1, Race to the Top funds enabled the State to engage national experts to provide advice in its charter application review and renewal processes. These outside reviewers supported the NJDOE's system for vetting charter school applications and assessing whether schools reaching the end of their charter terms have earned a contract extension. The State also used grant funds to support three full-time staff positions, and to manage and evaluate the charter school application and renewal process.

The State's Office of Charter Schools received 31 charter school applications in April 2012. These applications were reviewed by

NJDOE staff, with 17 applications forwarded to the second round, which included an additional review by a team of external experts. Eight applicants participated in interviews that took place in August 2012. The State awarded final approval via the Commissioner of Education, on October 1, 2012. After a planning period and a "preparedness review" by the NJDOE to assess the school's academic and operational capacity, the schools will open in September 2013.

Applications from high-performing charter schools and charter management organizations that have demonstrated a record of success in New Jersey or other States are eligible for review in an expedited process, designed to take four rather than six months. Nine applications were received for this round in October 2012. By the end of Year 1, three applicants were notified in November that they were approved to move forward to the second phase of review. The approved charters will be announced at the beginning of Year 2.

To assess the quality of the review process, the Office of Charter Schools tracks the progress of all applications, and the Race to the Top project manager responsible for this project ensures that the review process is happening in accordance with the approved Scope of Work. In addition, the project manager participates in the review of applications to ensure that the reviews are conducted with the quality described in the State's Race to the Top application.

# Charter Schools and Other Initiatives

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In Year 1, staff for this project were hired in a timely manner and the charter application review cycles took place according to plan. The

State has also maintained and expanded its relationship with external partners to provide guidance and expertise to the review process. Based on insight gleaned from the review cycles in Year 1, the State may revise its charter performance framework and its definition of “high-quality seats in charter schools,” the outcome of which is forthcoming.

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

### State’s STEM initiatives

New Jersey has woven STEM initiatives throughout its Race to the Top plan. For example, science and mathematics units within the State’s model curriculum will include performance tasks and assessments and the use of technology in real-world applications. In addition, the staff of the Regional Achievement Centers, the State’s intervention network for its lowest-performing schools, includes instructional content specialists focused on improving mathematics outcomes in both Priority and Focus schools. NJDOE also is undertaking a partnership with the Progressive Science Initiative (PSI) and the Progressive Math Initiative (PMI), offered through the New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Through professional development for mathematics and science teachers (specifically in physics, chemistry, biology, and K-12 mathematics), as well as training for prospective mathematics and science teachers, PSI and PMI support more than 20 courses. These and other efforts aim to advance the capacity of LEAs to improve mathematics and science instruction, and increase the number of highly effective mathematics and science educators in the State.

### Developing mathematics and science model curricula

As described above (see *Standards and Assessments*), in Year 1, the State completed its CCSS model mathematics curriculum, along with aligned assessments in mathematics, and posted the model lessons and SLOs to the model curriculum website for use by educators.

The State also set forth in Year 1 to create a model curriculum, assessments and SLOs aligned to the NJCCCS in science for grades 9 through 12. By the end of Year 1, however, that work had been delayed, as the State focused its efforts and capacity on completing the model curriculum for mathematics and ELA on time. The State submitted an amendment request to the Department that proposed moving the release of the science model curriculum and assessments to Year 2.

### Professional development for teachers

In Year 1, the State built a relationship with the CTL, a higher education organization offering professional development to teachers in STEM subjects. The State reported that eight participating and involved LEAs used Race to the Top funds to develop partnerships with CTL’s PMI and PSI programs. This includes participating in the CTL Teaching Methods training courses and implementing PMI and/or PSI curricula in classrooms. Through the program, these LEAs’ teachers are eligible to participate in STEM professional development that may result in certificate endorsements or master’s degrees.

## Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

As described in the *Standards and Assessments* section, the State completed its mathematics model curriculum on time but experienced challenges in meeting its milestones to deliver the science model curriculum per the Scope of Work. While capacity played a role in the delay, the State also chose to postpone the science model curriculum work as it considers the release of the Next Generation Science Standards. The new standards, if adopted, will significantly affect the structure and content of the model curriculum and assessments. Once the State has determined the new timeline for implementation, it will submit an amendment request to the Department.

While as many as 25 LEAs have expressed the intention to commit Race to the Top funds to STEM-related initiatives, it is unclear how all of the LEAs used those funds in Year 1. The CTL initiatives proposed in the State’s plan appear promising, but the State did not make timely progress against its Scope of Work milestones for this project. Those milestones included developing a partnership with CTL in January 2012, collaborating with CTL on professional development offerings in summer 2012, and collecting and monitoring program data in fall 2012. The State reported at the end of Year 1 that it had established a closer partnership with CTL and had plans to conduct monthly progress update meetings with CTL and monitoring visits to participating schools in Year 2.

## Looking Ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, the State will complete its model curriculum and assessment work and make revisions to these tools based on reports from the field. The second version of the model curriculum will include expanded CCSS resources directly aligned to the model curriculum SLOs and an updated and expanded website for educators to access these resources. Awards will be given to teachers who submit model lessons that are aligned to CCSS standards. The State will also plan and deliver additional CCSS professional development sessions for teachers and principals that focus on using data and assessment in the classroom.

Additionally, the State will procure a vendor to design and launch the IIS in Year 2. The IIS will house a model curriculum and formative assessment platform, a content-rating system, an assessment reporting

tool and online professional development resources for teachers and leaders. Participating LEAs will compete for sub-grants for additional support in offsetting the costs of set up, technological modifications and operating costs to use the IIS system. The State will complement the system with a series of professional development sessions for teachers and principals throughout Year 2.

The State will continue to monitor the implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation system through data collection and analysis as well as an independent external evaluation process. Findings will inform regulations and legislation to support full implementation in SY 2013-2014.

## Budget

---

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2012, please see the Race to the Top 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 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."