



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #2150AR-8



#### 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>50</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas is clearly, strongly committed to all four components of the reform agenda. The Smart Arkansas program wisely begins with early childhood education and connects to a state wide workforce and development strategy. The state earns full credit.</p> <p>(ii) The MOU and scope of work statements are generally strong except for softer language about implementation of Section D using school achievement data. Arkansas assures that 96% of the schools and students will be covered and served. Well over 90% of the superintendents and charter school directors signed letters of support. Only 40% of the local teacher organizations signed on. What is very encouraging is the state-wide support of the Arkansas Education Association whose leaders feel that state officials have listened to their concerns. That places potential local support at the middle of the top level.</p> <p>(iii) This work has already begun with the use of state, federal and foundation funds. Not enough information was provided on how regional education centers function, and how they will carry much of the implementation load for the state. Most of the work on meaningful teacher and principal evaluations is still in the early planning stages. This warrants a high middle score.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9

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

(i) The state leadership team that appears to be strongest is the Governor's Work Force cabinet linking several state education offices to manpower and employment agencies. The SEA capacity will not be restructured. The state has decided that it cannot monitor and provide reports on the RTTT program and grants by itself and will issue an RFP for an external project manager. Although eventually the state might assume those tasks, this possibility is not apparent in the proposed budget. The state education agency will add an Office of Innovation, hire technology specialists, and draw on outside experts from UCLA, U of Arkansas and Johns Hopkins to provide analyses and professional development, along with other state resources. This will expand the state capacity to promote and disseminate "best practices" in a limited way. Much of the work with schools will be delegated to regional "coops" who will add technical staff but their existing and future capacities are poorly described. Missing was an organizational chart of the

state education agency and the reorganization needed to carry out and sustain turnaround and implementation plans.

(ii) The University of Arkansas will play a constructive role in measurement and evaluation. Two major Arkansas foundations, Walton Family and Rockefeller, expressed support but there is no reference to past or future investments or priorities. Almost all of the local superintendents and regional coop leaders have committed support. The administrator and teacher groups have agreed to "study" and develop formats for more rigorous teacher and principal evaluations prior to adopting them, which is a sound strategy. The support of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) charter school and the Teach for America (TFA) recruitment of teachers are impressive ingredients. There are no letters from civil rights or minorities other than one state-wide advocacy organization.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	21
<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas has been moving achievement up from the bottom of many indicators, student scores, per capita income, percentage of college graduates et al. The state has made a strong commitment to adopting higher standards, including raising scores for "proficiency". There is a coherent display of data on the schools. Charters and America's Choice have been used to turn around low performing schools. The use of TFA and KIPP schools to bring in highly effective teachers and school leaders clearly shows progress. The plan includes a commendable expansion of these reform-minded organizations, especially in the low income high needs region.</p> <p>(ii) Student outcomes as measured by NAEP scores and state tests have risen dramatically over the last decade, in some cases climbing to only six points below the 8th grade mathematics national average which itself has been moving upward. Still the Hispanic and black population scores, while improving, show a persistent gap that is troubling. The (NAEP) scores reflect solid gains in mathematics and writing but less so in 8th grade reading. The state test data were less useful for evaluating progress. There remain serious problems at the high school level including college readiness, where the data (and one support letter) show that 50% of college freshmen require remedial courses.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>99</b>

**B. Standards and Assessments**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas is strongly committed along with 47 states in the Common Core Standards project.</p> <p>(ii) The state has confirmed that it will approve the Common Core Standards by August 2, 2010.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas has been participating with a national, nonprofit advocacy group for higher standards and rigorous assessments called ACHIEVE and is strongly, totally committed to high quality formative assessments.</p> <p>(ii) It is one of 27 states that are members of the ACHIEVE assessment development consortium.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>B (3)</p> <p>Arkansas has developed an elaborate and comprehensive plan to implement the new standards and assessments. The document shows a clear willingness for the state education agency to use the National Office for Research and Measurement Evaluation Systems (NORMES) resources of the University of Arkansas on the measurement component, and to bring national experts from UCLA to provide professional development formats for using data to improve instruction. The private sector joins in support of a Leadership Academy and draws on the local resources of regional educational service center "co-ops". The overall plan including resources from ACT and Johns Hopkins University is very impressive.</p>		
Total	70	70

**C. Data Systems to Support Instruction**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
1. Arkansas has completed all twelve America COMPETES elements on the state data system.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
2. Arkansas has pursued data access and useful formats through participation in the national Data Quality Campaign. The state has a longitudinal data system for each school, LEA and the state, by subgroups. It provides a School Diagnostic Audit using data to display weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. It will be able to monitor and check a local school curriculum against a Total Instruction Alignment, an essential component of an action data plan. Decision-makers and parents will be able to see the academic progress or problems at the school level, which is very impressive.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6

(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3
<b>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas will use data appropriately to identify the high priority or Tier One schools most in need of improvement. The state will incorporate data on teacher and principal effectiveness to design school improvement strategies and school productivity. The Gates grant will help Arkansas further increase the use of data by and with teachers and principals.</p> <p>(ii) The state will use the data on student growth to shape the use of the 60 hours per year of required professional development to upgrade teacher effectiveness. For Arkansas, a sparsely settled rural state, with mountains in one corner, the reliance on online and compressed video for professional development seems very appropriate. There will be coaches for all low performing schools, and mentors provided for new teachers, practices that have worked well elsewhere. The technology specialist support made explicit in the plan will be especially useful, given the sparsity factor.</p> <p>(iii) The data will be used most clearly by in the career readiness and workforce development experts;. Data will be available to researchers but they are not mentioned other than the NORMES staff at U Arkansas, who will be major analytic resource. Missing are references to any research on the special education and minority subgroups which score lower than other subgroups, and where the Arkansas school interventions must be reviewed and researched. Half credit for this criterion.</p>		
Total	47	44

**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>19</b>
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	6
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(i) Arkansas law allows for alternative pathways into teaching for those with bachelor's degrees who pass the Praxis tests and have supervised or mentored teaching experiences. The New Teacher Project and TFA account for 22% of new Arkansas teachers. A fairly new plan lures Professionals from other fields into teaching. There is a new alternative path for aspiring principals, a rigorous three summer program and online courses provided by the Arkansas State University.</p> <p>(ii) TFA has over many years screened, supervised, trained more than 600 teachers for high priority schools in Arkansas, and currently provides about 100 teachers each year, a number that will increase. This is dramatic and meaningful enough to warrant a high score. The new route for principals hasn't been around long enough to evaluate and lacks documentation about the RTTT ingredients of an alternative preparation program.</p> <p>(iii).Shortages are very clearly documented and published. Arkansas provides stipends to general education teachers who will pursue Special Education, math or science certification. The plan for preparing rural principals will use online courses but will originate from a state university. The plan makes sense for Arkansas, a state that must cope with sparsity and no other in-state alternative providers of principals. The plan lacks vital details about new principal courses, internships, mentors and quality assurances that are needed to produce "highly effective" principals.</p>		

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>45</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	13
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	21

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

(i) Arkansas will for the near-term future use two Growth measures, value added multi-year school performance and year to year "gains", fulfilling the federal requirement for AYP and with a growth model evaluation plan approved by the Department.

(ii) The state is committed to developing a more comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation system, such as Danielson, but is just now in the early stages. A study showed that 97% of veteran teachers (teaching three years or more) are checked off as "satisfactory". Hardly any Arkansas teachers (except a few failing first year teachers) are rated Unsatisfactory and no-one is Highly Effective based on student scores and other criteria. The state earns high points for taking the first steps for designing a new teacher evaluation systems with a task force representing all interests (36 teachers, principals and stakeholders) in 2009, and forming a comparable task force on principal evaluations in 2010, but without teachers, a possible flaw.

(iii) The new Arkansas teacher and principal evaluation system will use four levels of effectiveness and achievement, including student growth measures. Schools are clearly evaluated and categorized but it is not clear whether the principals of under-performing schools have been identified as a possible part of the problem. The state in this plan has committed to a process of developing a new and more powerful system, one for teachers, one for principals. Credit goes to identifying the problem and mobilizing professional support.

(iv) There is a good strategy for deciding on probationary teachers and some promising ideas on using data on student growth to reward effective teachers but viewed as local options. The plan cites an existing Arkansas law protecting teachers and principals from arbitrary or unjust removal but proposes no new statute for removing less than effective school professionals. The development of new and rigorous evaluations is still in the early stage. Arkansas will pilot test new systems in 4 or 5 LEAs, then ten school districts. Beyond that, there is no scaling up of a strategy for removing ineffective practitioners. It is not clear whether the pilots will mainly be in districts with the most serious problems. The effort to use data decisions about school turnaround or transformation is at best in the early stage of development, maybe the first of three stages, planning, then pilot, then scale-up. Arkansas earns commendations for proposing pilot tests of new evaluation systems, and for recruiting local professionals to help the state develop more appropriate systems. The plan gets no points for the discussion of the removal decision.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	10

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

(i) The state offers seven programs designed to recruit, assign and retain effective teachers in the sixty or so schools that are high poverty and/or high minority. These are very appealing, such as the additional \$5000 incentive pay for going to teach in a high priority school, and somewhat less for the next two years. Teach for America recruits and screens high scoring teacher candidates many of color and many qualified to teach math or science or languages. Some other programs such as online teacher education courses or recruiting lawyers and other professional (with teaching permits) offer some hope but little evidence. The

dollar incentives and use of TFA teachers qualifies for a strong score, while the other programs need to be tested and proven.

(ii) There is a strategy, that Arkansas declares is needed urgently in the Delta region, for incenting regular teachers to pursue Special Education certification, paying for online courses or for those already teaching. Teach for America will provide for an increase in TFA teachers from 100 to 200, including staffing a new Delta KIPP school. There are stipends for teaching Advanced Placement courses earned when students test well, an important state strategy. There will be a very substantial investment in STEM programs at

each and every school, some of the work after school, in sixty locations. This strategy represents an aggressive approach to addressing serious shortages.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	7
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4

**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(i) Arkansas has a strong commitment to using student achievement growth data to evaluate schools of education, their contribution to effective teaching, to addressing teacher shortages, and which are most and least effective. The Gates Foundation will help Arkansas to look at teachers in three LEAs and evaluate the quality and efficacy of their preparation. Arkansas is part of a six state consortium to review the adequacy of professional education including the field experience. The state will issue a report card on the most and least effective programs. This is an exceptionally powerful approach.

(ii) TFA will expand its state presence, but who else, including traditional Arkansan programs and The New Teacher Project? The plan does not tell much about how traditional state university principal and superintendent preparation programs will be upgraded to use data to improve or transform schools. A Council of Deans will help with STEM. There is not yet a comprehensive plan for expanding the more effective programs other than TFA, if in fact they have been recruited. TFA earns a few extra points for an otherwise modest program upgrading teacher and administrator preparation other than the three year Academy and online courses for principals.

<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Providing effective support	10	10
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(i) Arkansas has proposed developing an electronic Portal with access to lesson plans, teaching units, and data on what works in the classroom. It will mobilize fifteen educational service centers around the state and add technical specialists. The Arkansas Leadership Academy has dozens of partners willing to contribute on leadership teams and help with the many task forces and advisory boards cited in the plan. The plan includes innovations such as HIVE and Triand transcripts to propel Arkansas to new heights of attainment. These strategies earn full points.

(ii) Arkansas universities have been mobilized and outside experts including Michael Fullan and Margaret Heritage brought in to help redesign effective schools. Arkansas has been quick to pursue national foundations including Gates and Milken to add support and tighten the focus on more effective teaching. Arkansas teachers report satisfaction that they have been consulted and listened to in this state. The principals have been involved in the two initiatives to expand training of new principals and to devise a more comprehensive principal evaluation system.

<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>117</b>
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**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

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

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

(1) The state law clearly provides that the state agency can take over a failing school district and remove all or some board members and the superintendent, and assign or annex the failing schools to another district, and direct the closure or reconstitution of a school. This statute earns the full points.

<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: (Tier 1)**

(i) The proposal clearly explains that 273 schools need some corrective action, 60 need considerable help, and that up to nineteen schools remain in the most needy priority PLA (Persistent Low Achievement) school category. The state gets full credit for carefully tracking them.

(ii) America's Choice gets considerable credit for helping 52 Arkansas schools either get off the "Needs Improvement" list or improve in certain areas. The plan was not clear if they will continue as a resource. Arkansas argues that mountainous terrain and sparse populations make school closure or replacing half the teachers unlikely or impossible. There is a menu of resources including Deep Knowledge teams, college and career coaches for students, coop center help, and it appears that there is a state turnaround office if not a dynamic turnaround strategy. What is not clear is how a dozen low achieving high schools will be turned around, and by whom, and with what help. There are too few charter school slots available, and only one more KIPP school in the wings. Arkansas presents a nice menu of resources but not yet a full turnaround strategy, for example for Little Rock and North Little Rock schools. There is a one sentence offer to consult with other CMOs and EMOs but no plan for recruiting them. Credit goes for providing good tools and coaches for school transformation, one of the models, but not a fully developed plan. The turnaround plan goes only half way to transforming the PLA schools.

<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>35</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>6</b>
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3

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

(i) Arkansas slightly reduced the percentage of state funds allocated to public schools from 2008 to 2009 by .2% , a modest decrease in funding.

(ii) Arkansas had to respond to a major court case on educational "adequacy" by allocating more funds to schools in high poverty communities. However, the state appropriation for Adequacy declined and will not be full restored in the next fiscal year. Points were lost for this erosion of support.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	4
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

- (i) Arkansas some years ago increased the cap on charter schools but it remains at 24, a medium cap. Arkansas has approved 19 existing charter schools. The state has no cap on "conversion" charters but has no explicit plan to use these district-authorized schools to turn around the dozen or more PLA high and middle schools, the weakest links in Arkansas public schools.
- (ii) The state has a State Charter School Review Council with clear and sensible criteria for opening and closing charter schools and an advisory board to help state officials. Low performing charters are terminated and others are given five years to succeed. The KIPP charter school is well regarded and will get a second site.
- (iii) Charters get state aid but have no local access to the property tax. The assured per pupil financial base is not clear and needs to be comparable to what a regular public school has. Charters can apply for federal and state funds, but the local financial support was not as well defined.
- (iv) Charter schools have access to tax exempt bond proceeds for borrowing for space needs and can take over an unused public school building. There are no state funds available for charter school facilities.
- (v) There are no provisions for Innovation schools or Magnets or other autonomous schools. Arkansas has a Virtual school and an Arkansas Academy for Math, Science and the Arts but these are innovative statewide schools, not local.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(3)

The state Virtual School is serving thousands of students, since some high schools are too small to offer a full array of courses. This school has helped students who fell behind recover and complete the course credits required for graduation.

The Arkansas Academy for Math, Science and the Arts has helped 1600 graduates prepare better for college and qualify for millions of scholarship funds allowing them to enter selective higher education programs in these three fields.

Total	55	32
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**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: (Tier 1)**

Throughout the plan Arkansas expresses a strong aspiration to implement the American Diploma Project and enroll many more students in high school math and science courses for four years. Teachers earn additional stipends if their students take and test well in AP courses in math and science. Each elementary school will be given funds for a STEM project, in school or after school. A school will be offered a menu of choices, including "build your own."STEM" program options. The plan would allocate \$67 million for STEM programs. The budget is much more explicit than the plan, because this major STEM resource allocation

is understated in the proposal. There are no priority allocations for the sixty or fewer high need schools. The plan is intended for all Arkansas schools.

There is one sentence suggesting that these programs will be offered to young women as well as men. There is another sentence mentioning racial and ethnic group access to STEM program. This minimal commitment is by no means fleshed out with full details. Arkansas gives STEM a major emphasis but less than a full description of where tens of millions will be allocated other than each school getting some choices. On the whole, STEM is very close to being the centerpiece of the Arkansas plan and earns full support.

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

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

**Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Arkansas is committed to almost all of the major American reform initiatives starting with Data Quality and including the Diploma Project, "value added" growth models, and expanded access to Advanced Placement courses.

The state has had long and productive relationship with America's Choice, The New Teacher Project, Teach for America and more recently KIPP charter schools. To overcome barriers such as poverty the state generously pays for ACT (college admissions) exams in grade 11 and Advanced Placement tests for high school students.

The commitment to increasing the number of charter schools or other autonomous innovative schools is much less strong. The need to evaluate teachers and principals for effectiveness in adding value is recognized and a comprehensive reform plan already begun. There needs to be an aggressive plan to rescue a dozen high schools from persistent low achievement. This is a state eager to overcome a legacy of poverty and committed to raise the educational opportunities and attainment for the next generation. On the whole, Arkansas has mobilized higher education, employers, other state agencies and foundations to agree to a bold strategy of educational reform for the next four years and beyond.

Total		0
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<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>412</b>
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# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #2150AR-7



#### 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>48</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10

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

(A)(1)(i) The application as a whole sets forth a coherent, comprehensive agenda and clearly articulates its plan for implementation. Though the overall goals of the state's plan become clear throughout the application, there is no clear statement of these goals in section (A)(i) that would chart the course for the application more clearly.

(A)(1)(ii) The high number of LEAs participating in all areas, including evaluation, tenure, and removal, is most impressive and speaks to the high level of interest in and support for Arkansas' plan. With such a high participation rate, however, it is surprising and concerning that not a higher percentage of students in poverty, where the needs are highest, are served in the participating LEAs.

The MOU makes clear that participating LEAs must agree to implement ALL applicable elements of the scope of work.

The scope of work is quite thorough and direct and requires much of LEAs in terms of their complete buy-in to the state's plan, though some key elements are apparently not included in the scope of work in the Teachers and Leaders section. Again, with such a high rate of full participation, this is most impressive.

The following items are of particular note in the scope of work:

- Every LEA will be required to develop a plan to adopt at least one STEM program.
- Academic achievement required for attainment of effective or highly effective evaluation marks for teachers and principals.
- Individual professional development plans are tied to student achievement data.
- The ability to fire based on evaluation results is clear, though the timeline is somewhat nebulous.
- The state department of education is committing to districts it will develop and make available the comprehensive instructional improvement system discussed in section A.
- Requirements for high-priority schools are also tied to their School Improvement 1003g applications to support cohesiveness and alignment.

The summary table indicates fairly weak union agreement despite a strong letter of support from union leadership. Additionally, the MOU reveals that the union is not giving up its right to collective bargaining on mandatory subjects of bargaining or on anything that is contrary to existing contract. This somewhat weakens the 54% of signatures collected.

Taken in sum, however, the level of both collaboration and commitment throughout the state is strong.

(A)(1)(iii) With the high level of participation, broad statewide impact is certainly possible with successful implementation of the plan. There is a concern, however, about the lower percentage of students in poverty in participating districts. Though the impact across the state will be broad, some of the students most in need of intervention will be missed. The low percentage of union support and the MOU opt-out clause call the reality of actual impact into question.

In terms of performance goals and measures, Arkansas has presented strong, aggressive goals related to student achievement. Goals related to graduation rate are not differentiated which will make it more challenging for the state to address gaps among various subgroups. A strength of the state's goals is that they are long-range, reaching into the adult population for college success as well. This suggests the commitment to their vision.

<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	13
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	10

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

(A)(2)(i) Throughout the application, Arkansas consistently demonstrates a strong belief in the value and power of broad-based collaboration as evidenced by numerous programs and partnerships including the Data Quality Campaign and partnership with the National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems. The high-level Governor's Workforce Cabinet, a collaborative of seven key state agencies, working together on economic and education issues and opportunities demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of both systemic change and individual needs. The application further demonstrates a P-20 vision as evidenced by support for Arkansas Better Chance for School Success program and involvement in efforts such as the America Diploma Project. There is strong evidence of legislative support for education. The state posits an understanding of why significant efforts at the state level have not yet resulted in significant gains at the classroom level on the scale desired – a lack of human capacity to support local efforts, individualize them as appropriate, and hold schools accountable.

The state plans for a new Office of Innovation to help network teachers, instructional leaders, administrators, and the entire community in conversations about the education revolution the state envisions. With its small staff, however, it is not clear how the efforts and products of this office will be any different in terms of getting the ideas and resources into the classroom. The application discusses plans for increased and deeper communication and assistance for planning, alignment of services, and resource allocation, but there is still not adequate detail on how this would truly be different from status quo in terms of reaching the classroom. There is also no discussion of a plan for sustainability once the Race to the Top program ends.

The various project budgets are reflective of the state's plans and goals and are generally thorough and complete. There are, however, a few areas of concern. The application narrative discusses the state's plan to hire additional auditors for its scholastic diagnostic audit process. No project budget appeared to include funds for this expense, so it is unclear if the state plans to fund these additional personnel with state or other grant dollars. As noted above, the budgeted staff for the new Office of Innovation seems inadequate for the considerable work of the office. With 247 participating districts, the task of communication alone will likely overwhelm the office. Regarding the Instructional Facilitators Project Budget, it is not clear how this program builds capacity if it is awarding endorsement to those already filling this role, but it does reward teachers of excellence who choose to pursue the endorsement. The Differentiated Compensation Pilot Project is not well-defined in either the application or budget narrative, making the budgetary amount nebulous at best. The funds are identified for the incentives whereas no funds are identified for development of the pilot program in the various districts. The project budget

narrative for the Effective ESL Teachers and Administrators Project appears to have an error in that it sets aside funds for assistance with special education coursework rather than ESL coursework. The reviewer hopes this is the case rather than having the project assume ESL students are largely special education thus requiring additional teacher training in that area. Otherwise, the project meets a vital need. The budget for the Development and Implementation of an IHE College of Education Report Card Project does not include any funds for travel; thus, it is not clear how the planned stakeholder group conversations will occur. The School Turnaround Office Project budget narrative, in the indirect cost section, refers to the Office of Innovation rather than the Turnaround office. The narrative does not match the project budget. The narrative is also sketchy as to the roles and responsibilities of the coordinator and assistant of this new office. It is not clear either from the application narrative or the budget narrative how this office interacts with the Office of Innovation or the Instructional Improvement System, Leadership Support Specialists, and Technical Support Teams project.

In terms of grant management, the capacity does not exist within ADE, so the state plans to outsource grant management and oversight during the period of the grant then train and transfer responsibilities to internal ADE staff. When the capacity does not exist, it is wise to pull in support if such support is available. The application does not make clear if such entities with this capability exist in Arkansas (or to serve Arkansas). Certainly, the day-to-day business of grant management will disappear after the funds desist, but the case has not yet been made in the application that ADE will then somehow have the capacity to continue monitoring its schools and LEAs in the manner it appears to wish.

In terms of sustainability, the state is relying on its demonstrated history of collaboration. The application narrative discusses the state's commitment to evaluate programs and continue only that which is working, which presumably will scale back but hone post-grant efforts.

The application makes a generally good case through its discussion of the state's history of collaboration with multiple partners that it has the ability and experience to implement the various projects within the grant, evaluate them to see what is working, and sustain the core of the initiatives it chooses. There is no specific plan discussed, however, for how the various offices created in the grant – like the Office of Innovation or Turnaround Office – might be sustained if proven effective.

(A)(2)(ii) The application is quite convincing that collaboration with a broad group of stakeholders is the Arkansas way. Letters of support show a clear and unified belief that the application builds on the successes of the past in Arkansas and will be used to scale up successful programs. Many letters make note of the strong collaborative process used to develop the application. It is noted here that the union letter of support is very strong.

<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	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16

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

(A)(3)(i) Arkansas has made substantial progress over the past several years in the various education reform areas. These reforms have been possible due to increased education funding both from the state legislature and from various grants from both USDOE and several foundations. Additionally, since the state education budget was healthy, Arkansas has been able to target all its ARRA funds toward advancing education reform.

Arkansas' application notes progress in the areas of college and career readiness, data quality and systems, effective teachers and equitable distribution, and supports and interventions.

(A)(3)(ii) The Smart Arkansas initiatives have been the mobilizing force behind state education reform and improvement. Additionally, the state's gains model provides \$5 million to incent student achievement gains at the school level. Arkansas has an approved growth model that is making a difference in AYP determinations and, complementary to the state's gains model, is focusing efforts on student growth.

Student state assessment data is provided only from 2005 to present, not 2003 as requested in the criterion. It is understood that cut scores changed in 2005 for one of the subjects, but the requested data should still be provided with that caveat noted. The data provided shows a clear and steady trajectory of improvement over time in all areas. Seeing the data disaggregated would help regarding the achievement gap. End-of-course exam data in literacy support the improvement trajectory in the ESEA exams. Gap data on the NAEP is inconsistent, but NAEP data also supports the generally positive trajectory of student achievement over the requested period. Nation's Report Card data shows Arkansas closing the gap with the national results on the aggregate in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and recovering after a falter in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to remain steady in comparison with the rest of the nation. The application does not appear to provide historical graduation rate data, though the narrative states the rate is above the national average.

The application makes a clear case for Arkansas demonstrating progress in its various school reform initiatives and on improving student achievement. The lack of some historical achievement and graduation rate data is problematic.

Total	125	92
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## B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(B)(1)(i) Arkansas is a full and eager partner in the Common Core Standards Initiative which involves 47 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. The state is involved at both the leadership and writing group levels. An MOA is present and signed by the governor and chief state school officer. A copy of the draft standards is present.</p> <p>(B)(1)(ii) The application outlines a quick adoption timeline to ensure adoption by August 2, 2010 and notes that any current revision of state standards is on hold pending adoption of the Common Core Standards so state standards can be aligned. It is presumed that any such alignment will meet the 85% requirement.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		

(B)(2)(i) Arkansas was in early on the efforts to create common assessments through its work with Achieve, Inc. beginning in 2005. They joined the larger consortium to include Achieve, NGA, and CCSSO in January 2010.

(B)(2)(ii) Arkansas is part of a consortium including 26 states and the District of Columbia. A copy of the MOU for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers is present and is signed by the chief state school officer.

<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(B)(3) Arkansas' strong recent history of systemic change is well discussed in the application and bodes well for the state's ability to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The state also has a history of moving toward common assessments in the area of formative assessments. Their membership in the CCSSO Multi-State Consortium on Formative Assessment since 2006 and their work with Margaret Heritage in two state co-ops is work that will serve the state well in scaling up their efforts toward higher standards and high-quality assessments. Arkansas' well-established Total Instructional Alignment process will serve the state well in implementing both the Common Core Standards and Common Assessments with the creation and dissemination of curriculum guides for each grade and subject as well as lesson plans and assessment items for each of the core standards. Additionally, Arkansas law requires teachers to have professional development plans aligned with the school's comprehensive plan to improve student achievement. This requirement will enable districts and school leaders to direct the work that needs to be done. The state's plan appears to tackle their self-identified weakness of being able to transition state-level initiatives to the classroom, though this remains a concern pre-implementation.</p>		
Total	70	68

**C. Data Systems to Support Instruction**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(C)(1) All required elements appear to be in place. Element number 10 appears to meet the basic criteria but would be stronger with mention of SAT and AP data as well. It is noted that in element 3 Arkansas tracks P-20 data rather than just P-16. The state's ability to communicate in element 4 is most impressive.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(C)(2) Arkansas has impressive beginnings in the area of accessing and using state data with its work with the Data Quality Campaign (DQC). The Hive tool for members of the community is evidence of transparency in accountability. This tool will allow any member of the public to access school and district level data and create graphs and charts using a variety of variables. It shows respect for all members of</p>		

the Arkansas community in their ability to access, analyze, and make decisions about data. The application illustrates the presence of strong collaboration within the state to deepen and broaden both access to and use of data for decision-making. This is evidenced by the significant effort to increase inclusion of pre-K students in the data system by working with cooperating agencies. The state's well-established relationship with the National Office for Research, Measurement, and Evaluation Systems (NORMES) is a substantial strength in ensuring the integrity of the state's data. The application notes that a 2008 Metis Associates evaluation revealed significant use of the state's existing system as well as evidence that use of the system had an impact on increasing student achievement. Their strong history in this area as well as plans for the future in terms of targeting training combine to make this area a strength in the application.

<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	5
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	4

**(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(C)(3)(i) Arkansas has a most impressive vision for a robust system. The application does not make clear whether or not the more rural areas of the state have the infrastructure to make them full participants in the system. The Unified Resource Portal Project budget allocates \$1.2 million for infrastructure equipment, but it is unclear if this will meet the need for the instructional improvement system as well. Excellent work appears to have been done on the statewide longitudinal data system, and plans for enhancements will make this system even more accessible and meaningful. The Unified Resource Portal would be a tremendous gift to hard-working educators.

As part of a five-state collaborative, Arkansas is working to determine how best to measure teacher effectiveness, and data and its use are part of that equation. It is not clear in the application, however, how this effort will interface with the proposed project on new teacher evaluation.

(C)(3)(ii) Though the initial professional development will be created by an outside vendor, Arkansas' plan includes a train-the-trainer model to build local capacity in this area. As the application states, "[t]he MOU for LEAs requires teachers and principals to participate in professional development on how to use the instructional improvement system and on how to effectively use the data extracted from it." Arkansas' plan to build a team of technology experts to assist with developing the training, courses, materials, and documents demonstrates a commitment to high-quality and high-access training.

(C)(3)(iii) The Arkansas Education-to-Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative will provide for better accessibility to cross-agency data, but only to authorized users to access approved custom reports. The Project Agreement in Appendix C-3-1 reflects a healthy and realistic understanding of the possible difficulties in working with complex data sets. Arkansas is working to ensure student data is FERPA compliant while working within the various consortia and across agencies through work with Trust Ed. These efforts seek to create public and researcher portals to improve data accessibility with which to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, strategies, and programs. In terms of timelines, whereas the Pre-K timeline appears adequate given existing systems, the instructional improvement system timeline feels rushed by a year. Selection and any necessary modifications of the system followed by data input (and in

some cases, possible creation) will likely take more than one year. Other timelines seem aggressive but reasonable.

Total	47	44
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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>14</b>
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	5
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4

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

(D)(1)(i) State law authorizes ADE to offer alternative routes to certification for both teachers and principals. ADE has offered a nontraditional licensure program for teachers since 1987. Additionally, the state can offer grants to those individuals willing to teach in high-needs subjects or in hard-to-staff regions. Over the past four years, the amount of grant dollars received has skewed to those seeking certification in high-needs subject areas. The application states that Arkansas has defined all post-baccalaureate pathways that qualify a teacher candidate for licensure as an alternative program. Later narrative explains that this is because students are fast-tracked due to the candidates having baccalaureate degrees in another subject. The state has an MOU with Teach for America as an additional pathway (Appendix D-1-1). The Administrator Licensure Completion Plan is the only administrator alternative pathway. Legal provisions appear adequate and longstanding (Appendix D-1-2)

The application narrative in this section does not discuss whether or not their allowed alternative routes meet the five elements of the RTTT definition. An examination of their various MOUs, state laws provided (which deal only with the state's non-traditional licensure program), and other sections of the narrative reveals that only four of the five elements can be confirmed. The application makes no mention of limiting coursework or allowing candidates to test out of certain coursework.

(D)(1)(ii) Three alternate routes to certification for teachers are in use (one of which is the two university Masters programs considered alternative in the state's definition). They require demonstration of basic skills (Praxis I) and subject matter content (Praxis II). All candidates are mentored through the state's induction process and Pathwise mentoring program as a capstone performance-based assessment. Program participation data illustrates an upward trajectory in participation. The state's Professional Teaching Permit is highly innovative and will be particularly beneficial in implementing future STEM initiatives.

The Administrator Licensure Completion Plan is the only alternate route currently available for administrators. What is different from traditional preparation programs is that those participating in the program are granted a certification waiver and may work in the role of administrator while completing their university program in administration.

(D)(1)(iii) Arkansas' shortage identification process is tied to its certification waiver process. The application notes that the process assists LEAs in employing fully licensed educators in shortage areas due, in part, to the sharing of shortage information with participants in the Non-Traditional Licensure Program. However, it appears the trajectory for the number of waivers granted is steep, implying increased

difficulty in obtaining fully certificated teachers. The application narrative does not discuss a process related to administrative shortages.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>44</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20

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

(D)(2)(i) Arkansas has two complementary growth models – one for state and one for federal accountability purposes. These are both clearly defined, and the growth model used for purposes of determining AYP the RTTT definition of a growth model.

(D)(2)(ii) The application describes that Arkansas began refocusing on evaluation as a means of improving student achievement in 2008. Four large districts in the state worked with the New Teacher Project to look at the research on evaluation. The Teacher Evaluation Task Force then formed in 2009 to undertake a two-year research project on the subject of teacher evaluation and has been assisted by Charlotte Danielson. As described in the application, teachers and principals were very involved in this process. Concurrently, the Office of Teacher Quality began analyzing evaluation instruments in use around the state. They found that only 3.5% of submitted evaluation forms required data about students' learning. This work made very clear to Arkansas that they needed a new evaluation system. The new system that will differentiate effectiveness is ready for pilot status, and this timeline will be accelerated if RTTT funds are awarded. There is no mention, however, of a timeline for 100% participation. A strength of the new system is that evidence of student growth must be demonstrated before a teacher can be designated as proficient or distinguished; however, the appendix referenced to define this growth does not appear to be present. Additionally, the system does allow for eventual termination based on performance. The new evaluation system appears rigorous, transparent, and fair. A Principal Evaluation Task Force will be convening this summer and will follow a similar process.

(D)(2)(iii) The proposed Arkansas teacher evaluation system does require the use of student data in determining the effectiveness of a teacher. Evidence of student growth must be demonstrated before a teacher is designated as proficient or distinguished. Though the system calls for annual evaluations, once a teacher achieves non-probationary status, the teacher is subject to a different form of evaluation that requires administrator observation of all elements only once every three years and focuses instead on self-designed professional growth. Even for these teachers, however, data is reviewed and used as a determiner in the final designation.

(D)(2)(iv)(a) The application narrative in this section speaks only to induction and mentoring support for novice teachers or those pursuing an alternate route. The previous section, however, stated that “[a]ll teachers will be prescribed specific professional development to counter any areas of weakness” perceived through the evaluation process.

(D)(2)(iv)(b) Arkansas has done some work in the area of rewarding teachers and principals based on demonstrated effectiveness. There is also more evidence of Arkansas' spirit of collaboration through their

involvement in the Teacher Leadership Consortium of 11 states to create standards for teacher leaders. An existing endorsement opportunity for Instructional Facilitators (or teacher leaders) in Arkansas will be buoyed with financial support from RTTT. The state is also in the exploration phase regarding a comprehensive system of differentiated pay based on performance; however, two teacher compensations programs are currently available to Arkansas schools, though one is in pilot form. The Milken Teacher Advancement Program is also available in Arkansas schools. An opportunity for incentive pay for teachers exists in Advanced Initiative for Math and Science schools based on the number of students earning qualifying scores on AP exams. Two charter schools also have developed differentiated compensation programs. RTTT dollars, if awarded, will fund a task force on the issue.

(D)(2)(iv)(c) Arkansas does not have tenure but rather defines teachers in their first three years as probationary. Those who accept a fourth-year contract become non-probationary. This appears to be a distinction without a difference. The Praxis III Performance Assessment is required for obtaining the Standard Teaching License.

(D)(2)(iv)(d) The application notes that experienced teachers assigned to the Intensive Assistance Track 3 in the new evaluation system will not be recommended for non-probationary status, but the narrative does not indicate what happens with an ineffective teacher who has already attained non-probationary status. The earlier graphic suggests those teachers could also be terminated after sufficient opportunities to improve.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	9
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7

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

(D)(3)(i) The Arkansas Equity Plan approved by USDOE in 2006 was recently updated. The Arkansas Supreme Court found in 2004 that education funding was inadequate and that the General Assembly had an obligation to provide an "adequate and equitable system of education." Subsequent laws passed to repair the deficiency include those requiring equitable beginning teacher salaries and funding, those providing assistance for teacher housing in eligible counties, and those providing incentive bonuses in high-priority districts. The application describes that currently there are several programs in place to bring more individuals into the teaching and administration ranks, to provide effective professional development, and to give access to more students to advanced classes. Some of these efforts provide incentives for those working in high-needs districts or hard-to-fill positions. Also, incentives to recruit and retain teachers in high-priority districts are guaranteed by state law. The annual incentive pay ranges from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per year. This section does not detail, or frankly even hint as to, the state's actual plan to ensure equitable distribution (Equity Plan provided in appendix). Though current status and previous actions are described, there is no attempt to discuss how these efforts have informed the Equity Plan.

Baseline data is not yet set for teacher or principal effectiveness, but Arkansas commits to a 10% increase annually once the baseline is set in the fall of 2010.

(D)(3)(ii) Arkansas has multiple ongoing efforts to increase the availability of effective teachers in the area of elementary math, and there is significant beginning work being done in STEM areas. There are plans to use RTTT dollars to increase the availability and training of special education and ESL teachers. The application details outstanding efforts in the area of AP not only in terms of accessibility and participation of students due to changes in state law but also in the areas of teacher training, mentoring, and teaming. The Environmental and Spatial Technology Initiative (EAST) program discussion is interesting, but the narrative does not discuss how this project relates to increasing the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff

subjects. This is also true for the Real World Design Project, except for a brief mention of building the pipeline of individuals skilled and interested in the STEM areas. Again, no baseline data is provided because currently Arkansas does not measure teacher effectiveness, though the timelines and subsequent goals are aggressive. In general, however, the state's ongoing efforts to increase the availability of effective teachers in elementary math, STEM, and Advanced Placement are excellent.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	3

**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(D)(4)(i) Arkansas currently has the ability to link student and teacher data, and that ability is in the process of being enhanced to make the data more useful. Arkansas has been awarded a Teacher-Student Link Project for Agency Leadership from the Gates Foundation and is participating in a four-state consortium to learn how best to measure teacher effectiveness. The application does not adequately discuss linking student data to principals and, thus, is scored down.

Arkansas plans for a Report Card for Colleges of Education to begin in the summer of 2011. The proposal appears to be a most-thorough gathering and reporting of data. The application narrative pledges an accountability component to follow implementation.

(D)(4)(ii) The application describes that Arkansas is part of a six-state consortium working on envisioning a new system of educator recruitment, retention, preparation, development, and empowerment. Part of this effort, with RTTT funding if awarded, will establish a task force to review, define, and outline effective teacher prep programs as evidenced by results of the Report Card for Colleges of Education. The section also references the state's STEM initiatives and work being done with colleges to improve in this area. Overall, this is a weak section that really doesn't address the criterion. There is little discussion of how to expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful, once the determination is made as to which ones are successful.

<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>
(i) Providing effective support	10	6
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	3

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(D)(5)(i) Arkansas has a strong and detailed plan for providing support to teachers and principals. The many-layered Arkansas's Smart Initiative launched in 1998 to focus on standards, professional learning, student assessment, and accountability.

For principals, The Arkansas Leadership Academy's Master Principal Institute provides intensive professional development for school leaders. The state also has a leadership plan developed under the guidance of Dr. Michael Fullan and the state's Leadership Coordinating Council. RTTT funds will increase the access of schools and districts to Leadership Support Specialists who are leadership coaches and technical support personnel. These individuals will serve on-site as well, so presumably this level of coaching is job-embedded.

The team of expert technology educators who will support the various project groups in developing training and materials for myriad forms of delivery will serve not only to reach a maximum breadth of educators but also to build capacity of the state’s leaders in the area of technology and its integration. The narrative, however, centers on the development of the technological aspects of the training rather than the content itself. There is an acknowledgement that the training must include not only how to access the data but also how to use that data to drive instructional decision-making to effect academic improvement. This is not, however, the focus of the discussion on training. Similarly, in earlier discussions of the robust Instructional Improvement System, the discussion focuses primarily on providing the tool and on training teachers how to access it, not on how to make good instructional decisions based on available data, assessments, and curriculum.

Within the STEM emphasis narrative, the state-funded literacy, math, and science specialists discussed provide part of their services on-site and, presumably, in a job-embedded manner.

There is no discussion in this section of the application about common planning and/or collaboration time for teachers, and the discussion of the various professional development structures being job-embedded is implied at best.

Arkansas’ existing depth of professional learning experiences, structures, and supports for school and district leaders bodes well for future success in implementing effective statewide reforms. However, the lack of specificity about the substance and foci of the trainings in favor of discussions of methodology and structures, while understood given a statewide rollout, is unfortunate.

(D)(5)(ii) The application certainly makes a case for the impact of teacher working-conditions on student achievement, and the reality of that is not in dispute. The narrative also defines teacher working-conditions broadly to include such aspects as professional development and instructional improvement systems. The narrative indicates plans to use the National Staff Development Council’s *Assessing Impact* to design the process for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of state efforts. Though this approach exhibits outside-the-box thinking, the application does not address the forms of support intended in the criterion and does not speak of measuring effectiveness of those supports with academic achievement as a primary consideration.

Total	138	90
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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>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
(E)(1) Arkansas does have the legal authority to intervene directly in schools and districts. Additionally, Arkansas is part of the Differentiated Accountability Pilot with the goal of its Smart Accountability model being to target interventions where they are most needed and nuance them elsewhere.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>31</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	26
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		

(E)(2)(i) Arkansas' definition was approved by the USDOE on February 23, 2010.

(E)(2)(ii) Arkansas' 2009 Smart Accountability initiative – the state's USDOE-approved differentiated accountability pilot – forms the basis for reversing failing schools, but the application states that without RTTT, Arkansas cannot be as extensive in its intensive support as hoped. The state's plans include coupling SIG funds (for building school-based instructional capacity) with RTTT funds (for building infrastructure, leadership, and support capacity).

The application states that Arkansas is open to all four intervention models. Experience and support exists for all four models, though there is an understandable concern with school closure and the turnaround model for Arkansas' most rural schools (though some rural schools/districts are considering the turnaround model). However, page 7 of Appendix E-2-1 indicates one option at Whole School Intensive Improvement Year 4/5 is to replace the principal OR hire a school improvement specialist. This significantly limits the impact of the RTTT criterion that states a principal will be replaced with certain intervention models. The evidence chart on page 154 appears to be missing some text, though the substance of the information is still clear. The performance measure chart appears to indicate Arkansas believes it has the capacity to work with all schools identified as persistently lowest achieving.

The Deep Knowledge Leadership Institute as described shows great promise in assisting with a successful implementation of not only the turnaround intervention model but also effective practices through the high-level analysis of data and the sharing of lessons learned.

In terms of past work in turning around schools, the results of ADE's work with America's Choice on the transformation of 52 schools are mixed. This is true of the work done with three other school turnaround models that serve several of Arkansas' school districts.

Moving forward, the Intervention Model Needs Assessment provided in Appendix E-2-2 is a thoughtful tool that will assist school and district personnel in analyzing not only the need for but also the best model for significant intervention.

Taken in sum, the application demonstrates that Arkansas has a reasonably strong capacity, the historical wisdom, and an ambitious plan to support its LEAs in implementing one of the four intervention models.

Total	50	41
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## F. General

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4

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

(F)(1)(i) According to the narrative, Arkansas meets this criterion. According to the charts provided, however, it appears this percentage cannot be determined as the total amount of state revenue is not provided. Only state revenue related to education is provided as a comparison to the total education revenue. It is undisputed that the per pupil funding amount increased. What cannot be determined from the information provided is if that represents a higher percentage of total revenue available to the state.

(F)(1)(ii) The Arkansas Supreme Court found in 2007 that the state's education system is both adequate and equitable. To achieve that, there has been significant state legislation since 2003 to increase education

funding and to ensure equitable opportunity, including in the quality of facilities. The application states that beyond the base funding, the state has created categories of funds that ensure equitable support for high-need and high-poverty schools and other schools serving students whose particular needs require extra resources. The application does not appear to discuss equitability between schools within LEAs. Also, the application acknowledges that enhanced funding provided by the legislature is temporary.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	5
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	5
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	3
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(F)(2)(i) Arkansas has three types of charter schools – open enrollment, conversion, and limited enrollment. There is no cap on the number of conversion and limited enrollment charter schools. A cap of 24 on open enrollment charter schools exists, but the history and narrative suggest the legislature would be willing to increase this number if the need and interest existed. Currently there are 18, so no applicants have been affected by the cap. Additionally, existing and successful open-enrollment charter schools can open additional campuses without impacting the cap.

Though the numbers of each type of charter school are provided, and there is a discussion of the possibly transitory nature of the cap of 24 on open-enrollment charters, the total percentage of schools that 24 represents is not provided as is required for evidence for (F)(2)(i). Additionally, with 19 open-enrollment charter schools scheduled to operate next school year, if the cap of 24 stood, it would effectively inhibit increasing the number of that type of charter school, though it is noted that the other two types available in the state are unlimited.

(F)(2)(ii) State laws exist regarding approval, reauthorization, and closing of charters, and procedures are in place for monitoring the various aspects of charter school operation. The recent formation of the state-level Charter School Review Council will add an additional layer to the monitoring and evaluation of charter schools.

In terms of evidence for this section, in the chart showing charter school application, authorization, and closure statistics, specific reasons are not provided for why each charter was denied. The chart does indicate a probable high level of scrutiny given the number of charters denied and those closed in the historical data.

(F)(2)(iii) The application narrative indicates that charter schools do receive equitable funding. The application narrative indicates charter schools receive the same amount of per pupil funding, though the specific data is not provided in this section. Additionally, "[b]eyond the financial floor and depending on certain variables," charters are eligible for special categories of funds as well. One assumes the "certain variables" are the same that apply to other public schools and that they apply in the same way. The application does not discuss local funding for charter schools, as required by the criterion.

F)(2)(iv) Conversion and limited public charters are allowed to participate in bonds and mill levies in relation to school facilities. The question of whether or not facilities funding is provided for these two types of schools is not addressed, nor is the question as to whether or not charter facilities face any stricter requirements than other public schools.

Open-enrollment charters receive no state assistance for facilities and cannot participate in bonds and levies, but they are not subject to any additional requirements for their facilities. They are granted the right of first refusal to buy or lease closed or unused portions of public school buildings and facilities. The application provides no description of relevant law on the facilities issue beyond a restriction on charging more than fair market value.

F)(2)(v) The application provides no evidence that the state enables LEAs to operate innovative autonomous public schools other than charters.

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

**5**

**1**

**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

F)(3) Two examples of innovative schools are provided – one a distance delivery model and the other a residential school for academically gifted students focusing on math/science. The only tie to law, regulation, or policy discussed is that the legislature had to vote to establish the residential school, and there are regulations in place for distance learning rules that other schools may also choose to follow. However, no information indicating an increase in student achievement or graduation rates or a narrowing of the achievement gap is provided. There is generally no discussion of any additional significant reform conditions in the state in this section.

Total

55

25

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

Available

Tier 1

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

**15**

**15**

**Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Arkansas' evidence on STEM is evident throughout their application. The letters of support in Section A show clear support for STEM. Throughout the application, the sense of collaboration with industry partners and universities is pervasive. Requiring all districts to implement at least one STEM program affecting the district's entire P-12 system speaks to broad statewide impact. The exceptional work done on expanding AP programs across the state and to giving a much more diverse group of students access to these programs will also serve the state well. Arkansas' STEM plans build on existing work being done in the state to enhance math and science instruction.

Total

15

15

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

Available

Tier 1

<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>
<p><b>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b></p> <p>Arkansas' application comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The state's application demonstrates that it and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform.</p> <p>Arkansas demonstrates in its application sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans. The application makes clear how the state, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, plans to use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	375



# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #2150AR-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>53</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	33
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15

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

(A)(1)(i) - The applicant has outlined a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that has existed in the state for some time. Elements of the reform agenda appear well coordinated and well focused.

(A)(1)(ii) - The state has garnered broad commitment among its LEAs. As expressed in the application, "Educators have placed their trust in the vision of Race to the Top and the plans we've drawn up together. Within a very short time, 244 of the state's 259 LEA superintendents and charter school directors, along with their board presidents and 105 teacher association leaders, signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing them to the plans and the work. The signatories represent 97% of our public school students and 96% of our teachers". However, section 3. VI of the MOU is problematic in that it presents an open question about the state's ability to implement many elements of the Race To The Top initiative to the extent they are in conflict with negotiated agreements in LEAs. The terms and conditions of the MOU do not reflect the strongest commitment by the participating LEAs to the state's plan. Additionally, only 54% of teacher union leaders indicated their support.

(A)(1)(iii) - The state articulates a fairly ambitious plan for LEAs that are participating in the State's Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers, 244, and percentage, 94, of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, 97, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the state to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for— (a) Increasing student achievement in (at a minimum) reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA; (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA; (c) Increasing high school graduation rates and (d) Increasing college enrollment and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education. As noted in the application, "Arkansas was invited to be one of eight States to participate in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute. The institute was sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and was coordinated by our partners at Achieve, Data Quality Campaign, Education Counsel, Jobs for the Future and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Our goals include biennial improvements in high school graduation rates; the percentages of students graduating after having completed the Smart Core Curriculum; the percentage of students graduating after having completed the Smart Core Curriculum along with an AP, IB, or Concurrent Credit course; or having successfully completed a CTE program of study/career focus; the percentage of students not requiring college remediation; percentage enrollment in post-secondary institutions for specified periods and for adults 25 years or above; and percentages of public school graduates and adults 25 years or above receiving a 2- or 4-year post-secondary degree. All the while, Arkansas continues to focus its efforts on closing the achievements gap." Implementing this array of

programs and initiatives will have broad impact in the state, which demonstrates a consistent and focused effort by the state to target priority areas of concern and populations specified in the notice.

<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7
<b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(A)(2)(i) - The state's application budget presents a clear picture of the resource allocation proposed for RTT funds. Furthermore, the state has an education infrastructure that can adequately meet the capacity requirements to implement the ambitious plans laid out in the proposal. There are 15 Education Cooperatives, which serve school districts throughout the state. This is a significant asset to the many small school districts located in rural communities around the state. It appears the State Education Agency and Commissioner of Education have extensive support from the Governor and Institutions of Higher Education. Therefore, strong leadership from the top seems to be in place. Support for LEAs is wide-spread, as evidenced by existing state education infrastructure. The state's relatively small population is presented as a positive dimension to the state's ability to communicate among school districts, supporters and key stakeholders. Furthermore, given that this infrastructure has already been developed, one can assume it will continue well after Race To The Top funding is depleted. The fiscal, political, and human resources of the state appear ready to undertake extensive reform.</p> <p>(A)(2)(ii) - Critical stakeholders, including teachers and principals endorse the state's plan. The business and industry have exhibited strong support as have numerous community groups and non-governmental organizations. Yet, only 54% of teacher unions have signed off on the proposal.</p>		
<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	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18
<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(A)(3)(i) - The state has made steady progress over the past several years in the four reform areas of ARRA. This includes increasing student outcomes overall, as evidenced by state assessments and NAEP data, increasing student achievement and increasing graduation rates. A number of innovative initiatives have been developed for this purpose through the use of ARRA funding.</p> <p>(A)(3)(ii) - Arkansas has made substantive progress in making gains across the range of academic and education outcome indicators. This is a testament to education reform initiatives underway for a number of years. But the data also show that the achievement gap continues to persist, even while student achievement in reading, language arts, and mathematics is improving for the entire student population in the state. While sub-populations of concern have also shown growth across the range of indicators, such as graduation rates, the gap appears to remain constant.</p>		
Total	125	103

**B. Standards and Assessments**

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

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

B)(1)(i) - Arkansas is a full partner in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). They joined 47 other states, two territories, and the District of Columbia in a shared commitment to common standards, beginning with English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. The standards are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. The consortium Includes a significant number of states.

B)(1)(ii) - The state has established a timeline for adopting the standards that is consistent with the Phase 2 criteria of August 2, 2010. They have specified a high quality plan toward which the state has made significant progress, and its commitment to implementing the standards thereafter in a well planned.

<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(B)(1) - Arkansas is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high quality assessments (as defined in this notice) aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards. Arkansas, in collaboration with its partners, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Testing, and WestEd, has agreed to serve as the lead state on a consortium applying for an Enhancing Assessment Grant through the USDOE. This grant will focus on developing a formative assessment system for all students that will help teachers, principals, and parents build the best education plan for their students. The proposal will specifically focus on developing formative assessments in English language arts and math. The assessments will be culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate for students with disabilities and for English language learners in all content areas.

(B)(2)(ii) - The consortium includes 26 states and the District of Columbia.

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

(B)(3) - Arkansas has an integrated system of programs and services targeted to meeting the goals of the RTT initiative. Examples include such programs as the SMART Initiative Roadmap, the Professional Development Tool Box, Data Driven Decision Making, and Education Services Cooperatives. The State has established a credible and high quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, and high quality assessments tied to these standards. State in collaboration with its participating LEAs, outlines activities that include: a rollout plan for the standards together with all of their supporting components, for example, the foundational work in curriculum and assessment permeates the education system. They are positioned to embrace the common core standards (CCS) and assessments. Through the Total Instructional Alignment (TIA) they are poised to translate the new standards into clear curriculum guides, and fully develop a comprehensive assessment system of formative, interim, and summative methods and measures. In cooperation with the state's institutions of higher education, they are aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments; developing or acquiring, disseminating, and implementing high quality instructional materials and assessments (including, for example, formative and interim assessments

developing or acquiring and delivering high quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and engaging in other strategies like broad professional development activities that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, including high need students.

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

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> Arkansas claims 12 data elements the America Competes Act of 2007 in their application.		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> (C)(2) - The state has a compelling high quality plan committed to ensuring that data from the statewide longitudinal data system are accessible to, and used to inform and engage, as appropriate, key stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, teachers, principals, LEA leaders, community members, unions, researchers, and policymakers); and that the data support decision makers in the continuous improvement of efforts in such areas as policy, instruction, operations, management, resource allocation, and overall effectiveness. The plan also ensures data can be accessed, analyzed, and communicated to all stakeholders to promote continuous improvement; and building the capacity of all stakeholders to use longitudinal data for effective decision making.		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3
<b>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> (C)(3)(i) - The proposal puts forth viable plans to increase the acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems 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. For example, the proposal states, "As a vital element of local instructional improvement systems, we aim to enhance our ability to link and share essential student data within all levels of every school district, especially with teachers. Connecting such information is fundamental for educators who must ground their decisions and adjust direction based on information that's both current and comprehensive. Effective teacher-pupil links must include students' progress as a component in measuring their teachers' effectiveness. Forging those links has become a priority over the last year and a half, with the support of our USDOE grant. In this section we describe two compatible technological systems that will deliver a world of data and electronic capabilities to educators throughout Arkansas".  (C)(3)(ii) - In this criterion the state has articulated a well conceived plan to support participating LEAs and schools in the use of the instructional improvement systems, and to provide effective professional development to teachers, principals, and administrators on how to use these systems and the resulting data		

to support continuous instructional improvement. Professional development will give educators the capability to better analyze, draw conclusions from, and collaborate around student data. In addition, the teacher and principal evaluation system will be linked, allowing for alignment and decision-making in crafting individualized supports for improving professional practice. Furthermore, the MOU for LEAs requires teachers and principals to participate in professional development on how to effectively use the data extracted from the system. Customized professional learning specific to the needs of individual districts and schools are planned. Race to the Top will supply the state with the funds to put together a team of expert technology educators. This team will provide support to all training groups with customized training materials and on-line supporting courses and documents. The team will consist of technical writers, experts in the field of professional learning and adult learning theory, and technology experts in the field of on-line Web-based experiences. They will ensure incorporation of 21st century learning skills in all training and supporting documents. This work will allow for customized training opportunities to be shared within the Unified Resource Portal.

(C)(3)(iii) - This section of the applicant's proposal is limited in scope. It fails to show how the state will 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 (*e.g.*, students with disabilities, English language learners, students whose achievement is well below or above grade level). The plan focuses primarily on workforce readiness and does not speak to broader research uses or student subpopulations of concern.

Total	47	44
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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>21</b>
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	7
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7

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

(D)(1)(i) - Statutory provisions allow alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals, particularly routes that allow for providers in addition to institutions of higher education. Alternative licensure programs are offered by providers that combine to create several alternative pathways toward a license: local school districts, colleges and universities, many of the 15 Educational Service Cooperatives, and in the instance of Teach For America a vendor independent of Arkansas. Regardless of the particular route, the criteria are the same: a bachelor's degree, a specified grade point average, and satisfactory grasp of content knowledge evidenced by passing the appropriate test: Praxis I assessment in reading, writing, and mathematics; Praxis II in content knowledge and basic skills. For principals and other school administrators, the Administrator Licensure Completion Plan is an alternate route to administrator licensure. However, the state meets the threshold of having four of the five elements for this criterion.

(D)(1)(ii) Alternative routes to certification are in use. The state reports that 30% of its teachers were licensed via alternative routes over the past three years. There exists an alternative route for principal licesure as well.

(D)(1)(iii) A reasonable process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage is in place. The system is design to prerevent any class from being taught for more than thirty consecutive days by an individual who isn't licensed to teach the children's grade level or subject matter. LEAs must seek a waiver from ADE for

any educator who isn't fully licensed. That waiver allows the individual to remain employed for up to three years while completing an Additional Licensure Plan (ALP) or Administrator Licensure Completion Plan (ALCP).

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>43</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	21

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

(D)(2)(i) Arkansas has establish a clear approach to measuring student growth and measure it for each individual student. This system meets the requirements of NCLB and includes growth targets for all students.

(D)(2)(ii) Although it is under development, the state has designed a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement. All applications of the process require evidence of teaching that results in students' learning. To ensure that feedback about their effectiveness is fair and meaningful, teachers will be fully aware of what is expected of them beforehand and how their approaches must be targeted to teaching and learning concepts, processes, and outcomes. That awareness allows the new teacher evaluation system to incorporate student growth data as a significant factor and includes the following performance levels: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, distinguished. Drafts have been completed for implementing the evaluation procedures and the various tracks for any teacher (probationary or non-probationary) who is encountering difficulty or performing unsatisfactorily. A Principal Evaluation Task Force is scheduled to convene in summer 2010 to establish the framework that defines effectiveness in principals and the appropriate rubric, evaluation tool, and evaluation procedures. This task force will be structured similarly to that of the teachers' task force: the group will consist of 12 building-level administrators, 12 superintendents, and 12 stakeholders representing various organizations similar to those who served on the teacher task force. ADE and the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) are working together to appoint members to the task force.

(D)(2)(iii) The state, under its new evaluation system, will conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback. As part of such evaluations, teachers and principals will be provided with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools. Evidence of the students progress is a significant part of the system, carefully analyzed at every level to help illuminate teachers' effects on their students. The process highlights teachers whose successful strategies can be celebrated and shared, while it uncovers weaknesses that can be improved.

(D)(2)(iv) While the state does not have tenure for licensed personnel, per say, it has a probationary and non-probationary status. The system is linked to granting post probationary status, induction programs, retention decisions, and removing ineffective performers. The link between evaluations and compensation as outlined in the plan is tenuous and leaves such a process to the discretion of individual LEAs.

<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	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	10

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

(D)(3)(i) The notice asks that the state ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals by developing a plan, informed by reviews of prior actions and data, to ensure that students in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools have

equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals and are not served by ineffective teachers and principals at higher rates than other students. The state's plan envisions a model of growing effective teachers in such schools, which, while encouraging, does not ensure an equitable distribution.

(D)(3)(ii) Arkansas has an array of programs in place and plans to increase the number and percentage of effective teachers teaching hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, and special education; teaching in language instruction educational programs (as defined under Title III of the ESEA); and teaching in other areas as identified by the State or LEA. The applicant has good data to identify the shortage areas.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	7
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	7

**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(D)(4)(i) The state has data systems and a credible plan to link student achievement and student growth data to each students' teachers and principals, to link this information to the in-state programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing, and to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the state.

(D)(4)(ii) The state indicates it will expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals. Through the use of the College of Education Report Card and participation in the Six State Consortium, best practice and effective program will be identified.

<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Providing effective support	10	10
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(D)(5)(i) Arkansas's Smart Initiative, which to focuses on standards, professional learning, student assessment, and accountability provides effective, data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals that are, where appropriate, ongoing and job-embedded. Such support focus on gathering, analyzing, and using data; designing instructional strategies for improvement; differentiating instruction; creating school environments supportive of data-informed decisions; designing instruction to meet the specific needs of high-need students and aligning systems and removing barriers to effective implementation of practices designed to improve student learning outcomes. The Arkansas Leadership Academy instituted the Master Principal Institute, part of which is Smart Leadership another statewide initiative, which supports education leaders.

(D)(5)(ii) The state presents information about numerous avenues to measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of those supports in order to improve student achievement. Through grant programs and collaborative initiatives the state is well positioned to implement such improvement efforts.

Total	138	115
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**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1
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<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(E)(1) - The Arkansas Department of Education has the legal and regulatory authority to intervene directly in the state's lowest achieving schools. Act 1467 of 2003 (<i>see Appendix E-1-1</i>), commonly referred to as "The Omnibus Quality Education Act," authorizes the state to intervene when a school district fails to meet state accreditation standards or falls into academic distress.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(E)(2)(i) - The state has a viable mechanism to identify the persistently lowest achieving schools including any non-Title I eligible secondary schools that would be considered persistently failing. The USDOE accepted Arkansas and eight other states into the Differentiated Accountability Pilot. The model, "Smart Accountability," has allowed them to explore ways to correlate research-based interventions with the specific academic deficiencies that have led to a school's needed improvement. This flexibility allows the state to be directive in the interventions necessary for persistently low-achieving schools or "high-priority schools." Smart Accountability is a more nuanced way to grade schools: stronger measures can be applied to chronically under performing schools.</p> <p>(E)(2)(ii) - Arkansas has a reasonable process in place to support its LEAs in turning around its persistently low achieving schools by implementing several of the school intervention turnaround models: restart model, school closure, or transformation model. The state has developed rules pursuant to The Omnibus Quality Education Act with very specific language about the consequences for failing schools: "Should a school fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress in the fifth year (year 4 of school improvement), the Board shall advance that school into restructuring. In restructuring, the Department may require the school to dismiss staff and administrators, annex the school to another school that is not in school improvement, and/or take other such action as deemed necessary by the Department and the Board."</p>		
Total	50	50

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>(F)(1)(i) - The percentage of the total revenues available to the State that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 (71.4%) substantially unchanged compared to the total revenues available to the State that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2008 (71.6%).</p> <p>(F)(1)(ii) - The state's policies lead to equitable funding between high need LEAs and other LEAs, and (b) within LEAs, between high poverty schools and other schools. This is accomplished in two primary ways: First, the state employs a foundation approach to the distribution of general fund education dollars, which strives for equity between high wealth</p>		

and low wealth school districts; Second, the state's funding mechanism is augmented with a weighted student formula that directs additional resources to high need school districts and schools.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(F)(2)(i) - The application states that Arkansas does not have an absolute limit on the number of charter schools it will allow, however, the configuration of its charter school law effectively inhibits the number of charter schools. As stated in the application, "Arkansas law provides for 24 open-enrollment charters but doesn't limit the number of licenses that allow for duplicating high-performing open-enrollment charters. Nor does the state restrict the number of conversion or limited charter schools a district can establish. As school reform continues to strengthen, conversion charters are a viable and appealing option, and LEAs are ripe for choosing to pursue reform through the charter gateway. New charter school contracts for the coming school year are finalized, so two more open-enrollment and two additional conversion charters will join the ranks. As a result, Arkansas school districts and other sponsors will host 19 charters with open enrollments, 1 licensed charter campus, 13 conversion charters, and no limited charters as yet."

(F)(2)(ii) - The State has statutes and regulations regarding how it approves, monitors, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools. Student achievement is one significant factor, among others, in authorization and renewal. Charter schools are encourage to serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, especially relative to high need students. Procedures exist to close or not renewed ineffective charter schools.

(F)(2)(iii) - Arkansas funds its charter schools similar to all other public schools, according to the per-pupil allocations of the state's funding formula, which considers local resources (*Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-23-103, 6-23-501 and 6-23-502*), along with federal aid, grants, and private donations. State law also adds support for open-enrollment charters in the form of funding commensurate with the school's current-year enrollment; dispersing funds in twelve equal installments to forestall cash-flow dips; and the right to receive gifts and grants from private sources. *Ark. Code Ann. § 6-23-501*.

(F)(2)(iv) - The State provides some categories of charter schools with funding for facilities (for leasing facilities, purchasing facilities, or making tenant improvements), assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities. Open enrollment schools are the exception. No evidence of the state imposing any facility related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public school was observed.

(F)(2)(v) - The State does not enable LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

(F)(3) - The State, in addition to information provided under other State Reform Conditions Criteria, has created other conditions favorable to education reform or innovation that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes. Examples include the Virtual High School and the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Science and the Arts.

Total	55	39
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**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: (Tier 1)**

The state presents enthusiastic support for STEM and plans for future action contingent on Race To The Top funding in this section of the application, but does a poor job on explaining the extent of its existing STEM undertakings. However, based on information from other parts of the application there seems to be substantial efforts in the state related to STEM. For example, Project STEM, the Arkansas STEM Coalition, and STEM professional development. The plan also addresses underrepresentation in STEM by girls and women.

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

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

**Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The applicant has outlined a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that has existed in the state for some time. Elements of the reform agenda appear well coordinated and well focused. The state's application comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The state and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform. The state adequately demonstrates in its application sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans; and it describes how the state, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	436
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# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #2150AR-6



#### 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>48</b>
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8

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

The state articulates a clear plan and provides specific examples of how its application and reform agenda are comprehensive and coherent. Its Smart Arkansas Initiative is ambitious and addresses all the key reform areas.

The state generated participation from 96% of its LEAs, representing 97% of students, but only obtained local teachers' union leader support from 54% of participating LEAs, and only 80% of students in poverty are in participating LEAs. The state MOU departed from the model MOU in some respects e.g., in 3.II. the word "committed" was removed, and there are carve-outs in the Assurances section preserving the union's right to bargain any element of the plan. The Preliminary Scope of Work outlined in Exhibit I is detailed and robust, although it waters down the commitments in D(iv)(c) and (d) and eliminates completely D(2)(iv)(b) and D(3). The limit of scope criterion E(2) to high priority LEAs seems reasonable. Overall the state seems to be committed to aggressive reform at the risk, from which it suffers moderately, of having lower teachers' union support.

The state's plan to translate LEA participation into statewide impact is likely to be successful because of the 96% participation rate. The state articulates high school graduation and post-secondary education goals related to its participation in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute, but is not specific in this section about student achievement growth or decreasing achievement gaps, so medium points are awarded for (iii).

<b>(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9

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

The state points to a long history of joining national collaboratives and initiatives, and its ability to "work together," as evidence of its capacity to implement the plan, but it falls short of providing clear implementation accountability. The proposed Office of Innovation likewise has promise, but it is budgeted at 1 FTE and and less than \$200K/year in total, while having an impossibly broad agenda. The person to lead this Office is not identified, there is no timeline or priorities with respect to how it will become the "hub of collaboration and cooperative efforts aimed directly at what works." Bidding out oversight to a third-party project management office (PMO) seems like a good idea, especially with the intent to build capacity at the state and local level over time. There is only a mild commitment to coordinate, reallocate and reurpose

funds to align with the grant, and these efforts are to be coordinated by the PMO. Overall, the rhetorical language in this section of the proposal is stonger than its substance, and medium points are awarded for (i).

The state provides good evidence of broad stakeholder support, including from stakeholders including legislative leadership, IHEs, major foundations, and the statewide teachers' and administrators' associations, for its proposals, so high points are awarded for (ii).

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18
<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>The state's record is strongest in the area of college and career readiness, where it has attempted broad strokes efforts to increase rigor supported by creative initiatives like the emphasis on AP and Voluntary Universal ACT. It has made less progress in data quality. There have been some efforts to improve effective teaching and the equitable distribution, e.g., financial incentives given to about 500 high-performing teachers per year to work in high-priority districts. In the area of supports and interventions its efforts have been more traditional and not obviously successful. Overall there is good progress demonstrated in each of the reform areas, so high points are given for (i).</p> <p>The state has made strong progress on its state tests and good progress on the NAEP -- especially in closing the "gap" between the state and the rest of the U.S. The strength of the state test gains are even more impressive given the USDOE commendation for rigor. Given the relatively steady rate of gain on the NAEP it would have been doubly challenging to make substantial progress reducing the achievement gap at the same time, so the mixed record there is less troubling. No achievement gap data was provided for the state test scores, nor were any data provided on the high school graduation rate over time, so a high score could not be justified despite the strong NAEP gains.</p>		
Total	125	91

**B. Standards and Assessments**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>The state is a member of the Common Core Standards Initiative with 47 other states, and is eager to adopt the standards by August 2, 2010. The state has been a leader in the standards movement.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		

The state is a member of the Achieve consortium of 26 states planning to develop and implement high quality assessments to complement the Common Core Standards, and is the lead state in an application for an Enhancing Assessment Grant through the USDOE.

<b>(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>The state has a strong plan for supporting the state-wide transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. Its original 1998 Smart Initiative focused on standards and assessment with aligned professional development; subsequent to that initiative a regional co-op designed and implemented a Total Instruction Alignment (TIA) process that produced standardized curriculum guides. This TIA process evolved into the state's model for professional development on standards-based instruction. The state also developed a formative assessment system that was implemented by "many of our school districts." The state's plan makes standards-based instruction and assessments a clear priority. The education service co-ops provide an infrastructure for dissemination and training, and the plan includes Summer Institutes for additional training. The State's \$3 million per year graduation rate incentives related to the Smart Core curriculum is a creative and possibly revolutionary program. The only possible flaw in the plan is the lack of attention to the platform for the formative assessment system -- the budget includes \$4 million over 4 years related to an RFP to develop the training modules including technology tools, but there is no discussion of what technology tools are required or whether \$1 million per year is likely to be sufficient.</p>		
Total	70	69

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>The state's response to this criterion is comprehensive and complete, and includes all the elements of the America COMPETES Act.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Accessing and using State data</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
<p>The state has an impressive plan -- many steps of which have already been implemented -- to ensure access to, and effective use of, longitudinal data. Its state longitudinal data system (SLDS) is already functional and appears to be used well by many districts and schools. The state is prioritizing on-going ease of use, data integrity, and agency cross-sharing improvements, as well as linkages to pre-K and early childhood education. It has already developed a Hive system for interactive data analysis, which system will be expanded as part of its plan.</p>		
<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5

**(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state has a strong plan to increase the acquisition, adoption and use of local instructional improvement systems. It is built around a software-based instructional improvement system (IIS) that integrates with the SLDS and IDEAS, an on-line professional development portal. The four main components of the proposed IIS are clearly ambitious, but also well planned. The Unified Resource Portal represents a bold attempt to create a single sign-on system that will enable user access to all the various data systems. The proposed \$17MM budget for IIS and \$10MM for the portal project emphasize the importance of this criterion in the state's overall plan. If this initiative is successful it will be a true breakthrough for the use of data to improve instruction.

The state appropriately plans work with an external vendor to assist with the creation of professional development around the use of the IIS. The training model will build capacity at the regional co-ops, and leverage outside education technology experts to contribute to this state-of-the-art system.

The state's plan for data accessibility and dissemination is similarly thoughtful. The state already operates the Arkansas Education-to-Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative (AETTT) as a mechanism for cross-agency data sharing. The plan does address the need to address students' "divergent" needs, but it is not explicit about making the data accessible for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of materials, strategies and approaches for educating disadvantaged students and subgroups. The state has carefully considered privacy and security issues and plans to employ the Arkansas Research Center's Trusted Broker Unit, TrustEd to ensure sophisticated privacy and security practices are implemented.

Total	47	46
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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>12</b>
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4

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

For all three D(1) criteria medium points were awarded because the state reform criteria are met for teachers, but not for principals.

The state provides legal authority for alternative certification by the state education department. The non-traditional licensure program (NLTP) and Teach for America (TFA) programs appear to be independent of IHEs, selective, limit the amount of coursework required, provide effective mentoring, and give the same level of certification upon completion (at least in NLTP for this last element). For alternative principal certification there is an Administrator Licensure Completion Plan, but it is not clear whether it contains the elements of alternative certification as defined in the notice, as its participants continue to study at a college or university.

The alternative teacher pathways are used extensively in the state, but medium points are awarded because the waivers for administrator licensure do not meet the definition in the notice.

The state's process for monitoring, evaluating and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage are adequate. Under criterion (i) the application refers to grants for the NLTP participants, which appear to provide an incentive to fill the areas of shortage. The NLTP program, and to some extent TFA, appears to

have the effect of preparing teachers to fill the areas of shortage, but again high points cannot be awarded because of the lack of an analog for principals.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>42</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20

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

The state is sophisticated in the design and implementation of growth models to measure student achievement growth, as evidenced by its meeting the USDOE standards for pilot growth models. Its approach is clearly articulated in the proposal.

The state's narrative describing the recognition of existing flawed teacher evaluation systems and the consensus-driven Teacher Evaluation Task Force approach (which incorporated input from teachers, principals and other stakeholders) that resulted in the adoption of Danielson framework reflects a serious and organized effort to improve teacher evaluation in a substantive way. But while the new system will be evidence-based, it is vague to what extent student growth will be a factor in the evaluation. (I could not find components 4b, 4c, 4d and 4f, which the state says provide evidence of student growth, in Appendix D-2-3.) This vagueness may dilute the potential benefit of the \$10MM proposed investment in differentiated compensation pilots (1,000 teachers @ \$10K/teacher). The plan for evaluating principals is less well-developed because the Principal Evaluation Task Force will only convene in the summer of 2010, but its stated design intent is appropriate. This Task Force will include principals, superintendents and other stakeholders, but not explicitly teachers. Both evaluations include an annual evaluation protocol. The language in the scope of work exhibit to the state's MOU -- that a teacher or principal will not be rated effective or highly effective unless they have achieved acceptable rates of student growth -- does not appear to be incorporated in the narrative of the application. Because of the uncertain articulation of the prominence of student growth in both systems, only medium points are awarded for criterion (ii) and (iii).

The state's plan to use the evaluation systems to inform key decisions is well-intentioned but somewhat non-committal. It almost seems like the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Task Forces stopped short of the goal -- they plan to create effective systems, but aren't strongly committed to using them to inform the key decisions specified in the criterion. The language with respect to using the systems to create a comprehensive differentiated compensation program is watered down -- "we'll explore..." and "Many in Arkansas support..." and "may be grounds for reassignment..." There are a number of programs available for creative compensation structures -- Rewarding Excellence in Achievement Program, Alternative Pay, and Teacher Advancement Program -- but they do not appear to be highly utilized. The Performance Measure targets by the state assume its systems are "qualifying evaluation systems" but because of the uncertainty around the importance of student growth in the systems and the soft language about using the systems to inform key decision, only medium points are awarded.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</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	8

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

The state has a good program to provide incentives to recruit and retain teachers in high-priority districts, and has made some efforts to expand teacher and student curriculum through online delivery, but its plan falls short of detailing how it will redistribute highly effective (as defined in the notice) teachers and principals to those schools.

The state does have a variety of programs -- many of which it plans to expand with RT3 funding -- that increase the number and percentage of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, especially in special education, English as a Second Language, and STEM. The state plans to increase the number of schools in its Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP), which should have the effect of improving teacher quality in AP subjects. High points are awarded for (ii) despite some uncertainty about whether student growth is a significant part of the evaluation of teacher effectiveness.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	7
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4

**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state is one of five that received a Teacher-Student Link Project grant, which is focused on establishing guidelines around the tricky issue of attributing a "teacher of record" and validating the linkage of teacher and student data. The state plans to publish the Arkansas Report Card for Colleges of Education in the summer of 2011. The report will contain a wealth of information including student growth information. This initiative is ground-breaking.

The state plans to use RTTT funding to establish a task force to understand better what is effective teacher preparation, based on the report card. The task force plan, and the questions it plans to address, are laudable but do not contain all the elements of a high quality plan, so medium points are awarded for (ii). The state's plan also appropriately focuses on efforts to improve programs and options to produce more effective STEM teachers.

<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
(i) Providing effective support	10	7
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	4

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state's plan is solid with respect to providing effective support. It includes using RT3 funding to increase the number of Leadership Support Specialists in the regional co-ops, and to hire a Technical Professional Development Support team of expert technology educators to work in tandem with the existing infrastructure to ensure the state's priority of enabling data-driven instruction is implemented successfully. The state will also increase support for professional development in STEM.

The state is committed to undertake a study on teaching and learning conditions throughout the state with the intent of continuous improvement of its professional development efforts. It is not clear whether this study will be correlated with student growth data so that its conclusions can be verified. The state's commitment to continuous improvement of the effectiveness of its support is reasonable, but not particularly ambitious.

For both criteria the state's proposal lacks some of the elements of a high-quality plan, e.g., timelines and activities, so medium points are awarded.

Total	138	89
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**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1
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<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> The state has the authority to intervene directly in the lowest-achieving schools and in LEAs.		
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	15
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> The state's plan to identify the persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools was approved by the USDOE. Its turnaround plan for the 19 PLAs is reasonable but hardly bold, so medium points are awarded for (ii). It allows the schools to select the intervention model it proposed to implement (albeit based on a guideline instrument), but has a clear bias toward the turnaround model. The state proposes to establish a School Turnaround Office as a locus for the effort, and garner support from "allies" such as the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA) and the Deep Knowledge Team Institute. The state will also use grant funds to staff math teachers at the two PLA elementary schools, and college and career coaches at the five PLA middle and high schools that do not currently qualify for them. The state and some districts have experience with third-party turnaround models (e.g., America's Choice), but there is not much emphasis on the potential of this intervention in the narrative -- the state seems more interested in funding \$9 million for the ALA. Given the relatively small number of schools and focused attention on the PLAs, they are likely to improve, but the accountability for that improvement is not very clear and the pace of magnitude of the turnarounds are questionable.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> The percentage of total state revenues used to support education in FY09 was substantially unchanged from FY08, so medium points are awarded. The state National School Lunch (NSL) funding stream provides significant additional funding, above the minimum foundation payment, for high poverty districts that include high-need LEAs. The funding formula for school facilities improvements, which includes a "wealth index", likely leads to more equitable funding of school facility dollars to high need LEAs. It is not clear, however, whether the local portion of the funding formula results in wealthier districts providing disproportionately high funding to their schools such that effect of the state NSL funding is substantially reduced, and there is no explanation of whether the state policies lead to equitable funding of high-poverty schools within LEAs, so medium points are given.		
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>13</b>
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	3

(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	5
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	3
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	2
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state has a low cap on the number of open-enrollment charter schools and requires the application to be made first to the local school board. But the state does not limit the ability of high-performing charter schools to operate additional campuses under their original charter (i.e., replication of high-performing charter schools, if they already operate, is not constrained by the cap). This feature somewhat mitigates the low cap, so medium points are awarded for criterion (i). The state has taken a responsible approach to approving, monitoring, evaluating and closing charter schools, so high points are awarded for (ii) despite the apparent lack of emphasis on student achievement as a performance measure. The state's funding formula appears to fund charter schools equitably but there is no mention of whether charter schools are entitled to receive a commensurate level of local funding, so it cannot be determined what percentage of comparable funding the charter schools receive. Medium points are therefore awarded for (iii). Charter schools in the state do not receive any facility funding, but they have the ability to borrow using tax-exempt bonds and there are no special constraints on the types of facilities they may operate. The right of first refusal (ROFR) to buy or lease closed or unused portions of public school buildings is not necessarily meaningful if it requires the district to initiate the sale or lease that space before the ROFR kicks in. Overall, the facility funding policies put charter schools at a significant disadvantage, so low points are awarded for (iv). The state does not have a provision for LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools.

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

5

2

**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state points to the Arkansas Virtual High School (2,300 students) and the math-science residential school (230 students) as demonstrations of other significant reform conditions. These conditions represent only moderate evidence relative to this criterion, so medium points are awarded.

Total

55

21

**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: (Tier 1)**

The Project STEM Starters model focused on enhancing science learning for elementary students, which is a novel approach with a good chance of success. The appendix appropriately addressed how this program meets the requirements of this priority. At the secondary school level, the APTIP model also has a clear STEM benefit. One of the programs, the Environmental and Space Initiative, is noted to work particularly well with underrepresented groups in the STEM areas; another, the Real World Design Project, features participation with industry groups. But the guts of the state's STEM plan is to use \$68 million (representing about one-third of the total grant request!) of RT3 funds to fund LEA-driven STEM initiatives that meet the requirements of this priority, including removing barriers to underrepresented groups and garnering higher education and industry collaboration.

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

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

**Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state comprehensively and coherently addresses the key reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The state's plan has some creative and bold elements -- e.g., the Smart Core incentives, Unified Resource Portal, and College of Education Report Card. The state's proposal is strongest in the areas of Standards and Assessments and Data Systems; its plan with respect to Great Teachers and Leaders suffers somewhat from a vague commitment to use student achievement growth as a significant factor in teacher and principal evaluation systems, and does not commit to using those evaluations to inform key decisions. Its turnaround plan is reasonable but uninspiring, and the conditions for charter schools are poor.

In addition to the STEM priority, the biggest chunks of the proposed budget include \$17MM for IIS, \$12MM for Smart Core incentives, \$10MM for the Unified Resource Portal, \$10MM for differentiated compensation pilots, \$9MM for instructional facilitators, and \$9MM for the ALA turnaround program. While some of these programs are more creative and likely to succeed than others, the overall priorities represented by the budget proposal are consistent with the state's coherent proposal.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	361
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# Race to the Top

## Technical Review Form - Tier 1

### Arkansas Application #2150AR-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	31
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	5

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

The state puts forth a clear reform agenda that is aligned and in-sync with the education areas outlined in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The state puts forth a compelling narrative regarding how it wants to build on its data system and standards and assessment efforts. These sections are clear, most likely because they build on the state's current work, however, the state's explanation of how its plan supports Great Teachers and Leaders and Turning Around Low-Performing Schools lacks that sense of clarity. For example, the state highlights Teach for America for playing an important role in placing educators in hard-to-staff areas. This celebration of TFA seems to conflict with the state's commitment to ensuring poor and minority students are not taught by inexperienced teachers, since, inherent to the TFA model is placing new teachers, who are by definition novices, in the poor and underserved communities.

There is a tension between the state's plan to expand alternative routes and its plan for equitable teacher distribution. In addition, the state in discussing the work of its Teacher Evaluation Task Force does not cite the "noted expert in educator evaluation" they have partnered with. In regards to turning schools around, the state, per its theory of change, wants to build its capacity to "more deeply analyze school problems and develop a system to address them fully." It would seem the state and its districts are in the process of refining its turnaround work. Consequently, its effort to expand its scholastic diagnostic audit seems counter to its decision to provide analysis that is more meaningful. The state's "most intensive turnaround intervention" as described seems weak and inconsistent with the Department's turnaround models as the state's model proposes providing intensive support to a principal who may be terminated under one of the USDOE's intervention models.

The terms and conditions of the state's MOU and its preliminary scope work reflect a moderate commitment on the part of participating LEAs to transform, improve, and build the capacity of their education system in accordance with the four ARRA areas. For example, under 3. Assurances, roman numeral two, the state revises the sample MOU provided by USDOE, changing "committed" to "supportive". The result is the MOU reads: The Participating LEA hereby certifies and represents that it: is familiar with, and is committed to, the elements of ADE's Race to the Top grant application and is supportive of the goals and plans for implementation. The state's Preliminary Scope of Work does not include (D)(2)(iv)(b) and section (D)(2)(iv)(c) does not address the role of evaluation in granting tenure and/or full certification.

The state's decision to only require LEAs listed as high priority to participate in its turnaround work is a smart strategy as it allows the state to laser focus on 19 districts, which include Little

Rock School District, and leverage its School Improvement Grant.

The state's plan is supported by 96% of its LEAS although roughly 1 of 2 eligible local teacher's union signed on.

What is interesting here is the state's decision to "accelerate goals that have been clearly defined in the College and Career Ready Policy Institute." Using goals that were created in 2008 to implement a plan in 2010, seems unwise as the education and economic landscape has shifted. While it is plausible that the state revisited their goals and after careful evaluation made a decision to follow through with the plan, we are not told that this happened.

The 12 LEAs that are not participating in Arkansas's Race to the Top serve 20% of the state's impoverished student body. The state's application does not list the 12 non-participatory LEAs, so it is difficult to evaluate if their absence will limit impact or if due to the lack of economies of scale, their participation was prohibitive. For example, there could be one LEA serving a high number of students in poverty and 10 LEAs that are not or there could be 12 LEAs with a higher percentage of impoverished students per district than the participating LEAs.

It is very possible given the number of students served by participating LEAs that the state's plan will translate into broad statewide impact. The challenge is the state does not articulate a clear set of ambitious yet achievable goals for increasing student achievement, closing the achievement gap, and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit. The state established a set of 10-year "stretch goals" that it plans to implement before Race to the Top, so it would seem the "acceleration [of its] goals" would link to new benchmarks. Those are not included. In fact, the state seems use the same performance measures from 2008, which is a problem since the 2008 performance measures do not address the elements listed in the criterion.

<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	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8

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

The state's plan for supporting participating LEAs in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed includes developing an Office of Innovation. The state envisions a "small staff" whose work "will be action oriented" and "foster a fresh, inventive approach to sparking and sustaining education reform." While these goals are laudable, according to the budget, the state is planning an office of two - one director and one assistant. Consequently, the state's plan for supporting LEAs vis-à-vis its Office of Innovation is unsustainable, for it is under-resourced.

In addition, the state's plan for supporting participating LEAs places an unbalanced focus on dialogue and research at the expense of measurable meaningful actions. Arkansas will "gather an advisory group," "facilitate deliberative dialogue," "find *what works* models," "broadcast a 'Solutions Showcase,'" "hold forums," "craft a plan for communication," and "encourage successful reform practices." These activities are well-meaning, but they do not support what the state has previously identified as the most significant challenge to successful reform implementation: *a shortage of human capacity to support schools and school districts in their efforts to implement state reforms.*

The state will partner with a third party provider to provide a Project Management Office function to manage its grant. The state has a clear vision of the group's role, which should ensure that the

selected company provides effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant. The concept of "outsourc[ing] a Project Management Office function" is understandable initially. The challenge is that the plan does not seem to align with the state's desire to build capacity for the long term. While the state asserts it will "transfer this project management capacity to an internal team of seasoned ADE experts to ensure ongoing accountability well beyond the four-year Race to the Top span," the budget reflects a continued sustained commitment to the outsourced function throughout the life of the grant, rather than a descending expenditure that shows the state gradually bringing functions in-house.

One of the undertakings of the PMO office "will be to work with state agencies and school districts to determine how best to coordinate, reallocate, and repurpose education funds to align with Race to the Top monies." Since the state is clear that it would like the PMO office to provide these services, it is likely that they will build these requirements into the RFP. Also, the state's use of funds does seem to align with its theory of change. For example, it have set a minimum LEA funding floor of \$21,000; the states can use this money to build each district build its local capacity.

The state's response to using its fiscal, political, and human capital resources to continue those reforms funded under the grant lacks specific details and clear examples of how the state plans to "infuse [its] plan throughout [its] school system." This lack of description poses a minimal challenge. The state situates its plan in the context of its 10-year stretch goals; hence, it is likely the state will continue efforts after the grant period has ended because the state's efforts started before Race to the Top.

The State's teachers and principals support the state's Race to the Top effort. Although a significant number of local teacher's unions did not sign on, the support letters from the state-level group are effusive in praise of the state for collaborating, "recognizing, listening, and responding positively to [their] recommendations." In addition, the state's application is supported by a broad group of stakeholder, although letters from business and civil rights community are notably absent or scant.

<b>(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	21

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

As outlined in its application the state has an excellent track-record of making progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and using its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms. The section provides an exhaustive overview of the state's efforts to dramatically improve education systems and increase the number of young people being prepared to succeed in college and career.

Evaluating the state's progress today compared to the last decade illustrates a dramatic improvement in student performance; however, evaluating student performance within the last few years illustrates a drastically different picture. For example, the gap among black and Hispanic students has exploded on NAEP Grade 8 mathematics from a two-point gap in 2007 to a 19-point gap in 2009.

The state asserts that "for years, [it has] been able to boast a graduation rate above the national average;" however, the state does not include information since at least 2003 regarding its graduation rate. We are only told that their 2007-08 graduation rate is 69.4%. One can infer from the information the state provides that it has made steady progress at reducing dropouts and

increasing graduation rates.

The state's application does not simply present data; it includes adequate commentary/narrative for understanding the data.

Total	125	87
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**B. Standards and Assessments**

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

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

The state's participation in the Common Core State Standards Initiative is evidence that it is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards that are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. CCSSI includes a significant number of states (47).

The state outlines in (B)(3) a clear process for adopting a common set of K-12 standards by August 2, 2010. The narrative also includes a very thorough process for rolling out the standards to its districts and schools.

<b>(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state's participation in the Achieve consortium is evidence it is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards. Currently, twenty-six states are committed to the Achieve consortium.

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

The state's narrative regarding its Total Instructional Alignment provides a great example of the state's capacity and process for transitioning to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. Additionally, the state's pre-work with the CCSSO Multi-State Consortium on Formative Assessment and the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing gives them a roadmap for developing and transitioning educators to a "comprehensive assessment system of formative, interim, and summative methods and measures."

The state's decision to provide dedicated full-time staff is smart as it provides a point person who can be held accountable within ADE, and ensures through coordination and collaboration that cooperatives, districts, and schools are properly resourced and supported. Of note, the budget

refers to the to-be-hired staff member as the ADE Program Coordinator, while the narrative refers to the same person as Program Director. The state's decision to work with Margaret Heritage is understandable, given the excellent record of accomplishment and established rapport. However, depending on one person to bring their professional development program to scale seems unwise. It is a Herculean undertaking, for example, to hold annual summer institutes while launching online programs while providing direct guidance to schools on implementation. The state may be leveraging the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing to assist with this effort; however, it is not clear from the narrative. Overall, the state outlines a high quality plan that utilizes and leverages education service cooperatives, engages its school districts, and provides essential professional development to teachers.

The state's decision to develop professional training modules towards providing a train-the-trainer package gives them a cost-efficient way to ensure educators throughout the state are trained. However, a challenge with such a model is ensuring fidelity to implementation. The state does not discuss how they will ensure each training system will be implemented with a high degree of adherence to the model.

The state's Smart Core Incentive Program is a novel approach to increasing the number of students taking the more rigorous Smart Core Curriculum. However, the solution seems slightly off target. The state's asserts that "students decide to opt out or drop out of Smart Core [Curriculum] for various reasons, including insufficient academic support, an unclear vision of the school-career continuum, time constraints, peer pressure, and other factors." Yet, the state does not describe a plan for directly engaging students and, maybe to a lesser degree their legal guardians. It would seem if the reason students are opting out or opting in then dropping out is, for example, an unclear vision of how their efforts in the classroom related to their career goals, then providing an incentive to the school to increase participation without ensuring they address or respond to known factors for non participating misses a chance to creating a target solution.

Total	70	68
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### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

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

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

The state has a statewide longitudinal data system that includes all of the America COMPETES Act elements.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state's efforts to link its K-12 data to employment data and pre-school data will have the benefit of making its data richer and allowing researchers and educators to make/draw more meaningful connections. Through NORMES, the state has a method of sharing its longitudinal data with researchers and educators, which they can presumably use in the continuous improvement of efforts in such areas as policy, instruction, operations, management, resource allocation, and overall effectiveness. The state does not explain how often and for what reason researchers have used this database.

The state asserts that HIVE is a means for allowing stakeholders, such as parents, community leaders, and citizens at large, to access data towards informing decision-making. While this may be the case and HIVE does seem like a quality tool to "bring information alive," in the spirit of a

high-quality plan, the state lacks detail on how the aforementioned stakeholder groups find out about and, to what extent, are trained to use the tool. Additionally, given the state's investment in English language instruction and rural communities, the state does not address if HIVE is in languages other than English or if it is made accessible to parents with internet access.

<b>(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3

**(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state's plan epitomizes the development and use of an instructional improvement system. To this end, the state's instructional improvement system and its four main components should help teachers understand where their students are, what they are and are not learning, and tap into a community of educators for advice and resources. A minor critique is that the software outlined in the narrative seems to rely solely on user-generated content i.e., teachers can quickly construct and assign custom assessments. However, novice teachers or teachers in Track 3 of the state's evaluation system may have limited capacity to develop such effective assessment system. While this may resolve itself once the system is in heavy use, at least in the beginning it would seem important to have tools pre-loaded. In addition, the state's United Resource Portal is indeed "revolutionary," and should go a long way in helping educators tap into the actionable data necessary to systemically manage continuous instructional improvement.

It is also important to note that the state understands the "ever-increasing challenges in developing systems that control access to sensitive data while making sure educators have the information they need."

The state has smartly included into its MOU for LEAs the requirement that "teachers and principals participating in professional developing on using IIS." This requirement coupled with the state's track record of quality professional development e.g., (B)(3) and its impending RFP for a vendor to conduct professional development related to IIS collectively work to support participating LEAs and schools that are using instructional improvement systems on how to use these systems and the resulting data to support continuous instructional improvement.

The state mentions in (C)(2) how NORMES is a rich repository that holds over eight million records, among them some 450,000 active longitudinal K-12 records and is accessible by educators and researchers for almost limitless applications. The state, however, does not include this repository in its plan to make data available to researchers, which is curious given that the state also did not include it in its Unified Research Portal.

Nonetheless, the state's strategy of focusing its resources on building up its Education-to-Employment Tracking and Trends Initiative, though limited in scope, may advance the state's efforts to make meaningful data available and accessible to researchers. The challenge is that the state spends very little of its narrative explaining how the interagency data sharing process will work, how the information will be made accessible, or how researchers may use it. Sans the closing line: "This significant initiative to link data sets and create public and researcher portals to improve data accessibility will provide detailed information with which to evaluate effectiveness of instruction, strategies, and differentiation of appropriates for educating all students for college and career."

Total	47	42
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**D. Great Teachers and Leaders**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	5

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

The state asserts that state law allows ADE to offer alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals; however, their definition of what constitutes an alternative route is inclusive: all post-baccalaureate pathways.

The state describes its three pathways to certification for teachers that are in use. The state explains that there are alternative routes for principals, yet their explanation does not clarify if the route meets the five elements of alternative routes as defined in the notice.

The state explains "no distinction is made between the license awarded those who attain it through traditional college preparation and those who complete any of the approved alternative licensure programs and induction period." However, according to the legislation, a teacher pursuing an alternative route can receive an Initial Licensure or a Standard Licensure dependent on their performance on state assessments. It is unclear if students who complete the traditional preparation program also utilize this bifurcated licensure system.

The state's Nontraditional Teacher Licensing Program seems to meet the five elements of alternative routes as defined in the notice. In addition, this route has been an effective strategy in helping the state address its teacher shortage areas, particularly in the science subject area.

The state considers Teach for America an alternative route. After reviewing their contract and the state's narrative, it is still unclear how this process works. In accordance with the five elements needed to denote an alternative route, it is unclear how Teach for America's vendor operate independent of an institute of higher education. Also, the narrative states that TFA has not experienced any attrition in its teaching corps in the last five years; this is incorrect based on the state's teacher equity plan. Further, the state's budget lists both ADE and the LEA that utilizes a TFA teacher as paying \$3,000 to TFA for what seems like the same training. It is unclear whether this is indeed the same training and there is some cost-sharing agreement or if the budget is incorrect, which is entirely possible since the state's attrition data on TFA is incorrect.

The state does have a process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage that is effective at highlighting areas traditionally identified as shortage areas. In terms of preparing teachers to fill those shortage areas, the state has been effective in ensuring that NTLTP participants are recruited and serve in high-need areas. The state's process for a principal is less effective. The narrative does not explain how the state's alternative administrator licensure maps to shortage areas.

<b>(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>47</b>
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5

(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20

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

The state has established clear approaches (a performance index and a gain index) to measuring student growth for grades 3-8. The state has yet to develop a process for high school grades; however, it is presumed they have a plan in place.

The state's teacher evaluation system is very strong and highlights the state's ability to be honest about its deficiencies (as articulated in The Widget Effect) and coalesce a group of educators (Teacher Evaluation Task Force) to find a solution. The end result is a process that involved teachers and principals and a product that tracks closely to the expectations outlined in the Race to the Top application: evaluations differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories and take into account data on student growth as a significant factor.

The state's process for adopting the Danielson Model reflects a serious commitment to developing rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems that fit within the Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System. In regards to evaluation, the state plans to conduct annual evaluations for novice and probationary teachers; however, once a teacher progresses to non-probationary status they will be evaluated once every three years. While this process does not meet the standard of an annual evaluation, this concern may be mitigated by the state's decision to place non-probationary educators in intensive assistance if the data illustrates a "regression in students' learning over time."

The state is required by law to conduct annual evaluations of principals. However, the state does not have an evaluation framework in place and will create a task force to create one. Since this process has been effectively implemented in creating an evaluation framework for teachers, it is reasonable to believe a similar one will be effective for principals, in part because the state is again contracting with a national expert and has two-year comprehensive research project to draw from.

The state through its Arkansas Teacher Evaluation System establishes a clear plan and process for providing induction support to first year teachers, regardless of route, as well as any teacher in need of intensive support. (D)(2)(iv)(a)

To address the issue of compensation, the state will create yet another task force; the compensation task force will work with 10 pilot LEAs. The state does not include performance measures, so it is difficult to understand how and if the work of the task force will lead to more LEAs participation in current statewide models or new models for compensation. What is clear is at the very least, it will continue a dialogue on the support. LEAs currently have programs, such as Alternative Pay, that provides educators with additional compensation and additional responsibilities for progress on defined outcomes. Overall, based on the information provided, the state does not clearly show how evaluations will be used to address (D)(2)(iv)(b).

The state seems to be giving participating LEAs a choice in using its Teacher Evaluation System. The narrative states, "Race to the Top funds will speed infusion of the Teacher Evaluation System into 258 LEAs should all of them commit to this system." Per the state's MOU and scope of work, the state does not have a highly plan for how (D)(2)(iv)(c) will be informed by evaluations.

The state does not describe a compelling process for ensuring that teachers and principals designated as ineffective are removed after they have had many opportunities to improve. The law that the state cites seems to make removal for poor performance implicit. This is insufficient,

since the state could conceivably allow a teacher to continue his or her work in the classroom, while receiving Intensive Assistance Track that is not working.

<b>(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	9
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	9

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

The state highlights a number of initiatives that address in varying degrees the equitable distribution of teachers and principals; these programs, however, do not reflect a singular focused strategy to ensure the equitable distribution of teachers and principals. Further, the state's annual target of a 10% increase from the previous year may or may not be ambitious, since the state does not provide baseline data. The state's teacher equity plan does not include definitions of high-minority and low-minority schools as defined by the State for the purposes of the State's Teacher Equity Plan. The plan was recently updated and underscores the state's ability to be reflective and set plans into place that ensure equity. Further, the plan describes parity among the number of highly qualified teachers serving in low-poverty and high poverty school districts, yet the state has not been able to significantly close the achievement gap among students on NAEP who receive Freed/Reduced Lunch and their more affluent counterparts. Consequently, it is disconcerting, albeit understandable, that state performance measures for increasing the number of effective teachers in the classroom are to be developed later.

The state outlines a robust set of activities for increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers teaching hard- to-staff subjects and specialty areas with a particular focus on STEM. While the overall plan is solid, the state's decision to provide professional learning opportunities to principals with a focus on those in persistently low-performing schools may pose a challenge if LEAs and the corresponding school implements an intervention model that removes the principal and/or staff.

<b>(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	6
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4

**(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state currently has some capacity to link student data to the teacher and, where possible, his or her corresponding preparation program. Based on the state's participation in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sponsored Teacher-Student Link Project, the state is well-positioned to create a system that links student achievement and student growth data to the student's teachers, and to link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers were prepared for credentialing. While the state's performance measures include ambitious targets for teacher and principal preparation programs, its narrative does not discuss at length or in depth its plan for its principal preparation program. The state plans to report out performance data via its Arkansas Report Card for Colleges of Education on its 18 teacher preparation programs and its nine principal preparation programs in the summer of 2011. This seems consistent with its performance goals for linking student data to teachers to their respective college of education.

The state's strategy for expanding preparation and credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals is to "establish a task force to review, define, and outline effective teachers programs as evidenced by the results of the College of Education report card." The need for a task force to analyze the data from the College of

Education report card seems like an unnecessary bureaucratic layer. In fact, after review, the questions posed to the group do not directly address issues related to expanding programs that work and ceasing programs that do not. The state's work as a member of Six State Consortium and the efforts of its Governor to promote STEM education should help them better understand elements of successful preparation programs and move more students and teachers in STEM fields, but it is not clear if these activities will impact preparation programs.

<b>(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>
(i) Providing effective support	10	6
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	3

**(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state's professional development plan, as explained in its narrative, is aligned with its current efforts, such as using Race to the Top funds to expand its Leadership Support Specialist. Additionally, the state's mandate that "all educators devote at least sixty hours to quality professional development every year to maintain their Arkansas teaching license" ensure that the state is well-positioned to deliver on its need to provide effective, data-informed professional development. However, the state never outlines a framework for quality professional development. Hence, it is unclear how the state ensures that the 60 hours every educator spends being professionally developed meets the state's expectation of quality. In addition, the section does not describe how principals will be provided effective support.

The state does not outline a plan to measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of supports in (D)(5)(i) in order to improve student achievement. Instead, the state seems to want to use Race to the Top funding to conduct what is essentially the precursor to developing a plan, a "full study on the prevailing teaching and learning conditions throughout the state." This approach is absent of "ambitious yet achievable targets," goals for evaluating plans, and timelines for getting it done, the hallmark of a high quality plan.

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

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

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

The state has the legal and regulatory authority to intervene directly in the state's lowest achieving schools and districts. Further, the state through its Smart Accountability framework, which has been endorsed by USDOE as part of their Differentiated Accountability Pilot is allowing Arkansas to develop scalpel and hammer approaches to addressing high priority schools.

<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	13

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

The state has a USDOE approved definition for identifying its persistently lowest-achieving schools. Of note, the state lists Turrell School District as a participating LEA; however, they are

not listed on the Appendix A-2-1 summary table.

The state's decision to allow the persistently low performing school to select the most appropriate intervention model in collaboration with its school district is unwise. Schools with a track record of poor performance may select the least disruptive intervention model. The state says it will offer assistance, yet the plan does not describe a state education department that will be proactive and involved in the decision making process. The state is essentially allowing the people who had a consequential role in the failure of the school to then take the lead in coming up with the solution. Although this may be empowering to staff at the school, it does not reflect a high quality strategy for supporting LEAs in their turnaround efforts.

In its description of the intervention models, the state places significant emphasis on implementing the transformation intervention model in rural districts. The state outlines a number of factors, which seem to preemptively justify a rural district's decision to implement the intervention model that arguably ensures the retention of the highest number of staff. As a result, the rationale skews towards what is best for the teachers instead of the students. While the state does say the needs of the student are paramount, its discussion of the challenges to implementing other models are limited to the problems associated with uprooting staff and the shallow pool of teachers willing to work in these districts. These are all very important issues to consider. Such issues should not - as the state seems to posit - become the determining factor in intervention model selection. In this case, the state's "practical perspective" may not bring about the dramatic school improvement the state desires.

According to Arkansas' list of persistently lowest-achieving schools, many of the schools are in rural communities and are high schools. This has the acute challenge of a significant majority of students in rural communities attending a high school with a track record of failure. Dermott School District, for example, has two schools under its jurisdiction, and its high school is low performing, and the same goes for Hughes School District and Marvell School District. Forty percent of the schools under the auspice of Dollarway School District are in the bottom 5% of low performing schools; 33% for Fort Smith School District and Earle School District. Allowing the low performing school to choose its intervention model combined with the state's clear preference for the most practical least disruptive model may have the unintended consequence of continuing a culture of failure in these districts.

In sum, the state is not adequately supporting its rural LEAs in using one of the four turnaround models as much as it is biasing rural schools into selecting a model.

Total	50	28
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**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3

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

While funding has increased since FY 2004, funding levels between FY 2008 and 2009 remained essentially constant.

A ruling in 2007 by the Arkansas Supreme Court held that the state "has taken the required and

necessary legislative steps to assure that the school children of this state are provided with an adequate education and a substantially equal educational opportunity." The state notes this ruling as proof the state has maintained equitable funding between LEAs. However, the presence of a Supreme Court ruling comes after "many years of litigation" may also highlight a concern among key stakeholders that funding is indeed not equitable.

The state does outline a clear set of actions (legislatively and otherwise) it has taken to ensure that high-need and high-poverty districts receive equitable support that goes above and beyond base funding. The dollar appropriation for ensuring adequacy in funding to schools has declined, and the state legislature does not plan to address this challenge, due to, it seems, the economic condition of the state. With regard to the state's success ensuring equitable funding between high need schools and other schools, the state it seems does not address this issue. The information provided in the application explains how the state maintain parity among LEAs, not schools.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	3
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	3
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The State has a charter school law that effectively prohibits the expansion of high-performing charter schools in the State. The state has three types of charters available and the most flexible of the three is limited to 24 schools operating within it. The state makes a very strong case for why this cap is not inhibiting: in short, it is possible for an existing charter school to replicate itself. It is fair to conclude that high performing charter schools may not be limited in their expansion. The crux of the state's charter problem is it is reactionary i.e, it is based on what Arkansas legislators may do in a future legislation session. The solution is plausible, but not certain to happen. These factors work together to create a mildly inhibiting cap.

The State has laws that

- encourage charter schools to serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations
- guide how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools

The state's narrative does not clearly state

- whether authorizers require that student achievement be one significant factor, among others, in authorization or renewal. The reasons the state provides for closing charter schools and denying application does not list student achievement.

Since the state's charter schools are treated as traditional public schools, the state provides equitable funding to charter schools to the extent it provides equitable funding to traditional public schools. However, the state does not mention what, if any, local dollars are allocated to charters and if the amount allocated is consistent with funding for traditional public schools.

The state explains that the law supports allowing open-enrollment charter schools to lease or buy facilities from LEAs. The narrative does not describe a similar process for the two other types of

charter schools. Further, the section seems skewed towards explaining the facility provisions (or lack thereof) for open-enrollment schools, and the picture the state paints is that they make reasonable provisions for open-enrollment schools. It is unclear what the state does for limited charter schools and conversion schools.

Based on its narrative, the state does not seem to enable LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
Arkansas highlights a few activities that may help MDE meet its Race to the Top goals, notably its efforts regarding its virtual high school and a math-science school. There's a problem, however. The information provided does not constitute a reform condition. The examples included are likely the result of the state's efforts creating an environment favorable to education reform. The state is awarded low points because its response does not fully address the criterion.		
Total	55	25

### 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>
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>		
The state lists activities and initiatives in this section that it has also discussed throughout its application. The state offers clear evidence that it has a quality STEM agenda that it can implement and operationalize if awarded a grant. Of note, the state budgets \$67,000,000 for STEM education, which is about 1/3 of its total request. The result is, in the words of the state, "Race to the Top funds will underwrite a STEM emphasis in every school district." The state meets the STEM Priority and is awarded full points.		
Total	15	15

### Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

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

#### Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The state's application addresses all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. The state's allocation to STEM related initiative, development of Smart Core Incentive Curriculum, investment in HIVE to name a few collectively work together to demonstrate that the State and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform.

The State demonstrates in its application significant LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plans. The state clearly describes how it, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will use Race to the Top and other funds to transform the lives of its students.

In sum, the state meets this priority.

Total

0

Grand Total

500

362