

# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Virginia Application #6600VA-1



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>45</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	7
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(i)The State clearly articulated a thoughtful reform agenda within the context of six objectives aligned to the RTTT goals. The agenda builds on previous reform efforts in the four education goals areas as outlined in the plan. A clear path to the achievement of its goals does not exist due to a lack of clarity related to its overall goals and targets. (ii)(a) Statewide commitment as evidenced by the 88.6% (117) exist. LEAs committed to participate in some components of the reform agenda. Roles, responsibilities, recourse for non-performance, and expectations are delineated. (ii)(b)Participating LEAs have agreed to implement all of some portions of the reform agenda. However, the percentage of LEAs willing to engage in some of the most challenging reform work, such as redesigning evaluation systems linked to performance and decision making, and ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals is low in comparison to the total number of participating LEAs. The percentage, which is about 50% of the LEAs participating in the stated areas, raises a significant concern related to the commitment by the State to implement rigorous statewide reform. (ii)(c)The application outlines significant support as evidenced by the number of principals and school board members signing the MOUs (iii)LEA participation in the reform agenda is representative of 94% of schools in the State and 96% of students in poverty has the potential for statewide impact, however because the participating LEAs have selected various components to implement significant statewide impact can be limited. Addressing the issue of limited impact in key components due to the percentage of LEAs committing to these areas will strengthen this section.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	9
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(i)(a)The application clearly outlines the leadership structure and its capacity to implement the reform agenda. (i)(b)The application delineates the levels of support to the LEAs for the Virginia Department Of Education. Specialists as identified will work with LEAs in the identification of best practices, support in replicating promising practices, and the process for eliminating ineffective practices. This is an appropriate support strategy for the LEAs, however it is unclear as to how the specialists will be deployed and the expectations for the onsite support in terms of time, structures and capacity building. (i)(c)The key positions described in this section are appropriate given the needs of the RTTT Department, however, consideration for the areas of oversight, performance measures and tracking, and audit are unclear. (i)(d)The budget as outlined in the reform agenda reflects realistic</p>		

allocations which are aligned to the proposed plans, given the expected outcomes of each of the reform components. The budget process as articulated will leverage other federal, State and outside funds to align and support the reform initiatives. (i)(e)The applicant cited examples of the State's practice of institutionalizing previous grant funded programs but did not discuss it in the context of RTTT. It is unclear to what extent reforms with a record of success will continue to be supported. (ii)(a) Significant evidence of support from stakeholders, including principals associations, Virginia Education Associations, and school boards, reflects the successful process of engagement in the development of the reform plan. (ii)(b)A comprehensive process to secure support from a broad base of stakeholders is evidenced by the number of letters of support received from a broad base, including Members of Congress, State and local elected officials, community members, business and foundations.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20
<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b> (i)The State has been engaged in implementing significant reform efforts over the years as evidenced by the development and adoption of State Standards, Standards of Learning, the Statewide Web-based Technology Initiative, increasing rigorous graduation requirements, and creation of a Statewide Data system. The State's success in the implementation of these initiatives in increasing student achievement can serve as a foundation for the reform agenda plans, especially in the area of capacity. (ii)The applicant articulated the gains in reading, language arts and math on both the NAEP and the statewide assessment and aligned it to the key initiatives. For example, the State's progress in improving reading achievement is consistent with the State's programmatic investments in improving literacy. The same analysis is made for improvements in mathematics, linked to a focus on algebra proficiency and professional development and the narrowing of the achievement gap at some grades consistently over the years. Although the applicant referenced actions and initiatives implemented, a brief analysis would have been informative to the linkage of results. The applicant emphasized the increase in graduation rates since 2005-2006. This year marked the first year unique identifiers were assigned. The State provides technical assistance to those schools in need of drastically improving student outcomes that lead to increased graduation rates. Aan analysis of graduation data linked specifically to the actions and initiatives implemented would have strengthened this section.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>89</b>

## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> (i)The applicant participates in a consortium of States that is working on developing a common set of core standards. Forty-eight States participate in the consortium. (ii)The State did not provide evidence of an adopting the set of core standards by August 2, 2010.		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b> The applicant is not working on developing high-quality assessments as a participant in a consortium.		

<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:  The applicant clearly articulated a rigorous, thoughtful plan as evidenced by the systematic approach to supporting the transition to enhanced standards and assessment implementation. The activities prescribed, such as establishing statewide college and career readiness standards, course development to increase students preparation for postsecondary education, STEM academy development and high quality professional development are appropriate and are examples of the understanding needed for building an infrastructure for the transition to new standards. The applicant acknowledges the necessity of a roll-out plan for effective implementation. The plan explicitly outlines professional development that will be needed for principals, teachers and other school leaders, but it is unclear as to the extent of the need for ongoing and strategic capacity building across the system.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>37</b>

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:  The applicant was given credit for nine elements. There was a lack of clarity regarding one element and the plan reflected two elements not in place.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:  The applicant is committed to ensuring system accessibility for the purposes of informing and engaging stakeholders as evidenced by the clear and concrete actions that will be taken as outlined in the plan. The applicant's commitment as evidenced in the plan demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of transparency and the ability for continuous improvement.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:  (i)The plan to develop and utilize instructional improvement systems is appropriate and achievable given the State's experience in the use of technology to support and inform instruction. Framing the instructional improvement around the three targets of improvement in teaching, improvement in learning, and improvement in organizations provides clarity and coherence. It is unclear however, whether there will be involvement of school site personnel in providing continuous feedback and input throughout the development stages. The capacity for LEAs to engage in data driven decision making and planning will need ongoing support. Structures for accountability in the support to LEAs is not evident. (ii)The State presents a clear plan to engage teachers in on-line professional development modules on the instructional improvement system. It is unclear whether teacher leaders or coaches will be developed at the school site level to provide ongoing support. Ongoing capacity building at each level will be critical to the overall success of implementation. It is unclear from the application if principals are included in the stated professional development activities. The applicant does not provide significant information regarding how teachers and principals will be supported in the implementation of the systems, the data analysis and decision making processes (iii)The applicant's plan to make the instructional improvement system available to researchers is outlined in the plan. It is unclear, from the application, if the system will have the capacity and whether the systems will be in place to maximize the research to improve instructional practices.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>

## D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i)The State allows for alternative routes to certification for teachers through legal, statutory and regulatory provisions. Although the application references alternative principal certification, evidence of the existence of such programs was not provided in the application. (ii)The State's data clearly validates the use of many of the alternative routes as outlined in the State provision. (iii)A process for monitoring, evaluating and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage is in place due to the State's requirement of the annual submission of a supply and demand report by each LEA. However, how that data is utilized to address the shortage areas is not discussed.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>29</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	4
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(i)The applicant has outlined a coherent approach to the development of student growth measures for tested grades as evidenced by the current research work with national experts. The applicant does not provide information regarding measuring growth in the non-tested grades which is critical to developing an evaluation system that has as one of its components, student achievement. (ii)The applicant has developed a high quality rigorous plan to address the development and implementation of an evaluation system that utilizes growth measure data as a component of teachers and principal evaluations. The plan utilizes broad base stakeholders through the formation of a working group charged with the responsibility of making recommendations for statewide policy based on the results of pilots from participating LEAs. There is a concern regarding the length of time the pilot programs will be implemented and the number of LEAs choosing to participate in the pilots. The steps as outlined are appropriate and rigorous given the established goals. (iii)The applicant has developed a rigorous and ambitious plan for the development and implementation of annual evaluation pilots based on comprehensive design work developed by working groups charged with the responsibility. This is a powerful strategy to engage those stakeholders who will be most affected. The plan doesn't explicitly outline how it will ensure that the pilot initiatives will link student growth to the annual evaluations and use the information to inform instructional practices and continuous improvement. It is unclear as to how the working group participants will be selected. (iv)The application reflects the utilization of the pilot models to inform future policy and practices related to additional compensation, instructional decision making, professional development, support and personnel. This research initiative which is designed to implement a more comprehensive evaluation system as well as to identify evidenced-based best practices is rigorous and appropriate. However the application does not outline a plan which reflects a commitment to link evaluation data to the decision making process. The number of LEAs participating in this area is problematic in that the key learnings from the pilots that will shape the evaluation system policies will be limited. The plan effectively utilizes practitioners, stakeholders and national experts to inform the future practices and policies.</p>		
<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	10
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (i)The application provides a thorough plan for ensuring equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and principals in high poverty, high minority schools as evidenced by the expansion of an existing successful program by creating the Hard-to-Staff Initiative. A brief summary of the conditions that made the current program successful, and to what extent the conditions will be replicated in the new initiative, would be informative. (ii)The Equity Plan will be developed to monitor the distribution of teachers and principals and a task force will be created to identify best practices. This can serve as an excellent strategy to address a key area of concern, however the vehicle that will be used to share best practices throughout the State and the expectations for utilizing the best practices by LEAs are unclear. Membership of the task force is unclear.		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant outlined its plan to link achievement and growth data to students' teachers and principals as evidenced by the planned enhancements to the IPAL system. It is unclear as to the follow up actions that will take place as a result of the data. The plan outlines four initiatives designed to expand preparation and credentialing options. This is an appropriate strategy given the capacity needed to produce effective teachers and principals. The oversight of the initiatives and the performance tracking processes to determine effectiveness are not evident in the plan.		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: The plan as outlined provides a clearly articulated roadmap for providing data informed professional development systems in the areas of literacy, math and elementary STEM. The activities and supports planned are robust and appropriate in increasing capacity, integrating research-based practices and ensuring quality through strategic partners, mentoring and coaching. The selection process, including the criteria, for mentors, coaches and strategic partners is unclear. An accountability system that has a component for periodic assessment of the effectiveness and progress of the support system for teachers and principals, would be informative to the initiative and participants. The issues of time; for example, common planning and job embedded professional development strategies are not addressed.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>84</b>

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The State has the legal authority to intervene directly in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	20
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (i)The State identifies the persistently lowest-achieving schools. (ii)The reform agenda outlines a thoughtful and rigorous plan to implement two models, Turnaround and Restart Models to transform its persistently lowest-achieving schools. The initiative will be led by the Office of School Improvement following the timeline which has been established. The plan is ambitious but achievable as long as the annual targets are clearly delineated and benchmarked. An analysis of the conditions that led to these		

options and an outline of the processes and structures, ie. communication plan, community engagement) necessary for successful implementation would have been informative. It is unclear whether the applicant utilized previous data related to its efforts in addressing the lowest-achieving schools and how that data, lessons learned and data on the suggested models, will shape the design and plans. The process and criteria for determining the turnaround and restart models are unclear.

<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>35</b>
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## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:            (i)The percentage of the total revenues available to the State to support education increased in 2009 from 2008. (ii)The State's policies lead to equitable funding among its LEAS.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:            The State Charter School law does not prohibit the number of charter schools. There are guidelines for authorization to open and close charter schools. Student Achievement is one significant factor in the reauthorization or renewal of charter schools. Provisions and guidelines exist for the closure or non-renewal of ineffective charter schools. Charter schools are encouraged to serve student populations similar to the local LEA. Equitable funding compared to public schools exists. The State provides for facilities agreements with charter schools. The State enables LEAs to operate autonomous public schools. The State's efforts in ensuring high quality, rigorous charter schools is evident by the establishment of laws and provisions that address achievement, accountability, and standards of practice.</p>		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:            The establishment of the Council on Virginia's Future several years ago serves as an advisory for the State's education reform. Chaired by the Governor, the council focuses on necessary policies and practices that can positively impact the educational landscape. Key indicators of success have been developed and are used to assess success of the State's reforms. The State is proud of its strong governance structure for educational reforms.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>

## Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<p>Competitive Reviewer Comments:            The applicant has outlined a thoughtful and rigorous STEM plan as evidenced by the State's transition to common core international standards, establishment of external partnerships with higher education and industry and ambitious goals for increasing teacher and principal capacity for implementing a high quality STEM programming, through high quality professional development, coaching and support.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

## Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<p>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The reform agenda as outlined in the application represents a robust, comprehensive and coherent approach to transforming the educational system in the State. The four education areas provided a roadmap for creating highly skilled students prepared for postsecondary life of college or the workforce. The State's plans build upon the best research-based strategies and the expertise of practitioners and national experts.</p>		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>348</b>



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Virginia Application #6600VA-2



### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	23
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A 1 i Building on its solid record of comprehensive reform, Virginia clearly understands where it needs to put its energies now and has set forth a comprehensive set of goals that relate to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA ) areas and range from increasing the number of at-risk children served in high quality preschools to even more rigorous postsecondary preparation than it already has. A 1 ii While Virginia received 100% of signatures of participating superintendents and school board presidents (there are no teacher's unions) and a huge percentage of LEAs (88.6%) and schools (94.5%), much, much smaller percentages signed on for various portions of the State's plan with way over half the elements receiving support from less than half of the LEAs and some receiving support from only a third or less. Therefore, commitment to the State's plan does not appear to be all that strong. A 1 iii Given Virginia's history of, and plans for, wide stakeholder involvement (that would include LEAs) in developing and implementing changes and the success they have had in revising and increasing their curriculum standards (along with the positive recognition the state has received as a result of the revisions), it would be reasonable to assume that it would not encounter resistance from its LEAs and that they would support the state's plan to the extent that it would translate into broad statewide impact. However, given the percentages of LEAs who refused to sign on to various elements of the state's reform plan, concern is raised about the possibility of not only lack of cooperation but also outright resistance, e.g., of 132 of the state's LEAs just 69 or 59% agreed to measure student growth, only 46% agreed to conduct annual evaluations and 43% to implement evaluation systems.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A 2 i Virginia demonstrates that it has the capacity necessary to implement its proposed plan. It lists state department administrators with long experience in the state who can provide leadership for Race to the Top (RTT). It outlines its strong infrastructure that can support RTT plus it will also bring on board additional personnel necessary to effectively implement RTT but its organizational "chart" lacked specificity and seemed a little vague about producing strong support for participating LEAs. Virginia has had abundant experience in managing federal funds and will undoubtedly know how they might be aligned with other funds to leverage them. It plans to manage the grant within the State Department so that the institutional knowledge about the RTT elements will remain along with support for its goals. A</p>		

2 ii Virginia has reached out to a broad array of stakeholders and others and received assurances in support of RTT. It did not get the endorsement of charter schools because they have no association in Virginia and are authorized only by local boards.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

A 3 i Virginia has made progress over the past several years in the four education reform areas. It has increased its high-school graduation rates overall and for student groups: black, economically disadvantaged, Hispanic, LEP and white. It has increased student achievement on NAEP math in both 4th and 8th grades and on reading in the 4th grade, but not the 8th grade. Further the percentages of students with disabilities that were exempted from taking NAEP dropped greatly from 2007 to 2009. However, evidence was not presented on any decrease in achievement gaps and the narrative is silent on any increase in college enrollment. Examples were given of federal and state funding being used to support reforms. A 3 ii Virginia's increase in reading scores on its state tests has been remarkable for all students and for subgroups, e.g., scores for black students jumped 16 percent and for the learning disabled, 21%. Virginia attributes this success to the state's programmatic investments in improving student literacy, e.g., in:

- Early Intervention Reading Initiative – provides intervention services for 2 ½ hours a week to students identified as not being on track to read by the end of the third grade. It provides schools with the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment and resources to identify, monitor, and implement effective interventions for students who are struggling.
- Reading First – A federally funded program that has been in place for 6 years and served 21,177 students in 101 schools. Students in all participating grades showed phenomenal improvement from 58% passing state assessments in 2004 to 83% passing in 2009. And this compared to statewide pass rate for all students, e, in schools where there were not big percentages of students not reading on grade level: 72% in 2004 to 88% in 2009. NAEP results are less dramatic for Grade 4 Reading, but show a steady gain. For 8th-grade reading. While Virginia's 8th-grade scores are higher than all but 5 states, no progress has been made in the last 5 years. Cognizant of that fact, Virginia has been taking steps to address it:
- It convened an adolescent literacy policy summit in 2007 to address the situation.
- In 2008, a federally funded, widely attended summer training institute "Visions to Practice" focused on adolescent literacy.
- The State Department with ESEA Title IIA funds is collaborating with The College of William and Mary to work with targeted schools to embed literacy instruction in the content areas.
- With Reading First funds, it is partnering with the University of Virginia to provide four-day Reading Academies for Teachers of Special Education, grades 4-12 who are having trouble learning to read and write.
- It has made substantial changes to its content standards to align them with college and career-ready expectations as defined by the College Board-ACT- Achieve network.
- It plans to continue investing in improving literacy instruction with a strong focus on adolescent literacy. In math, students have improved considerably on the state tests, most especially black (13% since 2003) and learning disabled (20% since 2003) students. It is worth noting that Virginia has end-of-course exam data from 2003. The scores on NAEP math have not improved as much, but there has been a small but steady increase in the scores and Virginia's are above the nation's. Credit is given to the investments made in improving mathematics instruction, namely the Algebra Readiness Initiative that provides an online diagnostic test to identify students in grades 6 – 9 who are at risk of failing end-of-course tests in high school along with funds for intervention services for those identified. An area that Virginia is not satisfied with is the rate of improvement in graduation rates. While they have increased for all groups somewhat since 2005, the state decided that its standards-based accountability was not sufficient and has increased graduation requirements, hoping that that along with the data (including the percentage of students who earn alternative completion credentials) produced and transparency about results will improve its pass rates.

<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>88</b>
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## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B 1 i Virginia has joined the American Diploma Network, a consortium of 35 states responsible for graduating nearly 85% of all U.S. public school students that is dedicated to ensuring that every high-school graduate is prepared for college or a career. Their report "Out of Many, One: Towards Rigorous Common Core Standards from the Ground Up" describes English and math common core standards of knowledge. The Governor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association that standards would be internationally benchmarked and the memorandum that he signed commits the state to the process of developing common standards. Included in Virginia's ongoing vigilance regarding high-quality standards, its state board requested an analysis of Virginia's current standards vis-a-vis the proposed common standards and found them to exceed the content and rigor of the drafts of the common core standards that are currently available. Included in the narrative were examples of high rankings and awards that Virginia had received for its high-quality standards as well as examples of the recognition that its students had received as a result of their instruction driven by those standards. However, even given all that, Virginia did not address or give evidence that its process would be complete by the date stipulated by RTT - August 2, 2010.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B 2 Work was begun on assessments in 1998 and they have undergone several revisions since then, resulting in a mature standards-based program. Further, these assessments are based on Virginia's high-quality standards that are nationally recognized. Also, it is embedding items from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in its tests to ensure that their measurements of student growth are benchmarked to international standards. In addition, Virginia has been a national leader in online testing since 2001 and indeed its newly-developed, end-of-course assessments will be available online only, allowing for the use of innovative items such as open-ended questions to more fully measure a student's knowledge, understanding of and ability to apply critical concepts. Virginia has demonstrated that it is committed to high quality assessments, but has not engaged with others about a collaborative development of them.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B3 As Virginia has extensive experience in rolling out new standards and assessments, its LEAs are accustomed to implementing new ones and know what to expect. Virginia will build on its existing statewide support by providing clarity in its expectations for, and consistency in, its support to LEAs by for example: • Defining just what "college readiness" means and developing one set of standards based on that so that all high schools and community colleges know what it takes to prepare students for college success; • Providing the necessary professional development for teachers and school leaders to be fully aware of the above; • Work with state policy makers to include student performance on college and career-ready measures data in adjustments on teacher licensure and certification requirements; • Expand the Governor's Career and Technical STEM Academies and what they include, e.g., earning an industry certification on a state occupational license; • Making high-quality instructional materials and assessments available; • Translating all the assessment data into classroom practice, especially as it relates to global competitiveness; • Providing high-school seniors</p>		

the instruction and intervention necessary for them to be ready for postsecondary education; • Expanding student opportunities to prepare for STEM careers; promoting more effective interaction with arts and sciences and career and technical education, developing K-8 STEM standards and strengthening the pool of STEM instructional personnel, especially STEM teachers produced by universities in a program such as UTeach; • Many other activities that will strengthen and support LEAs as they implement the new standards. Virginia has also established timelines and responsibilities for implementation. By outlining the above steps, Virginia has demonstrated that it has a high quality plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and assessments.

<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>40</b>
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### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: C.1 Virginia's statewide longitudinal data system excludes two of the COMPETES elements.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: C 2 Virginia has a very high-quality plan to ensure that State data is complete, usable and accessible to all who want to access it and that it will provide a great deal of transparency about all aspects of its educational system. Its plan includes developing a Web-base portal to provide one-stop access to education and work force data by policymakers, educators the public, researchers, etc. It will create a longitudinal data linking and reporting system with the ability to link data among state agency data sources including K-12, higher education and work force systems. It will also create an integrated K-12 student-teacher information system that matches individual teachers to students. Also, Virginia will design a data management and control system that will allow it to maximize data quality, ensure accessibility with security and increase the usefulness of the data.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: C 3 i Virginia includes a timeline for helping LEAs acquire and use local instructional improvement systems, e.g., in Year 1 it will define the requirements for such a system. In years 2 and 3, it will develop vendor adaptors and assist school divisions in making decisions about and using the systems. C3 ii After helping LEA's acquire and set up instructional systems, in years 3 and 4 of their plan, the state will offer professional development which it will continue to do through Year 4. It will develop modules for teachers on such topics as the role of assessment in instruction. C 3 iii Virginia will make data available to researchers. One way they will do that is through their development of a Web-based portal to provide one-stop access to education and work force data.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43</b>

### D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: D. 1 Effective September 21,2007,Virginia's State Board approved multiple pathways to certification for teachers and principals that include A Career Switcher certification that can be awarded with the		

equivalent of an endorsement though verifiable experience or academic study and the Experiential Learning route. Both of these grant the regular provisional certification for new teachers. Virginia has several alternate routes to certification for teachers and two for an endorsement in administration and supervision and has presented the numbers completing for most. While not knowing the total number, Virginia can document the granting of nearly 4000 alternative certificates in 2009. Additionally, Virginia permits one to receive an endorsement in an area by passing a rigorous test. Virginia has a process for identifying and filling areas of shortage that includes a state statute requiring local districts to annually submit a supply and demand report which it posts on the Web for public view. They also monitor the supply of highly qualified teachers and have implemented programs to fill shortages. The State was silent on similar processes for principals and an appendix reference was non-existent.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>52</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	4
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	28

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

D 2 i Virginia has a very high-quality plan for measuring student growth, including individual student growth. In addition to many other, somewhat usual facets of a plan, theirs will include an explanation of variability in student performance in terms of school or teacher effects to allow decision makers to address important questions about what to do with the results of such measurements, such as: 1. How much growth is sufficient? 2. How much growth is needed for underperforming schools to meet their educational goals? 3. Given no change in instruction, what is the probability that schools will achieve their educational goals? 4. What intensity of intervention is needed to increase students' chances of reaching their educational goals? They have wisely included as one of the goals for their plan the establishment of a statewide policy that will be needed on the appropriate use of student growth measures. A wide-range of stakeholders will make recommendations for policies on what should be addressed. They will consider if the measures will be used and how they will be used: as a component of evaluations, to inform professional development and school and division improvement plans, to provide interventions and enrichment programs for students, in developing IEPs and academic and career plans and in making personnel decisions such as contract status. D 2 ii It is difficult to imagine anything that could possibly be missing from Virginia's design plan. It is well thought-out, well researched and complete. It incorporates everything from allowing LEAs to submit models to using state and national experts and participating in a national partnership with CCSSO, AACTE and a team of researchers at Stanford and the University of Washington. In their process they will be asking penetrating questions about the validity of the student-growth measurements – to what extent are they consistent with supervisor evaluations and to what effect will it have on student achievement? The Virginia Department of Education as part of their plan will set up a work group to establish the State's criteria for teacher and principal evaluations. Among the representatives on the work group will be members of the teachers and principals' associations and one of the components of the newly developed instruments will be definitions of multiple levels of teacher and principal effectiveness that are measurable and incorporate measures of student growth. Virginia's plan will address everything from model plans to assist struggling teachers and exemplary teachers to cost effectiveness. D 2 iii The plan calls for gradually phasing the new evaluation systems in with the districts learning from small numbers before widely implementing them. The first implementation year will, at a minimum, link student data to teachers of record. In the implementation of these evaluation systems, however, the word "annual" was nowhere to be found but the use of timely and constructive feedback is included. D 2 iv Virginia does plan to use the evaluation system developed to inform decisions in all four of the areas listed. It included a timeline and it intends that researchers collaborate with school divisions to determine the impact on teacher quality/effectiveness and student outcomes - much-needed information.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:  D 3 i Virginia has a State Equity Plan approved by the U.S. Department of Education that will be enhanced to monitor the equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers and principals and to share successful strategies across hard-to-staff schools. The plan was referenced but not included. It also plans to hire a specialist that will make efforts to ensure equitable distribution along with coordinating recruitment and retention initiatives. Virginia's effort to meet this criterion seems to lack the verve and detail evidenced in its plans to meet other criteria. While it plans to study the reasons for the problem, the incentives, strategies and commitment here seem weak. D 3 ii Virginia has already implemented two initiatives, the Hard-to-Staff Schools Initiative and the Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps. It's not clear what the former does except what is implicit in its title; the latter provides support for middle schools having difficulty finding qualified mathematics teachers by providing incentives to recruit and retain experienced, highly qualified mathematics teachers. It will also offer professional development opportunities focused on the specific needs of teachers in challenging high-needs schools including differentiated instruction, classroom management and the needs of children with disabilities. The state also has an Electronic Job Bank and Hiring Hall that is widely used and helps identify highly qualified teachers. This is all well and good and the plan is to expand the state's efforts, but the Teacher Corps' placing of qualified math teachers seems to be for all schools and not really focused on high-poverty or high-minority schools and why just math? There certainly needs to be recognition of the need to place qualified teachers of other subjects and areas also. Perhaps this effort is more to meet STEM requirements than to place high-quality teachers in the targeted schools.</p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:  D 4 Virginia has in place two systems that will enable them to provide the linkage outlined in this criterion. Their plan includes the addition of four new preparation programs, the most innovative of which is an online program for early childhood special education. Virginia will enhance its Education Personnel Data System so that it can link to the State's Educational Management Information System containing K-12 student data and link that data to higher education data, thus permitting student achievement data to be linked to teachers and principals and then to their preparation programs. While Virginia lists as a Key Goal expanding programs that produce effective teachers, it provides no details about how it would go about doing so.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:  D 5 Virginia has elected to meet this criterion by providing professional development and technical assistance in key areas of need such as literacy instruction and the use of innovative technologies in teaching and learning. They will also provide support by mentoring coaching for novice teachers and principals. However, only one of the professional development programs included an evaluation of the program itself to determine if it is actually improving student achievement and then making adjustments after review.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>102</b>

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: E 1 Virginia does have the authority to directly intervene both in the lowest achieving school divisions and the local schools within the divisions		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: E 2 i Virginia has a good plan to identify its persistently lowest-achieving schools. It includes Title I schools, a secondary school that is eligible for but does not receive Title I funds that has had a graduation rate of less than 62% for one of the past two years and any school that has not met AYP in the all students groups and has not decreased failure rate in reading and/or math by 10% in the last two years. They have identified the schools that meet those criteria. E 2 ii Virginia will support its LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools: • first, by acknowledging that the traditional efforts that have been tried have started too late in schooling; • second, by admitting that the LEAs have not had the expertise or resources to compensate for all of the deficiencies; and • third, by accepting that much more expertise is needed to provide intensive intervention for the students and therefore high performing charter schools or contract schools should be established. These schools will have to engage outside management organizations. Virginia knows whereof it speaks as it has attempted turnarounds in over 200 schools using four different approaches since 2004-5.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>

## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: F 1 i The percentage of total revenues available to the state for the use of public education funding increased, but just barely. F 1 ii Virginia achieves equitable funding in two ways. It relies on a Composite Index consisting of three wealth factors for districts: the value of local real estate, taxable retail sales and adjusted gross income. The ratio derived from those factors determines the share of school funding that is paid by the district and the share paid by the state with the inverse ratio representing the state share. Thus the state provides more funding for the less wealthy districts. Also six state funds are distributed based on free lunch eligibility driving more funding per pupil to high-need LEAs.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: F 2 Virginia has several sections in the code on Charter Schools including ones that establish a fund for them and one that releases them from policies and regulations. In 2009, the General Assembly removed the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. These schools are authorized and operated by local school boards and subject to the same accountability measures as all schools under the jurisdiction of the local boards. While it does not state explicitly that student achievement is a reason for authorization, it is implicit in the other reasons listed in the law. At no time has Virginia had more than 5 charter schools operating - the number in place before 2003 - and currently has 4. They have closed 3, one because it needed greater flexibility than allowed by state law. Altogether, there have been only 5 applications and 2 approved. It is difficult to ascertain if the funding is equitable or facilities supported because it depends upon the terms of an		

agreement with the local boards. Certainly, there is no state law stipulating any funding amounts. Given all of the above: • only FIVE charters operating in a big state like Virginia; • the General assembly having a cap on until last year; • local boards controlling the establishment of charters and therefore the exodus of students by refusing to let students leave even if parents would like an alternative to the local schools; and • considering that one of the reasons for denying a petition was that there was a lack of evidence that the curriculum was aligned with state standards – even though state law releases charters from state regulations, one can only conclude that Virginia is not hospitable to charters. It's possible to surmise that there are so few applications because there is so much satisfaction with the public schools, but the more reasonable explanation is that there is not much point in applying. Virginia is more tolerant of experimental schools in that it has 17 of those. There are some year-round schools that have demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap and better preparing students for the next grade. There are also regional career and technical centers and 8 STEM academies in addition to the Governor's residential and summer and regional programs that serve more than 7,500 gifted students.

**(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions**

5

5

**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

F 3 Virginia has demonstrated several other favorable conditions to reform and innovation including a state-funded pre-K initiative, a P-16 council, a program for developing a high-skill work force and the legislative-mandated and state-board produced standards of quality that require local boards to implement innovative programs.

**Total**

55

45

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments:</b> Throughout its application, Virginia has demonstrated that it will be offering more rigorous courses in STEM subjects to better prepare students in these areas, including underrepresented groups. It will also be working with external STEM-knowledgeable partners to enhance instruction in the relevant courses and motivate students to become more interested STEM careers. One example of Virginia's commitment in this area is the Governor's Career and Technical STEM Academies that will focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics and involve partnerships between PK-12, higher education and the local business community. Another example is that Virginia will establish K-8 standards, providing educators with STEM concepts that they can integrate into their instruction. It will also develop K-8 STEM eLearning Modules to assist teachers in integrating engineering and technology into K-8 mathematics and science content. Also, Virginia will continue to benefit from a National Math and Science Initiative grant that enables the state to expand access to college-level courses for traditionally under-represented students. During its first two years, both the participation and performance of high-school students in math and science AP programs increased.		
<b>Total</b>	15	15

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

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

Absolute Priority Throughout its proposal, Virginia has demonstrated that it is dedicated to a comprehensive approach to education reform. It is particularly determined to increase student achievement as evidenced by its ongoing attention to high standards and achieving them. It grasps that the only way graduation rates will be increased is by putting into place strong deterrents to dropping out such as literacy screening in the early grades and providing highly qualified teachers which they are making a huge effort to do by first identifying them and then producing them. The State has been making progress in raising achievement scores for sub groups and it is making changes to close achievement gaps through such measures as increasing the number of at-risk children served in high quality pre-school programs demonstrated by participation increasing from 6,000 in 2003-4 to 16,000 currently. Virginia is also focused on increasing college enrollment, taking steps such as increasing the percentage of students successfully completing Algebra I by the eighth grade, the proportion of high school students earning an Advanced Studies Diploma and the percent of students enrolled in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment courses. Overall, there is an increased awareness of weak areas and serious attention to remedying them, made especially doable by the technology now available and the State's plans to use the data they plan to access to the fullest.

Total		0
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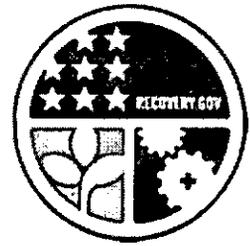
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# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Virginia Application #6600VA-3



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>37</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	28
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	4

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(1)(i) The reviewer gave Virginia maximum points on this sub-section because Virginia fully met the expectations asked in the notice. Virginia provided a coherent history of reform in Virginia and set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulated its goals for implementing reforms in the four ARRA education reform areas. It provided the reviewer with a clear picture of what Virginia expects to accomplish with its RTTT program. It gave a philosophical foundation for the planned work and a theory of action for how it could be accomplished. It also provided summaries of what the major work in the four education areas described in ARRA would be if the proposal is funded.

(A) (1)(ii) (a) High points were given to this subsection because Virginia used the U.S. Department of Education's model MOU with minor modifications necessary to make it a Virginia document. The most significant change was that it added additional assurances. (A) (1)(ii) (b) Low points were given for this subsection because there were so many subsections of the MOU that had less than 50% participation. Virginia is using the U.S. Department of Education's model scope of work with major modifications. It selected 18 subset items that Virginia believed were most concerned with LEA involvement. For those 18 subset items selected, the MOU did not have detailed state and LEA responsibilities beyond those in the model MOU. One hundred seventeen of Virginia's school divisions (89 percent) have signed an MOU to participate in Virginia's Race to the Top application. LEAs were allowed to opt out of those 18 subset items that they did not support. While 89% of LEAs signed an MOU, in reality the percentage participation in the subsets was considerably lower. For subsets associated with Great Teachers and Leaders, LEA participation, in the subsets, ranged from 27% to 59% in D2, 33 to 42% in D3 (equitable distribution of staff) and 47% to 65% for D4 (Improving the effectiveness of teachers and principals) and only 26 percent for E Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools (A) (1)(ii) (c) This subsection was given medium points because Virginia had very high percentage of LEAs opting out of very significant RTTT work. The MOUs had high percentage of signatures from LEA officials, 100% were signed by the superintendent and 100% were signed by the president of the local school board. Virginia does not have teachers' unions but the Virginia Education Association and several teacher content area organizations sent letters of support. There were numerous letters of support from educational administration organizations as well as the School Boards and the PTA. The participating LEAs represent 95% of the Virginia K-12 public school students, 96% of Virginia's K-12 students in poverty and 94% of Virginia's K-12 schools. (A) (1) (iii)(a) Low points are given to the subsection because of questionable state-wide impact and insufficient information to make a determination about subsections a,b,c and d of this section. From a demographic perspective, the RTTT proposal with 95% of the Virginia K-12 public school students, 96% of Virginia's K-12 students in poverty and 94% of Virginia's K-12 schools should have potential for translation into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup. The problem is that

a large percentages of participating LEAs have opted out of some of the most important work of RTTT. Highly problematic was that the Virginia RTTT proposal did not provide narrative for (A) (1) (iii) subsections a,b,c, and d. Instead Virginia, in its charts, showed growth increments of two points on all charts with no explanation of how those numbers were calculated.

<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	10
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A) (2)(i) (a) Medium points were given for the subsection. Virginia has a reasonable plan for providing strong leadership to the RTTT program. It has a dedicated leadership team and would utilize existing DOE staff where and when appropriate. The dedicated RTTT team would have an executive director who reports directly to the state superintendent of public instruction, one administrative support person, two general project coordinators and four RTTT educational specialists who will provide direct assistance to school divisions. Five additional staff would be integrated into existing DOE departments associated with financial, HR and communications. The section did not provide desired information on how SEA people would work with LEAs to jointly make RTTT successful (A)(2)(i)(b) Low points were given this subsection. Virginia did not provide a quality explanation of how it would support participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed. Missing were activities such as identifying promising practices, evaluating these practices' effectiveness, ceasing ineffective practices, widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary. Most of the narrative was focused on how DOE would function. (A)(2)(i)(c) Medium points are give to this subsection. The project and DOE staff will have responsibility to ensure that MOU agreements are met. They will do this through use of current funds disbursement procedures and systems. This is an approach that has been used with other large federal programs. (A)(2)(i)(d) Medium points are given to this subsection. Virginia provided historical information about how they had coordinated budgets for other tasks but provided few details specific to RTTT. (A)(2)(i)(e ) Low points are given to this subsection as Virginia provided very general language and some examples with small programs. It did not make any commitments nor did it talk about integrating state resources in a way that would have clear RTTT implications. (A)(2)(ii)(a) High points were given for this subsection. Response from educational groups in Virginia was very impressive. Letters of support were received from teacher and education-related organizations such as the Virginia NEA, the Virginia School Boards Association, Virginia Association of School Administrators, Virginia Association of Career and Technical Education, etc. (A)(2)(ii) (b) High points were given for this subsection. The proposal contained many letters of support for critical stakeholders including: State's legislative leadership, parent-teacher associations, and many institutions of higher education. Other State organizations including business, community, civil rights, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations also sent letters of support. Budget Comments. While the total for Section A appears to be reasonable, there are several requests in other parts of the budget that are not. The budget showed only the State portion and that totaled \$174, 632,466. Because another half would need to go to participating LEAs, it appears that Virginia is requesting nearly \$350 million of RTTT funds. This total is \$100 million over the total targets suggested by the U.S. Department of Education. The most egregious request is the expectation that RTTT would pay over \$32 million dollars of the costs associated with the data system. There are other major issues such as why Virginia evaluation costs of \$24 million for teacher and principal evaluations are so high. Also very questionable for RTTT objectives are the \$22 million associated with activities under D-5. Many of the activities would fund instructional applications of technology not directly linked to the "data" concerns of RTTT.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	24
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(3)(i) This subsection received medium points. In the initial section of the proposal, Virginia talked in general about progress made over the past several years but it did not report concretely about the improvements that occurred as a result of Virginia's specific reforms. (A)(3)(ii)(a) Maximum points were given for this subsection as most of the information showed improvements. Virginia students performed better on NAEP scores than students nationwide. Virginia students have improved over time slightly in the 4th grade in reading and stayed basically the same at the 8th grade. Virginia showed improvement at the 4th grade in mathematics and improvement at the 8th grade since 2003 but with a slight decrease in 2009. The performance of minority students, students with disabilities, and English Learners has improved over time but reading scores declined slightly for Hispanics at the 8th grade. Students in only two states performed at a statistically higher level on the fourth-grade reading test, and students in only five states achieved at a higher level on the eighth-grade reading test. (A)(3)(ii)(b) High points were given for this subsection as most of the information showed improvements. Virginia has decreased achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics for both Blacks and Hispanics. The achievement gap in reading is larger for Hispanics than Blacks and they are reversed in mathematics. Most of the gaps in 2009 are in the 9% range. Most Virginia results are better than those found nationwide. Virginia fourth and eighth graders performed at a statistically higher level in reading than blacks in other states. (A)(3)(ii)(c) Maximum points were given for this subsection because graduation rates for Virginia are higher for all groups than nationwide averages. The graduation rate in 2009 was 81.33% higher than the national graduation rate of approximately 70 percent. The Black graduation rate was 73.24 % and the Hispanic rate was 70.75 percent. As a trend, the graduation rate have increased slightly since 2005.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>84</b>

## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(1)(i)(a) Virginia is a member of the Common Core Initiative being led by the Council of Chief State Officers and the National Governors Association for best practices. The standards are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. It is also a member of the ADP Network that is a consortium of 35 states dedicated to ensuring that every high school graduate is prepared for college or careers. (B)(1)(i)(b) Forty-eight states and three territories are participants in the Common Core Initiative. Thirty-five states are members of the ADP Network. (B)(1)(ii) No points are given to this subsection because there is no evidence that Virginia will adopt the standards associated with the Common Core Initiative. Virginia, in its proposal, has a timeline for adopting K-12 standards by August 2, 2010 and for implementing the standards in a well-planned way. It is detailed in the proposal, listing timelines, specific activities and persons responsible for implementation. However it appears that the standards being adopted are Virginia's Standards that are aligned to Achieve project and the American Diploma Project. Reviewer guidelines are that the adoption in the RTTT notice is specific to the Common Core Initiative that has forty-eight states (including Virginia) and three territories as participants. Virginia, in several locations in its proposal,

indicated that they believe the Virginia Standards are superior to the Common Core Initiative and that declaration suggested that they will not adopt the Common Core Initiative Standards.

<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:            (B)(2)(i) This section was very hard to score for Virginia. The Virginia proposal narrative basically stated that Virginia's standards and assessments are already superior to what the consortiums proposed to do. Given the reviewer's guideline requiring jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality formative assessments aligned with a common set of K-12 standards, no points are given. Virginia provided no documentation of participation in a consortium. No evidence was provided that the ADP Network is involved in assessments that would meet the requirements of this section. (B)(2)(ii) No points were given since Virginia did not document assessment consortium involvement.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:            This section received high points because it does seem to meet the expectations of the RTTT program relative to common standards and assessments and it does have a high-quality plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. Virginia's response to B-3 was that they have already been in collaboration with its LEAs and are using a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards and assessments. They stated that existing work will prepare students for college and career readiness by the time they are high school graduates. What is different is that this plan is focused on standards already created by Virginia and not the common standards promoted by the RTTT program. As stated in various places in the proposal, Virginia believes its standards and assessments are superior to those being created by consortiums of states. Virginia believes the Common Standards are not rigorous enough. Virginia does have a high-quality implementation plan that contains almost all the elements given as examples in the RTTT notice. Most notable components in the Virginia roll-out plan are: Establish additional rigor in standards, assessments, and content for high school courses and diplomas; Develop and deliver high-quality professional development for teachers and school leaders; Develop or acquire, disseminate, and implement high-quality instructional materials and assessments; and Translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students. The plan has numerous activities with timelines designed to implement its plan.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>40</b>

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:            (C)(1) Virginia in one of its appendix of the proposals appeared to have six of 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act in a completed state. However in its narrative, Virginia suggested that it had completed eight. Credit is given for eight finished elements.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:            (C)(2) High points were given to this section because Virginia does provide in Appendix C a plan that has a high-quality assessment of needs, specific activities to correct the deficiencies, timelines and persons responsible for completing the tasks.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>

(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(3) (i) This subsection was given low points because it was minimally focused on the requested considerations for this subsection which was "using data to improve instruction." Virginia's narrative was focused on providing instructional tools such as The Infinite Learning Lab Web site and the Share the Skies remote telescope and only briefly on "develop a high-quality plan for design, development, acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems (as defined in this notice) that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instructional practices, decision-making, and overall effectiveness." The narrative was very confusing because there was minimal connection between activities in section C2 and activities in C3. It appeared that the two sections had been developed in isolation of each other. (C)(3) (ii) Low points are assigned this section because it was not responsive to "using data to improve instruction." Instead the focus was on using technology to provide instructional opportunities and to construct and use formative assessments that teachers would customize for their own use. It did not address things such as structuring information inquiries to find instructional solutions for students who were having particular learning problems. Virginia's professional development plan calls for considerable emphasis on test-taking practice and incorporating technology in instructional activities and as such gave less attention to using data to inform and improve instruction from a larger research-based setting than individual teachers in individual classrooms. (C)(3)(iii) Low points were given this section as no direct responses were developed for required components of the proposal. Virginia response was: "Part iii of this Selection Criterion ((C)(3)) - Make the data from instructional improvement systems together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, and approaches for educating different types of students - has been addressed extensively in Sections (C)(1) and (2)." Careful reading of those sections provided only some of the desired information.

Total	47	29
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## D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1)(i) High points were given this section because the Virginia legislature has given the State Board of Education authority that allows alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals. "Section 22.1-298.1 of the Virginia statute (Code of Virginia) authorizes the Board of Education to prescribe, by regulation, the requirements for the licensure of teachers and other school personnel required to hold a license. Education promulgated the Licensure Regulations for School Personnel, effective September 21, 2007, (8VAC20-22-10 et seq.) that provide for multiple pathways to certification (licensure) for teachers and principals. The section on alternate routes to licensure has extensive direction for how the program is to be operated. Two alternative programs were described for certifying principals in addition to institutions of higher education. The certification is based upon a minimum of three years of successful work in a school district. (D)(1) (ii) High points are awarded this section because there are several alternative routes to certification in Virginia that are in use. They are: (1) Career Switcher Program: The career switcher program is an alternate route to licensure for career professionals. Programs are currently offered by a school division, a consortium of school divisions, the Virginia Community College System, and four-year colleges and universities. In the 2008-2009 school year, 282 individuals completed the Career Switcher Program; (2) Experiential Learning: Individuals applying for an initial license through the alternate route as prescribed by the Board of Education must meet the specified criteria to be eligible to request experiential learning credits in lieu of the coursework for the endorsement (teaching) content area. During the 2008-09 school year, 51 individuals received an initial license through the Experiential Learning Pathway. Data was not available for principal programs. (D)(1)(iii) This section received medium points because it had quality

responses for identifying needs but not for responding to filling those needs. Virginia appeared to have a viable plan for identifying annually educator vacancies and trends to ensure an adequate number of effective teachers/principals in schools, especially in hard to staff areas. The proposal did not provide a quality plan for addressing hard-to-fill vacancies. It referenced appendices D1H as responding to this question but that document was not in either the print material or on the CD.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	5
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	3
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(D)(2) (i) This section received maximum points because Virginia has developed a plan for establishing clear approaches to measuring student growth (as defined in this notice) for each individual student. Virginia intends to establish valid and reliable measures of student growth on statewide assessments in mathematics and reading by September 30, 2011. It also wants to provide growth measure data to students and their families, teachers, schools, and divisions, and the public for grades 4-8 in reading and mathematics, and end-of-course assessments in mathematics no later than September 30, 2011. For other subjects it intends to "explore the establishment of growth measures for other statewide assessments that are administered in nonconsecutive years (e.g., grade 11 reading; writing grades 5, 8, and 11; science grades 3, 5, and 8." The plan has four components. They are: Research and select measures, Establish growth targets, Develop criteria and tools, Provide appropriate professional development. The plan has activities, timelines and persons responsible. VDOE indicated it would work collaboratively with Virginia's school divisions and other stakeholders (e.g., parents, advocacy groups, education associations, policymakers, researchers) to develop guides and training programs to interpret SGPs for parents, administrators and policymakers, and to determine the report content and format so that we provide useful reports to stakeholders. (D)(2) (ii) Low points are given for this section because the State role will be primarily providing resources and tools. It does intend to develop criteria and examples that LEAs could use in their teacher and principal evaluations but they would be suggestions and not requirements. The RTTT proposal noted that "In Virginia, decisions about specific evaluation tools are local decisions—the state does not prescribe evaluation methodologies required at the local level." Currently LEAs are not required to measure student growth as part of the evaluation of teachers or principals, and LEAs currently do not have to report evaluation results to the State or publicly. (D)(2)(iii) and (iv) Low points are given to both subsets (D)(2)(iii) and (D)(2)(iv) because Virginia intends to provide only guidance and resources and not the leadership that the RTTT notice had expected for these sections. Virginia does have a detailed plan on how it will provide guidance and resources for voluntary use. Virginia in its proposal noted that: "Virginia's school divisions have local autonomy to choose their own evaluation systems with the requirement (in the Code of Virginia) that instructional personnel are evaluated in part on student academic progress. The Code of Virginia also requires that local school boards adopt employment policies and practices that promote the employment and retention of highly qualified teachers who effectively serve the educational needs of students. The Code further requires that such policies include incentives for excellence in teaching and financial support for teachers attending professional development seminars or are seeking and obtaining national certification (Code of Virginia §22.1-295)." As the performance measure chart shows, there are some LEAs (Less than 30%) that have committed in their MOUs to use student performance-based evaluations for compensating, promoting and retaining and to grant tenure but that is only because those LEAs chose to do so under a local control option.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	4

(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(3) (i) Low points are given to this section because Virginia only talked about highly qualified teachers and not highly effective when developing a plan to ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals. Virginia presently complies with the federal requirement of employing highly-qualified teachers in core subjects but does not have a way of identifying highly effective teachers and principals and thus has no information on present distribution of highly-effective teachers and principals. Charts showed that Virginia has similar levels of highly qualified teachers and years of experience in both high and low poverty schools. In the performance charts, Virginia classified only 1% of its teachers as highly effective because it had no measures presently to make those classifications. In its RTTT proposal, Virginia stated that "Annual targets will be established after Virginia develops its growth model that is scheduled to be completed by September, 2011." The definition of "qualifying evaluation system" requires a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor. Virginia does not currently have baseline or historical data to establish these targets. Upon developing a qualifying evaluation system model and establishing a growth model, Virginia will be in a position to develop performance measures and targets. (D)(3) (ii) Middle points were given to this section. The proposal had an action plan for addressing this topic and provided information about how LEAs could choose to use their RTTT funds to participate in three programs designed to help with filling hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas teacher vacancies. The three programs were: Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps, Electronic Job Bank and Hiring, Hall High Quality Job-Embedded Professional Development. Some of these programs used special incentives such as differentiated pay or tuition reimbursement.</p>		
<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(4) (i) This section received medium points. Virginia did make a commitment to link student achievement and student growth (both as defined in this notice) data to the students' teachers and principals, to link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing. The plan in section C2 for doing this is detailed and well thought-out. Virginia did not provide much information on how it intended to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the State and points could not be added for this task. (D)(4)(ii) low points are given to this section. Virginia has a plan and commitment for expanding preparation and credentialing options. It details several new programs it intends to implement to help with this task. It has almost no information on what it will do about expanding existing programs that are found successful or closing down programs that continually produce poor performing graduates. Because most of the future teachers and principals are expected to continue coming from existing programs, failure to address existing programs means few points can be given this section.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(5)(i) This section received medium points. Virginia does have a plan for providing support to teachers and principals but it is heavily focused on use of instructional modules and technology supported units that do not address the primary intent of this section which is "data-informed professional development. There are some sections that do respond to the expectations of this section. The literacy and mathematics initiatives, STEM activities and the principal mentorship do and points are added for those efforts. However considerable portions of the response to this section are focused on instructional applications of technology that are nice but are not the focus of the RTTT program. There is also minimal discussion about the implementation aspects of this plan such as a system of statewide, regional and local delivery of services, common planning times, professional development opportunities for specialized subject areas such as physics, calculus or other topics where only one or two teachers in a high school teach that subject. There was little discussion about responding to needs specifically highlighted in the RTTT proposal such as standards, assessments,</p>		

using data systems turning around lowest-achieving schools. (D)(5) (ii) This section received low points because there was no plan provided on how data will be collected on the kinds, amounts and quality of services provided to districts and the impact of those services on changing professional practice and increasing student performance.

<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>66</b>
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### E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(1) Maximum points are given because Virginia has the authority to intervene in BOTH the State's lowest performing schools and LEAs. The following is evidence of Virginia's applicable citation. "The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.), which shall include, but not be limited to, student outcome measures, requirements and guidelines for instructional programs... When the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, the Board may require a division level academic review." Excerpts from the Virginia Standards of Quality (State Law) – Standard Eight are as follows: "The Board of Education shall have authority to seek school division compliance with the foregoing Standards of Quality. When the Board of Education determines that a school division has failed or refused, and continues to fail or refuse, to comply with any such Standard, the Board may petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the school division to mandate or otherwise enforce compliance with such standard, including the development or implementation of any required corrective action plan that a local school board has failed or refused to develop or implement in a timely manner."</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	32
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(2) (i) For the purposes of identifying the State's lowest-achieving schools, Virginia has a process that is clear and fair. The considerations that are most important are the school's proficiency rates on state reading/language arts and mathematics assessments, and their recent progress on those assessments. For high schools it is having a graduation rate below 62 percent. Virginia has identified five schools from criteria 1 and 4 from criteria 2 as persistently lowest-achieving schools. (E)(2) (ii) This section received high points. It has a highly detailed and specific plan for working with persistently lowest-achieving schools. From descriptions and statements in the proposal, Virginia seems to have had only moderate success in turning schools around. It has learned several valuable lessons but the most important one was that treatment required attention to the LEA and not just the school. The new plan for working with persistently lowest-achieving schools is an expanded version of the restart model. It provides strong direction and does not leave the decision to the low-performing school. The schools will be led by "turnaround partners (educational management organizations) to provide intensive services to students who are struggling, high-need students, at-risk of not graduating on time or not graduating at all, by providing educational services to accelerate student growth as early as fifth grade. The LEAs selected must agree to maintain these charters or contract schools for a minimum of five years. The contract or charter schools led by lead turnaround partners must accelerate students' academic growth by 1.5 years to 2.0 years as defined in this notice for at least 85 percent of the students enrolled in the first year of operation."</p>		

Total	50	47
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## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(F)(1) (i) Medium points were given to this subsection because the State of Virginia funding to public school both in terms of actual dollars and as a percentage remained substantially unchanged. There was \$7,595,533,607, appropriated for education in FY08 and \$7,819,254,912 in FY09. The percentage of the total revenues used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was .31% greater than for FY 2008. For FY 2008, 24.54% was available and in FY 2009, 24.85%. (F) (1) (ii) High points were given to this subsection because Virginia does have policies that lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs (as defined in this notice) and other LEAs. "Virginia's funding policies include two mechanisms that increase equity in funding between high-need LEAs/other LEAs and between high-poverty schools/other schools: the Composite Index of Local Ability-to-Pay formula (Composite Index) and use of student free lunch eligibility in the funding formulas of various programs focusing on at-risk students. In FY10, the 40 high-need LEAs received \$6,215 per pupil in state funds while Virginia's other 96 LEAs received \$4,408 per pupil. This same amount also was true in schools within LEAs. There was no information about the actual range of funding between the wealthiest LEAs and poorest LEAs.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(F)(2) (i) Medium points were assigned this section. In legal statutes, there is no limit on the number of allowed charter schools. Additional points could not be given because only local boards can authorize charter schools for students in their own resident area(s). The charter school law has been used very infrequently and for the past five years the number of charter schools in the whole state have ranged between 3 and 5. The Virginia General Assembly's most recent change to the charter school law was in 2009, and the change was to remove the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. "The Code of Virginia, (§ 22.1-212.5), defines public charter schools in Virginia as nonsectarian, nonreligious, or non-home-based alternative schools located within a public school division." (F)(2) (ii) Low points were assigned to this section because of limits on authorizers and low use. Public charter schools are operated by agreement with a local school board(s). Public charter schools are subject to the same accountability measures as any other public school within a school division since they were created by the same local boards of education. Consequently, the accountability structure (test scores and other benchmarks) used for state accreditation and for meeting federal benchmarks is the same as that for other public schools. Since 1998 when the initial charter school law was passed, only 10 charter schools have been approved by local boards of education. Presently four charter schools are in operation. Since school year 2004-2005, it appeared that approximately one new charter school has been approved in Virginia every year and one has been closed. The number went from three to four in the last two years. The main reason for closing charter schools was "lack of sufficient program in achieving academic goals." (F)(2) (iii and iv) Medium points are assigned this section. Virginia charter schools receive the same per-pupil funding that the student would have earned in the district of residence because they are schools in that LEA. They also get an equitable portion of funds for facilities. (F)(2) (v) High points are assigned this section. Virginia has no state laws or rules that would prohibit an LEA from creating an innovative, autonomous school. In fact, the Virginia charter school law is more designed to address innovative schools than charter schools. Virginia currently has 17 experimental, innovative, or year-round programs in five school divisions throughout the state.</p>		

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b> (F)(3) Maximum points are given this section because Virginia listed many other significant reform conditions that qualify for this section: It listed numerous laws, programs that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes. Many of the program provided students with opportunities they would not have had if those reforms had not been made.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>42</b>

### Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments:</b> . Virginia demonstrated exemplary attention to STEM on many components of the proposal. The Virginia proposal does meet the STEM priority competitive requirements. The proposal was strong in providing assistance to teachers needing to develop content expertise. The proposal also was strong on continuing and developing State and LEA partnerships with businesses and numerous IHE entities. The proposal noted numerous special programs focused on STEM concerns that they intend to continue and expand. The proposal could have given more attention to programs that encouraged under represented populations. However, plans to expand the current number of Governor's Career and Technical STEM Academies by eight additional academies will likely help with this concern. Because the reviewers are required to give all or none points to this section, the proposal will be given 15 points.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

### Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<b>Absolute Reviewer Comments:</b> The Virginia RTTT proposal was a reviewer unfriendly document in some sections. This unfriendliness made giving points to the proposal difficult. Data was not easy to find and in many cases was missing. Some of the subsections were extremely good. At other times, the reviewer was sent to appendices that had only raw data that required extensive study to determine answers. On several occasions, the proposal (on required questions) had no responses or provided generalities that did not answer the questions. This was especially true of section C where there were many responses that promoted instructional use of technology and did not address required questions on "data systems." In sections B and D, the proposal in some subsections provided plans for resources and guidance to LEAs who have local control options to use or reject the guidance and resources as they wished. However, the Virginia proposal does address all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA. The Virginia proposal did meet the conditions required for the absolute priority. The proposal also had strengths in its emphasis on increasing student achievement and increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The Virginia RTTT proposal is given a yes for meeting the requirements of this section.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>

Grand Total

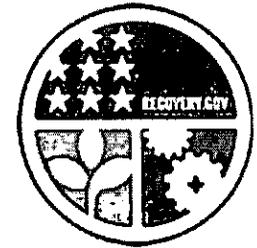
500

323



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Virginia Application #6600VA-4

### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>34</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	30
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	0

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

i. Virginia's plan touches on many of the ARRA goals. It describes a set of standards and assessments that undergo regular review and revision, a data system that allows tracking of individual students over the duration of their educational careers in the state, a new set of standards and frameworks for training and evaluation of school teachers and leaders, and a system for identifying and intervening in the lowest performing schools. However, this section deals much more with what Virginia has already accomplished as opposed to its goals for future reform and its path to achieving these goals. More discussion of the broad goals that Virginia has and what it will do differently in the future (if anything) would have been helpful. The narrative identifies spending more money on the existing pre-K program, expanding the AP/IB programs, and investing more in math instruction. However, both of these are existing programs, not future goals. The programs that are identified as new – STEM academies, increasing the percentage of advanced studies diplomas, and improving the graduation rate – are limited in their description. Though limited in their description, these goals do not seem to depart significantly from the accomplishments that Virginia cites in its earlier sections, and thus seem reasonable.

ii. Virginia's MOU includes all elements of the RTTT application and thus would indicate significant participation if LEAs had committed to all or most of the elements of the MOU. And, Virginia has a good percentage of LEAs stating that they will participate (89%), as evidenced by the signatures of all participating superintendents and LEA leaders. However, none of the local representatives of the VEA have signed the MOU. While their signatures may not be binding on the LEA, they would indicate an important element of local teacher support.

iii. While Virginia's MOU and apparent participation rates appear to be strong, in none of the areas of the proposed programs identified in the MOU are all of those LEAs committing to participate. And, while the state has documented high percentages of the schools, students and students in poverty as being covered among these LEAs, the limited levels of commitment would suggest limited impact in many of the program goals. The highest levels of participation are related to the use of data, while troublingly few of the districts were willing to commit to using evaluations for critical decisions or the state's plan for turning around low-performing schools. It is particularly concerning that fewer than half of LEAs are willing to commit to the state's plan for measuring the effectiveness of professional development. This limited agreement among LEAs, often fewer than half of the LEAs and sometimes fewer than one-third, indicates that LEA participation on the full range of Virginia's plans may be difficult to achieve. It is difficult to tell just how many LEAs even committed to a majority of the elements of the MOU, but it appears that most did not make such a commitment. Without commitments in many of these areas, it will be difficult to assume broad impact. In addition, the state did not provide evidence of state goals on NAEP and state assessments, as requested in the application, illustrating what goals would look like were the state not to receive an award under this program. Without this evidence, it is difficult to surmise any potential impact of this

award. The goals that are described look reasonable for a steady growth trajectory thus making it difficult to detect added benefits of RTTT funding.

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

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

i. Virginia proposes a leadership structure with an executive director for RTTT with a staff under that individual. This ensures that the programs will receive regular attention. It would be helpful to understand more about how this director will interact with those divisions of the DOE that will oversee particular programs such as pre-K or CTE or teacher evaluation. The state does not provide sufficient detail to describe how it would support LEAs in implementing the reform, other than to say that four educational specialists will support the LEAs in their work. The list of tasks that these specialists appear to be charged with is considerable and it seems unlikely that they alone will be able to break LEAs out of traditional habits without additional support. Virginia describes embedding new programmatic functions within existing departments as a strategy for sustaining initiatives after the conclusion of grant funding. This is a sensible and strategic approach to limiting the temporary impact of grant funds. In addition, the staff support described for the RTTT executive director should be sufficient to track those requirements that last only for the duration of the grant period. The application provides some examples of previous ways in which the state has used different funding streams to support initiatives. However, it does not provide examples of the way in which it would propose to coordinate support for initiatives that are to begin as a result of RTTT funding. The budget narrative and project budgets and narratives also do not describe the use of other funding streams (apart from RTTT) to support the work that is described here. While the state describes programs and practices that it hopes to continue following the expenditure of grant funds – and describes how some programs will be supported within existing departments - it also describes a large number of new initiatives and staff members who will have to be funded if their roles in supporting LEAs is to continue. There is no evidence of how other funds will be coordinated to support the new goals that are being introduced.

ii. The letters of support from the various stakeholder groups – including the VEA and other teacher groups – indicate that the state has sought the participation and support of a broad group. This type of broad support, from politicians, career educators, and parent groups, and other state leaders, provides a firm foundation on which to build.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

i. The state describes a number of accomplishments in the four reform areas. While some of these developments are at an earlier stage than others (e.g., the frameworks for evaluation), it is clear that the state has had initiatives underway for several years that relate to these key areas. ii. In the area of reading, the state does a good job of pointing out gains on the state assessment and contrasting these with static performance on NAEP in grade 8. Resulting in part from the static NAEP scores, the state identified a number of initiatives that it has put in place to focus on adolescent literacy. Several of these initiatives are funded through competitive grant programs indicating that the state created a compelling and thoughtful plan to improve literacy instruction in the upper elementary and middle school grades. In math, the state has a less consistent improvement trajectory on both the state assessment and NAEP. Again, the state has identified a number of programs focused on addressing student achievement in the elementary and middle grades. The state did not sufficiently discuss its efforts and progress in closing the achievement gaps among student subgroups. While the state has

had more success in this on the state assessments, the NAEP scores point to a troubling and consistent achievement gap among students of various races/ethnicities. While explanations were given for how overall scores drove improvement efforts (as described above), less attention was given to any actions that may have been driven by the persistent achievement gaps. Virginia has had some success improving graduation rates and narrowing gaps among student subgroups in some cases (starting from 2005-06 with consistent data). However, persistent gaps remain and for some subgroups (e.g., LEP students) almost no progress has been made. For other student subgroups (e.g., Black students) the rate of improvement in graduation rates is too little to significantly address gaps that remain. There is no discussion of particular strategies to understand better or to address the gaps in graduation rates. In terms of overall graduation rate, the application describes steps to make a high school diploma more meaningful (e.g., requiring minimum pass rates in high schools and minimum index scores) but provides less information on the particular steps being taken to support students as they move toward graduation. Though the VDOE is required to support schools that are not fully accredited, the specificity of improvement strategies to boost graduation rates is limited.

Total	125	74
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## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

i. Virginia has demonstrated its participation in the Achieve consortium developing common standards through its Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the (outgoing) governor and the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction. The state's commitment to the process is further evidenced by the participation of the state English coordinator on the development team. The state's interest in developing standards is also supported by participation in the American Diploma Project led by Achieve which focuses on college and career-ready standards. Both of these efforts involve a majority of the states and include significant levels of transparency. Furthermore, Virginia has received support from a number of external organizations vouching for the quality of standards. This is strong evidence that Virginia is committed to developing common and high-quality standards to guide instruction in the state.

ii. Though the state is committed to participating in the process to develop high quality standards, it does not articulate a commitment to adopting these standards. The state has a regular process for the revision and adoption of standards and describes using the common standards to inform this process as it moves forward. However, it does not commit to adopting these common standards in math and reading before the 2010 deadline. And, while the application states that these common standards will be adopted by Virginia in cases where they exceed Virginia's current standards, it is not clear who will make this determination. Regardless of this point, it suggests that Virginia may not have a set of standards in common with other consortium members by the end of 2010.

**(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments**

**10**

**0**

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Virginia has no current plans to participate in a multi-state consortium to develop common high quality assessments. While the state regularly revises its own assessments in order to maintain alignment with state standards, there is no evidence of an effort to have external measures of this work. And while the state has demonstrable commitments to developing high-quality standards, there is no evidence that these collaborative efforts will include assessment development.

<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>          Virginia has outlined a number of activities that seek to improve the quality of instruction in a number of areas – pre-K, adolescent literacy, STEM education, foreign languages etc. However, there is very little detail provided about how the state will introduce and support changes among teachers in this area. Evidence would suggest that it is the quality and capability of the classroom teacher that most impacts student success. Thus, as Virginia seeks to enhance the quality of its standards and assessments (as described in other sections of this application) it would benefit from a more clearly defined program of support for its teachers as they make these changes. For example, the state proposed a new set of college readiness standards that will be measured within their statewide tests. These “testlets” will result in college readiness scores. And, while the application mentioned providing statewide professional development to help teachers understand these new standards, the professional development receives almost no description. Similarly, the application describes a new diagnostic tool to build literacy in adolescents, but is very limited in its description of teacher training to use these new tools. There are some exceptions to the general lack of focus on supporting teachers and administrators to implement changes. For example, the application does describe some support for a capstone course for students who are not college ready. This description explicitly includes mention of “initial professional development” for the course, recognizing that support will be needed. Similarly, the state describes introducing “Laying the Foundation” which focuses heavily on preparing teachers to teach more rigorous content. However, overall this criterion is focused on supporting the implementation of standards and assessments. Unfortunately, there is very little detail here about how teachers and school staffs will be supported in these changes or any of the others that the state proposes.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>30</b>

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>          Virginia clearly met 8 of the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act. It has clearly not yet established 1) a system to match teachers to students; and 2) a system to collect student-level transcript information. The application narrative is not clear about whether the state meets two other criteria; the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems nor about whether it collects other information necessary to address alignment for success in postsecondary education. While there is a lack of clarity around these two criteria of the COMPETES act, points were awarded for them based on the information provided in the application and appendix C2.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>          Virginia has a detailed application to fund development and enhancement of a longitudinal data system that will provide accessible information to a range of stakeholders. The plan includes a reasonably ambitious and appropriate timeline and appears to be staffed with individuals who have experience and expertise in similar projects. It is not clear however how this project will move forward (if at all) if the state is not awarded the grant funding for which it has applied.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p>		

i. The state has provided some detail on the technology that it hopes to create as a result of this grant. The principles suggested by the ECS Smart Teacher Desktop are provided as possible components of the system. However, the state's plan lacks specificity. The application only states that the specific system attributes will be identified following a "dialogue." Without clear guidelines for system development, it is difficult to assess the likelihood that the system will meet the criteria of the instructional improvement systems as defined in the application. ii. The professional development is heavily focused on the use of the "Electronic Learning Environment." While this may help staff to understand how to use the new systems, there is not evidence here that it will help staff to use the resulting data in effective ways in improving instruction. The one program that does seem to be more focused on data appears to be the professional development on the development and use of formative assessment. However, the professional development described in the application is largely limited to webinars. Evidence would suggest that without more intensive in-school support, staff are unlikely to use evidence resulting from these systems in effective ways. iii. While the application states that the evidence for this criterion has been supplied in sections C1 and C2, it is not clear how the plan that the state describes will allow researchers to connect student performance data with the particular approaches that schools and/or teachers are using in the classroom. It is the connection between particular instructional approaches and student outcomes that will supply researchers with the kinds of information that would be useful in assessing impacts of particular programs for all students or subgroups of students. The data system described in previous sections of this application does not indicate fields for particular programs such as IB or AP, professional development that teachers may have received, or where new programs may be piloted. Including this data would make it much easier for researchers to assess student impacts.

<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>32</b>
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#### D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

i. While the Virginia regulations allow robust alternative route certification (as defined in the application) options for teachers, the options for principals are somewhat less robust. For teachers, all of the criteria stated in the application are met. However, for principals, several criteria are not met. Principals cannot be certified by various types of providers, nor do alternate routes provide effective ongoing support for principals. Due to the fact that only 3 of the 5 criteria are met in the alternative pathways for principals, the state has received a "medium" score on this criterion. ii. The state provides evidence that most of the alternative certification routes are in use. However, it does not provide information about the total numbers of teachers and principals certified statewide. As a result, it is difficult to assess how robust the alternative certification routes are within the state's context. In addition, no information is provided about the numbers of principals certified through alternative routes. And while specific numbers of participants in alternative route programs are not required, the application was lacking evidence that the alternative paths for principals are currently in use. iii. Virginia has a statewide process for monitoring and identifying areas of teacher and administrative shortage and has several robust systems to assure that this data is collected and accurate. In addition, it has at least one program – the Employment of Retirees in Critical Shortage Areas – that is targeted at preparing staff to fill shortage areas. The state also has a large number of more general programs targeted at recruiting additional teachers. According to the application narrative, these were to be described in more detail in Appendix D(1)-H, but unfortunately, this appendix was not included in the application. Still, it appears that because a number of these programs are dependent on employment by school divisions (based on information provided in a previous section), these alternative routes can be effectively used to fill areas in which there are shortages. This strategy is not comprehensive and statewide in pro-actively targeting and predicting shortage areas.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>24</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	7
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	10

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

i. The state describes an approach to measuring growth in the tested grades and subjects that appears to be both ambitious and achievable. They have already begun this work using other funds and provide examples of the types of information that may be gleaned from the system they are developing. In addition, the application describes the start of a process to develop criteria for measuring growth using locally administered assessments. There is no hint offered of how this might be done. It seems highly unlikely that the state will be able to develop a set of guidelines that will lead to valid and reliable student growth measures for individual students in multiple subject areas using local assessments – and successfully monitor the development and use of such a system. In addition, it is not clear whether the local school divisions will develop these assessments or whether there would be state models for use. If divisions are to develop the instruments, intensive assistance and monitoring would be needed. The application timeline and narrative suggest that the work to develop a framework will be ongoing during all four years of the grant. This would imply no time to pilot or evaluate the guidelines. These facts make the effective development of local systems in all participating school divisions unlikely. ii. Virginia's system of local control is an impediment to ensuring that participating LEAs implement a rigorous evaluation system that takes into account student growth. In fact, many of the "participating LEAs" did not agree to comply with this requirement. In addition, because the state does not yet have the ability to link students to teachers (and will only develop such capacity depending on being awarded a grant), it cannot promise a student growth measure linked to teacher evaluation. However, the state does describe a process of development that will include important stakeholders and points were awarded for this element of the plan. The primary concern here is whether the state can really ensure that the plan will be used by any LEAs. iii. The use of measures such as CLASS or Val-Ed will allow, as the application states, for timely and constructive feedback for those staff members who are evaluated every year. The application does not provide any information about how many LEAs currently evaluate every year. For those LEAs who do not currently use a labor-intensive instrument like the CLASS for annual evaluations, it is not clear how this would be achieved and sustained over time. In addition, as mentioned above, it is not yet possible to link student growth to teachers in Virginia and most of the participating LEAs did not commit to using such information (should it come to exist) in their evaluations of teachers and principals. This is evidenced by the performance measures, which show that by the end of the grant only 37% of participating LEAs will have a qualifying evaluation system. Without firm commitments from participating LEAs to use such data, it is difficult to assess the likelihood that the state's plan will be implemented by LEAs. iv. Among participating LEAs, only 40% are projected to use evaluations to guide professional development (criterion a), about 20% are projected to use evaluations to guide compensation, promotion, or retention decisions (criterion b), 30% are projected to use evaluations to decide on tenure and/or full certification (criterion c), and 36% are projected to use evaluations to remove ineffective staff (criterion d). The level of overlap among these districts is not clear, so it is not possible to know whether any districts are projected to use evaluations to guide decisions in all four of the areas cited above. The application describes an inclusive process to develop model policies using evaluation data, but there are no clear incentives for participation. However, the state does plan to include a research component to assess the impacts in those LEAs using different models. The data resulting from this research should prove useful in helping other LEAs to make informed decisions about their own evaluation policies. However, there is no detailed information on how the state would encourage or ensure that LEAs make use of the model programs and policies in their local evaluation systems.

There is not information about an implementation stage for use of evaluations, only a piloting and development stage.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	5
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	3

**(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

i. Virginia proposes to enhance and improve its state equity plan through a statewide taskforce that will identify initiatives that have the greatest impact on student achievement in high poverty and high minority schools. This directly addresses the criterion of improving access to highly qualified staff based on data. It is less clear how the initiatives that the application proposes will fulfill the second part of this criterion which is making sure that these same schools do not have higher proportions of ineffective teachers than do other schools in the state. The other initiatives also do not appear to specifically target the types of schools identified in this criterion. While improving professional development and streamlining the hiring process have the potential to improve overall teacher quality throughout the state, there is nothing in these initiatives that addresses the potentially inequitable distribution of highly effective staff across schools. The one potential exception to this is the Middle School Teacher Corps. Though this program is focused on those middle schools struggling in math, which may or may not be high poverty, high minority, as the criterion requests, it could potentially result in encouraging effective teachers to seek jobs in schools that are both struggling in math and are also high poverty or high minority. Nothing is discussed about how to recruit and retain highly effective principals to the schools in question. Also, because the state has no current system for identifying highly effective staff, it does not provide targets for the distribution of highly effective staff going forward. As a result, it is difficult to assess the ambitious or achievable nature of their goals. ii. Because the efforts described in this section were not connected to a measure of teacher effectiveness as the criterion requires, only limited points could be awarded. In spite of this flaw, points were awarded for several initiatives described. The job-embedded professional development that the state proposes is specifically targeted on helping LEAs to implement professional development in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. The idea of a competitive grant program in which LEAs propose professional development programs has the potential to improve the quality of teachers in those areas. The electronic hiring hall and the Middle School Teacher Corps are likely to increase recruitment of teachers and, though it is difficult to know about the quality of teachers recruited through these programs so far, they may potentially "raise the bar" in many subjects and specialties. However, without any numbers to indicate the intended reach of this program or the impact on teachers in terms of improving their performance to be highly effective, it is difficult to assess the ambition of this program.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

i. The state is committed to creating a data system that will connect students to teachers and principals and will connect that data to the preparation program that the teacher completed. The plan includes a provision to make this data publicly available. There do not appear to be any statutory or logistical obstacles to this goal. ii. The application describes three enhancements to teacher preparation – creating masters degrees in content and pedagogy, teacher residency programs, and online teacher certification programs – that are to be funded by this grant. However, in none of the descriptions does the application mention funding or sustaining these programs based on the student achievement data for those teachers who complete these programs. This definition of success is essential to the criterion. This stands in contrast to the program that will be developed for the "principal of distinction" designation. In this case, the state explicitly mentions that this program will be compared to other programs in terms of performance. The fact that there is no discussion of introducing, expanding, or sustaining most of the programs based on student achievement and growth measures indicates that

the state does not have a plan to include these measures in planning and evaluation of these preparation programs.

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

20

3

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

i. The PALS system is promising, but support to teachers coming only through phone or email seems relatively limited. Similarly, the eLearning modules for mathematics appear to include many strong elements – e.g., discussion tools, instructional resources, assessment techniques, vertical articulation information – but it is not clear how the use of this resource will be supported in schools. The same is true of the Infinite Learning Lab, the STEM eLearning modules, and Learning without Boundaries. While all of these appear to be interesting content-development projects, there is little if any information about how their use may be encouraged. Because this criterion is focused on providing support to staff that is ongoing and job-embedded, it is not clear how the creation of new systems without a clear support strategy meets the requirements of this criterion. Though these tools will be made available through the electronic system described earlier in the application, there is little information about how their use may be supported at the school site. The teacher and principal mentorship programs are much more strongly connected to the ongoing work of teachers and principals though on-site visits, assessments of strengths and weaknesses, and (particularly in the case of the principal program) a clearly defined program of study. ii. There is no discussion in the application of how the programs described would be evaluated. Discussion of the evaluation of these programs is not included in either the timeline or the narrative. As a result, it is unclear which outcomes are to be considered as measures of the programs that are being proposed.

**Total**

138

54

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

**(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs**

Available

Tier 1

10

10

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Virginia state law allows for the intervention in both schools and LEAs. There is a process in place for the review of both schools and divisions and steps for intervention if the LEA is not able to implement improvement plans or meet achievement targets.

**(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools**

40

13

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools

5

3

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

35

10

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

i. The state identifies five elementary schools that are the lowest-achieving, but it is not clear from the definition whether these five schools are the only ones that meet the criteria stated in the application or whether these five were chosen from among a larger number. The same is true for the secondary schools. ii. Virginia states that it will use a turnaround model to improve low performing schools. The partners to run these schools will be approved using a state-level approval process. It is not clear how the partners will be approved. LEAs with the lowest achieving schools will engage in a competitive grant process for funds to support the turnaround partner. The application states that only 5 to 7 grants will be awarded to LEAs. This seems to imply that some LEAs with the lowest performing schools will not receive support to improve those schools. The evidence that the state provides on its historic performance on school turnaround does not provide data related to student achievement, thus it is impossible to know the state's track record in selecting partners and yielding gains in student growth. The lessons learned by the state indicate that "support must be provided to the LEA" as well as the school and that specialists from "within the system were more effective than from outside of the

system." It does not appear that the state's current plan incorporates either of those lessons. It appears that the turnaround specialists that are being proposed will be external school operators and will be charged with working only with the school as opposed to building the capacity of the LEA. The disconnect between the lessons that the state has apparently learned from past experience and the proposal that it puts forth now raise questions about the likely success of this plan.

Total	50	23
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## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The percentage of state budget going to education increased slightly between FY08 and FY09. Clearly, education funding has remained a priority within the budget. This criterion was awarded 4 of 5 possible points, representing a score in the "high" category because while there was an increase, it a very small percentage increase. ii. Virginia has a number of policies to aid high need schools and LEAs. Data is provided indicating that the state spends considerably more per pupil in the high need LEAs than it does in the more wealthy LEAs. This does not, however, provide us with evidence that the actual funding that students receive in different LEAs is equitable. One could imagine a state in which high wealth LEAs vastly outspend low-wealth LEAs, despite significant infusions of state funds in the low-wealth LEAs. Without data to assess the equity of funding across schools and/or LEAs, it is impossible to reach a final assessment on this criterion. Points are given for the evidence that the application provides about the state's efforts in this area, even if the equity outcomes are not provided.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The state does not limit the number of charter schools in a state or division. ii. Virginia has detailed regulations guiding the approval and reauthorization of charter schools. The guidelines about charter schools are based heavily on student achievement outcomes as well as compliance with the original terms of the charter contract, including adherence to state and local academic standards. LEAs have closed charter schools due to lack of student achievement and lack of adherence to standards (among other reasons). iii. Funds in Virginia are allocated to charter schools in the same way they are allocated to traditional public schools. iv. Charter schools receive funding in ways very similar to traditional public schools. The application states that this is "depending upon the terms of the agreement with the local school board." However, there is no evidence provided that would indicate that the charter school receives any more or less support from the state than a traditional public school would. In addition, the state has a public charter school fund to support the establishment of charter schools that "stimulate the development of alternative public education programs." v. The establishment of innovative and autonomous public schools is dependent largely on LEAs. The state has a waiver process for innovative schools that may need exemption from state requirements.</p>		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Virginia LEAs have flexibility in what they allow schools to do. For example, they can exceed required minimum school days, grant course credit for mastery of content rather than "seat time," or partner with other LEAs to grant charters. The state has authority to set minimum standards and guidelines. While all of the standards and supports that the state has put in place surely contribute to the achievement of Virginia's students, there is no evidence provided here that particular conditions for reform or innovation have contributed to increased student achievement, graduation, or other important outcomes.</p>		

Total	55	50
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### Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout its application, Virginia has cited a number of initiatives that target STEM education in particular. The state has a regular revision process for science and math standards and works with several national consortia to ascertain that these standards would position Virginia graduates for college or career success. The state's UTeach program seeks to recruit more and high quality STEM teachers. The proposed development of 8 new Career and Technical Academies focused on STEM educational programs would enhance the offerings to students. And the eLearning modules that the state proposes would enhance the programs and materials that teachers could provide. These are only some of the initiatives that the application details to support STEM education. Though the scale of some of these programs is not always apparent in the application, it does appear that the state has made a conscious effort to improve its STEM offerings for both elementary and secondary school students and teachers.		
<b>Total</b>	15	15

### Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Virginia has demonstrated some effort in all four education reform areas. It has also provided evidence that the state conditions would not significantly hinder reform efforts. The varying commitments of LEAs that are designated as "participating" is of some concern. The application makes clear that LEAs in Virginia have significant local control. This fact, in combination with the limited agreement of LEAs on the state MOU, may make it difficult to use the Race to the Top funds to directly achieve the state's goals and the improved student outcomes that are desired.		
<b>Total</b>		0

<b>Grand Total</b>	500	278
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# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Virginia Application #6600VA-5



#### A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>39</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	33
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	3
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>            In this section, Virginia lays out their educational reform agenda, which appears to be based on their results and efforts for the past 15 years. The applicant did not specifically address the four reform areas of Race to the Top. It appears from reading the application that Virginia has not embraced the Race to the Top reforms but wants to use the Race to the Top funding to further much of what the state has already been doing in terms of reform. The state has not necessarily changed or adapted its approach for the RTT goals. Virginia recently underwent a review by College Board, ACT and Achieve of state standards and according to the narrative, they were found to be rigorous and would likely prepare students for college and career success. It is not very clear from the narrative however that these standards have been internationally benchmarked. Virginia has attached a copy of the MOU signed by each participating LEA and the state has done a good job of securing just over 85% of its total LEAs to sign up for the RTT reforms. At the same time, Virginia's participating LEAs vary a great deal in terms of how many will complete the scope of work of the RTT reforms. For example 88% have committed to the use of local instructional improvement systems while only 46% have committed to conduct annual evaluations of teachers and leaders. This brings up a concern about the potential of implementing all the RTT reforms statewide. Virginia did secure 100% of participating LEA superintendent and school board presidents' signatures and has captured data on this in a detailed table along with another table detailing participating LEAs. Virginia attaches a table capturing all its participating LEAs and the total LEAs statewide along with the total number of students in K-12 in the state and students living in poverty. Finally, Virginia did not set overall goals for increasing student achievement on their NAEP results or on their state assessments. The state did not set goals for decreasing achievement gaps. Although the state has goals for the percent of students successfully completing Algebra or earning Advanced Studies Diplomas, they did not articulate clear goals for increasing high school graduation or college enrollment.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>            Virginia's plan to build capacity to implement, scale up and sustain the RTT reforms has some strong points but needs improvement. The state did a good job in involving current DOE staff in drafting the RTT proposal and they will continue to be involved in the RTT initiatives moving forward. The state also plans to hire an Executive Director for implementing the RTT initiatives, this person will report</p>		

directly to the superintendent of public instruction and will have direct reports. RTT specialists who will report to the Executive Director for the RTT initiatives and will be key individuals in providing direct support to school divisions as well as serving as liaisons between the DOE and the LEAs in implementing the various state-level components and policy development. It is not clear however from the narrative what background and skills these specialists will bring or how they will be selected or be able to provide support to the over 100 LEAs who are participating in Virginia's Race to the Top reforms. As a part of the additional capacity on the team led by the Executive Director, there will be a data analyst, grants manager, procurement officer and communications specialist and these individuals will provide the operational support and processes for implementing the RTT grant. Although this was not factored in the state's scoring, in reading the applicant's budget narrative, it is concerning that Virginia has exceeded the Race to the Top guidance in terms of the state's overall budget. The applicant did not provide enough evidence that it has used funds, as described in the state's budget and accompanying budget narrative, to align with the Race to the Top goals nor is it clear that Virginia will be able to use fiscal, political and human capital resources to continue the Race to the Top reforms after the period of funding has ended. Virginia has received good support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans given the involvement of the Virginia Education Association in drafting the state's application for RTT. The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals and of Secondary School Principals, Association of School Superintendents and School Boards all submitted letters supporting the application along with other critical stakeholders. These letters can be found in the Appendix attachments.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia has made progress in the four reform areas for Race to the Top but does not have plans in place to adopt standards by the August 2, 2010 deadline. According to the narrative, Virginia had demonstrated progress in raising achievement and closing achievement gaps. They have not made as much progress however in high school graduation rates. According to the narrative and test score data included in this application, Virginia has made progress with increasing the percent of students earning proficient or higher on the state's reading assessments. The state's NAEP reading results are close to the national average in scaled scores. As for math, Virginia's students, including all student subgroups, have made substantial gains in all grade levels on statewide math assessments since 2003. In 2009, Virginia's 4th-grade students, including most subgroups, had higher average scale scores compared to the national profile. The state has also been able to speak to their reading scores increasing for third-graders who have participated in Reading First schools. Virginia has also made progress with closing achievement gaps. Between 2003 and 2007, students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch and black students showed statistically significant increases in their average scaled scores on the NAEP reading exam. Virginia's graduation rates have remained the same or dropped since the 2002-2003 school year for all student groups for which data is available. Although 2005-06 was the year when the state got student identifier data, which impacts the reporting of the data, since then gains have been made especially for Hispanic students and students with disabilities. At the same time, very little gains have been made with LEP students. Virginia also did not include any data on college enrollment and college credit accumulation rates in this section of the application.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>82</b>

## B. Standards and Assessments

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
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<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:  Virginia has recently gone through a process of getting input from multiple stakeholders on the revision to their standards. The state has joined the American Diploma Project Network in order to inform the revision process of their math and English standards of learning. There is a letter attached to the application stating that Virginia is a part of a 35 state consortium dedicated to ensuring that every high school graduate is prepared for college or careers. There is a MOU attached to the application communicating Virginia's involvement in the CCSSO and NGA Center's goal to create common core standards that will be internationally benchmarked and that, when implemented, will help ensure that students are prepared for college and careers. A copy of the MOU and standards are also attached to the application. Virginia does not have a plan in place to adopt a common set of K-12 core standards. According to the narrative, it appears as if Virginia's DOE has decided that their current 2009 Standards of Learning exceed the content and rigor of the common core standards that are currently available. Given this and the feedback that Virginia has received on their standards, it does not appear as if the state is committed to a plan to adopt a set of common K-12 standards by August 2, 2010.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:  It is not clear from the application that Virginia is participating in a consortium to develop and implement common high-quality assessments.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:  Virginia does have a plan in place to support the transition to its enhanced standards and assessments. First, the state plans to establish a subset of its recently revised Standards of Learning in reading, writing and math. Virginia will then work to develop sustainable professional development opportunities and course materials needed to support teachers' ability to provide instruction that prepares students to succeed in postsecondary education. Finally, the state plans to enhance its statewide system of support that provides students with support and interventions throughout their educational career that will directly support the skills development and academic achievement that will lead students to be prepared for postsecondary education and global competitiveness before graduating from high school. Virginia has key activities like creating separate STEM standards and identifying or developing a diagnostic and instructional tool to address adolescent literacy needs. Although Virginia does include a timeline by year of when it will complete the activities necessary to meet the goals of their transition plan, they have not broken down the months that each activity will take place which is concerning given how much needs to be accomplished each year. There is also a concern about Virginia's capacity to execute this plan. There is a lot of emphasis placed on Webinars and it's not clear whether or not Webinars will contribute to changing practice in schools.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>32</b>

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>16</b>
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The data presented in this part of the application was not very clear. It appears from the data presented that Virginia has met 8 of the elements of the American COMPETES Act to implement a statewide longitudinal data system. Based on the information shared, it was not clear if the state met two of these elements and it was clear that they did not meet at least two elements.

<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia has a high-quality plan in place to ensure that data from the state's longitudinal data system are accessible to and used to inform and engage key stakeholders. The plan includes establishing a portal to provide one-step access to education and work force data by policymakers, educators, the public, etc. The state will also create a longitudinal data linking and reporting system with the ability to link data among state agency data sources and will also work to create an integrated K-12 student-teacher information system that matches individual teachers to students. Finally, the state plans to design a data management and control system that enables them to maximize data quality, ensure accessibility with appropriate security, and enhance the usefulness of the data in both existing and proposed systems.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia has a plan in place to use data to improve instruction. The state hopes that this plan will increase the acquisition, adoption and use of an integrated improvement system that will provide electronic tools and resources that will enable parties to more closely individualize and personalize learning. The state plans to define requirements for this system in year one, and develop, post and award an RFP. In year two, the state will begin its professional development activities for teachers and school divisions in using the system. It is not clear from the narrative, however, that the state will make the data from the instructional improvement system, along with the statewide longitudinal system available and accessible to researchers so that they have detailed information with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies and approaches for educating different types of students. In reading Virginia's plan, it is not clear that LEAs will be able to use data in a meaningful way. It's not clear that Virginia has built in the support at the school level for using the technology to inform instruction and change teaching practice.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>31</b>

#### D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia does have in place the legal provisions that allow alternative routes to certification and these routes are attached in the appendix for both teachers and principals. There are three routes that operate independently from IHEs for teachers, but there are no such programs for principals. According to the appendix, all these routes are selective for teachers and principals, but it isn't clear what the application process is for these programs and therefore there is not a lot of information on the selection criteria for candidates. All but one of these programs provide supervised, school based experiences for teachers and the two principal programs only require full-time experience. 4 of the 6 alternate routes to teacher certification limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of a course while both alternate pathways for principals limit course work. In addition to the alternate pathways for preparing teachers and principals, Virginia has implemented programs to address critical shortage areas.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>23</b>

(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	5
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	5
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Virginia does have a plan in place to establish valid and reliable measures of student growth on statewide assessments in mathematics and reading and to provide this growth measure to students, their families, teachers and schools. Virginia also plans to establish growth targets and the criteria and tools for measuring student growth for measures of student achievement other than statewide assessment. The state will then establish statewide policy on the appropriate use of student growth measures and to provide information, training and guidance to stakeholders on interpreting growth measures. Although Virginia has approved standards for evaluating teachers and leaders and another regulation requires that instructional personnel be evaluated in a manner that takes into account student academic progress, the state does not prescribe evaluation methodologies at the local level. According to the narrative, this is because the VDOE wants to provide local flexibility and also wants to first see what the research reveals about teacher and principal evaluations and their link to student outcomes before piloting any initiatives. Although the state's commitment to research is commendable, it is concerning that Virginia is not willing to take a stand on defining effectiveness of teachers and principals. It also does not seem as if Virginia buys into the RTT definition of 'effective' and 'highly-effective' teachers and principals because this language is never used in the narrative. Virginia's plan is to conduct research on teacher and principal evaluations in the coming years before moving forward in executing these evaluations. This plan will ultimately permit leaders to quantify teachers and principal performance levels using validated measures from a variety of sources and include student achievement and growth in those evaluations. Virginia's LEAs have local autonomy in choosing their own evaluation systems as per the Code of Virginia. The Code of Virginia also requires that local school boards adopt employment policies and practices that promote the employment and retention of highly qualified teachers who effectively serve the educational needs of students. Given this, the applicant does not currently have a plan for annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback. However, they are working to create one in the coming years. Currently Virginia does not have a plan in place to use evaluations to inform decisions regarding developing teachers and principals, compensating, promoting and retaining teachers and principals, granting tenure and/or certification or to remove ineffective teachers. Virginia has a plan to develop model policies that they will be able to test during the RTT grant period. According to the performance measures for this section of the RTT grant, the VDOE only anticipates that approximately 20% of the participating LEAs will enhance or develop evaluation systems to pilot qualifying evaluation systems. This is the most concerning part of Virginia's plan because even when the state does ultimately develop a plan, it will be left up to LEAs to decide whether or not they will implement this plan and it's clear from the low level of LEA commitment on teacher evaluations that few LEAs will actually implement this yet to be determined plan.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	5
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	2

(D)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Based on the narrative, it is not clear if Virginia's plan to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals is high quality. Virginia defines high-poverty schools as those in the top quartile of poverty based on the Free and Reduced Lunch data as reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report. Low-poverty schools are defined as those in the bottom quartile for poverty. Virginia's plan mostly involves implementing strategies around recruitment, professional development and obtaining data on teacher and principal effectiveness. Given the state's desire to wait to implement

evaluation systems for a few years and to allow LEAs to choose to do this, it is not clear how the state will be able to assess the distribution of effective teachers and principals. Virginia did not set goals for increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers teaching in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas because they plan to set their annual targets after the state develops its growth model, which is not scheduled to be completed until September 2011.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments:          It is not clear from the narrative that Virginia's plan will improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs. According to the narrative, Virginia states that it plans to link student achievement and student growth data to the students' teachers and principals and ultimately will do this for preparation programs and publish this information on the DOE web site and work to expand programs that are successful in producing effective teachers and principals. Given that, the activities that Virginia lays out are not aligned to these goals. Most of the activities involve launching additional preparation programs, like a Teacher Residency program, yet these programs have only attained results with retention, as per the attached narrative in the appendix. It is not clear that Virginia is committed to using student achievement data to make decisions of the effectiveness of their teacher and principal preparation programs and which programs they choose to expand in the state.</p>		
<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia lays out a plan for providing effective support to teachers and principals but it is not clear if the activities will be data-informed. The plan involves providing professional development and technical assistance that is responsive to the needs of teachers, students and principals. It is not clear, however, how these programs will be developed and executed in the LEAs. Virginia does not provide a plan for measuring, evaluating and continuously improving the effectiveness of the supports above in improving student achievement. Because of this, it is not clear if these supports will lead to producing more effective teachers and principals.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>54</b>

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:          Virginia's law gives the state authority to intervene directly in persistently low-achieving schools and LEAs.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	10
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:          As a part of the narrative, Virginia has identified and listed the persistently low-achieving schools, and non-Title 1 eligible secondary schools that are also low-achieving. Virginia's plan for turning around its lowest-achieving schools is to identify turnaround partners led by educational management organizations. There isn't a great deal of information shared, however, on how these partners will be approved or how management of the schools will be turned over to these partners. According to Virginia's plan, these partners will help the state to develop high-performing charters or contract schools for currently low-achieving schools while the transformational model is also an option. Virginia</p>		

already started advertising for potential partners and has a timeline to select these partners after the Race to the Top funding is announced. It also plans to have ongoing monitoring of these schools to evaluate the improvements along the way. Virginia's plan needs some improvement. Since the state's historic performance on school turnaround has not been strong, according to the narrative, it's not clear what lessons Virginia has learned from their history and results in this area. It's also not clear that the state has applied any lessons learned to their turnaround strategy for low-achieving schools moving forward.

<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>
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## F. General

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:            The percentage of state revenues spent on education in Virginia in FY 2008 increased by .31% in FY 2009. Virginia's policies seem to lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and between high-poverty schools and other schools within LEAs. According to the narrative, with federal funds like Title 1, additional funds have been provided to high-need schools. Additionally, in FY 10, the 40 high-need LEAs received \$1.1 billion in state funds, or \$6,215 per pupil while Virginia's other LEAs received \$4.5 billion or \$4,408 per pupil. The higher per pupil state funding driven to high-need LEAs would also impact the high-poverty schools within these LEAs.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:            Virginia's applicable laws regarding charter schools are listed in the application. The state recently passed a law in 2009 that removed the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. Virginia has laws in place governing charter schools and a list is enclosed in the narrative of the application for the past five years of the number of charter applications made, the number of charter schools approved, the number of charter schools denied and the number of charter schools closed. Public charter schools in Virginia are operated by agreement with a local school board and are subject to the same accountability measures as any other public school within a school division. Based on the narrative, it appears as if charters in Virginia have access to the same funding as traditional public schools. It does appear that based on the charter laws, school boards may establish contracts outlining funding provisions for a public charter school. According to the narrative, charter schools in Virginia could be eligible for the same facilities supports as other public schools, but this is all dependent upon the terms of the agreement with the local school board. The SEA also provides additional services like school building guidelines, facility conferences and training and playground safety to charter schools. Virginia currently has 17 experimental, innovative or year-round programs in five LEAs throughout the state. Virginia also operates Governor's Schools, which provide academically and artistically challenging programs beyond what is offered at students' home schools. These schools serve more than 7500 gifted students. There are also eight STEM academies.</p>		
<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:            Virginia has demonstrated other significant reforms in the state. The state recently revised its accreditation system for schools and defined a graduation rate for public schools. The Governor can also issue executive orders as a tool for education reform and this included establishing a P-16 Council in 2005.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>53</b>

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
Competitive Reviewer Comments: The applicant meets the STEM criteria given its focus on STEM throughout its application. Virginia has also taken some actions to strengthen the course of study in STEM. According to the narrative, the state has received national recognition for its STEM academic programs, with resounding student results. Additionally, the state is working with universities, state agencies, industry organizations and other STEM partners to prepare teachers in STEM, both in the individual subject areas, as well as in an integrated format. Finally, Virginia plans to prepare more students for advanced study and careers in STEM, including addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of STEM.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>No</b>
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Virginia's application did not comprehensively and coherently address the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors. Virginia did make a case for their state's standards potentially being more rigorous than the common core standards being developed. Given this, not having common standards will also mean not having common assessments, which is also problematic. Additionally, Virginia has a lot work to do to ensure that their data system meets at the America COMPETES act and given the state's hesitation to define teacher and principal effectiveness, most of the RTT initiatives to link student growth to teacher, principal and school of education results will also be challenging. Because the state has struggled with turning around low-performing schools, it will also be challenging for the state to do this if the data and assessment systems aren't aligned.		
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>292</b>