



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2



Georgia Application #2500GA-8

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	61	61	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	42	42	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	14	14	
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(A)(1)(i) GA provides a comprehensive, coherent and well organized survey of its educational reform efforts. It has a well aligned set of reforms and has backed that up with solid implementation, co-ordination and oversight structures. The Governor's letter to the Secretary and the alignment map (Appendix A 4) show that GA's plans and actions mesh well with RTTT priorities.</p> <p>(A)(1)(ii) GA has adopted a strategy of inviting LEAs to join in the reform effort while setting out a comprehensive program of work covering all 4 RTTT and areas of action. All the LEAs that have signed on have agreed to the whole package -except where there are no eligible turn around schools in the district. The participating LEAs cover 40% of schools and students and 46% of students in poverty. The LEAs include some big districts like Atlanta, Clayton, DeKalb and Gwinnet. This concentration strategy is debatable as a means of reaching State wide reform- see below- but as a means of husbanding resources and allocating them where they are likely to produce the most impact it is a defensible strategy and one that falls into the middle of the high range.</p> <p>(A)(1)(iii) Noting and accepting GA's concentration strategy in its participating LEAs, many of the reforms GA is pursuing are policy changes that will impact on all LEAs - like the stronger pathways for leadership, the enhanced assessment processes and the better materials and resources to support high quality instruction. GA also illustrates how its reforms, if supplemented by RTTT resources, will address student performance, decrease performance gaps and improve graduation rates, college enrollment and completion rates. On balance this is a plan that will have State wide impact and is of high quality.</p>				
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28	28	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8	8	
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(A)(2)(i) GA has an impressive history of interagency co-operation and a clear framework for implementation - Appendix A 20. There are dedicated teams, an RTTT implementation director and an office of school turn around will be created. The various sections of the plan usually include clear goals, associated activities with timelines and assigned responsibilities, which suggest that there is good implementation capacity. The State has a clear plan to support LEAs through data systems, training,</p>				

research and feedback on good practice. The State has a good track record on managing Federal grants and in overseeing professional development funds and proposes to add technical assistance support and communication initiatives to help LEAs. The plan includes co- mingling of State and RTTT funds,reallocation of state funds and efficiencies in the use of those funds in a thoughtful and measured way. It also intends to look at aligning RTTT funds with other federal funds and philanthropic support. Finally the State is committed to financing education reform. This adds up to an impressive high quality plan.

(A)(2)(ii) GA has assembled a good cross section of support for its reform program and has made innovative use of teacher and general community surveys to improve the planning process. This is further augmented by a critical feed back team of experts and opinion leaders. The letters of support show a breadth of interest groups and measured and deep support including personal letters from district superintendents that were persuasive - see the Atlanta superintendent's letter for example. The letters from business leaders were also well informed reflecting their direct involvement in the detailed work of task forces and committees - the governance reform committee for example-and the letters from the Woodruff and Casey Foundations were also solid. There did not seem to be letters of support from community groups or immigrant family groups. This omission suggests a lack of broad consultation and constituency building which limits the plan to the bottom of the high range.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	24	24	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	19	19	
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(A)(3)(i) GA has made progress on standards and college readiness in past years through its own content standards and the American Diploma project. Its data system work has laid a good foundation for further progress as has its work to improve teacher preparation programs. GA has a legal framework for school turnarounds and has been using it to good effect.</p> <p>(A)(3)(ii) GA presents NAEP data showing reasonably consistent growth since 2003 although there is some volatility. The State test scores show similar growth patterns since 2006. GA has been able to narrow gaps in performance between sub groups when the comparison is between the same sub groups - say 8th Grade Black males - at the State and national level. Comparison between sub groups within GA is less encouraging. For example while gaps between Hispanic and Black students versus White students in GA on 8th grade reading have narrowed, the gap between White and Black students on 4th grade Math has increased as have gaps between White and low income students. GA's NAEP related narrative tends to over emphasize the national level comparison but the discussion of the State test scores (CRCT) is more realistic. It shows that achievement gaps between sub groups have not been consistently narrowed over recent years.</p> <p>Overall while there is a good track record of improvement in student performance -the uneven progress places GA at the bottom of the high range.</p>				
Total	125	113	113	

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(B)(1)(i) GA is a leading player in the Common Core Standards 51 state consortium with the Governor serving as co chair.				
(B)(1)(ii) GA plans to adopt the standards by August 2010 and has sketched out a reasonable implementation plan which falls into the high range pending greater clarity about the date in August that adoption occurs.				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(B)(2) GA has signed onto both PARCC and SMARTER and notes that SMARTER is planning to move ahead "very aggressively towards full implementation on line". GA plans to be part of any application for RTTT assessment funds and both groups seem to have a majority of States signed on.				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(B)(3) Drawing on its experience of the last five years, GA outlines a comprehensive and realistic plan for implementing K-12 standards. Its plan begins with developing and distributing the best possible teaching materials backed up by professional development aligned around the common core standards. The plan has much of this support being delivered to schools rather than districts, which is appropriate for the tasks. In addition GA reinforces that support with activities that will develop a stronger assessment culture among districts, school boards and parents.				
The implementation structure may seem top heavy, but it is appropriate for GA's strategy of concentrating on a specific group of LEAs.				
All of this is backed by specific goals, activities, timelines and clearly assigned responsibilities. Overall this is a very good plan				
Total	70	70	70	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	24	24	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(C)(1) GA has implemented all 12 elements of America Competes .				

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(2) GA has begun the process of making longitudinal data more accessible and useful by establishing a participatory data governance committee covering seven government agencies and has developed an action plan with four sensible goals, associated activities, timelines, assigned responsibilities and funding sources. The timelines are aggressive but appropriate.</p>				
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	13	13	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5	5	
<p>(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(C)(3)(i & ii) GA has a good plan to address these two RTTT elements. The narrative shows a clear assessment of the overall objective of creating data systems which can be used to improve instruction. It delineates sensible roles and actions for the State, LEAs, schools, teachers and principals. Actions are identified with deadlines and individual offices are assigned responsibilities for implementation. While this is commendable, all actions in this element are dependent on RTTT funds for implementation, suggesting that without new money there will be no State action in this area, which detracts from the plan.</p> <p>(C)(3)(iii) GA has a solid plan to make its longitudinal data accessible to researchers through "strategic partnerships" and general improvements in data accessibility. It identifies some research areas of interest to the State and in its plan sets dates and assigns responsibilities. It is not clear what "efficiency reasons" limit the storage of all LEA based data at the State level.</p>				
Total	47	42	42	

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	17	17	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	5	5	
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(D)(1)(i) GA has alternative pathways for teacher and principal preparation that meet all criteria including five providers which are not based in higher education institutions.</p> <p>(D)(1)(ii) All of these pathways for teachers are being used and used extensively. The same is not the case for alternative pathways for principals - accordingly GA plans to diversify these pathways- but until that plan is more fully articulated the plan falls into the low end of the high range.</p>				

(D)(1)(iii) Absent a good data system GA relies on a set of administrative proxies to monitor and forecast teacher shortages. These produce sufficient data to identify "large scale critical shortages" in key subjects. GA has partnerships with local providers to address emerging shortages . There is also good STEM specific material on teacher preparation. While this is not as data rich or as highly structured as other parts of the application, it is adequate.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	52	54	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	14	14	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	9	9	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	24	26	

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

(D)(2)(i) GA's plan puts individual student achievement and growth at the center of its measurements and professional development systems for teacher and principals and sets an aggressive and ambitious timeline in the state action plan.

(D)(2)(ii) GA's plan is to create a teacher and principal evaluation system that meets the RTTT criteria of multiple categories and various approaches to assessing student growth, including achievement gap reduction. Its plan also addresses the absence of summative scores for teachers of "non- core" subjects and suggests alternative strategies to assess teachers of these subjects. GA has established and will establish committees to involve teachers and principals and higher education faculty in developing these processes and instruments.

(D)(2)(iii) GA already has mandatory annual evaluation of teachers and principals but is aware of the shortcomings in implementation, such as the annual feed back to teachers on their performance. It plans to make feed back more timely and constructive and the State will support these improvements through training and professional development on using student growth data for teacher and principal evaluation.

(D)(2)(iv) GA's plan sets out how it will use teacher and principal evaluation data to inform the full range of personnel decisions - from initial training through to re- certification. The relatively small number of LEAs participating in the GA plan means that the State agencies can concentrate their efforts on them. It is also notable that some of the larger LEAs like Gwinett have good track records in this area of reform and can serve as models for others in GA. The timelines for linking teacher and principal compensation to growth and for establishing better processes for removing ineffective teachers are realistic and may even be ambitious given the complexity of the area. The activities proposed in this area are dependent on a lot of LEA action and effort but the plan does not provide specific incentives to LEAs to take up these reforms, which holds this part of the plan to the bottom of the high range.

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

(D)(2)(iv) The presentation corrected the reviewer's impression that the use of teacher evaluation data would be concentrated on participating LEAs. The teacher evaluation process will be used State wide. This increases the impact of the planned actions and the score is accordingly increased.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	22	22	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	15	15	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7	7	

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

(D)(3)(i) GA has a sophisticated plan mixing supply and demand strategies to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers. It rightly begins by seeking to retain those effective teachers and principals already working in high need areas and supports that by attracting others to take on assignments in these schools either by lifting the quality of existing personnel or by attracting new high quality entrants to teaching and leadership. GA will use incentives to retain and attract, target professional development to improve capacity and work with alternative providers of beginning teachers with track records of preparing personnel for shortage areas and hard to staff schools. Overall this is a robust and thoughtful plan with specific time lines and assigned responsibilities.

(D)(3)(ii) GA does not specify numerical or quantifiable targets for effective teachers as its current annual evaluation measures are too variable to be aggregated into baseline data on the numbers of effective teachers. It does propose to set effectiveness targets for 2012/13 & 2013/14 once its multiple measures evaluation system is operational. This is realistic given the timelines for its plans in this area. Specific

attention to special education and language teachers would have strengthened this element of the plan which accordingly is scored at the bottom of the high range.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	11	11	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	6	6	
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	5	5	
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(D)(4)(i) GA has established an effective framework for co-operation with the GA university system as a basis for lifting the quality of teacher and principal preparation. It has augmented this with a set of activities which will link student growth to teacher and leader preparation programs and will publish report cards on program performance.</p> <p>(D)(4)(ii) GA will use performance data to guide State funding for preparation programs after sufficient reliable data is available - after 2013/2014. This is realistic given its timelines elsewhere.</p>				
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	19	19	
(i) Providing effective support	10	10	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	9	9	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(D)(5)(i) GA is realistic about the challenges the breadth and depth of its reform plan presents to its personnel, procedures and infrastructure. To support its personnel it has identified over 30 actions at the State and LEA level that will underpin their work. These cover all parties: teachers, principals, local managers and partners. It reinforces these with a package of STEM specific activities, an induction program for beginning teachers, specific support for turn around schools and, very importantly, with a robust communication strategy.</p> <p>(D)(5)(ii) The plan's actions to evaluate these various support activities are embedded in the narrative and cross referenced to other parts of the plan (B3, & C3 for example) and in the teacher induction section of the activities table. It also uses teacher surveys to guide program design but could do more to improve teachers' content knowledge.</p>				
Total	138	121	123	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(1) GA is able to intervene in low performing schools and LEAs.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	37	37	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	32	32	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(2)(i) GA has identified low performing schools in a reliable and systematic way.				
(E)(2)(ii) GA has a good history of turning around low performing schools and schools in need of improvement (NI) but plans to extend those efforts by focussing on those schools that have had NI status for the last 6 years. GA has looked closely at its successes in turnarounds and identified six solid strategies or factors that fostered improvement and which will inform its future efforts. Its plan includes an office responsible for turn around and a suite of actions including partnerships with teacher preparation providers and education management units. It also makes good use of various programmatic supports covering a range of issues from professional development to drop out prevention. All of them are assembled into a comprehensive implementation plan with timelines and responsibilities which places this part of the plan towards the middle of the high range.				
Total	50	47	47	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(1)(i) GA's expenditure on education increased by 4% between FY08 and FY09 even though State revenue dropped. This meets the criteria.				
(F)(1)(ii) GA's school finance formula has a basic per capita element that equalizes allocations across schools and this is overlaid by needs based components that favor less wealthy communities. This meets the RTTT criterion.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	34	34	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(2)(i) GA does not prohibit, cap or inhibit the creation of charter schools.				

(F)(2)(ii) GA has laws that encourage the creation of charter schools that aim to increase student learning and which enroll populations similar to local school districts. It has acted against Charter schools that have fallen short in the area of student performance, showing a degree of accountability for performance.

(F)(2)(iii) GA's charters are treated "no less favorably" under financing formulae for state, federal and local revenue.

(F)(2)(iv) GA has a special charter schools facilities grant and a 2009 law makes unused facilities available to local charters at very advantageous terms but there is a limitation on facilities funding where a district is only required to "provide facilities funds if feasible".

(F)(2)(v) GA offers only one innovative public school pathway, "early college," as an example and it offers no examples of autonomous schools with budget control. This holds it to the medium range.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(3) GA gives a reasonable overview of other reform conditions especially in the area of board governance, innovation, and leadership and teacher preparation. There is little in this section on early childhood education, although this is well covered elsewhere in the submission, or on community coalition building. But the overall environment for reform is well established in the plan.				
Total	55	48	48	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
GA's STEM provisions throughout the plan and in this section are very good. They build on successes in setting higher mathematics and science standards and personnel policies to attract, retain and compensate specialist teachers. The 20 plus activities summarized in the implementation matrix are impressive and some are innovative, like targeting women and minorities in teacher preparation programs for "career changers" and a public awareness campaign.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
GA's plan addresses all four RTTT areas of reform in a systematic way, with thought and with appropriate reference to past successes. It has chosen to concentrate on those LEAS willing to sign on to a comprehensive scope of work while directing resources to policy changes, materials, training and program development that will have relevance to the whole State. This concentrating and selection strategy is a credible if debatable theory of change.				

Oversight of the planned reforms is strong and clear and there is an impressive cross agency coordination structure that is already working effectively.

Most parts of the plan have specific goals, timelines and assigned responsibilities and in some cases identified funding sources. This shows the amount of time and effort that has gone into the planning process.

A lot of attention has been paid to how to strengthen the educational leaders and the teachers of the State. While the plan's timelines for better teacher assessment measures based on multiple ratings and student growth are relatively long, there is a clear process for getting to that point.

Total			0	0	
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Grand Total	500	456	458		
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2



Georgia Application #2500GA-5

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	56	56	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	39	39	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12	12	

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

(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda

Georgia has designed a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda with clear goals in all four areas of intervention. At the heart of the plan is

- improving the rigor of the curriculum,
- supporting data-driven decision-making,
- placing high-quality instructional leaders in every school
- engaging teachers in continuous improvement regarding their teaching and learning.

Research supports the effectiveness of these practices in reforming schools. The plan to provide compensation incentives tied to performance aligns nicely with the state's priorities, including incentives for closing achievement gaps. It addresses the challenges of accelerating achievement for minorities and poor children.

This application reflects a broad-based partnership. LEAs, state education leaders, business and community leaders, and higher education institutions, charter schools, STEM educators, early childhood experts and others all brought ideas to the table, integrated them strategically to make the application as a whole more than just the sum of its parts.

(ii) Securing LEA commitment

The terms and conditions of the MOU reflect a strong commitment by participating LEAs. All 26 superintendents and school board presidents signed the MOU. Georgia does not recognize teachers unions and, as specified in the RttT application are not expected to sign the MOU. One concern is that as presented, LEAs without schools in the "persistently lowest-performing schools" category excluded that portion of the text from their MOU. Therefore, should one or more of their schools become eligible during the grant period compliance will require renegotiating the MOU and cause, at the very least, a delay in implementation.

(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact

Twenty-six LEAs will participate in RttT, including most of the largest LEAs in the state. Participants represent 41 percent of Georgia's students, 46 percent of students in poverty and slightly higher

percentages of the state's minority students. There is limited participation from rural districts in southwest and northwest Georgia, regions that present special challenges to school reform because of the legacy of racial segregation and Appalachian poverty. Had participating LEAs represented greater geographic distribution and had a larger percentage of the state's school population participated, impact of the reform could be truly deemed statewide.

Because NAEP sampling cannot be considered reliable at the school and student levels, Georgia does not expect gains in NAEP scores to result from its RttT plan. Although setting a goal of no gains in NAEP scores by 2014 is achievable, it cannot be considered ambitious.

Georgia has set goals to substantially reduce achievement gaps by ethnicity, disability, and income on the state reading, language arts, mathematics, and science tests. Georgia's goal is to raise the overall graduation rate from 79 to 85 percent and reduce the gap for subgroups 2-4 points. These goals seem ambitious and realistic.

Georgia goals for gains in high school graduation rates, an overall increase from 79 percent in 2009 to 85 percent in 2014, are achievable. To achieve this goal the state has set ambitious targets for subgroups, in particular, students with disabilities, Hispanics and African Americans.

Georgia is in the process of increasing the reliability of its data on college matriculation and persistence. The plan sets a goal of increasing college enrollment from 64 percent to 72 percent by 2014. Individual district goals will vary and will be included in the final scope of work attached to the MOU. With the planned alignment between K-12 standards and college entrance expectations, these goals are achievable and ambitious.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	20	20	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15	15	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	5	5	

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

(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement

In general, Georgia has the capacity to provide sound leadership to the reform efforts and continue on course after the grant period. Georgia's plan integrates RttT into all aspects of the state education structure. The RttT director will have a direct line to top executive leadership in the department of education and governor's office. The state has well established procedures and personnel for tracking the budget, distributing funds, reporting grant progress, and otherwise administering an RttT grant. Because the goals and objectives of the initiative are embedded within existing parts of the department and governor's office and proposed new functions, e.g. turnaround director, will be needed well past 2014, the initiative is likely to continue after the grant.

The one problem area is the performance incentives for teachers and principals in economically challenged low-performing schools. Georgia has budgeted money to support these incentives during the four years of RttT, but it is not clear where the money will come from afterwards should the economic downturn continue.

(ii) Using broad stakeholder support

Georgia has evidence of support for RttT from a broad group of stakeholders with one crucial exception. Because there is no organized representation for teachers, it is difficult to know how much support they will give to the more controversial areas of RttT. To address this issue Georgia conducted a survey that queried teachers on questions of teacher and principal effectiveness. Many respondents expressed some dissatisfaction with the current evaluation system and supported standardized evaluation with qualitative and quantitative criteria. Although they supported compensation incentives for new career advancement opportunities or working in hard to staff schools, they were less than enthusiastic about an overall application of pay for performance. Teachers' organizations do exist in Georgia. There was also no letter of support from the principals organization. It would have been helpful to have teacher and principal letters of support included in the submission.

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

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

i) Making progress in each reform area

Georgia has made progress in the four areas of reform, yet recognizes that there is much to be done, especially in the areas of assessment and staffing and improving low-performing schools. The state has improved its student standards and curriculum, increased high school graduation requirements, and redesigned high school tests to better indicate college or workforce readiness. Georgia suspended its more recent work to raise standards to collaborate on the Common Core. Georgia has no statewide value-added assessment for measuring student growth. The state has begun work to revamp teacher and principal evaluations and work with LEAs to create a statewide system. The teacher evaluation tool is being field tested in 55 LEAs. The leader evaluation tools are under development. Since 2003 Georgia has helped 500 schools in the "needs improvement" category to successfully move out of that status, but some schools have remained there after eight or more years.

(ii) Improving student outcomes

Since 2003 Georgia has improved student outcomes overall and made varying rates of improvement for subgroups. NAEP scores have increased, showing larger rates of gain as Georgia implemented higher standards in mathematics and reading. In most categories student progress in Georgia has matched or exceeded the comparable national rate of progress. Also since 2003, Georgia has increased most state achievement test scores and mostly decreased gaps by ethnicity and income on state achievement tests in language arts and mathematics. An exception to this trend is the limited progress of African-American students in mathematics achievement. There has been some, but limited progress for students with disabilities and English language learners.

By increasing the rigor of standards and curriculum, Georgia has been moving in the right direction. On state achievement tests there have been annual gains in the number of students achieving proficiency overall and for subgroups. High school graduation rates have increased. There has also been progress on NAEP scores, but much less gain than on state tests, and the large gaps for some subgroups indicate that Georgia still has a long way to go.

Total	125	98	98	
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia has been a leader in the development of NGA/CCSSO "Common Core" standards, which are internationally benchmarked. The collaboration involves 47 states. Georgia plans to adopt the Common Core standards by August 2, 2010.				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia has signed a preliminary MOU with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (Achieve) and the SMARTER-BALANCED consortium (WestEd). The SMARTER Balanced Consortium (WestEd) includes 47 states. No list of states was included.				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	19	19	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia has developed a high-quality plan to transition to enhanced standards and assessments, which aligns the necessary elements (standards, formative and summative assessments, instructional resources, and professional development). Georgia has already worked on the development of Common Core and has begun to assess how well state standards are aligned with them. This preliminary work will enable the state to hit the ground running.</p> <p>The plan for implementation includes collaboration with participating LEAs, frequent surveying of end users (novice and veteran teachers, school and district leaders, families) to determine whether the state developed tools are effective and whether implementation has taken hold. The state plan includes every important aspect of the transition, including communicating with the public.</p> <p>Professional development relies heavily on access to electronic resources, which may not be easily available to every teacher, especially in rural areas. In large schools, four teacher coaches may be inadequate to provide the amount of ongoing, face-to-face professional development implied in the plan. Because of the feedback loop the state has established, problems and additional needs should become apparent quickly so that the state can address them in a timely manner.</p>				
Total	70	69	69	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	24	24	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia has all elements in place, albeit at different stages.				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4	4	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) With key stakeholders from the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, LEAs, the Georgia education research community, and the business community as participants, Georgia created a vision for a state longitudinal data system. The Alliance of Education Agency Heads members have signed an MOU that describes how the system will be governed and requests from researchers handled. Georgia plans to investigate best practices in other states to inform the design of the system. The current longitudinal data system is a work in progress. The plan as envisioned is solid. It lays out key goals, actions, responsibilities, and sources of funding. The plan faces some challenges, however. Full implementation of the envisioned single longitudinal data system is dependent on access to adequate funding and the capacity of the state's many small districts to provide timely, accurate source data. The only performance measure included in the plan is the annual number of unique visitors, which does not directly address the quality of use.				
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	9	15	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	3	5	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3	5	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3	5	
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) (i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems Georgia will provide training and technical assistance to participating LEAs to assist them in creating, upgrading, or maintaining local instructional improvement systems. For districts that currently do not have a continuous instructional improvement system, the state will develop a list of approved vendors and encourage the use of a single vendor across multiple districts. The state itself will offer some tools, such as item banks for creating standards-aligned formative assessments. Georgia will also monitor participating districts to ensure they are complying with this RttT expectation. It is unclear why the overall target for use is only 50 percent. This plan, with the timetable described, may not be feasible. Small, rural districts may lack capacity, ready access to state assistance, or the will to commit to more than a minimum level of compliance. (ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems Georgia plans to develop instructional improvement reports to assist principals, teachers, and superintendents to formatively assess student needs. The state will conduct regional training sessions on their use. Georgia will work with higher education institutions and districts to make sure that the use of				

continuous instructional improvement systems is integrated into certification and recertification requirements.

This plan, with the timetable described, may not be feasible. It is unclear that teachers and principals will receive the continuous, job-embedded professional development necessary to be able to make the most effective use of the data for instructional decision-making.

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

As part of RtT Georgia plans to enhance the student profile data in its longitudinal data system by adding information related to specific program components, such as benchmark assessments and college retention. Teachers and principals already make some use of these data, but the classroom reports will be upgraded and the interface improved. To improve profiles, districts will be expected to report more data at more frequent intervals. Georgia will encourage researchers to use the longitudinal data to study issues such as the effectiveness of educator preparation programs and educational profile of students who experience the least difficulty in transitioning to college.

This plan, with the timetable described, may not be feasible. The capacity and willingness of some districts to report a greater amount of data may affect the timeliness and accuracy of the overall information.

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

Georgia clarified that all districts in the state will be expected to use value-added data to make instructional decisions and will receive ongoing professional development support.

Total	47	37	43
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16	16	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4	4	

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

(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification

Georgia has the legal, statutory, and regulatory authority to allow alternative routes to certification for teachers, principals, and superintendents. Georgia's professional practices commission has approved five routes that do not require going through a higher education institution, are selective in accepting candidates, provide supervised school-based experiences and ongoing support, significantly limit coursework requirements, and award a full certificate.

(ii) Using alternative routes to certification

The alternate routes for teachers are well used and the alternative route for principals is being revised to encourage greater use. The alternative routes have produced 837 successful candidates that hold valid teaching certificates. An internship program has produced another 234 successful completions. The alternative certification program for leaders has rarely been used because it requires a Master's degree.

(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage

The process for monitoring, identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage is incomplete. Georgia is constructing its longitudinal data system. Limited accurate information is available about the extent and exact nature of teacher and leaders shortages; however shortages in science, mathematics, English language learners, and special education have been identified. Alternative certification providers are not well distributed throughout the state, but are ready to prepare candidates in high-need subjects when they are identified. When the longitudinal data system becomes completely operational, Georgia will have specific information about teacher and leader shortages, which can be passed on to both traditional and alternative certification collaborators.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	51	51	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	13	13	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8	8	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	25	25	

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

(i) Measuring student growth

Georgia will contract with a vendor to develop value-added measures. The state will collect these data as part of its longitudinal data system. An advisory committee will oversee the integrity of the system's technical development, particularly with regard to growth data's use for evaluation. The state will also survey teachers, administrators, and parents to determine issues and concerns among users of growth data. This is a high quality, ambitious approach

(ii) Developing evaluation systems

Georgia will develop a new evaluation system to differentiate effectiveness among teachers and leaders. The system will include qualitative, quantitative, and growth data. Including achievement gap reduction data as a component of the evaluation system is an important innovation. In achievement-tested subjects, value-added data will count for half of a teacher's or principal's total evaluation score. Although there will be an end-user committee advising the development of the new evaluation system, there is no independent teacher voice. Representatives to the Critical Feedback Committee are appointed by the participating superintendents, for example. The amount of professional development needed to use this system fairly, especially in low-capacity districts, may be underestimated. Still, this is the kind of bold approach to reform that RttT calls for. The design and implementation plan meets the goal.

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations

Georgia's participating LEAs will evaluate each teacher and principal annually according to locally developed rubrics for qualitative assessment, value-added scores, student achievement gap reduction scores, and other quantitative measures. Evaluations will require observations and timely, face-to-face feedback before the summative evaluation. The MOU specifically addresses expectations of the state and participating LEAs regarding requirements for teacher and principal evaluations, that they be timely, constructive and data-driven, for example. The state recognizes the need to provide professional development to evaluators and has included that step in its plan. The state plans to survey teachers to help determine their perceptions about the new evaluations.

Georgia's plan to meet this goal of fair, data-driven, constructive evaluations is ambitious and relatively achievable. The timeline may be overly ambitious. For example, training time may be underestimated. Steps to solicit feedback during the rollout period could be more carefully planned. For example, since

surveys of teachers are to be conducted during the summer, what measures will be taken to ensure a high rate of return?

(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions

Overall, Georgia has developed an ambitious and reasonable plan to meet RtT goals for using teacher, principal, and preparation program evaluations. Georgia has developed the Teacher Effectiveness Measure, Principal Measure, District Effectiveness Measure, Teacher Preparation Programs Effectiveness Measure, and Principal Preparation Programs Effectiveness Measure, which will provide significant information for fair decisions about

- designing induction, professional development and coaching activities
- compensating, promoting and retaining teachers and principals
- developing compensation and career lattices for highly effective teachers and principals
- making classroom and school assignments
- granting certification to teachers and principals
- removing ineffective teachers and principals
- continuing the license of teacher and principal preparation programs.

Georgia's plan also calls for the state, districts, schools, and educator preparation programs to use the evaluation data to determine training needs and the effectiveness of professional development. With the training that the state plan includes on the use of student performance data, participating LEAs should find the evaluation system helpful in identifying induction, professional development, and coaching needs.

Potentially, this plan could help Georgia to identify what incentives work for recruitment to the neediest schools and subjects. Incentives may, for example, convince highly effective teachers and principals who are already in low-performing schools to stay longer than they otherwise would. Since the compensation incentives and career lattices will be opt-in plans for teachers and principals, the level of participation is unclear. Are the incentives robust enough to be persuasive? When making involuntary assignments of teachers and principals, however, Georgia's plan will provide decision-makers with more complete information.

From the description provided, it is not clear how effectively the new system will streamline the process for removing ineffective veteran teachers, but it should assist principals in determining whether to grant the initial Career Teaching Certification to novice teachers.

The plan's evaluation system should help the state to compare the effectiveness of traditional preparation programs as well as alternatives like Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and U Teach.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	19	19	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	13	13	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6	6	

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

(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools

Georgia's plan meet this goal is achievable and ambitious. The plan may be especially effective in retaining highly effective teachers and principals to remain in high minority and high-poverty schools.

The approach includes:

- retaining highly effective teachers and principals who are already teaching in high-poverty, high minority schools
- improving the capacity of other teachers and principals already located in high-poverty, high minority schools
- encouraging effective teachers and principals to move to high-poverty, high minority schools
- partners with institutions successful in attracting teacher candidates to rural high need schools
- establishing a pipeline of effective novice teachers and principals who will locate in high-poverty, high minority schools
- develop summer leadership academies for principals to provide coaches and mentors
- revise the alternative principal certification requirements.

Interestingly, Georgia will provide a pool of RttT funds for high need rural districts that want to establish a “Grow Your Own Teacher” initiative. Funds will be available on a competitive basis for well-crafted innovative approaches.

Georgia’s redesigned leadership preparation requirements stipulate that leaders be jointly selected by their districts and a higher education institution and that candidates engage in performance-based learning that has both practice and coursework experiences. Because high-quality leaders can attract high performing teachers to their schools, the new preparation program could be helpful. High-need schools, especially rural ones, have difficulty attracting outside talent. If this approach is effective, when combined with the “grow your own” approach, Georgia could make important staffing progress.

Once implemented, Georgia’s evaluation system will identify highly effective teachers and principals accurately. Performance based compensation, in part determined by closing achievement gaps, and bonuses are ambitious, however their achievability will be limited to the grant period for some districts. Signing bonuses for teachers that vest over time and effective induction programs will be used to attract effective teachers to rural high-poverty and high-minority schools, especially novice teachers.

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

In its plan, Georgia:

- provides professional development strategies for STEM to improve the effectiveness of teachers already teaching in those subjects
- provide alternative certification routes in high-need subjects
- partners with alternative certification providers such as UTeach that specialize in recruiting candidates in STEM fields.

Staffing rural isolated schools with highly effective teachers in high need subjects is a difficult problem. Georgia’s proposed strategies are ambitious, but with limited achievability. The plan does not specify quantifiable targets.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10	10	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5	5	

(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	5	5	
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Georgia's data system will link student growth and achievement data to their teachers and principals. The state will also link this effectiveness data to the identity of a teacher's or principal's preparation program. Furthermore, it will publicly report the success level of teacher and leader preparation program graduates. The state legislature may take action to link funding to this effectiveness data, once preparation programs have had the opportunity to respond to their results. Georgia's approach to this goal is not as ambitious as it could be and may not be totally achievable if reaction to the plan stimulates perverse incentives. For example, Georgia sets a goal of only 30 percent for expanding effective programs by 2014.</p>				
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	13	18	
(i) Providing effective support	10	5	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	8	8	
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state's plan relies on the districts to provide ongoing job embedded professional development, in depth coaching, induction, common planning, and other measures that ensure that teachers and principals learn continuously and apply that learning to daily performance. The state will intervene strategically by providing resources on the common core standards on the state maintained portal, including courses for professional learning units. It will require teachers to take these courses for recertification. For the most part, job-embedded professional development will be the responsibility of the participating LEAs. Through its negotiation of the final MOU, the state will have an opportunity review local district plans for professional development.</p> <p>Aside from persistently lowest-performing schools, Georgia will assume its most direct role in professional development as it develops formative and benchmark assessments, value-added measures, end of course tests, and the evaluation system tools. To help teachers and principals understand how to use these varied forms of data, the state will offer some face-to-face professional development to schools. Georgia will also help districts identify vendors to provide professional development. On other aspects of the plan, districts are on their own, which may be a challenge for some high need rural participants. While it is positive that the state will recognize and provide incentives to local talent, it is unclear whether such measures will provide enough capacity to districts to meet RtT goals.</p> <p>Although it attends to both, Georgia has emphasized its compliance role over its technical assistance role in its approach to professional development. Examining recent past performance on standards based reform, it is clear that Georgia has improved student achievement and narrowed achievement gaps, but RtT raises the bar. Teachers and leaders will need to accelerate student growth on content that is far more rigorous. It is unclear that reliance on the old approach to professional development, the professional learning unit, will work for these new demands.</p> <p>The state's approach has positive aspects—the entrepreneurial support for innovation, the effort to build local capacity, the frequent surveying of users to create feedback loops on new products and systems. It is also important that the plan encourages all parties to periodically reflect on what is working and stop what is not working. Except for some plans for STEM interventions and persistently lowest-performing schools, there may not be enough focus on the deepening the subject matter knowledge and related instruction strategies to reach program goals.</p>				

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

Georgia clarified that the state will provide intensive support to districts to build the capacity of participating schools to embed effective ongoing professional development.

Total	138	109	114	
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia has authority to intervene in the lowest-achieving schools. Under No Child Left Behind, schools in need of improvement are categorized at levels from one to eight. Those at level five or greater are given a state director and receive intervention for improvement. Currently 278 schools are in need of improvement and 45 of those are at level five to eight. Georgia also passed legislation recently that permits the state to intervene when school system governance has failed or the system has been placed on probation by the accrediting agency.</p>				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	38	38	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	33	33	

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

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools

Georgia has identified persistently lowest-achieving schools. These schools are all middle and high schools. Recognizing that subgroups aggregate in large enough numbers in a secondary school to affect its "needs improvement" status, but not at smaller elementary schools, Georgia decided it was important to include feeder schools to reach target subgroups of students with early intervention. A total of 124 schools will be defined as persistently lowest-performing. Districts will not receive additional funds for the feeder schools, however much can be accomplished within the existing budget. It will be important not to stigmatize these schools, especially the feeder schools where attention will go primarily to sub groups that are already stigmatized by society. Georgia plans to work with these lowest performing schools as counselor rather than regulator.

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools

Georgia has developed a thoughtful, research-supported approach to support LEAs in turning around their persistently lowest-achieving schools. The approach begins with an in-depth analysis of school performance based on standards for high-functioning schools resulting in a recommendation of one of the four turnaround models. The analysis is conducted jointly by the state and the participating LEA. With results in hand, the parties will select the most appropriate of the intervention models. All LEAs will have to abide by the teacher and leader evaluation and compensation plans that the state will develop for RttT.

The MOU requires a serious commitment to school turnaround from affected LEAs and schools.

Additionally, the state has partnered with Communities-in-Schools of Georgia to create small alternative schools to provide personal and intense academic support to students who are more than one year behind grade level and at risk of dropping out. Although such schools have served high-school aged students to date, three new small schools will be opened to serve middle or high school students. This earlier intervention option is a positive step.

To assist the individual schools involved in turnaround, Georgia's plan requires them to extend the school day and provide at least 60 minutes of common planning time per week to teachers. Based on an analysis of instruction, coaches will help teachers with issues like formative assessment, data-based decision-making about instruction, rigorous subject matter teaching, and use of state portal resources on standards and assessment. The state will assist turnaround schools find a vendor that offers high quality professional development for instructional improvement and standards-based teaching. Turnaround schools will be encouraged to offer students access to advanced placement and specialized courses through the Georgia Virtual School. STEM partners of the state will be encouraged to help turnaround schools improve STEM teaching and learning. These are all well supported strategies for school improvement.

In addition to direct intervention at the school level, Georgia understands the importance of building a district's capacity to meet the needs of its students, so it will assist in broadening options for the students based on a careful analysis of student need. For example, the state might assist the district to plan magnet schools, career academies, or technical schools.

In selecting school intervention models, Georgia has indicated to balance the ideal with the possible. In particular, considerations such as the willingness of any charter management organizations or alternative teacher preparation program to work at the location, will affect the extent to which the certain intervention models are available.

There may be some instances where the very turn-around model the state and district deem likely to work best for a particular school, is not feasible, limiting the achievability of Georgia's plan. Some of these schools have been in "need improvement" status for eight to ten years, but it is unclear whether they will be closed. If so, will their students' learning options improve? It is unclear how well the state will serve its most fragile populations in its most poorly resourced areas.

All things considered, Georgia's plan is of high-quality and focuses on essential elements necessary for school improvement: high quality standards-based instruction; continuous professional development; good instructional leadership; personal and intense support for at-risk students; accurate, complete data and good decision-making with those data; early focus on literacy; consistently high quality college and career readiness preparation; and improvement of the early learning pipeline. With a dedicated turnaround section within the SEA, it appears that Georgia is committed to do whatever it takes to significantly improve persistently lowest-performing schools.

Total	50	48	48	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	

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

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education
 For FY 2009, Georgia increased its education budget by 4 percent.

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools

Georgia has taken some measures to equalize funding between poor and wealthy districts, but great inequities still exist, limited the quality of the equalization effort. Rural districts with large holders of land valued at low rates and poor families who use the public schools are disadvantaged compared to well-to-do suburban districts. By counting the actual millage value of LEAs and providing grant subsidies to less-wealthy districts, Georgia lessens this inequity. Within districts, the state allows for funds to be allocated to poor schools disproportionately to provide a base threshold of education quality and remediation.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32	32	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	6	6	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	

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

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"

Georgia law does not limit the number of charter schools. There are currently 121 charters, six percent of all schools in the state.

(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes

Georgia law requires charter schools to include improving student achievement in their purpose. Charter school authorizers include the Charter School Commission, a body created by legislation solely for that purpose, a local school district, or the state board of education. Since the state amended the law in 1998 to allow start up charter schools, the state board has authorized 117 charters and closed or not renewed 13. In general, the discontinued charters were deemed ineffective, denied licenses, or withdrew their applications due to poor academics, poor financial practices, low enrollment, and non compliance with the charter law. Some charter schools have had multiple years of inadequate yearly progress. The demographics of charter schools are similar to local districts.

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools

In Georgia, charter schools are entitled to the general school funding formula. They receive an equitable share of federal, state and local funds.

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities

The Georgia legislature created a grant fund to support charter facilities. Charter schools can apply annually for a share of this money. Under a 2009 law, local districts are required to offer their unused facilities for lease to charter schools on a no fee basis. This law has benefited about a dozen charter schools, primarily located in urban districts with declining enrollment.

(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools

The state board of education has the authority under Georgia law to grant waivers to establish autonomous public schools. It has used this authority to establish 12 early college high schools. These schools, which give dual high school and college credit, are run by the University System of Georgia. Funding comes through the local school district so fiscal autonomy varies. Early college high schools serve high minority and high first-generation college enrollees successfully. There are no other autonomous schools. It is unclear whether these schools have control over their staffing issues.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>To some extent Georgia has created other conditions favorable to education reform. SB 84, a recently passed law, sets standards for the operation of school system governance. School board members and superintendents are expected to act in the best educational interests of citizens in their district in setting policy, making fiscal decisions, avoiding conflicts of interest, acting ethically, etc. The state may intervene when a school board is determined to be dysfunctional. This is truly innovative and significant legislation. Unfortunately, low income and minority students are sometimes concentrated in districts where the governance is not functioning well or not operating in the best interests of its constituents. To make this law truly effective will require a support system for school boards (coaching, academies, etc.), which has yet to be put in place.</p> <p>High performing school districts may be granted waivers by the state to increase the flexibility and creativity with which they operate. As long as they meet mutually agreed upon performance based goals, these districts have greater local decision-making authority over issues such as class size, salary schedule requirements, expenditures, and certification requirements. One participating LEA, Gwinnett County, operates under these waivers. It is unclear in the RtT plan, whether Gwinnett County's MOU is or can be any different than the standard MOU that will govern the other participating LEAs.</p> <p>Georgia does not provide information on the extent to which these measures have closed achievement gaps, increased student achievement, or increased graduation rates overall or for specific subgroups.</p>				
Total	55	44	44	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia's plan for STEM addresses all three parts of the RtT requirements. It incorporates approaches and partners with a history of effectiveness.</p>				

More and rigorous courses

1. Georgia will make more STEM coursework available to students with no locally available advanced course through the virtual high school.
2. Adding science as a secondary adequate yearly progress indicator means LEAs will pay greater attention to the teaching of science in tested grades, devoting more time to science instruction and paying more attention to the rigor of the content.
3. Increasing the graduation requirements in mathematics will help prepare more students all along the STEM pipeline.
4. Adopting Common Core science and mathematics standards, providing related formative, benchmark, and value-added assessment tools, and offering professional development for teachers in science and mathematics will increase the rigor of STEM education.

Collaborate with industry and scholarly partners to integrate STEM across the curriculum

The Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing and Georgia Virtual High School will develop professional development modules for integrating STEM in the new standards based teaching and learning.

Prepare more students including minorities and girls

1. Georgia will contract with U Teach and other alternative certification groups to place more STEM teachers in high-minority schools.
2. Georgia will provide incentives to attract and retain STEM teachers in high-minority schools
3. Scaling their work with partners such as PRISM and Science + Math = Success, will help teachers and leaders identify and use effective strategies to help girls and minorities receive appropriate counseling at gate-keeping points, deal with negative peer pressure, increase family support, and address other barriers to their persistence in STEM education through middle and high school.

Since lack of foundation knowledge is a major barrier for high-minority and high-poverty students, one significant challenge will be the limited STEM content knowledge of elementary school teachers. The LEAs that are likely to be most successful in reaching these STEM goals are those that offer continuous high quality professional development and take full advantage of STEM partners experienced in collaborating with educators. Georgia has addressed these issues in part through its plan to provide a pipeline and increase the effectiveness of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects. While it will be a struggle to build industry and scholarly institution partnerships in portions of the state outside of metropolitan areas or places where there is immediate demand for a STEM-related workforce, it will not be impossible. It will require the state to devote time and attention to the issue, and Georgia appears to be up to the task.

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

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				

Georgia's RtT plan meets this priority. Georgia has a track record of progress in all four education reform areas of this initiative. Georgia seriously commits the state to rigorous subject matter content standards and, by making them matter, plans to ensure that all of its public school students have an equitable opportunity to graduate from high school, college or career ready.

Georgia has proposed significant changes to the way in which teachers and leaders are prepared and their workplace performance assessed. There is research that supports linking performance to compensation incentives and Georgia's plan will add to that knowledge base. The plan is innovative, for example including specific targets for closing achievement gaps for underserved groups in evaluation protocols and establishing a fund to encourage new ideas about methods for developing a pipeline of effective teachers and leaders.

Georgia's plan to turn around schools balances state intervention with local collaboration and works to build the capacity of both the affected schools and the district of which they are a part. Georgia excels in seeking and nurturing partnerships. This skill is evident in its plans for STEM.

Georgia's plan would have benefited from greater LEA participation in some parts of the state. The LEAs that are onboard, however, are committed to strongly worded terms and conditions and ambitious performance goals. With time, demonstrated success may win over converts in the future. Regardless, changes that become fixed in state policy will eventually affect change in all districts.

Total			0	0	
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Grand Total	500	420	431		
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2



Georgia Application #2500GA-7

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	52	55	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35	38	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12	12	

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

In its application, Georgia provided documentation concerning its history of reform efforts predating recent federal reform initiatives. State multiagency strategic planning processes were implemented in 2005 yielding six broad reform goals, only one of which (teacher quality) directly aligns with the RTTT assurance areas. Georgia did provide extensive crosswalk tables in the appendices, however, which show how its efforts address each of the assurance areas.

Georgia succeeded in obtaining the participation of just 26 LEAs representing 14.4% of all LEAs in Georgia which is low. The participating districts do include the largest LEAs and those with the highest percentages of students in poverty. Only 15 of those districts agreed to implementation of the turnaround strategies for the lowest achieving schools. The low level of LEA participation is the weakest aspect of Georgia's overall application. Georgia used the MOU provided in the application package, which is strong, and made no modifications to weaken it. Using the MOU elements as an outline, Georgia provided an extraordinarily detailed and comprehensive scope of work plan. Georgia will be working intensively with a strongly committed but small percentage of districts most in need of the RTTT reforms and those with the most and neediest students and it is clear that many of Georgia's reform efforts will reach all districts. It is a concern that 85% of districts will not participate in the full package of Georgia's RTTT reforms.

The absence of teachers' unions in Georgia presents some dilemma in judging the extent of teacher buy-in for the participating LEAs. Georgia presented little evidence of teacher buy-in as a substitute for the signatures of union representatives. The extent of teacher support for RTTT is unknown and cannot be assumed. The teacher survey results reported in appendix A31 shows general support for some RTTT concepts but not all RTTT MOU elements were included and the wording and context may have been a factor in the support that was shown.

Georgia's application is generally strong. Points were withheld in A(1) (ii and iii) because of the small number and percent of participating districts and a concern that many Georgia students will not receive some of the reform interventions.

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

Three points were added for A(1)(ii) based on information provided during the presentation making a strong case for strategically focusing intensive RTTT resources on a relatively small but highly motivated and committed set of LEAs.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	27	27	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7	7	
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Georgia's application details steps which have been taken to create teams and administrative structures which cross state agencies and are designed to provide RTTT implementation capacity. Detailed budget plans for 30 projects systematically aligned with the four RTTT areas were also provided. The budgetary plans support the creation of a number of state-level positions which are critically needed for a successful RTTT implementation. The highly detailed MOU scope of work and budget shows very thoughtful planning and contributes to credibility regarding the state's capacity to implement. Georgia's prior work with reform elements and successes in getting Gates Foundation and IES data system funding have contributed significantly to their readiness and capacity to implement RTTT.</p> <p>From its early strategic planning efforts through design of RTTT teams and oversight bodies, to getting feedback on drafts of the RTTT application, Georgia has attended to getting broad stakeholder support. Georgia provided letters of support from a broad array of stakeholders but none was provided by any teacher or principal organizations, a conspicuous omission and the reason for assigning less than a perfect rating for A(2).</p>				
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	25	25	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	20	20	
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Georgia has used a mix of federal and private funding in recent years to make substantial progress in each of the four core RTTT reform areas. Georgia appears to be well ahead of most other states in this work. Georgia improved state standards, implemented annual teacher evaluations and developed a new evaluation framework with a Federal Title V grant, increased use of alternative teacher certification, improved its data system with IES and Gates Foundation grants, and intervened substantially with low achieving schools, dramatically cutting the number of schools in improvement.</p> <p>Analysis of the data provided by Georgia reveals that improvements in reading and mathematics on the NAEP assessments have been small, that improvements on the state end-of-course tests have been small to moderate, but high school graduation rates have increased substantially. More rigorous mathematics standards and assessments were implemented in 2006 and 2007 which likely accounts for score drops. Improvements in the performance of student subgroups generally has been substantial in all areas. The increased rigor of the Georgia math standards probably helped the state to be among 15 showing gains on the 2009 NAEP assessment in math. Improvements shown by Georgia's Hispanic, Black, and free-reduced price lunch student subgroups on NAEP have generally been equal to or better than the gains for the nation as a whole. Georgia provided a credible root cause analysis for the observed improvements citing its foundational work with the four key areas of reform. Georgia could have posted even greater improvements so less than a perfect score was given for A(3)(ii).</p>				
Total	125	104	107	

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia is a part of the Common Core Standards Initiative which includes 51 states and territories. Georgia is on track to adopt the Common Core Standards by August 2, 2010.				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia is a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (30 states) and the Smarter Balanced Consortium (45 states), both of which will develop assessments aligned with the Common Core Standards. MOUs documenting participation were provided.				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	19	19	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia submitted a comprehensive high quality plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The plan includes six goals, 48 activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. Although not required to do so for this section, Georgia provided performance measures related to implementation of the plan, four of which included challenging but attainable target levels for implementation. Five of the 30 project budgets are dedicated to supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. The plans are very thorough and well-thought-out.				
Total	70	69	69	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	24	24	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia has all 12 of the required America Competes Act elements for statewide longitudinal data systems in place at the present time.				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	

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

Georgia submitted a high quality plan for accessing and using state data. The plan includes four goals, 14 activities with timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The plan activities make it clear that while Georgia has the 12 longitudinal data system elements in place as described in C(1), they are not yet functionally integrated into a usable system. The activities described in C(2) would bring the system to that level.

The budget shows seven projects numbered six through 12 supporting the further development and implementation of the longitudinal data system. Although not required to do so for this section, Georgia provided a performance measure (number of unique visitors to the state's report card).

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	14	14	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	2	2	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	6	6	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6	6	
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia submitted a high quality plan for using data to improve instruction. The plan includes a set of three goals with 17 activities and a set of two goals with nine activities. The plan also includes timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows seven projects numbered six through 12 supporting the use of data to improve instruction. Performance measures were provided ending in 2013-2014 with low and unchallenging target rates (50%) for teachers and principals accessing the Instructional Improvement System. No explanation was given for the projected low use rates.</p> <p>Georgia not only discussed its commitment to make data from the instruction improvement systems available to researchers but reported it will create strategic partnerships with universities and researchers to conduct a purposeful research agenda supporting its improvement efforts.</p>				
Total	47	43	43	

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16	16	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4	4	

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

Georgia has statutory authority and regulations which provide alternate pathways to certification for teachers and principals. A copy of the regulations was included as evidence. While Georgia did not provide the requested itemized list of alternate certification programs operating in the state, they did provide a general description of the array of 27 providers and summary statistics.

The number of teachers credentialed through alternative pathways is substantial. For 2008-2009 alternative certification programs accounted for 22% of new hires while Georgia's traditional university-based programs provided 28%. The number of principals credentialed through alternative pathways is low.

In the application, Georgia offered the self-reflection that "the state does not yet have a sophisticated monitoring projection vehicle in place" for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage. The narrative indicated that Georgia aspires to such a capability but provided little detail regarding how it will be operationalized.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	54	56	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	24	26	

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

Georgia submitted a high quality plan for improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance. The plan includes a set of five goals with 46 activities as well as timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows six projects numbered 13 through 18 supporting improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance.

Georgia presented a clear and thoughtful plan for creating a student growth measure. The plan calls for the use of value-added student achievement scores to be linked with the student's teachers and principals and their preparation programs. The test growth scores will be supplemented with rubric-based rating tools to create Teacher and Principal Effectiveness measures.

Georgia presented an impressive planning framework for the development of its teacher and principal evaluation system. Georgia already provides for annual evaluations teachers and principals. Evaluation systems will be piloted in the 26 participating districts then rolled out to 60 districts per year. Over time, all districts should be impacted.

Georgia described plans to use the proposed evaluation system to inform teacher development, compensation, promotion, and retention decisions. Georgia's approach is generally strong but teachers can opt out of the performance-based compensation model and proposed changes to state regulations concerning linking evaluations to teacher retention decisions have not yet been made.

Performance measures were provided with the end of 2013-2014 attaining 100% for most measures. The projection was 80% for using the evaluation measures for teacher and principal promotion, compensation, and removal decisions though 100% was shown for these activities in the MOU summary table for A(1). The narrative text in D(2)(iv) also said all participating districts would do so. No explanation was given for not reaching 100%.

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

Two points were added for D(2)(iv) because during the presentation it was clarified that the performance-based evaluation system will be implemented statewide and not just with participating LEAs.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20	20	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12	12	

(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8	8	
(D)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia submitted a high quality plan for ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals and provided definitions for high and low minority schools. The plan includes two goals with 12 activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. Georgia also supplied the required definitions of high-minority and low-minority schools. The budget shows four projects (19,20,24,25) supporting equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals.</p> <p>In addressing the equitable distribution of staff, Georgia thoughtfully addressed not just supply side recruitment but retention strategies as well. The state plans to use an extensive array of incentives to recruit and retain teachers to serve in areas of need based on content area and geography (poverty vs non-poverty). Georgia also discussed how its STEM activities and partners such as Georgia Institute of Technology will assist with teacher recruitment, retention, and effectiveness.</p> <p>Performance measures and targets were not provided for any years and 2011-2012 was identified as the year that targets could be set. Although Georgia's plans are credible, it has not established ambitious but achievable targets for participating RTTT districts. A reasonable explanation for the absence of baseline data was given but no explanation was given for not setting eventual target goals for the measures.</p>				
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10	10	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5	5	
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	5	5	
(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia submitted a high quality plan for improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs. The plan includes two goals with five activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows no projects supporting improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs but it is clear that projects for other areas will provide the foundation for the work. There is an explanation that eventual program expansion will be funded by the legislature contingent on the availability of validity data for the program.</p> <p>Performance measure targets were provided for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 for the percent of teacher and principal preparation programs in the state for which the public can access data on achievement and growth of their graduates' students. They are quite low and unambitious, topping out at 30%. Very sketchy information was provided regarding the steps and processes that Georgia will take to expand its effective teacher and principal programs.</p>				
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18	18	
(i) Providing effective support	10	10	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	8	8	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia submitted a high quality plan for providing effective support to teachers and principals. The plan includes four goals with 24 activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows two projects (21 & 22) supporting the provision of effective support to teachers and principals. Ambitious yet achievable performance measure targets were provided for 2013-2014.</p>				

For each of the four assurance areas, Georgia described a thoughtfully compiled set of state and LEA support strategies to be implemented.

For each of the major support areas, Georgia included rather general information on how it would continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of the support. Points were withheld because evidence of a stronger approach could have been provided.

Total	138	118	120	
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) In its application, Georgia provided narrative describing its authority to intervene with persistently low achieving schools and LEAs. State regulations concerning the state accountability system were included as evidence. Georgia was one of several states approved to implement a differentiated accountability model.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia has a well-thought-out process for identifying persistently low achieving schools which includes the strategic identification through root cause analysis of at least one feeder school for each school that is otherwise identified. The state has a rather good track record with turning around low performing schools as indicated by the reduction from 414 schools needing improvement in 2003 to 278 schools in 2009. Georgia submitted a high quality plan for turning around the lowest-achieving schools. The plan includes three goals with 23 activities and includes timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows five projects (22, 24-27) supporting turning around the lowest-achieving schools. Georgia has set an ambitious performance measure target aspiring to increase the number of turnaround schools annually from nine during the baseline period to 34 per year for the next four years. In the application, Georgia described a comprehensive array of deep interventions that all turnaround schools will receive regardless of the specific turnaround model used.				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
From 2008 to 2009 the proportion of state expenditures devoted to education in Georgia increased by 4% from 58 to 62%. Georgia's policies concerning the provision of funding for high need versus other LEAs and within LEAs for high poverty versus other schools assures equitable funding for high poverty schools.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28	28	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	4	4	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0	0	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia provided documentation showing that it has no restrictions on the number of charter schools, that it authorizes a wide range of charter school types, encourages charter school creation, and that it has 121 charter schools operating in the state currently. Georgia requires charter school applicants to address steps taken to assure representative racial and socioeconomic diversity for the school and data on enrollment suggests that goal has been achieved.</p> <p>Funding for charter schools is provided on a basis equal to non-charter schools with the exception that local capital expenditures for facilities need only be provided for charter schools "as feasible". Achievement outcomes are a consideration in the initial approval and the continuing approval of charter schools. A number of Georgia charter schools have been closed due to poor academic performance. Charter schools can apply annually to the state for up to \$280,000 per school for facilities support but it is not clear if the local and state funding is adequate to meet charter school needs in the state. Local school districts are required to make available unused buildings for use as charter schools and cannot require any lease fees.</p> <p>Georgia did not provide convincing information that it enables LEAs to operate innovative autonomous public schools other than charter schools. Georgia offered its innovative Early College program as an example but did not provide sufficient evidence that it functions as an autonomous school, has the authority to select and replace staff, or consistently has authority to control budget. The application included references to the state Board of Education's waiver authority for the Early College program but provided no information on specific waivers possible or granted.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia provided information concerning several other meaningful reform initiatives such as Investing in Educational Excellence, and the redesign of teacher and principal preparation programs, but did not discuss the extent to which they have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes.				
Total	55	41	41	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>It is clear that STEM activities were integrated throughout Georgia's application. Georgia strategically added science proficiency as the required "other" AYP area for all elementary and middle schools assuring that science will not be ignored during the early but critical phase of student careers. Georgia submitted a high quality plan for STEM. The plan includes three goals with 21 activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. Georgia's extensive efforts include increased academic rigor in science and mathematics, partnerships with the Georgia Institute of Technology among others, and an innovative public awareness campaign.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia's RTTT application described wide-ranging, thorough, and thoughtfully-developed reform activities in each of the four assurance areas. It is clear that many of these reform activities predate the RTTT initiative. Georgia's readiness and success in these areas is due in no small part to substantial funding obtained from private sources including the Gates and Wallace Foundations and previous IES competitions.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	440	445	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2



Georgia Application #2500GA-6

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	46	46	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4	4	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	30	30	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12	12	

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

(i)

The state provided a comprehensive, coherent reform agenda that is complementary to the goals of the *Race to the Top* agenda, and in addition, the state describes a recent historical commitment to meeting the education needs of students from kindergarten to early college entry by developing nationally and internationally benchmarked standards and aligning them with both Pre-K readiness standards and college and career readiness standards in 2006. There were a couple of questions.

For example, a more complete description of the Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education program including examples of the "high -demand, high-skilled, high-wage" occupations that students are preparing to enter after this program and an ethnic break-down of students in the program would have been helpful. For instance, how many students found employment after graduation in the specialty areas in which they were trained, and how many were able to hold these jobs for more than one year?

The state outlines its plan to hire mentors in the Science (n=17) and Math (n=5) Mentor Program; however, the number of mentors does not appear sufficient to adequately address and provide academic support in these content areas to all teachers in rural, economically challenged, and other schools. Finally, the proposed stipend offered to math and science teachers does not appear attractive as compared to salaries in the private sector.

(ii)

A concern that surfaced was the number of LEAs participating in Georgia's reform agenda since only 14.4% or 26 of the state's LEAs have entered into binding MOUs with the state. Fifteen (15) or 100% of the "lowest-achieving schools" made a commitment to the state's plan. Although this level of involvement on the part of low performing schools is admirable, the lack of commitment on the part of the rest of the state's LEAs appears to contradict a statement that there is strong support for the state's agenda.

The state has secured a binding agreement with the participating 26 LEAs, which satisfies element "a" of the criterion. Scope of work descriptions, element "b," appears comprehensive, and appropriate signatures on MOUs from participating LEAs are documented.

(iii)

Critical components of the state's plan include the creation of a new teacher evaluation system, plans to develop a model policy addressing critical groups of students (overage, gifted, credit deficient, and those at

risk of not graduating), and work on what is called "instructional improvement systems." Funding has already been secured through a Gates Foundation grant. Components already in place are said to be complementary to those proposed for the *Race to the Top* agenda. It is possible that the proposed agenda if enacted will produce results that will eventually have a statewide impact on schools. This part of the state's application would have benefited from a fuller discussion.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	22	22	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	17	17	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	5	5	

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

(i)

Proposed plans include the creation at the state level of new departments to work in collaboration with existing departments to implement the proposed agenda, with the Governor, State Superintendent, and chair of the State Board of Education being accountable for implementing the proposed plan. For example, there is the proposed creation of a new office, the State Office of School Turnaround (SOST), to lead the effort to address persistently low performing schools. The oversight of grant administration is comprehensive and includes monitoring, tracking, and reporting elements. It was unclear whether the state's plan is sustainable following the grant period, a topic that was not fully addressed.

(ii)

The state sought input from principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, central office staff, and "other" by posting online their plan for the *Race to the Top* agenda. Of the 20,507 who responded, 13% were teachers.

In addition, 358 other "stakeholders" responded to the survey; these included university or technical college faculty (62), non-profit organizations (54), business community (46), philanthropic organizations (4), legislature (1), and other (190). All surveyed were also encouraged to send in their suggestions or comments via email.

All surveyed received the same survey instrument. However, results are of little value since there is such a difference in responsibility in implementing the proposed changes between the different groups surveyed. For example, consider the differences in responsibilities between classroom teachers and "central office staff." Additionally, since such a small percentage of teachers responded, their input about the proposed changes is almost absent. A stronger effort to reach and to secure feedback and support from building level administrators and classroom teachers would have been helpful.

The state was able to secure an impressive number of letters of support for its plan from a wide ranging list of stakeholders, which include the State Board of Education, the University of Georgia System, business/community partnerships, Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries, and other partners. Little or no support for the state plan came from teachers and principals, key stakeholders.

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

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

(i)

The state provides evidence of progress in raising achievement and in closing the gaps in student performance using various assessment, such as National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) results and graduation rates. The state's redesigned performance standards, called the Georgia Performance Standards or GPS, were largely credited for much of this success. The state has provided evidence that it has made progress, sometimes significant progress, in the four reform areas.

(ii)

Data provided documents improved student outcomes especially in core academic areas for students in various subgroups, such as African American, Hispanic, and the economically disadvantaged. Since 2003, Georgia's graduation rate improved from 68.3% to 78.9% with minority student populations showing significant improvement in closing the gap. In addressing this element of the criterion, the state cites various contributing actions, such as a STEM initiative, effective intervention for low performing schools, and a virtual school.

The state provided troubling data concerning outcomes for students as shown on NAEP data provided. For example, there was a *decrease* in fourth grade reading for African American students in 2007, and there was a *decrease* in fourth grade reading for Hispanic students in 2007. The same pattern of decreases in performance levels for all student groups can be seen for fourth grade math, eighth grade reading, and grade eighth math.

Total	125	93	93	
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

(i)

Georgia has done a good job at providing evidence that it has made a commitment to address development of high quality standards by being one of many states to join the National Governors Association and the Chief State School Officers to work on this important task. The state's goals are to develop a common core of standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics that are nationally and internationally benchmarked and aligned with college and work expectations. As expressed, this effort is an extension of Georgia's plan to strengthen its educational standards at the K-12 levels. The provided draft of the new ELA and mathematics standards appear well developed and rigorous.

(ii)

Georgia outlines a plan to quickly adopt and implement their proposed standards by August 2010. The further involvement of other states at this point appears unclear, as the state Department of Education is posed to take control of implementation efforts according to the state's application.

A plan to implement the Common Core Standards will begin with a briefing and discussion with the Academics Standards Council, composed of various state education stakeholders, whose members will provide additional assistance. Final standards will be reviewed by ELA and mathematics advisory boards; final modifications will be made prior to making the new standards public.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i)</p> <p>Georgia provides evidence of a signed MOU between the state and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) and the SMARTER-BALANCED consortium (facilitated by West Ed). It was unclear of how many and which states are involved in the consortium.</p> <p>Georgia does not plan to alter its existing assessments with common core assessments until the common core standards are effectively aligned with the current Georgia Performance Standards. A more detailed plan on when and how this is going to happen would have strengthened the score on this item. The state plans to develop additional assessments but provides little detail. Reference is made to the innovative use of technology to implement an online assessment program.</p> <p>(ii)</p> <p>Requested information regarding the state's participating in the consortia is not included in the narrative in this section of the application although references are made to Appendix B4, B5, and B6. Appendix B5 shows a copy of an MOU entitled "Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers" is provided and makes reference to "Partnership States" although a list of these states was not provided. Participating states in these consortia constitute a large number of states.</p>				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state has articulated a seamless, well developed plan that will support the transition of the new standards and assessments. Much of the proposed plan occurs at the state level. At the school level, four teachers from every school will become "school-based trainers," and the state plans to "empower" school leaders although it remains unclear about how this will occur.</p> <p>The state has met key elements of Application Requirement (e) of the notice. For example, activities, an action, plan, a time line, and optional performance measures are included.</p>				
Total	70	70	70	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	24	24	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(C)(1)</p> <p>Georgia provides evidence of a well developed statewide longitudinal data system and plans to improve its system by piloting a new program that will track high school students into and through post secondary education. This effort should provide high quality data that can be used to improve student success and</p>				

college persistence rates at the secondary and post secondary levels. Currently, Georgia is able to track students' enrollment in public and private colleges and universities, but does not yet track students' persistence and graduation rates at this level. Efforts to improve its data system appear on-going.

Georgia has met this criterion and has all elements of the COMPETES Act implemented, one of only eleven states to do so.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)
 (C)(2)
 Georgia states a commitment to robust and comprehensive data on student and teacher performance. A comprehensive "vision" for a longitudinal system was developed. The proposed plan will provide school data that will be accessible to all users. The state's action plan is fully developed, and implementation steps including a timeline are included.

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

(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)
 (i)
 Georgia plans to make available to teachers, principals, students, parents, and administrators information and resources designed to improve schools' overall effectiveness. It is unclear what type of student performance data will be available. The state has current plans to post math items for students in preparation for the new, more rigorous high school math curriculum. The state outlines a logical plan for participating LEAs to use its local instructional systems to improve instruction and to increase overall effectiveness. Further, the state plans to provide access not only to administrators, teachers, and principals, but also to parents and students.
 It appears that the effort to increase acquisition, adoption, and use of local instructional improvement systems is on-going as the state plans to work with a current vendor to improve reports in the current online system. A major goal in the state's efforts is to assist teachers in spending less time manually disseminating projects and tests and in analyzing test results and more time designing student instruction. This element of the criterion has been met.
 (ii)
 The state plans to provide enhanced assessment resources to support LEAs, schools, and teachers. However, it does not clearly identify these resources except to state that the soon to be provided reports will ensure instructional improvement. Curiously, in the table called "Performance Measures," the percent listed of teachers and principals using the instructional improvement systems is 50%; there was no rationale or discussion provided of why this percentage was selected. The state has partially met this element of the criteria.
 (iii)
 The state plans to use *Race to the Top* funds to improve its current instructional systems, and the state plans a "purposeful research agenda" in collaboration with various research groups including those in

universities. The state's plan allows researchers access to data from its instructional improvement system. The state has met this element of the criterion.

Total	47	44	44	
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	16	16	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4	4	
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia has the legal, statutory, and regulatory provisions that allow alternate routes to certification. Georgia meets this element of the criterion as it provides alternative routes for certification for both teachers and principals that permit providers that operate independently of IHEs, and includes requisite elements of the definition of alternative routes.				
(ii) In the 2008 academic year, Georgia's alternative teacher certification program prepared 22% of new teacher hires. The alternative route for principals was newly developed and has been not frequently used according to the state's application. The state partially meets this element of the criterion.				
(iii) The state's newly developed monitoring system is still under development according to the application. Proposed is a plan to track teacher candidates and their characteristics (type of certification for example) and their entry into the workforce. Once the new system is complete, the state will have a more effective way to evaluate supply and demand patterns. Currently, the state is able to identify a large scale teacher shortage in mathematics, science, special education, and ESL. There was very little discussion on how the state plans to meet these shortages although recommendations from a math and science task force were referenced. This element of the criterion called for a process of not only monitoring, evaluating, and identifying teacher and principal shortages, but also for filling these areas. Because the state does not appear to have a fully developed plan to meet teacher and principal shortages, a mid-level score was awarded.				
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	53	56	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	13	13	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	25	28	

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

(i)

The state proposes using *Race to the Top* funds to implement a value added model. The state's application includes a discussion of how student growth and student achievement will be measured for each individual student. The state plans to create a vertically aligned system wide approach to effectiveness and accountability.

(ii)

The teacher, leader, and district evaluation models document a well developed process that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data from a range of respondents including parents (in the teacher's evaluation model). Climate surveys are mentioned as a tool for evaluating governance and leadership in leader effectiveness. 50% of the measurement instrument for both teachers and principals includes a value added score of student growth. Use of aggregated student achievement data by subgroup to determine the level of gap reduction is favorably noted as one variable to be used to evaluate principals.

A more thorough definition and discussion of exactly what measures will be used in making a determination of who is an effective educator would have been helpful. Parts of the model as described appear strong; the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data from a wide range of respondents, for example. Some critical elements of the plan are not fully explained or discussed, such as the capacity of rural districts to develop or to implement the state's plan. This element of the criterion was partially met.

(iii)

Currently, annual evaluations of teachers and principals are not designed to provide constructive feedback since teachers ratings are binary (satisfactory or unsatisfactory). The state proposes using *Race to the Top* funding to implement the proposed models for evaluation that appear well developed.

Parts of the state's plan in this area includes a strong evaluation commitment. Elements of the proposed plan include: providing timely and constructive feedback; sharing summative annual evaluations with teachers and principals (includes rubrics-based evaluation, value added growth data and other measures); surveys for teachers and principals to assess the new system.

(iv)

The state proposes a cohesive plan for using data from an identified evaluation model to reward effective teachers (especially in core content areas) and effective principals. A plan for removing ineffective teachers and principals is also included. The reward system for highly effective teachers appears modest considering the impact of these key individuals on the entire reform effort.

This section of the state's application would have been strengthened by a full description and discussion of how its evaluation system will be used to identify, support, and remove ineffective educators. The state has partially met this element of the criterion.

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

The state presentation provided added clarification on the use of the state's evaluations to inform key decisions, which included using evaluations to inform key decisions for teachers and principals across all schools.

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

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

(i)

Georgia plans an incentive system for effective teachers to both keep them in high need schools or draw them to high need schools, especially rural schools where the graduation rate is 56%. In this section of the application, award bonuses of \$50,000 (over a 3 year period) to appropriate candidates (effective teachers) willing to relocate to high need schools is suggested but no bonuses or incentives are planned for effective principals willing to move to low achieving schools. The state also plans to implement a new model for principals of low achieving schools that will assist them in becoming instructional leaders for the school rather than holding a managerial role. Another component includes professional development for teachers.

(ii)

The state does not provide a well developed plan to increase the number of effective teachers of hard to staff content areas. It relies almost exclusively on outside organizations. To increase the number of effective teachers to high need schools and hard to staff content areas, the state outlines various solutions including teachers from Teach For American, which the state appears to favor and which is a presence in the urban areas. The state also plans to institute the UTeach program in four IHEs to improve recruitment of STEM teachers.

In describing the state's Grow Your Own Teacher program, a statement was made about how the program must include "extremely rigorous screening of applicants," a concern that was not fully explained. Potential applicants, according to the application, might include members of under-represented groups, paraprofessionals and career changers, all possessing the skills to become effective teachers in rural schools.

Considering that the state has the third largest rural school population in the nation with a graduation rate of 56%, data the state provided, analysis and a stronger response to meeting the needs of these students is warranted.

The state partially fulfills the requirement of this element in the criterion.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	10	10	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	5	5	
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	5	5	

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

Georgia plans to use its proposed data system to track and to evaluate the impact of teacher preparation graduates for the purpose of strengthening teacher preparation programs and requiring teacher preparation programs to develop partnerships with LEAs. Outlined activities include requiring teacher preparation programs to produce student learning *before* candidates graduate. This part of the state's plan appears unrealistic.

Performance measures on the percentage of teacher and principal preparation programs for which the public can access data on achievement and growth of graduates' students has a 30% target goal in Year 3. The state provided additional explanations on the performance measures including its plan to pilot a value added model in 2010, to add a research based evaluation tool in 2011, and to give LEAs two years of data on teachers and principals in 2013, so that they can make high stakes decisions.

Little discussion was provided on the state's plan to expand effective programs, and this element of the criterion is not fully addressed. The state has not fully met the requirements.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20	20	
(i) Providing effective support	10	10	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10	10	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) The state outlines various types of support for educators in participating LEAs. Examples include data driven professional development, coaching, and removing barriers to effective implementation of practices to improve student learning. The state provided a comprehensive table listing various state supports especially supports to turn around the lowest achieving schools.				
(ii) The state provides a succinct description of proposed state and LEA supports for various purposes such as implementing common core standards, high quality assessments, and implementing a data system to support instruction. Attention was given to investing in communication efforts to encourage educators' buy-in and to solicit feedback. Implementation steps for professional development in STEM activities for teachers appear well designed. The provided documentation outlines Implementation Steps in which the state will work with Georgia Tech.				
Total	138	114	117	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Georgia's statewide accountability system gives the state wide legal, statutory or regulatory authority to monitor and intervene to assist a persistently low achieving school and LEA.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	38	38	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	33	33	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Using <i>Race to the Top</i> criteria, Georgia identified 62 persistently low achieving schools including 21 middle schools, 39 high schools, and 2 K-12 schools. The application states that at the elementary school level, sample size for students in subgroups is small, which impacts the way the state calculates AYP, making identification of persistently low achieving schools at that level difficult. The state indicates awareness of the need to identify students in various subgroups who come from different feeder (elementary) schools who				

may need additional academic support, and plans to review resource allocation at both the district and state levels to address this.

(ii)

The criteria for this element requires the state to implement one of four school intervention models. The state refers to "School Turnaround," suggesting its plan to adopt of the turnaround intervention model. Based on data presented in this section, this approach has met with somewhat mixed results. For example, Georgia reports reducing the number of schools needing improvement from 414 in 2003 to 278 in 2008, a laudable 33% reduction in six years. Nevertheless, 12% of schools, 30 schools, have been unable to move out of the needing improvement category for six years. The application admits that this is "not acceptable."

As a possible solution, the state proposes the creation at the state level of a new office, the State Office of School Turnaround, to lead the effort to address the continuing problem. The state's plan also outlines structural initiatives and programmatic initiatives that appear well developed to encourage effective coordination at the state level to support LEAs in turning around their lowest achieving schools. Supporting evidence includes a detailed action plan describing various implementation steps.

Total	50	48	48	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Despite challenging economy conditions, Georgia's budget for education increased slightly from 58.2% to 62.5% of the total state expenditures from 2008 to 2010. The education budget includes funding for elementary, secondary, and higher education.				
(ii) Georgia documents various efforts to fund the highest needs schools. It provides a higher portion of funds to less wealthy districts through a grant called "Equalization." The state's funding formula in supporting regional educational centers is weighted towards rural and poorer districts, and in 2009, the state implemented special appropriations to supplement low income districts for renovation and special projects. The state meets the requirements of this element of the criterion.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8	8	

(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) Georgia's Charter Schools Act in 1993 (O.C.G.A. 20-1-2061 through 20-2-2071) offers no restrictions on the development of high performing charter schools in the state.</p> <p>(ii) Georgia's charter school legislation provides for authorizing charter schools and holding them accountable. Applications can be and have been denied if a proposed charter's creation does not align with charter law or does not have rigorous academic goals. Charter schools have been closed for a combination of performance related problems. Since 2004, 14 charters have been closed indicating the state's willingness to hold charters accountable for outcomes.</p> <p>(iii) In 2008-2009, Georgia's average per pupil expenditure in a charter school was \$8,456, and in a regular school, it was \$8,875. Funding for charter schools is not dependent on special state appropriations. Georgia charter schools appear to have equitable funding levels.</p> <p>(iv) A district is required to provide facilities funds to a charter only if "feasible." However, charter schools (except for chartered special schools) are entitled to state, federal, and local revenue. In addition, the state's General Assembly created a competitive grant program for a charter facilities fund in 2004, which has continued to be funded; annual awards range from \$20,000 to \$280,000 per school. Charter schools in the state often utilize unused school district facilities since the LEAs are required to make unused facilities available to charter schools. Based on this evidence, the state provides charter schools with adequate and equitable funding for facilities and assistance with facilities acquisition.</p> <p>(v) In this section, Georgia cites one example, its Early College Program, that benefits low income, minority students, and first generation college students. The program is a collaborative effort between LEAs and a state IHE, and allows students to graduate high school with two years of college. Its first graduating class was in May 2009, and total enrollment is 2,201 students. This appears to be a successful program. It is not clear from this one example, whether the state truly enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. In fact, from the description provided, this school is far from autonomous since the school's budget depends on the "principal's relationship with the superintendent." This suggests that the state does not fully support the creation of innovative, autonomous public schools.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>To support its reform effort, Georgia adopted Senate Bill 84 in 2009, legislation that supports education. The state is also in the process of redesigning preparation programs for school leaders and teachers. Proposed efforts to redesign the educator preparation programs appear promising and realistic. However, these proposed reform conditions cannot be described as innovative. Their plan calls for the coordination of the state's plan at the state level, which appears well developed.</p>				
Total	55	50	50	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state describes a commitment to address the needs of underrepresented groups and of women in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.</p> <p>Other elements include development of rigorous mathematics and science standards, cooperation with IHEs, and requiring science across all school levels. One of the innovative features includes a public awareness campaign designed to encourage support for science and mathematics. However, relying on alternative teacher certification candidates (UTeach), who are not likely to remain in the state or to have a commitment to the state, is a weak response to meeting the staffing needs of schools.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Some parts of the state's application were strong. Overall, the state provided a comprehensive and coherent application that demonstrates a systemic approach to educational reform.</p> <p>Highlights of the state's plan includes description of interagency coordination at the state level; ambitious goals and a strong supporting budget; and well developed action plans that included detailed performance measures and timelines. Many times critical information was found in the supporting materials that was not always discussed in the narrative.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	434	437	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2



Georgia Application #2500GA-4

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	52	55	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35	38	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12	12	
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) Georgia has articulated an aggressive, comprehensive reform agenda. The six state goals clearly include the four federal required categories. Governor Perdue has pulled all education agencies into a cabinet committee, set up a Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and chairs the national Common Core Committee for the NGA.</p> <p>(ii) The MOUs and scope of services meet the requirements. Only 26 (14%) of the 180 LEAS have signed on but they include two of the largest counties, including Atlanta, and serve 45-50% of the minorities in the state of Georgia. Georgia does not allow collective bargaining but neither local teacher groups nor the two large statewide groups were consulted or brought into serious discussions about RTT, and this limits local teacher support. It is not clear how many of Georgia's 500,000 rural students will be served; many of the smaller counties are quite rural and did not sign on. Awarding points for LEA commitment reflects the large number of low income and students of color whose LEAs will participate.</p> <p>(iii) The state has set ambitious but reasonable goals for adopting the common core, implementing the American Diploma Project, evaluating teachers and principals and their preparation programs. The state is committed to a full Value Added growth evaluation of schools, LEAS and professionals. The plan includes goals and strategies for reducing the achievement gap and increasing college attendance. Three to five counties will actively try on for size the new student assessment and teacher and school leader evaluation formats, several with the help of Gates Foundation grants. Rural areas may decide to take the teacher recruitment incentive money and bonuses. Still, local leaders representing half of at risk students signed on to this bold and controversial reform package. Therefore, the likely state impact may be rated at the high end.</p> <p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)</p> <p>The presenters explained clearly how all LEAs and schools would benefit from the Common Core, from new evaluations, data services, and monitoring and that only the most highly committed had signed on initially.</p>				
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	28	28	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	20	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8	8	

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

(i) The plan includes several deputy state superintendents, one for standards and one for turnaround, and plans for teams are laid out in sufficient detail with dozens of very specific and carefully sequenced tasks and activities, The budget includes 100 pages of narrative, numbers and justifications for staff, travel, professional development and more, exceptionally well documented.

The state intends to build a strong capacity to succeed at all levels from early childhood to university degree programs and has designed a strong structure for implementation. The Governor's office will monitor the state longitudinal data systems development, adding staff and other resources. The capacity plan warrants full credit.

(ii) There is very strong support from two greater Atlanta Chambers of Commerce, major employers including IBM, GE, AT and T, all the Georgia state education agencies, (public) higher education, three foundations and the Georgia PTA . Two dozen superintendents signed on but not the principals. There are no civil rights letters or child advocacy groups and the teacher groups abstained from assuring support. The Governor's office surveyed 20,000 teachers (of the 120,000 teachers employed) and large numbers felt their annual evaluations were not well documented. They felt that teacher preparation programs were uneven in quality. Employers and educational leaders will provide the energy to advance and scale up this plan but will need to bring presumably skeptical principals and teachers along. The high score reflects the strong support from so many state and corporate leaders if not the teachers and principals.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	28	28	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	23	23	
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia state officials have provided state and national leadership in raising standards, promoting better assessments, establishing charter schools without caps, recruiting teachers through alternatives (22% of new teachers) with the help of Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP). The state deserves full credit for using federal and foundation grants to pursue and accomplish the reform agenda.				
(ii) Georgia has raised achievement scores in almost every category, and decreased the achievement gap in poor rural areas and central cities. Georgia high school graduation rates were once quite low (65%) but have been increasing above the 70% national average, remaining a problem in certain rural areas and urban neighborhoods but showing solid improved outcomes.				
Total	125	108	111	

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia is committed to working with 47 states and 4 territories on the Common Core. Governor Perdue is co-chairing the NGA task force on the core.				

(ii) Georgia intends to review the final versions of the standards and adopt them by the August 2, 2010 deadline.

These strong commitments earn the full points.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) Georgia has joined TWO consortia on assessments, the ones led by ACHIEVE and WestEd. The commitment to strong testing and data systems is very strong, bipartisan, and overseen by the Governor's office in collaboration with the SEA.</p> <p>(ii) The state did not cite numbers of states in the proposal, but there are more than thirty states committed to new high quality assessments in these two consortia.</p>				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(3) Georgia has one of the most comprehensive transition plans imaginable, a list of 48 separate and sequential activities with many pages of budget backup and a list of officers responsible. There will be many forms of communications with LEAs, teachers and local school leaders, beginning with a ten hour course on standards, gap analyses, webinars, tool kits, and other opportunities to learn how to use data. Several LEAs have offered to go first to test Value Added models, new teacher and principal valuation systems, and the teacher bonus and relocation incentive plans. The state will use Gates money to improve the teacher data links and use data to improve classroom and school effectiveness. This is as complete a plan as any state might offer. There are 650 pages of appendices, much of it on transitions and implementation. The plan is incredibly well documented and detailed.</p>				
Total	70	70	70	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	24	24	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(1) Georgia has completed all the work on twelve elements needed to comply with America COMPETES. 24 points were earned, two for each set of tasks.</p>				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(2) Georgia has outlined a comprehensive plan for using longitudinal data. This is seen as so important that the functional responsibilities are lodged in the Governor's Office of School Achievement and additional technical staff will be hired. The state will seek a vendor to perfect a Value Added model for SEA and LEA</p>				

use, which will help the state identify effective and highly effective teachers, principals and schools, and the instate universities that prepared them. There seems to be a high commitment to continuous improvement by the Governor, the SEA and six other state education agencies. Teachers were surveyed about the use of data to evaluate their performance, and for retention and rewards, and expressed dissatisfaction with past teacher evaluation systems. The two major teacher professional organizations will have access to the data, despite not participating in developing or supporting the plan.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	15	15	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6	6	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5	5	
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) There will be many types of data assessments, longitudinal as well as snapshots, school diagnostic audits, evaluations of teacher and principal effectiveness, and student profiles. Data will yield useful reports for teachers, advice on portfolios, and include formative assessment test questions. Georgia will mount an impressive campaign to serve participating LEAs, schools and students, earning full credit for such a comprehensive state and local instructional improvement plan.</p> <p>(ii) Georgia has developed school audits and other reports that will be helpful to LEAS, schools, teachers and principals in their efforts to improve instruction. The potential support to teachers and principals is great. It will be so important to entice the non-participating 85% of school districts serving more than half of the students (not to mention their teachers), into the web of collaboration and commitment. It is clear that Atlanta and up to ten LEAs will pilot test and drive the reforms, but not as clear how long the other counties will be free to watch and wonder. This earns medium scores for trying to reach many low performing schools, if not 100%.</p> <p>(iii) Georgia is committed to transparency and to involving all of the public universities in the reform plan. But there is no mention of a Special Education research agenda or council and no support from the private colleges and universities who are providers of many professional workers. There was no mention of research on subgroups including ELL and Special Education and underrepresented populations. There will be considerable R and D on teacher and leader effectiveness measures, school measures and ways to evaluate teacher education and leadership preparation programs, mostly related to Section D of this plan.</p>				
Total	47	44	44	

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	18	18	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	

(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4	4	
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(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

- (i) Georgia has an aggressive plan and a state law authorizing alternative routes to certify teachers. Using an umbrella group called the Georgia Academy (GAPP), the state authorizes alternative preparation programs including sources other than from higher education. These include the five elements.
- (ii) The state for several years has organized and cultivated alternative sources of teachers, and has one of the best organized strategies of any state. Almost as many teachers are trained through alternative routes (22%) as by the 25 university providers (28%). A Leadership Academy is an alternative designed to produce more effective principals.
- (iii) The state carefully and thoroughly monitors the shortages in key areas such as STEM, Special Education and other specialties and has proposed financial incentives and bonuses to entice teachers to schools with serious shortages and high needs. Georgia Tech has agreed to provide leadership in addressing STEM teacher shortages. Less clear is the strategy to ensure that the best qualified principals are identified and assigned to high need schools on the Needs Improvement list. Points are awarded for the attention to teacher shortages but not for principals, because the alternative pathways are still limited.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	55	57	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	15	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	25	27	

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

- (i) Georgia has proposed to go outside the state for a vendor/developer and procure a Value Added Growth model provider, learning from Tennessee and other states, to help the state measure achievement growth and identify in detail achievement gaps for each student and subgroup.
- (ii) The state has developed a highly sophisticated model for evaluating both teachers and principals, using student growth data as a major component along with other evidence of effectiveness in the school. Georgia wisely proposes to use parent and peer surveys and other data to evaluate the effectiveness of school leaders. There will be provisions recognizing multi-year growth in achievement, in assisting teachers to become "highly effective" and other important leadership indicators. Several LEAs have volunteered for the trial and use of Value Added measures, but the major teacher groups have not signaled support as of yet.
- (iii) The 15,000 teachers who actually completed the state's web survey felt that existing annual evaluations neither recognized really good teaching nor removed ineffective teachers. The proposed new system builds heavily on Value Added growth models and would provide constructive data and feedback once adopted across the entire state. Principals would be evaluated both on achievement scores, working with parents, and other leadership factors. These are aggressive and potentially very sound reforms.
- (iv) The new system would provide performance data for mentoring, coaching, and promoting teachers. Although tenure in Georgia has been abolished, at year three the "probationary" status can be removed as data shows that a teacher is worthy of retention. Georgia proposes offering bonuses for more effective schools, teachers and principals. Discussion of removal of ineffective teachers and principals was missing from Section D (2) (iv) subsection (d) which therefore earns only a few points.

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

The presenters were eloquent on how data would be used to evaluate teachers and even decertify them, if found to be ineffective.

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

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

(i) Georgia supports multiple ways to ensure equitable distribution of teachers, including signing bonuses incenting teachers to work in low income rural schools. They will send Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) teachers to high needs schools in the Atlanta metro area. U Teach and Georgia Tech will work to fill STEM teacher shortages. An experiment to lure more effective principals previously failed and it is not clear what the new strategy might be, other than using a Summer Leadership Academy to increase the supply. This plan earns a middle rating for lots of good ideas to recruit teachers, but not principals.

(ii) Success at removing schools from the Needs Improvement list would be rewarded by bonuses for teachers and principals, funded at least in part by federal RT3 funds. Low performing schools would get a school manager (SAM) to take chores away from the principal who the could work with teachers on teaching and learning. Tax exemptions would be made available for staff willing to relocate to high need schools. Again, TFA (supplying 1000 new teachers) and TNTP will be part of the solution. But there are hundreds of needy schools and limited information on goals and targets. Other than Georgia Tech in STEM, the plan does not discuss whether other in-state providers might commit to this redeployment strategy. More ideas are needed on placing highly effective principals in low performing schools. The plan does not indicate whether the three Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) schools might expand. This section earns a high middle score.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	13	13	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	6	6	
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	7	7	

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

(i) The state plan would track highly effective, effective and ineffective teachers and principals right back to the teacher and leader education providers. The public universities pledge support to the Value Added growth model (but they provide only 26% of new teachers!) And if they produce effective teachers the state needs a stronger plan to expand their productivity. This process will require the full four years since value added methods will take several years plus time to test out the process in cooperating LEAs. The plan provides for collecting the right data but only for 30% of preparers.

(ii) Georgia wisely proposes reducing recruitment from programs that produce less effective educators, and to expand programs that produce highly effective educators. Georgia needs 16,000 new math and science teachers each year and 18,000 Special Education teachers. Recruiting 1000 new teachers from TFA over four years can help but not begin to fill all of the needs. The expansion plan is aggressive and potentially appropriate, but will require further commitments from the most effective public, private and alternative sources.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20	20	
(i) Providing effective support	10	10	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10	10	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) The state has designed an impressive array of supports beginning with learning units on standards, sample test items, use of television, and tool kits, technical assistance, state appointed directors assigned to high need schools, and summer programs. GA will get help from Georgia Tech for (STEM teacher support) and utilize Innovation Funds, bonuses and tax breaks for teachers in high need schools. This is a very comprehensive plan earning full points.</p> <p>(ii) Teachers and principals will be surveyed to determine the need to fine-tune and refine these tools and supports. The state has done this once by surveying 20,000 educators and more than 300 other key leaders. There is an awareness of local level as well as state wide weaknesses in the system and an intense commitment to support dramatic and well thought out reforms which earn the full points.</p>				
Total	138	123	125	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(1) Georgia statutes clearly allow state intervention in LEAs and schools in need of improvement, including replacing leaders and assigning new management teams to run the schools or districts where needed.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35	38	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30	33	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) The state knows exactly how many schools have serious and persistent problems, 60 middle and high schools and 62 elementary schools. Of these 45 are in state directed status with a one-on-one state director assigned to each of those schools. This capacity earns full credit.</p> <p>(ii) The state, by using Title I and other state and federal resources, has reduced the number of schools not meeting AYP from 414 to 278 which is good progress. There is provision for a new state Office for Turnaround Schools which is a good idea. GA will provide bonus pay incentives, tool kits, math coaches, career coaches, the virtual school, the use of TFA and other providers to address low performing school needs. Georgia wants (and needs) more time to see if the designated State Director model works well for more low performing schools. There are "preliminary discussions" with charter management organizations (CMOs, EMOs) and others on possible turnaround strategies, but no firm commitment to ten or twenty "restarts" with new or conversion charters. The three KIPP charter school programs so successful elsewhere are not mentioned as models worthy of expansion. This is a strong commitment but with a few gaps.</p>				

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

The presenters explained that negotiations with charter management organizations continued, but that no commitments for additional charters can be made without a formal bidding process prior to a restart decision.

Total	50	45	48	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia has had to reduce state aid to public schools but by 3% rather than the 10% cut to many other state programs. This is not good, but results in a slight increase in the percentage of state allocations to education, from 58 to 62%. (ii) An equalization aid formula helps many schools in-need, and a \$10 billion school bond program rescues some of the worst schools lacking adequate facilities. There is a third of a billion dollars allocated for early intervention in failing schools, many in high poverty areas of the state.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	34	34	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia has no cap on charter schools and thus earns the maximum points. There are 7 types of charters authorized and 121 charter schools. (ii) A strong state Charter School Commission reviews the applications, screens and approves the best, and rejects those whose academic or financial plan is lacking. The Commission has denied 26 applications and, after careful scrutiny, not renewed 13 charter schools. This very strong process deserves full points. (iii) Charter schools appears to qualify for approximately 95% of the funds non-charter public schools receive. This policy meets the suggested federal percentage of comparable aid. (iv) Money for facilities is available only "if feasible" or an unused public school is available. This is less than perfect policy, not quite fair, and earns only some points.				

(v) There is limited capacity for other local Innovation schools. Georgia with 180 school districts has twelve early colleges that require collaboration with a college or university that serves only 2000 of students in the upper high school grades.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(3) Georgia is committed to using more Performance Contracts, to increased use of the very innovative Virtual School (mentioned elsewhere), expansion of AP courses and early college programs, and generally displays a keen appetite for innovation and reform. Missing was the explicit link to student scores or graduation rate improvements. There is a strong record of leadership for reform at the state level.				
Total	55	48	48	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The commitment to STEM is very serious and appears throughout the plan. The American Diploma Project adopted by Georgia requires four years of science and math which represents a STEM upgrade. The increased use of math coaches, the STEM help from Georgia Tech, U Teach, TFA and others, expanded use of STEM AP courses and the Virtual School, all testify to a great emphasis on STEM. Allowing 100 teachers to have a research lab or industry internship can be highly beneficial to helping teachers get excited about STEM careers for their students. The plan includes 21 activities including four that mention serving underrepresented sub groups, although with little detail and no letters of community support. The plan lacks detail on how U Teach that reached hundreds of Hispanic teacher candidates in Texas might do that again in Georgia. This is not a perfect STEM plan but very strong in most of its components.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia is deeply committed to reform, to raising achievement and high school graduation rates and preparing graduates for the hundreds of employers that have moved to Georgia and expanded employment. Georgia has one of the best charter school laws in the nation and a strong commitment to value added growth models and more powerful assessments of schools and staff. LEA participation is an issue for the state and it will be important for local school leaders to understand the negative consequences of not catching up to the educational achievement of other nations. The plan is on the whole very strong.				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	453	461	
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