RACE TO THE TOP

Tennessee Report

Year 2: School Year 2011–2012

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

February 1, 2013

Executive Summary

Race to the Top overview

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. ARRA provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top fund, of which approximately $4 billion was used to fund comprehensive statewide reform grants under the Race to the Top program.[1] In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded Race to the Top Phase 1 and Phase 2 grants to 11 States and the District of Columbia. The Race to the Top program is a competitive four-year grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers.

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

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

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

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

Race to the Top program review

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting States as they implement ambitious reform agendas, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top program. The goal of the ISU is to provide assistance to States as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes. Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is also designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU works with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and helps States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes. In partnership with the ISU, the Reform Support Network (RSN) offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to Race to the Top grantees. The RSN's purpose is to support Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.

Grantees are accountable for the implementation of their approved Race to the Top plans, and the information and data gathered throughout the program review help to inform the Department's management and support of the Race to the Top grantees, as well as provide appropriate and timely updates to the public on their progress. In the event that adjustments are required to an approved plan, the grantee must submit a formal amendment request to the Department for consideration. States may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget, provided such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. In the event that the Department determines that a grantee is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR section 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).[3]

[1] 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.

[2] Participating LEAs are those LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plan, as specified in each LEA's Memorandum of Understanding with the State. Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year, in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA.

[3] 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.

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.[4] The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's annual Race to the Top implementation. The Year 2 report for Phase 1 and 2 grantees highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation from approximately September 2011 through September 2012.

State's education reform agenda

In January 2010, Tennessee passed the First to the Top Act (FTTT). Supported by the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), FTTT laid the foundation for broad-based education reform. Among other provisions, FTTT: (1) mandated a comprehensive evaluation system for teachers and principals based on multiple measures of effectiveness, including student achievement indicators and annual observations of educator practice; (2) removed the restriction on the use of value-added data for promotion, retention, tenure, and compensation decisions; (3) enabled intervention in the State's lowest-achieving schools; (4) authorized LEAs to adopt alternative salary schedules; (5) appropriated funds to TDOE to support its pre-kindergarten through higher education (P-20) longitudinal data system; and (6) aligned funding policies for a statewide plan for higher education established through the Complete College Act of 2010.

Tennessee's $500,741,220 Race to the Top grant provides additional support to advance the goals established by FTTT. Tennessee plans to narrow the academic achievement gap between student groups while raising overall student performance. In particular, Tennessee is committed to building State capacity to support LEAs and drive student performance gains through Race to the Top's four education reform areas.

State Year 1 summary

Tennessee received its Race to the Top grant in July 2010 as part of the first round of the competition. During Year 1, TDOE worked diligently to align its organizational structure with the FTTT goals and objectives. The State also began to establish a collaborative relationship with its LEAs and implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in kindergarten through the second grade (K-2). In conjunction with building capacity at the State educational agency (SEA) and local levels, the State also began to design and implement its Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) educator evaluation system. Moreover, the State began to establish the Achievement School District (ASD) in preparation for co-managing five schools in school year (SY) 2011-2012.

While Tennessee accomplished a great deal in Year 1, it also encountered some setbacks. Turnover in key leadership positions, including a change in the Governor and Commissioner in the middle of the first year of the grant, affected TDOE's project timelines and its capacity to support LEAs, and turnover within a few of its critical offices hampered its ability to support the LEAs' implementation of their Race to the Top plans. In addition, the State did not execute against its original Year 1 plans to expand the instructional resources and professional development offerings available in its Electronic Learning Center (ELC) or establish a Leadership Action Tank with tools and shared resources for principals. Instead, the State used Year 1 to reevaluate and prioritize its implementation plan for each of these projects, amending its plans for Year 2 to ensure high-quality and strategic approaches to these initiatives.

State Year 2 summary

Accomplishments

During Year 2, TDOE revamped its approach to project management to ensure meaningful project oversight and revised project work plans and goals that focus on measuring project performance and impact at the SEA level. The State also participated in partnership meetings with LEAs to build relationships focused on data and collaborative problem solving. These meetings reinforced the State's goal of transitioning from compliance monitoring to a more collaborative role as LEAs implemented their Race to the Top plans.

In an effort to ease the LEAs' transition to the CCSS and in response to feedback from the field in Year 1, the State adjusted its CCSS training to reflect a more focused, hands-on approach. The State established and implemented a rigorous recruitment and selection process in Year 2 for Core Coaches, hiring more than 200 teachers and leaders to work through regional centers to build LEA capacity for the transition to the new standards. In addition to hiring the Core Coaches, TDOE created the CCSS Leadership Council to engage educators from across the State and receive input on the design of the summer 2012 training and ongoing CCSS transition plan.

Building upon its Year 1 pilot, the State successfully implemented the TEAM evaluation system statewide in Year 2. The State also met an ambitious timeline to release teacher-level value-added scores on June 15, 2012. In collaboration with the SAS Institute, TDOE also launched a data dashboard to help educators analyze their results and

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

make data-driven decisions. Also during Year 2, Tennessee's Race to the Top-funded teacher and leader residency programs completed their first cohorts with high retention rates, and the State successfully established and implemented communication and oversight processes to track progress of and provide support to its teacher and leader residency program grantees.

TDOE co-managed five schools in the ASD, and continued to develop the ASD Central Office, human resource and finance systems, and school-level capacity to begin fully operating the ASD in SY 2012-2013. Moreover, to coordinate high-quality science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) instruction and share best practices across the State, TDOE also opened two STEM Hubs and one Platform School[5] in SY 2011-2012 and approved three additional Hubs and Platform Schools for SY 2012-2013.

Challenges

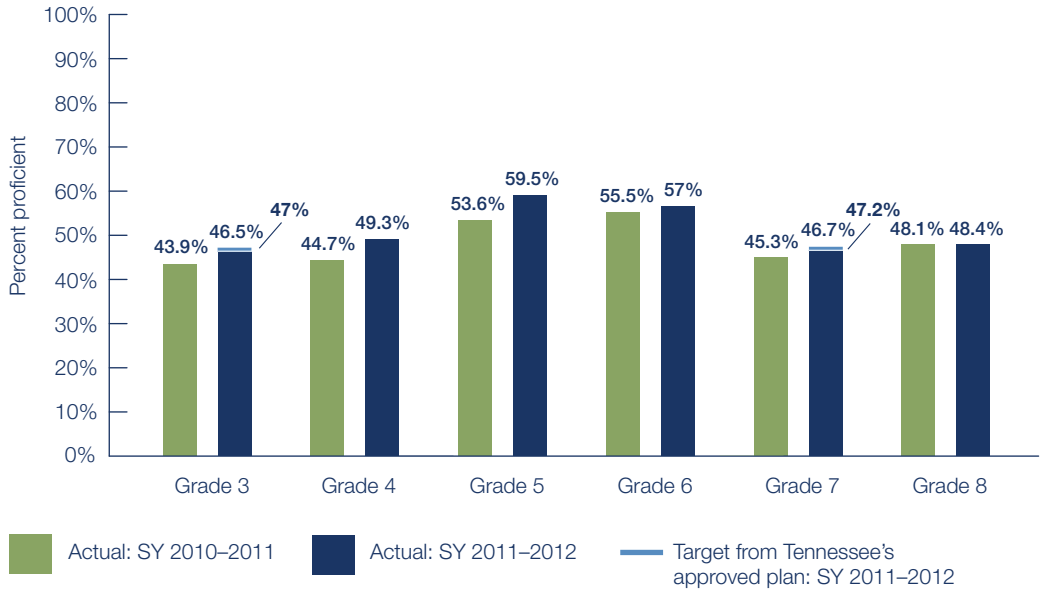
Although Tennessee made excellent progress in Year 2, it still faced challenges as it rolled out TEAM and the CCSS, built data systems to support instruction, and expanded its STEM network. For example, based on feedback from the field, the State identified the need to provide additional TEAM training and support for implementation of principal evaluations and information to assist educators on selecting their Academic Achievement Measures, which account for 15 percent of their total evaluation score. TDOE also acknowledged that its training for K-2 teachers on the implementation of the CCSS was not sufficient, and as a result, committed to providing more robust and higher quality training in Year 3. To help collect, disseminate, and analyze student achievement data, the State worked in Year 2 to build strong data systems; however, addressing technical and data quality issues with the Early Warning Data System (EWDS) required a mid-course correction that committed the State to an ambitious timeline with limited time to pilot the system. The State met its targets for establishing and implementing STEM Hubs and Platform Schools; however, it was and will continue to be a challenge to ensure that the Hubs provide the needed support to every LEA they serve. In addition, the State struggled to identify a mechanism for measuring the quality of implementation of its STEM initiatives.

Looking ahead to Year 3

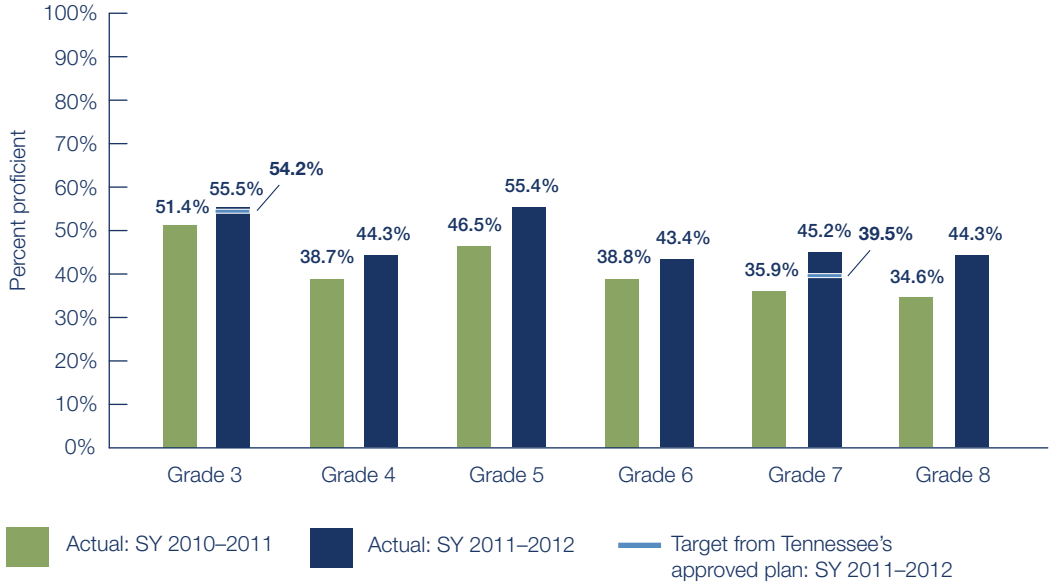
Moving into Year 3 of its grant, Tennessee plans to build on its accomplishments and address its challenges from Year 2. The State is reassessing its implementation plans in several reform areas to ensure continuous improvement and effective implementation. For example, the State is making changes to its educator evaluation system to address feedback from teachers and principals. In addition, TDOE is enhancing its existing Field Service Centers (FSCs) to provide content-specific supports to LEAs and schools. The FSCs will now be called Centers of Regional Excellence (COREs) and will leverage the existing strengths of FSCs and add additional capacities to provide support to LEAs as they implement the CCSS and the new evaluation system. The State's plans for Years 3 and 4 rely heavily on effective CORE implementation, highlighting the need for the State to establish high-quality centers and mechanisms to assess their effectiveness.

[5] The other platform school, in Nashville, was established in SY 2010-2011. Platform Schools offer their students applied, in-depth STEM curricula and serve as models for how to implement innovative STEM projects.

Student Proficiency on Tennessee's ELA Assessment



Student Proficiency on Tennessee's Mathematics Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011–2012 data reported as of: August 27, 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.

Building capacity to support LEAs

During Year 2, TDOE revamped its approach to project management to ensure more thorough project oversight. As part of that process, TDOE modified project work plans and goals to focus on the frequency and method of measuring data to assess the progress and quality of each project. To hold its own staff accountable for their work, TDOE tied personnel goals to the project-specific outcomes, and the State passed legislation granting TDOE and other government agencies the authority to assess employees' performance based on those outcomes. Additionally, the FTTT Oversight Team established project plan spreadsheets to track the project indicators, goals and metrics, and major milestones. The State believes that this revised structure improved the FTTT Team's oversight, collaboration, and ability to identify and address challenges.

Support and accountability for LEAs

TDOE began restructuring and repurposing its existing FSCs to become more content-oriented COREs. The State hopes to build upon the most effective aspects of the FSCs to ensure that COREs have the necessary capacity to support LEAs in improving academic achievement. For example, the COREs may employ a TEAM consultant to provide support for implementing educator evaluation systems, including identifying LEAs in need of mid-course corrections and sharing best practices with other LEAs. To establish State-level oversight of the COREs, TDOE recently hired a chief district support officer to oversee the eight CORE directors, who serve as academic specialists and lead the support efforts for their regions. The State's plans rely heavily on CORE teams effectively disseminating information and building competencies, illustrating the importance of quickly establishing high-quality COREs.

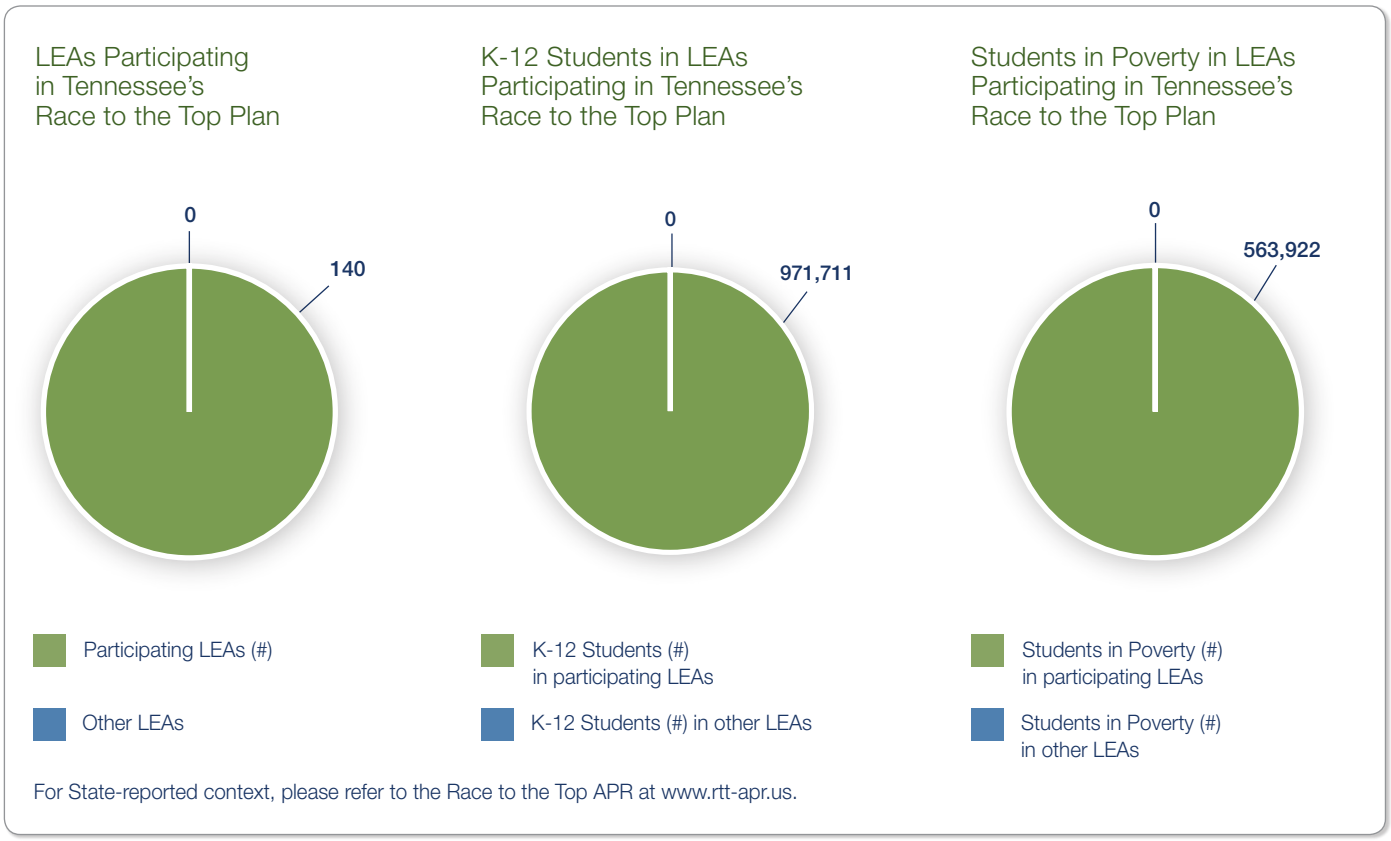
The State also restructured and refocused its support structures for LEAs. For example, the State revised the structure of partnership meetings with LEAs to build relationships focused on data and collaborative problem solving. The State used the meetings as a way to identify and share best practices and address the need for mid-course corrections, while reinforcing the State's goal of transitioning from compliance monitoring to a more collaborative role as LEAs implement their Race to the Top plans. In addition, the State used LEAs' prior performance to align LEA performance management processes and focus plans on targeted activities.

In the summer of 2012, the State revised its approach to reviewing LEA Scopes of Work to leverage the expertise of LEAs experiencing success in improving student outcomes. It executed a peer review process where individuals from exemplary LEAs came together and worked in teams to review their peers' Scopes of Work against a State-designed rubric. The State believes this process resulted in more focused and comprehensive LEA Scopes of Work than in years past.

The State also continued to coordinate its LEA Scope of Work submission and accountability processes to streamline the routines for LEAs and ensure that their plans connected to the State's goals and current outcomes. In July 2011, the State adjusted its timeline for the annual review and approval of LEA Scopes of Work to allow for the analysis of student achievement data. Additionally, to orient LEA Scopes of Work on projects that impact student achievement, the State revised its Year 3 submission process to include more detail on planned activities, as well as a peer review process to foster a better understanding of what constitutes a strong plan and to encourage connections among LEAs with shared goals. In September 2012, peer reviewers scored 80 LEA Scopes of Work against a State-developed rubric, and provided positive feedback to the State on the process overall. The State reported it was able to provide deeper and targeted support to LEAs because of its differentiated review process.

LEA participation

In Year 2, Tennessee reported that all 140 of the State's LEAs participated in Race to the Top.[6] There was no change in the number of participating LEAs from Year 1.



For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

Stakeholder engagement

During Year 1, the State recognized that the FTTT Advisory Council was underutilized and was not providing ongoing opportunities for practitioners to share input on the implementation of Race to the Top, as originally intended. Thus, in Year 2, the State reestablished the group and included more school- and LEA-level representation, including four superintendents, two principals, and the Tennessee Teacher of the Year. The FTTT Advisory Council now meets twice a year to review progress updates and provide strategic guidance on key implementation challenges. In addition, although teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders gave the State feedback in Year 1 that they agreed with the policies espoused in the FTTT plan, communications was an area they acknowledged needed improvement. As a result, the State implemented several policies in Year 2 aimed at sharing information with the LEAs, including a weekly review process by the Commissioner and key SEA leaders to ensure coordinated, consistent messaging to LEAs.

In addition, TDOE contracted with the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TN CRED) to evaluate and examine Tennessee's reform initiatives. In SY 2011-2012, TN CRED supported TDOE most extensively in the evaluation of the State's teacher and principal evaluation systems. As part of its evaluation, TN CRED conducted surveys and focus groups with educators to assess the implementation of the evaluation systems and to inform the State of LEAs' progress and areas in need of adjustment. The State received a report of initial results from the Year 2 evaluation in July 2012, and expects to receive an in-depth report in Year 3. TN CRED's evaluation of other initiatives is also underway, including evaluations of the State's alternative compensation projects and STEM professional development. TN CRED also conducted analyses to inform the revised model for how schools become eligible for the ASD, and examined the issues of governance, coherence, and relevance in Tennessee's educational data systems.

[6] This number includes 136 LEAs, and 4 State special schools: Alvin C. York, Tennessee School for the Deaf, Tennessee School for the Blind, and West Tennessee School for the Deaf.

Through the RSN, Tennessee provided a resource to the Race to the Top community by sharing its communications strategies and tools to help other SEAs map out their strategies, plans, and efforts. The State shared these promising practices in a publication titled *Considering Social Media as a Strategic Opportunity: A 'How To' Guide*.[7]

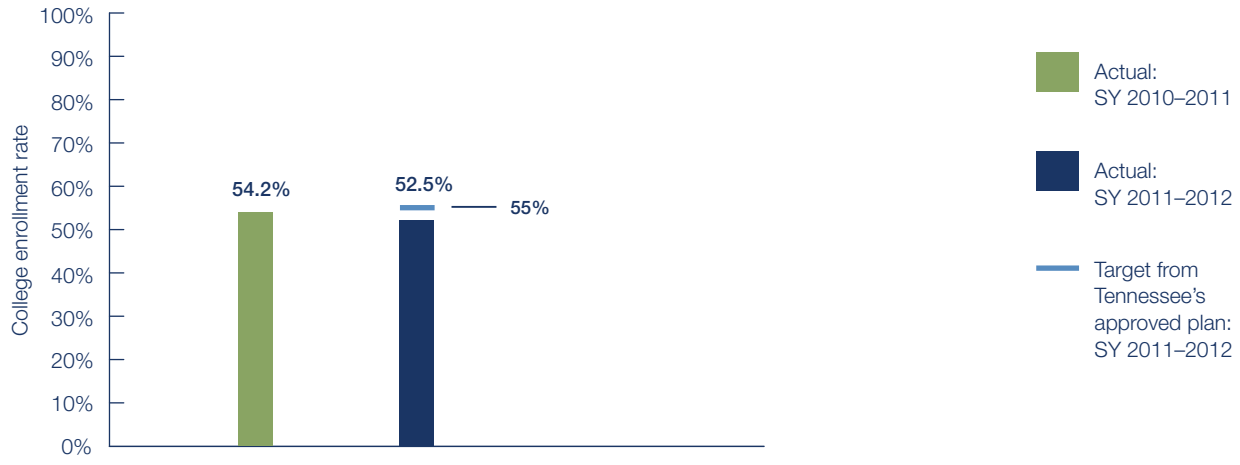
Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

TDOE's new performance management processes are more productive and timely than those used in Year 1 and the State's existing divisions are successfully taking on the new roles created by FTTT. Moreover, Tennessee is being strategic and reflective in its effort to ensure that projects are cohesive and produce high-quality products.

The State also created new support structures and enhanced its communication efforts to better address LEA needs. TDOE began restructuring and repurposing its existing FSCs to become content-oriented COREs to support LEAs in improving academic achievement. While COREs offer major promise for TDOE's capacity to regularly support LEAs, success will be dependent upon timely and effective implementation in Year 3. Finally, Tennessee revised its Year 3 Scope of Work submission process to include more detail on planned activities and a peer review process to foster a better understanding of strong plans and encourage connections between LEAs.

The State has promising mechanisms, including partnership meetings and COREs, for establishing stakeholder communications and feedback routines to support LEAs. Still, attention is needed at the LEA level to develop high-quality plans and to continuously assess progress and provide real-time differentiated support. Moreover, additional time is needed to assess the impact of TDOE's revisions to its LEA performance management processes and communication strategy, as well as the effectiveness of the COREs.

College Enrollment Rates

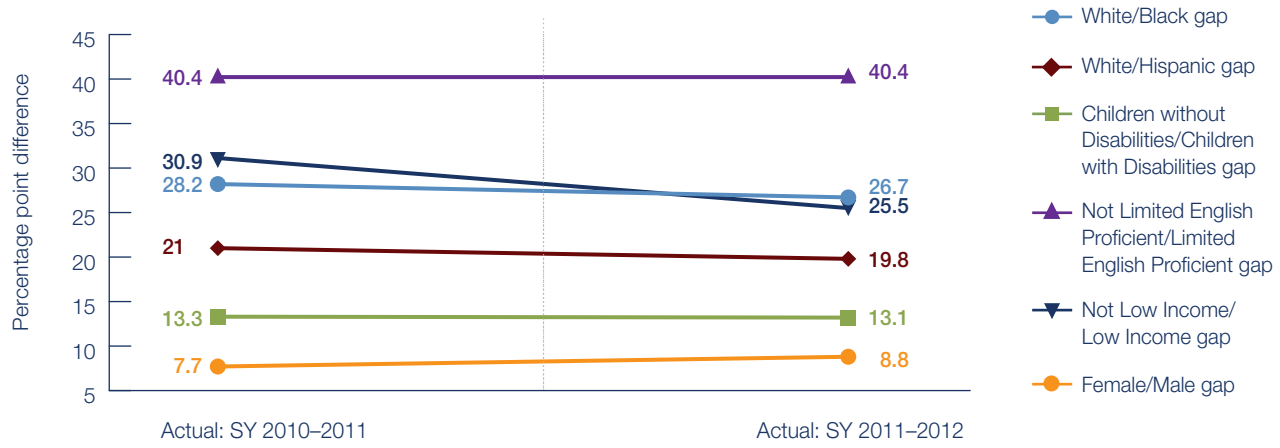


Preliminary SY 2011–2012 data reported as of: September 28, 2012

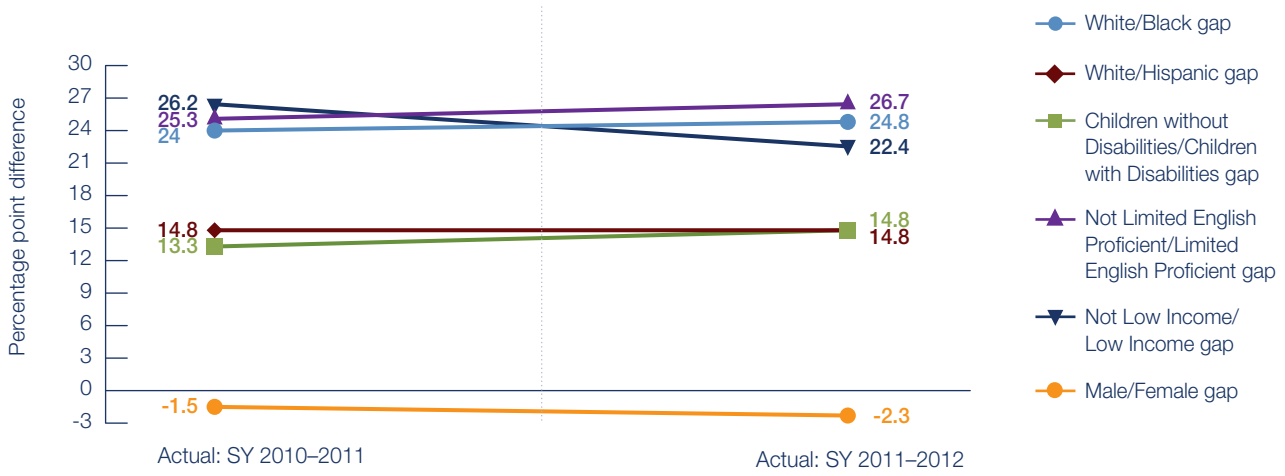
For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

[7] This publication is available at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/index.html.

Achievement Gap on Tennessee's ELA Assessment



Achievement Gap on Tennessee's Mathematics Assessment



Preliminary SY 2011–2012 data reported as of: August 27, 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.

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

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

In Year 1, Tennessee officially adopted the CCSS and became a governing member of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment consortium. During Year 2, Tennessee implemented the CCSS in K-2 in 90 percent of its LEAs. TDOE and the LEAs will continue to work collaboratively over the next two school years in anticipation of fully implementing the new standards in all grades and subjects by SY 2013-2014 and the assessments by SY 2014-2015.

Based on feedback from the field about State support in Year 1, the State learned that implementation of its TEAM evaluation system overshadowed the implementation of CCSS in K-2. In addition, the State identified a need for more hands-on and focused trainings to support LEAs in transitioning to the CCSS. As a result, the State made adjustments to enhance its resources and support related to CCSS.

Tennessee established a Common Core Leadership Council, a working team of 13 leaders from across the State, to guide the development of the training and roll out plan for full implementation of CCSS in all grades and subjects by SY 2013-2014, with implementation of middle grades (*e.g.*, grades three through eight) mathematics statewide in SY 2012-2013. In Year 2, the Council engaged educators from across the State and received input on the design of the 2012 summer training and ongoing CCSS transition plan. The State helped to ensure transparency and communication with all educators by publishing updates from the Council via its website (www.tncore.org) as well as sending bi-weekly updates to LEA teams.

In addition, the State established and implemented a rigorous recruitment and selection process for core coaches, hiring more than 200 teachers from across the State to lead training and ongoing support for the grades three through eight transition to the CCSS in mathematics. In the summer of 2012, these core coaches received intensive training from the Institute for Learning (IFL) and subsequently led summer training sessions for more than 10,000 Tennessee educators. Starting in SY 2012-2013, core coaches will help build LEA capacity for the transition to the new standards by leading their peers in learning experiences around the scoring process for the State's constructed response assessments. Core coaches will serve as contacts for ongoing support throughout the year, while maintaining their classroom roles and responsibilities. Additionally, based on feedback from LEAs, TDOE is working to embed mathematics and data specialists in each of the COREs to provide ongoing, personalized support. The State believes these staff will streamline delivery of LEA-specific support both to LEAs that request support as well as to those that the CORE director determines are in need of additional support.

> Tennessee's Common Core transition plan is based on a peer-led model of training and support. In the summer of 2012, the State recruited, selected, and trained more than 200 educators statewide to serve as core coaches and lead their peers in the transition to the CCSS in mathematics for grades three through eight. Through this plan, the State plans to provide leadership opportunities for its most effective teachers, and embed expertise on the standards within LEAs to help sustain the CCSS transition beyond Race to the Top.

Core Coaches will use the skills they have developed through the IFL training and the experiences they had leading summer 2012 training to help LEAs implement the mathematics standards in grades three through eight during Year 3. In summer 2012, approximately 10,000 educators, including teachers, principals, higher education faculty, and district leadership, completed the State's mathematics training and gave positive feedback on the quality of instruction. This training included a three-day grade-level specific workshop with sessions on the content shifts from the Tennessee State standards to the CCSS, as well as specific time for school-level teams and administrators to design action plans to take back to schools. The State is still refining its plan for implementing the CCSS in other grades and subjects but is committed to fully implementing the CCSS in all grades and subjects by SY 2013-2014.

To facilitate the implementation of the CCSS in other grades and subjects, the State initiated a plan to pilot the implementation of the CCSS in English language arts (ELA). Sixty of the State's 140 LEAs have committed to participate in the pilot during Year 3. Additionally, Tennessee's State Board of Education launched a committee to study high school course offerings and determine next steps to ensure close CCSS alignment in mathematics and other specialized disciplines in grades 9 through 12.

To support Tennessee's educator preparation programs, the State contracted with the Ayers Institute, a Tennessee-based philanthropy group working in conjunction with Lipscomb University, to develop CCSS training and resources for institutions of higher education (IHE) faculty that would be available for SY 2013-2014. Specifically, the contractors will provide professional development, facilitate the creation of video models that use CCSS in the classroom, develop a handbook for CCSS content pedagogy, coordinate an ongoing IHE teacher preparation Common Core Advisory Board, and design

a website for the dissemination of resources on the new standards. Using these resources, TDOE will partner with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) to provide ongoing support to the educator preparation programs so that educators enter the field with the skills needed to immediately implement the new standards. The State acknowledged that success hinges on individual IHE faculty boards adopting the CCSS content as part of their curriculum, and quickly completing the curriculum revision prior to implementation in SY 2013-2014.

In Year 2, a team of SEA, LEA, and other participants from Tennessee collaborated with other Race to the Top States during RSN meetings in Washington, DC, and Boston, Massachusetts to discuss, develop, and enhance strategies to align and support the implementation of teacher and leader effectiveness initiatives within the context of the newly implemented CCSS.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State made major progress in the implementation of this reform area as evidenced by rigorously recruiting Core Coaches, establishing focused CCSS training content, and developing mechanisms to engage local educators in the ongoing development of the plan to transition to the CCSS. In addition, the State continued to solicit and use feedback from the field to inform and guide continuous improvement of implementation. While the State has immediate plans to implement CCSS in mathematics in grades three through eight and pilot implementation of the CCSS in ELA in Year 3, it has not yet refined its comprehensive plan for how it will scale up to ensure implementation of all grades and subjects by SY 2013-2014. The State plans to use lessons learned from implementation to date to inform improvements to its CCSS trainings and supports as it rolls out the standards over the next two years. The State, however, needs additional time to assess the impact of the training and resources on instructional practice in LEAs.

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.

Fully implementing an SLDS

The State's plan includes enhancements to the accessibility and display of data currently contained in the SLDS through the EWDS and an extension to its P-20 system to include data from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary education. In Year 2, the State piloted the EWDS with 10 LEAs, but, due to the timing of the pilot release, the feedback was not as rich as anticipated. Upon completion of the pilot, the State elected to delay statewide implementation of the EWDS to address technical issues and ensure quality data. Ultimately, the State decided to redevelop the data system in order to provide enhanced functionality and expanded data metrics to educators. The State also determined that revising the EWDS architecture was necessary in order to drive improvements in the State's overall P-12 data system. Despite this six-month delay, the State committed to launching the EWDS in early 2013 and providing LEAs with PDF reports in the meantime that contain data on the indicators that will eventually be included in the EWDS.

TDOE made progress developing the infrastructure needed to launch a P-20 data system in early 2013. The University of Tennessee's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) is managing the project and facilitating collaboration among TDOE, THEC, and the Tennessee Department of Labor to build data-sharing agreements and complete an initial analysis of available data. In addition, CBER facilitated monthly project review meetings with staff from each of these partner organizations to discuss progress and risks in the development of the P-20 system. Once launched in 2013, this system will augment the State's kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) data with college enrollment data; progression and completion information from THEC; and workforce wage records and employment history from the Department of Labor. Over time, the State plans to integrate data from the Department of Children's Services and the Department of Human Services.

Data Systems to Support Instruction

Using data to improve instruction

While Tennessee educators have had access to a wealth of data for several years, the State recognizes that building local capacity to purposefully use the data for strategic decision-making is a continuing challenge. To address this challenge, TDOE provided a variety of in-person and online resources aimed at helping educators analyze and use data to improve instruction. In partnership with Battelle for Kids, the State provided in-person regional workshops to support educators in using and interpreting formative assessment results and value-added data. As of May 2012, staff from nearly every LEA in the State had participated in one of these workshops. In addition, based on feedback from LEAs, in Year 3 TDOE plans to embed data specialists in each of the COREs to provide ongoing, personalized support.

The State supplements its in-person support with online resources to help educators access and analyze data. For example, the State completed the expansion of its teacher and principal personalized data dashboards to include additional student performance data and college readiness projections. The SAS Institute also developed eight hours of Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) content for pre-service institutions and is piloting the online modules with approximately 400 current teachers, recent teacher preparation program graduates, and IHE faculty. The State expects to implement these modules for 2,000 pre-service teachers in teacher training programs in SY 2012-2013. In addition to this TVAAS content, all LEA, school, and IHE staff have access to optional online modules on value-added data, formative instruction, strategic compensation, and highly effective teacher and principal practices. As of June 2012, the State reported that approximately 305,000 educators completed one of these optional online modules, representing an increase of nearly 100,000 participants since Year 1. Of the courses that staff members have completed to date, more than two-thirds pertained to using value-added data to inform educator evaluations.

The State solicited LEA feedback on State-provided resources and learned that LEAs generally found the online courses and face-to-face trainings useful and, in particular, thought these resources improved teacher capacity to interpret student outcomes data. The State also plans to continue to solicit and use LEA feedback to inform adjustments to the resources and supports over time. For example, the modules developed by Battelle were intentionally designed to be living documents that can change periodically to fit the evolving needs of educators.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

As evidenced by the high usage of and positive feedback for the in-person and online trainings, the State successfully engaged educators in ways to access and use data to improve instruction. TDOE and its partners made strides in developing the P-20 longitudinal data system in Year 2 and are well situated to continue making progress in SY 2012-2013, particularly in areas related to security and end-user piloting.

Due to technical difficulties and system design issues, however, the State is further delayed on its timeline to make an enhanced data system available to LEAs. While the State has taken steps to address technical issues and data quality concerns of the EWDS, the delay in system development creates uncertainty around the State's ability to complete the broader proposed system revisions in a truncated time period. Based on the limited feedback the State received during the EWDS pilot, the State must gather additional stakeholder input on system quality during the re-development phase.

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.

Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

During Year 2, Tennessee continued to implement several teacher and leader pathway programs funded through Race to the Top. The State continued to expand its UTeach program, and provided supports for and oversaw implementation of LEAs receiving competitive pre-service and exemplary leadership residency grants in Year 1.

The UTeach program is one of the largest teacher pathway programs in the State. It focuses on preparing secondary education teachers in STEM fields. Based on enrollment and retention rates to date, the State estimates that the Race to the Top-funded expansion of the program to four additional sites will produce an additional 150 mathematics and science teachers by SY 2014-2015, exceeding the State's target of 100 teachers. In addition, the State highlighted the caliber of participants, noting that the grade point averages of program participants in three of the four programs exceeded the university average. To ensure the ongoing success of the program, the State is supporting IHEs in building endowments to sustain UTeach programs beyond the grant. TDOE will leverage its CCSS and pre-service projects with UTeach to ensure that educators graduate with the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully contribute to the success of their schools.

The State used Race to the Top funds to provide competitive grants to LEAs implementing teacher and leader residency programs in SY 2011-2012. In Year 2, the State established and implemented communication and oversight processes to track progress of and provide support to each grantee. In January 2011, the State awarded two pre-service and two exemplary leadership awards to LEAs, each for approximately $2 million per year for the four years of the Race to the Top grant. The pre-service awards include a project to expand the Memphis Teacher Residency program in partnership with Memphis City Schools and a project in Hamilton County to expand the TEACH/Here pre-service residency model into a middle school mathematics-focused program called Project Inspire. The exemplary leadership awards support programs in Metro Nashville Public Schools and Memphis City Schools. Metro Nashville's program will identify, recruit, and train approximately 35 veteran, highly effective teachers as instructional practice mentors for novice teachers in at least four high-priority schools in each year of the grant. Similarly, Memphis City Schools will recruit, select, and train four external leadership fellows and 25 veteran, effective principals to serve as leadership mentors to support the development of aspiring and newly placed principals during their first three years. In Year 3, the State will continue to identify and implement procedures for monitoring, evaluating, and sustaining these residency programs.

In an effort to support, monitor, evaluate, and sustain the residency programs, TDOE worked collaboratively with each grantee to establish performance plans that include specific and measureable goals with performance metrics (*e.g.*, participant effectiveness, enrollment figures, program retention) aligned to specific data sources. TDOE established a monitoring and support process that includes quarterly check-ins, year-end performance reports, and annual site visits with multiple stakeholders such as LEA administrators, building-level leaders, mentor teachers, pre-service teacher candidates, IHE faculty, and community organization partners. These processes allow the State to continually review input and output measures and gather information on program implementation, problem solve when issues are identified, and share best practices with other LEAs.

The State also provided educators with pre-service supports through its Teach TN Commissioner's Fellows program. Through this program, the State recruited and trained 29 new fellows in SY 2011-2012 to teach in high-need subject areas. The State reported that 28 of these 29 fellows plan to teach in SY 2012-2013; the retention rate for the program to date is 83 percent.[8]

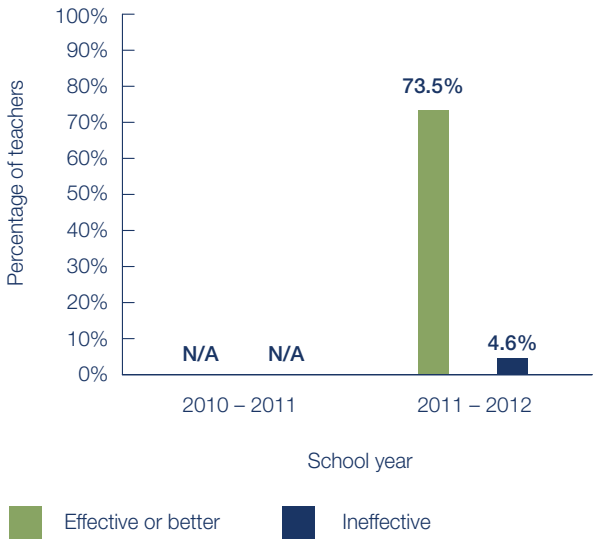
[8] Twenty-three of the 35 fellows from SY 2010-2011 taught in SY 2011-2012.

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

In Year 2, the State fully implemented TEAM teacher and principal evaluations in all of its LEAs. To help ease the transition to TEAM, TDOE established mechanisms to provide real-time responses to LEA questions, feedback loops to inform ongoing improvement, and data review processes to analyze trends in the field and areas in need of additional training or support. The State's efforts to support LEAs are exemplified by TDOE answering 98 percent of the more than 2,800 questions received from LEAs within 24 hours of receipt. In addition, the State trained teams from LEAs on each component of the TEAM model in summer 2011, and based on feedback from the field, communicated additional information in fall 2011. Moreover, to follow-up on the 2011 summer training, the State held 12 mid-year support meetings across the State to discuss the implementation of TEAM. In total, more than 500 participants representing almost every LEA attended at least one of these sessions. While many of the routines (*e.g.*, rapid response email, website, and webinars) put in place to support TEAM also applied to administrator evaluations, the overall level of training and support in SY 2011-2012 for administrator evaluation implementation was not as extensive as the training and support for teacher evaluations.

The State implemented its summer 2012 professional development plan based on areas in which LEAs need additional support to prepare for the second year of implementation. TDOE hired 50 master evaluators from LEAs across the State to serve as TEAM trainers and conduct the summer trainings. To ensure that the trainings included content on the principal evaluation process in response to feedback that the State's guidance regarding principal evaluations was inadequate, the summer 2012 training plan included a day focused on the implementation of administrator and alternative educator evaluation rubrics. Year 1 feedback from educators indicated that the State's guidance on Academic Achievement Measures, which account for 15 percent of their total evaluation score, was, in general, confusing. In response, the State included additional training and support for educators on selecting these measures. In addition, based on the overall high trends in the SY 2011-2012 evaluators' observation ratings, the State intentionally designed summer 2012 training to address methods for differentiating performance based on the observation rubric. Moving forward, TDOE will continue to analyze the performance distribution carefully, including an analysis of the correlation between observation and value-added ratings.

Percentage of teachers in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were evaluated as effective or better or ineffective in the prior academic year



Percentage of principals in participating LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems who were evaluated as effective or better or ineffective in the prior academic year

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

Refinements to TEAM based on stakeholder feedback

The State has consistently communicated that TEAM is a work in progress and that continuous improvement based on stakeholder feedback is a key characteristic of the TEAM model. As part of its continuous improvement strategy and to alleviate some of the burden TEAM places on administrators, TDOE worked with the State Board of Education to reduce the minimum number of visits required of each administrator by allowing for evaluation of multiple elements in a single observation visit. In addition, the State decided to base the minimum number of required observations on a teacher's licensure status and evaluation score from the previous year, with the intent of differentiating the minimum number of evaluations each principal or administrator must conduct each year.

In addition, the State released a TEAM flexibility package in March 2012 to provide LEAs with options for implementation in SY 2012-2013. The package included information on how to request "tailoring" of the evaluation system to meet LEA-specific needs, propose modifications within specified parameters, or apply for probationary status for a new alternate model.[9] In May 2012, the State approved 32 LEA requests for slight modifications to evaluation implementation, including increasing the number of unannounced observations and adjusting the structure of observations for teachers with high value-added and observation scores from the prior year.

TN CRED published a report in summer 2012 on the initial results from the Year 2 evaluation system implementation. With support from TN CRED, TDOE used evaluation results and historical data to analyze TEAM performance distribution and inform targeted technical assistance plans for LEAs. The State also worked with the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) to gather feedback from stakeholders across the State on improving the teacher evaluation system. Consequently, based on feedback from teachers and administrators in Year 2 and the SCORE report released in June 2012, the State made additional modifications to TEAM in August 2012 to improve the evaluation system in Year 3.

The State is taking actions to refine its approach to evaluating educators who teach non-tested grades and subjects, including piloting and approving alternative measures. For example, the Stanford 10 assessment and peer-review portfolios that were piloted in Year 2 allow LEAs to calculate individual value-added scores for grades one through three and for fine arts, respectively. Although educators will still have the option to use a school-wide value-added measure based on Tennessee's State assessments, additional assessments will expand the flexibility educators have to choose an assessment that best fits the content they teach.

In order to better understand other States' efforts, Tennessee collaborated with several States through webinars in late 2011 and early 2012 as part of the RSN to review and discuss potential solutions to address student assessment and growth measurement in non-tested grades and subjects. In spring 2012, the RSN asked Tennessee to share lessons learned from implementation of its evaluation system with other States. TDOE hosted Race to the Top States for a one-day meeting in April 2012 during which it profiled TEAM and discussed what was learned during the first year of full implementation. As part of this meeting, TDOE gathered superintendents from across the State to share their experiences with implementing at the classroom level and their recommendations to other States when rolling out their evaluation systems. In August 2012, Tennessee began participating in the RSN's Quality Evaluation Rollout Work Group, made up of Race to the Top grantees fully implementing their teacher evaluation systems statewide in 2012. In addition, Tennessee contributed to a publication, released in July 2012, which informed other States of Tennessee's transition to TEAM and illustrated first-year implementation challenges and lessons learned.[10]

South Carroll, a small, one school, K-12 LEA, focused their teacher evaluation system implementation on rapid improvement for educators who are not yet exceeding expectations. For all teachers achieving a level 1, 2 or 3 on their evaluation, South Carroll created a teacher improvement plan geared specifically to each teacher's strengths and weaknesses. To maintain a team-oriented culture and provide rewards for both success and improvement, evaluation and student outcomes were tied to South Carroll's strategic compensation model. The focus on improving instructional practice, as well as a unifying compensation model, led to teachers taking ownership of their Professional Learning Communities, the expansion of the use of data dashboards and data notebooks, and ultimately strong student growth for the school, which received a school-wide growth score of 5 last year.

Alternative compensation models

In Year 1, the State awarded Innovation Acceleration Fund (IAF) grants to four LEAs that proposed to transition from the traditional salary schedule, which compensates educators for their years of experience and level of education, to a schedule that rewards educators for raising student achievement. In Year 2, all four IAF grantees implemented new educator evaluation systems in conjunction with alternative salary schedules. The State reported

[9] More information is available at http://team-tn.org/forms.

[10] This publication can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/index.html.

that based on initial analyses of survey data and focus group feedback, approximately 80 percent of educators in IAF LEAs rated their awareness of their LEA's alternative compensation plan as "strong." The State expects that when they make compensation payments in fall 2012 they will obtain further information about implementation. TDOE expects to award two to four LEAs a total of $2.15 million in multi-year IAF grants in Year 3. In an effort to sustain the existing programs and help the next cohort create high-quality plans, TDOE is providing assistance to LEAs to build sustainable alternative salary schedules and is working with potential round two applicants in advance of the application deadline.

In SY 2011-2012, the State made its second round of Competitive Supplemental Fund (CSF) grants to 7 of the 27 LEAs that had the smallest Race to the Top allocations; the funds are being used to support initiatives related to evaluation, compensation, or human capital development. The State plans to use evaluation scores and TVAAS data to assess the quality of the programs supported with CSF grants. However, given the short time frame for implementing the second round of CSF grants, it could be difficult for the State to accurately measure the programs' effects at this time. The State plans to share lessons learned from the CSF grantees' focused professional development plans and implementation in CSF LEAs to other LEAs in the State. The State also announced its third round of awards to a total of 12 LEAs in fall 2012.

TN CRED will evaluate LEAs' implementation of alternative compensation systems through IAF, CSF, and/or the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF)[11] grants. Based on the number of LEAs participating in programs supported by TIF, IAF, and CSF grants, the State met its revised target for 10 percent of participating Race to the Top LEAs to have qualifying evaluation systems that are used to inform teacher and principal compensation in SY 2011-2012.

Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

In February 2012, Tennessee partnered with the Distinguished Professionals Education Institute (DPEI) to expand its program to recruit professionals in technical fields ("technical professionals") to teach in LEAs that otherwise would be unable to properly staff themselves with certified full-time educators. DPEI hired a director for the Middle Tennessee region, and established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with one LEA to participate in the program. To foster sustainability, the State set an expectation that LEAs that participate in this program pay approximately two-thirds of the cost of each Distinguished Professional. DPEI fell short of their goal of recruiting 80 technical professionals to teach in SY 2012-2013 and the State is in discussions with DPEI to determine how to address this challenge.

Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

In fall 2011, the State publicly released enhanced teacher preparation program report cards that included TVAAS effectiveness ratings of graduates and narratives explaining the data presented for all teacher preparation programs in Tennessee.[12] The programs reported SY 2011-2012 data in July 2012, and released this data publicly in fall 2012. By 2013, the State plans to include data on institutions' ability to train effective school leaders using a rubric piloted in 2012 that evaluates implementation of the Learning Centered Leadership policy.

TDOE indicated that it is developing new licensure and accreditation standards informed by the results from the teacher preparation report card. The State will require programs to improve deficiencies noted on the report card in order for the institution to recommend teachers for license in those areas. In an effort to prepare for the transition to new licensure standards, THEC is working closely with the SAS Institute, the vendor that calculates the value-added component of TEAM, to develop rigorous value-added analysis reports for all of THEC's institutions.

Providing effective support to teachers and principals

Support for teachers

The State executed a contract with Nashville Public Television to, among other things, develop customized learning objects (CLOs) to support CCSS implementation. In May 2012, each of the local Public Broadcasting System affiliates presented a CLO to support CCSS implementation and received feedback from the State. The State assigned content to specific affiliate stations and engaged teachers in content reviews to ensure that the CLOs were of high quality.

Tennessee's original Race to the Top plan included an expansion of the ELC as another mechanism for supporting educators. However, the State has since determined that it should not invest in such an expansion, given the fundamental issues with those systems and emerging technological solutions in the field. The State is considering how the ELC may connect to CCSS and the new Chief Information Officer's technology plans. Given its hesitancy to implement the ELC as originally intended, the State may modify its approach to meet its goal of providing high-quality resources to support instruction.

[11] TIF is another program funded by the Department that focuses on educator evaluation, compensation, and human capital development.

[12] The Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 49-5-108 statutorily requires a report to measure the effectiveness of programs through retention and placement rates of teacher preparation program graduates, Praxis II pass rates, and teacher effectiveness on the basis of TVASS.

After a delay in Year 1, the Strengthening Instruction in Tennessee Elementary Schools – Focus on Mathematics (SITES M) program extension completed its first year of mathematics professional development in five middle schools and five elementary schools, serving a total of 104 teachers. In addition to in-service teachers, 20 pre-service teachers from partner IHEs, whom faculty identified as in need of additional support, participated in the SITES M summer institute and weekly workshops during SY 2011-2012. Although the State successfully launched the program in Year 2, attrition of program participants, the quality of the preparation program partners, and demonstrated outcomes for the SITES M program raised concerns. The State is monitoring the progress of SITES M to address any issues that arise.

Support for principals

During Year 2, the State made significant progress in articulating a refined approach to improving and supporting school leadership. The State reexamined its State-level efforts to improve leadership pipelines, and focused on transitioning from input- to outcomes-based determinations of leadership quality based on evolving leadership needs that have arisen due to implementation of initiatives like TEAM and the CCSS. With the support of the RSN, Tennessee developed a concept paper to articulate a revised leadership strategy, including a framework for the overall approach, milestones, strategies, and timelines. Still, the State has not progressed against its plan for a Leadership Action Tank as outlined in the State's application. The Department is considering the State's request to amend its Leadership Action Tank from a stand-alone research entity to an overall strategy to improve preparation and support of leaders that utilizes key levers like revision to the Tennessee Instruction Leadership standards (TILS), preparation program approval and renewal processes, recruitment and hiring practices, licensure advancement, principal evaluation, teacher leadership, and ongoing professional development programs like the Tennessee Academy of School Leaders (TASL).

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State implemented its teacher and leader pathway programs with fidelity and achieved high retention rates, as well as designed and implemented a process for monitoring the progress of each program. Over the course of the next two years, TDOE will continue to address the challenge of collecting data to evaluate the programs and will work with its external partners to ensure that the programs are sustainable beyond the grant period.

Tennessee also successfully implemented its TEAM model in every LEA and school in Year 2. Overall, despite some frustration with the swift pace of implementation, the State reported that educators viewed the evaluation positively and felt that holding educators accountable for results was appropriate and fair, and that the State was successful in messaging that the new process is a system that enables thoughtful reflection and professional growth rather than a punitive tool. In Year 3, TDOE will implement the adjustments made by the State Board of Education in August 2012 to help address the issues raised by stakeholders during the first year of implementation. In particular, the State is committed to ensuring that LEAs assess more teachers using an individual growth metric and that they receive evaluation results promptly.

The State continues to refine its support mechanisms for teachers and principals related to the ELC, Leadership Action Tank, and the SITES M programs. Though it has made strides in developing more coherent plans in these projects, the State may face challenges implementing the amended plans during the grant period due to the delays and a truncated timeline and may find it difficult to determine the efficacy of these programs.

Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

Achievement School District (ASD)

As authorized by FTTT, the ASD is a State-run LEA that provides a structure for turning around the State's lowest-achieving schools through direct oversight and partnerships with nationally recognized non-profit organizations. After amending its timeline and approach in Year 1 due to delays and new leadership, the State has made significant progress in Year 2 to establish the ASD as an LEA by building an ASD Central Office, human resource and finance systems, and school-level capacity.

The State co-managed five of the State's lowest-achieving schools in Year 2, while completing activities to prepare for full operation of the ASD in SY 2012-2013, when the ASD will be composed of three "Achievement Schools" directly managed by the ASD and three charter-led schools.[14] Although the ASD will be fully operational in SY 2012-2013, in April 2012, the State requested additional adjustments to refine the requirements for a school to become eligible to become part of the ASD and its operation capacity budget, giving the ASD the flexibility to expand operations into additional schools consistent with the superintendent's expansion strategy. The State submitted evidence that the ASD had been formally established as an LEA before the August 30, 2012 deadline.[15]

In Year 2, ASD staff participated in a summer induction program, including school-level design planning for leadership teams, culture building among school staff, professional development on instructional sessions aligned to the CCSS, and opportunities to participate in ongoing community outreach. ASD staff communicated with teachers, administrators, and district-level staff to build buy-in for future efforts to recruit quality staff for the schools. Moreover, the ASD worked to build the capacity of its current leadership by providing training and development opportunities to principals in ASD schools, including summer training at the University of Virginia's Turnaround Principal Academy. The ASD also hired three planning-year resident principals to provide support in ASD-operated schools in SY 2012-2013 while preparing to take full-time positions in the new ASD schools in SY 2013-2014. The State believes these trainings and resident principals will help ensure the placement of high-quality principals in ASD schools.

In an effort to help support and grow the ASD, TDOE engaged stakeholders, recruited high-quality staff, and trained existing staff to ensure continuous professional growth and improved student achievement. The State has made progress communicating about the ASD to various stakeholders, which has contributed to stronger local awareness, support, and interest in ASD schools. In addition, ASD staff conducted extensive outreach to nearby communities and to broader State and education networks, and plans to continue these engagement efforts through the start of SY 2012-2013.

ASD staff plan to assess and monitor ASD schools (both charter-run schools and Achievement Schools) over time to ensure they meet the performance expectations for student growth and achievement, community impact, and narrowing the achievement gap. For student growth and achievement, the ASD set a goal for its schools to increase student achievement yearly to ensure that they move from among the bottom 5 percent to the top 25 percent of schools in the State within five years. Given that the student achievement outcomes of the five ASD co-managed schools in SY 2011-2012 did not demonstrate major gains in student achievement, the State recognizes that this is an ambitious goal, but is hopeful that the people and structures the ASD has put in place will help ensure it can meet this goal.

Supporting low-performing schools

Tennessee developed an accountability continuum along which the lowest-achieving schools receive increasing levels of SEA support to improve student achievement. The State identified those schools on the accountability continuum as Focus Schools or Renewal Schools.[16] In Year 2, the State continued to support Focus grants to a total of 176 schools in 52 LEAs to purchase support services from a list of State-approved providers. In addition, the State provided Renewal grants to 19 schools in eight LEAs to support implementation of comprehensive reform efforts.

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

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

[14] All schools in the bottom five percent in overall student achievement in the State, which also make up the State's "priority" category in its accountability system and are considered the State's persistently lowest- achieving schools, are eligible for the ASD.

[15] The amendment update letter can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/tennessee-9.pdf.

[16] At the time of the submission of its Race to the Top application, the State defined Focus Schools as those schools in the first and second year of improvement status, and Renewal Schools as those in the third and fourth year of improvement status.

Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

In September 2012, to align with its approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request[17], TDOE revised its accountability structure, which determines performance based on a combination of achievement targets and gap closure targets. In this new structure, additional school-level accountability and State supports were identified for Tennessee's lowest-achieving schools categorized as Focus and Priority Schools.[18] In addition, the State included funding to support its schools with the highest proficiency scores and rate of growth, categorized as Reward Schools.[19]

The State is in the process of expanding its supports for its lowest-achieving schools through multiple competitive grant award opportunities and a Gap Closure Specialist working through the State's CORE offices. The State ran a competition for two-year grant awards available to a subset of the 170 identified Focus Schools and awarded 56 in fall 2012. Applications focused on a school's plans for individualized student support, high-quality job-embedded professional development, performance management and sustainability, or another area with evidence of identified school need. The State also contracted to provide each non-grantee Focus School with a Tennessee Academic Specialist (TAS) to address performance gaps in these schools. TASs will provide support services to address specific school needs including coaching school leaders, observing and providing feedback to educators, conducting staff development, and visiting exemplar schools. The State will hold the contractor accountable for results through the performance of the Focus Schools served and through intermediary metrics, including formative assessment data and satisfaction surveys from principals and district leaders.

The State held a grant competition to recruit highly effective teacher leaders from the schools with the highest proficiency and growth scores (categorized as Reward Schools) to serve as "ambassadors" to Focus Schools in their regions. The State received 50 applications, and is currently reviewing these applications to select roughly 20 ambassadors.

The State also partnered with the Tennessee College Access and Success Network (TCASN) to expand its postsecondary awareness programming and to provide grants to expand or create college access programs across the State. In Year 2, TCASN awarded a second round of grants to 18 LEAs and non-profit organizations. The State expects these programs to serve more than 22,000 students. TCASN also continued to oversee and support the 11 first-round grantees who received awards in December 2011 targeted at expanding, sustaining, or starting-up college access programs that will reach an estimated 11,000 students.

The Charter School Fund project is composed of three groups that aim to increase the number of high-quality charter schools both within and beyond the ASD: the Charter School Growth Fund (CSGF), Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Memphis, and KIPP Nashville. Through the end of the grant period, CSGF will establish four to six new Charter Management Organizations and expand the number of charter schools in the State. CSGF appears on track to fully implement its project based on evidence provided on the number of executed planning contracts, contracts in process, and awarded charter incubator projects. The KIPP schools are also on track with their approved plan for expansion and implementation.

As part of its work with the RSN, representatives from Tennessee presented the State's approach to recruiting external partners during a webinar in April 2012 for Race to the Top colleagues in a third-party provider working group. Specifically, State representatives outlined their process for vetting and identifying third-party vendors to match the needs of schools and districts. Similarly, Tennessee shared a snapshot of its accountability continuum with Race to the Top colleagues in the School Turnaround Community of Practice. The presentation focused on the increasing levels of support received by the lowest-achieving schools and shared promising practices regarding State-run LEAs that provides a structure for turning around the State's lowest-achieving schools through direct oversight and charter conversions.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State made progress on several projects in this area during Year 2, including significant improvements to the ASD and TCASN after initial timeline delays. In addition, the State adjusted its accountability structure and specified additional supports for its lowest-achieving schools. The State acknowledges that expanding the ASD to the desired level by SY 2014-2015 may be a challenge; therefore, continually assessing the quality of implementation and building capacity to scale up the State's efforts in SY 2013-2014 are critically important. In addition, the State must closely monitor the student growth and achievement of students in ASD schools to inform continuous improvement as it works toward its ambitious goals for ASD schools.

[17] On September 23, 2011, the Department offered each interested State educational agency (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 (NCLB), 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.

[18] In September 2012, the Department approved the State's request to amend its use of funds to support its "Focus" and "Renewal" schools. The State's funding now supports categories of the State's lowest-achieving schools aligned with its approved ESEA flexibility plan. Focus Schools are defined as the ten percent of schools with the largest achievement gaps, subgroup performance below a 5 percent proficiency threshold, or high schools with graduation rates less than 60 percent; and Priority Schools are defined as schools in the bottom 5 percent of overall performance across tested grades and subjects. The Department expects to receive a future amendment request from the State for its approach to supporting its Priority schools.

[19] According to the State's approved ESEA flexibility plan, Reward Schools are now defined as Schools in the top 5 percent of overall performance and schools in the top 5 percent of fastest growth–a total of 10 percent of schools in all.

State's STEM initiatives

Tennessee's STEM Platform Schools offer their students applied, in-depth STEM curricula and serve as models for how to implement innovative STEM projects. A regional STEM Innovation Hub supports each STEM Platform School. These regional hubs identify and connect STEM assets, partners, and programs in their region to maximize their impact.

In Year 2, the State expanded the enrollment and course offerings in its first STEM Platform School, Stratford STEM Magnet High School in Nashville, and continued to work with its second STEM Platform School, L&N STEM Academy in Knoxville. Based on its experience with the first round of STEM Platform School and Hub awards, the State made adjustments to its RFP process for the second round to include more explicit coordination between the schools and Hubs in the initial application process and provision of front-end technical assistance. Using the new RFP process, the State awarded three Platform Schools and Hubs in March 2012 that will begin operation in SY 2012-2013.[20] The State reworked its contract with Battelle Memorial to provide additional staff capacity to support this work, and engaged the STEM Advisory Council to help build local capacity and plan for sustainability after the grant period.

The diversity of geography, grade configuration, and school structure among the five Platform Schools and Hubs operating in SY 2012-2013 offers an opportunity for the State to learn important lessons about scaling STEM initiatives to the diverse LEAs in the State. Although the State is working with the Hubs to ensure that they adequately serve all LEAs within their regions, it needs additional time to determine whether Hubs are able to reach and differentiate support for the diverse LEAs they serve. In addition, the State needs additional time to determine whether Hubs are able to maintain relationships and continue coordinating between LEAs in their regions. Finally, the State must work with Battelle Memorial to identify and award a strong proposal for a Platform School and Hub in the West Tennessee region.

To supplement its efforts to create a network of STEM Hubs and Platform Schools, the State awarded STEM professional development grants to support teachers in STEM subjects. In addition to the 11 projects awarded in April 2011, the State awarded grants to 18 STEM professional development projects in April 2012 and expects to reach 500 teachers. The State completed site visits for round one grantees and a portion of round two winners in summer 2012.

The L&N STEM Academy is a STEM Platform School in Tennessee, focused on using universal high standards, individualized learning plans, and community partnerships to ensure that every student has equitable access to challenging STEM coursework, exceptional instruction, and empowering relationships with mentors. The L&N STEM Academy had success in recruiting teachers and students for SY 2011-2012, the school's first year of implementation. In total, the school reviewed 500 applications for 11 teaching positions and received 22 student applications for each available opening.

The State plans to measure the Hub and Platform Schools' quality and effectiveness of implementation through the TN CRED evaluation and work with its partners to implement its monitoring and evaluation plans. TN CRED will analyze data on student performance, academic rigor, and workforce development throughout the grant to evaluate the quality of implementation.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

Tennessee made progress in its implementation of the STEM Hubs and Platform Schools during Year 2; however, the State indicated that Year 3 will be critical for moving to the next phase of development and solidifying the long-term sustainability of the State's STEM initiatives. Building capacity at the Hub levels will be crucial for building the necessary capacity at the local level. Additionally, as the FSCs transition to COREs, connecting each CORE director with the Hub will help streamline the supports the State provides to LEAs.

[20] The new Platform Schools and Hubs are in Chattanooga, Cookeville (Upper Cumberland), and the Tri-Cities area (Northeast Tennessee).

Looking Ahead to Year 3

Tennessee's significant progress in Year 2 leaves it poised to continue implementation of its Race to the Top plan. According to the State, in Year 3, Tennessee will continue to establish and implement COREs that will support LEAs in improving academic achievement. In addition, TDOE will continue to implement its revised performance management structure to track the project indicators, goals and metrics, and major milestones to identify quality and progress and inform ongoing continuous improvement.

As part of the State's plan to build a more robust regional support network, Core Coaches will use lessons learned from the implementation of the CCSS in Year 2 to help LEAs implement mathematics standards in grades three through eight and pilot implementation of ELA standards in SY 2012-2013. However, the State must quickly and carefully refine its plan for transitioning to implementation of the CCSS in other grades and subjects to ensure it can meet its commitment of fully implementing the CCSS by SY 2013-2014.

In early 2013, the State plans to launch the EWDS and P-20 data systems to enhance the accessibility and display of data currently contained in the SLDS. It is unclear if the proposed EWDS system revisions in this shortened timeframe can be accomplished. Once it has analyzed its existing systems, the State is considering using Race to the Top funds to design a data platform that streamlines data collection, data storage, and the user experience.

The State will deliver TVAAS modules for 2,000 pre-service teachers in teacher training programs in SY 2012-2013. The State must determine whether the modules improve new graduates' knowledge and understanding of how to interpret and use TVAAS data.

The State has consistently communicated that TEAM is a work in progress and that continuous improvement based on stakeholder feedback is a key characteristic of the TEAM model. Consequently, in Years 3 and 4 the State will continue to use feedback from teachers and administrators to inform future supports for or modifications to TEAM implementation, such as enhanced training and support for principal evaluations. The State will continue to identify and implement procedures for monitoring, evaluating, and sustaining its teacher and leader pathway programs. In 2013, the State plans to include data on teacher preparation program report cards that focus on institutions' abilities to train effective school leaders. Given previous delays, the time needed to transition from concept to implementation, and the feasibility of substantively implementing a revised approach in SY 2012-2013, the State will need to work quickly on any approved revisions to its Leadership Action Tank.

In Year 3, the ASD will be fully operational and will directly manage three "Achievement Schools" and three charter-led schools. The State will continue to support its Focus and Renewal schools through multiple competitive grant award opportunities and a Gap Closure Specialist working through the State's CORE offices. Moreover, the State will focus on establishing a plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of the State's STEM initiatives.

Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2012, please see the APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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 mathematic 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.)

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."