



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #1680CT-1



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	32
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	20
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: A1(i) This state has been working on a somewhat comprehensive reform plan for several years already, with much of the work getting organized in 2006. Their accountability plan was focused on data, standards and effective teaching, and had made some progress in their neediest LEA's. Their RTTT plan brings these efforts forward with plans to add missing elements from RTTTs four key areas. A1(ii) They have participation from only 61.9% of possible LEA's and signatures from 55% of those teacher unions, but no signatures from local union presidents in Hartford or New Haven, 2 of the largest and most impacted LEAs in the state. A1(iii) They have participation from 61.9% of possible LEA's and signatures from 55% of those teacher unions. That said, they have almost all of the districts with the most economically disadvantaged students (30/32) and these districts enroll 87.7 % of the states K-12 students in poverty. The lack of union support in the 2 large districts is troubling—when it comes to 2 major elements of RTTT--data and changing terms of work for teachers, they could slow down or stall reform in these districts. Even if the state initiates reforms, these 2 districts could look for ways their current contracts could get around them.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	19
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: A2(i) The governor has a track record of being involved in education in the NGA and in her priorities for the state. Leadership in both the house and senate helped to pass the accountability legislation to intervene in low performing schools. The state Board of Education and Commissioner of Education have a 5 year plan on which the state's RTTT application was built. They plan an expert panel to advise on implementation for the 4 RTTT grant areas. This seems like a solid set of leadership and alliances with a history of making progress in educational policy making. They also have put in place a management structure to support RTTT grant areas that include internal staff, unions and associations, and non profits and foundations. However, in this plan, the data system area seems under-supported, with only staff and the P20 council, which will presumably include research universities, but that is unclear. There are no technical data or analytical sources mentioned. There is a lot riding on building robust data systems that can measure student achievement and tie to teacher and principal evaluations, so this is a little concerning. In terms of funding, the CSDE has a history of managing 50 different federal grants and will use the same processes and standards to manage RTTT funds. They have only just begun to think about how other grants can supplement RTTT, but some</p>		

small state appropriations have already been made to accountability, data and teacher standards. It may be a little early to have thought through how different grants could dovetail or be repurposed, but they haven't shown any possibilities in this proposal. They also plan to analyze spending each year to find ways to sustain gains. A2(ii) They have gathered letters from 84 institutions, including the teachers unions, businesses, colleges, and social service organizations. They have received wary support from private colleges that are worried about the collection of private data on their students and that states would try to exercise more regulatory control over private colleges. There also seemed to be an accidental inclusion from an arbitration association of a letter regarding a grievance and a bill. Most of the letters of support were very boilerplate, using the same language but frankly lacking strength of organizational support. Few mentioned how they understood the state's plan or how they could partner or support. In addition, there were no letters from any of Connecticut's tribes.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	25
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A3(i)The state has made some progress in each of the four reform areas. 1) They have curriculum standards for preK-Grade 8 in math, science and English language arts. 2)They have revised certification and the Common Core of Teaching, and are developing a new teacher induction model. There is, however, no mention of new recruitment, alternative certification, new assignment systems or new incentives. 3)They have been working on data systems and currently have 5 of 12 America COMPETES requirements in place. The remaining requirements are in progress with completion dates of 2010-11. 4)State accountability legislation in 2007 aimed at Title 1 districts which allows the state to intervene in low performing schools, but there is no mention of what they have done in this regard. A3 (ii) With regard to NAEP Math scores, the state has made progress moving all subgroups forward in both 4th and 8th grades between 2003 and 2009, however in 8th grade, all subgroups dropped in 2005, but all have reversed that trend. The data suggest there is some slight narrowing of the achievement gap among subgroups in math. The CMT and the CAPT also showed some gains in math, NAEP reading scores have not been as positive. Their average scores are higher than the national average, but reading performance is not improving in 4th or 8th grade. African American students were the only ones to have a positive trend in both grades, although they continue to be the lowest performing subgroup. There is no real evidence of a narrowing of the achievement gap. The CMT and the CAPT show slightly better gains. The four-year adjusted cohort rate is not yet available for CT. The rate they use is the USDOE approved one for NCLB. The graduation trend is positive for all students and for the subgroups and their rates have increased faster than that for white children. The statewide graduation rate has increased 3.1%, from 89 to 92.1. The evidence provided for the connections between the data and actions taken includes curriculum initiatives with assessments and pacing guides to increase consistency across programs, grades, schools and subjects. This also included instructional documents. There was also an effort to align standards. CALI (accountability) was developed in 2004 to provide professional development and coaching in the instruction of ethnic minorities. There was no evidence provided for how the data led to ways to increase graduation efforts, nor was there explicit evidence for how the data was used to hone strategies for consistently underperforming subgroups, such as ELL and African American students. Though there have been some drops in scores overall and a plateau in reading scores, the state is making progress in raising achievement for historically underperforming subgroups, as well as increasing the graduation rate.</p>		
Total	125	76

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
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(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	35
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	15
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B1(i) In May 2009, CT signed on to the Common Core State Standards issued by the CCSSO and the NGA Center for Best Practices. This national initiative includes 48 states and Washington DC. There was no inclusion of a draft or final copy of these standards as requested in the application. B1(ii) Connecticut's state standards are very similar to the Common Core State Standards which will make the adoption a smoother process. They are putting together statewide committees to review and align the standards, will solicit input from educators, students, parents and other stakeholders and will bring a final version to the Board of Ed for discussion in June 2010. They expect final adoption in July 2010, prior to the August 2, 2010 deadline.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	8
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Connecticut is among 36 other states that have signed an MOU to participate in a state consortium to develop a balanced system of assessments, however the MOU included seems to be missing pages that explain the involvement—the only thing shown is a signature. They also plan to promote technology standards. They meet the criteria but lack proper evidence of participation.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	14
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In 2008, the State Board of Education approved the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform, focusing on 4 key themes: student engagement, 21st century skills, rigorous expectations (higher graduation requirements) and accountability (standards-based assessments, formative and end of course exams.) Because the state was already preparing to implement work toward these themes and because these themes are closely linked to the Common Core State Standards, the state should be able to transition well to implementing the enhanced standards. Their goals include educating the public, professional development for incoming and current teachers to understand the new standards and score new assessments, continuous improvement at the state curriculum level, educating high school students on what is expected. Schools will use multiple measures of assessment and STEM coursework will run throughout. Planned activities include web-based information, electronic student success plans that could allow LEAs to design alternative programs for students in danger of dropping out or in need of high quality options. Online benchmarks for assessments for LEAs to pilot, professional development for new and current teachers and higher education to understand new standards, increased credit and course requirements in math and science and model curricula in STEM areas will developed. The timelines for these plans seem reasonable, though most will not begin until September 2011. The plans have the potential to reach many educators, and to reach traditional teacher training program faculty. The only concern here is their passivity—they are web based and seemingly voluntary and there seem to be no incentives for signing on. Some involve small groups of interested voluntary participants, which may overlook the teachers currently teaching who are disinterested in learning about the next new reform standard. Schools with chronic low performance and perhaps a weaker teacher corps will need extra supports and attention to get them up to speed.</p>		
Total	70	57

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
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(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: 1. Unique student ID number – yes 2. Student demographic, enrollment and program participation information – yes 3. Student transition information P-16 –No (not P-16) 4. Capacity to communication to higher ed data systems – in progress 5. Audit system to ensure data quality – Yes 6. Yearly test records for assessment required under the ESEA – Yes 7. Information on students not tested by grade and subject – Yes 8. Teacher identifier to match teachers to students – In progress 9. Student level transcripts containing courses and grades – In progress 10. Student scores on college readiness tests – no (SAT, AP not adequate) 11. Transition data from secondary to higher ed – In progress 12. Data on the alignment and adequacy of student preparation for post secondary education – In progress Total= 5 already underway, 7 planned</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	2
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has plans to both continue and expand access to data, linking student scores to teachers by 2011 and using a data warehouse and a data and research web site to allow constituents to access data more quickly. They plan to continue the CALI accountability system with 15 partner districts which they will monitor and provide with technical assistance. They plan to train and seek feedback. Though they are collecting and sharing data, there is no definitive link between student achievement data connected to teachers and principals, except for math and English teachers in tested grades. This is, in general, a solid plan for expanding access and use of data, but it also misses an opportunity for teachers and principals to get formative feedback by not connecting more to student data.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: They plan to use their comprehensive accountability plan (CALI) and expand it to all participating LEAs. Their K-2 Assessment Consortium project is preparing formative assessment materials and protocols to identify unmet needs in literacy, math and science in the earliest grades. They have a plan to get their participating LEAs trained and implementing instructional improvement plans. They have a system of PD that they have developed for CALI which they will require participating LEAs to attend, that includes an array of modules on understanding and using data. This system is already in place. They have created a new data dissemination web site (CEDaR) that anyone can access for school, LEAs and state level data. In addition, non-profit research groups can get student level data within 60 days of request. With regard to data on the local instructional improvement systems, LEAs will need to assure that any data from their system that is not part of the statewide longitudinal data system (local benchmark assessments, student satisfaction surveys) will be shared upon request within a reasonable amount of time. The state department of education requested an evaluation of the CALI system, which is 18 months into a 2 year study. Early findings show that the current districts involved believe it to be a good model for improvement, though the researchers haven't yet determined the implementation at the school level. They find it to be a data driven, continuous improvement model. They developed new data systems and have established methods and professional development for getting LEAs to use the new data to improve instruction and to share data among policy makers and researchers.</p>		
Total	47	30

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Yes, the state offers legal alternatives to traditional preparation for teachers and provides proof of state law. There are currently 8 alternative routes to certification (ARC) programs, 4 of which are independent of institutions of higher education. In 2008-09, they graduated 323 teachers, 15% of the total teachers certified that year. There are no ARC programs for principals, though one is in the works, potentially opening in Fall 2010. For the last 20 years, the state has surveyed districts to determine teacher and administration shortage areas and published it in the Data Bulletin Hiring Report. The report, however, does not note what grade levels they are short in. They also do not yet have a plan for attracting more candidates to these shortage areas, though ARC programs are initially approved for shortage areas only. Though they experience a shortage in administrators they have found that they have many people with certification -- 3,000 received certification in the last year, and there are only 1,121 schools in the state. They plan to use RTTT funds to survey on this issue.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	45
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	18

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The state has a solid plan lined up to track student progress from Pre-K to 12 and link it to teachers, track scores for grades not currently tested at the state level, implement grade-level benchmarks for Grade 3-8 in math and reading, develop appropriate assessments for K-2, and implement vertical scales to measure growth across grades on tests that have different characteristics but similar content. They are planning to develop an evaluation system that is grounded in evaluating performance via classroom observations, agreed-on measures of student growth, and other measures that may include peer reviews, student/parent evaluations, or effective use of student success plans. They also have a plan for evaluating principal performance. Methods for evaluating administrators will include student growth measures and other sources of data, including school improvement goals and AYP, supporting teachers through data-driven decision making, and other issues related to climate, leadership and teacher attraction. This looks like a good plan, but the involvement of teachers and principals is unclear. They will require all participating LEAs to agree to conduct annual evaluations, and will use the RTTT definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and principals in this evaluation. They will require data to be collected into a statewide reporting data system and will report on the findings, statewide. They have plans for ensuring it occurs annually, and that reports will include data on student growth. They have a plan to offer professional development to teachers and principals to help them make use of data gained in the evaluation process. They want to look at new ways to compensate and retain and promote teachers and principals, especially highly effective ones and they cite the recent New Haven teachers contract as a way to link school reform and student achievement to teacher evaluation and compensation. They also want to support salary reform, getting away from linking salaries to credits earned. They want to review tenure decisions, though there are no targets set. They mention an interest in removing ineffective teachers and principals that have had ample opportunities to improve, and will include in their new evaluation guidelines intensive evaluations for low performers, but mention no plan for this difficult endeavor. They have raised important issues about evaluation and effectiveness, but they are aspirational at this point and have no plans in place for the near future. They also fail to include any performance measures.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	13
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

They already have some activities in place to tackle the issue of equitable distribution of effective teachers in high poverty or high minority schools: hiring back appropriately certified retired teachers, alternative routes to certification in shortage areas, mortgage assistance for teachers in high poverty/high minority LEAs, MOU with India, China and Spain to allow teachers a permit to work in these LEAs. They plan financial incentives, targeted interventions, specialized programs and changes in state policy to make further headway. They plan a special consortium of public and private institutions to train ELL teachers. Another new program would be a master in residence program in high poverty/high minority districts. Signing bonuses and retention bonuses, transferability of tenure and seniority when moving to a LEA with shortages, expansion of on line courses taught by highly effective teachers. These seem like a list of items, not so much a plan. While these are a wide variety of plans to attract teachers, they do not provide any baseline data or annual targets for performance measures, nor do they make any assurances that high poverty/high minority students will not be served by ineffective teachers at higher rates than other students. They are using the same strategies to ensure equitable distribution in shortage areas as they are using for high poverty/high minority schools and already have some activities in place to tackle this issue: hiring back appropriately certified retired teachers, alternative routes to certification in shortage areas, mortgage assistance for teachers in high poverty/high minority LEAs, MOU with India, China and Spain to allow teachers a permit to work in these LEAs. They plan financial incentives, targeted interventions, specialized programs and changes in state policy to make further headway. They plan a special program to hire STEM teachers to urban and rural districts, pay them bonuses and expect them to stay for 6 years. They also plan to offer signing bonuses and retention bonuses, and transferability of tenure and seniority when moving to an LEA with shortages. Again, while these are interesting plans to attract teachers, they do not provide any baseline data or annual targets for performance measures.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	9
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

They have a pilot in place linking student scores to teachers and their preparation and endorsement information and plan to expand that to all teachers prepared in CT. They do not provide any baseline data or annual targets for performance measures for this. They also plan to follow the trends and increase accountability at institutions with at risk or low performing results and use this in the accreditation process. Using the data gathered they plan to identify successful programs and encourage their growth. They offer no details on how they will expand them.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The state has –both in place and planned – professional development that is targeted toward teachers and principals. This includes training in the CALI accountability system (including using data, and best practices for ELL, and school improvement), induction and mentoring for both teachers and principals, math and science curriculum and coaching and using new technologies. There are plans to make sure the training runs deep in schools, by involving school staff on instructional data teams, and annually monitoring their effectiveness. Teams will also receive training together so they create a critical mass at their school. They also plan to revise continuing education units to move toward job-embedded training and training more focused on differentiated student learning. They plan to hire external evaluators to study professional development efforts and provide recommendations. These are solid plans for state to district professional development, but they don't mention how schools can tailor professional development to their particular needs.

Total	138	97
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
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(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state has legal authority to intervene in persistently low-achieving schools, but to intervene in the LEA they need to get the Governor and Legislature to approve the intervention, which is very difficult to do.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	28
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	23
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has developed a methodology for identifying persistently low achieving schools and non-Title 1 eligible schools. Beginning in 2007, the state identified 15 low performing LEAs as part of their CALI accountability plan and intervened with goal setting, professional development, coaching, suggested replacing of staff and required time for staff collaboration. They have seen some improvements in some of the schools in these LEAs, but none of the 4 school intervention models were used and they admit that they have not had the kinds of change they were hoping for. Their lessons learned suggest that they are ready to use the 4 intervention models to get some bigger results and have plans to use them in addition to their CALI system and SIG funds. They plan to require their participating LEAs use these models. They have already met with LEAs to identify the schools and in some LEAS they plan to implement a longer school year. While they have not taken ambitious and aggressive steps in the past, relying too much on professional development and coaching, they appear committed to doing this in RTTT.		
Total	50	33

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The percent of funds available for education was essentially equal in both 2008 and 2009. Grant programs to support education are distributed through an equalizing formula based on a town's wealth and student needs. The state distributes most of the funds by LEA, but in some cases they earmark funds to high poverty schools, which includes school breakfast and early childhood education.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	22
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: There is no cap, however there is language that states that the Board of Ed may only grant charters "within available appropriations." The SBE plans a legislative proposal for the 2010 session to strike that language. Whether it is this language that prevents more schools from opening or not, the attempt to change it in the 2010 legislature does not seem aggressive enough. There are 1,211 schools in the state. The law was passed in 1996, but there are only 18 charter schools. This represents just 1% of the schools in the state. The local LEA as well as other districts weigh in on the approval process, there is a limit on the number of schools that can operate in an LEA and the number of students that can enroll, there are restrictions to the demographics of students that can enroll, and very few applicants (7 in the last 5 years). All of these facts point to a weak law. The approval process seems to be discouraging rather than seeking high quality applicants (see above). There is no evidence offered for why the state turned down any applicants. The state has closed, revoked or not renewed several charters in the last 10 years, though the only explanation offered was that one school that closed due		

to insufficient funds. Charter schools receive more funds than traditional public schools from the state and federal level, but receive much less from local revenues, resulting in charter schools receiving \$12,939 per pupil, as compared to \$14,016. Charter schools in CT are not generally eligible for grant assistance under the traditional school construction program available to local and regional school boards, but the state has provided charter schools with funding for facilities and other related supports. The state allows the Commissioner of Education to establish a grant program to assist charter schools in financing charter school building projects. Since 2002 they have provided \$14.5 million in funding for charter school building projects. In 2005, a pilot school construction grant was made to provide a grant to one charter school to buy and renovate a building. They were approved, but 4 years later they have yet to start construction. They operate ComPACT schools, which are a collaboration between UConn, unions, and administrators. There are 8 of these. They also have 60 interdistrict magnet schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state offers interdistrict choice, drop out prevention in 21 targeted LEAs, leadership training for parents and life skills for 40 minority male students. These and the descriptions of work mentioned in A1 suggest that they have in place a variety of reform conditions, with some much stronger (CALI) than others (i.e. the promising life skills that only serves 40 minority students.)		
Total	55	34

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Though they mention specific courses and teacher policies, the overall application did not come through powerfully or persistent enough, missing opportunities to really direct STEM plans at high needs students, underrepresented groups, or connecting to higher education and careers. The efforts mentioned seemed like one-off elements and there was no effort to really explain a plan that would tie all these discrete elements together nor make it much more ambitious.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: The state has put effort into plans to address all four of the education reform areas and has backed up these plans with a comprehensive state reform effort. It has mixed LEA participation, but encompasses most of the high poverty students in the state. There are creative efforts underway to get effective teachers in to high poverty schools and shortage areas. The state accountability system is already underway and the RTTT plans will dovetail with this effort. The application meets this priority.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	327
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #1680CT-2



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	43
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	30
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (i) Plan addresses all 4 reform areas and provides a comprehensive overview. Statement has clear strategy and focus on urban districts. Many promising new initiatives introduced. The numerous reform elements have cohesion and depth. (ii) The major problem is that several urban teacher unions have not signed, and these signatures are an overall intervention priority. Unions in Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford have not signed. Moreover, only 55% of local union leaders signed statewide. Proposal needs to provide more details on local union participation. (iii) MOU includes well aligned and effective, specific reforms that LEA's must agree to implement. Not all LEA's are participating so the schools participating equals only 70% of students. See comment in ii on union concern. Much of the proposal focuses on urban low achieving schools, so it is noteworthy that 80% of poverty students participate. Some local board members did not sign MOU, and reasons for this need to be included.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	24
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i) Administrative structure and responsibility is designed well and state has history of implementing complex initiatives. The budget is very well done and reflects the coherence and design of the proposal. Budget detail included is impressive and creates confidence in this fiscal plan. (ii) There is a very broad swath of state and local organizations involved. Many letters of support indicate more than generic or pro forma support. Connecticut has a number of effective delivery mechanisms (CALI, RESC) that are integrated well into the budget and plan. Stakeholder support is linked appropriately to subsequent initiatives in the proposal. There was a letter from statewide AFT, and a statewide NEA letter. Union support unclear at some local levels, and needs more detail to provide broad stakeholder support by teachers.</p>		
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	23
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	19
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

(i) Connecticut lacks many data elements and its teacher evaluation system has no individual student academic growth components. The charter law is limited in scope and potential, and includes restrictive caps. But they are making some progress in all four areas. The state has been very active in teacher policies that are at the front end of new concepts and approaches (e.g., CALI and TEAM). Connecticut's assessments have been redesigned appropriately to meet new conditions. Finance equalization is detailed and effective. School intervention through the transformation model is highly developed and has been implemented with some positive effects. (ii) Analysis of strengths and weaknesses is detailed and demonstrates awareness of the situation. Tables on NAEP increases are consistent with the proposal's interpretation of math increases, and flat scores in reading. There is enough progress on NAEP and frank statements about problems to indicate state policy will change in future years. State tests are compared and contrasted appropriately with NAEP. The CMT test shows more progress in math and some positive movement in reading, The Grade 10 (CMT test) highlights analysis of gap closing except for ELL. Overall, CT has an impressive, wide array of state test data that is compared to NAEP and pinpoints problems. Subsequent parts of the proposal focus on ELL student issues derived from the state tests. CMT is useful assessment for this proposal because it has several constructed response and grid-in items.

Total	125	90
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) State meets all the requirements to be part of large common standards consortium (47 states included). (ii) Proposal includes adequate implementation schedule and sufficient alignment analysis. Connecticut has several successful past curriculum development projects that provide positive experience with mapping and aligning standards to high quality state assessments. CT is part of impressive interstate consortiums to develop assessment. The New England Assessment Collaboration is especially impressive. Many parts of the proposal provide needed examples of grounding curriculum content standards in broader concepts including explicit state policies for Common Core of Teaching and Common Core of Learning.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application demonstrates clear understanding of linking assessments to standards and the numerous steps to implement assessments. Secondary School Plan provides impressive recent experience in transition to new assessments. The NESSC consortium is succeeding in interstate assessment development and implementation. CMT is another example of prior ability to design and implement complex assessments that move beyond multiple choice items.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>NESSC, CAPT, and CMT are evidence of successful assessment transition. CT has creative ideas for use of technology by classroom teachers. State is part of 36 state balanced assessment consortium. The eight goals and detailed content under each demonstrate a complete grasp of the many elements needed for a transition. Particularly impressive are inclusion of STEM, College High School partnerships, benchmarks, use of web and technology. This plan is based on experience, built upon</p>		

prior policies, and coherent in its many parts. Regional centers provide a good base for LEA and public involvement in transition.

Total	70	70
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: 1,2,5,6,7 of the Competes Act elements are in place, and detailed plans presented for the rest. Higher education linkage in element 10 is not sufficient because no current base data system that spans the levels for all students. SAT/AP are not taken by most community college/technical students so plan for element 10 needs more depth. Placement exams for broad access colleges need to be aligned with k-12 assessments.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state is making progress on providing student test results for individual students. The 2011 timeline for accomplishing this may be too ambitious. A new grant from IES demonstrates state has seen the need to improve its overall data system for years before RTT application was even contemplated. The focus on very needy districts is good. The functions of the DATA Teams are correct. CALI is a very impressive system and evaluation in appendix by RMC provides the guidance on how to proceed to improve CALI. CALI is at the forefront of the state of the art for improving classroom use and instruction.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	16
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: This section is very strong and only concern is that ambitious plans may not be realized. Expanding CALI to all participating LEAs seems unlikely given expansion issues raised in RMC report. CBAS is promising for benchmark testing. State is correct to use K-2 data, but needs to mention that many assessments for young children are not valid or reliable. State (BAI) and local administrative roles are detailed well. Promising and reasonable training models for local educators are provided and field tested in demonstration schools. These models should provide sufficient data for educators to use in improving instruction. Researcher availability of data is sufficient and robust, and researcher role is supplemented in appendix to an adequate extent. So many initiatives in C3 that only risk is that the implementation burden is too large, and it cannot be sustained after RTT.</p>		
Total	47	30

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (i) Statutory provisions provide clear and effective basis for alternative certification for teachers, but no alternative route for principals. (ii) State has both IHE and non IHE provider alternative programs for teachers, but not for principals. Teacher programs may not be "selective" because institutions probably accept all applicants who meet minimum qualifications. Internship seems satisfactory, but summer coursework may not provide sufficient depth. (iii) Teacher programs apply to shortage areas (bilingual</p>		

etc.) only, so this limits statewide impact. Plan for subjects that have no current shortages is needed. No current alternative program for principals, so this alternative route needs to be added.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	44
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	19

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(i) Plan has many effective student growth elements, but may be difficult to implement them within the timetable presented. The ideas in 1-6 are impressive and creative. TEAM provides good basis for successful administration. Need more detail on how teacher and staff training will be designed for ELL. (ii) Several of these initiatives mentioned in earlier parts of application. Table D2 (b) demonstrates a fine use of broader concepts and policy documents from the past to help with new initiatives for designing an effective evaluation that provides multiple ratings. But more detail needed in how teachers from large districts will be involved. Full implementation and sustaining large scale evaluation after RTT is uncertain. More explicit attention to college readiness is needed. (iii) Benchmarks, Timelines, and Responsible Parties provide confidence that plan is thorough. Steps are detailed sufficiently to reach outcomes. Plan is very comprehensive. (iv) Some RESCs are weak according to RMC evaluation and specific plan needed to build up their capacity. Mentions commitment of administrators and boards, but unclear plan for teacher buy in and needed changes in collective bargaining. New Haven teacher contract cited as good example, but NH teachers union did not sign MOU. There is a need to clarify this. Overall D2 is a detailed blueprint with many interlocking parts that add up to a major reform. However, many current performance measures are missing, so implementation is uncertain.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	17
(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	7

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(i) Has no current data on whether teachers are evaluated as effective now, or any other of this type of data on teachers or principals. Proposal needs annual targets, but does have adequate data needed on subject matter and ELL shortages. The analysis of "equitable distribution" problem has some data. The ELL Institute is promising. TEAM and Master Teacher legislation demonstrates state commitment to new initiatives, but no plan for long run financing of these many initiatives. Mentors can be helpful, but need more analysis on other states' experience with enhancing the effectiveness of mentors. Statewide mentor programs have been uneven in quality. Signing bonuses have been tried in two cities, but no data presented on their effects. For example, teachers often favor working conditions over money in choosing districts/schools to work in. Tenure revision is good idea, but required collective bargaining adjustments make this uncertain as an outcome. The On line learning initiative is specific and designed well. Performance measure table is blank, and explanation for this needs to be expanded. (ii) Overall, a lot of promising initiatives that provide multiple strategies to address the problem. Baseline data and policies make it difficult to project success and sustenance. Much more focus on teachers rather than principals so need more specific information about principals. No STEM in this section, and need reasons for omission.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Data and baseline status being phased in to appropriately link teacher and administrator prep to key outcomes, except for college transition. Need plan for enabling new teachers to align their instruction with college expectations. New program regulations will not be implemented until 2014, so need to explore faster implementation. Targeting short run initiatives to seven Pilot districts may make sense, but need information on how those districts will be chosen. The amount and type of data linked to teacher prep programs is comprehensive and includes student performance. Quality index is specified well. Overall design of initiatives is strong and comprehensive. Covers both teachers and administrators adequately. Public access to data not in performance measures, and should be added.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: Very strong section that includes both teachers and administrators. CALI is an outstanding and creative base to build from. There are eleven reinforcing and integrated initiatives in this section, so comprehensive scope is a positive. Has STEM focus that helps strengthen STEM scope. Each needed element of support for educators is included in certification training program. RMC evaluation of CALI is used to strengthen numerous dimensions of plan. Technology is well integrated throughout with deep penetration into classrooms. Parent support and involvement is specified. This Section effectively integrates initiatives like TEAM from prior sections. Prior successful negotiations with teacher leaders provides evidence that collective bargaining will not be an obstacle in some districts. Principal program will be new, but more detail needed on mentoring and developmental portfolio. A positive point is that lots of coaching concepts in this section are developed well. Phase in plan is provided that seems reasonable.</p>		
Total	138	102

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: State authority to intervene in districts and schools is provided in adequate detail. However, the approval of legislature is needed for district takeover, and this may be difficult to obtain. Connecticut has intervened in schools in the past as evidenced in the application. It is possible to intervene in districts under existing policies</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	28
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	23
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i) Proposal identifies intervention schools in a very precise and specific manner. Intervention effectiveness is supported by some schools improving their status on federal improvement standards. (ii) CALI is a very promising intervention because of its links to improving classroom instruction. State has implemented only 3 of 4 school intervention models and charter law and implementation is not widespread (also has strict cap). This restricts alternatives for turn around and requires more justification for restrictions. The lessons learned on turnaround displays ability to evaluate and improve strategies/tactics. Transition model is strongest design and will be the major state intervention. But insufficient justification for why other turnaround strategies will not be used widely. Plan needs much more detail on restart and closure models. These strategies are merely mentioned as part of CALI. Section includes STEM in an adequate manner. More detail needed concerning missing performance measures.</p>		

Total	50	38
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut has presented ample evidence of school funding and equalization formulas. Proposal provides numerous and complete tables and analysis on equalization formulas and impact. Level of funding effort is presented clearly in table. Total revenues remained about the same. Equitable funding is provided by so much state money going to the more needy school districts.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	25
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: New law (if it passes) will improve the opportunities for future charters. Charter program has appropriations cap that will inhibit growth. Financing for operations are over 90% of traditional, but facilities support is not the same as for public schools. Concerns are that state has been the sole authorizer, and until 2010 limited the number of students in each school. Law does provide some local operational autonomy, but charters must apply for state waivers which inhibits flexibility. There is an extensive state oversight/renewal process that includes sufficient criteria for nonrenewal and revocation decisions. Charters have been revoked by state for poor student performance, so this provides evidence of effective state oversight. There is a small number of charter schools, so it is not clear how effective oversight would be if number of charters expanded greatly .</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: Other student choice programs have operated for many years with positive effects for improving choice. For example, magnets and inter district choice are well developed and targeted to low income students. Regional technical schools have been part of CT education for many years. CT has impressive programs for dropouts, minority males, and parents. RTT will expand some of these.</p>		
Total	55	37

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: Specific initiatives are included in many sections - most prominent in B3, D5, and E. These programs are specified in detail and linked to broader concepts and reforms in the sections. They are not stand alone projects. The application addresses specific courses, numerous teacher policies, and preparation for advanced STEM careers. This section did not provide a clear focus on coherence of various initiatives.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments: Connecticut meets the absolute priority. It does address well all four education reform areas. The coherence, integration, and reinforcement of the various plans is especially impressive. There is a logical progression from impressive past initiatives, and this is not a collection of disconnected projects. There are some gaps in areas such as local teacher union sign off, data elements, charter policy, and school turnaround. But in most of these gap areas there are plans for improvement. Moreover, there are very strong past accomplishments and plans in key areas such as Sections B,D, and F. When all this is put together the absolute priority is met.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	382



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #1680CT-3



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	37
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	25
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) Connecticut articulates its State Education Reform Plan (SERP) in a thorough description of seven elements aligned with RTTT. Of particular interest is Connecticut's Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) and how it currently works with the neediest Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The state has numerous current and proposed initiatives that may add to the impact of RTTT if the initiatives are well integrated. However, the number of reform initiatives may overwhelm LEAs. (ii) 122 LEAs have agreed to participate in the RTTT program representing 61.9% of the statewide total LEAs, 69.5% of statewide schools, 69.7% of students, and 87.7% of students in poverty. While this is obviously more than half the LEAs, schools, and almost all CT students in poverty, there are missing LEAs and schools. Of greater concern is the range in signatures secured across Superintendents (100%), School Boards (86%), and Local Teacher Union Leaders (55%). If 45% of local teacher union leaders were unable or unwilling to commit to implementing the RTTT program, the potential for success of the effort in CT might be called into question. (iii) Additional information and/or analysis of this lack of commitment is necessary to better evaluate the potential for implementation at the LEA level and the resultant statewide impact.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	22
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT has the support of its Governor, State Legislature, and State Board of Education as well as numerous partners in the advocacy and higher education communities as indicated by the number of legislated reform programs and the budget levels over the past few years. The State Education Agency (SEA) is organized to support reform efforts and intends to add staff to manage RTTT and integrate it into on-going programs and resources. The plan to add 3 managers and approximately 20-25 staff may be difficult to not only effectively manage but also sustain after RTTT funding. Given the State's recent SEA re-organization, the integration of this new staff may be overwhelming within the SEA. The sustainability plan is ambitious and appears to be dependent on a number of legislative and re-purposing actions that, if successful, may lead to increased integration of reform across CT. The reverse is of concern; if the legislation and re-purposing do not take place the RTTT activities may end-up as a separate activity dependent on short term funding. It is unclear what CT may need to stop doing (if necessary) to improve school performance. (ii) CT has forged alliances with approximately 80 stakeholders ranging from state level education associations and other organizations. While the</p>		

absolute number of letters is impressive. it would have been useful to have additional specific details on how these groups will add value to the reform plan including how the support will translate into action. Without specifics on what these groups are going to do to advance the RTTT plan, their "support" may not have an impact.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	22
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	17
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (i) CT has a made progress in each reform area. There have been improvements in many components from data systems to better in-depth tools for school and district use. CT does not provide specifics on how the funds were used. (ii) NAEP and state data indicate a slight upward, albeit uneven, trend in mathematics, reading, and the high school graduation rate. Because of changes in the state tests, the data in the application does not provide comparable data or analysis for NAEP and the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), scale scores v. at/above proficiency rates respectively, leading to questions regarding student outcomes and state progress. As mentioned previously, the data provided indicate some upward movement but without additional explanations the results might call into question the CALI model and the subsequent support provided to schools and districts. Given the level of effort undertaken by the state to date, more robust increases in student achievement might be expected.		
Total	125	81

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	35
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	15
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (i) CT is participating in the Common Core of State Standards initiative. (ii) CT is currently setting up statewide committees to review and align its current standards with the Common Core standards. While the application states that there is a "high agreement" between the Common Core and CT's current standards, a more quantified description of the degree of alignment between the Common Core of Standards and the existing standards might be useful. The process proposed by the state does not anticipate any problems/issues that might arise in aligning the current standards. It is unclear if the Common Core Standards are more (or less) rigorous than the current CT standards and how the state intends to negotiate any problems that might arise during the review and adoption phase.		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: CT is a member of a state consortium to develop balanced assessments aligned with the common core standards. They have also joined with other New England states to develop performance based assessments for secondary students as well as technology standards developed and endorsed by the International Society for Technology. CT also plans to apply for additional funding to develop assessments as part of the above Consortium.		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

CT outlines a linear process to support the transition to the Common Core of Standards and aligned assessments. The state includes appropriate steps to engage the participating LEAs, track student achievement, and provide resources for teachers and administrators to effectively implement the standards on a web based system. It appears as if most of CT's activities are predicated on teachers, administrators, and the larger community accessing web sites sponsored by the state. This form of passive engagement with the level of change in practice envisioned by the plan may require additional steps to be fully implemented. The most active elements of the implementation plan focus on developing open-ended and performance tasks to ensure the teaching of rigorous standards. CT does not provide a rationale for this approach. However, the development of formative and summative assessments that reflect the standards and use student work might provide teachers and administrators with the type of real world examples necessary to implement the standards and assessments.

Total

70

55

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	12
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: CT has completed 6 of the 12 requirements and is working on the remaining six with target completion dates of 2011-12. Components of the teacher and student identifier data appear to be dependent on a grant application submitted in December 2009.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: CT has been working on its statewide data system and intends to have the enhanced system (CEDaR) available in February 2010. LEA use (including analysis) of student and teacher linked data appear to be in the development phase. Much of the work appears to fall on the LEA with support from the state. It is unclear if LEAs will be able to meet these demands. CT is working in depth with 15 partner LEAs to fully implement and use State data. It is unclear how many of the 22 RTTT partner LEAs are among this group of 15. As mentioned previously, the respective roles of the LEAs and the SEA in this area are not clear. An additional concern is the integration of the CEDaR system and the CALI accountability framework.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	13
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (i) CT proposes to meet this RTTT requirement by expanding the CALI accountability framework to the RTTT participating LEAs. The LEAs will be responsible for preparing data based improvement plans and then establishing a variety of data teams to monitor the implementation. To implement these plans, the state intends to provide the LEAs with additional data and professional development. It is unclear from the application how the various improvement plans and the data used to both develop and measure them are (or will be) integrated into a meaningful improvement strategy. The plan as described in the application may be overly complex. It is difficult to know if the plan is based on the experiences of the current 15 partner LEAs. (4) (ii) The state proposes to support the LEAs by requiring them to participate in CALI training. CT outlines a process for requesting training in a variety of data programs. It was difficult to determine if the participating LEAs were to be provided with specific training or generic professional development opportunities. The process for requesting training did not appear to be structured to help the LEAs meet their need to support instructional improvement. Given the level of activity at the LEA level, the capacity to meet the state requirements without additional</p>		

coaches, technical assistance, and/or staff is questionable. (3) (iii) CT will make the data available to researchers. (6)

Total	47	28
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT has had an alternative route to certification (ARC) since 1988. The current statutory program for teachers only includes the five elements listed in the definition and permits programs outside institutions of higher education (IHEs). A program for principals is expected to begin in fall of 2010.(4)</p> <p>(ii) There are currently eight programs operating in CT which certified 15% of the total number of teachers certified in the state. Two-thirds of the ARCs completed a program sponsored by the Department of Higher Education which is not considered an IHE; the next highest provider (22%) is Teach for America. (6) (iii) CT presents data on teacher shortages for fall 2008 that do not appear to correspond to the ARC programs and/or graduates. The greatest need areas (based on the data) are for bilingual, school library media specialists, and speech and language teachers. There was only one ARC completer in those areas. CT intends to develop a plan to better evaluate preparation programs and needs areas. (3)</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	39
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	18
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT will use its RTTT funds to accelerate and expand its state longitudinal data system that is under development with another grant from ED. The proposed system will be completed by 2011-12 and will include reliable measures, demographic data, and teacher/student linkages. CT intends to allow LEAs to integrate local measures as well as benchmark assessments. While these elements may provide important data points, it is not clear in the application how the state will guarantee their reliability and impact on the system as a whole. CT also intends to support vertical scaling to help interpret growth. This is an additional area that the proposed outside measurement experts may need to carefully review to ensure that the system supports. (3) (ii) CT intends to revise its current teacher and principal evaluation systems. The work is to be completed by the 2012-13 school year. The plans included in the application include student growth as a significant factor. The participation of teacher and principals in the development process appears to be confined to their state level organizations. Given the need to include student growth measures which will be developed on a similar timeline, CT may need to better coordinate across these two activities. (10) (iii) CT intends to use the evaluation system including student growth data developed above and report the first data in 2012-13. It is unclear how the focused monitoring will ensure appropriate use of these extensive new measures. Also, given the degree of change necessary to implement this system, CT may need to consider additional interim pilot testing. (7) (iv) The applicant may need to consider a deeper level of review to ensure that not only is the evaluation system itself producing appropriate results but also is being used to improve teacher and principal performance. It is unclear how active the State will be in this area as opposed to the responsibility and authority of the individual LEAs. (18)</p>		
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	12

(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5
(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (i) The applicant does not provide data on the current distribution of highly qualified teachers and principals nor does it critique prior policies that may (or may not) support more equitable distribution of teachers in high poverty and/or high minority schools. While there is some discussion of teacher movement into less challenging districts and schools, it is difficult to determine the extent of the problem. (7) (ii) CT's proposed solutions include an integrated approach tied to new teacher mentoring with an emphasis on the high need area (bilingual) as well as financial incentives as a more general approach. At the state level, there appear to be a number of support systems proposed for RTTT implementation, for example, the Teacher-in Residence program. However, it also appears as if many of the activities need to be supported and the decision to implement made at the participating LEA level. The application does not discuss the extent of the State's capacity to ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals as well as the degree of independence LEAs have in this area even with the signed MOU. It is also difficult to know the benefits that would accrue to an LEA participating in programs such as the Teacher-in-Residence Master Teacher Program.(5)		
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	7
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: CT will use its state data system to link student performance with teacher preparation programs. These data will be available in September 2014 and will be the starting point for examining the efficacy of teacher preparation programs. It is unclear in the application how the time period between 2010 and the intent to adopt action by the state board and the final adoption of standards for teacher preparation programs in 2014 will be used to monitor and improve the programs. In addition, it would be useful to know how many of CT's current teachers and principals are graduates of in-state programs as well as how the current programs are operating. It is unclear how the SEA will actually be able to inform the approval process for educator preparation programs since this is the key to improving the preparation programs. In the application the SEA role in this improvement process seems to be modified with "to the extent possible" which is difficult to evaluate without additional information on the SEA's ability to act.		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: The state has 11 initiatives as part of SERP to support teachers and principals, 5 of which are required - 3 for teachers and principals, two additional initiatives for teachers. The proposed initiatives are well-focused on known implementation issues. It is unclear if there will be additional opportunities for teachers and principals to identify additional areas of needed support.		
Total	138	86

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: CT has the authority to intervene directly at the school level. Before the state can intervene in the lowest achieving LEAs it must consult with the Governor, chief elected officials of the district and may request the General Assembly to authorize that control of the LEA be reassigned to the SEA. This statutory requirement makes intervention very difficult.		

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	25
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT has identified its lowest performing schools separating them into Tiers to further define levels of need. Currently, 18 Title I schools are the lowest achieving in the State - 16 are elementary, 2 are high schools. (ii) CT has focused on its lowest performing LEAs and schools with the CALI initiative using a variety of techniques to improve the lowest performing schools from establishing demonstration schools which receive coaches and resources, set achievement targets, and other specific activities to focus on student achievement. CT states that it will take two to three years to turn around the lowest performing schools. Most of the activities are focused on additional supports and resources rather than staff changes or school closings. CT has provided evidence of the impact within the participating LEAs demonstrating that approximately 41 schools within the 15 participating LEAs have improved to the level at which they are removed from the Needs Improvement status (5 schools) while 36 made AYP. While there are documented success, the time line for this change may leave many students in consistently failing schools for too long.</p>		
Total	50	30

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT state funding has increased in absolute dollars but decreased by .09% from 2008 to 2009. (3) (ii) CT has an equalization Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant program that decreases state funding proportionally for high wealth/high tax districts while increasing funding for low wealth/low tax base districts as well as target grants that typically provide additional resources to CT's poorest and neediest districts. (5)</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	24
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i) CT is proposing to modify its existing charter school rules which in effect have a "cap" not in actual numbers but by imposing "within available appropriations" limits. Current statute also caps the enrollment of any charter school. The State Board (SBE) has approved a resolution to request a legislative change in the restricting language. (2) (ii) State statute governs the application, approval, monitoring, annual reporting, accountability and renewal process for charter schools. 5 charter schools have closed since 2000. (4) (iii) Per pupil funding for charter schools is slightly less (92.3%) than for traditional public schools when federal, state, and local sources are combined. State and federal funding levels for charter school pupils is higher. (6) (iv) The state provides some funding for facilities but it is not equitable. (4) (v) CT does, however, support a robust interdistrict magnet school program and CommPACT schools to provide parents, students, and teachers with choices. (8)</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>CT supports public school choice programs, has begun a drop-out prevention program, parent leadership training, and a mentoring program for adolescent minority male students. Given the extent of the issues confronting CT these do not appear to be significant reforms. In addition, CT does not</p>		

include evidence that shows the impact of these reforms on student achievement or other important outcomes.

Total	55	35
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: CT does not provide a high quality STEM proposal. Most of the activities are limited and not well-integrated throughout the application.		
Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: CT has proposed to meet the RTTT reform areas through a state partnership with 122 of its LEAs. The state will provide support and resources, the LEAs appear to have much of the authority and responsibility for implementing the programs. CT has a history of making progress in some reform areas, e.g. CALI, which intends to capitalize on in the RTTT program. However, it was not clear if there were more intense reform activities planned that would move the lowest performing LEAs to improve student achievement and close the achievement group on a faster timeline.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	315
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #1680ct-5



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	48
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	33
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: CSDE has set forth a comprehensive and coherent agenda and articulated goals for implementing reform in the four areas targeted to improve student outcomes statewide. They have also established a clear and credible path to achieving these goals consistent with the specific reform plans proposed. Nearly two-thirds of the state's LEAs (61.9) representing nearly seventy percent of the state's students are participants in the reform effort. There is high/strong representation of students in poverty (87.7) and urban districts are well represented. This positions them for statewide impact. All of the 122 participating LEAs are committed to all elements of the state reform plans. Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) were signed by all superintendents and most board presidents, indicating strong leadership support. There is no explanation as to why forty-five percent of the LEA union leaders did not sign the MOU. There also is no specific information about the types of districts where the union leader did or did not sign the MOU. This information would shed more light on the state's ability to have a statewide impact. Most of the state's students in poverty will be served because their LEAs are participants. In sum, the LEA commitment is solid but thirty percent will not participate. The extent to which LEA participation translates into statewide impact is unknown because of the lack of signed MOUs by teacher union leaders.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	24
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: CSDE has developed and implemented structures and processes to enhance their capacity to implement their plan for reform. The department's organizational structure has been realigned and strengthened. Work groups have been meeting on a regular basis to plan for school reform. New administrative components and additional staff are proposed. The proposed addition of staff poses challenges for year one. Staff roles will have to be defined, positions advertised, applications screened, interviews conducted, references checked, etc. Ensuring that the right people have been selected and are in place to execute the grant in year one poses a significant challenge. It is also not clear whether CSDE intends to continue the employment of the 20-25 staff members added to execute the grant. There is a clear delineation of responsibilities for supporting LEAs. There is evidence that CSDE is committed to ensuring effective and efficient operations and in developing and implementing the processes and activities identified in the application. Fund use and its relation to goals and activities are addressed in the budget summaries and in Key Activity Four. Activities related to policy,</p>		

private foundations, partnerships, and efficiency to sustain the effort and to incorporate fiscal, political, and human capital resources have been identified. Letters of support include both teacher unions, parent groups, colleges and universities, groups representing minority students, business and private sector entities and other stakeholders and possible partners. There is evidence of broad stakeholder involvement in reform effort activities. Some letters of support were not strong and some groups not represented.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	24
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	19
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: There is evidence that CSDE has made significant progress in the four areas identified in the Race to the Top notice: standards and assessments, data systems, improving teacher and principal performance and turning around low performing schools. Development and implementation of the Connecticut Accountability Learning Initiative (CALI) coupled with the Connecticut Reform Model provides a schemata to align and support the thrust and direction of Race to the Top. CALI focuses on accountability and employs district, school level, and instructional teams to help develop plans to monitor implementation. The state reform model provides a common framework for LEAs and schools. CSDE has disseminated a number of high quality documents such as the Walkthrough Protocol Guide, benchmark assessments and other tools that provide support to the LEAs and focus the state effort on teaching and learning. Evidence provided in the appendix in the form of statutes supports the state's commitment to raising student achievement. Connecticut's NAEP scores are among the top scores nationally. The scale scores of fourth and eighth grade students have risen in mathematics from 2003 to 2007. The rise is not dramatic but progress is being made. The state, however, has not experienced scale score gains in reading from 2003 to 2007 and there is a persistent achievement gap of approximately thirty percentile points when comparing the achievement of white students to that of black and Hispanic students. There is an even more pronounced gap for students with disabilities. These gaps also surface when CMT measures are employed and on the tenth grade CAPT reading and mathematics tests. Scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in fourth and eight grade reading and mathematics and on the tenth grade CAPT test have risen steadily from 2003 to 2009. These scale scores tend to rise at the rate of slightly less than one scale point per year. Graduation rates are high when compared to other states. There is a ten to twenty percent difference across sub groups. In summary, Connecticut has improved student outcomes in some areas and not made progress in others. There is a persistent achievement gap among sub groups.</p>		
Total	125	96

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state signed a memorandum of agreement as a member of the national consortium of states committed to the process of developing and adopting a common core of rigorous, internationally benchmarked standards in English Language Arts and mathematics aligned to college and work force readiness. They are in the process of adopting state standards with a plan and processes in place to complete the work by June 2010. They are also a member of the New England Secondary School</p>		

<p>Consortium and the Great Schools Partnership which includes other states committed to adopting high standards. These provide evidence of their commitment, plan, and capacity for developing and implementing high-quality standards.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: There is a signed memorandum that documents Connecticut is one of 36 states participating in a state consortium to develop a balanced system of assessments for evaluating student achievement in meeting common core standards.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The plan to support the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments includes eight appropriate goals and nine key activities. Goal Eight emphasizes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Plans for achieving these goals include a broad-based outreach to educators and parents, a capstone project and professional development. The key activities are appropriate. They include the development of curriculum frameworks, a digital curriculum, assessment library, web-based information site, integration of electronic Student Success Plans, involvement of LEA staff in item and task development, formative and summative assessment, online benchmark assessments, training programs, and rigorous and meaningful opportunities for all students in STEM. The effort has been buttressed by a number of other appropriate ongoing initiatives. The timeline and activities are ambitious and realistic.</p>		
Total	70	68

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: CSBE has made progress in implementing a statewide data system. The application provides a detailed description of accomplishments in each of the 12 of the America COMPETES Act elements. Connecticut asserts that they have six elements completed but seven narratives indicated "yes", it was completed. There is evidence of completion in five of the 12 elements. Element 3 is in progress and element 10 does not address community college entrance.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The plan to access and use state data includes appropriate goals. They focus on: improving access, the use of CALI, providing training, and assessment of the level of use by districts. The activities for each goal are appropriate as are the timelines, responsible parties, and performance measures. They build on previous work; utilizing systems and processes in place. The enhanced CEDaR website appears is a promising tool. The fifteen CALI partners provide a ready team to move the work forward and the data teams provide needed support.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	16
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: CSDE has a strong plan to use data to improve instruction. CALI provides a comprehensive model for instructional improvement and increases the acquisition, adoption, and use of local improvement systems through data teams. The Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System, the K-2 Consortium</p>		

and other similar partners provide vehicles for implementing the 11 key activities outlined in the application. The activities, timeline, and responsible parties are appropriate and ambitious. The performance measures provided represent goals, not measures. Needed is clarification about how progress toward the goals will be measured. The areas for effective professional development for teachers and principals on how to use instructional improvement systems have been identified. They include data driven decision making, data teams, making standards work, effective teaching strategies, common formative assessment, scientific research instruction, and technical assistance service tracking. Each of these training modules has multiple levels of training and reflects content needed to implement data use. A key delivery system is the Connecticut Association of Schools. Other providers respond to a request for service application and plan approved by a state technical assistance team. While this approach appears to be sound no specific evidence has been provided to support that quality of training that has been delivered is high quality, that module developers and the process will ensure quality, or to what extent CALI is successfully implementing professional development. Public Act 09-241, enacted in 2009 and another state statute provide a legal lever to ensure that researchers have access to statewide longitudinal data. CSDE has identified three goals that facilitate the use of data by researchers and others. Its new dissemination web site, CEDaR, is a vehicle for delivering the data. In addition, CSDE has a work plan that assures that data not available on the website will be shared upon request. The plan identifies responsible parties and appropriate performance measures.

Total	47	30
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Connecticut provides pathways or alternative routes for teachers that meet the criteria in the Race to the Top notice. It has eight programs independent of higher education institutions that provide alternative pathways. They are selective in accepting candidates, some but not all provide school-based experiences. These programs limit the amount of coursework required and upon completion award a certificate equal to that awarded by institutions of higher education. In 2008-2009 323 teachers were certified through alternative pathways; 296 of these attended programs by providers other than higher education institutions. Completion through alternative routes by thirteen percent of the total number of teachers certified in a year is substantial evidence that the approach provides additional teachers. The state monitors and addresses teacher shortages. Alternative Routes to Certification helped the state fill 93.7 percent of vacancies in Fall 2008. Eleven teacher shortage areas have been identified. Special education, world languages, and speech and language have the most positions remaining vacant. The state also actively assists LEAs in filling shortages by working with Department of Labor and other entities that provide incentives. The state has no alternative pathway for administrator certification although there is a pending application for intermediate supervision approval from an independent provider.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	40
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	15

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The CSDE plan to improve teacher and principal effectiveness is addressed in the following elements:
 (1) revision of Connecticut's 1999 teacher and administrator guidelines that includes clear and reliable

procedures and multiple measures of performance to be implemented in 2012; (2) effort to "define student growth in ways that the parents and public can easily understand;" and (3) a new system to evaluate teachers. Other elements are included, such as a principal mentor program. A plan for measuring student growth has been crafted. Measurement of student growth will be operational in 2011-2012. CSDE's plan to improve teacher and principal effectiveness integrates other activities such as the use of benchmark assessment and builds in a one year pilot with select districts. The plan involves multiple and diverse stakeholders. The key activities for developing the evaluation systems for principals and teachers including the roll out, pilot, and staff development activities are sound and timelines are appropriate. Stakeholder involvement as partners is broad-based. The plan is ambitious. It raises some concerns. Comments below address subtopics (i) – (iv). (i) The plan for measuring student growth addresses the elements in the definition and identifies processes and activities to promote positive results. It does not, however, provide activities that engage stakeholders. (ii) The plan for conducting annual evaluations is built around the development of a statewide data reporting system and made operational through strong leadership by CSDE. This is a viable approach. The timeline states that it will commence in 2011 and "continue hereafter." Needed are specific timelines and performance measures to monitor progress including start and end times for the activities. (iii and iv) CSDE proposes that the system for compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals be developed by CSDE with input from the Connecticut Association of Schools and the superintendent's organization. It would then be brought to each local LEA and agreed upon through bargaining. But nearly half the LEA union leaders did not sign the Race to the Top participation MOU. Bargaining with each LEA may protract and affect the timing of events. It was also mentioned that the contract recently negotiated with New Haven Public Schools might be looked at. It would be helpful to reviewers to know why this contract is of interest. In sum, the application lacks a specific plan for linking student growth to compensation.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	18
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	13
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 CSDE focuses on achieving an equitable distribution of teachers in high-minority LEAs rather than schools. While that has merit it neglects minority students in high minority schools in LEAs not classified as high minority. Barriers to equitable distribution such as seniority and retention of teachers were identified and provide valuable insights into the nature of the problem. No policy changes or strategies are provided that would provide Connecticut an opportunity to change things that inhibit equitable distribution of teachers and principals in high poverty schools. Specific strategies for promoting an equitable distribution of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects are not provided. While it can be assumed that many of the initiatives that promote equitable distribution apply to hard-to-staff subjects, more information is needed. This includes an explanation of what the state does to monitor shortages and specific approaches to address area of high need.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 CSDE proposes to use the Student Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to identify more effective preparation programs among the 20 institutions that prepare teachers and the seven that prepare administrators. CSDE has a plan to link student growth to effectiveness of the preparation program and identify successful programs. It is proposed that a panel of experts use these data and research to expand successful programs that prepare future teachers and administrators. They propose to then identify strategies to expand these programs. The expansion of successful programs has merit. The absence of a plan that identifies promising expansion strategies, cost, time needed, etc. makes it difficult to determine if expansion of successful program is doable and the extent to which it might succeed. More is needed to clarify implementation of the proposed strategy.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: CSDE proposes 11 initiatives to enhance support provided to teachers and principals. Five of these initiatives are for teachers only, four for principals and teachers, and two for principals only. The primary support strategies are professional development and coaching. CALI, technology training, math and science coaching, teacher leader academies, principal mentoring programs and executive coaching for demonstration school principals are identified as vehicles for enhancing support. The support and learning activities listed provide a comprehensive and strategic approach. They are long term and target specific audiences. Goals, key activities, and timelines are clear and promising.</p>		
Total	138	104

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut statutes provide the State Board of Education authority and broad powers to intervene directly in both the state's lowest performing schools and LEAs. This authority includes the following: transfer of teachers and principals, identify schools for reconstitution, and redirect funds. The State Board of Education has demonstrated a commitment to improving low performing LEAs and schools by employing actions that include annual monitoring visits and alignment/revision of plans.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	28
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	23
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has identified 18 schools constituting the lowest five percent among low achieving Title 1 schools. Two are secondary schools, the remainder elementary schools. An additional 36 schools have been identified because they did not make adequate AYP or Safe Harbor. These schools utilize the CALI partnership as a vehicle for improvement. While CDSE assumes that it will take two to three years to significantly raise student achievement five of 15 schools participating in CALI were removed from the federal In Need of Improvement list. Three of the five were demonstration schools. More information about these demonstration is needed. Progress has also been documented at some of the 36 schools partnering with CALI. CALI, the state's primary vehicle for improving low performing schools does not meet the criteria for any of the four school intervention models as defined by the Race to the Top notice. It has a number of the elements of the transformational model: develop and increase teacher and school effectiveness, institute comprehensive instructional reform, provide operational flexibility and sustained support but does not include replacing the principal or increasing learning time. CDSE recognizes this and proposes increasing CALI requirements and extending and expanding an existing grant to meet the criteria for other models required to turn around low achieving schools. Implementation of CALI that includes removing the principal and use of other models must be negotiated if the LEA is proposing it. In addition, CDSE proposes using CALI in 18 districts next year. To meet notice requirements it will be necessary to replace the principal. It is not clear if removal of the principal is a viable strategy for CALI and for Connecticut next year. CDSE has experienced some success in turning around schools. The lessons learned provide evidence that Connecticut understands what is needed to take it to the next level. Their plan needs additional information and attention to concerns identified by these comments.</p>		
Total	50	38

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut's educational expenditures were basically flat from FY 2008 to FY 2009 (23.41% to 23.32%). The application noted that this was due to the downturn in the economy coupled with an upturn in the use of revenues for social services, Medicare, homeless, and similar programs. They "held the line" during tough times. The state's funding formula takes into account wealth, student need, and towns with low wealth. It ensures equitable funding between high need districts and other districts and between schools within the district and high poverty schools.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	20
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut currently does not have laws that prohibit or effectively inhibit increasing the number of high performing charter schools. The cap on the number of charter schools is tied to "within available appropriations" significantly limiting charter school start-up. Its laws and regulations limit charters. Funding for charter schools reflect 92.3 percent of the per pupil expenditure for a traditional school. Funding for facilities is provided but only 14.5 million has been expended since 2002. LEAs are able to operate autonomous schools through CommPACT Schools and magnet schools. These elements create positive conditions for charter and innovative schools. Charter school law does specify that the teachers of a local charter school shall be a member of the local LEA teachers union. The nine charters in the state are inter-district charters schools; the district converted a public school to a charter. Only seven applications for local charter schools have been made in the past 5 years and only three were approved. The application did not explain why this number is low. It is not clear if current laws, regulations, or practice limit charter school startup up or what is planned to address factors presently hindering charter school use.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: A number of state programs, created through law, regulation, or policy to promote statewide reform were identified in this section. These programs have potential for significant impact in increasing graduation rates, and narrowing the achievement gap: (1) a public choice program that provides inter-district enrollment options, (2) an inter-district cooperative grant program, (3) technical high schools, (4) regional agricultural science and technology centers, (5) a dropout prevention program targets 21 LEAs, (6) regional community-based institutes offer training eight times a year, and (7) "Developing tomorrow's professionals" has experienced success using mentors working with 60-80 minority males.</p>		
Total	55	33

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: Connecticut has a number of programs and activities that emphasize science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The application integrated some initiatives that create additional learning opportunities for students who participate in STEM courses and after school programs. Connecticut has a rigorous course of study. Needed are sufficient strategies that integrate STEM in the</p>		

statewide reform plan. Initiatives that operationalize CSDE's intent to cooperate with industry, experts, museums, universities, and research centers, and to form partnerships to assist in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines need to be integrated in the plan.

Total	15	0
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

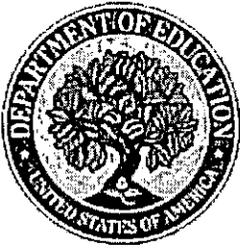
	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes

Absolute Reviewer Comments:

Connecticut's application demonstrates that the state and its LEAs are taking a systematic approach to state reform. The application comprehensively and coherently addresses each of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factor Criteria. The state's plans and funds target increased student achievement, closing the gap, and increasing graduation rates.

Total		0
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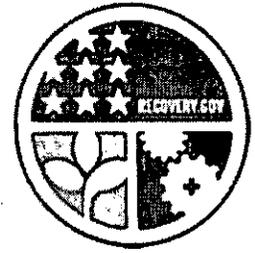
Grand Total	500	369
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #1689CT10



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	49
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut is committed to the four key reforms, and to raising high school graduation rates and pupil achievement. The CT legislature boldly authorized the state education agency to audit not only the spending but the quality of instruction in LEAs. Next they authorized a longer school day and year, the transferring of teachers and principals, reconstituting ineffective schools, expanding technical assistance to parents as well as schools, evidence of a strong commitment. The Governor is widely recognized as an advocate for early childhood programs, and the Chief has pushed for higher standards, for high school reforms including the Common Core, for better data and for raising the caps on charter schools. Local support is high medium, with 38% of LEAs and 300 schools not participating. 45% of union leaders did not sign on, despite state NEA and AFT leadership support. It was surprising that New Haven teachers whose new contract supports important reforms did not sign on. The major impact will focus most of all and appropriately on Tier One (urban, low performing schools). An asset will be the six regional service centers with many more staff resources for PD and technical help than the small state department staff could provide. Much less clear are the possible reform and school transformation contributions of community colleges and the multiple campuses of UConn and the Connecticut State Universities that produce most of the urban teachers and principals.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	26
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The relatively small state education agency office will be appropriately strengthened by 20-25 new RTTT staff, sorely needed to lead and monitor the reform progress. The appropriate focus is mainly on the most needy districts, most of them cities, with a few small and needy rural towns. What is especially strong is the emphasis on high schools, a level neglected in NCLB. Connecticut will strengthen the existing capacity to mentor and support new teachers, already impressive. The state can attract private funds, as it has from the Nellie Mae Ed Foundation. Six strong regional centers have agreed to provide professional development, which is vital. What is needed is more detail on what the national expert panel will be asked to do and what types of experts recruited, other than possibly Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins. Also, Connecticut has strong public and private universities that support the plan in letters but their possible contributions to school transformation and stronger professional development (including STEM) have not been displayed in this proposal.</p>		

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	23
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	19
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut is already one of the five highest states in overall pupil achievement. There remain large minority pupil achievement gaps in the midsize cities. Refreshing was the list of "lessons learned" from prior interventions. CT graduation rates are high overall except for black and Hispanic students. The goal of raising high school graduation rates by as much as 6% for black and Hispanic pupils is aggressive, a good start with much more to be done. State and NAEP scores have risen in math and ELA have improved for all groups, less so for ELL students who may have migrated from other nations or states. Data system work has begun but about half remains to be completed. CT has closed several underperforming charter schools for failure to achieve the dream of educational gains. CT has authorized eight new pathways for teachers but none yet for principals.</p>		
Total	125	98

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	38
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	18
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: Connecticut is strong on participating in consortia, joining not only the Common Core (48 states) but 30 other states developing multiple measures of assessment. The state has been working with these for several years. CT is working with other New England states on defining high school standards, essential because of the frequent migration of workers within this small region. The State Board will approve the Common Core standards in the summer of 2010 after a thorough and sensible stakeholder review. The state discussion of science and math standards reflect a focus on health sciences, less so on energy, ecology, marine science, and the needs of financial and insurance industries for highly trained mathematicians.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	8
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: Not yet finished, the state deserves credit for including many stakeholders in the review of the Common Core before state board approvals next summer. It is not clear enough how higher education institutions will help align their expectations with high school teachers, a major barrier to high school reform and college retention success. The timetable for action is not explicit enough.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	16
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The regional centers have agreed to help support the local PD necessary to interpret and use data including in the early grades. The state seems strongly committed to alternative assessments for pupils with special needs. What is impressive is the commitment to add 21st Century goals such as financial literacy and global literacy, for Connecticut hosts many investment and insurance firms, and city pupils need financial concepts after mastering ELA and mathematics. The state STEM program</p>		

builds on an existing pre-engineering program, and on biotechnology and engineering technology for girls, but could include nanotechnology and marine science, emerging fields that Connecticut youth need to study.

Total	70	62
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state expresses a strong commitment to improve the state educational data system, but has completed only half of the America Competitiveness data elements. Only 1,2,5,6 and 7 are in place. Others are "in progress" which means not available yet. The linking of students and their test scores to teachers and principals and higher education requires much more work. The state cannot yet provide that data to school districts but is committed to developing a P-16 system but must complete the data system.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has begun to develop a data base with substantially enhanced assessment capacities. They have months and possibly years of work to make it useful to schools and LEAs. The system seems to be more than halfway to completion but not yet ready for researchers, universities and other consumers. What is potentially very constructive is not only the state sharing pupil and school data with LEAs but the requirement that each LEA and school establish a data team to review and discuss how to use data to improve teaching and learning.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	14
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: Although a state assessment of learning and instruction is conceptualized, it is far from ready and CT intends to finish it by collaborating with other small and midsized states. CT cannot at this time use the data to evaluate teachers and principals annually, but is reliant on AYP data. The plan is constructive but the capacity just above the midpoint. CT proposes to develop that statewide capacity. An added strength is the commitment to sharing as many as 18 achievement tests and a large number of test items for use by LEAs for formative assessments during the year. Also the state has contracted with RMC to test the fidelity and measure the actual impact on schools of sharing data which is often an open question. This section of the proposal is as strong on P-8 assessments compared to other sections that emphasize the frontier of high school reform. CT is far from ready to align pupil information about courses completed or skill gaps, or display the adequacy of preparation with higher education, a major gap in assessing the accomplishments of CT school reform.</p>		
Total	47	27

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: Since 1988 Connecticut has been at least partially open to alternative pathways for teachers but for many years strictly limited to teacher specialties in short supply such as SpEd and STEM. As of 2010</p>		

CT authorized 8 other sources including the very innovative Charter Oaks state college teacher preparation online program. Teach for America is fairly strong in CT (more than 100 TFA teachers employed) and strongly endorses this proposal. There are no alternative routes for principals but the strong Capitol Region Educational Services Center has one possible program in the planning stages. What the universities intend to do to upgrade and transform administrator preparation cannot be discerned from this proposal.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	40
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	18

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The state very clearly and positively commits to gathering data on a growth model to assess achievement on the Common Core. What strengthens this commitment is use of additional data from AYP, DDM and other sources. CT deserves commendation on the declared intention to include science, history and certain 21st Century skills such as global and financial literacy. The formats for annual evaluations of both teachers and principals have yet to be developed and displayed, and are undoubtedly subject to negotiations. The commitment to evaluate teachers and principals using pupil achievement data is in the very early stages. CT offers to test the use of SLDS data and other tools in 22 LEAS. The burden will fall mainly on LEAS and regional centers with the state agency playing the roles of approving plans and monitoring the impact. Tenure and transfer and staff removal plans are in the early stages. Steps toward such uses of data even for interim evaluations require extensive stakeholder discussion in this state so intense about maintaining "local control" over personnel decisions, despite the broad grant of new legislative authority. Much more could be mentioned about how the recent New Haven teacher contract that authorizes pupil achievement data to be considered on annual evaluations, and how ineffective schools may be closed and converted to charter schools. The state "due process" law (for removals) is cited without any discussion of the need to update it to clarify the definition of "causes" for dismissals.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	11
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	4

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Most of the CT proposals to ensure that the most effective staff will be assigned or hired in high need schools are soft and voluntary. CT struggled with actually pledging that the most experienced and effective teachers and principals might be reassigned to under-performing schools. Instead CT will loosen the restrictions on rehiring retired teachers already drawing retirement pensions. There may be multiple sources of highly effective teachers from new sources such as Teach For America. Not in evidence are tools such as signing bonuses, or policies such as extra pay or higher placement on the salary scale for STEM teachers in under-performing schools. CT LEAS may need to provide additional pay for longer days and weeks of instruction. The CT proposal for equitable distribution seems less likely to succeed without additional innovation and incentives.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	6
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

UConn won one of the major Carnegie grants for reforming teacher education but there is no mention of how these new models might migrate to the four CT state universities that supply most of the new teachers. The state wisely commits to a stronger focus on teacher preparation for diverse learners, for

behavior management, limited English learners and integrating pupils with disabilities. There needs to be more information on reforming principal preparation programs using data and new intervention and turnaround strategies. Except for some interest by CREC, the possibility of new programs to prepare schoolwide instructional leaders is understated. CT will use data to weed out less effective in-state teacher programs, raising an issue of whether that will extend as well to out-of-state universities that provide many mobile teachers to CT. Even the in-state provisions will take effect in 2014 at the very end of this initiative.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: This section presented a full menu of teacher and school support with multiple resources, from technology to regional service centers offering PD, expanded use of TEAM mentors, math and science resources and more. It is an attractive menu but far from a systemic plan for the lowest performing 200 schools (5%). There might be more support from universities (other than Eastern with ELL) as well as from regional centers that already provide professional development. The role of Demonstration Schools is mentioned without a description of a commitment to open more of them, if any. There is not enough discussion of what might be in place to help new or struggling principals. CT has a strong CT Association of Schools (principals at all levels) which is a resource already willing to help as partners to the state, regional centers and/or universities to support principals in Tier I schools.</p>		
Total	138	87

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The legislature has authorized interventions in underperforming schools but this is relatively new. It is not clear that the state could take over an entire LEA without legislative approval but could now under state law "reconstitute" a school. The state is authorized to "retrain" local boards but not to remove them for alleged failures. Although CT now authorizes state audits of instruction followed by action plans, reconstitution of schools and retraining of school boards, the SEA does not cite much evidence on how this authority might be used.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	25
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: CT clearly identifies the low performing schools using state data and federal reporting criteria. The state will clearly have the test data. The seven highest need LEAs will need serious interventions not yet fully outlined or described. It is stated that regional centers might help local schools with technical assistance and PD but not clear that they might take over or play the lead role to transform a low achieving school. There is no role specified for universities despite their potential capacity to help schools and LEAs. Other than closing some failing charters, there is no clear commitment to bold transformational and school turnaround strategies. Perhaps certain models, other than Demonstration Schools, will turn around the low performing schools. Discussion of the four turnaround models was slight. CT by way of example has closed some failing charter schools.</p>		
Total	50	35

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The state pays approximately 23% of local school costs. The state school aid has been flat. The strength of the CT school aid formula is that the poorest schools get 20 times more school aid (\$7500) than the wealthiest (\$358) schools. Of the \$4 billion in state school aid, half is devoted to equalizing opportunity mainly in city schools. CT, a wealthy (and in general a high achievement) state relies heavily on property taxes to fund public schools. State charter schools are better funded at \$9300 than many low performing city schools at \$7000. However, charter schools serve only 4000 pupils and a court order affirmed the state's greater reliance on 60 magnet schools to allow pupils of color to pursue opportunities with white students from nearby LEAS. State revenues are down, the state budget is challenged, and little new state revenue for schools is likely in the foreseeable future.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	24
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: CT has not yet lifted the size limits on number of pupils per grade and total size and number of charter schools. The three midsized cities have had only two or three charters each, and the state now potentially will authorize more. Charters are eligible for state aid (up to \$9300) and federal grants which is a strength. The state since 2002 has appropriated funds to lease and renovate charter school facilities (\$14 million) which is still a limited or low commitment. CT needs to be acknowledged for supporting strongly the regional magnet schools over several decades.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: What is impressive about CT is the reliance on 60 magnet schools allowing black and white students to learn together in thematic schools. CT is also strongly committed to expand local drop out prevention strategies, parent training, and a fund a small program to help minority males think about becoming professionals. The appendix but not the proposal describes Middle College Schools that reduce the dropout rate and propel more city students to college while in high school, an effective reform.</p>		
Total	55	36

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments: CT is committed to several aspects of STEM but not a full spectrum of science and mathematics. The CT PREP(preengineering) program is well-established and invites more girls to study technology which is very constructive. The reliance on the new CT science center and the Science Academy may not be enough. The one clear industry partnership offering CAD is out of state. Biotechnology is mentioned but not nanotechnology that will affect the CT medical and military/defense employers. CT is an ocean state and there are careers in marine science, ecology and exploration in partnership with the CT Boys and Girls Club after school programs. STEM is more than health science and pre-engineering. Attention to advanced placement or early college STEM initiatives were not identified.</p>		

Total	15	0
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>CT is aggressively committed to new and higher standards, to the collection and use of data, to more effective teacher education programs, and to alternative pathways for teachers. It has relied on Demonstration Schools rather than more aggressive school turnaround strategies. The local commitment is strongest in the high need cities but weak in local union support. The citation of the recent New Haven "model" contract lack a full description of how low performing CT schools might be transformed with teacher consent and shared commitment. Resources to retrain or identify principal leaders are not very explicit. The role of public and private universities, community colleges and middle college/dual enrolment strategies to raise the graduation and college enrolment rates is hinted at in the appendix but not central to the strategy outlined in the proposal.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	345