



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #2300CT-6



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	44
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	30
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10

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

(i) The CT plan sets forth measurable goals for increasing student achievement and reducing achievement gaps. No explanation was provided regarding how the ambitious targets were selected, why they are considered ambitious, and how the determination that these targets are achievable was made.

The plan, as described, does address the four ARRA reform areas. The theory of change presented in the proposal relies on six strategies (family/community engagement, educator training, educator evaluation/accountability, curriculum innovation, alignment of high school-college-workforce, and continuing financial support). Each of these will be implemented through six specific partnerships, one of which (finance) is already formed and beginning its work. However, the plan has many other pieces that do not seem to dovetail cleanly with the six strategies, and create a somewhat confusing picture of the reform approach. Somewhat disconnected pieces include CALI (described below), scientific-research-based interventions established for the federal Response to Intervention requirements, and high school reforms that include increased seat time requirements (Carnegie units).

Since 2004, the state has implemented the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI), which was supposed to accelerate learning and close achievement gaps. However, based on data provided in the proposal, learning has not accelerated and gaps have not closed. Therefore, it is hard to understand why CALI is described as having "emerging capability" to succeed and is proposed as the foundational approach for the RTTT plan, even though it has supposedly been strengthened by recent (2010) legislation.

(ii) The state has 82% of its LEAs participating, representing 91% of students and 95% of students in poverty. All LEAs signed the MOU conditionally for every single element of the scope of work, reserving the right to bargain implementation of every requirement with local teachers' unions. About 88% of local union presidents signed the MOUs. It seems likely that this relatively high signature rate is a result of the presence of the bargaining clause and totally conditional nature of the MOU. One large urban center bargaining unit president did not sign, pending the resolution of other collective bargaining issues in the LEA. Despite the very candid and somewhat persuasive explanations of this conditional participation situation in the proposal, it still seems doubtful that this really represents a strong commitment to RTTT implementation in the participating districts.

(iii) Because of the highly conditional nature of MOU acceptance on the part of LEAs, the statewide impact of RTTT reforms is somewhat questionable for this plan, despite the apparently high participation rate. The percentage of participating districts and percentage of poverty students that will potentially benefit is high. The response merits medium points.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	17
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	10
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) The proposal includes six teams dedicated to implementing the plan's six key strategies. Leadership resides in the SEA, but several layers removed from the State Superintendent. Since this plan is supposedly going to unify many existing efforts, it is hard to understand why it would be relegated to a lower division level within the SEA.</p> <p>A strength of the plan is that a network of regional education service centers will work with participating districts as they implement elements of the plan, providing support services. Department staff within the SEA will support participating districts, identify best practices, and hold them accountable for progress and performance. Although some discussion of meetings to be held and schedules to be formed are included, no actual details of the types of LEA supports, nor the means of holding LEAs accountable, were provided.</p> <p>The budget allocates the vast majority of funds to support teachers and leaders. While this may be a good investment, it is hard to see why such a small amount of the budget is allotted to turning around the lowest-performing schools, especially since closing achievement gaps seems to be one of the key challenges for the state. Overall, the budget raises questions as to how all components of the plan can be sufficiently supported.</p> <p>The SEA has adequate capacity to manage the federal RTTT funds, including budget reporting and oversight. The department has coordinated the potential use of the RTTT funds with other state and federal funding aligned with the state's RTTT goals. Admirably, the state has already convened one of its six strategy teams to investigate ways to finance continuation of plan activities beyond the grant period, based on public/private partnerships.</p> <p>(ii) The state has amassed an impressive array of support letters from educational, public, and private entities, some of which offer specific and tangible support to the RTTT implementation effort. Others do not contain the specific types of commitments described in the proposal narrative: supplementary support, experience, and added capacity.</p>		
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	12
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) The proposal adequately describes reforms occurring in three of the four ARRA areas: standards/assessments, data, and teachers/leaders. However, only scant reference is made to turning around low-performing schools through the CALI initiative [mentioned in (A)(1)(i)]. Only a "sample" of student gains in those schools is included in the proposal, so it is not possible to understand, from the information provided, the overall picture of activity in this reform area.</p> <p>(ii) Much of the discussion in this section focused on CT's relatively high NAEP performance overall, compared to other states. NAEP performance has improved slightly since 2003 overall and in all subgroups. However, examination of the state ESEA test <i>achievement gap</i> data provided shows that little or no progress, or actual regression, has occurred: in reading, ELL students have made no progress since 2003, and gaps between ELL/Non-ELL students have actually widened in that time period. No change is seen in achievement gaps (40 points) between poverty/non-poverty students in the 2003-2009 time period. White/black and white/Hispanic gaps have closed only slightly (4 and 3 points respectively). A positive spin</p>		

was placed on the fact that some groups (males, black, Hispanic) have improved in reading more than their counterpart subgroups, but these small changes over seven years are not impressive. The same trends hold true for state ESEA mathematics, with achievement gaps hovering steadily around 40 points between poverty/non-poverty students, white/black, and white/Hispanic. ELL/non-ELL gaps are larger and have grown in the seven year time period (from 42 to 46 points). High school ESEA results are even a bit bleaker.

The state readily admits that it has the largest achievement gaps in the nation; it is not clear why these data were not forcefully presented as such, rather than trying to put a positive spin on the data.

Total	125	73
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The proposal provides evidence through a copy of its MOU that it is a member of the Common Core standards consortium. The proposal includes appropriate documentation of the fact that the standards will be internationally benchmarked, the number and names of states in the consortium, and a copy of the standards. Forty-eight states and three territories are participating in the Common Core consortium, a clear majority of states in the country. This response qualifies for full credit for this criterion.</p> <p>(ii) The state has scheduled adoption of the Common Core standards by the State Board of Education for its July, 2010 meeting, complying with the RTTT deadline of August 2, 2010, and qualifying for high points on this criterion.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(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)		
<p>(i) The proposal provides evidence through a copy of its "document of commitment" that it is a member of the Balanced Assessment consortium, which will develop assessments aligned with the Common Core standards. This response qualified for full credit for this criterion.</p> <p>(ii) Thirty-three states are participating in the Balanced Assessment consortium, a clear majority of states in the country. This response qualifies for full credit for this criterion.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	19
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The proposal provides a fairly robust series of supports for making the transition to new standards and assessments. Of most direct utility to participating LEAs will probably be those trainings they requested themselves: cross-walking the new standards with current curriculum, and using newly available formative</p>		

assessments to improve instruction. While a bit disconnected as described in the narrative, the totality of rollout and support activities has the potential to fully support the transition to new standards and assessments, and qualifies for high points on this criterion.

Total	70	69
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Although the narrative states that six data elements are complete, the proposal provides evidence that only 5 of the 12 America COMPETES Act elements for a statewide longitudinal data system are fully in place, qualifying for 10 points on this criterion. Requirement #3, student transition information, will not be complete for higher education until 2012, so this does not qualify as a completed America COMPETES element.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The proposal lists a variety of activities, including expanding its current data platform and making it more readily available to users. It's not clear what the current platform can and cannot do, so it is not possible to judge how much expansion this plan represents. The plan did not adequately describe how the data will be used to inform decision-makers.</p> <p>Apparently, CT does not have an IES grant to complete its data system and enhance its utility (or at least, this was not mentioned in the proposal). Therefore, RTTT resources will be used to support staff work at the SEA. No use of outside contractors is mentioned, and only \$1.7 million is allocated in the budget for this work, which seems insufficient to create the system and conduct the types of training and outreach described.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	9
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	2
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) Two instructional improvement models will be adopted by all participating LEAs. From the descriptions of these models, they appear to provide educators adequate information and resources necessary to improve instruction and effectiveness. Not all participating districts will adopt these models in Year 1, but no specific phase-in plan was provided, nor any rationale for why the staged adoption is necessary.</p> <p>(ii) The response to this section was puzzling. It provided only a discussion of an interim evaluation of one of the state instructional improvement models, and the intent to continue evaluating the model. The response did not address how the state will deliver professional development in the use of the two instructional data systems as required in this criterion, although professional development was mentioned briefly in response to (C)(3)(i). In that section, trainers are referenced, and both SEA and regional staff would provide training to LEA and school personnel (no detail provided on the training content).</p>		

(iii) The proposal addresses the fact that LEAs will be aware that their data may be shared for research purposes; however, no mention is made of any specific research uses, or of partnerships with research organizations or institutions of higher education to conduct such research.		
Total	47	22

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	20
(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	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The descriptions of both teacher and principal alternative routes provided in the proposal meet all five requirements for alternative certification programs as defined in the RTTT notice, qualifying for high points for this criterion.</p> <p>(ii) The proposal provides clear descriptions of the eight alternative certification programs for teachers currently in use, including numbers of completers during the 2008-09. They do not currently have an alternative route for principals, so this response qualifies for medium points.</p> <p>(iii) The narrative provides a detailed description of the data collected and analyzed to determine areas of educator shortages in the state. The proposal includes a credible plan that includes incentives and flexibility for recruiting, developing, and placing educators in shortage areas and in high need schools. The response qualifies for high points for this criterion.</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	28
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The narrative presents a timeline for developing some individual student growth measures (based on subjects and grades currently tested through ESEA state exams), indicating that these will not be operational until June 2012. The state acknowledges that measures in addition to state tests will be required, and mentions assessments to be developed for K-2. However, no clear explanation is provided as to how other necessary assessments (e.g., grades 9,11, 12, and subjects not tested on state exams (e.g., music, art, physical education) will be developed and be comparable across grades, schools, and districts. Some mention is made of local districts contributing their own formative assessments, but how these will be validated as individual student growth measures is not explained.</p> <p>(ii) The proposal provides a logical plan for developing and implementing an educator evaluation system that incorporates multiple rating categories from "emerging" to "highly effective," based on supplemental measures as defined in the RTTT notice, and that incorporates student growth measures as a significant component. The plan calls for teacher and principal involvement as required in the criterion. However, since</p>		

the student growth model will not be implemented till late in the grant period, this system will not be able to be developed as described within the grant period.

(iii) The state includes a plan to require participating LEAs to conduct annual teacher and principal evaluations. The plan includes providing educators with student growth data (which at this time appears to be limited to state test data and a vague description of "other measures that can be tracked at the state level"), and incorporates the provision of training and/or coaching as required in the criterion.

(iv) The section regarding decision-making based on the new evaluations is very weak. Quite a bit of verbiage is included, along with a lot of process descriptions (meetings, consultations, intensive evaluation periods, etc.), but no real commitments are made to using the new evaluation system data for making compensation, tenure, or removal decisions. This weak response qualifies for low points on this criterion.

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

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

(i) CT takes a creative but questionable approach to the challenge of equitable distribution of highly qualified educators. First, it suggests using a "proxy" set of effectiveness measures to use while the new educator evaluation system is being developed. Second, it plans to combine incentives with a voluntary employee/employer matching system to place effective teachers in high need schools. Third, it proposes giving high need schools priority access to highly qualified candidates, and suggests creating regional consortia that would share/exchange highly effective educators. All this would potentially constitute a strong plan if any evidence were included that (a) monetary incentives entice highly qualified educators to work in high need schools, and (b) teachers, principals, school boards, and district leaders would be able to collaborate in sharing/exchanging teachers as described. There seems to be an assumption that money is the answer to this problem, when evidence is not provided that this is the case.

The annual targets provided are confusing...they seem to indicate that the overall percentages of highly effective educators in high need schools will not change over the course of the grant period.

(ii) The proposal provides some reasonable strategies for recruiting and retaining new teachers in critical shortage areas. However, in this section again, the annual targets are confusing, indicating only incremental increases in the percentages of highly qualified teachers in some of the shortage areas, and not indicating how the shortages themselves will be ameliorated over time.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	6
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

(i) The CT plan will link student data to teacher data, and report on teacher effectiveness to the public and back to preparation programs. The SEA plans to use this process to inform program approval and accreditation "to the extent possible." It is not clear what this conditional statement means, because the proposal does not explain the circumstances under which the data would or would not be used. Although the performance measures provided indicate that 100% of preparation programs will receive these effectiveness data by 2013, the narrative indicates that the system of reporting on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs would not occur until the RTTT grant period ends (2014).

<p>(ii) The narrative discusses some potential effects of the new reporting system on low-performing preparation programs, but only vaguely addresses expanding successful programs. This does not constitute a high-quality plan.</p>		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	12
(i) Providing effective support	10	7
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	5
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) The proposal presents a comprehensive series of professional development initiatives that include coaching (in STEM teaching). The professional development activities, as described, are ongoing, job-embedded, and data-informed. However, the plan does not include mention of new teacher induction or collaborative planning time for teachers and principals.</p> <p>(ii) The plan includes biannual program evaluation for professional development initiatives that includes effects on student achievement. Data from these evaluations will be used to continuously improve programs. However, the plan does not describe a method for how student achievement data will be linked to specific participating teachers to determine changes in teacher effectiveness, and thereby determine program effects.</p>		
Total	138	79

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The proposal provides credible evidence in the form of statutes that the state is authorized to intervene directly in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs. This response qualifies for high points on this criterion.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	23
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	18
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) The state has a credible methodology to identify the lowest-achieving schools. Using this methodology, the SEA has identified 18 Title I schools and five non-Title I high schools as constituting the lowest 5% of low-achieving schools. A useful school data table was provided. This response qualifies for high points on this criterion.</p> <p>(ii) According to the data table provided in this section, of the 23 schools identified in the lowest 5%, only 18 have selected reform models from among the four RTTT options. The end-of-year goal, as stated in the application, is only to have 18 schools initiate these reforms, so it is not clear what plan the other five identified schools will adopt and when they will do so. How CALI will specifically support the four turnaround models is not specifically described.</p>		

The proposal describes the state's past experience with school turnaround models in regard to Connecticut Accountability for Learning (CALI) districts and with two demonstration schools receiving extra support. One -year gains (2008-09) are reported to outpace statewide averages, although those averages were not provided. Only samples of student gains in selected schools was provided in table format, but the proposal does not specifically describe how all CALI schools performed. The description provided in the proposal does not explain how CALI interventions were linked with student outcomes.

Other experience comes from restructuring 84 schools under ESEA requirements. It can be assumed from the "lessons learned" narrative that these restructuring efforts were generally unsuccessful. It is not clear how the lessons were derived - no specific evidence or data was provided regarding the restructuring results in the 84 schools, so it is not possible to tell whether the cited lessons are the result of actual study of these schools, general observations, or drawn from other research about effective school improvement processes.

Overall, this section does not provide sufficient evidence that the state has strong capacity to support LEAs in turning around the lowest-performing schools. The overall response qualifies for medium points on this criterion.

Total	50	33
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i) Evidence provided indicates that state support for education, as a proportion of overall state funding, remained substantially the same from 2008-2009, qualifying for medium points on this criterion.		
(ii) The evidence provided in both the narrative and tables for this section indicates that CT has an equitable system of funding between high-poverty and other schools.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	37
(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	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i) The proposal describes and includes state laws recently amended (2010) to remove all caps on the number and enrollment of <i>high-performing</i> charter schools. However, there are still caps on enrollment for <i>new</i> charter schools, and funding restrictions also limit charter school enrollment.		
(ii) The tables provided in this section indicates that 18 state-chartered schools are currently in operation. Reasons for denial of applications were provided and conform with state requirements. Of charter schools		

formed from 1999 through 2006, five have been closed for reasons provided in the proposal and conforming with state law.

(iii) Charter schools are provided with funding equitable to that received by other public schools.

(iv) The proposal provides credible evidence through state mandates that the state operates a grant program, now permanent (as of 2010), to support charter school building projects. The state operates a dedicated bonding program to support this funding.

(v) The proposal includes detailed and credible descriptions of how the state allows LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools, including alternative schools with shared governance structures and interdistrict magnet schools. The proposal provides evidence of newly adopted state law (2010) that authorizes LEAs to convert schools to "innovation schools" with external partners such as institutions of higher education and charter school operators.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal includes descriptions of other education reforms currently underway in the state. The narrative makes claims regarding positive results for some initiatives, but provides no data to support these claims. For other initiatives, no results/outcomes are described.		
Total	55	47

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal includes a comprehensive and high-quality plan for improving STEM education, with components of the plan woven throughout the proposal. The plan includes offering rigorous courses of study, engaging STEM-capable partners from higher education and industry, and engaging and preparing students from underrepresented groups.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
The proposal presents a plan that addresses all four RTTT areas in a comprehensive manner, although with several weaknesses as noted in the criterion comments for each section. Important concerns are: (1) LEA participation appears to be sufficient, but only if the conditional MOU requirements in 100% of the participating districts are eventually settled and implemented; and (2) the RTTT funds, as presented in the budget, are overwhelmingly allocated to teachers and leaders, raising some questions as to how other components of the plan will be sufficiently supported. The plan also presents significant strengths in addressing the four ARRA reform areas, and on balance, meets the Absolute Priority.		

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	338
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #2300CT-10



A. State Success Factors

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

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

The State has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that clearly articulates its goals in each of the four reform areas of the ARRA and makes clear connections between the four reform areas of the ARRA and the goals already existing in the 2010 Education Reform Law, the Comprehensive Five-Year Plan, the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative ("CALI") and the Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform. In addition, the State's plan for success is anchored in a well-articulated theory of change with six levers, all of which are integrated into the explanation of the State's Race to the Top conditions, goals and plans. The specific reform levers and their location within state law and policy are consistent throughout the application and, when supported by the organizational and leadership structure proposed (and, in some cases, already in place) present a credible path to achievement of ambitious goals.

The terms and conditions of the State's Memorandum of Understanding by which districts commit to being Participating LEAs reflect a strong commitment to the State's plans. Each Participating LEA is committed to implementing all or significant portions of all of the State's Race to the Top initiatives. There is a little lack of clarity around what precisely they are committed to with respect to implementation of the State's Eight Year Plan for Secondary School Reform and there is an option to participate in the pilot of the *Board Examination Systems*, but otherwise all aspects of the Participating LEAs' commitments are significant. Because several aspects of the State's Race to the Top plans require changes to collective bargaining agreements, the Memorandum of Understanding includes a savings clause. It is concerning that the savings clause applies to the full agreement and is not tied to specific parts; this potentially significantly undermines the commitments. Also, it is unclear whether the signatories' agreements to "work together in good faith to implement those areas" is equivalent to an agreement to bargain in good faith," however, it appears that it is the intent of the savings clause.

Significant commitment on the part of the leadership of the 162 Participating LEAs is demonstrated by the signatures of 100% of the superintendents, 91.4% of the school board presidents and 87.88% of union presidents (of the 148 LEAs represented by unions).

As a result of the fact that 82% of LEAs statewide will be Participating LEAs and that those LEAs represent 89.6% of schools, 90.8% of all K-12 students and 95.1% of the students in poverty, their participation will very likely translate into broad statewide impact that should allow the State to reach its goals overall and by subgroup. Connecticut's vision for reaching its goals is optimistic in nature: they are generally represented by increases in every student subgroup's success, at different rates so that achievement gaps decrease over time. The goals are both ambitious and should be achievable. In addition, they should be within reach

due to the fact that more than 90% of the state's K-12 students and 95% of the students in poverty will be represented by Participating LEAs.

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

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

The State has created a significant structure of leadership to implement its Race to the top education reform plans. Leadership will be provided by the P-20 Shared Leadership Council, an Office of Race to the Top, Partnerships for Change for each of the State's "six levers of change," Administrative Support Centers and associated staff and liaisons. While perhaps complicated in its structure, the organizational leadership plan includes overall and content-specific leadership positions for individuals and groups that demonstrate the State's capacity to provide leadership necessary for implementation of its State's Race to the Top plans. Participation in the leadership by representatives of several stakeholder communities may complicate the leaders' tasks up front, but should support the ability to generate widespread agreement and implementation. The clearest explanation of the leadership structure created for Race to the Top is within the budget summary narrative. Of potential concern is the location of the Race to the Top leadership within the State; it resides several levels down from the overall education leadership.

The State has recently reorganized the Department of Education around a plan to provide direct support to LEAs and schools. There are four divisions that provide LEAs with the kinds of support they will need to implement the Race to the Top initiatives, including assessment, evaluation, professional development, accountability, school turnaround, staffing, data collection, etc. In order to ensure that the State has capacity to provide this significant additional support, it proposes to hire additional staff for Race to the Top support responsibilities.

Connecticut has a well-established system of grant management that should ensure effective and efficient operations and processes for implementation of its Race to the Top grant. A system of checks and balances is designed for cash management, oversight, budget reporting and fund disbursement. Added to this already existing system is the ARRA Administrative Officer who has overall responsibility of oversight for performance measures and all applicable tracking and reporting.

The budget and budget narrative paint a clear picture of how the State will use Race to the Top funds to accomplish its plans and meet its targets. By aligning the individual budgets with the Memorandum of Understanding entered into by Participating LEAs, the budget makes clear not only where funds are allocated, but how they will be used by the State and Participating LEAs to accomplish the goals and activities of each initiative. The budget includes incentive funds from Race to the Top to incentivize smaller districts to participate, and to collaborate in regional networks, to provide further support for meeting the state's Race to the Top goals. The state is committed to coordinating education funds from other sources in order to better support its goals and plans under Race to the Top, and will use a Partnership for Financing Sustainable Change to focus on this effort.

Virtually all dates specified for actions and strategies within the application are coterminous with the grant period. Therefore, it is important that the State has committed itself to creating a sustainability plan through the work of the Partnership for Financing Sustainable Change. The Partnership will examine current funding patterns and make recommendations for change, which may focus on specific funding uses or make recommendations for policy changes to impact the conditions necessary for success and for sustaining the work.

Connecticut has garnered an extremely broad range of support for participation in Race to the Top from critical stakeholders. The State's teachers and principals, through their unions, have presented strong

endorsements of support. In particular, the Connecticut Education Association commits its support to the application, including a positive comment regarding Goal 3: Great Teachers and Leaders. Most other conceivable stakeholders have also provided specific and positive letters of support, including state and federal legislative leaders (including those running for governor), business leaders, civil rights organizations, education interest groups, parents, community organizations, nonprofits, foundations, public and private institutions of higher education, and STEM partners.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	22
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18

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

The State has made some progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas. It has been working to improve its data system, and now has a target completion date for meeting all of the America COMPETES requirements by the end of 2011-2012. Both federal and state funds are supporting the effort to improve the longitudinal data system. The State has developed curriculum standards and a curriculum development guide, as well as models for curriculum. Several of Connecticut's assessments have received full approval from the United States Department of Education. The application does not indicate what funds have been used for these efforts, or in what time frame the products were developed. The State has been actively engaged in efforts to improve teachers; over the past three years it has revised its certification regulations, revised the Common Core of Teaching, begun developing a new beginning teacher induction model and made plans to develop new guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluations. There are no indications of activities that have improved leaders or leadership training over the past several years. The State has made progress in turning around low achieving schools through implementation of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative ("CALI"). Although not following any of the four turnaround models now specified in Race to the Top, the State has supported the restructuring of over 80 schools with state and federal funding support.

The State is in the enviable position of having among the highest NAEP scores, but progress in raising those scores and in decreasing the achievement gap has been uneven. In particular, scores for grade 4 reading decreased for all students and white students over the period 2003 - 2009. However, the scores for Black and Hispanic students increased over the same period -- thus helping to decrease the achievement gaps between each of those groups and white students. More consistent progress among all students and individual subgroups was evident for grade 8 reading and writing and grade 4 and 8 in mathematics. However, here also there was evidence of greater growth among subgroups than among all and white students (except that grade 8 reading scores for Black students decreased, while those of white student increased - thus increasing the achievement gap). The State has demonstrated its ability to improve student outcomes (and decrease achievement gaps in most cases) for reading and writing overall and by subgroup on the Connecticut Mastery Test. Improvement for English Language Learners is incremental at best and in several instances achievement gaps between English Language Learners and others increased. Improvement in mathematics for all students and individual subgroups is also evident on the Connecticut Mastery Test results. The Connecticut Academic Performance Test results indicate that progress at the high school level is difficult to come by. Results are slightly positive for reading and writing, but inconsistent with respect to achievement gaps. Results are a little better in mathematics overall, but there has been less progress in reducing the achievement gap. Connecticut has shown that it has been able to increase high school graduation rates, overall and by subgroup.

The application provides some explanation of connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to them. In particular, the State points to CALI as the most important and effective means of accelerating the learning of all students and closing the achievement gaps. Further support is attributed to the early learning standards and pre-school framework. However, gains have been modest and the state

struggles to decrease its achievement gap; as a result, it does not make a strong connection between strategies and its student outcome improvements.

Total	125	103
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Connecticut has demonstrated its commitment to adopting a common set of high quality standards by participating in the Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices to develop the Common Core standards. The standards are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness. There are 48 states and 2 territories in the consortium.</p> <p>The Common Core standards will be presented to the State Board of Education for approval in July 2010. There is no further legal process required for adoption of the standards in Connecticut. However, the State has already designed a plan to move from adoption to implementation of the standards. The plan begins with a gap analysis to compare Connecticut's existing standards to the Common Core standards, then moves to a statewide stakeholder engagement conference to build credibility and understanding of the standards, identify Connecticut standards that should be added to the Common Core standards, collect data that allows for meaningful comparisons of the Connecticut and Common Core standards and elicit feedback to inform planning for the rollout, transition support, required resources and professional development. The State also plans to work with the Early Childhood cabinet to develop appropriate standards to be integrated into the state standards and with the Partnership for High School, College and Workforce Alignment to propose college- and career-ready standards.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(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)		
<p>Connecticut has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of its assessment by providing evidence of its participation in three consortia of states working toward jointly developing and implementing common high quality assessments aligned with its new standards. Connecticut is a member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, which includes 34 states and is applying for a Race to the Top Assessment grant. Connecticut is also participating in the National Center for Education and the Economy Consortium as one of eight states applying for funds in the Investment in Innovations Grant to support internationally benchmarked Board Examination Systems as alternative paths for students to complete high school graduation requirements. And finally, Connecticut is a member of the five state New England Secondary School Consortium, which plans to develop performance assessments among other initiatives to strengthen secondary schools in New England.</p>		

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	17
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Connecticut's plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments is built around accomplishing six distinct goals that, together, should support LEAs in their efforts to implement the standards and assessments. The plan is comprehensive, and the goals relate to stakeholder engagement and understanding; adoption of a fully aligned preschool to college- and career-ready framework; professional development to support teachers, leaders and educational staff to understand and use the standards and assessment system; implementation of multiple pathways to graduation, including the Board Examination System, virtual high school courses, additional Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment options; providing increased access to standards, curriculum units, assessments and other information; and expanding access to high-quality STEM learning opportunities for student and for faculty. Specific activities are described that support each of the goals, and the plan specifies the leadership group responsible for the activity as well as the general time-frame for the activity. In particular, the goals around professional development to support educators to use the standards and assessments in order to continually improve curriculum, instruction and student performance include many specific activities that are well-designed to support LEAs to successfully make these transitions. Among others, they include providing teachers and administrators with professional development around using the state longitudinal data system and using student assessment data to draw valid inferences, as well as being responsive to LEA requests for targeted professional development for teachers and instructional leaders.</p>		
Total	70	67

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Although the application states that Connecticut has completed six of the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act, there is evidence of only five elements having been completed. The remaining seven are in process.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Connecticut's plan to ensure that data from the state longitudinal data system are accessible to, and used to inform and engage key stakeholders is designed around the accomplishment of five goals, each of which is supported by activities, time lines and designation of responsible parties. The first goal relates to LEA access to student assessment and growth data and, sensibly, begins with providing direct training in the new features of the state's website and strategies for using the data found there more effectively. The second goal relates to increasing the data that is available to LEAs on the state's website, and also begins with professional development for users and then focuses on the specific improvements that will be made to the website - increasing the data collected and the ways in which it can be manipulated. Another activity under this goal will focus on analyzing use and improvements to the site. The third goal focuses on continuing to implement the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (" CALI") data-driven decision-</p>		

making component so that LEAs know the data is available to them and know how to use them to improve their instruction, policies and effectiveness. This element of the plan is supported by specific numbers of professional development modules in each year. The fourth goal circles back to the first, providing training and outreach to parents and the public about the use of the State website. The final goal is to work with the P-20 Data Group to improve the capacity to share data across the P-20 continuum and determine best practices for disseminating the information. Four specific activities related to information gathering, sharing protocols, security and dissemination support this effort. The plan is detailed and well-supported; however, it does not include significant feedback to decision-makers to inform continuous improvement of efforts. In addition, it is questionable whether sufficient funding has been allocated to complete this work.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	16
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6

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

Connecticut already has the ability to make an impressive amount of data available to schools and LEAs through CALI and its Scientific Research-Based Intervention ("SRBI") program. As explained earlier, it also has a high quality plan for increasing the information available to teachers and LEAs through its web-based system (CEDaR) and planned improvements to formative, interim and summative assessments. The plan to increase the access, adoption and use of these systems and this data is grounded in expansion of CALI and SRBI to all Participating LEAs. The steps and order of activities in the plan are well-designed to accomplish its goals. The plan begins with increasing the capacity of CALI trainers and technical assistance providers, followed by needs assessments and a roll-out of responsive CALI professional development. The Department of Education also plans to provide resources for the executive coaches and data teams that will be provided to select LEAs and to support districts to develop District Improvement Teams that support the LEAs and, in turn, the schools to enable teachers and principals to use the resources provided to inform and improve practice. The activities within this plan are supported by designated responsible parties and each has a time frame associated, either a general beginning and end date or a phased in start time.

The State's plan to support Participating LEAs and schools in providing effective professional development to teachers and principals on how to use the data systems to support instructional improvement is designed both to improve their use of the data and to contribute to the State's evaluation of the effectiveness of the CALI theory of action. The information provided in response to (C)(3)(i) details how the State is actually supporting LEAs and schools in providing effective professional development; the plan to bring this support to Participating LEAs and their schools and teachers follows what the State is already doing successfully. However, there is a lack of detail with respect to what roles the various support providers will be providing to teachers. Section (C)(3)(ii) focuses solely on the evaluation of CALI which, together with a planned evaluation of the effectiveness of CALI in closing the achievement gap, has as its primary effect the provision of information that enables the State to support LEAs, teachers and principals in continuous instructional improvement. The plan should include a feedback mechanism not only to the State but to teachers, principals and schools in order to ensure that their access to and use of that enables them to personally engage in continuous improvement.

The State has a three-prong, high quality plan to ensure that data from instructional improvement systems are available and accessible to researchers. The three strategies -- using its enhanced data dissemination website to provide education data, requiring the Department of Education to provide student-level data to tax-exempt non-profit organizations operated for educational purposes, and requiring in the Memorandum of Understanding that Participating LEAs share any data from their local instructional improvement system

that is not part of the state longitudinal data system - are inclusive, should be easy to navigate, and are designed to provide the access required for researchers. Elsewhere in the application, the breadth of partnerships with universities -- including around the use of data -- is described. It is also important to note that state law now provides that the data be made available to researchers. The time frames for all pieces of this plan are specified and responsible parties at the state and LEA level are designated.

Total	47	30
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	18
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6

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

The Connecticut General Statutes and the recently passed Public Act 10-111 clearly give the State legal authority to allow alternatives routes to certification for teachers and principals. The law specifically permits providers who operate independently of institutions of higher education and requires that alternative routes:

- Be selective in accepting candidates
- Provide supervised, school-based experiences and support (in the case of alternative programs for administrators, the programs must complete a full-time administrative residency for ten months)
- Significantly limit required coursework
- Award the same level of certification as traditional programs (after participation for 90 days under a 90 day certificate for teachers and after participation in a ten month residency for administrators)

The State has eight alternative routes to certification programs for teachers that are in use; seven of the programs had participants who completed the programs and received certification last year. The State does not yet have an alternative certification program for administrators, though it is required to create such a program and one is already in the process of design and creation.

The State has a complete and well-used process for monitoring and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage, through a data-rich annual survey and ranking of severity for each resulting shortage areas. The State has a multi-part plan to address the identified shortage areas, including the following:

- Approving alternative certification routes that prepare teachers specifically for shortage areas
- Offering incentives to teachers to teach in the shortage areas
- Allowing certification applicants to substitute an excellent score on subject area assessments in shortage areas for the subject major area requirement
- Creating scholarship opportunities for substitute teachers to earn cross-endorsements in hard-to-staff areas

In addition, the state is required by law to create an alternative certification program for administrators, and the program is designed to prepare administrators for shortage areas, i.e., urban schools and those designated for turnaround.

All of the activities are supported by start and end dates and designation of responsible parties.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	28
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	10

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

While Connecticut's plan for building a growth model has important steps and is well designed to build the growth model, the time-frame is slow (completion is not expected until the last year of the grant) and the plan lacks detail concerning how the steps will be taken, what support will look like and how the implementation will be supported. Connecticut's plan for building a growth model picks up at the point where the State has already begun, completing its work to measure student growth for every student tested through the vertical scales off the Connecticut Mastery Tests. Even when the growth model is not yet in place for all grades, the State will pilot the system in the schools identified in the School Improvement Grants, and then complete the development of indicators and measures of growth for the rest of the students. The application states that the Department of Education will support the implementation of the vertical scales in the Participating LEAs, but does not otherwise provide any detail about what that means or how it will provide the support. Another part of the plan to establish clear approaches to measuring student growth is to expand and support implementation of the Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System. Again, there is no detail with respect to how such support will be provided to Participating LEAs. The third part of the plan is to provide the capacity to allow LEAs to integrate local measures of student performance into the state longitudinal data system. There is no other information provided about this piece of the process. The fourth piece of the plan expands the range of the growth model, by creating early childhood interim assessments and building new assessments for Board Examinations in grade 10 and capstone projects for high school graduation. These projects are described elsewhere in the application, but no detail with respect to how the State will collaborate with LEAs to add these additional assessments to the growth model is provided. The final step in the plan is to expand the capacity of the State's longitudinal data system, as described briefly in this section and more expansively elsewhere in the application.

Connecticut's plan to design and implement evaluation systems for teachers and principals that (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account student growth and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement is briefly described and not very detailed. The application does state that they will use the Race to the Top definitions of "effectiveness" and it does include a broad list of parties that will be invited to participate in the process of building the systems, including teacher unions, LEAs and the Partnership for Teacher, Principal Effectiveness and Accountability. The only activities described as part of the plan are "building the teacher performance system" and "building the principal performance system" and, other than benchmarks that must be reached within the process of building those systems, the only information provided are the basis of the domains for each system and potential measures that may be included in the systems. There is a similar lack of detail in the benchmarks associated with building each system: For example, one "benchmark" described is "roll out plan and prepare for piloting with select Participating LEAs" and another is to develop guidelines and policies for "new methods of measuring teacher efficacy that can be monitored by the CSDE and reported quantitatively on an annual basis." Another important benchmark, providing training for the supervisors who will support and evaluate their teachers/administrators with the new systems, is a critical piece of the plan. While there is a time-frame provided (as there is for each benchmark) and a designation of responsible parties, there is no detail in this section as to what the training will be and how it will be delivered. However, section (iv) provides the missing detail, and provides evidence of a robust system of training for all supervisors who will be charged with evaluating personnel with the new evaluation systems. The description of the process in section (iv) is evidence of a high quality plan for delivering this critical piece to

LEAs and schools. Overall, however, in this section there is insufficient detail about the rigor, transparency and fairness of the systems and there is insufficient evidence of the State's plan to collaborate with LEAs to ensure that they have the resulting systems in place.

The application states, and state law requires, that Participating LEAs will be required to annually evaluate all teachers and principals and report data into the data systems established to monitor effectiveness. The application says that as a result of reaching its goal to conduct evaluations Connecticut will provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes and schools. However, there is no mention of the time frame for reporting back to teachers and principals and there is no description of the type of feedback other than data on student growth that will be provided as part of the evaluation system.

The State's plan to use the evaluations to inform many decisions begins by focusing on training school and district supervisors how to use the evaluation systems and monitoring their use of the systems to ensure districts are making effective use of the systems and providing responsive professional development. Specific parties are designated as responsible for various pieces of these training and monitoring activities. While this is a key component of using the evaluation systems, this section asks for evidence of the State's plan of use the evaluations to inform decisions regarding developing teachers and principals, including by providing particular kinds of professional development. The only reference to providing responsive professional development as a result of the use of the evaluation systems is a reference to Section (C)(3). This reference is to the use of CALI and SRBI. While both of these are relevant and critical to helping schools and districts use data to improve teaching and learning, they focus more on school- and student-based responses than on individual teachers. The application does not speak strongly to how use of the evaluation systems themselves informs decisions regarding professional development support for teachers and principals.

The State's plan to use the evaluation systems to inform decisions regarding compensation, promotion and retaining principals and teachers is not yet a definitive plan. It is a plan to get input in order to develop a framework for designing new compensation systems. The framework may include guidance around performance pay and other strategies for providing teachers with additional compensation, but there is no specific tie-in to the evaluation systems in the description of the suggestions that may be included within the framework. In addition, the State plans, through the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, to study the issues and provide guidance on how to reward highly effective teachers, how to link the evaluation process and improved student performance with incentives for teachers and administrators and how to encourage salary reform based on differentiated assignments or staffing rather than the accumulation of credits. The plan does not provide sufficient evidence that the State will be creating evaluation systems that will be used to inform compensation, promotion and retention of educators.

Aside from committing the Partnership for Teacher, Principal Effectiveness and Accountability, the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council and the Department of Education to reviewing and discussing conditions for tenure based on identified criteria for teacher effectiveness, and perhaps calling upon the schools working under Title 1(g) to report on the impact SIG funds are having on tenure discussions, this section does not include any elements of a plan to use the evaluation systems to inform decisions on whether to grant tenure and/or full certification to teachers and principals.

This section describes the State's obligation to include as part of the new evaluation guidelines protocols for implementing and enforcing an intensive evaluation phase for teachers and principals whose performance is significantly below acceptable levels of performance. The plan then focuses on the provision of this support and states that if efficacy is not ultimately demonstrated, state guidelines will outline the steps for termination of tenured or non-tenured teachers and principals. As a plan, the four steps outlined in the application are minimally acceptable in that they include the ultimate decision on removal, they are given a start date and responsible parties are designated.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	21
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	13

(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8
<p>(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Connecticut's plan to ensure the equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals is of high-quality: It is thoughtful and well-designed to ensure equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and principals in high-poverty and high-minority schools. The application presents a profound understanding of the difficulties of achieving and retaining equitable distribution of highly effective educators and the difficulty of creating a plan in the absence of a way to identify which educators are highly effective. Therefore, the State has created a proxy identifier to use until the growth model and evaluation systems that allow for identification of highly effective educators are in place. The plan relies on creating a database that will collect information about the identification and location of highly effective educators so that the information is publicly available and those who need to hire the highly effective educators know who and where they are. This will be done first with the proxy indicators and then, when available, with the indicators tied to the Race to the Top definition of highly effective. To support LEAs and principals' efforts to bring highly effective educators to their districts and schools, respectively, and to retain them, the State's plan includes making incentive funds available and creating a system and supports to assist high-poverty and high-minority schools to compete for the best candidates. While the State expresses hope that these strategies will be successful, it is of concern that even with these strategies, the State's estimates for the percentages of highly effective and ineffective teachers and principals do not change significantly over the course of the grant (and the Performance Measures for this section indicate that after two years of decreases in the percentage of ineffective teachers, the percentage increases again in the final year of the plan). The budget supports each of the pieces of this plan, the start and end dates are provided for each activity and responsible parties are designated.</p> <p>Connecticut's plan to increase the number and percentage of teachers teaching hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas is also high quality, thoughtful and well-designed to enable the State to reach its targets. Again, the application reveals a solid understanding of the issue as well as the difficulties attendant to ameliorating the shortages, especially given that the increased high school graduation requirements will require yet more teachers in hard-to-staff subjects. The plan is tailored to shortage areas that have remained consistent for a long period of time, and includes strategies to increase the supply of teachers, to make incentives available for teachers, and to change policy to encourage future teachers to enroll in hard-to-staff certification areas, rehire retired teachers without loss of pension benefits, and allow alternate evidence of subject matter expertise for teachers in hard-to-staff subjects. Target start and end dates and responsible parties are not designated in this section; however, all of the strategies are described elsewhere and are likely supported by such information.</p>		
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	6
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Connecticut's plan to link student achievement and student growth data to the students' teachers and principals, and to link this information to the in-State programs where they were prepared for credentialing is part of an evolving partnership between the State and its institutions of higher education, including growing collaborations between districts and local institutions of higher education to improve the preparation of educators for the district. This particular piece of the partnership relies upon improvements to the State Longitudinal Data System to link students to the teachers and courses they take and then linking the data system to the certification system database so that connections can be made between the teachers and administrators and the in-state institutions that prepared them. Although the application</p>		

speaks of linking student academic performance to their teachers, it does not specify that it will be linking student achievement and student growth as defined in Race to the Top to the teachers. However, the performance measures matrix is completed and it refers to data on student achievement and growth as defined in Race to the Top. The plan also includes analyzing and reporting on the data, but it does not make clear whether the information regarding the student achievement and growth results for teachers and administrators prepared at each institution of higher education will be communicated to the public or only to each individual institution of higher education. Once the system is created and all measures of student assessment are included within the state longitudinal data system it should be able to be used to generate the relevant information; as a result, the State should be able to reach its target of 100% by the end of year 3.

The only part of the plan that refers directly to the State's expansion of preparation and credentialing programs that are successful are the statements that "to the extent possible, [the Department of Education] will use this data to inform the approval and credentialing process for educator preparation programs" and that "effective preparation programs will be encouraged and supported to increase their training programs." Although there is a time frame for these actions and responsible parties are designated, this does not rise to the level of a high quality plan.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	14
(i) Providing effective support	10	8
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	6

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

The State has a well-developed, high quality plan to provide effective, data-informed professional development to teachers and principals. The planned revision of Connecticut's Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development make clear that the state is encouraging job-embedded learning that focuses on using data to inform instructional and curricular decisions, improves student engagement and achievement and differentiates instruction for all students, including those who are English language learners and students with disabilities. At the heart of the plan for specific professional development is the broad use of CALI, through which schools in Participating LEAs are to be provided with an executive coach, a data team facilitator, stipends for release time for teachers to work in collaborative professional learning communities and together participate in learning modules designed to support teachers and administrators to use data for improvement planning, use classroom and formative assessment data to pinpoint student difficulties and devise responsive strategies, implement effective instruction, improve school culture, engage students, etc. In addition, the State's plan rests on providing targeted professional development to teachers and administrators in order to support the State's efforts to:

- Ensure that all teachers are prepared to teach in an online environment;
- Understand the impact of race and culture on learning and develop the skills necessary to apply knowledge and strategies and improve learning and career outcomes for racial and language minority students;
- Are able to engage family and community; and
- Have opportunities to improve their understanding and teaching of STEM-related content

Each of these targeted areas is supported by several activities, each has a start and end time designated, and responsible parties are designated. However, while addressing the learning needs of English Language Learners and poor and minority children is of paramount importance to the success of the State's plans, the plan provides no detail with respect to how these needs will be addressed. While there is a clear preference for job-embedded professional development, with the exception of coaching that is a part of CALI, the plan does not specify the mechanisms (including coaching, induction, common planning) that will be used to implement the professional development initiatives.

<p>The State has a plan to measure, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of all of the professional development supports that are part of its Race to the Top program. The State will itself, or through a contractor, design and implement a survey of all professional development offered over two years, and will also create a mapping study of all the Race to the Top professional development, which will also include a summary of best practices in professional development. The report will include recommendations, and will be shared with the six Partnerships for Change and with the Shared Leadership Council. A time frame and responsible parties are designated. However, the plan does not make clear how the various professional development opportunities will be measured or evaluated. Nor is it clear how the results will be used.</p>		
Total	138	87

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Largely as a result of recently enacted legislation, the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education have statutory authority to intervene directly in the State's lowest-achieving schools and the LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	28
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	23
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The State has identified the persistently lowest-achieving schools. Application of its methodology resulted in identification of 18 schools as the lowest 5% among low-achieving Title I schools. In addition, five non-Title I high schools were identified.</p> <p>Connecticut's plan to support its LEAs in turning around the persistently lowest achieving schools is to support implementation of one of the four Race to the Top intervention models and use the CALI process. CALI allows the State substantial latitude to require organizational, staffing, curricular and other changes that will enable them to implement the four turnaround models. And results from the State's use of CALI in Partner districts and demonstration schools provide clear evidence of why the State would want to use this structure and content to support the turning around of low achieving schools. Since the State has used CALI without the four turnaround model, it is unable to provide evidence regarding its use of the models. Outside of discussing the supports that were provided to the CALI Partner districts and the demonstration schools, there is no discussion in this section of what support for the LEAs will look like specifically -- what support will be provided, to whom, when, on what schedule, etc. There is a reflection on what is needed to effectively turn around low achieving schools -- including systemic change, strong leadership, external pressure, committed and strong stakeholders, specific allocation of resources, ongoing evaluation, an accountability model, professional development, a standards-based curriculum and significant redesign of the school day -- and all of those elements are within the authority granted to the State Board of Education and the Commissioner of Education. Specific time lines and responsible parties are indicated only very generally for the process of supporting the LEAs in the implementation of the turnaround models and for specific aspects of the State's plan to support LEAs to turn around these schools -- notably, partnering with</p>		

the Connecticut Early Literacy Project and designing and piloting the State's student growth model using data gathered in the 18 schools that will be turned around under this section.		
Total	50	38

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
(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)		
<p>The percentage of revenues available to the State that was used to support elementary, secondary and public higher education in 2009 was essentially the same as in 2008. In 2008, 23.41% of total revenues was spent on education as opposed to 23.32% in 2009.</p> <p>Connecticut's policies include a number of separate mechanisms to create equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs. Indeed, the extent of the difference in funding provided to high-need LEAs and others is significant. The extent of equity provided through its policies is evidence in the total percentages of funding provided to LEAs by the State: Connecticut provides just 4.41% of revenue to the highest wealth/lowest need districts and 62.5% of revenue to the lowest wealth/highest need districts. And, importantly, the \$2.85 billion of equalized and targeted aid represents more than 95% of state elementary and secondary education aid. While very little of Connecticut's aid is targeted to schools as opposed to LEAs, there are two initiatives that provide additional support to the poorest schools. There is no evidence, however, of the impact of these aid programs on the extent to which they enable equitable funding between high-poverty schools and other schools.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	34
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	3
(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	7
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The State's law does not inhibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools; however, although the Board of Education must waive this section for high-performing charter schools, the law restricts enrollment levels of new state charter schools to 250 students or 25% of the enrollment of the LEA, whichever is less. In deciding whether to grant a charter, the Board of Education is directed to consider the potential of over-concentration of charter schools within a district or in contiguous districts. New charter school growth (State Charters) is also restricted by the fact that funding is provided via a set per pupil grant from the state. If the line item in the budget is not adjusted every year, the State Charters are limited to the number of seats supported by the fiscal year's budget. Although the State Board of Education has</p>		

established an Ad Hoc Committee to Study Funding School Choice Programs, until and unless this limitation is addressed, this is a significant restriction on the growth of State Charters.

The State has law and policies regarding charter school approval, monitoring, accountability, reauthorization and closure. With the exception of the law regarding the process for approving state and local charter schools, the law requires that each of the other decisions rests in significant part on the charter school demonstrating sufficient student progress (which is not defined in the statute). Although the law does not directly encourage charter schools that serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, in determining whether to grant a charter the Board of Education must consider the effect of the proposed charter school on the reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation in the region where it is to be located. The charter school law requires that the Board of Education give preference to charter schools that will serve students who reside in priority districts or districts where at least 75% of the enrolled students are minorities.

The application provides information about the reasons for which it has closed five charter schools since 1999 and about the reasons given for those charter schools that were not approved.

It appears that charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools. The application provides evidence that charter schools receive, on average, greater per pupil state funding than traditional public schools. Over ten years, the state's application provides evidence that charter school funding has been a minimum of 142% of traditional public school funding.

Connecticut provides substantial facilities funding and assistance and does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than applied to traditional public schools. The State has a permanent charter school facility grant program and has also established a separate bond fund for charter school building projects and improvements. In addition, the State awards funds to charter schools for technology infrastructure.

The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous schools other than charter schools. "Innovation Schools" are open enrollment schools created new or as conversion schools have a great deal of flexibility, and are only permitted to remain open if they are determined on an annual basis to have met annual goals and specified implementation. These schools have the flexibility and authority to define -- and are required to do so in their innovation plans -- instructional models and curriculum; structures and formats for the school day or year; and creative use of their budgets. They also have flexibility in staffing and procedures, including agreed upon waivers from or modifications to contracts or collective bargaining agreements. CommPACT Schools, which are LEA-sponsored alternative schools reorganized by teachers and administrators to maximize shared decision making with administrators, teachers, community leaders and parents, are also given autonomy in governance, autonomy and curriculum in exchange for accountability to the LEA.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Connecticut has created conditions favorable to education reform and innovation as part of its efforts to improve secondary school results and to decrease the achievement gap. In particular, the dropout prevention program, the in-school suspension program and Developing Tomorrow's Professionals program are all innovative supports designed to improve student outcomes, including narrowing the achievement gap. There is no data presented with respect to outcomes from any of these programs, yet implementation and request for services indicate that they are on their way to success. The Parent Leadership Training Institute and aspects of the State's Early Childhood Education programs are otherwise described in the application.</p>		
Total	55	44

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Connecticut has substantial STEM resources in terms of higher education, business, museums, and secondary education opportunities. However, according to the application there has been a lack of organizational coherence to link these resources and opportunities into a "seamless delivery system of resources and learning opportunities." The plan puts a great deal of emphasis on creating the organizational coherence, by giving responsibility to the Partnership for High School, College and Workforce Alignment. In addition, other consortia and interest groups are being formed in order to share resources, ideas and supports. Responsibility for offering a rigorous course of study in STEM is thought to be taken care of by increased graduation requirements; however, only one additional credit in STEM is required. Nonetheless, rigor should be increased as a result of the implementation of standards, professional development for teachers at all levels (some of which will be offered by industry and other STEM partners and some of which will be supported by the Department of Education -- as, for example, the Math-Science Instructional Coaches will be), and the creation of model curricula and end-of-course assessments for STEM courses. There are several different programs designed to stimulate interest of students and, in particular, underrepresented group and girls, in STEM. The State's STEM goals are addressed throughout the application - in particular in its plans to improve and implement high quality standards and assessments and in supporting effective teachers and leaders.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The State's application comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four ARRA reform areas, as well as the State Success Factors Criteria. As described within the application, each of these is addressed in a way that is aligned with the State's theory of change and by addressing one or more of the six levers of change. This consistency makes for a systemic approach to education reform. The systemic nature of the State's approach is also evident in the extent to which many of the reform areas are addressed within the parameters of CALI and within the 2010 education reform law.</p> <p>The State has successfully garnered broad and deep support -- both within its districts and its stakeholders. It is noteworthy that most of the many stakeholder support letters included as part of the application are specific -- they speak to their specific interests and how they will support the state's efforts. Together, the broad participation, the ambitious goals, the leadership structure and capacity, and the consistent strategies used throughout the Race to the Top program and plans should lead to increases in student achievement, decreases in the achievement gaps, and increases in the rates in which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p>		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	384
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #2300CT-7



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	50
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	33
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12

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

(A)(1)(i) – Connecticut's vision of change is anchored in their plan to expand and unify existing management structures, particularly public-private partnerships, as the work cannot be done by districts and the state alone. The state legislature has been extremely supportive of education reform as evidenced by its passage of landmark education legislation this spring. Among the highlights of the law are that it increases the requirements for graduation, requires student learning plans of districts, requires AP programs in all districts, requires expansion of the state longitudinal data system, implements a teacher evaluation system linking students and teachers using multiple measures of student growth, creates a new alternative certification route for administrators, provides authority to the Commissioner and State Board of Education to reconstitute local boards of education, authorizes parent-teacher governance councils to petition for reconstitution, waives enrollment limits for successful charters, and establishes authority for Innovation Schools within priority districts.

Though overall student achievement is among the highest in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and the state's own assessments show overall improvement in mathematics and reading, the achievement gap remains fairly steady and is unacceptable to Connecticut. The application defines measurable goals with reasonable interim targets to increase the rates of growth, close the gap in student achievement, and improve graduation rates. Connecticut's goals are anchored in the increased rigor and course requirements of the *Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform*, and the state plans to pursue them with or without RTTT dollars.

Connecticut's Race to the Top application sets forth a very comprehensive and coherent reform agenda for the state. Connecticut's measurable goals related to student achievement are quite rigorous, and the details of their plan will provide the infrastructure and training necessary to move strongly toward achieving those goals.

(A)(1)(ii) The application notes the strong participation of LEAs and of signatures from union heads of 82% and 87.8% respectively. The participating LEAs contain 95.1% of the students who live in poverty in the state. There are over 100 letters of support from a broad range of stakeholders around the state.

The MOU terms and conditions contains a "Savings Clause" indicating that nothing in the MOU should be construed as overriding existing collective bargaining agreements. The application narrative states that Connecticut feels this is a reasonable statement of respect for legal frameworks between unions and LEAs. The application asserts the "Savings Clause" is not a declaration of refusal to agree to the

requirements, but rather the assertion of rights to bargain the implementation of those requirements. However, the result is that 100% of the LEA's that are participating are doing so conditionally in every element. It's a considerable weakness that absolutely nothing could be parsed out for full agreement.

Every participating LEA has signed on to implement all aspects of the scope of work, albeit conditionally as discussed above. The MOU does not mention using student achievement data in the evaluation process, but the scope of work referenced in the MOU does, so the application will not be scored down for that. The scope of work also includes a STEM statement, which is a positive.

Despite the "Savings Clause," it is noted that the leaders of both unions representing Connecticut's teachers worked to gain passage of Public Act 10-111 and urged all members to sign on to the RTTT initiative. Their letters of support are also strong. The application notes the local challenges with the large urban Hartford district's union signature and hopes to gain their union support once local negotiations are resolved. Gaining 87.8% of union leader signatures is most impressive, even with the aforementioned "Savings Clause." The application narrative provides no explanation for the number of school board presidents who did not sign.

Taken as a whole, the application reveals very strong support for and commitment to Connecticut's plan from a broad range of stakeholders. The weakness of the MOU and subsequent conditional agreement to all aspects of the scope of work, however, is a considerable weakness.

(A)(1)(iii) The number of participating LEAs and the high percentage of students in poverty in those LEAs indicate a high likelihood of broad statewide impact with successful implementation of the state's plan to increase student achievement and reduce the achievement gap. Further, the strong high school focus will assist the state in meeting its goals related to increasing high school graduation rates and increasing college enrollment with students who are prepared for the rigors of college work. The fact that all commitment is conditional is of some concern moving forward, but the applicant is convincing that the will is present statewide to move forward together.

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

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

(A)(2)(i) The state plans to supplement the resources of the Connecticut State Department of Education through a cohesive collaboration with various organizations to include the State Education Resource Centers, Regional Education Service Centers, a new P-20 Council, six new public private Partnerships for Change, and the Knowledge Network to aid the department in providing information, professional development, and technical assistance to LEAs, school boards, parents, and other stakeholders.

The application highlights Connecticut's Plan to Manage the RTTT Implementation Process Effectively and Efficiently. The plan has six implementation goals around the issues of providing leadership and dedicated teams; supporting participating LEAs, providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing the grant; using funds from the grant and coordinating with other available funds to accomplish the plan; and planning for sustainability.

Goal #1 – Management and Leadership structures are established and functioning well.

- The P-20 Shared Leadership Council will be the umbrella organizational unit for all administrative units assigned to implement RTTT initiatives. It will provide direction and policy oversight of the

Connecticut State Department of Education's implementation of all aspects of the state's education reform plan.

- Connecticut will staff an Office of Race to the Top and RTTT Management Team.
- The state will have six Partnerships for Change, each of which will have a Leadership team tasked with giving direction to the work of each administrative support center. Each partnership will also have a Regional Education Service Center director assigned to it whose primary responsibility will be to serve as the information leader linking the Partnerships' and the state department of education's activities to the districts and other stakeholders. Each Partnership will also have a Connecticut State Department of Education Liaison.
- Administrative Support Centers will help lead and implement the work of each Partnership for Change in terms of planning, coordinating, budgeting, and administering the various projects.
- Aggressive yet reasonable timelines are provided along with a delineation of responsible parties.

Goal #2 – Divisions and bureaus, along with the Connecticut State Department of Education's senior leadership, will administer, support, and co-lead components of the RTTT plan for comprehensive reform.

- The state has reorganized its department of education in an effort to provide interdivisional and bureau support structure to participating LEAs and hold districts accountable for progress and performance.
- A Regional Education Service Center Director is part of each Partnership for Change whose purpose is to ensure seamless communication with districts.

Goal #3 – Expansion of state department of education staff required to support the state's RTTT reform agenda.

- Approximately 15 additional staff will be added to support the new administrative, financial, and accountability provisions required during the life of the grant.

Goal #4 – The Connecticut State Department of Education will ensure strong, effective, and efficient fiscal operations and processes for implementing and reporting on the RTTT grant.

- The application notes that the state department of education has experience administering a large number of federal grants.

Goal #5 – The Connecticut State Department of Education will use RTTT funds to fully implement the proposed reform agenda and will coordinate, reallocate, or repurpose education funds from other federal, state, or local sources.

- Connecticut will use federal School Improvement Grant dollars to provide support for LEA adoption of school turnaround models.
- State funding for after-school programs is being reviewed in order to re-emphasize a STEM focus wherever appropriate.
- Approximately \$5.5 million in current state funding is also dedicated to the comprehensive reform agenda.

Goal #6 – The Connecticut State Department of Education will establish a sustainability plan to continue fiscal support for reforms put into place through the RTTT initiative.

- One of the public-private partnerships is the Partnership for Financing Sustainable Change.
- Findings and recommendations are required by December 2011.
- Of note, the state's governor issued an executive order in May of 2010 calling for the creation of a commission to study and make recommendations on eliminating Connecticut's achievement gap. The Commission on Educational Achievement is charged with addressing structural, cultural and financial issues underpinning the underperformance of students in the state. A report with recommendations is due January 2012.

Connecticut's plans and goals for building leadership capacity and communication and support infrastructure are very complete and bode well for the success of implementation.

(A)(2)(ii) The application notes the vast improvement in participation of LEAs and of signatures from union heads from Phase 1 to Phase 2 (up from 62% to 82% and 48% to 87.8% respectively). There are over 100 letters of support from a broad range of stakeholders around the state. The Partnerships for Change engage leaders from numerous walks of life from around the state.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	24
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20

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

A)(3)(i) The application narrative describes increases in student performance on state assessments and notes Connecticut is among the highest performing states on NAEP. In terms of turning around schools, the application notes the 2007 state accountability legislation and implementation of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) as being responsible for demonstrable academic progress in schools being "turned around." The data does suggest progress is being made with the state's instructional improvement model.

So far, Connecticut has six elements of America COMPETES requirements implemented; six are in progress. The target completion date is 2011-12 on the remaining six. They have made progress in this area but have substantial work to do.

Connecticut has curriculum standards for pre-k to grade 8. The application does not discuss work done in this area for high school grades.

The Connecticut State Department of Education recently revised its regulations on certification. These are awaiting Board approval this summer. The state department also recently revised its Common Core of Teaching standards. Revised leadership standards are in progress. The Connecticut State Department of Education has begun developing a new beginning teacher induction model to be implemented in 2010-11. The state has begun its work on an initiative to develop a more rigorous, data-driven set of guidelines for teacher and administrator evaluation.

Generally speaking, good progress has been made, and it appears Connecticut's plan is placing its emphasis on those areas still needing the most improvement.

(A)(3)(ii) As noted in the application, Connecticut's NAEP scores are among the highest in the country. However, they are not making progress in grade 4 reading, though they are in 8th grade reading. 8th grade writing has also improved. Wide gaps among subgroups persist. Though math scores have improved for both 4th and 8th grade, significant gaps persist.

Connecticut's state ESEA reading test results show an upward trajectory, particularly in the past two years. Gaps persist but appear to be lessening with the exception of ELL students. There were only small increases in writing achievement, and significant gaps persist. In mathematics, the trajectory is upwards with most of the gains coming in the past two years. Gaps persist with some improvement in the ethnic subgroups.

Connecticut's high school test for ESEA shows generally flat performance across the board and significant gaps in reading, writing, and mathematics, indicating an area of more significant challenge.

The application notes that the state is in the process of bringing its graduation calculation method in line with federal request. Their method until 2009 was a modified cohort rate approved by USDOE for the state's accountability system. They changed to the NGA rate for 2009, and this data using a different calculation shows a significant dip from their previous calculation method. Even with the dip, Connecticut's graduation rate is comparably high. The gap among subgroups persists.

The application narrative describes state actions contributing to their progress to include the State School Board of Education's 2006 Comprehensive Plan causing many districts to develop and implement rigorous curricula with benchmark assessments, curriculum-based assessments, and pacing guides; the state department of education's Connecticut Curriculum Development Guide to guide curriculum development; the state department of education's documents for districts to use related to walkthroughs, curriculum guides, pacing guides, benchmark assessments, etc.; the revision of multiple policy statements; pre-kindergarten to kindergarten alignment; the state school board requirement that all teachers take and pass a foundations of reading exam before earning certification; and the 2004 establishment of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) to provide embedded professional development and coaching. The passage of state accountability legislation in 2007 strengthened and expanded the CALI initiative, and it is this to which Connecticut points for the strength of their gains in the past two years. The data would appear to support that assertion.

Total	125	104
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(1)(i) Connecticut signed the Common Core Standards MOA, which is provided as evidence, in May 2009 and is a full partner in the 47+ state effort. A copy of the draft standards is present.</p> <p>(B)(1)(ii) The application notes that the standards will be presented to the State Board of Education in July 2010 for adoption. No legislative action is required. Connecticut has a multi-layered plan in place to build support for the standards, analyze gaps and add local standards as necessary, and elicit feedback for rollout and implementation.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(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)(2)(i) The application states commitment to adopting common assessments and that Connecticut has expanded membership and roles in three consortia engaged in the development of common assessments. The Document of Commitment is present.

(B)(2)(ii) Connecticut is currently a member of three consortia:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium – 33 states;
- National Center for Education and the Economy Consortium – 8 states;
- New England Secondary School Consortium – 5 states

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(B)(3) The application discusses five key advances Connecticut has been developing in preparation for RTTT Phase II applications and has established a broad set of implementation goals to ensure the common core standards, associated curricula, and aligned assessments will be in place as soon as possible to have the quickest possible impact on student learning. The five key advances described are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state has strengthened its commitment to engaging families and community agencies. • The state has a plan for Secondary School Reform enacted by the state legislature. • Work has begun to align standards with both pre-k and post-secondary. • The state has moved to enrich the evolving framework for teaching and learning anchored in a STEM framework. • The state has strengthened the relationship between Pre-K and K-12 and institutes of higher learning to ensure college and workforce readiness standards to be adopted June 2011 are aligned with higher education. <p>Connecticut presents a robust plan with six goals and expected outcomes to support LEAs in the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. Timelines are provided for each project activity within each goal. The activities make extensive use of the Partners and other management structures created by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Responsible parties are listed. Annual Performance Targets are provided.</p> <p>Though in general the plan appears quite comprehensive and coherent, there are a couple of elements that could bear additional discussion as to the expected impact. For example, the Connecticut Student Assessment Forum sounds particularly helpful in terms of the anticipated goals and activities, but the narrative doesn't discuss the number of projected attendees or what participants will be expected to do to pass on their experience, so the breadth of the impact cannot be determined. This is also true for the one-day Fall 2010 Conference on New Generation Learners.</p>		
Total	70	68

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(1) Connecticut's narrative describes diligent work towards meeting all 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act. The application notes six elements are currently in place with the other six to follow by</p>		

the end of next school year; however, the chart indicates element #3 is only partially complete. Thus, points are awarded for five complete elements.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(2) As noted above, some critical elements of the statewide longitudinal data system are not yet in place, but they are in process and nearing completion. A requirement for a series of expanded data requirements by July 1, 2013 is now a matter of law in Connecticut.</p> <p>The state established a P-20 Data Working Group to inform the process of providing broad access to state data. Connecticut's Plan to Support Broad Data Access and Use contains five goals with activities, timelines, and responsible parties listed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving access to state assessment data. • Improving access to data in the statewide longitudinal data system via the CEDaR Web site. • Continuing to implement the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) data-driven decision-making component to ensure LEAs are using available education data to inform practice. • CALI is designed to provide a comprehensive model for instructional improvement, based on the use of data, at the LEA and state level. • The Regional Education Service Center (RES-C) Alliance and State Education Resource Center (SERC) will provide professional development on data-driven decision-making and CALI modules for 280 schools in year one, 560 schools in year two, 280 schools in year three, and 580 schools in year four. • Providing parent and public CEDaR training and outreach. • Working with the P-20 Data Group to improve the capacity to share data across the P-20 continuum and determine best practices for disseminating the information. <p>The state's plan appears thorough and sound. It focuses not only on training for system use but also on using the data to inform instructional decision-making. There is some concern, however, with the relatively low amount of money allocated for this system in the budget.</p>		

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	14
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6

<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(3)(i) Currently, Connecticut provides data support for instruction to districts through two programs: the <i>Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)</i> and the <i>Scientifically Research Based Interventions (SRBI)</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALI is the core component of the instructional improvement process. • Data teams at the LEA, school, and classroom levels. • SRBI is the state's RTI framework. • Data development and use at the classroom level is critical in the process. 		
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As described in the application narrative, the sources (and future sources) of data seem somewhat disparate in terms of who owns the data and how is it accessed.

(C)(3)(ii) and (iii) Connecticut has developed the Plan to Support LEA Implementation of Broad Data Access and Use containing three goals.

- Goal #1 -- All participating LEAs will implement the CALI and SRBI instructional improvement processes. The activities discussed in this section suggest a strong support network that will ultimately help teachers access and use data in a meaningful way to improve instruction.
- Goal #2 -- LEAs will use data from local instructional improvement systems and SLDS as a means to determine the effectiveness of the CALI Theory of Action and will make those results publicly available.
- Goal #3 -- Ensure data from the SLDS and from LEA-specific sources are available and accessible to researchers. This is now a matter of law in Connecticut.

As it is such a key component of the state's efforts, the state had an independent evaluation of CALI by RMC Research in 2009, and it bears mentioning here. This evaluation is attached to the application in Appendix C. The evaluation concluded that CALI is a strong model for school and district improvement that is being well implemented in its early stages. Though the evaluation was generally very positive, there were some areas of concern.

- The evaluation noted some concern with the leadership pipeline down to the building level, though further noted that high-level leadership is strong. This could be problematic as the state seeks to hire the most qualified individuals to lead the various RTTT projects.
- The evaluation noted concern with quality control with Regional Education Service Center (RESC) presenters of professional development. District leaders were particularly concerned about module training. In contrast, external consultants were generally reviewed very favorably.

It appears through its RTTT application that CDSE has taken to heart many of the recommendations of this evaluation. It has increased communication structures involving the RESC/SERC alliance, it seeks to resolve human capacity issues, and it deepens rather than excessively broadens CALI's training modules.

Total	47	28
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	20
(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	7

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

(D)(1)(i) and (ii) Connecticut state law authorizes alternate routes to certification for both teachers and school administrators. A recent law change requires the State Board of Education to review and approve proposals for alternate route to certification programs for school administrators. In Connecticut, providers may be from within or independent of the state's institutes of higher education (IHEs).

Eight alternate programs for teachers currently exist, half of which are IHEs and half of which are operating independently of IHEs. The program currently under development for administrators will be operated by a Regional Education Service Center, which is independent of IHE. The narrative states that all programs are selective and provides a list of entry requirements, though no data is provided to support the assertion of selectivity.

The narrative states that a temporary 90-day certificate is issued upon completion of the program, which then requires the candidate to be provided supervised, school-based experience and ongoing support. The narrative regarding supervision and the 90-day certificate appears contradictory. One paragraph states that the candidate receives the temporary certification (or resident teacher certificate) upon successful completion of the alternate certification program whereas another paragraph says the certificate allows candidates to work within the public schools for one full year prior to completing the alternate certification program. Still later the narrative says that once the candidate has successfully taught for 90 days, he or she may be awarded an initial certificate, which is the equivalent of what a regularly certificated teacher receives. The narrative states that after a one-year residency, the individual is issued a three-year initial certificate. This is very confusing if the 90-day certificate is only good for three months. Due to these apparent contradictions, it is impossible to determine whether or not the state meets this element of the RTTT definition of an alternate route to certification. Though clearly the teacher eventually receives an initial certification, it appears they first receive a "lesser" certificate than regularly certificated teachers.

The programs as designed allow for coursework to be limited when the candidate successfully passes a content area exam. All alternate routes to certification programs in Connecticut are shorter in duration than traditional programs.

The number of teachers and principals successfully completing an alternate route to certification in Connecticut for the 2008-2009 school was 323 (or 15% of teachers certified that year), 296 of which participated in non-IHE programs.

(D)(1)(iii) Connecticut's process for identifying areas of shortage for teachers and administrators begins with surveys of districts, charter schools, and Regional Education Service Centers every fall to collect information about vacancies. The data are then categorized and ranked. Each endorsement receives a shortage score from which the top ten shortage areas are ranked.

The state's primary strategy to fill future shortages is to approve more alternate routes to certification programs. The state provides for Durational Shortage Area Permits and Temporary Authorizations for Minor Assignments provisions to assist in filling positions. Incentives also exist in terms of loans to students in identified shortage areas and for mortgage assistance. Those seeking certification in an identified shortage area may be able to substitute a passing score on a subject matter test for having a major in the subject. Additionally, the state's laws allow the rehire of retirees for up to two years in a shortage area without hardship to the retiree's pension.

Connecticut appears to be making diligent efforts to prepare and incent more teachers in shortage areas.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	27
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	11
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8

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

(D)(2)(i) The timelines provided in the application narrative reveal that the system to measure student growth won't be in place until the 2013-14 school year, which is highly problematic. The process will build upon the state test's vertical scales to measure growth between grades. Additionally, the state's online system for grade-level benchmark assessments for grades 3-8 will be piloted next school year and will be another measure of student growth. The plan will allow for integration of local measures of student performance. A strength of the plan is that it includes the development of K-2 interim assessments

The narrative states that Connecticut will begin work to link student and teacher data "based on the availability of state and other federal funding." Though somewhat realistic, this significantly weakens the demonstration of commitment to this key idea.

(D)(2)(ii) Though the process to reach the ultimate goal as described is a thorough one involving significant input from teachers and principals, timelines reveal the system won't be in place for implementation until the 2012-13 school year, which is regrettably late to determine if the evaluation system has an impact on student achievement. Table (D)(2)(b) indicates full implementation of the various elements of the evaluation system, to include measuring student growth, in 2013-14. The narrative indicates the new system will have three levels of differentiation regarding educator effectiveness.

(D)(2)(iii) The plan for the new state evaluation system for teachers and principals provides for an annual evaluation including student growth as a factor. The narrative describes that student growth data will be provided to LEAs, but no mention is made of getting the data into the hands of teachers as part of the evaluation process.

(D)(2)(iv) The application narrative outlines several forms of professional development on the new systems and on using data to inform decision-making, but it makes no mention of activities resembling coaching or mentoring decisions based on evaluation.

The narrative discusses designing a collaborative framework for designing compensation systems that can be adopted by each LEA through collective bargaining. This is a very weak statement of commitment for recognizing the successes of highly effective teachers. The application also describes how a Performance Evaluation Advisory Council will meet at least four times each year to consider and amend strategies for rewarding highly effective teachers and encourage them to work in high-priority schools. Again, there is no meat on this bone.

In terms of granting tenure and full certification based on performance, the narrative contains a discussion of guidelines on evaluation, consistency, and a sound system rather than directly addressing the criterion. The most direct statement in the narrative about the actual question of tenure and full certification based on performance is as follows: "The partners will next review and discuss conditions for tenure based on identified criteria for teacher effectiveness and. . .report on the impact SIG funds are having on tenure discussions. . ." This reviewer can find no commitment or even hint at a direction here.

New evaluation guidelines will include protocols for implementing and enforcing an "intensive" evaluation phase for teachers and administrators whose performance is significantly below acceptable levels of performance. Ultimately, termination of both tenured and non-tenured after a specified timeframe with specified supports will be possible. There is no discussion of tying the determination of "ineffective" to student achievement. The narrative does note that school boards can direct schools to transfer ineffective teachers to other schools to ensure equitable distribution. There appears to be more discussion of moving the problem that terminating the ineffective educator.

The performance measures for this section, as opposed to the section on developing the evaluation system, show a huge jump in targets in the final year to achieve 100 % compliance. The trajectory on this roll-out does not bode well for success.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	14
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	8
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6
(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(D)(3)(i) Connecticut cannot yet measure teacher effectiveness due to their current inability to link teacher and student data. Thus, they will temporarily use "proxy-based" effectiveness measures. Though this is a creative approach to move philosophy in this area, it dilutes the focus on the actual need to create the systems to measure teacher effectiveness. The state's own application suggests a low level of expectation for the results of this effort.</p> <p>Connecticut's Plan to Support the Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers and Principals contains five goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a database to support the strategies to resolve inequities in distribution. • Apply database information to the new evaluation system and produce a first report on equitable assignment of effective teachers. The timeline provided of September of 2013 implies the database will only contain data from pilot districts. • Implement a system of effectiveness distribution based on proxy effectiveness measures such as Praxis II cut scores, National Board Certified Teachers, and teachers who successfully complete the Urban School Leaders Fellowship program. • Implement incentives for high-minority and high-poverty schools to recruit and retain highly effective teachers and principals. • Increase numbers and equitable distribution of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding supply • Providing scholarships • LEA incentives for hiring and retaining effective teachers • Policy changes <p>The narrative provided sets forth target dates for completion of plan elements but sets forth no measurable annual targets for improvement.</p> <p>(D)(3)(ii) Connecticut's application notes an increased concern for shortages in the areas of science, math, and world language due to the state's new graduation requirements. Among the numerous strategies Connecticut describes for increasing the number of teachers available to staff hard-to-fill positions is approving alternate routes to certification programs; seeking federal designation of official shortage areas enabling loans and mortgage assistance; re-employment of retired teachers in shortage areas; expanding the use of on-line courses for students in shortage areas; developing post-secondary scholarship programs; and providing scholarships for substitute teachers to cross-endorse in hard-to-staff subjects.</p> <p>As the state has no current definition for effective teacher, no baseline data is provided.</p>		
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	3
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		

(D)(4)(i) The application narrative discusses the work done in recent months in the areas of reading preparation for pre-service teachers, curriculum alignment, training for pre-service teachers, more inclusion of higher education leaders in the new state leadership structures, and the statutory requirement to expand data collection related to teacher preparation experiences for the statewide longitudinal data system. This section does not discuss linking achievement and growth to teachers and principals, though that element is addressed elsewhere in the application.

The section on the Reform Plan Conceptual Framework lists measures for how teachers add value to student achievement. Of concern is that one measure not listed is the state's ESEA assessment.

The section on Linking Student and Teacher Data does not discuss linking this data at all. However, the section on Linking Teacher to Teacher Preparation Data does mention it, so points can be awarded.

The application taken as a whole presents a workable plan to link teacher effectiveness data to their preparation program. The state has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring this data is collected, reported, and used effectively.

(D)(4)(ii) The application narrative centers around a discussion of redefining and increasing accountability measures for the state's educator preparation programs. The data will then be used to inform the approval and accreditation process for these programs. Effective programs will be encouraged and supported to increase their training programs, particularly in shortage areas. The application does not discuss strategies or measurable targets to determine success.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15
(i) Providing effective support	10	10
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	5

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

(D)(5)(i) The application states that RTTT funds will be used to expand participating LEA access to essential professional development programs in effective data-informed professional development, coaching, induction, and common planning and collaboration time. Eighty percent of the application's total requested funding is geared toward the development and support of effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

CALI and SRBI are at the core of the Connecticut professional development framework.

Goals of Plan to Implement Comprehensive, Coordinated State-Local Professional Development are as follows, each of which is supported by numerous activities:

- LEAs provide student support systems necessary for success of all students.
- Teachers and leaders will provide learning environments and employ teaching strategies that engage all learners.
- Ongoing and planned professional development is mapped statewide.
- Coordinated professional development schedule/calendar is available.
- Guidelines for continuing education units are revised to promote engaged learning of all students. The goal is to move toward more job-embedded rather than "sit and get" professional development.
- External review of professional development effectiveness and cost-efficiency.

The plan appears to be coherent and aligned with the state's major goals for its Race to the Top Application. The structures both in place and planned are well designed to provide appropriate support.

(D)(5)(ii) Goal 6 of the plan discussed above provides for an external review of professional development effectiveness and cost-efficiency. While an external review is laudable, the description of that effort is very broad and surface-level with no indication of how such an external evaluation might begin to parse out the impact of each initiative on student achievement.

Total	138	84
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

(E)(1) The application narrative provides a description of the state's applicable laws, statutes, regulations, or other relevant legal documents related to the state's ability to intervene in schools and LEAs.

The passage of Public Act 10-111 allows the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education to intervene in low performing schools or districts without legislative or gubernatorial approval in two ways: (1) reconstitution of local or regional boards of education and (2) creation of parent-teacher school governance councils with the authority to petition the local board of education to reconstitute the school.

Section 10-223e of the Connecticut General Statutes gives the State Board of Education the authority to intervene directly in both the state's persistently lowest-achieving schools and the LEAs. The State Board of Education has used this authority by working with the 15 LEAs currently participating in the CALI, referred to as Partner Districts. The law also authorizes the State Board of Education to provide intensive supervision and direction to any school or LEA identified as in need of improvement and requiring corrective action pursuant to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

The law also grants the General Assembly the authority to enact legislation authorizing that control of a district be reassigned to the State Board of Education or other authorized entity when certain conditions are met. The law also grants the Commissioner of Education the authority to directly intervene under certain conditions as well. Those conditions are that the school fails to make adequate yearly progress for two years in a row.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	29
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	24

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

(E)(2)(i) The state has an approved definition of lowest-achieving schools. Methodology is thoroughly discussed in Appendix (E)(2)(a).

(E)(2)(ii) From 2007-2010, Connecticut funded two demonstration schools in each of the CALI Partner Districts to examine the impact of student performance if the schools were provided additional resources beyond traditional CALI supports. These schools have posted gains that outpaced the statewide average. Gains are also reported in CALI districts in AYP status. There were also gains reported in Supported Districts (which received slightly less additional support than Partner Districts).

18 of 25 eligible schools have applied for federal School Improvement Grant funding to support their turnaround efforts, and each has selected a model from the four RTTT models. No annual measurable targets are provided beyond year one.

Connecticut has not yet implemented any one of the four intervention models as described in RTTT, so the requested evidence cannot be provided. The application notes, however, that many of the elements of CALL are also core components of each of the four mandated intervention models.

The application discusses no lessons learned as, again, Connecticut has not yet implemented any one of the specified models. However, the application discusses lessons learned in its restructuring process with 84 schools under NCLB. Connecticut learned that previous requirements under NCLB were insufficient. They needed more systemic change and a comprehensive reform model aligned across the state, LEAs and schools. There must be strong leadership at the LEA and building level and the willingness to move from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration anchored in an identified accountability model. Connecticut learned that external pressure from the state can also be important to overcome some barriers at the local level, but priority goals for the restructuring or turnaround need to be established by a strong, credible stakeholder group to include parents and union representatives. Resources must be properly allocated to focus on priorities. There must be ongoing evaluation and research of interventions to allow for continuous improvement of the model and efficient use of resources. Professional development must be of high quality and must be job-embedded, with modeling. Finally, Connecticut learned that there must be a significant redesign of the school day and expansion of the school year.

Though Connecticut does not have experience with the four specific turnaround models required in RTTT, it is clear the state has significant experience in using its established laws and systems to restructure schools.

Total	50	39
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5

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

(F)(1)(i) The application states that Connecticut is traditionally among the highest spenders in elementary and secondary education. The latest National Center for Education Statistics information provided in the application shows that Connecticut had the third highest per pupil expenditure for both total expenditures as well as for instruction. Connecticut was the highest in the country for capital outlay for school facilities. Clearly, education funding is important to the state.

According to information provided in the application, 2009 saw a \$126 million increase in elementary and secondary education revenues. The percentage of total revenues that Connecticut made available to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for 2008 and 2009 was virtually flat at 23 percent (with a .09 percentage point decrease from 2008 to 2009) and, thus, substantially unchanged. Overall, the state's support increased 3.25 percent, though the percentage of total revenues was flat as more money went for welfare and social services programs.

(F)(1)(ii) The Connecticut State Department of Education distributed nearly 87% of grant programs supporting elementary and secondary education (Education Cost Sharing and Categorical Reimbursements) through an equalizing formula in which the distribution is affected by a town's ability to support education and student need. Funding is provided at the LEA level to support its schools appropriately. State funding initiatives for School Breakfast and for Early Childhood Education are targeted directly at the poorest schools rather than at the LEA level. Data presented shows a high level of responsiveness within the state's funding formulas to the issue of equitable funding.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	37
(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	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8

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

(F)(2)(i) Connecticut does not have a cap on the number of charters allowed to operate in the state. A previous barrier requiring secured appropriations prior to application has been removed as has the enrollment cap for high-performing charter schools (though new charter schools that have not yet established their level of efficacy have an enrollment cap of 250).

The laws related to funding for local charter schools as opposed to state charter schools are somewhat prohibitive, which no doubt partially explains why no local charters are currently operating in the state. The State Board of Education has formed an Ad Hoc Committee to Study Funding School Choice Programs to make recommendations to the Board in time for the next legislative session.

The application provides the number 18 for the number of charters operating in the state. Table (F)(2)(a) provides the numbers of districts participating in each type of public school choice program and the total amount of state revenue provided for each type of school in the 2009-2010 school year, but it does not indicate how many of each type there are.

(F)(2)(ii) The narrative outlines the process for approval for both types of charter schools (state and local). The process requires the State Board of Education to give preference to applicants that will serve students who live in the state's priority school districts or in an LEA where 75 percent or more of the enrolled students are members of racial or ethnic minorities.

Table (F)(2)(ii)(a) provides numbers of charter applications made, numbers approved, numbers denied and numbers closed. The reasons for denials are provided.

The application outlines the monitoring requirements and activities related to state oversight of charter schools and provides a table summarizing monitoring and accountability activities that were required by the state for each of the last five years. It also describes the annual reporting required by each charter to the state.

The application outlines the processes of charter renewal and revocation and provides the recent history of charter school closure, non-renewal, and revocation for the state.

From the information provided, it appears that Connecticut has a diligent oversight system for its charters.

(F)(2)(iii) The application describes applicable laws related to the funding of public charter schools in Connecticut. The per-pupil grant from the state is \$9,300 (or \$10,508 as an average taking grants into account as well). The second figure represents a number 199% above the average per-pupil funding received by LEAs. The application states that state-funded charter schools have historically received higher rates of state support than traditional public schools and provides a chart for the past 12 years as evidence. Even with federal, local, and other revenues added to state funding on a per pupil basis, charter schools are still funded at a higher amount (106%) than traditional schools. Though charter enrollment is only about 1% of total school enrollment, charters represent about 2% of Connecticut State Department of Education's general fund appropriations.

(F)(2)(iv) Connecticut has provided charter schools with funding for facilities and related supports since 2002. A recent change in law makes this program permanent. The state also has provided for a separate bond fund specifically for support of charter school building projects and improvements. The General Assembly has also created a pilot school construction grant to provide one state charter school with funds to buy and renovate a building for its use. The Connecticut State Department of Education awards funds to charter schools for technology infrastructure.

(F)(2)(v) Connecticut currently offers several public school choice options that include charter schools, innovation schools, interdistrict magnet schools, the Open Choice Program, the Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Program, Connecticut Technical High Schools, and Regional Agricultural Science and Technology Education Centers. Current state law allows LEAs to operate innovative autonomous public schools in the form of CommPACT schools, interdistrict magnet schools, and innovation schools. The application describes each authorizing law, each type of program, and provides results for each.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(F)(3) In addition to Innovation Schools described above, Connecticut notes five other programs or initiatives designed to increase student achievement, improve graduation rates, and narrow achievement gaps. Unfortunately, the application provides no effectiveness data for these programs as required in the criterion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropout Prevention – Efforts and activities are described, but no results are provided. • In-School Suspension Actions – A recent change in law is described making most suspensions in-school rather than out of school. No results are provided. • Developing Tomorrow's Professionals – The narrative indicates this program has been extremely successful in a number of ways, but no data is provided to support that claim. • Parent Leadership Training Institute – This leadership training is described, and numbers of participants are provided, but no efficacy results are discussed. • Early Childhood Education – The application describes the initiative but provides no results beyond the work successfully building a commitment to build an early childhood system. 		
Total	55	47

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

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

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Connecticut's application describes the state's large concentration of STEM businesses and industries as well as prestigious institutes of higher learning, which makes their interest in strengthening the STEM pipeline high. Significant resources, both public and private, have been invested in STEM education. Previous efforts, however, have lacked the organizational coherence possible with the state's RTTT grant plans to provide for the necessary infrastructure to implement the state's plans and achieve their goals.</p> <p>The Connecticut Plan for Secondary School Reform mandates increased credit and specific course requirements for math and science. Model curricula and end-of-course exams will be created. Alternate routes for certification have been established for middle and secondary math teachers. STEM programs and courses will be expanded, especially those that provide career-focused learning experiences. The plan calls for significant professional development in STEM for teachers at all levels.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>Connecticut'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's application demonstrates that it and its participating LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform.</p> <p>Connecticut 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	385



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #2300CT-4



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	50
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The applicant has provided a comprehensive reform agenda that directly connects with the Race to the Top theory for transformational change. Noteworthy are the established goals connected to student achievement by increasing the rigor and requirements of the Connecticut Plan Secondary School Reform. Information presented is comprehensive and sets the stage for a clear understanding of the intended reform process. (ii) As stated in the application, the percentage of LEA's who committed to the plan was 82% with 87.8% of local unions signing up as well. This rate of support by the stakeholders is commendable. (iii) In spite of the number of LEA's and local union sign off, there is still a concern that some of the largest cities in the state with the largest numbers of disadvantaged students did not seek to agree to participate. This is a concern since the absence of cities with large numbers of disadvantage students could impede the academic growth of students who the reform is meant to address.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	24
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) The applicant provides a clearly stated structure and necessary processes to bring rigorous reform to the state's LEAs. Based on information presented, the applicant has in place a shared leadership council that will collaborate with the SBE and State Board of Higher Learning to oversee the accountability requirements of the RTTT grant. Additionally, the Commissioner of Education will be ultimately responsible for the grant. The Office for Race to the Top will be established to track the progress of each goal as well as examine and report outcome data of students and programs. Numerous other layers of accountability will be established with direct reporting to the Commissioner of Education (ii) The application provides a clearly delineated listing of support from numerous institutions that include all aspects of the state government consisting of the governor, state educational officials, members of the legislature and the heads of numerous organizations locally, as well as statewide, such as community-based organizations, educational organizations, Institutions of Higher Education as well as stakeholders representing ethnic groups and others specialized populations. Additionally, the budget is well developed and provides a sense of fiscal security in implementing this proposal. However, the primary concern is the fact that there is still a</p>		

need to garner support from the teachers' union of the largest metro area of Hartford as it serves a large percentage of disadvantaged students.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	23
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18

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

(i) The applicant has made an effort to improve its data systems by implementing the 12 America COMPETES requirements as defined in the RTTT standards. To date, five have been completely implemented with seven still in progress with a completion date of 2011-2012. Additionally, in support of the state's curriculum areas, the state developed the Connecticut Curriculum Development Guide (CCDG) whose express purpose is to lead the planning, review, and development of local curriculum for PK-12. Several initiatives are set to begin revision this year including certification regulations, revision of the Common Core of Teaching (teaching standards expected to be used by all teachers), teacher induction program and the development of data driven guidelines for teachers and administrators. In spite of this, there is only one indication that one initiative, the teacher induction model, TEAM, will be ready for implementation during the 2010-2011 school. The timeliness of completion for implementation at the beginning of the school year makes it difficult to evaluate the completeness of the program prior to its implementation. (ii) The applicant presented a comprehensive report of test results of students covering years 2003-2009. Results indicated a very slow, but steady increase in test scores among minority students except in grade 8 where there exists a large gap in performance among subgroups in NAEP mathematics. Within the scores of CMT reading, again scores reflect large gaps among subgroups. It is noted that there was a decline in the reported graduation rate for the 2009 year, but it was also noted that this reported severe drop was due to a change in the calculation methods used in previous years to the NGA rate. The applicant has made limited yet positive strides toward closing the achievement gaps within the minority population, and it is recognized that more focused work is needed to attain this goal. Additionally, rigor appears to be more prominent at the secondary level rather than across all grade levels.

The leadership for the state has identified funding sources in addition to the RTTT funds to be distributed to LEAs based on a preset formula. Small districts are encouraged to pool their resources in an effort to receive the same benefits realized by larger districts. Support for this initiative is far reaching, though there is support from teacher unions, once again the concern is for the districts where unions have not embraced the necessary reform to address the salient needs of low achieving students. Of greatest concern is the status of Hartford which has been placed under a five year plan that sets forth annual desegregation goals. As stated in the application, the original court ruling came in 1996. This second mandate brings pause because after 12 years, once again there is a mandate to desegregate schools in Hartford and somehow the teachers' union finds it necessary not to sanction the state's notion to compete for the RTTT funding which would bring opportunities to provide needed assistance for all students, but more particular to minority students. This is significant in that Hartford has the largest number of minority students who fall within the poverty level. Commendably, the RTTT grant proposal is strongly backed by the business community, civil rights groups, parent groups and other stakeholders from across the state.

Total	125	97
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i)The applicant has joined 47 other states, two territories, and the District of Columbia in a multi-state process of developing a common core of rigorous standards in language arts and mathematics. Working cooperatively with other states can ultimately prove beneficial to the students of the state. (ii)The applicant has made an effort to fully implement the Common Code State Standards (CCSS) which, when adopted at the 2010 meeting of the State Board of Education (SBE) will provide an alignment with K-12 curriculum standards and professional development for instructional personnel.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(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)		
<p>The applicant has joined a consortium of 33 other states in the development of comprehensive assessments aligned with the CCSS. The system is being developed by SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium. This step will provide the link needed to student achievement , that is, formative and summative assessments for evaluating the academic needs of students.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant provides a detailed summary of timelines germane to the activities supporting implementation of the Common Core State Standards. It is commendable that higher education will be included in the planning and implementation as a means of aligning their undergraduate and teacher preparation programs with the CCSS. Further, this partnership will provide an opportunity to increase dialog between secondary schools and colleges in providing increased preparation of students for the post secondary academic experience. Of note is the utilization of electronic Student Success Plans, a web-based information site, online benchmark assessments, and additional opportunities for rigor and relevance for all students involved in STEM.</p>		
Total	70	70

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	10
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant has indicated complete accomplishment of six of the 12 America COMPETES Act requirements, and that they continue to make significant progress in implementing the remaining six requirements. Though the narrative indicates a completion of six requirements, with closer scrutiny, it was ascertained that #3 requirement including post-secondary will not be completed until August 2012. Though the process has begun, it is important that the applicant move forward steadily in order to provide</p>		

necessary data for teachers to assess the needs of students through testing and subsequent analysis of data.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
Goals have been established to use state generated data to drive educational reform and improve the instruction at the classroom level. Additionally, the CSDE's CEDar Website provides for availability for access of needed school and LEA data. Of interest also is The Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI) which presently serves as a core component of the instructional improvement process for the state, however, it stands to reason that once the process is complete, the state will have the necessary tools to effectuate positive change across all academic areas.		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	16
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i)The applicant has presented a plan to use data as a means of improving instruction. The intent is to provide intensive professional development for administrative and instructional staffs to effectively use this instructional improvement system. ii)The applicant is to be commended for the use of data teams in all LEAs reaching from the district, school and to the classroom level, however, there appears an insufficient budget available to continue to support the completion of the process of gathering sufficient data. (iii) Once all necessary data gathering tools and adequate funding are in place, the results of gathering good data will be a great asset to instructional staffs in providing students with targeted instruction. The data captured in CALI will be accessible to researchers from numerous sources. The data from researchers will be beneficial in planning professional development activities for teachers and administrators. Further, the research will extend itself to refining the academic offering at each grade level, again, in an effort to increase academic achievement, close the academic gaps between each identified student group and play a role in future legislative action to improve the educational system for all LEAs.		
Total	47	29

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	17
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	5
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	6
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(i)The applicant has established eight alternative route program providers for teachers. To date, there is no alternative preparation program for administrators, but Public Act 10-111 requires the SBE to review and approve ARC programs for administrators. If indeed this is mandated, the urgency of implementation of		

such alternatives has not been delineated in the application. (ii) Though there are alternative routes for certification for teachers, the same has not been determined for principals. The applicant has identified the following alternative route providers to assist with the certification process for teachers:

- Capital Regional Education Council
- Teach for America
- Area Cooperation Education Services
- CT ARC Program
- Charter Oak College
- Albertus Magnus College
- Quinnipiac University
- Eastern Connecticut State University

(iii) For the past 20 years, the applicant has had a process in place to monitor, evaluate, and identify areas of teacher and principal shortage as well as make provisions for preparing individuals for filling these shortage areas. More specifically, the applicant conducts a yearly survey to ascertain teacher and administrator shortage areas and uses comparative data over a ten year period to provide a snapshot of trends in growth of shortages and the specific areas affected. This process has proven successful in monitoring the teacher and administrator needs of the state.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	34
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	6
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	15

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

The applicant indicates they will develop a new model of student growth that will serve as a major component of measurement of the effectiveness of teachers and principals. It is anticipated that this system will be easily understood by parents and the public. Ten years has passed since the evaluative tool for teachers and administrators was last adopted, now it is anticipated that a new tool will be completed for publication in 2011. There is no indication if a more timely review and adjustments will occur in the future.

The applicant has identified several activities to satisfy the need for providing teachers and principals with constructive feedback after evaluations as well as data on student growth. Included in the evaluative process will be clearly delineated statements describing the connections among teacher evaluation, curriculum development, professional development and student assessment. Specific activities in preparation for the roll-out of the new process will include the training of all administrators in the use of the teacher evaluative instrument. There is also indication of collaboration between key stakeholders, including bargaining units, to develop the framework for designing compensation systems. However, after careful review of the information presented by the applicant, there appears to be no genuine commitment to use evaluations in the manner stated. Rather, it appears that the plan presented is merely a plan to develop a more in-depth plan to use the evaluation outcomes. Additionally, there is no indication of how unions will be a part of this process except in the area of compensation.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	17
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	10
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7

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

(i) Goals have been identified to equally distribute highly effective teachers and principals, but there is no assurance that these goals will be attainable. Specifically, the applicant states that the primary challenge facing them is the need for adequate funding to hire personnel to begin to capture information in regards to publishing lists of individuals who are interested in moving from their present assignment to high-poverty or high-minority schools. As a result, this data will not be available in a timely manner for names of potential teachers to become available for principals to consider them for hiring at the beginning of the school year. (ii) The applicant has developed activities to increase the number of new teachers in shortage areas by offering scholarships to substitute teachers to assist in acquiring a degree in education, grants to districts and rehiring of retired teachers and possible enactment of policy to provide financial aid to individuals who are interested in receiving certification in hard-to-staff certification programs. It is apparent that movement is being made to address the need to equitably distribute teachers and principals at an appropriate level, however, it is not completely clear that this initiative will provide the desired outcome prior to 2013 when the applicant states data will become available. This data will identify the needs of particular schools and specific subjects and specialty areas that are directed impacted.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	3

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

(i) As per the applicant, they have undertaken five recent activities in an effort to shore up the teacher and principal preparation program, however, baseline data was not made available from which to compare future growth. (ii) This process will be reported to the public and used to identify successfully implemented programs and replicate them where appropriate, however, there is no indication how areas such as collaborative assessment will be utilized, nor is there information that addresses the needs of English Language Learners (ELL). Additionally, the plan is void of information indicating how professional development will be tied to student achievement and finally, how professional development will be measured and evaluated. There is an effort to improve the effectiveness of teachers and principal preparation programs. Though there is movement to improve in this area, there appears to be less movement to credential principals as compared to progress made to credential teachers to work in schools where there is a proliferation of shortages of teachers and high performing principals. Based on the evidence presented in the document, it is anticipated that success of the efforts for principals will be limited, at best.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	16
(i) Providing effective support	10	8
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	8

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

(i) The applicant's plan for supporting teachers and principals is clearly delineated in Public Act 10-111 which anchors changes in school and district improvement in CALI. (ii) Though the system is still in the building stage, the potential for success is apparent. The plan calls for concentrated professional development activities which address the needs of teachers and administrators directly impacting the

academic achievement of students. The applicant has made a concerted effort to use data to direct effective professional development activities that will prove successful for teachers and principals.		
Total	138	92

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The applicant reports that Public Act 10-111 was passed with provisions allowing for the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education to intervene in low performing schools or districts without legislature or gubernatorial approval. This act holds promise for those schools that are constantly low achieving and where immediate intervention is required.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	20
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	15
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) (i) Using detailed methodology, 18 schools were identified as constituting the lowest 5% among low-achieving Title I schools. (ii) CALI has shown to be an effective intervention for instructional improvement. Improvements have been noted in CALI demonstration schools such that gains were made among CALI districts in AYP status. 15 CALI partner Districts and five demonstration schools were removed from NCLB in need of improvement status. This is an indication that attention is indeed paid to the low achieving schools and interventions are being used to effectuate positive changes. Though strides have been made toward turning around low performing schools, only a small number of schools have shown overall significant improvement. As per the applicant, Connecticut has not yet implemented any one of the four intervention models as indicated in RTTT. The state is in the process of applying for School Improvement Group (SIG) funding. Though CALI is beneficial to low performing schools, the state is still in the planning stages for implementation of some/all four intervention models as deemed appropriate.		
Total	50	30

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		

(i)The applicant has provided a comprehensive delineation of funds for education. Though due to difficult economic times, the state's contribution to education has remained flat for the most recent years.(ii) The state still makes a concerted effort to provide additional funding to high- poverty schools. Accompanying charts bring clarity to the manner in which state funds are distributed to all LEAs.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	37
(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	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i)The applicant does not prohibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools. However, there is a cap on the seats available in new charter schools. (ii) There are however, guidelines that encourage high performing charter schools that speak to the needs of students who are high-need. (iii)(iv)Presently, the state provides charter schools with some funding for facilities as well as funding for operations and a share of local, state and federal funding as with traditional public schools. (v) The state also enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. Additionally, the state provides opportunities for students and parents to make choices as to where students attend magnet schools throughout the district. Through CommPact schools, students are able to attend schools which are a collaboration between the University of Connecticut, the union, and administrators.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant is very supportive of public choice reform efforts of LEAs by providing new initiatives to increase academic achievement of students, decrease the dropout rate and increase the rate of graduation. Additionally, the state has increased parental engagement by instituting the Parent Leadership Training Institute.</p>		
Total	55	48

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant has a large concentration of STEM businesses and industries in the state in addition to a partnership with research universities, Yale University and the University of Connecticut. The LEAs continue to link schools and many of the businesses throughout the state. The direction in which the state is proceeding indicates that work toward a solid direction for improvement is well at hand. As per the applicant, the state has invested significant resources into bolstering STEM education.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant is to be commended for their systematic approach to educational reform in the state of Connecticut. They have embraced the four educational reform areas in an effort to close the achievement gap, increase the graduation rate and equip teachers and administrators with skills to assist in increasing the academic achievement of students. This is being satisfied through professional development centered around data analysis and how to use results to effectuate positive academic changes.</p>		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	381



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Connecticut Application #2300CT-5



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	55
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	36
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	14

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

The State has articulated its goals in the four areas and sees this as a continuation of its prior educational reform work. The State has documented trends in performance. While past performance of students was notable, recent trends show a slip in rankings and large achievement gaps between white, black and Hispanic students at all levels and the growing number of high school graduates who come to community or four year colleges ill prepared to do the academic work needed to earn advanced degrees. Nine percent of adults in the State are functionally illiterate. The newly formed P-20 Council is ready to address this with 9 guiding principles that encompass the 4 areas of RTTT.

The State has recently passed legislation which has been signed into law by the Governor. This landmark legislation had the support of the legislature, the Superintendents Association, both teachers unions, the Federation of School Administrators and ConnCAN, an education reform advocacy nonprofit.

The applicant has documented the highlights of the legislation and referenced them to RTTT proposal sections:

- Increase the rigor and requirements for high school graduation with additional coursework in science, mathematics and world languages (Sections (B) and (D))
- Require LEAs to create Student Success Plans and provide adequate student support and remedial services aimed at increasing learning time (Section (E))
- Require all districts to have an advanced placement program and a policy for earning credits through online courses (Section (D))
- Allow districts to participate in a pilot board examination system endorsed by the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) (Section (B)(3))
- Require expansion of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (Section (C))
- Implement a teacher evaluation system linking student and teacher performance, including multiple measures of student growth (Section (D)(2))
- Create a new alternative certification route for school administrators (Section (D)(1))
- Provide authority to the Commissioner of Education to reconstitute local boards of education (Section (E)(1))
- Authorize parent-teacher governance councils in low-performing LEAs with the right to petition for school reconstitution (Section (E)(1))

-Waive enrollment limits for charters with a demonstrated record of high performance and makes the charter school facility grant program permanent (Section (F)(2))

-Establish authority for Innovation Schools within priority school districts. (Section (F)(2))

The LEAs within the state have signed MOUs, and intend to implement all or a significant portion of the State's plan. Signatures from LEAs include all (100%) of the Superintendents, all but 14 (91.4%) of the presidents of the local school boards, and all but 15 (87.8%) of the local teachers' union presidents.

There is an opt out clause in the MOU and there is also language protecting the current contracts which are in force within the districts.

162 of the 197 LEA's are participating which is 82% of districts; all 7 of the state's large urban districts, 30 of 32 districts with the most economically disadvantaged populations. 90% of the students in the state are participating and 95% of the students in poverty will be served. The State will work with Partnerships for Change for the implementation.

It is uncertain how many LEAs will ultimately participate due to the opt out clause in the MOU, and the number of districts that are lacking all 3 signatures for participation. Therefore, it is difficult to accurately project the ability to have statewide impact.

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

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

New staff will be hired within 120 days. Although there is an indication that the partnership for financing sustainable change will look into repurposing existing federal and state funding, it is not clear whether staff will remain after the funding period.

The State has reorganized its administrative structure because of budget and to better reflect an aggressive reform agenda. Partnerships have been created. It is unclear from the diagram how the partnerships will assist and who will ultimately be responsible for the tasks and for the management of the daily work. There are no arrows on the diagram going to and from the partnerships. Also having the RTTT office be a separate 4th level position, makes it difficult to understand how there will be capacity building and also how the work will be integrated within the structure.

It is unclear whether this implementation is sustainable beyond the years of the funding. In addition to the structural issues, (see above), many of the timelines have 2014 as the ending date. Only 4 divisions within the State department of education will provide support to the LEA's. It is unclear how this will be perceived by the LEA's, and how this will provide for a systemic change.

Stakeholders from all levels have been involved in the reform process. There are letters of support and commitment from business leaders, non profits, government, higher education, community organizations, foundations, STEM organizations, etc.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	23
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	18

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

The State has focused on high academic achievement standards for students. The State will cross walk the

newly adopted core standards with the current standards looking for gaps, overlaps, and repetition. In 2009 the State reports that it received full approval from USDE for its standards assessments in grades 3-8. The State also reports that it received full approval for its alternate assessment for children with significant cognitive disabilities. In addition, the State reports that on NAEP, it has been one of the highest performing nationally. Although there were large gaps among subgroups, the trend from 2006-2009 is slightly positive for most groups. ELL students, in particular, demonstrated poorer achievement than the other subgroups.

*The applicant states: "Our target goal is that at least 60 percent of African American and Hispanic students who enter high school as freshman in the fall of 2014 will be performing at the **goal level or above** on state achievement tests. Also by the spring of 2014, our goal is for the high school graduation rate among at-risk and vulnerable students to increase from 60 to 80 percent, reducing the gap by half."*

Since the gains from 2005 to date have been minimal or non-existent, it is unclear how the very ambitious gap reduction by half will be achieved.

Total	125	103
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

The State has participated with 47 states, two territories and the District of Columbia, in developing and has an MOU with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Consortium. These internationally benchmarked standards in English language arts and math are aligned to college and workforce readiness. There is a plan to build educator awareness of the standards, to align the preschool curriculum framework to the CCSC for K-3 and to develop career and college ready standards.

These standards will be presented to the State Board of Education (SBE) for adoption at the July 2010 meeting. No other legal or legislative action is required once the SBE approves the standards for adoption. There is no indication in the proposal that there will be difficulty in the board adoption process.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(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 is participating in 3 consortia that are or will be engaged in the development of common assessments that flow from the common core standards. The State is also in another which focuses on high schools in New England. There is a focus on summative and formative assessment among these consortia. A signed document of commitment is included for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. There is a letter of Intent for the National Center for Education and the Economy Consortium, and a letter of support for the New England Secondary School Consortium.

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium consists of 31 states. The National Center for

Education and the Economy Consortium has 8 states and the New England Secondary School Consortium has 5 states.

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

The results of the consortia will be a comprehensive, integrated, cohesive structure of formative, benchmark and summative assessments and performance tasks. From January through May of 2010, the State has strengthened its commitment to engaging families and community agencies in understanding and supporting the new higher standards. The newly signed legislation supports this process.

Accountability, high expectations, 21st century schools, and student engagement are all part of the plan. The State is moving forward in its teaching and learning framework which is anchored in a STEM framework. The applicant has included goals, activities, responsible parties, and timelines. There is a comprehensive plan to inform and educate the stakeholders. There is research being conducted on assessment accommodations for students with disabilities, English language learners and performance formative assessments. The use of technology will also be highlighted. Student success plans will be implemented.

The State is also working with another consortium to develop developmentally appropriate formative assessment materials and protocols in specific content areas for the early elementary grades. The RESC Alliance will provide professional development based on a recent needs assessment.

It is unclear how all of the 2010 and 2011 timelines can be met with the resources proposed.

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	10

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

The P-20 Council Data Working Group was established to inventory data needed and determine policy questions in conjunction with the Interoperability System Council (members are from State Department of Ed, Higher Ed and Department of Labor) to develop a plan and protocol for sharing data from PK-12 into higher education and the workforce. It is unclear how these 2 groups work together and which one (or who else) has final authority to ensure that the needed requirements are completed.

The State has completed 5 (1, 2, 5, 6, 7) of the 12 America COMPETES Data Requirements, the elements which are requirements for fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system. There are 7 elements (3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) which are still in process.

Element #3 which is PK-16 student transition information (enter, exit, transfer, dropout, graduate) is complete for PK-12 and in progress for secondary with a target completion date for higher education of August 2012. There is support expected from an IES grant and the applicant states that MOA's have been developed for this project. It is unclear if or when these MOA's have been/will be signed.

Element #4 which is the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems is in progress and expected to be completed by September 2011. Again, support is expected from the IES grant. Progress has been made as higher education agreed in April 2010 to incorporate the student identification number as a field in their student information systems.

Element #8 which is the teacher identifier to match students with teachers is in progress with an expected

completion date of April 2011. The unique identifier has been in use since 2008-2009. Beginning in 2010 these numbers will be used to match math and language arts teachers to their students for the administration of the CMT and CAPT. A timeline with milestones for the completion of this is included.

Elements 9, 10 and 11 are all expected to be completed between April and Fall of 2011.

Element #12 which is the data on the alignment and adequacy of student preparation for post secondary education, is in progress, but no target date for completion nor a plan for completion is discussed by the applicant.

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

The State is working together with higher education and contracting with the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The new law requires that the Commissioner of Education annually report on the status of implementation progress including the remaining data elements discussed in C1 of this application which need to be completed by 2013.

Five goals are listed and each has a set of activities, timeframe for completion and responsible parties included. It is unclear if there are sufficient resources allocated to accomplish the system. It is also unclear what the feedback process is for decision makers during this process.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	14
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(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems

6 6

(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems

6 4

(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers

6 4

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

The State currently provides data support to LEA's through 2 programs CALI and SRBI. SRBI is the framework for RTI in the state. CALI is a comprehensive model for instructional improvement and accountability based on use of data at the state, LEA, building and classroom level. A prekindergarten model will be under development for 2010-2011.

The applicant states that participating RTTT LEA's will be required to have a District Improvement Plan with a limited number of high leverage, measurable targets, an LEA Data Team that meets monthly, a SIP that aligns with the DIP, and a school level data team. Data on adults are also used in setting targets. There will also be a data team facilitator to coach the instructional level data teams, and an Executive Coach to work with the leadership team. Rubrics will be used for monitoring. It is clear that the schools will receive support for instructional improvement; it is unclear how the roles of the facilitators/coaches and data teams differ and how they all support without working at cross purposes or becoming burdensome for the teachers.

Data will be available to the public and will also remain secure to maintain confidentiality. The State is in the process of a 2 year external evaluation to determine the fidelity of implementation of CALI, the impact on performance, and whether the components support each other. The preliminary results of the first phase indicate positive outcomes. Findings from the final report will be used to refine the tools and the process.

The State will make data available to researchers to conduct studies of effectiveness. It is unclear how this process will work for access of the data by researchers. It is also unclear how the information will be shared back with the LEAs and how it will be used for continuous improvement.

Total	47	28
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	20
(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	7

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

Prior legislation authorized alternative routes to certification for teachers and school administrators. The recent new law requires the State Board of Education to review and approve proposals for alternate routes for school administrators. Providers both within and outside of higher education institutions are authorized to offer programs of study to teachers and administrators.

Currently, the State has eight alternate route program providers for teachers and approximately 15% (323) were certified in 2008-2009. 296 of the 323 completers attended programs operated by providers other than higher education. Another provider is currently preparing an advanced alternate route to certification for highly effective administrators in high needs schools. It will have a residency component, be intensive, have mentors, portfolio assessments, and build leadership capacity within the LEAs. The program for principals is not currently in effect.

The State intends to expand the teacher Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program and to design a new ARC for administrators with satellite programs.

It is unclear if these new and expanded programs will be capacity built as the ending date is 2014 on the time frame.

For 20 years the State has surveyed to find shortage areas for teachers and administrators. In May 2010 a Full Hiring Report was issued defining the shortage areas with the top 8 being Speech and Language, Special Education, World Languages, Intermediate Administrator, Bilingual, English, Music, Math... Incentives and flexibility are the key levers to filling the shortages. In addition to allowing teachers to teach if they score highly on the test, LEA's can reemploy retired teachers in shortage areas for up to two years with no penalty to their retirement earning when no other teacher can be found.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	34
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	7
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	16

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

During the last 5 months, the State has been busy passing legislation, encouraging public and parental support, focusing on disadvantaged students, and, with the prekindergarten through post secondary education leaders, building partnerships with a variety of stakeholders who are willing to provide leadership at the state level. The result has been putting in place the conditions for building a new system to improve instructional quality, boost academic achievement and narrow the achievement gaps in the poorest schools with the following characteristics:

- building internal capacity, developing distributed leadership (using teacher leaders) and a collaborative culture;
- developing and increasing parent and community involvement;
- developing and retaining high numbers of effective teachers; and working effectively with the CALI system for continuous school improvement.

As with the teacher evaluation system, the partnership with the unions is listed in the chart for during implementation, but there is no mention of union involvement during the development. Since there are local unions who have not signed MOU's, this could be problematic for garnering union support which could influence teacher and administrator participation.

By March of 2011, the State will be collecting data annually, developing an electronic data collection process, approve all plans, identify needed supports, provide an annual student growth data base, analyzing/reporting on teacher and administrator performance and monitoring the progress of school districts in reporting evaluation data that districts may track separately. The measuring of student growth component will not be completed until 2014.

The State will also pilot the training and once it has been refined, it will offer, on a statewide basis, job-embedded and summer training on the new evaluation plan and review specific methods for evaluating and the performance rubric. Principals will be required to have a minimum of 15 hours of training in teacher evaluation. Principals and teachers will plan professional development needs based on student growth data used in the evaluation process.

The State is not clear in its commitment on compensating, promoting and retaining educators. The framework for designing compensation systems has not yet been developed. There is information included in the proposal on what may be included in the framework. The key stakeholders listed on the Council do not include union representatives.

The annual targets for the performance measures for teachers and principals are listed as 6% for the first two years, then 8% for the third year and finally 100% for the fourth year. It is unclear how the State will successfully go from 8% to 100% as this is a huge increase. It appears unrealistic in light of the fact that it expects to only gain 2% over the first 2 years.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	22
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	13
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	9

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

The State has collected data from districts (but not individual schools) on teacher shortages since 1994 with evidence that the highest percentages of unfilled positions and the hard to staff positions are in the lowest achieving (poor and needy) districts. Currently, there isn't data on whom or where effective and highly effective teachers and principals are. This system should be available by 2013.

The State plans to actively recruit and retain effective teachers for the highest poverty schools (238 in 2009). In addition, the short term 'proxy-based' effectiveness measures for assignment will be used as part of the improvement planning process.

The plan, which will be implemented from 2011 -2013 will also address:

- creating/implementing the database to support the strategies to equitably distribute effective teachers and principals through the completion of an ID system matched to student data to be completed by January 2011;
- applying the evaluation system and then having the first report on equitable assignment of effective teachers by 2013 with data available to schools/districts by July 2011;

--A revised state regulatory framework for awarding teachers and administrators certificates to practice based on such factors as coursework, a range of assessments and experience

--Rigorous teacher preparation programs that will lead to certification in all areas of teaching and administration, supported by the new regulatory framework

--New protocols for mentoring beginning teachers during their first two years of practice

--New protocols for supervising and evaluating all teachers, principals and other public school administrators PreK-12, in all certificated areas

--New mechanisms to enable schools serving high percentages of minority and/or poor children to recruit and retain highly effective teachers and principals

--New mechanisms to recruit induct and retain effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects or shortage areas

--New models for developing teachers' professional competencies through continuing education requirements (CEUs) and/or additional coursework at the undergraduate or graduate levels

By 2011 the State Mastery Tests (CMTs) will be ready to pilot for grades 3-8 in 18 Title I schools. Development indicators and measures of academic growth will then be completed for grades K-2, and 9-12.

The pilots will provide data for the development of the statewide supervision and evaluation system being built to determine the highly effective, effective and ineffective principals and teachers.

The vertical scales developed in 2008 to measure growth across grades will now be piloted in the same schools for measuring growth for individual students (or sub groups—ethnicity, poverty, special education), schools or school districts.

Grade level benchmark assessments, in reading and math, will be piloted in 11 school districts. RTTT funds will be used to move from the pilot to use in all districts statewide. There is not enough detail given on the assessments and the process to be able to adequately evaluate them.

The applicant states that the ability to track student progress from preschool through grade 12 with the statewide longitudinal data system will be based on the availability of state and other federal funding. It is not clear if the success of this initiative only refers to the RTTT funding or if this is also dependent on securing other funding in addition to RTTT.

By 2012, the State plans to develop a new, annual Teacher Performance System, based on the Common Core of Teaching, which will include classroom observations, student growth and other measure such as peer review, student/parent surveys and/or student success plans. The State includes a chart for implementation that includes benchmarks, timelines and responsible parties. While the teacher unions are mentioned as being invited to become implementation partners, it is unclear how they are participating in the development and generating local support. This omission could signal potential difficulty in the process, since, currently, there is not local union support in all school districts throughout the state. Also, the timeline for completion is very late in the process.

By 2012-2013 school year, a new, annual evaluation system for measuring effectiveness of administrators/principals, based on the new law, will be in effect after a pilot. The State includes a chart with benchmarks, timelines and responsible parties. The system will include use of student growth measures and multiple sources of data such as:

- achieving school improvement goals and adequate yearly progress (AYP) on an annual basis;
- supporting teacher efficacy through the use of data-driven decision-making by teachers to improve student learning;
- developing structures and teacher skills to address the learning needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and students in need of interventions;
- maintaining a safe and positive school climate;

---implementing a system of effectiveness distribution based on 'proxy' effectiveness measure for teachers and principals by 2011 and 2013 respectively with integration of elements into the certified data file by 2012 and the ability of districts/schools to use the data for those highly effective staff to move to high poverty schools; and

---providing incentives to address barrier/challenges of recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers and principals for hard to staff schools by 2013 such as scholarships for certified substitutes to earn additional endorsements by 2012 and Crandell as well as Olmsted Competitive Incentive Grants for districts and consortia.

The State has identified the acute shortage areas, but demographic data is not available in the annual survey. To address this issue, in addition to gathering the data, there will be an alternate route to certification such as special education; the State will seek a shortage designation from USDE to qualify students for Stafford and Supplemental Loans; enlist the assistance of state unions to recruit nationally; get the assistance of STEM and business leadership groups to recruit in math and science; use electronic media such as blogs for job alike groups to communicate vacancies across shortage areas; and the Housing Finance Authority will enable teachers in priority school districts or shortage areas to qualify for mortgage assistance. The State has proposed a variety of strategies to hire and retain effective teachers in hard to staff subjects. Once the collection of demographics is in place, these can be implemented more successfully.

While the State has a detailed plan (including goals, activities, timelines and party responsible) for collecting, sharing, and analyzing data and has identified some incentives for encouraging highly effective teachers and principals to move to high poverty schools, it states in the application that it can only speculate on how the implementation will produce minimal changes over the next 3 years based on the proxies. It is difficult to know what the long term results will be after formal implementation of the new systems. There are also no measureable targets for continued improvement. Based on information in the State's application, retirements will enhance the results over time as there are many who are currently at the upper age/years of employment range. There is no indication that the district knows that only ineffective teachers will retire, or that effective teachers at hard to staff schools will not be retiring, so it may not be a reliable strategy

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	9
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4

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

The State has proposed a quality plan that will improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs by aligning teacher and principal preparation curriculum to the standards. Faculty at 4 universities have analyzed test results and identified areas of weakness to determine changes in the curriculum. Going forward, there is a short term and a long term plan for the revisions. There is an effort to align high school and college curriculum to reduce the numbers entering college who are in need of remediation. There is also significant multi-year revision to the regulations governing teacher and leader certification which will include among other changes an increase in applied training and an emphasis on the characteristics of diverse learning needs, assessment and the use of data to inform instruction.

The new law that was recently signed requires that by July 2013, data related to teachers shall be collected and linked to student achievement. In addition, this information will be linked to the higher education preparation programs to inform the approval and accreditation process, to assist in determining the effectiveness of the preparation and, in addition, to determine the effectiveness of the PreK -12 system in producing college and career ready graduates to enter the higher education programs. The student data will not be available until September 2014. Sanctions are planned for ineffective programs, but it is not clear how, when or what will be enacted. Other than encouraging effective programs to expand, it is unclear how

these programs will be financed or incentivized to be able to expand.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	16
(i) Providing effective support	10	8
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	8

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

The State has been nationally recognized as a leader for its programs and practices in teacher quality. The State has already been building and developing supports to address improvement in this area. The State details a comprehensive plan to invest in data informed, job embedded professional development, coaching, induction and common planning/collaboration time for teachers and principals which focuses on elements which are directly connected to student achievement, retention, STEM, Advanced Placement, literacy and early childhood, and linkages with parents and the community.

The State lists goals, activities, a timeline and responsible parties for the plan. It is unclear what type of needs assessment was done, when and with whom to determine the needed professional development that is initially proposed.

Fostering equity and diversity are also a part of the plan. The State has listed needed baseline activities concerning race, ethnicity, and other equity issues which will begin the conversation as to what is the current situation and why it is important to make sure that there is equity in learning within the diverse population. It is unclear what other training will take place to ensure that students of color, ELL students, gifted and talented, and those with disabilities will have highly effective teachers who know how to instruct students with differing needs to attain high achievement, how to assess achievement appropriately (separate from language, culture, ability and/or disability influences), and how to ensure that quality, suitable data is collected, that properly reflects learning.

The State has invested additional resources in 2 demonstration schools and an additional 7 schools to close the achievement gap over 3 years. A minimum of 45 demonstration schools will be in place for the 2010-2011 school year with additional demonstration schools added during each year of the RTTT grant. A report on the findings of the summary of best practices in professional development will be prepared and shared by January 2011 and recommendations will be available by March 2011. The State will develop a professional development education registry which will be online by July 2011. The LEA's will have access to timely professional development through online, in person and over the summer delivery options.

In addition to the proposed data informed analyses of the initiatives, an external review of professional development effectiveness and cost efficiency will be conducted through the awarding of a contract to one or more external reviewers. The results will be used to modify offerings, provide feedback to principals/district administrators, and to plan new professional development. It is not clear what will be included in the study as the State does not include any proposed evaluation questions or an outline of the design of the study that will be issued as a request for proposals to be awarded to an external contractor. There also is no mention of professional development standards and/or a rubric against which to measure improvement.

Total	138	101
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

The State has made extensive progress toward the ability to turn around low performing districts, especially in the last 5 months. The new law gives the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education the ability to intervene in both low performing schools and districts without additional legislative or governor approval. It can reconstitute boards of education and/or create a parent teacher school governance council with the authority to petition the local board of education to reconstitute a school. The State has already exercised this authority by working with the 15 LEAs (partner districts) participating in the CALI school improvement process.

The recently awarded federal school improvement grant provides substantial funding for the adoption of 1 of the 4 RTTT intervention models in up to 7 LEA's. The Governor has established a special commission of business and philanthropic leaders headed by a former Education Trust staff member. This group will study achievement gap data and trends and make recommendations by October 2010.

The State reports that it is also collaborating with the State Association of Board of Education to implement a 2 year training model which focuses on accountability as it pertains to the role of boards of education. This is modeled after a successful Iowa model and requires 5 years of data collection. Currently there is positive feedback from the five school boards who are participating in the training.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	33
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	28

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

The State has already demonstrated recent progress with low achieving schools using CALI which has many of the attributes of the 4 intervention models. The progress has been slow and incremental to date and there is no indication in the application that CALI has been evaluated and results reviewed to determine if adaptations might be needed. Eighteen schools have been identified as persistently low achieving. They are in the lowest 5% of the low achieving Title I schools. In addition 5 non Title I high schools were identified. Two demonstration schools in each of the districts were given additional resources. Improved achievement on the state proficiency in one year ranged from 6 to 29% across both reading and math. 36 additional schools made AYP or Safe Harbor in 2009. In total 84 schools have been restructuring as required by NCLB, and it has not been sufficient to turn around the schools. Schools have already submitted applications for additional resources for turnaround through RTTT and upon funding, the dollars will be awarded.

The State is prepared to incorporate and support all of the four intervention models in addition to CALI in Tier I and Tier II schools. The schools have selected 3 of the 4 models in their plans. The State does not indicate any experience to date with any of the turnaround models. No measureable targets are indicated beyond Year 1.

The State will develop an RFP for Tier III schools for early literacy projects. RTTT funds will be awarded and by 2014 student achievement will exceed the statewide average.

Total	50	43
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5
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(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Although the State has increased education funding by almost 3.25% between 2008 and 2009, when looking at education revenues as a percent of the Total Revenues, the 2008 compared to 2009 were virtually flat at 23%. Education funding has remained a priority in spite of the economic downturn.

The State has appropriated funding of almost 2.9 billion dollars to provide equalized funding with almost 2.6 billion in 9 state equalization grants. The 9 wealthiest LEAs received \$358 per pupil and the 7 poorest LEAs received \$7,551 per student

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	38
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(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	6
(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	8
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8

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

For 50 years the State has supported public school choice with high academic achievement as an expectation. Currently there are options such as charter schools, innovation schools, interdistrict magnet schools, open choice program, interdistrict cooperative grant program, technical high schools and regional agricultural science and technology education centers. Many public school choice programs have partnerships with public or independent higher education institutions, including community colleges to prepare students for post secondary opportunities. In Hartford, public school choice is a tool for integrating students which meets the Supreme Court Order.

The State provides for both state (18) and local (0) charter schools to be approved for up to 5 years. It is unclear why there are no LEA charters so it is difficult to determine if the current charters were only able to begin through the state, and why that might be true. 15 of the 18 charters are in priority districts. With the new education law, there is no explicit cap on the number of state and local charter schools or a cap on enrollment for high performing charter schools (but new schools still have an enrollment cap); the state may approve charter schools regardless of available appropriations; the charter school facility grant is made permanent; and the development of innovation schools in priority school districts is now authorized. Primary funding for state charter schools is a per pupil grant from the state for \$9300. This amount is 199% of the state funding for others which is \$5276 per pupil. There is not a separate line item for funding charter schools so it is unclear if this could be capping charters by the fact that a flat budget or a reduced budget will affect the number of dollars available for opening new and expanding existing charters. A new task force was formed in March 2010 to look at a more equitable funding structure.

The State law requires charter schools to demonstrate their success and comply with the law in order to operate. Public charters and interdistrict magnets routinely outpace the standardized test scores of the nearby city and typically exceed statewide averages in math, reading and writing. Student retention is high due to school theme, smaller size, sense of community among students, and specific interventions by schools to prevent drop outs which are 1/3 less than comparison high schools.

The State regularly monitors and conducts site visits to charter schools. Low performing charters may be closed and five already have been closed. Charters are renewed for up to 5 years or closed if student progress has not been demonstrated, governing boards are not performing adequately, and/or if the school has not been in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Yearly reporting of charters to the State is required. Demographics, finances, governance, student achievement, and diversity are all important

aspects of the school.

CommPACT schools were authorized by the state legislature in 2007. They are LEA sponsored alternative schools staffed by faculty who voluntarily come together to redesign the core programs and working conditions for managing school operations through shared decision making and collaboration. They operate under existing local school attendance policies and draw students as they were able.

Magnets and innovation schools also exist.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The applicant includes information on other reform conditions and forms of support such as dropout prevention, in school suspension actions, developing tomorrow's professionals, parent leadership training; and early childhood education. In addition, the State has passed recent legislation (cited frequently within the application) which supports the 4 areas of reform.</p> <p>Although positive results are included about these programs, there is very limited data included on measureable outcomes.</p>		
Total	55	49

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The State has incorporated an emphasis on STEM throughout its application. There is evidence in every section of the proposal, from planning to professional development, to innovative schools/academies. The Governor called for a coordinated and comprehensive plan to improve PreK- 16 student interest and achievement in STEM. There is a large concentration of STEM business and industry in the State and leaders have been active in these initiatives through committee membership, decision making roles, and by providing funding.</p>		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>A reform plan has been submitted which comprehensively addresses all 4 of the education reform areas specified in ARRA with responses to each criterion through a narrative and appendices. The State has numerous past successes and new legislation as a foundation upon which to build success going forward. There is recognition that even though progress in student achievement has been made over time, it has been slow, and some of the gains have been minimal.</p> <p>A large percentage of the LEAs are committed to participate in RTTT. The data included acknowledge 82% of the LEAs (including all 7 of the urban LEAs and 30 of the 32 LEAs) will be participating which represents 90% of the students, 95% of students in poverty. Union support and participation is still an issue</p>		

to be addressed.

The applicant describes how it intends to improve student achievement, decrease achievement gaps across sub groups, and increase graduation rates of students prepared for careers and college. The applicant describes a support and professional development system which will be ongoing during implementation. The applicant has already acknowledged a focus on special students (SPED, ELL) will be included.

A large commitment to families and community members is addressed in this application along with an early childhood emphasis. There is a plan included to move forward on the completion of the data elements, and there is a new law for support and accountability.

Overall, this is an application which meets the absolute priority.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	407