



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Massachusetts Application #3480MA-1



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	49	54	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4	4	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35	35	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10	15	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(A)(1)(i): When motivated by the 1993 Education Reform Act, MA began a significant investment in and focus on writing, implementing, and measuring progress against standards. Students and systems have been held accountable. The effort paid off. On both national and international assessments, MA students now score at or near the top. MA identifies its persistent achievement gaps and the continued effort that is required to close them. While all students are better off than they were 15 years ago, minority and English Language Learners (ELL) continue to be most likely to stand in harm's way. In 2008, MA launched a second reform, the Commonwealth Readiness Project with its Education Action Agenda. This agenda, written before RTTT existed, is more comprehensive than RTTT in that it explicitly includes factors beyond the traditional school day, but MA's objectives align to the Race to the Top's mission. Most persuasive of MA's fitness to serve as a model to the rest of the nation is its own language that, "Race to the Top funding will provide the resources we need to get there faster." As illustrated by the work in progress, MA has already begun its journey to the top. Related to its Education Action Agenda, it has specifically done these things:

- Established the Executive Office of Education to work with Departments of Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Higher Education
- Identified new leaders and launched a coherent policy agenda
- Created a Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet
- Established 6 regional Readiness Centers to serve as hubs for collaboration and to deliver professional development. MA identified 4 objectives in this area
- 1. "Developing and retaining an effective, academically capable, diverse and culturally competent educator work force." • MA has very ambitious goals captured in language like, "transform the entire career continuum and licensure system...". MA describes a vision that "rewards practices that work, changing practices that do not, and connecting consistent, high quality feedback..." MA further describes a system that embeds educator effectiveness into all of its schools, and ensures high-quality support is available and delivered.
- 2. "Providing curricular and instructional resources that support teacher effectiveness and success for all students." • MA has had good standards, assessments, and data system, but has not built the capacity of its teachers, schools, and districts to use the information to inform day-to-day teaching. • MA will work with LEA's to develop a "statewide PreK-12 unified system of standards, curricula, assessment tools, and online resources designed to support individualized instruction in every classroom." All of this will be available through a digital library.
- 3. "Concentrating great instruction and supports for educators, students, and families in our lowest performing schools." • MA would use RTTT funds to develop a specialized corps of educators prepared to tackle the challenges of low achieving schools by beginning with and building out from in-state people with established track records. MA will recruit, train, and support experienced teachers and leaders and expand existing, successful programs to do this. • Identify and coordinate family support systems to create "wrap-around" zones for the neediest students. MA has identified cities ready to begin work. Detailed evaluations will be conducted to determine

the circumstances that most effect student achievement and that will lead to recommendations on how they can be locally sustained. (Worth noting is that MA's turnaround plan lists the detailed types of support necessary to address social service and health needs of students at the school and social services for their families away from school including law enforcement and workforce development services.) 4. "Increasing our focus on college and career readiness." • MA already has a good data system and knows what is happening to its students after high school. It intends to strengthen that system and then use it to 1) build an Early Warning System; 2) make its recommended program of high school studies (MassCore), which it believes aligns to the Common Core standards, the de facto curriculum, 3) align existing scholarship opportunities, 4) provide funding to increase IB type programs in struggling schools, and 5) deliver timely data to all stakeholders. MA receives most of the possible points because the MA narrative tells a compelling story, well. It does not receive the total possible points because the path between the need and the outcome it is not always clear. For example, in the case of the "wrap-around zones," it is not clear that there is a concrete plan to create a process to ensure that it happens. It is not clear who has the ultimate responsibility for the work; what, if any, role the Department will play; and what type of accountability system will ensure it happens. (A)(1)(ii): MA is to be commended for only accepting LEAs with three signatures. To have accepted the other sixty-two LEAs that attempted to submit without the signatures of the teacher's unions, would have created impressive numbers, but not the degree of commitment necessary for the challenging work ahead. Additionally, 1) MA did not accept waivers and 2) did garner the signature of Boston, the largest urban setting. All of this means that the LEAs in MA's pilots have strong commitments to develop and pilot approaches to teacher evaluation that, among other things, links student and teacher data. The commitments in the MOUs fall short of a guarantee to implement such an approach, however. Participating LEAs have committed to engage in developing and piloting teacher and principal compensation and advancement plans, but not to full-blown implementation. While the reviewer appreciates how difficult even this step is, LEAs have not promised to implement. In summary, (ii) earns high but not full points because, 1) not all LEAs are participating and 2) "participating" does not guarantee "implementing." Because of the collaborative process and the honest engagement on the part of most of the LEAs in the State, MA has created a condition likely to result implementation and, ultimately in true transformation and so warrant most of the points. (A)(1)(iii): The statistics for LEA's with MOUs are: • 65% of eligible LEAs signed • 72% of K—12 students • 86% of students in poverty A core of the MA proposal is on strengthening the ability of the State to gather data and to increase both the uses and users of that data. Full points are not awarded only about two-thirds of the LEAs are participating and participation is only a commitment Still, this is a serious commitment, which was not taken lightly, as shown by the fact that only two-thirds of the LEA's were able to garner all three signatures. Because the major urban areas are participating and because the majority of the State's students have the potential to be affected, high middle points were awarded. The areas of focus are laudable: • MA notes that reading scores have flatlined and identifies this as of particular concern. • MA intends to increase IB-type course at struggling schools. • MA is increasing its focus on science, a strategy that treats equity as more than a re-distribution of resources.

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

(A)(1)(iii): Additional points are awarded because the MA State presentation highlighted and explained information included in its proposal related to the following excerpt from page 82, "This work will result in new local evaluation models and state licensure regulations and career ladders (see sections (D)(2)(iii-iv)), and will enable us to address equitable distribution as we expand the supply of effective educators for priority subjects and specializations (see sections (D)(3) and (D)(4))." MA intends to learn from the various pilots and to use what it learns to craft legislation that will effect all LEAs. It has a history of working effectively with the legislature to enact legislation designed to improve education.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	27	27
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(A)(2)(i): Full points are awarded here because MA has specifically identified both the people and the structures that it will use to complete the work if it receives RTTT funds. The people and functions (except the LEA liasons) already exist and have shown capacity in the necessary skills, in part by the quality of this proposal, as explained below. In brief, MA intends for entire project to be led by the ESE commissioner. Senior executives who oversaw the proposal development for particular areas will continue to lead the work in his or her area. Each assurance has a set of projects and these projects will form the core work of the existing departments. Every project has an assigned project manager and If MA receives funds, it will identify a lead manager to work with each participating LEA. MA has gone so far as to establish a tentative meeting schedule and agenda topics. MA plans, when it makes sense, to have projects evaluated by outside evaluation agencies. It is poised to begin work. On the budget side, MA uses RTTT funds in ways that build capacity and that should need only minimal support after the four-year grant period. It is not adding permanent staff, for example. MA is requesting 240 million dollars and is reallocating or repurposing 33.8 million dollars which it now controls. This suggests commitment now and sustainability in the future. It is reasonable to believe that the data system and the functionality MA describes can be built within the described budget and timeframe. It is more difficult to believe that MA will be able to meet its goals of changing practice at such a deep level within four years. Nonetheless, because MA began this effort without RTTT, one assumes MA will find a way to continue it afterward. Specifically, in section (A)(2)(i)(e), MA describes how it will use the strengthened LEA relationships to sustain efforts and describes how it has already begun this work. "Our efforts in identifying effective practices will strengthen requests for state and private funding. Taken together, we are confident that we have the strategies in place to ensure that the fiscal, political, and human capital resources we build through Race to the Top will allow us to continue this important work long after funding ends." A)(3)(ii): There is no doubt that strong relationships with LEAs are important to MA. Beyond being central to this proposal, MA intends to use this effort to change its relationship with LEAs to become less a compliance agency and more a support agency. MA has clearly worked hard to garner support as is evidenced by the letters of support and MOUs. MA has managed to find support with a variety of stakeholder groups including the teachers' unions. This is state where both AFT and NEA are strong, so that is impressive. Additionally, as described in the rubric, the proposal contains letters of support and specific examples of how stakeholder groups will support this effort by sharing expertise, serving on boards, and convening meetings.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	30	30
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	25	25

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(A)(3)(i): MA deserves full points because by every measure it has both increased achievement for all students and narrowed the gap between the various sub-groups. This is shown by results from NAEP and MCAS, its state test. (A)(3)(ii): Full points are awarded in this category. MA is staying the course with the standards, assessment and accountability work it began in 1993. Simply put, by any measure, the MA system is stronger today than it was in 1993. More students are achieving at higher levels of achievement, the differences between achievement between subgroups are shrinking, and more students per cohort are graduating. Further, it is not satisfied. It notes areas that still need attention including reading scores that have flattened and a narrower, but persistent gap between subgroups. MA has and uses its ability to track achievement on its MCAS. If it receives RTTT funds it will hone this ability.

Total	125	106	111
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B. Standards and Assessments

Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
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(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25	25
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(B)(1)(i)/(ii): MA signed an MOU with CCSS and NGA to participate in the effort to develop common standards. It has all measures, including the working groups required by MA legislature, in place to adopt these standards by August 2010. MA earns full points for (B)(1)(i) but, because the standards will not be formally adopted until after the September date identified in the RTTT proposal, the RTTT rubric specifies that MA earns 5 points rather than 20 points for (ii).

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(B)(2)(i): MA has signed commitments with both the Balanced Assessment State Consortium and with Achieve, agreeing to work with both the Consortium and Achieve to develop embedded and summative assessments. MA sees this the work with the two groups as compatible with one another. There is no reason to believe this is not the case and so full points are awarded. (B)(2)(ii): There are more than 25 ("a significant number") states involved in the Achieve work.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18	18
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(B)(3): Part of the core work of the MA proposal is building an online data warehouse with all of the resources necessary to individualize instruction in every classroom [(A)(1)] based on standards. (Also considered in scoring this section is the work MA describes in other parts of its proposal related to professional development.) High points are awarded because the rubric expects MA to be judged based on its "participating LEAs," and MA has: 1) identified key organizations, staff, and effective practices, 2) created a clear vision of how LEAs should function in the future, and 3) described a path to use the identified resources to leverage the vision. MA uses strategies as simple as "disseminate the Common Core Standards" and as complex as "create a unified PreK-12 teaching and learning system. Full points are not awarded because the plans for and details of populating the content in the Pre-K – 12 seem to underestimate the difficulty of the task. There is not enough detail provided to ensure that MA has a clear understanding of the work involved in the task. The timeline and resources allocated are sparse.

Total	70	53	53
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(C)(1): In brief, MA's status/progress/plans related to this component are: 1) Private, unique student identifiers: In 1998 MN implemented a confidential, unique State Assigned Student Identifier. (2 pts) 2) Student-level enrollment, demographic, program information: MA began doing this in 2001. (2 pts.) 3) Student-level information about when students enter, exit, transfer, and complete programs P-16: SIMS

captures information on enrollments, transfers, dropouts, and graduates. MA has information on early education and the Dept. of Higher Ed. captures enrollment of public high school students into public post-secondary programs. (2 pts.) 4) Ability to communicate with institutions of higher education: It is legal and has been started. DHE does data matching and is preparing to assign student identification numbers to increase frequency of analysis. (2 pts.) 5) State data audit system: MA has extensive data verification systems to assess data quality, validity, and reliability. (2 pts.) 6) Yearly test records: MA has collected this information since 1998. (2 pts.) 7) Information on students not tested: It also collects information about students not tested. (2 pts.) 8) Teacher identifier system matched to students: MA established its Education Personnel Information Management System in 2007. It is piloting linking teachers to students, but the data will not be available until October 2010. (0 pts.) 9) Student-level transcript information: Also slated to be available in October 2010. (0 pts.) 10) Student-level college readiness: MA uses a combination of MCAS, SAT, and Advanced Placement test results to assess student-level college readiness. (2 pts.) 11) Student transitions to postsecondary education: DHE conducts data matching with state database of public high school graduates and provides FERPA-compliant reports. (2 pts.) 12) Other information to address adequate preparation for post secondary: This will begin in October 2010. (0 pts.)

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(C)(2): MA has and uses an Education Data Warehouse (EDW) that addresses all 12 of the elements stipulated by the America Competes Act and described in (C)(1), although not all elements will be online until after September 2011. MA begins with a solid foundation in this area and has a plan that brings the rest of the elements on line as described in (C)(1).

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18	18
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(C)(3)(i)-(ii): MA does not yet use the data as well as it wishes. RTTT funds would be used to make the data warehouse more 1) useful; 2) usable by the public; and 3) capable of data audits. MA frequently references its desire to increase the usefulness of its data to teachers and to increase the skill of its teachers in using data. Specifically (pg 68) MA would transition its Data Warehouse to one that is compatible with data from pre-k and post-secondary systems and it would add functionality in terms of reporting functions available on a teacher dashboard. MA has been doing professional development around data use for five years and has learned that significant investment in training and in job-embedded activities is required if data use is to become a regular part of teacher practice. They have developed additional online courses; they will upgrade delivery of the courses, they will expand the capacity to deliver local support. (C)(3)(ii): Researcher access to data already exists and will be enhanced by making it much easier for researcher to access.

Total	47	41	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	21	21	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(1): MA has multiple alternative routes—a total of 39 programs—and all graduates, including those from traditional programs, receive the same initial license. There are more programs waiting for approval.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	35	48
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(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5	5	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	15	23	

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(2)(i): Full points are awarded because MA has been tracking achievement by assigning unique identifying numbers to individual students since 1998 and even attended to tracking student achievement before then. (5 of 5 pts.) (D)(2)(ii): MA is committed to a process to develop an assessment system with multiple rating categories including a way to account for student growth. It describes activities that are inclusive, reasonable and important to the development process. MA also sets parameters around expectations and possible expectations for what its system will include such as: 1) multiple measures, 2) research-based observational tools connected to best practices, and 3) measures of school climate. On a minor point, there seems to be a missed opportunity to connect school climate to wrap-around services, another major thrust of MA. MA recognizes that its current system is not working well and intends to use a pilot process, working with LEAs that are most interested, to create new local evaluation and compensation models that work and that are financially sustainable. It is not clear to this reviewer that any model will necessarily be implemented. All LEA activity is voluntary. MA will provide funding to support at least 3 LEAs interested in moving to a new evaluation model and to 4 pilot efforts around differentiated compensation but there is no guarantee. (10 of 15 pts.) (D)(2)(iii): Only about ¼ of MA teachers participated in an annual evaluation last year. MA has a productive approach for developing models, but it is impossible to say how likely it is to bear fruit. It is a positive sign that many LEAs signed MOUs, but that alone is not a commitment to implementing this aspect of the proposal. Medium points are awarded. (5 of 10 pts.) (D)(2)(iv): MA has a process to develop pilot approaches to teacher evaluation. Although it has stated that the evaluation approaches will include the attributes listed in (D)(2)(iv), that is not strong enough to warrant awarding full points to this section. What exists is a timeline for ten LEAs to create and pilot possible models, with the realistic hope that the models would codify and spread. While MA is providing the supports it hopes will ferment and then stabilize sustainable models, the models are not tested or proven and certainly not scalable. This is particularly true when it is not clear to that an LEA must implement one of the models. Medium points are awarded (15 of 28 pts.).

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

(D)(2)(ii): Additional points are awarded for this section. MA explained that the pilot process described in the proposal will result in legislation and best-practice models that grow from what the State learns from LEA work. Here is the language from page 82 in the proposal that needed to be given more consideration during scoring:

"This work will result in new local evaluation models and state licensure regulations and career ladders (see sections (D)(2)(iii-iv)), and will enable us to address equitable distribution as we expand the supply of effective educators for priority subjects and specializations (see sections (D)(3) and (D)(4)). At the same time, we will ensure that we place and retain our strongest educators in the schools where they are most needed. We will act on the results of a powerful teacher and principal survey, Mass TeLLS, to ensure that we enhance working conditions and proactively support our educators (see section (D)(3)). Finally, we will make an unprecedented investment in educator development and supports aligned with the state's reform priorities (see section (D)(5))."

(D)(2)(iv) The MA presentation clarified that annual evaluations are a necessary part of any model that meets State criteria and so additional points are awarded.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	14	16	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	8	8	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6	8	

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(3)(i): Low points are given here because not all of the necessary pieces are present. MA has most of the necessary components. It: 1) has a plan to identify effective educators; 2) has targets of the percentages of effective educators that would constitute equitable distribution; and 3) has a plan to increase the pool of potential teachers. However, there does not seem to be any way to incentivize teachers to work in low-income schools that can be hard to staff. There does not seem to be any way to ensure teachers (and principals) are assigned where they are most needed beyond staffing the absolutely failing schools. (The proposal describes MA's approach to the lowest 5%, the persistently failing schools, which is covered by statute requiring staff to reapply for positions.) What is needed is a way to ensure that every high-poverty or high-minority or even STEM intensive school has a highly effective staff. (8 of 15 pts.) (D)(3)(ii): MA is taking a bold step in using its RTTT to, not only expand on the functionality of its Data Warehouse, but to "publish and monitor data related to educator effectiveness." Related to this, it states that it intends to concentrate its most effective educators in its highest need schools. In other words, in four years, schools with high rates of ELL or poor students will have almost twice as many teachers who are "highly qualified" as schools with few high-needs students. MA sets percentage goals for itself that increase effective teachers in high needs schools and decrease the percentage of ineffective teachers in high needs schools. MA has most of the necessary components. It: 1) has a plan to identify effective educators; 2) has targets of the percentages of effective educators that would constitute equitable distribution; and 3) has a plan to increase the pool of potential teachers. MA earns medium points because there does not seem to be any way to incentivize teachers to work in low-income schools that can be hard to staff. There does not seem to be any way to ensure teachers (and principals) are assigned where they are most needed beyond staffing the absolutely failing schools. (The proposal describes only MA's approach to the lowest 5%, the persistently failing schools, which is covered by statute requiring staff to reapply for positions.) What is needed is a way to ensure that every high-poverty or high-minority or even STEM intensive school has a highly effective staff.

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

(D)(3)(ii) The points are increased based on MA's explanation of how it will increase the supply of teachers in targeted locations. It has working examples and has already started to scale the practice with good results.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	11	11
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(4)(i): MA is attempting to create a cohesive system in its approach to strengthening its preparation programs. It plans to will work closely with LEAs and union partners to develop and roll out a performance-based system that in many ways parallels the system it is putting in place for existing educators based on new local evaluation models. Preparation programs will be evaluated based on completers impact on student learning. ESE intends to use the results from (D)(2) to • refine the effectiveness indicators to: • Provide assistance on the requirements; • Create a platform for data collection for indicators related to the requirement; and • Conduct monitoring visits after SY 2013 when the new requirements go into effect. Less than full points are awarded because the RTTT RFP has specific requirements for student achievement and student growth which MA does not explicitly include. (4 of 7 pts.) (D)(4)(ii): MA has multiple routes to certification and is looking for additional ones. Along with twelve of the current partners, MA is piloting an approval process for would-be providers based on the outcome indicators. The plan is to also align it with the results of the pilots related to evaluation/quality. MA earns full points for (ii).

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	13	16
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(D)(5)(i): Beginning the first year of the RTTT grant, MA intends to develop content by "work(ing) with field to identify the highest priority knowledge and skills and to map these to specific programs and activities;

begin developing and piloting professional system." MA has a robust delivery system for professional development that means content is delivered by the state and pulled by the educator. There are 1) free, online modules, 2) state and regional convenings, 3) networks to build leadership capacity, 4) professional development institutes, 5) regional trainings, and 6) job-embedded professional development through PLCs. Taken together, this approach to developing content in partnership with LEAs and then distributing it through so many mediums earns MA almost full points for (i). Missing is the "data-driven" element. (8 of 10 pts.) (D)(5)(ii): MA intends to hold LEAs and professional developer providers accountable for providing effective support. For example, in SY 2013 it will conduct surveys and share the results of the surveys to continue to refine its approach to evaluating professional development. It would be more effective to begin with best practices (for example, Gutskey's work on evaluating professional development) and refine from there. Additionally, MA doesn't seem to include the DOE in the evaluation process and it should. This component earns medium points because there is a process to develop a system indicating MA recognizes the importance of evaluation. (5 of 10 pts.)

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

(D)(5)(ii): MA is able to describe a chain of command and provide details related to its vision of accountability. It earns high (8 of 10) points for this section.

Total	138	94	112
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(E)(1): MA passed new legislation on January 1, 2010 that makes possible the designation of the lowest 20% of level 4 (underperforming) and lowest 20% of level 5 (chronically underperforming) schools based on a measure of student achievement that will be developed by ESE. 72 schools or 4% can be designated as either at any time. Level 4 schools are under the control of its respective superintendent, with the turnaround plan to be approved by the State commissioner. When a school is determined to be Level 5, chronically underperforming, the commissioner creates a turn around plan. MA earns high points. Also worth mentioning, while RTTT is obviously the motivation for this new legislation, it shows two things: • A legislature/governor's office and a department of education that work together for a common purpose. • A state that has the capacity to get things quickly.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35	35
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30	30

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(E)(2)(i): MA has the ability, which it has long exercised, to identify troubled schools. (E)(2)(ii): MA has looked at the research and at its own experience in this area to develop its approach to turning around struggling schools. The work done for this section of the proposal includes an analysis of the various models that MA has used and the lessons learned from each. It intends to: • Develop a specialized corps of turnaround teacher and leader teams; Build the capacity of proven partners to support struggling schools; • Build district capacity to intervene in struggling schools; and Develop, attract, and manage lead partners and turnaround operators. It has identified the elements and the steps necessary to put its own version of each of the RTTT defined models in place. It does not receive full points because its approach is to create another organization to oversee this aspect of school improvement. While it is understandable that the MA

doesn't want to overextend, this raises issues around sustainability and accountability. This section is particularly tight in that it ties together many of the components from other sections of the proposal. For example, Strategy Three: Build District Capacity, includes MA's commitment to wrap-around services and access to additional elements of the enhanced Data System. Rather than outsource everything or decide to keep everything "inhouse," there really is a menu of options that can be used thoughtfully to meet the particular needs of specific schools. MA's comprehensive, multi-pronged approach reflects the work of a state that knows how hard it is to improve schools that have not improved for many years.

Total	50	45	45
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(1)(i)-(ii): MA gets full points for its commitment to funding education. The percent of the State's budget dedicated to education increased 4% between SY 2008 and SY 2009 from 32% to 36%. It will remain the at the 36% level for SY 2010. MA takes a progressive approach to funding education. When all state and federal monies are considers, \$2,151 more per FTE is spent on low-income students than on high-income students.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	20	20
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has 55 charter school entities, each of which may be a single school or a group of schools. These exist outside collective bargaining units. (F)(2)(i): MA earns less than full points for this element. Although charter schools are permitted, their expansion is limited by number (120 maximum) and by capping the total amount of public dollars that can be allocated to charters (9% of the State's net school spending). However, in addition to charter schools, other innovative schools can and do exist as described in (iv). Since there doesn't appear to be a cap on this secondary type of school, high points are awarded. (6 of 8 pts.) (F)(2)(ii): MA earns full points (8 of 8 pts.) related to charter school oversight. The Charter School Office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education oversees all charter schools, which are held accountable for: • Faithfulness to charter, • Academic success, and • Organizational viability. (F)(2)(iii): MA's funding for charter schools matches the funding for the surrounding district, but there is a huge amount of variance (\$9,000 to \$20,000) between districts, suggesting discrepancies in funding between some charter schools and some public schools. Other funding aspects are more equitable, but this remains a concern and so medium points for this component are awarded. (6 of 8 pts.) (F)(2)(iv): MA has a funding formula for charter schools based on a per pupil allocation. It has recent legislation that incentivizes districts to offer unused space. (8 of 8 pts.) (F)(2)(v): Recent legislation permits a wide variety of entities to (e.g., parents, school committees, and colleges) are now permitted to operate autonomous schools other than charter schools. These Innovation Schools are intended to promote high levels of achievement and offer an indistrict alternative to charter schools. Local school committees have final approval over the authorization of these schools. (8 of 8 pts.)

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(F)(3): These points are awarded because of MA unwavering commitment to high student achievement as evidenced on both national and international assessments.

Total	55	35	35
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The story line is "all students to and through the door to college. Help students learn by giving them great teachers and supporting wrap-around services. Help teachers teach with all of the curriculum, student information, and professional development they need. Hold everyone accountable." That said there is enough STEM reference embedded in the form of the engineering, STEM advisory council, and attention to TIMSS to warrant STEM points.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
MA comprehensively addresses each of the four assurances. It is a state that has been working on these issues for a long time.				
Total		0	0	
Grand Total	500	389	412	



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Massachusetts Application #3480MA-3



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	56	56	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	37	37	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	14	14	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA presents a comprehensive plan that builds on its 15+ year education agenda and the successes staying true to that agenda has produced. The most recent iteration of this agenda, the governor's Education Action Agenda prioritizes the development of an educator workforce, providing the tools and resources which that workforce needs, directing great people and resources to the lowest performing schools, and creating greater focus on college and career readiness. Together these priorities cover the four assurance areas of Race to the Top (R2T). The terms and conditions of MA's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and accompanying SOW reflect a strong commitment from signers to the State's reform plans. The MOU is clear in its expectations and it delineates consequences for a Local Education Agency's (LEA) failure to implement the State's plan in a timely manner. There is however, a provision that nothing in the MOU that contradicts language in a collective bargaining agreement shall be binding. While the MOU does stipulate that LEAs and their unions will agree to bargain in good faith around elements of the state reform plan that are superseded by collective bargaining language, the fact that in the end the collective bargaining agreements can undermine significant portions of the State's reform plan is a problem. MA was able to get all signatures applicable from all LEAs – including union heads. MA's application shows substantial commitment from its LEAs, and the 256 participating LEAs represent 72% of all students in MA and 86% of students in poverty. The goals and potential impact that MA lays out are straightforward and very ambitious. What could seem overly ambitious seems possible given the track record and articulated focus on education that the Commonwealth possesses. As articulated, the goals are sweeping. While they clearly project substantial growth in math and English/language arts (ELA) on both National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and their local assessment, overall grasp would be improved if some key data points were included in the body of the application. Yet the simplicity and the motivational strength that comes from the challenge they represent are undeniable. Under the proposed goals, achievement gaps would close, graduation rates would go up, and college enrollment would increase.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	25	25	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15	15	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10	10	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's plans for supporting the R2T work are streamlined and clear. The application does a nice job of mapping out how the administration of R2T work and initiatives will map right onto the existing work and

organizational structure of the Office of Strategic Planning Research and Evaluation. OSPRE has well-defined plans to staff up if they receive the grant, and much of the coordination of this work would fall to a dedicated implementation manager. That said, the staff-up plans are measured and MA has clearly decided to go with the minimum staff needed so that they can reserve funds to partner with external experts and so that they are realistic about sustaining work beyond the life of the grant. OSPRE has experience in program management and with the extra staff, administration should not be a problem. While MA has a clearly defined process for flagging issues and problems at the LEA level, they did not do enough in this section to explain their vision for the direct support they plan to provide LEAs in implementation beyond the project managers, which is unfortunate. They do, however, have plans for a cross-stakeholder advisory group and an external experts advisory group. The first would address the need for stakeholder buy-in, investment and engagement, while the other would provide the critical friend perspective and access to national best practices. Overall, MA's roll-out strategy is sound but it lacks a little detail in this section around how direct state support will look and how MA will actively and consistently disseminate LEA learning. MA has a strong program management function already that handles the monitoring and finance aspects of grant programs and they propose hiring additional staff to support this function in handling the expanded needs of the R2T work such as a fiscal officer, an operation and grants manager, and a policy analyst. MA's budget and financial approach to the work is a strength. It is realistic, makes strategic decisions about staffing levels, working with outside experts and funding the work beyond the life of the grant. That said, there is not a lot of information about concrete sources of additional funding that might be leveraged after grant funding ends. Rather, there is hope that the capacity developed at the LEA level during the grant can sustain results and that strengthened requests for funding and coordinating existing funding sources with R2T work will be sufficient. MA held a number of engagement meetings to discuss R2T plans and proposals with multiple stakeholder groups. The meetings were well attended and there was impressive stakeholder representation at the meetings. This participation translated to an impressive number of support letters from all stakeholder groups including unions, political leaders, the philanthropic community, the private and non-profit sectors, and numerous education organizations.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	27	27
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	23	23

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's success in improving student outcomes overall and by subgroup is formidable. Ranked consistently at or near the top in NAEP standings for the past five years, MA has consistently raised student achievement for all students and closed many of the achievement gaps for subgroups of at-risk students. During that time, gains in the high school graduation rate have been more modest. While MA has one of the highest school completion rates in the nation at 81.2% in 2008, there is a question of why MA's successes in other student achievement categories do not translate more strongly to graduation rates. Despite its successes, MA can still articulate where it falls some students and link new education initiatives to those deficiencies. MA has made strides in all four R2T areas. In addition to its well documented work on standards and assessments since the nineties, MA was the first state to incorporate standards and assessments for technology and engineering and they recently adopted MassCore as a rigorous program of study to prepare students for college and career. With regard to data systems that support instruction, MA has built a growth-model for educators and a data warehouse that provides free statewide access. When it comes to educators, the State continues to strengthen standards for teacher certification and they recently adopted new performance standards for administrators. In the area of identifying and assisting turnaround schools, MA recently coordinated a cross-stakeholder effort to develop a framework for district accountability and assistance that identifies conditions for school effectiveness. MA has passed recent legislation giving the SEA and LEAs actionable steps they can take when dealing with falling schools. The application does provide some evidence of how federal and other grant funds have been used to address their work in developing data systems and creating strategies for turnaround schools, though these examples seem

limited. When taken as a whole, it is clear that MA makes education an annual priority. Its agenda has mirrored and continues to reflect the R2T agenda.

Total	125	108	108
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25	25	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5	5	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA is a member of the Common Core States Standards Initiative along with 48 states, DC and two territories. This Initiative has published draft standards in both K-8 Math and ELA as well as College- and Career Readiness standards in Math and ELA. MA is committed to adopting the standards upon their final release. The Initiative has documented that these standards will be internationally benchmarked and ensure students are college- and career-ready. The MA State Board has approved a process for review and adoption of the Common Core Standards by fall 2010. This process and timeframe was moved back after the release of draft standards was pushed from January to March to allow adequate time for public comment.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA appears committed to working jointly with a significant number of other states to develop common, high-quality assessments aligned with the aforementioned consortium's common K-12 standards. MA is currently working in partnership with two separate consortia (containing 30 and 26 states respectively), which are working to develop assessment systems based on the Common Core standards. MA's application does a good job of connecting its own current work and successes on assessments linked to state standards to the joint effort to produce new, effective, common assessments linked to Common Core standards.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has a track record of effectively developing nationally recognized standards and assessments and rolling them out statewide. This prior experience, with its lessons learned and best practices provides the basis for MA's plan to develop and transition to a new generation of standards, assessments and resources to help educators deliver the instruction their students need to be successful. MA's plan is clear about how it expects this new effort to go beyond even the commendable work it has done on standards and assessments in the past. Most notably, the plan proposes the development of a unified PreK-12 teaching and learning system to ensure that educators have the tools they need to help their students meet the standards. Development of this system in collaboration with the assessment consortia and over 300 MA educators is a hallmark of the MA plan. The resources available through this system, such as a digital library of resources aligned to the standards in all subjects, will play a driving role in the success of the new standards and assessments roll-out. In addition, at the secondary level, MA is building the transition to new standards and assessments into an expansion of some of its most successful secondary programs, policies and incentives. By taking programs like MassCore, aligning it to the new standards and then requiring it statewide, MA piggybacks the transition effort on something already in place and with a local history of

results. The State is also doing this with two of its most successful college and career incentive programs. Overall the MA plan is clear, cogent and realistic. It utilizes MA educators and existing structures to facilitate the transition and seeks to add real practical value for practitioners so that the transition is not just "one more thing" they are required to do but rather an opportunity to really improve instruction.

Total	70	55	55	
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has 9 elements specified by the America Competes Act in its longitudinal data system. They do not have statewide linkage of teachers to students currently. Availability of student-level transcript information rolls out in 2010. Statewide data collection on postsecondary readiness begins in 2010. Another question is whether the capture graduation data at the post-secondary level.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4	4	
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA currently has substantial statewide data systems including its Education Data Warehouse (EDW) and a state-run public website. Despite sizable investment in these systems, MA recognizes that they need to be better, as well as more accessible. Accomplishing that aim, along with making integrated student/teacher data efficiently available to all stakeholders, is the centerpiece of the plan. MA's plan for ensuring that data from the statewide longitudinal data system and the public website is both accessible to all stakeholders and useful to continuous improvement efforts is clear and realistic. It also has a component focused on ensuring the validity of the data in the systems to maintain system integrity. The plan contains clear goals, timelines, responsible parties and general strategies. Even more important, it contains a clear sense of what the State currently has and where it is lacking. The plan builds in sensible time to gather feedback and then incorporate that into design and revision of proposed systems. While the appendices provide examples of the kinds of reports and data currently available to current stakeholders, the application did not contain much detail on what new pictures of the data might look like or how they might serve different stakeholder groups.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12	12	
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's vision for a statewide teaching and learning system is powerful. One online platform connecting standards, curricula, assessments, student and teacher data; a digital library of instructional resources mapped to standards; and collaboration space for educators is the kind of technology that can truly help educators revolutionize their practice. MA's strategy of building their own system, piloting an outside vendor's, and using student results to make any final decisions between the two is practically valuable. The intention to use resources from LEAs and schools to populate the resource library is evidence of some effort to acquire and adopt the best practices of LEAs. However MA's application did not seem to reflect a serious attempt to survey local instructional improvement systems and take any successes there into the effort to create the right statewide system. MA does seem serious about involving educators from LEAs – both in the design of a new system as well as in the ongoing population of such a system with content. However there could have been more consideration given to identifying and building on successful models already in use in MA. MA currently has a solid six-course sequence for educators in the use of the data EDW. In addition, the State has worked with preparation programs to ensure that standards around using data to improve instruction are worked into the curriculum. In its application MA proposes to build on this approach by

adding 10 new EDW courses. In addition, it plans to add an online training component and increase capacity in its District and School Assistance Centers to train and directly support district and school data teams. These are sound strategies for building the capacity of educators to use data to continuously improve instruction. It is not clear whether this training is mandatory or optional, however. And it is not clear whether the State's efforts in this area are designed to drive change or merely support it where it happens organically. This seems to be reflected in what are certainly realistic, though perhaps not aggressive, goals for teachers using the systems by school year (SY) 13-14. Moreover, there isn't a substantial amount of information about how the State would support specific LEAs or schools that are currently implementing solid instructional improvement systems. This contributes to a general feeling that the State is not looking closely at what LEAs and schools are currently doing well and what specific support needs they possess. MA already has a high level of researcher accessibility to its data and its application proposes to increase that level of access both technically and through developing the processes and protocols necessary to allow researchers an even higher level of accessibility.

Total	47	34	34
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	18	18	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA State does have in place the legal and regulatory authority to allow for alternative routes to teacher and principal certification. This authority allows for both IHEs and other providers to administer these alternative routes. Other providers include districts, the SEA, non-profits and professional associations. The application mentions several charters that have their own alternative routes. MA's application documents its preparation program requirements that ensure that alternative routes must have supervised school-based experience and ongoing support, a degree of selectivity, meet a baseline level of rigor, allow candidates to test out of required coursework, and award standard professional certification to completers just as if they had completed a traditional preparation program. MA does have alternative routes in use and they prepared 15% of newly-licensed teachers in 2008. In addition, MA lists alternative routes for administrators such as the Boston School Leadership Institute and the Panel Review options. While the application does refer generally to aspects of these routes that conform to the five elements listed in the application, it does not address each of them specifically. Also, we do not have a clear sense of how many of the alternative route programs in MA do conform to the 4 of 5 R2T elements of a quality alternative route program standard. This evidence is requested in the notice. MA does collect teacher pipeline data from multiple sources and it details in its application how this data was recently used in an initiative of the governor to help the Commonwealth prepare for anticipated shortages in hard-to-staff subjects. In section D2, the launch of Status of the Educator Workforce report is explained and it will be released annually.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	34	37	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3	3	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10	11	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5	7	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	16	16	

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA released its first student-specific growth data to educators last fall. Educators have access to this growth data by individual, subgroup, class, school, or district. The growth data takes the form of a percentage score that says what percentage of a student's peers that student outperforms in a given year. That percentile score can be compared from year to year. While this certainly can tell something about a student's growth, it relies on the assumption that the performance of the peer group will stay relatively consistent. It falls short of measures that test a student at the beginning of a year (or end of the preceding) and then again at the end of the year, compare the difference in scores to the predicted difference (projected based on actual growth in past years) and then assign teacher effect scores based on how much the student exceeds or falls short of the projected growth. This isn't the only way to measure growth but it is an example of a more complex measurement that has a better chance of telling us about teacher effect. MA's plan to develop new valid assessments for measuring teacher and principal growth is founded on the convening of a cross-stakeholder panel in 2010 to guide development and the delineation of multiple measures of effectiveness. The panel will utilize the experience and expertise of national experts along with that of actual MA educators, administrators, union leaders and others. In addition, it will rely on the learning and best practices provided by a number of national projects and state partnerships ensuring that a wide survey of research and perspectives informs their attempt to produce a high quality evaluation system. MA's proposal clearly lays out that the end product will be a system that uses at least three summative rating categories, involves multiple measures of student growth and educator impact on it, evidence of educator content knowledge, skills, etc. What is not clear is how significant a role the evidence of student growth will play. Currently, MA's educator evaluation regulations do not include any measures of effectiveness based on student performance. While that in and of itself is not an issue, the fact that there is not a clearer statement of the role evidence of student learning will play in the final system paired with it creates some important questions. MA does have a clear plan to work with a pilot group of LEAs to develop new evaluation systems and it appears committed to determining how to provide substantial support to implementing LEAs - something that was not done in previous years. In sum, MA has a quality plan to design transparent and fair evaluation systems in collaboration with teachers and principals. These systems will use multiple measures and take student growth measures and the teacher effect on it into account. The issue is how these latter elements will be taken into account and whether they will be a significant factor. MA's plan for regular evaluation providing constructive, timely feedback and involving student growth data is realistic. It starts with a study that shows evaluation is not done on any kind of a regular basis in the state and then highlights the State/LEA pilot partnerships as the places where it will determine how to provide the conditions necessary to provide annual high quality evaluations. The plan proposes the use of an external party to provide training on good evaluation techniques. It creates a space where best practices in this area can be shared. It does not show any indication that it will make annual evaluations its goal or that it has a clear sense of how evaluation will drive individualized professional development when the pilot work is done. So while MA's application generally asserts that it will do what the notice requires, it does not do enough to explain how it will make annual evaluation of all teachers happen or how these new types of evaluation will drive educator reflection on practice and improvement in the instruction they deliver or support. MA's proposal to create evaluation models that drive decisions along the career continuum is general. Again, it looks to the 10 LEAs in the proposed pilot to serve as crucibles where how this might look will develop. In addition, it references several local initiatives and models that would inform the effort to develop these relationships between evaluation and critical human capital decisions. Also, the plan is clear that it wants to move LEA human capital management away from compliance and towards the promotion of effectiveness. Finally the plan discusses the role of collaboration, multiple stakeholder engagement at the LEA level, and the State's role in facilitating this collaboration and the dissemination of pilot lessons learned to other LEAs. But the plan does not indicate that the State has a sense of the hypotheses it wants to test out or where it thinks LEAs should be going. There is evidence that this comes from recognition of the reality that this work must develop and ultimately be implemented locally by the actors in those locales. However, there is still a necessary State perspective missing from this narrative as well as concrete possible strategies that the pilot districts might be encouraged to try either because they are supported by research or because they have shown promise in other places. (One can assume that the local examples cited such as Springfield's "Instructional Learning Teams" would provide some of this detail, but the application needs more explicit information about this.) While a State's role can only take the work so far, it should also frame it whenever possible. There is more detail in MA's proposal to align certification and a

teacher's career ladder with evaluation. And current models developed and implemented in MA are included. In this model, certification is linked to performance on evaluation (though it is not clear how much of that is based on student performance) and full licensure is a pre-requisite for differentiated roles and advanced career paths. MA has targets around using evaluations to remove ineffective teachers, grant tenure, promote and compensate teachers and there is a general sense that new evaluations with effectiveness measures will affect these activities. But overall, the strategies in this area are not explained in a way that presents a clear picture. Moreover, the projected targets do not seem realistic, in most cases having a target of 0% or less than 4% for the first two years with expansion to 25% and then 100% in the last two years. Expansion from 25% or 33% to 100% in one year – especially in areas like developing teachers and principals that require significant human capacity in the coaching and supervisory areas – will be extremely challenging. Principals are not dealt with comprehensively in the key decisions section (iv).

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Clarifying questions in the State presentation shed new light on the portion of the application that talked about the intent to pass new statewide evaluation regulations at the conclusion of the evaluation pilot work. These regulations will be a key lever for ensuring statewide adoption of annual evaluations much more focused on performance management. This clarification leads to award of additional points.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	19	19
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	11	11
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8	8

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's plan to ensure the equitable distribution of effective teacher and principals is strong. It targets both the supply and the retention of such teachers and acknowledges the key roles school leadership and working conditions have in addressing these issues. It starts with the development of an annual educator workforce status report to ensure an accurate picture of where the district is from year to year. Using this picture, they propose to diagnose regional needs and then address them for principals and/or teachers through an RFP process that asks for outside vendors who can execute the research based strategies that MA endorses (e.g. teacher residency, paraprofessional conversion, etc.). MA has specific strategies for developing a cadre of teachers who will teach in its hardest to staff schools. The State is committed to identifying problems with working conditions in schools that serve at-risk students and addressing them. They pair intensive induction support for new teachers with National Board Teaching Certification support for veterans in those schools along with the potential for expanded roles for teachers who are consistently effective. The targets associated with these strategies are realistic and substantial. The one missing element seems to be incentives to move to hard-to-staff schools. The MA plan is right to look first and foremost at working conditions and creating places where effective teachers want to work. But the incentive issue must be considered more comprehensively for the full points. MA addresses the priority to increase the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff subjects and grade levels together. While these priorities are certainly interconnected, there could be more discussion of strategies specific to drawing teachers into hard-to-staff subjects. Strategies for this are addressed elsewhere in the application but they merit some direct discussion here.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8	8
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA proposes to develop a system of accountability for its preparation programs that is anchored in the effectiveness of its graduates. It looks to the RFP pilots to develop the relationships between preparation programs and LEAs necessary to develop effective teachers. The application states that the State is piloting

a new program that is based on outcome indicators, but the questions raised earlier about how much of the outcome indicators will be based on student growth data is unclear. If the effectiveness indicators that are developed are strong and contain evidence of student learning, the weight of this pilot will be substantial. MA does intend to make the student growth data of all program completers public and this is good. However the implications of this data are unclear. By extension, one can assume that MA will foster the expansion (or creation) of effective programs at the expense of ineffective programs, but this is not addressed directly. Principal effectiveness is addressed in the general language about assessing and reforming preparation programs but any specific information appears to be about teachers.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15	15
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has a strong cornerstone for its plan to provide high quality professional development to all educators and that is access to the envisioned teaching and learning technology platform. An insightful aspect of their plan is the intention to pay attention to what will be practically useful to educators in their day-to-day practice and also ensure it is connected to the State's reform agenda. MA directly addresses the need to develop leaders who know how to foster ongoing instructional improvement (and by extension proficiency in using the Teaching and Learning (T & L) tech system). The State is working on increasing the capacity of a statewide professional development system focusing on instructional leadership that targets individualizing and differentiating instruction for teachers. In addition MA has in recent years required induction programs and submission of individual development plans for teachers renewing their licenses. To distribute training and support content, MA has begun to build out multiple delivery methods. The effort to ensure that training and support content is accessible and available to all the State proposes online modules, statewide convenings to launch new products and services, regional networks to build leadership capacity around training and support, intensive professional development institutes, regional training to support use of tools and resources, and job-embedded professional development through professional learning communities. They plan specifically to use R2T funding to provide intensive technical assistance to 30 LEAs as a way to accelerate the actual adoption of many of these tools and resources. Special attention will be paid to struggling schools and those serving at-risk populations. This approach seems comprehensive and has varied strategies for developing and disseminating tools and resources as well as the training necessary to ensure they are used effectively. One challenge would be to question whether the kinds of approaches and strategies to instructional improvement the application discusses must be tied so intimately to the technology platform. Specifically there should be ways that the approach that the technology platform is designed to support could be disseminated and nurtured more widely prior to the rollout of the platform in 2012-13. The leadership development may be the vehicle for this but even the discussion of that seems focused primarily on the technology. While this system will be a revolutionary driver of this approach, the State could pair it with more organic approaches earlier on as well. MA has a clear process and model for assessing the fit and effectiveness of professional development and support strategies. Using an already completed national framework for this effort initially, the State will work to develop its own process and framework for assessing effectiveness as time goes on. These processes will be used to create a preferred provider list of proven partners providing quality strategies and support. These quality supports will ultimately be linked to actual teachers and principals that need them through the individual professional development plan process that is part of the licensure renewal process currently. MA proposes the addition of program evaluation staff if they receive grant funds.

Total	138	94	97
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has the authority to intervene directly in persistently low-achieving LEAs and schools. The number is capped at the lowest 20% of schools and 10% of districts but the intervention authority is substantial.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	36	36
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	31	31

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA will use a multiple measures methodology for identifying underperforming schools that looks at absolute achievement levels and student progress. The methodology builds on preexisting MA district accountability measures and dovetails with R2T definitions of under-performing. MA has a Center for Targeted Assistance and tools like the District Framework for Accountability and Assistance. However their history with turnaround schools has been average at best. MA has learned lessons from past attempts, including the overwhelming need to have clear criteria for district and school status, to have a clearly defined role for ESE when it comes to impacting governance in low-performing districts, the necessity of focusing on district systems as a key lever for successful school turnaround (including the LEA role in determining which model to use), and the need for long-term support. In response to past experiences, MA has four interconnected strategies for building state and district capacity to turn around low-achieving schools in the future that touch on developing specially qualified teacher and leader teams, building the capacity of proven partners, building district capacity to intervene and developing/attracting more turnaround operators and partners. The first strategy seems to build on the earlier plan to do a better job recruiting and developing teachers and principals for MA's under-resourced districts. This plan talks about building pools of proven teachers and leaders and supplying teachers and leaders in these schools with incentives and additional training and support. The second strategy is to scale-up proven partners that provide social-emotional supports, expanded learning opportunities and support in using data effectively to support instruction. The state will assess partners and manage the process of bringing them on through a Priority Providers initiative. Third, MA plans to pour a lot of time and effort into building district capacity in leadership, HR, community/family engagement (instituting their version of the wraparound service model for some schools), and a focus on dropout prevention and recovery. Finally MA, is looking to build up their pool of qualified turnaround operators to give schools good, proven options. Overall MA's past efforts in this area have been average (though so has this effort almost everywhere). But, they have a cogent, well-thought out plan for addressing this issue in the future and its set of interconnected strategies is the right one.

Total	50	46	46
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Education expenditure increased from 2008 – 2009 and is projected to increase in 2010. MA employs a foundation formula for providing school funding. The end result is that schools serving large numbers of at-risk students receive the most funding. MA's progressive approach to funding has equity at its core. Between the foundation formula and other funding sources like grants and federal aid, the poorest students receive the greatest funding in MA.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32	32
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has two laws that effectively limit the number of charter schools they can have. One hard caps the number at 120 or approximately 7% of all schools. The other is a funding cap that says that districts can't spend more than 9% of their school spending on charters. New smart cap laws could make it possible that more than 7% of schools are charters, and they loosen the funding limits, but that has not happened at this point. MA has one charter authorizing authority and it has been recognized nationally for its rigor and success in promoting charter excellence through authorizing. They have clear standards for charter accountability and a rigorous application process. There is a thoughtful process for reviewing charter success over time and MA has options for conditionally allowing charters to remain open if their performance does not warrant a straight renewal or non-renewal. MA has closed 3 schools in the past five years with academic achievement driving two of those closures. In that same time 10 of 21 final applications were approved. MA has a thoughtful process for calculating charter tuition rates that strives for equity. When all is said and done, regular public school teachers average around \$1800 more than charter students on average. But, this is largely due to costs charters do not bear such as sending students to private schools for special education (SPED) services and the higher average teacher salary in public schools. The initial calculation relies on foundation formula adjusted for demographics and the sending district's per pupil expenditure average and then a facilities adjustment. MA does provide a facilities component in its charter funding formula on a per pupil basis. It also has a quasi-public agency that issues tax exempt bonds for charter school facilities development. There are also newly-enacted incentives for districts to help charters get into unused district facilities. Through pilot schools and recent legislation that allows for the creation of Innovations schools, MA enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charters. There are 23 current pilot schools and 20 planned innovation schools for fall 2010.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has other significant reform conditions as evidenced by the expanded learning time initiative, programs that support targeted 8th graders in successfully completing the high school MCAS. MA also has various funding initiatives targeting STEM, early childhood and literacy.

Total	55	47	47	
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State's application has a high-quality plan to address the need to offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; cooperate with partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Investment in STEM is a critical component of Massachusetts' overall reform agenda and is integrated throughout their R2T proposal. They have made a rigorous commitment to high standards in STEM, leading the fact that their fourth- and eighth-grade students lead the nation in mathematics achievement and are ranked internationally in both science and mathematics. MA plans to use R2T funds to make targeted STEM investments that address key challenges. Massachusetts will incorporate STEM subjects into all aspects of the PreK-12 teaching and learning system, and will prioritize formative and interim assessments for mathematics and science. Educators will have access to high-quality curriculum materials, model units, and lesson plans, designed to model what an effective STEM classroom looks like, what engages and excites

students in STEM, and how to better integrate courses. MA plans to scale up intensive recruitment and preparation programs and invest in retention efforts as well as provide additional induction and coaching for new STEM educators. In addition the State will provide opportunities to participate in proven professional development networks for science and K-8 mathematics instruction (e.g. Massachusetts Intel Mathematics Initiative). The state will continue to emphasize STEM in what will be the required high school curriculum, which will include a minimum of four years of mathematics and three years of lab-based science. It will also provide supplemental funding to LEAs to scale proven programs that embed rigorous STEM curricula in lower-performing schools, including six new early college high schools. In October 2009, the governor established a STEM Advisory Council that will serve as a central advisory body, convening public and private sector stakeholders to increase student interest in and preparation for careers in STEM fields. This Council, along with several related channels, will be leveraged to achieve rapid and effective implementation by our Race to the Top investments to promote STEM education.

Total	15	15	15
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State's application comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA. It also meets the State Success Factors Criteria. The State has sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans. The application adequately describes how the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. MA's application builds on the significant successes of its 15+ year education reform efforts and it proposes ways to address weaknesses that still remain. Their contention that addressing these weaknesses and building on their strengths as they address the four assurance areas will lead to continued increases in student achievement and narrowing of the achievement gap is convincing.

Total		0	0
Grand Total	500	399	402



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Massachusetts Application #3480MA-2



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	55	55	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35	35	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15	15	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA documents a comprehensive program of reform building on work started more than 15 years ago. Its plan addresses the four education areas described in ARRA.(5/5) ii. MA provides evidence that a large number of LEAs are willing to participate in the planned reforms. The Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix A3) could be stronger- some sections fall short of concrete deliverables – the use of "encouraged" as a reform approach is weak for example and the sanctions for non performance are not punitive. Union commitment is evident in signatures from locals union leaders (35/45) iii. The narrative claims that MA will pursue its goals with or without R2T funding but notes that some goals would be pushed back to 2020 from say 2018. Appendix 5 has explicit and reasonable goals for closing the achievement gap- for example halving the width between white and black students on Grade 8 math over a 5 year period for racial sub groups. A further example is the ambitious but sensible goals for reducing gaps in high school graduation, college enrolment and college course completion. The plan covers more than 70% of the State's students and 86% of students in poverty. Effective implementation of the plan will translate into broad State wide impact. (15/15)

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	30	30	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10	10	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA offers a clear statement of the State agency arrangements to implement, oversee and evaluate the planned reforms. There is a clear management structure and a consistent implementation philosophy – contracting as much as possible, repurposing existing staff and resources, a strong commitment to evaluation and good advisory and consultative structures. Lead managers are assigned to each LEA with the most senior people assigned to the largest urban areas where the need is greatest. MA has a very strong record for financial management and grant oversight. The State has a clear and executable plan for how it will sustain these reforms after federal funding ceases.(20/20) ii. MA has assembled wide support for the R2T plan with business, philanthropy and union leader statements that are thoughtful and constructive and show real engagement with the process. (10/10)

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	30	30
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	25	25

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA's plan documents the State's track record in education reform and its effective use of State & federal funds to achieve better student outcomes. (5/5) ii. MA offers evidence drawn from its English Language Assessment & its Composite Performance Index and from the National Assessment of Educational Progress of progress by sub-groups of students on all three key variables- net increases, narrowing gaps and graduation rates. MA articulates how it has used data and evidence of good practice to underpin these improvements. (25/25)

Total	125	115	115
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25	25	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5	5	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA is a signatory to the Common Core Standards project which meets the criteria. (20/20) ii. MA's plan describes a credible and inclusive adoption process for common standards but has no specific date- they are aiming to adopt the standards in Fall 2010. (5/20)

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(B)(2) MA is active in the Balanced Assessment State Consortium that claims 30 member states. It is also in Achieve. (10/10)

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18	18
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(B)(3) MA provides a comprehensive plan with goals, timelines and identified parties with specific responsibilities. It has a set of strategies and activities that will support schools transition to better standards and assessments.(18/20)

Total	70	53	53
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

Available Tier 1 Tier 2 Init

(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18
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(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has a system with 9 of the 12 elements. (18/24)

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

There is a clear plan to improve the state's education data warehouse for 80,000 educators and to improve the public website. Appendix C2 has detailed activities and Appendix C8 has a template to guide researcher access to data.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18	18
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The narrative and Appendix C3 identify key outcomes for the State's data enhancements that show data will be able to be used to improve practice and supportive formative assessments in a timely manner by teachers and educational leaders. The material cited in C2 is also relevant. This is a high quality plan, well designed and clearly able to be executed by the State agencies.

Total	47	41	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	19	19	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA has a wide range of alternative providers of certification paths for teachers and principals many of which are independent of higher education institutions. Some of providers have residency programs, some an apprenticeship model, to reference a few strong practice-based alternative paths. (7/7) ii These paths are in use for teachers and principals and there are significant numbers of people who went through these routes in 2007/08 . (7/7) iii. MA has processes based on its personnel system for identifying educator shortages, but they will be more effective when they are integrated in 2010. It has good processes and practices to attract and retain teachers and principals in hard to staff schools. (5/7) (19/21)

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	41	41
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(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6	6
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	18	18

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA has a clear approach to assessing student growth and released its first data in 10/2009. (5/5) ii. MA plans to have a multiple measures approach to determining teacher and principal effectiveness. There is no direct statement in the plan that student growth will be a "significant factor" in assessing teacher effectiveness. Instead the expressions "impact on student growth" and "anchored in student growth" are

used. The development work will include key stakeholders and be informed by teacher and principal surveys (12/15). iii MA is pursuing an annual evaluation strategy that will provide student performance data to educators and will lift the quality, rigor and coverage of evaluations. (6/10) iv. The MA plan does not have clear indications that the activities proposed will result in a evaluations being used to inform decisions about developing teachers and principals. They will inform HR decisions, and compensation, licensure and career ladder judgements and tenure and removal. Much of what is planned in this area depends on a number of pilots in a small number of LEAs. This detracts a little from the quality and credibility of the plan. The leads to a medium rating (18/28) 41/48

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	7	12	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7	7	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	0	5	

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has a reasonable strategy to affect a net increase in the supply of effective teachers but the assumption is that an increase in the total number will translate into an increase in all schools including the high poverty schools & hard to staff schools with a long history of shortages. This is unlikely to be the case and indeed the State's goals for performance measures show that the gaps in the distribution of effective teachers between high need and low need schools persist over the project period. The goals for the distribution of effective teachers do show some greater impact on inequitable distribution but gaps still persist by end of 2014. This suggest that the plan is not strong. ii. There is no specific narrative about the supply and distribution of specialist teachers and there are no goals to address distribution. The plan notes the "absence of a true baseline" and reiterates the assumption of an even distribution of effective specialists even though the plan notes that waivers – a proxy for shortages – are proportionally high in certain disciplines and in schools serving English language learners. (0/10)

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

Officials clarified the State's strategies for the distribution of effective teachers - referencing the role effective leaders play in attracting good teachers, the recruitment of mid career professionals for shortage areas like Mathematics and Science and mechanisms to retain these recruits, and the alliance with a community college to transform paraprofessionals into special education teachers in a high poverty district as measures to acheive more equitable distribution of personnel. This moves this element into the medium range. (5/10)

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	5	8	
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA's currently does not hold teacher and principal preparation programs accountable for the effectiveness of graduates. It has a sensible plan to address this gap through a program report card for example. It will rely on the small number of LEAs in the personnel practices pilots (D2) to inform work in this area. In addition, it has already begun work with 12 representative programs - showing a degree of commitment to improvement in this area.(5/7) ii. There are no plans or targets to expand the successful programs. (0/7). (5/14)

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The officials clarified the State's plan to concentrate resources on preparation programs that are more effective, which will lead to the expansion of successful programs. There are still no targets. This moves them from low to medium for D4 ii. (3/7) This brings the total to 8/14

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15	15
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has an impressive array of professional development activities with six different modes and has tied participation to induction and certification. It proposes to concentrate support on low performing schools but does not set performance measures for either delivery or take up in high poverty schools, for example, or to teachers facing difficulties. (7/10) ii. MA has an adequate plan for evaluating professional development but its goals for the end of 4 years leave 20% of districts untouched by this activity. Yet it is an area where total coverage is possible and desirable. (8/10). (15/20)

Total	138	87	95
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA has legal authority to intervene at the school and district level. (10/10)

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. MA has a good plan and a process to identify schools "most in need of intervention" using performance data and the measures of student growth that will be developed. This aligns with the criteria. (5/5) ii. MA has solid – 5 years at least - experience intervening in low performing schools and providing support to schools and districts. Its strategies are well thought out and coherent and include at least one of the 4 intervention models. (35/35)

Total	50	50	50
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

i. Table F1 shows that MA expended more in terms of % of state revenue in 2009 than it did in 2008- even though total expenditures were down in simple dollar terms. ii. Table F2 shows that the progressive financing formulas that the State uses result in more per capita funds for high need students – in the order of 18%.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	31	31	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

1. There are limits on the overall # of charters (120) and barriers that will inhibit growth. (0/8) ii. MA's policies and laws require charter schools to serve populations similar to local populations or to serve greater concentrations of need and the need to consider student academic performance in renewing charters. The quality of proposed academic instruction is assessed in consideration of initial charter approvals. (8/8) iii. The MA funding formula for charter schools gives them a commensurate share and is essentially "equitable." It is a little complex as the amount a charter school student attracts is determined by the student's sending district, making it difficult for a charter to plan its budget because the amount each student brings is not constant. There are good reasons for the approach MA has taken but the impact on fiscal planning is regrettable. (7/8) iv. There are no significant restrictions on capital or facilities funds for charters and there are laws giving charters access to unused state facilities. MA also gives charters access to bond and loan facilities that are favorable. (8/8) v. MA has a profusion of alternative innovative or autonomous public schools. (8/8)

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's narrative through out the document shows a history of reform and innovation beginning with the Education Reform Act of 1993 referenced in Part A. In addition the State fosters and finances other reforms that reinforce the likelihood of young people improving academic performance - the expanded learning time program for example,- and college preparedness. (5/5)

Total	55	46	46
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MA's commitment to STEM priorities is evident at numerous points in the plan and is reinforced by statements of support from business leaders and seven STEM specific groups. Its attention to teacher supply could be stronger and more creative.

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

There was confirmation of the state's commitment to STEM priorities. For example they have strategies to recruit mid career professionals as science teachers.

Total	15	15	15
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Overall the MA proposal meets the basics – solid LEA participation, very good stakeholder support, a commitment to implement, and a near 20 year history of implementation to draw on and guide action. There is an impressive array of professional development, sophisticated progressive financing formulas and good strategies for dealing with underperforming schools and narrowing academic outcomes gaps. On the

converse, the assumption in the plan that a net increase in the number of effective teachers will result in a more equitable distribution of that valuable resource is ill advised. But overall, there is a commitment to action and comprehensive reform.

Total			0	0
Grand Total	500	407	415	



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Massachusetts Application #3480MA-4



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	60
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has laid out an ambitious and comprehensive reform agenda that covers fully the four education areas in the ARRA. Building on a strong track record of reform beginning in 1993 with legislative changes as recent as January 2010, Massachusetts also will make a special effort to coordinate and align other entities and agencies outside the sphere of education particularly to address students in need and early childhood. The terms and conditions of the MOU reflect strong commitment and the participating LEAs will implement all of the state's RttT plans, except they are encouraged to be a part of rolling out the P-12 Teaching and Learning System and increase college and career readiness. This has a small potential to negatively affect these two projects. The number of LEAs participating as well as the number of students and percentage of students in poverty potentially affected is impressive. A minor concern is the lack of participation in the southwest portion of the state. There is 100 percent commitment from the LEAs participating as evidenced by the signatures, including teachers' unions, of the participating LEAs. In fact, Massachusetts went so far as to reject MOUs from 62 LEAs that obtained only two of the required three signatures. Massachusetts has very ambitious goals: increasing student performance on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) by 15% in four years, reducing achievement gaps by 25%, improving graduation rates by 5%, etc. These are especially ambitious due to Massachusetts' already high student performance status at near first in the nation in all areas. Significant improvement is difficult to make when already at the top, but Massachusetts has thought through where rapid changes will occur and acknowledges that other changes may come more slowly: "We expect that students who are currently furthest behind will make faster, more dramatic improvements and that gains will accelerate in the two years following RttT as the benefits from the state's investments take off." If attained, these goals translate into broad statewide impact.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The Massachusetts proposal describes a broad-based, yet coherent and strong leadership and organizational structure for implementing and monitoring the proposed grant and sustaining it. In addition to appointing people and designating specific responsibilities, Massachusetts will provide training on effective project management. Each project will have an associated evaluation design, often from a third-party evaluator, to gather information and measure program outcomes. This effort is</p>		

highly commendable. The proposal also establishes strong support for participating LEAs, including identifying a lead manager with responsibility for working with each LEA to ensure they successfully implement their plan. The method for identifying and evaluating best practices is mentioned, but somewhat buried in the process, although the lead managers have overall responsibility for tracking LEAs progress and holding them accountable. The overall program management function will be taken on by units already familiar with such operations, augmented by additional, focused staff. In addition, Massachusetts is creating two advisory groups. One, comprised of stakeholders and convened by Mass Partners, will provide overall guidance on strategy and implementation and "to develop plans for continuing the work once the grant runs out." The second, made up of state, national and international leaders in education policy, will provide overall advice and suggestions for strategy. The approach to the budget is to contract for many services rather than add staff, to take advantage of "the state's strong nonprofit and technology sectors." The impact on the state's capability to sustain the effort once the contractors go away is not clear. The state plans to coordinate, reallocate or repurpose approximately 19% of available funds from federal and state sources as well as 11% of agency staff. Both the delineation and size of commitment are impressive. There also is a \$12.5 million set aside for program evaluation. Appropriately, the state side of the budget is front loaded and, for the most part, diminishes over the four years while the LEA side is lower in the first year and leaps in year two and stays at about that level. Descriptions of efforts to sustain momentum and programs after funding from RttT runs out are less specific and more based upon the expectation that the state and LEAs will all have greater capacity and better means of communication and support. Outside groups such as the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education and Mass Partners are already working on ideas to sustain the efforts. Massachusetts engaged in a significant outreach effort as it was building its proposal for RttT. The letters of support from a vast array of stakeholder groups is impressive. The teacher unions, while expressing trepidation regarding specific parts of the grant, support the effort and look forward to working together.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	29
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	25
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has made significant and impressive progress in all four of the education reform areas as evidenced by National Assessment of Educational Progress and Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment of Skills scores. They have decreased the achievement gaps, although this is an area the state acknowledges needs additional work. Even with a significant ratcheting up of standards, the dropout rate did not increase, and the cohort graduation rates improved overall and for many subgroups. All these gains are most impressive. While Massachusetts' successes are touted, appropriately so, the state is not afraid to point out what needs work and lessons learned. Most notably in the turning around schools area, between 2001 and 2006, the state identified 57 schools as underperforming and "directed modest state resources and technical assistance to support their improvements." This "light touch" didn't work and the state has taken both organizational and legislative action to change the approach to turning around low performing schools. The extent to which they used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and other federal and state funding to pursue the reforms is not noted, but legislative initiatives were.</p>		
Total	125	117

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has shown commitment to the Common Core standards, which are internationally benchmarked and build college and career readiness by signing an MOU with 51 states and territories and by having six staff members serve on working groups for the standards. The original plan for adoption called for adoption by August 2010. When the final version of the standards was pushed back to March 2010, the state moved its adoption date back to the fall of 2010 to allow for the state-required public comment period.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts is a member of the Balanced Assessment Consortium (30 states) and the Achieve Common Assessment Consortium (26 states). Massachusetts, in conjunction with the consortia, is working towards jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments aligned with a common set of K-12 standards.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has a very detailed and well-thought out plan to support the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments. The roll-out includes not only regional meetings, but also special seminars for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The unified PreK-12 teaching and learning system is an ambitious project, yet if it can be accomplished in a timely manner and teachers and principals can be trained effectively, it could yield extremely positive results. It will create a standards-based system of curriculum, instructional tools and assessments for all subject areas. Especially note-worthy are the performance tasks to be included in the system. Increasing the requirements for high school graduation, strengthening two current state programs that provide college and career incentives, increasing the opportunities for STEM and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in conjunction with community partners in lower performing schools, and additional efforts for the lowest performing schools all should bear positive results. The state did not address aligning school exit criteria and college entrance requirements directly, but the new requirements for high school graduation should make a major step in that direction.</p>		
Total	70	53

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has in place a statewide longitudinal data system that currently includes nine of the America COMPETES Act elements. Element 8 (matching teachers to students), and Element 9 (student level transcript) are being piloted with the expectation that the data will be collected in October 2010, but these elements are not in place currently. Element 10, is underway and the state hopes to have these data incorporated in the spring of 2010.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Massachusetts has a high quality plan to enhance its data warehouse in anticipation of a 10X increase in users over the next few years. The state also will make its web portal more user-friendly and the data more accessible. At the LEA level, the state will facilitate increased installation of Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) solutions. The state also plans to increase its data audits to ensure the data are valid. All three projects are important to ensure the state's data are accessible and easily usable, and the successful completion of the projects should make that happen. The successful completion of the three projects, in conjunction with the high-quality data in the new data mart and how those data are linked, should result in reports and other data that will support decision-makers at all levels.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts has a plan for using data to improve instruction, including acquiring, adopting and using local instructional improvement systems. A very large part of that plan relies on the Pre-K-12 Teaching and Learning system. The plan for building the content for the system seems solid. A coalition of LEAs will help develop the local systems and key LEAs such as Boston and Springfield will help develop and roll out the systems. However, the plan to develop the system is not well defined. Some analysis of "build versus buy" has occurred with "build" holding a tentative lead, although the state will also pilot a vendor-built system as well. The desire to compare student achievement outcomes from two systems is not realistic in the timeframe given the time necessary to install, implement, train, and actually use the systems with teachers and students for a sufficient time to compare outcomes. The Digital Library and test builder engine are excellent, achievable ideas. Separating the secure bank (highly valid and reliable items) from the non-secure bank (LEA generated items that may or may not be valid and reliable) is very wise. For educator training and support, building upon an existing catalog of courses with new courses available online as well as traditional class settings should broaden the reach of the courses and increase teachers' ability to use data effectively. Massachusetts already has made much data available to researchers. They will increase that and make it easier through the improvements to the web portal described above.</p>		
Total	47	35

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	19
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts law allows for multiple alternative routes to initial licensure for both teachers and principals in addition to institutions of higher education and address at least four of the five elements in the definition of alternative routes to certification. For teachers, the state currently has alternative programs in IHEs, public school districts, charter schools, educational collaboratives, a foundation, private schools, and a professional association. For principals, similar options exist. The state has a strong process for monitoring, evaluating and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortages and that process will be enhanced as the data systems get linked as planned in Section C. They have used this process in the past to develop recommendations to address shortages, but a description of these recommendations is lacking in the narrative and evaluation of how the state intends to prepare teachers and principals to meet the shortages is difficult. The state has experimented with incentives and has created a set of recommendations for expanding the pool and pipeline for teachers.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	40
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	13
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Massachusetts has a clear approach to measure student growth and is doing that now for students in grades 4 – 8 and students in grade 10 with years in Massachusetts schools. They plan to create other measures of student growth including new tools for non-tested grades and subjects. Educators have access to this information through the Education Data Warehouse. Massachusetts has a plan to create a system to measure effectiveness for teachers and principals, anchored on student achievement data, but also including supervisor evaluations and such possible items as promotion, graduation, student and/or parent feedback, or measures of school climate. The system will be developed by a group of educators, including unions, and local and national experts and build on the research of various efforts throughout the country including the Gates Measures of Effective Teaching project. This is a thoughtful and potentially very effective plan that includes both experts and stakeholders. To develop new approaches to evaluation systems, Massachusetts will create 10 diverse but representative pilots (urban, rural and suburban; at least one high-performing, and at least one charter, etc). Pilot LEAs will need to demonstrate commitment from all stakeholders – unions, principals and school committee – to participate. The goal is to develop sustainable models using the effectiveness measures, and to focus on training school and district administrators on conducting equitable and affordable evaluations. The evaluations will be “regular,” but it is unclear if that means annually or some other frequency. The MOU designates annual evaluations, but annual evaluations is such a difficult and critical component - as acknowledged - annual needs to be explicit. Districts will be able to choose from among the models, but state regulations will be built to ensure consistent use and reporting. This also is a solid and clear plan that should attain the desired goal. Massachusetts acknowledges a problem with teacher evaluations as currently conducted. Using RttT funds, the state plans to give educators data on student growth and achievement and provide training. As noted above, training will be a major focus of the new evaluation models, and the state will contract with a third party to develop regional training and tools, some delivered online, for conducting effective evaluations using student data. This plan has good parts, but it is not as well thought out or tightly woven together as others in this section or in the proposal. The state plans to use the evaluation pilots to align the measures of effectiveness to all decisions along the career continuum. They will build upon national research and local efforts as well as the efforts of three districts looking at working “with the state to refine local approaches to induction, professional development, advancement to new roles and responsibilities, professional teaching status (tenure), compensation, and the removal of ineffective teachers.” The state will encourage collaboration and attempt to change the culture in the state and in LEAs from compliance to effectiveness-driven organizations. The state will also create four alternative compensation pilots and capture and share best practices with the LEAs. Finally they will create “a statewide conversation” in an attempt to review current tenure structures, pension and benefit policies and current “step and lane” system used in most teacher contracts. They hope to build a set of recommendations to strengthen educator effectiveness. These efforts are all admirable, but potentially weak if there is no carrot or stick for LEAs to change. While unions will be highly involved with all efforts, change is difficult and threatening, and unlikely if the results from the pilots are not dramatically enticing and/or effective for student success. One positive incentive the state plans to carry out is to use measures of teacher and principal effectiveness to create a multi-tiered licensure system that is performance and portfolio-based and create a statewide career ladder. The career ladder will build on efforts underway by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. This could be the glue that holds together all the disparate pilots and related efforts, but it will take significant and constant collaboration and negotiation to pull this off.</p>		
(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:

Massachusetts has outlined a 4-part strategy to address the equitable distribution of teachers and principals: publish and monitor data about educator effectiveness; expand effective teachers through recruitment and preparation; concentrate effective teachers in lowest achieving schools; and increase retention of effective teachers. The state has begun work on a report on The Status of Educator Workforce. As the definitions of effectiveness are verified, those will be worked into the report to make it even more useful. They will work with regional Readiness Centers to expand the number of pathways for teachers such as community colleges, school paraprofessionals in Special Education (SPED) and English Language Learners (ELL) settings, midcareer candidates, etc. These efforts will be through an RFP process that builds upon some current activities. The RFP process is not well-defined, but does address a laundry list of high-priority initiatives. This process does not seem as holistic and connected as plans described in other areas of the proposal, but this could be due to lack of detail. Finally, the work of Mass TeLLS, a survey of teaching and learning conditions in the state, provides the basis for increasing the retention of effective teachers. Again, there will be a reliance on the state encouraging teams to create actionable plans to improve working conditions and then the state will identify and disseminate promising practices. Encouragement may be sufficient, though without monitoring and incentives, it may not. The state plans to create very interesting and innovative strategies to providing induction support to new teachers, especially in low-performing schools, including both face-to-face observations and mentoring and online support and critique of videotaped lessons. The approach described above addresses hard-to-staff areas as well by emphasizing those areas. However, beyond an emphasis, there is little in the way of special strategies for hard-to-staff areas. This is not completely negative, because if the entire approach does work, hard-to-staff areas will be better addressed.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

14

7

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The state is piloting a new program approval process for teacher preparation programs that is based on outcome indicators and will be aligned with measures of effectiveness. Student achievement and growth of program graduates will be included and will be reported via a public web site for all preparation entities. The state plans to link the databases for students, teachers, and licensure by the third year of the grant. All the pieces seem to be in place to link student achievement and growth to teachers and principals and back to the preparing institutions. The second part of the plan required for (D)(4) speaks to the expansion of preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful. The state does not address this component of a high-quality plan at all.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals

20

20

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Massachusetts will build upon existing efforts and mix a series of capacity building and networking/collaborative efforts with the more formal efforts, embedding the measures of effectiveness in evaluation, licensure and re-licensure. This approach, more carrot than stick, should be effective and sustain the efforts past the life of the grant. In this section, as in a few others, the state has at least mentioned ensuring the state's investment beyond the grant, a most admirable consideration in planning. The state has clear targets for these efforts, including closing the achievement gap and five identified instructional strategies, and their six channels of implementation support line up well with the targets. The six channels take advantage of technology (free online modules and videos) yet rely heavily on expanding regional efforts through the six District and School Assistance Centers (DSACs), regional networks and Professional Learning Communities. While the six channels are clearly defined, there will be fluidity among them to leverage success in one throughout the others. The state will create a strong accountability system for its support efforts. They first will use NSDC's Standards Assessment Inventory to evaluate professional development. They will build on this as educator effectiveness data becomes available and create a set of processes and tools to assess the impact of professional supports on educator practice. Through encouragement and advocacy of best practices during monitoring, the state expects these tools and processes to be adopted by LEAs. The state also

will link this new approach to the measures of effectiveness, evaluation, licensure and career ladders. This approach should be powerful and highly effective.

Total	138	103
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Massachusetts recently passed a law that empowers the commissioner to intervene in underperforming and chronically underperforming schools and districts.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state has a process to identify those schools most in need of improvement, based on achievement and growth. Early in February they will announce the 36 lowest achieving schools which will be the target of their initial turnaround work. Massachusetts' strategy for turning around schools not only looks at building the state's capacity to support the schools and the capacity of schools that are persistently low performing, but also the strategy looks to prevent others from falling into that category in the future. The state plans to develop a specialized corps of turnaround teacher and leader teams, build the capacity of proven partners, build districts' capacity to intervene in struggling schools, and develop, attract and manage lead partners and turnaround operators. The state has a strong plan to build programs to develop teachers and principals and to support them and to retain them, including incentives such as loan forgiveness, career ladder opportunities, and compensation. After the life of the grant, they will rely on philanthropy and Title I grants to fund continued efforts. The state also will create a process to vet possible partners in turnaround efforts, especially those who work with socio-emotional supports, expanded school day and year, and using data effectively. The state will use this process to find partners who can help districts gain capacity in effective governance and leadership, human resource management and development systems, enhanced family and community engagement and support, and improved dropout prevention and recovery. The state has identified these four areas as crucial to turning around schools and the state has clear and viable tactics for each of the four areas. This approach is intended to help districts work with the lowest performing schools, and it also should provide capacity to keep others from falling into that status. All these strategies, informed by a sometimes painfully honest assessment of what has worked and not worked regarding turnaround efforts in Massachusetts schools, should build district and state capacity to turn around schools. The state has learned that a "light touch" does not work, and its plans indicate both a willingness and knowledge to turn around the lowest performing schools. As a further and highly commendable initiative, the state intends to initiate a competitive process to attract Level 3 schools (Levels 4 and 5 – the worst – will be addressed in the process described above) to volunteer to implement the turnaround, transformation or restart models. The intent is to prevent additional schools from declining to Levels 4 and 5.		
Total	50	50

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
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(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The education share of total state revenue increased in Massachusetts from 32% in 2008 to 36% in 2009 and is expected to stay at 36% in 2010. K-12 education's share of total state revenue also increased over that time span. The state's policies lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs. Within LEAs is not addressed. The proposal states that districts in Massachusetts are small by national standards, enrolling an average of about 3000 students. The state does, however, have some large districts where inequitable funding among schools could be possible. These situations are not mentioned in the proposal.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The state's very complicated charter schools law has two limits on charters – the first limits the number of charters to approximately 7% of the total number of schools, and the second limits the amount of any district's net school spending that can be reallocated to charters to 9%. The law (and new modifications to the law) has other components that favor charters in low-performing schools. The state has regulations and guidelines regarding how authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize and close charter schools. A newly passed law strongly encourages recruitment and retention plans to ensure that there is a comparable academic and demographic profile to students from which the charter is drawing. The state has closed or not renewed ineffective charter schools for various reasons, including lack of student achievement. The state's charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools and a commensurate share of other funds. The state does provide charter schools with funding for facilities and has established other mechanisms for funding such as various bonds, loans and loan guarantees, as well as authorization to spend some ARRA Qualified School Construction Bonds on charters. These are all positive efforts. The state has taken large strides in supporting innovative, autonomous public schools through pilot schools and especially through Innovation Schools. These present an in-district alternative to charter schools and can be established by superintendents, school committees, teachers, parents, charter schools or others. Local school committees, not the state, have final approval over these schools, but the state is responsible for overall monitoring of the Innovation Schools Initiative. Twenty schools are poised to open over the next two years under this admirable initiative.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The state has created a number of initiatives favorable to school reform. The primary emphasis is in the area of funding for additional time. While these programs have not caused much change on scores on MCAS in the first two years, they are expected to yield more positive results as the programs become further institutionalized. Other older programs have generated very positive results, including increases of 12 to 34 points in the share of students earning a Competency Determination. The state also has funding for the transition from half day to full day kindergarten. Since 2000, the share of the state's students attending full day kindergarten has moved from 29 to 77 percent. All these efforts provide firm support for school reform in Massachusetts.</p>		
Total	55	45

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments:		

Massachusetts imbedded STEM throughout many areas of its proposal. The state has made a commitment to high standards in science and mathematics, although engineering and technology were directly not addressed in the summary part of the proposal. The state's ranking in NAEP and in international assessments in science and math indicates that they are doing something well, and standards are a key. They will prioritize STEM in the Pre-K – 12 teaching and learning system to provide formative assessments and instructional materials, ratchet up their efforts in recruitment and retention of STEM teachers, and emphasize STEM in lower performing schools. Possibly most promising in this strong array of efforts is the Governor's STEM Advisory Council which will leverage a number of existing innovations. The state did not directly address the needs of women and girls in the STEM part of the proposal, but again, the results on NAEP and other measures indicates the state is headed in the right direction.

Total	.15	15
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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:

Massachusetts has created a very strong, coherent, and far-reaching proposal. It addresses all the areas of school reform with clear, well thought out plans and initiatives that hold great promise to increase student achievement, decrease achievement gaps across student subgroups and graduation rates. The commitment from LEAs is strong and includes the unions in all the participating LEAs. A particularly laudable component of the Massachusetts proposal is the numerous times it alluded to sustaining the efforts after the time of the grant. Clearly the state has thought about this and is planning for it. Massachusetts has a strong history in school reform and its students do very well compared with other states. Yet, the state clearly understands its problems and its plan address the problems fully.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	418
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

Massachusetts Application #3480 MA-5



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	50	50	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34	34	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	11	11	

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has a comprehensive agenda that builds on existing systems in place. Fiscal and statutory investments have established statewide high standards and assessment systems which provide the foundations for current reform proposals. The State ranks high on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessments although it recognizes achievement gaps among subgroups, while improving, still persist. The recent Education Action Agenda has begun the process of putting into place systems that will focus on individualizing learning, developing and retaining effective teachers, increasing focus on college and career readiness, and creating conditions for innovation. LEA and stakeholder participation in the preparation of plans for the RTTT application began in 2008 with the Commonwealth Readiness Project. 65% (256/392) of the LEAs representing 72% of the K-12 student enrollment and 86% of student in poverty have agreed to participate as indicated by the appropriate authorities signing a standard MOU. The MOU is based on the standard MOU although in some places is non-binding. For example, the state "encourages" participation in the roll out of the statewide P-12 Teaching and Learning System; signatures on the MOU would not necessarily obligate participation in this key strategy for statewide reform. Similarly, participating districts can opt out of initiatives targeting career and college readiness. Another 62 LEAs submitted MOUs that were not approved because only two of the required three signatures were present. A state map indicates the LEA's that will be participating. It looks like the southeastern region of the state is underrepresented; statewide impact may be in jeopardy.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28	28	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	18	18	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10	10	

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The Office of Strategic Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the department of education in the State will manage the implementation process and monitor grant activities. While additional staff positions will be created, many of the functions and goals of the State plan utilize existing infrastructure in the department of education. Guiding implementation efforts will be two advisory groups consisting of key constituencies including Mass Partners members, and charter school and business leaders. Letters of support from 146 stakeholders were included in the appendices. Stakeholders have been involved in the planning and information gathering processes with input gathered through statewide surveys, face-to-face forums,

webinars, and special meetings of the superintendents. Union leaders and school committee leaders for all LEAs were consulted and numerous sessions with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education occurred.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	28	28
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	23	23

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Improvement of student performance over an eight year period is well documented. While gaps among subgroups remain, those gaps have decreased on all measures. State standards of expectation as measured by state, national, and international tests are high and build on a history of policies and practices that parallel the four assurance areas. Especially groundbreaking have been efforts to incorporate technology and engineering standards within the science curriculum frameworks. State dropout rates have not shown similar progress, however. While the state average graduation rate remains steady at 81%, Hispanic, Native American, White, and Low-income students show a slight drop in graduation rates.

Total	125	106	106
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	25	25	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	5	5	

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

An MOA has been signed which commits the State to working collaboratively with other states on developing and adopting common standards. Participation with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association ensures the participation of a significant number of states. Fifty-one states and territories signed the Common Core Standards Initiative; State representatives have been very active to date on working with these consortia on developing the Core Standards. Legal and procedural processes are in place for adopting state standards including a Curriculum Framework Advisory Panel that includes educators, scholars, business and community leaders. Fall 2010 adoption of the Core Curriculum is planned. The date of adoption has been moved to allow for a required public comment period which, although commendable, prevents full points being awarded for having a plan in place by August, 2010.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has signed an MOU to participate in the Balanced Assessment State Consortium. The Consortium, consisting of 30 states, will develop a system of assessments designed to measure the extent to which individual students, schools, and LEA's are achieving Common Core Standards. These assessments will include multiple measures of student growth and teacher effectiveness. The State already has in place a Comprehensive Assessment System which will likely be incorporated into the system of assessments agreed upon by the consortium. The Commissioner of Education also signed an additional

MOU to participate with Achieve. This consortium of states will develop a system of summative assessments based upon college and career readiness standards that are internationally benchmarked.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The plan for supporting transition to new standards and assessments includes dissemination, technical assistance, and instructional support tools. The Balanced Assessment State Consortium will develop teaching and learning assessment systems that are available for real-time data analysis through state-of-the-art technology; teachers will receive training through online supports as well as professional development. Supplemental funds will be provided to LEAs and community partners (such as Jobs for the Future and Mass 2020) to implement and scale proven programs that will embed rigorous curricula in lower performing schools, including six new STEM Early College High Schools (ECHS), 12 International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, and a subset of Innovation Schools. In addition, the State will give Level 3 LEAs and schools priority for these funds. Three new STEM schools will be located on state college or university campuses and three will be on community college or high school campuses. Opportunities for dual enrollment and AP course offerings will be expanded as well. Attention is paid to providing even more intensive interventions to increase college and career readiness in the state's lowest performing (Level 4 and 5) middle and high schools.

Total	70	55	55
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	18	18	

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The statewide longitudinal Education Data Warehouse addresses and accommodates for 9 of the America COMPETES Act elements. Not in place by August, 2010 are: teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students; Student-level transcript information; and Other data necessary for alignment and preparation for postsecondary education. The new data collection system will be in place beginning in October, 2010.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Building on the existing data warehouse system of support the State plans to enhance existing structures and expand the capacity of them. In particular, the existing system, in its current form, cannot accommodate a large number of different kinds of users. As data analyses become more complicated, including building systems of individual student growth and teacher effectiveness, the Education Data Warehouse will need to provide for customized reports and analyses. Plans include transitioning the data warehouse to a "data mart architecture" as well as enhancing user access, accommodating multiple data sources, and providing for a variety of kinds of reporting needs and purposes.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	18	18
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(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State will use RTTT funds to invest in the data systems and technology necessary to support the Pre K -12 teaching and learning system, strengthen and expand educator training and supports for data use, and make state longitudinal data available to researchers through the EDW. There is a strong history of

increased accessibility to data to inform policy development and operational decisions. Existing strategies are in place upon which a state-of-the-art data system can be built. The State recognizes that a particular challenge is to support educators in their use of data to inform classroom decisions and is therefore planning to invest in expanding training and job-embedded activities. There has been a history of researchers using statewide data and plans are articulated for providing mechanisms for researchers to have access to data.

Total	47	41	41
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	18	18	

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Regulatory provisions allow for multiple alternative pathways to certification for teachers and principals. Alternative routes lead to the same initial licensure as traditional preparation programs. It is unclear what the requirements are for admission to alternative programs, and how selective and high-quality these programs are. Similarly, it is not clear that all programs provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support. 39 alternative route programs exist and 1037 (15%) of newly licensed teachers were prepared through alternative programs in 2008. Mechanisms exist to monitor and anticipate critical shortage areas as well. Provisions exist for offering incentives, differential pay and signing bonuses for STEM teachers as a result of supply and demand analyses. It is not clear whether incentives are in place for recruiting administrators to high needs schools and/or for identifying areas where highly successful administrators are lacking.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	32	32
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	9	9
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5	5
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	15	15

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State does not have a system in place for measuring student growth at this time and plans for doing so are sketchy. Similarly, plans for differentiating teacher and principal effectiveness and using effectiveness measures in performance evaluations are not very well developed. Preliminary plans suggest teacher effectiveness will be based on aggregated student percentile scores without consideration of other important factors. The strategies described in the plan for developing a rigorous system of teacher and principal evaluation that uses student growth measures will be piloted before large-scale implementation ensues. It is hard to tell at this point whether the success metrics are reasonable. It also does not appear there are clear guidelines and regulations for removing ineffective teachers and specific incentives and methods for recruiting, assigning, retaining, rewarding and supporting effective teachers and principals are not delineated. The State reports that less than 25% of non-tenured teachers in the district received their state-required annual evaluations and over a quarter of the district's school leaders failed to turn in any evaluations over the two-year period. Variability in the quality of local evaluations is recognized and strategies are proposed in the application to provide for consistency and rigor of the evaluation process for teachers. The evaluation process for administrators is not clearly articulated or planned, however. Low scores are given in the area of improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

because the plan is still in its infancy. There is sufficient evidence, however, to suggest a high-quality plan with ambitious yet achievable annual targets may emerge although much more needs to be incorporated and considered, especially in the area of principal effectiveness measures, expectations, and incentives.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	15	19	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12	12	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	3	7	

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has a plan for recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and principals. The plan is not clear, however, about strategies for the equitable distribution of teachers and principals in high poverty and/or high minority schools. Annual targets for equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals are not sufficiently aggressive nor explained. While still in the early stages of identifying and planning for equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, there appears to be a commitment and infrastructure for making progress in this area.

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The State presentation clarified strategies for recruiting, supporting, compensating, and retaining teachers for high-poverty, high-minority, and hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. It is still not clear, however, what supports, incentives, or strategies will be used to ensure equitable distribution of principals.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	11	11	
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(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Plans for developing a system to trace teacher/principal effectiveness back to preparation programs are very early in the process. Effectiveness Indicators and a Preparation Program Report Card are in draft form and outline how student growth will be incorporated into a preparation accountability system. Through the statewide pilots, ESE will develop a statewide accountability system, anchored in measures of student achievement and growth of program graduates, that includes web-based public reporting for all preparation entities and new program approval regulations. The State intends to use this system to provide opportunities for continuous system improvement, reflective growth, and assessment of teacher/principal preparation program effectiveness and impact. 12 preparation programs are piloting a new program approval process that incorporate effectiveness indicators. It is not clear, however, how preparation programs will be evaluated or accommodated for participation of graduates in high poverty, low performing schools.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20	20	
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(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has a history of providing for and mandating professional development through induction programs for teachers and individual professional development plans as part of the licensure renewal process. The State has plans for expanding existing statewide support systems for professional development that will support rapid reform implementation, data driven efforts and meet the needs for teachers and principals to receive meaningful and specific professional development that will impact effectiveness. Several delivery channels are in place and planned that include training and support through regional centers, the use of online and hybrid face-to-face institutes and courses, and literacy and STEM focused institutes. The State has also developed a set of tools and resources focused on data-driven instruction and decision making ("Professional Learning Communities" or "PLCs") in high need schools and

has partnered with the National Institute for School Leaders (NISL) to customize its two-year program for school leaders focused on strategic instructional leadership.

Total	138	96	100
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has provisions for designating underperforming (Level 4) or chronically underperforming (Level 5) schools based on student performance data and school or district reviews and can directly intervene in failing schools and LEAs.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	36	36	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	31	31	

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has only recently identified the 36 persistently lowest-achieving schools that will be the focus of turnaround efforts. The basis for identifying low-performing schools includes student scores on state tests and new measures of student growth. The strategies for turning around these schools includes building a corps of turnaround teachers and school leaders, building capacity through partnerships, building capacity to intervene in struggling schools and working with turnaround operators. It is not clear which turnaround models might be used or how the decision will be made. Previous experiences with working with chronically underperforming schools have been met with mixed results.

Total	50	46	46
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The trend of the percentage of state revenues supporting public schools appears to be increasing over the past three years. A progressive funding formula is used by the State to distribute education aid to school districts in order to ensure that every district reaches equitable spending goals through a combination of state aid and local resources. The formula has produced a progressive distribution of state aid with the most state aid per pupil going to districts that have the highest percentage of low income students. Grant funding was also provided as additional support to high poverty districts including for providing for expanded learning time, academic support programs, and full-day kindergarten.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32	32	
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

State statute provides for two types of charter schools. There are limits on the number of charters allowable overall and in any given year. There is a recently passed "smart cap" law that will increase the number of proven charter providers allowable in low-performing districts serving high-needs students. State statute delineates the application and approval processes for charters and defines accountability requirements that include faithful implementation of the charter plan, academic success and organizational visibility. The statute clearly provides guidelines for charter approvals, monitoring, accountability and reauthorization. Funding amounts and supplements for charters are comparable to funding in the area schools. Differences in average amounts spent per student in charters was around \$1,800 and was attributed to lower salaries of teachers in charters. This may suggest an inequity in staffing that needs to be addressed. Assistance with facilities is provided by the State and provisions for autonomous and other innovative schools are made. The Smart Cap law is designed to flexibly increase the number of proven providers operating in low performing districts and serving high-needs students.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State provides funds for statewide expanded learning programs and after-school or out-of-school programs. Funds have also been provided to support full-day kindergarten resulting in an increase from 29% to 77% participation. The State has a history of establishing innovative conditions, policies, and programs favorable to education reform. State legislature's funding priorities include supporting programs that increase time for academics, supporting after-school and out-of-school grants to improve the quality of after-school and summer programs, and supporting enrichment and professional development programs to increase instructional effectiveness. The State has also supported reforms that address school-career readiness and provisions for second-language learners and students with disabilities.

Total	55	47	47
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has made a commitment to rigorous standards in STEM. Students perform well on national and international comparisons. There has also been an innovative inclusion of engineering concepts in the state curriculum. Plans are underway to recruit, retain and support effective STEM teachers and tangible goals are in place to increase the STEM readiness, especially among under-represented groups.

Total	15	15	15
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state has a history of success and leadership in the areas of curriculum and high academic standards. The State has a clear plan to build on existing structures to engage stakeholders at all levels in significant and fundamental reform. There is wide scale support for educational reform within the State and a variety of strategies have been used to reach a wide range of stakeholders during the planning process.

Total			0	0
Grand Total	500	406	410	