



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Arkansas Application #1300AR-1

### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>58</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	42
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>            Applicant clearly articulates its goals and agenda for implementing reforms in all four RTT areas. Examples of this from Applicant's "Theory of Change" vision include: a meaningful growth model defined by student achievement outcomes rather than inputs, establishment of a new Office of Innovation, adoption of a performance-based professional evaluation system, upgraded support system to address persistently low performing schools and expanded opportunities for professional development and articulation with higher education programs. The applicant's agenda is an extension of several years of purposeful legislation and policies, partnerships and practices to significantly improve academic performance of students. Applicant has secured MOU commitments for all components of plan from 253 of 264 LEAs which represent 98% of public school students and 96% of teachers. Also, MOUs have been secured for 116 teacher association leaders which represent 61% of the associations. Applicant's RTT reform agenda builds upon, expands and revitalizes present comprehensive system of integrated reform efforts called Smart Arkansas. This continuing effort and the overwhelming support of 96% of LEAs and the relative small size of the state will translate into a significant statewide impact. The potential of this impact is greater because it will build upon recent documented student achievement improvements that have resulted from the Arkansas Smart program initiatives. However, Applicant's strategies for implementation are not clearly evident.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>            Applicant has in recent years increased state funding for public education. As a result of this increase and the purposeful Arkansas Smart reform efforts, the applicant has demonstrated its increased capacity and ability to successfully implement systemic reform measures. This is evidenced by an upswing in trend data that indicates improvements in student achievement on both state and national indicators. In fact, Arkansas has gone from being historically being ranked near the the bottom of states on student achievement indicators to beginning to push towards the middle. Applicant has purposefully cultivated broad stakeholder support for RTT application by seeking input from community forums and inclusion of 30 external stakeholders which included members of the higher education communities and teacher, administrator and school board associations, who committed to being</p>		

involved in its implementation. Applicant's letter of support in the Appendices are not comprehensive in nature. Applicant's student achievement performance goals are not evident.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	22
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>  Exerpts of specific accomplishments that document obvious progress of Applicant that are related to the four ARRA pillars include: adoption of a college and career ready (Smart Core) curriculum, development of rigorous English and mathematics standards that meet America Diploma Project/Achieve "college and career ready" rigor, requirement for all public high schools to offer a minimum of one AP course in each of four core subject areas, implementation of the Arkansas Career Pathway Initiative, secured funding from twelve universities for STEM Centers, recognized by the Data Quality Campaign for implementation of all ten essential elements for a quality longitudinal education data system, developed Smart Start, Smart Step, and Smart Future professional development program for teachers, recognized by the National Institute of Early Education Research for the Arkansas Better Chance Program which serves over 25,000 three and four year olds, statewide use of America's Choice school turnaround model. As a result of the Applicant's purposeful reform efforts there are documented results of improvement in student learning outcomes. This improvement is evidenced by positive trend lines for both the State's Benchmark Exams and the National Assessment for Educational Progress. In addition, to all students exhibiting marked gains, the state has seen, for the first time, a narrowing of the achievement gap among subpopulations of students.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>110</b>

## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>  Applicant is member of Common Core State Standards (48 states) initiative as evidenced by signed MOU. Applicant's former Commissioner of Education served as Chair of the Council of Chief State School Officers which provides an indirect supportive advocate for the applicant's programs. It is clear that Applicant is positioned, upon release of Common Core Standards, to adopt the standards through existing policies and procedures as defined in policy.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>  Applicant has joined with 36 other states the Balanced Assessments of Common Core Standards Consortium. Applicant is also planning to join, with 27 other states, the Achieve Consortium which will focus on the development of common core assessments.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p>		

Applicant started the Smart Initiative in 1998 which represents a statewide comprehensive plan for student achievement that focuses on strong accountability and well defined standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. This plan is supported by a systematic set of statewide professional development activities. Applicant's recent work in 2007 with nationally recognized consultant facilitating the Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) process provided support and developed capacity in the of the Curriculum Frameworks and their vertical and horizontal alignment with the Curriculum Frameworks. The capacity building that has resulted from this foundation curriculum work across the state well-positions state educators to adopt the Common Core State Standards and to use the TIA collaborative process.

Total	70	69
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### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:            Since 2005 the Applicant has made progress in the development of a longitudinal data system and has recently received assistance from United States Department of Education to fill in gaps in curent system that resulted in constructing a data warehouse that interfaces with the State's fiscical, student and staff data. Applicant's statements of progress towards the building an "enterprise-wide" LDS to fulfill the State data needs greater clarity. Applicant addresses 11 of 12 America COMPETES Act elements. Applicant's capacity to communicate with higher education data system lacks detail. It appears that a number of elements are not in place. Applicant was recognized in 2007 as having met all of the Data Quality Campaign's ten essential elements.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:            Applicant was recognized in 2007 as having met all of ther Data Quality Campaign's ten esesntial elements. Applicant correctly acknowledges the need for progress in this area. Applicant has developed proposed outcomes and a timeline for further improvement of its Statewide Longitudinal Data System that will improve upon its ability for cross system analysis and the provide necessary data to institutional partner and educators throughout the state.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:            Applicant's wish to enhance its current ability to link student achievement data with teachers needs to become a reality. Only when the infrastructure for this link becomes available will it become a vital component for analysis of teacher effectiveness and will provide real-time data to support teachers in their effective use of a student growth model. Applicant has recently been awarded a Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership grant by the Gates Foundation that will focus on policy questions around how to most effectively measure teacher effectiveness. Applicant states it has used, but needs to expand, the services of contracted consultant to implement a new open source tool, named "Hive", to provide increased support to stakeholders across the state in their ability to access state and local student achievement data. Applicant appropriately will be conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to improve its State Longitudinal Data System.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>40</b>

## D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:            Applicant has the authority to offer nontraditional licensure programs for teachers and principals and has granted authority for institutes of higher education to provide licensure programs. However, at the present time there does not exist an alternative route for principals. Applicant's Alternative Certification Program for teacher includes the requisite four elements and provides three pathways. As a result of this program over 30% of the new teachers come from nontraditional programs. These programs are important to supplying teachers in high-need geographic and subject areas. The applicant has entered into a MOU agreement with Teach for America and has established an effective partnership.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	22
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:            Applicant has two accountability models: one for the purpose of State accountability and one for NCLB accountability. Each model, using the Arkansas Benchmark Exams, documents students achieving grade level proficiency as well as students making incremental progress towards proficiency. Applicant intends to expand its commitment to providing greater technical assistance and leadership to LEAs by providing a review of the system for evaluation of teachers and principals. The Teacher Evaluation Task Force was established and charged with the creation of a new System for Teacher Evaluation. A nationally recognized consultant on Professional Teaching Standards, was contracted to facilitate this initiative. Impressively, the Task Force has unanimously endorsed Danielson's Framework for Teaching as the Arkansas standard for effective teaching which will be incorporated into their new teacher evaluation instrument. LEAs participating in RTT will be required to adopt the State's teacher evaluation model. In the future, a Principal Evaluation Task Force will be convened to establish a similar framework for effective administrators and an evaluation instrument. Applicant has the legal authority to create an alternative pay program. Currently some LEAs compensate teacher leaders at a higher level. Applicant states its intention to study and pilot a comprehensive differentiated compensation plan for teachers and principals. Applicant has much work yet to do to receive the systemic benefit of a comprehensive performance-based evaluation program and differentiated compensation plan. Presently only new teachers and teachers in need of assistance receive annual evaluations. Applicant was selected as one of eleven States to participate in the Teacher Leadership Consortium that has drafted national standards for Teacher Leaders. The comprehensive program that the applicant presents will be dependent on significant capacity building with the LEAs.</p>		
<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:            Applicant created the Arkansas Teacher Housing Development Foundation to provide housing incentives to attract high-performing teachers to high-priority LEAs ( many which are rural). Applicant has given LEAs the ability to create alternative pay programs and is committed to the development of a differentiated compensation plan for teachers and principals that has potential to support equitable</p>		

distribution of effective teachers and principals. Almost all of Applicant's public schools provide distance learning opportunities for students to ensure students have access to a wide range of academic courses. Applicant's successful history with Teach for America has led to the establishment of a new regional training center to serve the Delta region that will result in expanded TFA presence next year. Applicant proposes additional staff and an expanded commitment to support efforts to ensure children with special needs are taught by effective teachers in all areas of the state.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:          Applicant (as previously stated) has been awarded a Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership grant by the Gates Foundation to address policy questions around how to most effectively measure teacher effectiveness. Details on the accountability structures that will lead to program improvement are not evident. Applicant has initiated an RFP process inviting higher education institutions to design and implement STEM teacher preparation programs to serve needs of rural schools. Applicant will expand its partnership with the University of Arkansas and the National Office for Research , Measurement, and Evaluation to expand effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:          Applicant provides professional development grant funding to fifteen educational cooperatives and twelve STEM Centers regionally located across the state. Applicant's Smart Leadership initiative provides leadership institutes to ensure leadership expands present capacity for understanding and supporting best practice teaching and assessment systems and promoting professional learning teams. Proposed activities are focused to expand the availability and the quality of these programs and provide virtual technology support systems to expand availability of resources. In addition, core subject content training in literacy, mathematics and science are part of a plan to provide needed support to professionals. It appears there is a need to expand focused professional learning experiences that are equitable and comprehensive and supportive of teachers and principals statewide. Applicant will use the RTT opportunity to commission a study on teaching and leaning conditions in the State with the expressed purpose of providing expanded support.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>109</b>

### E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:          Applicant has legal authority to intervene in low-achieving LEAs and schools. Applicant's selected school interventions are provided a continuum of support depending the stage of school improvement: Targeted Improvement (176 schools), Whole School Improvent (113 schools), Targeted Intensive Improvement (32 schools), Whole School Intensive Improvement (64 schools) and State Directed (58).</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	4
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:          Applicant is one of nine states receiving approval from the US Department of Education to be part of the Differentiated Accountability Model, Smart Accountability. Applicant reorgnized State structures to</p>		

better coordinate support to schools, particularly in the rural areas, and partnered with the educational cooperatives to provide more focused professional development and on-site technical support to identified schools. However, school turnaround options other than the transformation model are presented. Applicant contracted with America's Choice as the State's turnaround model during 2006 and has worked with 52 schools with varying degrees of success.

Total	50	42
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## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's support for public education funding for FY 2008 (71.6%) and FY 200 (71.4%) is essentially the same. Applicant uses an Educational Adequacy formula to provide equitable funding between high-need and high-poverty LEAs and other LEAs.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	40	28
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's current policies provide for three types of charter schools. Two of the models are operated by public school districts. The other model, "Open-enrollment charters, has a cap of 24 which, by definition yields medium points. However, this cap has not denied any applications (20) and there is flexibility in the language that a Open-enrollment public charter may have multiple campuses. Public Charter Schools are funded as any other public school and receive the same per pupil allocations from state funding. Applicant provides evidence of monitoring and providing accountability standards for the effectiveness of charter schools. Applicant's conversion and limited public charter schools have access to district funding with regard to facilities. Applicant does not provide LEAs the ability to operate innovative, autonomous public schools.		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	5	4
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: Applicant's Smart Arkansas initiative provides a framework for its strategic efforts to improved student learning outcomes. These efforts have resulted in improved student learning. Smart Start, Smart Step, and Smart Future as well as Smart Leadership and Smart Accountability have been part of a successful reform effort that has been supported by expanded levels of funding for public education.		
Total	55	39

## Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Applicant has established 12 regional STEM centers and has recognized the critical need to expand STEM educational programs and has created programs to train additional teachers for underserved areas.		
Total	15	15

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Note comments for F-3 that document Applicant's successful comprehensive reform effort.) Applicant has made a significant effort to reform education in Arkansas. Past traditions and low expectations for public education have been put in the past and the beginning of a successful educational reform effort is evident. However, much is yet to be done. The infrastructure improvements such as the coordinated use of information technology to make student achievement information easily accessible at the school level are a must to support the school improvement process. The influx of RTT funding will be necessary for Arkansas to both sustain and provide the critical support systems to go beyond its current positive first steps.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>424</b>



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #1300AR-2



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>53</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	1
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:                      The introductory section of proposal lacks a clear articulation of the state's overall reform agenda. Higher expectations, change, and systems alignment are mentioned and loosely linked to the four RTTT standards, but there is no coherent articulated overarching design or plan summary to make comprehensive school reform happen. LEA commitment is excellent with 253 out of 264 Superintendents and School Board Presidents on board. Union support is also a strength with 116 out of 191 possible signatures. It appears that there is a strong commitment to school reform. There appears to be no narrative discussion in A 1 iii. One table is labeled A 1 iii. Data, however indicates a high potential for statewide impact.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:                      A collaborative data management system is in place. The state appears to have supportive policies in place and a strong willingness for involvement from LEAs. What's needed are RTTT resources to implement and scale up all the good reform ideas that are being initiated. The creation of an office of innovation and a project management office are creative and needed steps to implement RTTT initiatives. Input on the RTTT proposal included 300 people attending community meetings and 30 participants from all stakeholder groups being involved in the actually writing and crafting of the proposal. There is a strong letter of support from the President and Executive Director of the Arkansas Education Association. There are no letters of support from community based organizations.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:                      The state has made steady progress over the past several years on its reform agenda and has allocated its resources wisely to encourage significant school improvement. The state has shown a steady increase in the numbers of students meeting standards in Reading and Math, rising NAEP</p>		

scores, and an increase in the numbers of student taking AP courses. Graduation rates are rising, but college success and completion is elusive. The state reports for the first time a slight closing of the achievement gap, but it's difficult to draw the same conclusion from the test data as presented.

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>98</b>
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**B. Standards and Assessments**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state is participating in a consortium of 48 states to develop and implement the Common Core State Standards. The state is in the process of formally adopting the Common Core State Standards.		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state is in partnership with the Balanced Assessments Consortium of 36 states. Balanced Assessments is classroom based and nicely focuses on formative assessment to improve classroom learning. The state is also in partnership with Achieve and has joined a consortium of 27 states focused on summative assessments linked to the Common Core Curriculum.		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state has a clear, thoughtful and nicely linked plan to facilitate and implement the Common Core Curriculum Standards and the Balanced and Achieve Assessments programs. It involves multiple parties including the Arkansas department of education, education service cooperatives, school districts, principals and teachers.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>

**C. Data Systems to Support Instruction**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: This section was difficult to assess. Some elements were clustered together and in some cases not fully explained. It appears that elements 4, 7, and 11 are not implemented.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: State has a sophisticated and comprehensive state design and plan for improving data use by various stakeholder groups. Would like to see some discussion on its usefulness and meaning for students. Difficult to determine if the plan is in the adoption or implementation stage.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b> The plan addresses the need to build local knowledge and better meet the needs of practitioners in a limited fashion. The discussion was challenging to follow and was difficult to determine if plans were more at the awareness/adoption level or at the implementation level. There was very little discussion of professional development to support teachers and administrators at the local level. Most glaring was the absence of discussion about using data to improve instruction, especially at the classroom level. Finally plans are in process to give researchers and higher education academics access to data through the ED Trust program.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>28</b>

**D. Great Teachers and Leaders**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> The legal authority to allow alternative routes to certification is present. Very few if any alternative routes to certification are in wide spread use for teachers. There are no alternative routes for principals. The state monitors requests for waivers in the various teacher specializations and attempts to make adjustments in preparation programs and recruiting.		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>30</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	14
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b> An approach to measuring student growth is present. However, it appears to be quite technical and challenging for practitioners and students to follow and understand. An emerging and well developed teacher evaluation system based upon the work of Charlotte Danielson has been adopted by the state. It is currently being piloted in 4 school districts with plans for 10 more next year. Plans, to develop a system for principal evaluation, that are nicely grounded in the ISLLC standards are to be developed this summer and will follow a process similar to the one used in adopting the Danielson design. The state has a long ways to go here but is moving in the right direction. The new state model grounded in Danielson's design requires annual and differentiated evaluations for probationary and veteran teachers. The current system appears to be hit and miss. Evaluation plans for principals are to be developed this summer. The state has a mentoring program for all first year teachers and has developed a commendable instructional facilitator program involving some 1300 teachers who will provide professional development to their colleagues. These teacher leaders receive additional compensation for their work across the state. The state is also to be commended for forming a partnership with a Teacher Leadership Consortium of 11 states, which offers participants networking opportunities and a best practices framework for developing powerful learning opportunities for both teachers and students. State policies and laws are in place to allow for differentiated pay systems. There are currently two alternative compensations plans for teachers in place and an apparent commitment to develop a comprehensive and differentiated pay system for both teachers and principals. Student growth will be measured in a comprehensive fashion to include student portfolios, teacher made tests, and traditional assessments. There is no tenure law for teachers and principals; however there is a fair dismissal law that signals to teachers and principals that poor performance will		

not be tolerated. LEA plans supportive of differentiated pay have not been developed but with RTTT leverage and LEA commitment are likely to happen in subsequent years.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	15
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5
<p><b>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>                  Plan is very strong in this area with creative ideas to ensure the equitable distribution of teacher and principals across the states' high poverty and minority schools. Creative examples are housing assistance, online &amp; distance learning programs, tuition reimbursement grants, the professional teaching permit, and cash incentives for teachers willing to work in high needs school district. Finally, expanding the Teach for America program will bring bright and committed new teachers into hard to staff regions of the state. Plans are developing for ensuring the equitable distribution of hard to staff subjects and specialty areas. Tuition reimbursements for those interested in special education is a good first step along with a dedicated staff position to recruitment of special education teachers. Hiring assistants to help special education teacher with their heavy paperwork loads is another solid incentive for attracting teachers. 900 additional ESL teachers are needed and plans are at the beginning stage to create new endorsement programs. What's missing is discussion of STEM programs and foreign language instruction. Performance measures are to be set this spring.</p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>                  The state has a plan underway to link student growth and achievement data to teachers and institutions of higher education where the teachers were granted their certification. This plan is supported by a grant from the Gates Foundation and the participation of 4 other states in a consortium. There was no mention of principals in the plan. There is very little discussion about expanding successful programs for teachers and principals. There is discussion of improving the availability of STEM teachers and RFPs to improve teacher preparation programs. State involvement in a 6 state consortium for Revisioning the Professional Continuum is promising. Performance measures are ambitious. Moving from 0 to 75% in 1 year seems unachievable.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:</b>                  There is an overwhelming number of learning activities that appears to be coming from the ADE rather than from a partnership with LEAs and higher education programs. The activities are worthy, but appear more like a laundry list than a focused and integrated plan.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>76</b>

**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>                  The state has the legal authority to intervene in persistently low achieving schools and LEAs.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35

<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b> The state has a high quality plan for identifying and helping its persistently low achieving schools that is adapted well for its rural state context. It builds well on prior work and strengths and offers many insights and exciting ideas for the future. Funding and support for identified schools would be significant. For those schools compelled to adopt the transformational model, existing school designs should be thoroughly investigated. Low performing schools do not need to reinvent the wheel but rather build on an existing body of R & D. The eventual design should be a good fit with the existing school culture and needs. Arkansas began targeting schools in 2007 and has worked to improve 52 schools with mixed results improving 18 and maintaining current levels in 34. No schools further declined.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> Funding for schools was substantially unchanged between 2008 and 2009.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b> Arkansas has a low cap on the number of open enrollment charter schools at 24. Charters are first approved at the district level and then go to the State Board of Education for final authorization. Applications are granted for 5 years and renewals can be granted for 1 - 5 years. Between 2004-10, 20 out of 51 applications were approved. 29 were denied. Funding appears to be quite equitable, but there is no support for facilities. Finally the state does not allow LEAs to operate autonomous innovative public schools. Conditions appear to inhibit charter school development.		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b> The state's Smart initiatives focusing on key K-12 transition points for students, leadership capacity and accountability systems have apparently created favorable conditions for school reform. More discussion and elaboration is needed.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>25</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments:</b> STEM. Although mentioned throughout the application and summarized at the end of the application, its difficult to envision a comprehensive program for recruiting, training, and placing STEM teachers in schools throughout the state.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
Absolute Reviewer Comments: There is a comprehensive approach to school reform in place that meets all four of the education reform areas. Furthermore, there appears to be strong state support from key stakeholder groups, especially LEAs.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>347</b>



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #1300AR3



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>53</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) The state provided a set of goals that track closely with the 4 education areas of RTT. (ii) 253 of 264 LEAs have signed on. Signatures from all Superintendents/Charter School Directors and School Board Presidents were received. Only 116 of 191 teacher associations were received. No explanation for the missing signatures was given. Participating LEAs agreed to implement all parts of the plan. Governor Beebe has charged the directors of 6 state agencies with creating a school-to-work system. The planners understand that the reforms they intend to undertake requires a culture change in the ways the SEA supports schools. (iii) This item was not addressed directly. One can imply that this aspect can be met by its expression in the goals of A(1)(i).</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	4
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(ii) 253 of 264 LEAs have signed on. Signatures from all Superintendents/Charter School Directors and School Board Presidents were received. Only 116 of 191 teacher associations were received. No explanation for the missing signatures was given. There wasn't a broad base of stakeholders. No parent groups or community based organizations provided letters of support. Participating LEAs agreed to implement all parts of the plan. Governor Beebe has charged the directors of 6 state agencies with creating a school-to-work system.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) The application states that Arkansas has shown significant improvement in NAEP scores. The percentage of students scoring proficient is in the lowest group of states. (ii) It was noted that the racial achievement gap has not narrowed. AP participation has increased. A graph was presented by</p>		

subgroup of students attaining a "3" or better, but not "4/5". It was stated that the graduation rate is above the national average. It is still low.

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>99</b>
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**B. Standards and Assessments**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:                      (i) &amp; (ii) Oklahoma is an active participant in the Common Core Standards Initiative, a consortium of 48 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. The Initiative is coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council for Chief State School Officers. The standards that are being developed will be internationally benchmarked. The Board will consider adopting the standards by the August 2012 deadline. A strong foundation has been laid for an implementation process through participation in the Total Instructional Alignment process that began in 2007. It has involved annual revisions, which makes it a familiar model to use in the implementation of the new standards.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:                      (i)(ii) OK is a member of the Achieve Assessment Partnership and Balanced Assessment Consortium. To date, the consortium is comprised of 27 states. This project will contain both formative and summative assessments that are aligned with the state standards, which are developed in line with the Common Core Standards. In 2008 the Department of Education contracted with an outside vendor to pilot a professional development program on assessment with two Cooperatives. The pilot study will be taken to scale. The state Department of Education will engage practitioners as advisors in the development of this process.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:                      The DOE began a standards and curriculum implementation process called Total Instruction Alignment. The Education Service Cooperatives have used them with LEAs. This model will be used for the rollout of the new standards and assessments. The Department of Education contracted with an outside vendor to create training modules for the implementation process. This process was piloted with two of the Service Cooperatives. The state will ensure that ongoing professional development opportunities are offered. The state has a logic model that is well articulated about professional development regarding the implementation of standards and assessment.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>

**C. Data Systems to Support Instruction**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

It is not clear that the state meets elements numbers 4 or 7. Element 4 is missing. In element 7 it was difficult to determine if the state has a way to attend to students who are not tested.

<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:                  The state is aware of the mismatches and has a plan to link data P-20 so that it will be available for educators and other stakeholders. The Governor established a multi-agency data-sharing consortium to spearhead this effort. In 2008 the state hired an outside organization to review utilization of its data system by school personnel. The study found significant utilization of the system and satisfaction with it. The researchers noted that heavy users of the system had a discernible improvement in student growth. There are planned enhancements to the system that will make it easier for school personnel to access. The state will link student outcomes to teachers. There are plans to link with data systems of other government agencies to give a richer picture of the p-20 spectrum. The data system will be enhanced so that best practices can be shared electronically. These enhancements will facilitate data sharing among educators, researchers, and the public. This will make the data available for instructional, management and policy decisions.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:                  (i)(ii)(iii)The state is the recipient of a grant from the Gates Foundation to develop a data system to link teachers' work to student achievement. Three other states are involved in this project. The project is supported by the CELT Corporation and the Data Quality Campaign. This project will support states in sharing the best thinking as they enhance their data systems. States will conduct needs assessments and pilot the new systems before going statewide. It was not clear how the state would move from the pilot phase to full implementation. There wasn't enough information given about how they would support educators in beginning to use the data. The state is developing the Unified Resource Portal. This will link local and state data. It will link data pK-12. The state worked with an outside vendor to create a system, HIVE, that makes the data available to the public. It was mentioned that data will be available to researchers, but no specific purpose was stated. One cannot assume that it is for use in evaluating effectiveness. (i)4pts (ii)4pts (iii)4pts</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>37</b>

**D. Great Teachers and Leaders**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:                  (i) The state has the authority to offer alternative routes. The non-traditional route meets the elements in Race to the Top. 22% of teacher came through alternative route between 2007-2009. 7pts (ii)The state has an alternative route for teachers, but not principals. TFA and the Non-traditional Licensure Program are the primary vehicles for alternative route. (The Administrator License Completion Plan allows an individual to serve as a principal while completing coursework). Arkansas has a program, Professional Teaching Permit, to allow community members to teach a class. 4pts (iii) Arkansas has a process for monitoring shortage areas and for preparing teachers to fill them. Evidence was provided of shortages that have been filled in recent years (see Appendix D-5). The process is managed by the DOE's Human Resource and Licensing Division. 7pts</p>		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>39</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	21
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) Student growth is measured, but the current measure is not appropriate for use in evaluation of teachers and principals. A new growth measure will be developed. (ii) A task force that includes <i>teacher and principal representatives</i> has drafted an evaluation plan for teachers. The evaluation system is based on the work of Charlotte Danielson, an expert on effective teaching practices. The system is transparent and the tool has multiple categories. The tool will use student growth as an important element. They will also be accompanied by a professional growth plan for the evaluatee. No detail was given for the principal process. The development of a model for principals will begin in summer 2010. They are a long way from full implementation. (iii)(iv) <i>The data from evaluations will be used to shape performance decisions.</i> It does not appear that experienced teachers who are doing well will be evaluated annually. They will be observed and given feedback annually. Experienced teachers who meet a set of criteria specified in the state law will be considered Instructional Facilitators. These teachers will be used to facilitate the work of other teachers in the LEAs and state. Two districts are piloting differentiated compensation models that take student growth into account.</p>		
<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	10
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i)(ii) <i>The application notes several initiatives for ensuring equitable distribution, but no evidence was provided to determine if the strategies are working. In shortage areas a LEA can request short term waivers for an individual. The state tracks waivers to understand the shortage areas. The state will use retired teachers to fill areas of shortage. The employee must be retired a minimum of 180 days and can come back without losing retirement benefits. In section D(3)(i), the proposal delineates several vehicles to support the equitable distribution of teachers and principals. The programs range from housing assistance to distance learning. The state has specific plans for increasing the number of teachers in special education and bilingual education. The state is aware of the shortage of STEM prepared teachers. They are providing funding for IHEs to develop STEM programs. Arkansas is a member of a six state consortium for improving recruitment.</i></p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) <i>It is noted that teachers can be tracked to their preparation programs. The state is in a consortium to develop a system to link student achievement to teachers and their preparation programs. No mention was made of public reporting. The state has not finalized this work yet. No detail was given about principal preparation programs. (3pts) Mention was made of developing new programs in STEM areas. Little was said about improving teacher and principal preparation programs in general. (ii) The application lists several avenues to improve teacher preparation programs. There are resources to support the initiatives, but only one program mentioned a target. (4pts)</i></p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) <i>Clear plans were delineated for leadership development through institutes for various leadership role groups. Leadership support specialists will provide on onsite support to schools. New opportunities will be hosted for teachers in literacy, math, and science. The state will create an electronic instruction improvement system to support the new curriculum and assessment initiatives. Nothing was said about the incentive for educators to participate in these initiatives. (9pts) (ii) The application did note the results of a small state study that found that conditions in schools often inhibit teachers from</i></p>		

participating in opportunities for their own learning. The state will do a broader study to gain a better picture of conditions in schools and tailor the professional development to what they find. This is the first step in developing a system of regular evaluation and continuous improvement for professional development. (9pts)

<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>
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**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state has the authority to intervene in schools and districts.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i)The state has a process to identify the lowest performing schools. The state has a Differentiated Accountability plan. (ii)They are aware of the need to change the SEA to a culture of support and assistance, not just compliance. They have been building that capacity through state support teams. The state models are similar to the 4 turnaround models. They have given thought to which models work in a given situation. Given that they have a large number of rural schools with high teacher turnover (50%), the transformation model is the one most likely to be used. Given the preference for the transformation model, it is not clear that the state will not bump into the 9 school/50% issue. The state has a multi-pronged approach to support, but it specifies targets for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, but not other initiative.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>43</b>

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: There was a modest increase. Nothing was said about the allocation of funds to high-need LEAs.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>23</b>
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i)There is a cap on open enrollment charter schools, which can draw students from anywhere in the state, but not on district controlled schools. The cap has been raised once and could be raised again. (4pts) (ii)The state has laws that govern the charter schools. Evidence was given about charter schools that were not reauthorized. (8pts) (iii)Charter schools receive equitable funding. The formula was provided in this section.(8pts) (iv)District chartered schools receive support in finding facilities. Open enrollment schools do not. They do have first right of refusal for purchase or lease of available public school facilities. Money is not provided for facilities.(3pts) (v)The state does not provide for schools of innovation in addition to charter schools. (0pts)		

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b> The foundation for reform is mentioned throughout the proposal. The actual response to the section did not give information about how the various initiatives are interwoven to support reform. It did not provide information on the success of the additional reforms mentioned in this section.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>30</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments:</b> A commitment to raise the attention given to STEM areas is demonstrated throughout the proposal. This section gives added detail. Collaboration with a variety of stakeholders is apparent in this section. There are several initiatives in place that offer the possibility of broad impact in improving STEM readiness in the state.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>No</b>
<b>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</b> •I did not see evidence of a broad base of support. The depth of reform the state intends to make will require support from stakeholders beyond education. There was no evidence of support from three critical groups- parents, community based organizations, or business. •It was difficult to see what the targets for improvement were in all education areas. Those that were mentioned were often low. •There is no alternative route for principals. •Open enrollment charter schools currently have a low cap.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>394</b>



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #1300AR-4



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>52</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	2
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	43
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	7
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>            (A)(1)(i) It is apparent that Arkansas understands the need for a cohesive and comprehensive reform agenda. Specific goals were stated; however, other than relying on an easily accessible data system to provide ready and complete access to information, little evidence was presented about how this system would be implemented. (A)(1)(ii) Arkansas was able to obtain commitments from 253 of its 264 LEA superintendents and charter school directors. This figure represents 98% of Arkansas' public school students and 96% of its teachers, and this high participation rate is commendable. The scope of work is clearly laid out and follows the tenets of RTTT. (A)(1)(iii) No specific details were provided about how the participation of such a large number of districts would translate into statewide impact, except that found in the summary table.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>            (A)(2) (i) Arkansas appears committed to building capacity in several areas, such as developing a state data collection system by partnering with the University of Arkansas to capitalize on its resources in statistics, data management, and research. From 2004-06 an additional \$700 million was added to the state's education budget. Arkansas is making notable efforts at increasing college graduation rates and offering funding for the teaching of AP courses and the exam fees for students. Results, however, from these and other initiatives vary markedly by district. The state would like to use some RTTT funds for opening an Office of Innovation to support the reform efforts. It would be charged with providing strategic direction for state reform efforts. The state proposes outsourcing a Project Management Office to manage the RTTT funding and other efforts. These activities would eventually be transferred to the Arkansas Department of Education. (A)(2)(ii) This section was not addressed; however, stakeholder support has been mentioned in other sections of the application, such as Appendix H.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	22

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(3)(I) Arkansas described an array of initiatives which it has undertaken to raise achievement and close gaps. Of note are requirements that all Arkansas high schools teach a minimum of 38 courses so that students will have equal access to the same course structure, and all beginning teachers must participate in the well-structured Pathwise induction program. Another program component targeted at improving student outcomes requires all high schools to offer at least one AP in each of the 4 content areas. The State should strongly consider offering more than one AP course in a given subject area, especially in the STEM areas. (A)(3)(ii) Evidence shows that Arkansas students have made notable gains on NAEP and other assessments in the past few years. Subgroup performance gaps have narrowed both on state tests and NAEP, but the performance of subgroups needs to be a higher priority for the State and text should have been included to clearly address this need.

Total	125	99
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## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(1)(i) Arkansas is a full partner in the Balanced Assessments of Common Core Standards Initiative, which includes 48 states. Arkansas' State Board of Education has demonstrated its support of this initiative. (B)(1)(ii) Though Arkansas plans to adopt the standards under existing policy, insufficient information was included about their existing processes for adopting standards. However, information was presented addressing a sound procedure for aligning the Arkansas and the Common Core Standards.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(2) Arkansas is a member of the Balanced Assessments of Common Core Standards Consortium, which includes 36 states.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(B)(3) Arkansas has clearly described a well thought-out plan for transitioning to a comprehensive system of high academic standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics and assessments aligned to those standards, as part of the state's Smart Initiative, based on the Total Instructional Alignment model. This commendable endeavor, which led to the development of curriculum guides, was expanded throughout Northwest Arkansas, and by 2008 was being implemented across the state. The Arkansas-developed package consists of clear curriculum guides; summative, formative, and interim assessments; model lessons and units; and videos of best teaching practices. Subsequent activities are planned, and full rollout is expected to be complete in 2011. Additionally, the Department will add qualified staff to manage this initiative. This plan has been well researched and should greatly enhance the connections between Arkansas content standards and assessments.</p>		
Total	70	65

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (C)(1) Arkansas has a well-established data system and has demonstrated clearly that its system currently includes or has plans to include all of the elements specified in the America COMPETES Act. Additionally their application contains an MOU among the ADE, ADHE, and Arkansas' pre-kindergarten to facilitate sharing data P-20.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (C)(2) Arkansas' plan ensures that statewide longitudinal data are accessible to a wide range of audiences, from K-12 to workforce and plans are well underway for enhancing this system to allow policy research, the evaluation of teacher effectiveness, and enhanced cross-agency data sharing.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (C)(3) By providing access to pertinent data and using well-described security procedures, when fully implemented the Arkansas data system will provide users with a wide array of tools to greatly facilitate using data to improve instruction through targeted professional development. Additionally, as part of a consortium, Arkansas was recently awarded a grant for a Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership from the Gates Foundation to explore the most efficient ways to measure teacher effectiveness through pertinent research.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>47</b>

### D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (D)(1) Arkansas has 3 pathways for alternative certification: its non-traditional licensure program, the Teach for America Program, and a Master of Education program, which greatly expands access to credentialing opportunities via multiple routes to certification. These programs issue participants a provisional license while they are completing requirements for an Initial or Standard Arkansas license. Additionally, these programs focus on the high-needs areas of science and mathematics. The Teach for America program has been in place in Arkansas since 2001-2002, when it produced 20 licensed educators who were teaching in Arkansas, to 2009-2010, when it will produce 133 licensed teachers who will teach in Arkansas. Additional certification programs/pathways are needed to meet the needs of providing each Arkansas student with a teacher fully certified to teach his/her assigned classes. The Administrator Licensure Completion Plan allows an administrator to serve in that role while completing requirements of the program. A reasonable and practical process is in place for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of shortage.		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>48</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	6

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	27
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(2)(i) Arkansas has 2 models for measuring student growth: a state model developed in response to Arkansas' Student Assessment and Accountability Act and a growth model developed for the No Child Left Behind Act. Both models use pertinent data to measure growth for an individual student and will provide a broader view of growth than a single model will provide. (D)(2)(ii) Arkansas is developing a well-researched system for evaluating teachers, using nationally respected materials, practices, and experts. No plan exists for evaluating principals. (D)(2)(iii) Teacher evaluations will take place annually. Training for the new teacher evaluation system was scheduled to take place in January 2010. Data on student growth will be part of the evaluation. (D)(2)(iv) Arkansas will use the aforementioned teacher evaluations in conjunction with the currently used Praxis III Performance Assessment as the criteria for obtaining a Standard Teaching License. Arkansas does not have tenure status. Student growth will be a significant factor in the evaluation of teachers.</p>		
<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	15
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	10
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(3)(i) Arkansas has an ambitious and multi-faceted approach to help ensure equitable distribution of educators in high-poverty or high-minority schools. These include incentives to enroll in the Master School Principal Program, receive housing assistance, provide distance learning to enhance curricula, create higher education satellite sites, participate in a 2-year institution Associate of Arts degree that is transferrable to a 4-year institution, provide recruiting grants for Arkansas colleges of education, award Professional Teaching Permits for working professionals to teach one or two classes in their field, encourage participation in Teach for America, and offer monetary incentives for teaching in high-priority schools. (D)(3)(ii) Arkansas has identified Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) as the top hard-to-staff areas and will provide tuition reimbursement to general education teachers who obtain special education licensure. The Arkansas Department of Education will fund a position focused on increasing the numbers and quality of special education teachers. Funding for training an additional 900 teachers to obtain and ESL endorsement will be part of this initiative.</p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(4) The state's accountability system can currently map each student and teacher to a master course schedule and can map each teacher to his/her educator preparation program. The Gates grant, referred to in a previous section, will be targeted at measuring teacher effectiveness. To help ameliorate Arkansas' severe shortage of STEM teachers, the state plans to guarantee tuition slots needed to fill STEM programs, which will generate 100 STEM and 100 teacher leaders. A more far-reaching and multi-faceted approach that emphasizes career changers who would attend alternative certification programs, will generate more teachers in this area. Arkansas does not have preparation programs for principals nor does the State publicly report pertinent data from its preparation programs.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(5) Arkansas has proposed a multi-pronged approach for professional development in areas of need and on-site coaching. Every Arkansas teacher must participate in 60 hours of professional development each year in order to maintain his/her teaching license. Additionally, the Department proposes to conduct a full study on teaching and learning conditions in the state. Additional focus</p>		

should be placed on having mentor teachers on-site or available by video for the persistently low-performing schools.

Total	138	108
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### E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (E)(1) Arkansas is one of nine states receiving approval from the USDoE to be part of the Differentiated Accountability Pilot. Thus, the state can intervene directly in both schools and LEAs. (E)(2)(ii) Even though Arkansas did not receive additional funding from the state, it chose in 2009 to implement a Smart Accountability plan to attempt to dramatically turn around the state's lowest performing schools. The state is committed to accelerating its work with the persistently low performing schools. A very detailed activity plan is described.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (E)(2)(i) Arkansas has outlined a logical, credible, and understandable process for identifying persistently low-performing schools. (E)(2)(ii) Even though Arkansas did not receive additional funding from the state, it chose in 2009 to implement a Smart Accountability plan to attempt to dramatically turn around the state's lowest performing schools. The state is committed to accelerating its work with the persistently low performing schools. A very detailed activity plan is described to address low-performing schools.		
Total	50	35

### F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (F)(1) Even though the percentage of total state revenues decreased by .2% from 2008 to 2009, the dollar amount of allocated revenues increased by \$23,207,397; thus they were substantially unchanged.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (F)(2) Even though Arkansas has a statutory cap of 24 on the number of open-enrollment charter schools, each of these entities may petition the Arkansas State Board of Education for additional "licenses" to establish additional campuses across the state. Arkansas law clarifies that all charter schools are public schools; thus, they are included in the public school monitoring process. Open enrollment charter schools do not receive facilities funding since they do not collect property taxes.		

Arkansas does not permit LEAs to operate any other than what is traditionally allowed or through open enrollment, conversion, or limited charter school status.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (F)(3) Arkansas' "Smart Arkansas" initiatives cut across the education spectrum with increased focus on a solid, rigorous curriculum, educator preparation, accountability, and school improvement, while implementing well thought-out initiatives to elevate the education system in Arkansas to a higher level and serve the students in Arkansas well by creating conditions favorable for needed reform.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>34</b>

### Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout the application Arkansas has focused on STEM by emphasizing the adoption and implementation of rigorous content standards, requiring more rigorous preparation of teachers and principals, and enhancing school accountability to ensure that Arkansas can be a strong producer of well-educated young adults and attract individuals and businesses to the state to stimulate its economy.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

### Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has met the absolute priority. There is a very strong, and well-needed, focus on STEM, systemic reform, accountability, raising academic standards, and enhancing teacher preparation. The state is taking a proactive approach to reform by seeking out grants, providing needed support to its school districts, and attempting to maintain its education budget at a level comparable to that of the previous year.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>403</b>



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #1300ar-5



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	43
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) This is a coherently conceived and presented proposal that grasps the opportunity that RttT funding could provide to continue driving educational improvement across the state in all locales. The proposal demonstrates an understanding of many of the components of its reform agenda. The proposal also addresses the challenges of being a rural state. (ii) Almost all (96%) of LEA's have signed on, and all of those have committed to implementing all aspects of the state's reform agenda as laid out in the proposal. (iii). With strong LEA support, the state can expect strong translation into statewide impact. But no goals for student performance growth overall or by subgroup are provided either here or elsewhere in the proposal. Later, targets for high school graduation, college enrollment and success are provided. Without a focus on the pipeline as well, Arkansas is not going to know if it is on track to improving these outcomes.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	3
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Arkansas's educational leadership has demonstrated a capacity to drive reform in the state, as evidenced by the use of data to inform action and instruction, its Governor's Workforce Cabinet that bounds not only education (the usual P-20) but economic development agencies as well. It has the support of the National Office for Research, Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES), an academic resource at the University of Arkansas for statistics, large-scale data management and modeling and research. This is a tremendous asset as the state continues to expand and connect its various data bases. The state has adopted a uniform ACT score as the basis for determining placement in remedial courses in its postsecondary institutions - a bold experiment that can provide a national pilot. Among the many activities that are being undertaken, the one to identify high schools where required coursework may not meet the level of rigor specified for the state's academic core (called Smart Core) is good. Focusing on course content and not just its label is critical to true standards and student progress. It is also encouraging to see the state asking itself "why have these core strengths not created statewide sustainable success for all students?" and continuing with a perceptive analysis of the state's weaknesses (limited human capacity to identify and meet the needs of its diverse LEAs) and the need for highly qualified personnel locally for successful implementation. The proposal presents a plan to address this weakness. The state recognizes its limited internal expertise to manage a grant of this size, and plans to outsource the project management function to a</p>		

world-class provider that will be competitively selected. This company will be charged, in part, to cross-train and eventually transfer the project management capacity to an internal team of department staff. This is a very sensible approach. After the grant ends, the state will continue to pursue the objectives that have been established through its College and Career Ready Policy Institute. The proposal does not explicitly indicate whether permanent funding will be provided to continue the staff positions that would have been created. It would be unfortunate to lose momentum. (A)(2)(ii) is not addressed in the narrative, nor was there a reference to letters of support which were located at the back of the appendix. The letters of support are not comprehensive in nature, and do not show broad stakeholder support.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:                  The state describes a plethora of activities and commitments supporting each reform area. Arkansas' progress in improving student outcomes has moved the state to near the middle of the pack, and their progress has been recognized by the Education Trust and the Center for Education Policy. It has state standards that are well aligned with NAEP (per a 2005 USDOE study) and they have raised cut scores. There has been modest narrowing of the achievement gap, with the exception of Hispanic reading scores. Its high graduation rate apparently reflects a weak high school curriculum, and the state is focusing efforts on adding more rigor.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>101</b>

**B. Standards and Assessments**

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:                  Arkansas is one of 48 states participating in the Common Core State Standards Initiative and took a leadership role in the initial stages of the process. The state can adopt the standards through existing policy and procedures. The State Board of Education will formally consider adopting the Common Core Standards by August 2010 and has a plan for immediate implementation.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:                  The state has joined the Balanced Assessments of Common Core Standards Consortium (36 states). As an Achieve state, it is also in discussion with Achieve on the development of a common summative assessment (27 states).</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:                  The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) will build on strategies it has used in the past for capacity building and change. This involves a systematic, sequenced set of statewide professional development activities for all districts and schools. It has been working with the Northwest Arkansas</p>		

Educational Service Cooperative and 16 member districts to develop a common curriculum and pacing guide that was grounded in theory and practice. This included 124 schools represented by 168 teachers and academic coaches over three days. Now the 15 Education Service Cooperatives have adopted the Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) curriculum guides and initiated the systematic implementation across the state. This process will be used to transition the Common Core Standards into curriculum guides. An outside expert will be hired to take to scale their assessment professional development program. No discussion is provided of a link with higher education. The approach might be strengthened if there was a strong on-going support system for teachers grappling with the new standards, or their need for enhanced content knowledge and pedagogy.

<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>
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**C. Data Systems to Support Instruction**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The proposal talks about the 12 data elements and provides a detailed description of how the state complies with all 12. This discussion, however, was not crystal clear - the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems is an example. They describe that the K-12 and postsecondary data bases are shared through MOUs for research purposes. So it is yet to be a fully implemented longitudinal data system, but Arkansas can connect students from K-12 into postsecondary education, so points are given.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has contracted with IBM/Cognos for scorecards and dashboards, and an ADE open-source visual analytic and collaboration tool (Hive) is also available. Teachers are successfully accessing data, and evaluation has been able to link usage to school results. And there is a coherent outcomes plan for data sharing and use. Finally, NORMES is a valuable assess for reporting, assessment and research.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has had data systems in place, but wishes to enhance many current abilities, including how it links students with teachers so that performance data are available. They have not at this point drilled down to the teacher level, which RttT funds will move forward. They are participating in a B&M Gates Foundation grant under the Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership that is exploring how to most effectively measure teacher effectiveness. Such basics as defining the teacher of record demonstrate how complex large education data bases are, and how carefully they need to be used. Arkansas is taking a cautious approach to measuring teacher effectiveness, but one that will contribute to the national knowledge base. (6) Data will be available through Enspire, Inc to implement a new open source tool - Hives. It allows stakeholders to explore state and local test scores at the district, school and individual levels. Arkansas does not appear to be taking any direct responsibility or involvement in professional development for teachers and principals in the use of these data to drive instructional improvement. (2) Arkansas is making progress with cross-agency data matches and plans to make data available using extracted files into a data mart data repository. This will be used to generate standard reports for agencies and educators. Arkansas' concern about FERPA, HIPPA and other state and federal laws concerning the privacy of individuals leads them to a conservative approach to data sharing for researchers, although they do plan to build a more robust data-sharing environment. (3)		

Total	47	40
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**D. Great Teachers and Leaders**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:                      The information provided at the beginning of this section seems to imply that Arkansas does not have statutory or regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification in addition to institutions of higher education. But later in the proposal it appears that the state is entering into a non-IHE agreement with Teach For America, so apparently the laws do allow this. It also appears later that ADE administers its Non-Traditional Licensure Program, but it is not clear who provides the Instructional Models(4). Arkansas does offer alternative routes for teachers, but not principals, within the higher education enterprise. Entry requirements are the standard bachelor's degree and 2.5 GPA, which does not demonstrate selecting from among the most successful college graduates. And for those with significant work experience, the GPA requirement is eliminated. Their university Master's degrees require 40 credit hours, and do not meet the definition of an alternative route to certification under RttT. They do award the same level of certification as traditional programs.(4) Arkansas' method of identifying areas of teacher shortage is through a survey that collects information on the use of non-licensed teachers at the grade level or subject matter of class. This is a reasonable approach to what can quickly become an overly complex teacher demand issue. Arkansas' strategy for filling these areas of shortage is to grant waivers to most of these teachers and require that they become fully licensed within three years. However, this means that students may be faced with non-licensed teachers for up to three years in the same school. Retired teachers may return to teaching. There is a small state-level program to address persistent STEM teacher shortages in the rural areas through tuition assurance to institutions of higher education (5).</p>		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	6
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	21
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:                      (i) Arkansas has a state accountability model for student assessment, and is piloting a state growth model for AYP. The state recognizes that its growth model will need adjustment if it is to be used as one of the measures of teacher effectiveness and accountability. Because of the high stakes nature of such use, Arkansas will contract out from qualified entities to develop an acceptable statewide growth model.(5). Arkansas has not provided technical assistance to LEAs since the 1980s. Nor do the LEAs have the expertise that will be needed to move to a rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals. But in the 2008-09 year, a pilot began through the Teacher Evaluation Task Force, with twelve teachers, twelve principals and eleven other stakeholders. Evidence from a survey revealed that the majority of LEA evaluations consist of checklists and lack evidence, a rubric or data on student learning. Danielson's Framework for Teaching was adopted by the Task Force, and implementation procedures have been drafted with three performance tracks. But the involvement of teachers and principals is so far quite limited, and Arkansas is quite a long way from meeting criterion (D)(2)(ii).(6) Annual evaluations for teachers will be required under the MOU with LEAs, and LEAs participating in RttT will be required to adopt the state's principal evaluation model, which includes annual evaluation (10). Arkansas did not address directly the use of evaluations to inform key decisions for teachers and principals. They did describe a novice teacher and administrator induction</p>		

program, and have instituted an Instructional Facilitator licensure endorsement, which will be expanded with RttT funding to create about 1,300 qualified teacher leaders (2). Information is provided about new compensation approaches that are being piloted or studied and which are expected to include components that recognize performance, student achievement and additional responsibilities. (5) Arkansas uses Praxis III Performance Assessment as the capstone experience for obtaining the Standard Teaching License. (7) The LEA MOUs stipulate that the evaluation system and student growth shall in part be used to inform the removal of teachers and principals after ample time for improvement. (7)

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	10
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) The proposal lists several programs aimed at increasing the principal and teacher pipeline and recruitment. IHEs are developing satellite campuses to serve the rural communities. And most important is the Incentives for Teacher Recruitment and Retention in High-Priority Districts. But it appears that Arkansas is still struggling to get enough teachers for its rural areas before it can begin to address the issue of effectiveness. (ii) With regard to hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, Arkansas is focusing on Special Education and will use RttT funds to increase the stock of qualified teachers - again not yet moving on to differentiate between highly effective and ineffective teachers. Its contract with Teach For America in the Delta schools shows promise. TFA teachers and alumni who remain in the region to help with other aspects of education, are collectively impacting school performance in the Delta Region, and the state has agreed to allow TFA training and support, along with state mandated testing of the Praxis Series, as an alternative certification path for teachers rather than requiring the traditional state or higher education operated alternative licensure paths. The proposal does not address other hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas.</p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Arkansas has a way of linking teachers (and their performance) to the programs where they were trained. But there was no description of how this information would be used as feedback to improve the training programs. Nor did they indicate a plan to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the state (2). Arkansas did not address the expansion of successful preparation programs (0)</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Arkansas focuses much of its work under this criterion on leadership - for principals, school leadership teams, instructional facilitators (academic coaches), teacher leaders, state and district support. Its train the trainer approach should result in embedded on-site expertise to individual teachers as they learn new data-informed approaches to teaching and learning (10). With regard to the measurement and continuous improvement criterion, Arkansas explains that it first plans to understand teacher working conditions to ensure that they do not present barriers to overall success. The application also provides extensive information about how the state would then implement its professional development strategy and assess and continually improve the provision of professional development to improve student performance (10).</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>92</b>

**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas has the authority to intervene in both LEAs and schools, and does so.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: Arkansas identified the lowest 5% of Title I schools plus the bottom two (5%) of Title I eligible secondary schools using a well-explained methodology. Arkansas provided data on their success so far in turning around lowest-achieving schools. They have used America's Choice as their preferred model, which they categorize as a transformational model. Of the 52 schools ever involved (since 2006 -07), thirteen are no longer served (7 made enough performance gain, 3 received a waiver, 2 were consolidated, and one was replaced with another in greater need of the services of America's Choice.) Of the 52 schools, 6 show more growth than the Arkansas average, 12 showed growth, but some of which was less than the state as a whole; 34 showed mixed results, with growth in some areas but at least one area where scores were lower. None declined for all grades in both math and literacy. Arkansas' rural nature brings challenges to replacing significant numbers of staff, so building capacity is preferred as an intervention to the turnaround model. However, the state intends to work with schools to determine the best intervention model. If LEAs do not select turnaround, closure or restart, the state will require implementation of the transformational model. As they say "it is not a case of lack of political will, but lack of practical capacity that necessitates the transformation model." Arkansas will add elements to their current Transformational Model. It will use its School Improvement Grants (SIG) to accelerate the Smart Accountability (a component of Arkansas' strategic process) timeline and build capacity. They specify activities that must be incorporated into a transformational (or turnaround) model, including building state and LEA capacity, professional learning teams, the National Board Take One! Initiative, expanding Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (to teach job readiness skills to high-need youth - a great idea), a compensation study and pilot, a focus on the whole child and scholastic audits. Arkansas' proposal provides evidence of a strong commitment to assisting LEAs and schools to, as they say, help schools take the courageous steps of implementing the models of school turnaround, closure or restart that will use their new model of student growth for professional development and interventions. It certainly remains to be seen, however, whether RttT funding and additional intervention strategies will lead to more success than did the America's Choice turnaround model. The track record is modest, but the plans are creative.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>45</b>

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state appears to have increased its education funding, although the column headings (Education, State, Total) are not clear (5). Arkansas has taken great strides since 2007 to add hundreds of millions of dollars to education and implement sweeping changes in accountability, standards and		

consolidation of small rural schools: No actual evidence was provided, however, to show how this increased funding had led to equitable funding between high-poverty schools and other schools. (2).

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:                  Arkansas allows public school conversion to charters. It also allows open-enrollment charters operated by an eligible sponsoring entity that may draw students from anywhere in the state. There is a cap on the latter type of charter school, although in practice the cap is raised as the number of charters are approved by the State Board of Education. Furthermore, approved charter schools may open additional campuses that do not count against the cap. There are 32 charter schools currently, 20 of which are open enrollment - or about 3% of all public schools (4). All charter schools are public, and therefore included in the public school monitoring processes, reporting and state mandated testing program. There are not specific encouragements for specific student populations (4). Arkansas charter schools are funded on a similar basis to all public schools (8). Arkansas provides conversion and limited public charter schools access to district funding including bonds and mill levies. Open enrollment charter schools do not collect local property taxes and do not receive facilities funding locally or through the state's facilities partnership program. They have right of first refusal on unused public school facilities and can access other bond sources. This modest support is given a score in the low range (2). Arkansas currently does not operate other kinds of innovative, autonomous public schools (0).</p>		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:                  Arkansas' Smart Arkansas initiative encompasses its efforts to increase educational attainment through Smart Start (K-4), Smart Step (5-8), Smart Future (9-12), Smart Leadership (educational leadership capacity) and Smart Accountability (accountability and school improvement initiative). This systematic roadmap for learning improvement has likely provided a useful framework for learning improvement, although no direct evidence was provided.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>29</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments:                  LEA's MOUs contain a commitment to implement the state's STEM plan, which includes new STEM teacher preparation programs in hard-to-staff areas, STEM Centers for instructional support, and AP courses. Arkansas's application makes clear its concern about the importance of STEM knowledge to its future workforce, and its approaches to improving STEM teaching. While it would have been preferable to learn more about some of their STEM initiatives throughout the proposal, some initiatives were woven into the whole application, and overall the effort warrants award of points for this competitive priority.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>

**Absolute Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal did address the four educational reform areas in ARRA as well as the State Success Factors criteria. But the lack of student achievement growth targets made this determination difficult. Without these benchmarks, Arkansas is not going to know if it is making progress of two of the four key performance goals contained in the State Success Factors Criteria.

<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
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<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>389</b>
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