Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Mississippi Application #3250MS-11

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	**65**	**48**
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	35
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10

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

A1i) The application includes goals and strategies that appear to emanate from work that was underway prior to RTTT and that will be enhanced by RTTT participation. There are three overarching goals, five strategies, and nine transformational goals, which map to one another as well as to the four goals of the RTTT competition as a web of sorts. Only the nine transformational goals drive the implementation plans and the budget. As a result of this construct, the state's path for achieving its goals is not as clear and credible as it could be.

A1ii) Mississippi has secured commitment to its RTTT proposal from 93% of districts, representing 95% of its students in poverty. All participating districts agreed to implement all RTTT provisions. Its MOU mimics the model provided by ED, and is therefore fully acceptable. Full points are not awarded because the scope of work leaves a great deal of wiggle room through use of weak verbs like "participate", "facilitate" and "assist". Districts can agree to "participate" in an activity without participating fully (for example, they could implement in only one school), "facilitate" with low energy, or "assist" without enthusiasm. Some provisions are stronger and require more commitment, such as "Evaluate teachers at least annually using the Statewide Educator Evaluation System."

A1iii) Participating districts encompass nearly the entire state and appear to be representative of the state as a whole, including being representative of the state's current low NAEP scores, achievement gap, graduation rates and college enrollment. Therefore, if the plan is implemented with fidelity by all committed LEAs, these indicators will be improved.

This criterion also requires the state to present ambitious yet achievable goals in four areas. The state's goals are certainly ambitious, but the applicant does not provide sufficient rationale for why they are achievable. For example, the state proposes to increase the graduation rate from the current 72% up to 79.9% within six years, while it simultaneously introduces state board examinations and raises standards across the state. The state says it will provide intensive supports for students at risk of dropping out, but such supports are not a central feature of the RTTT proposal, i.e. they are not described, staffed or funded.

Ten points are awarded in recognition of the representative participating districts and ambitious goals.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	**30**	**23**
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7

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

A2i) Applicant proposes what appears to be a solid implementation structure, with a new Office of Innovation and Reform (OIR) in the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and utilization of the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). The staffing of these entities provides personnel to support LEAs in their RTTT work and to assure compliance by LEAs to their RTTT commitments. It is not stated whether the director of the OIR will report to the Superintendent of Education - if this is the case, it would provide greater assurance of the priority level of the RTTT work. The plan to deploy the Delivery Unit Approach implies a commitment to sophisticated project management techniques. Partnerships with other national organizations are included that will help ensure fidelity and high quality of implementation.

The criterion also requests assurance that the state will be able to sustain the changes that it makes via RTTT funds. The applicant states that it will continue them, but does not provide analysis of which RTTT-funded programs/positions/processes will require on-going funding versus those that are one-time investments.

A2ii) Letters of support represent teachers associations, chairs of both legislative education committees, representatives of higher education and others. With the exception of a skeptical US Congressman, the letters are unequivocal in their support. There is no letter representing principals or superintendents. More importantly for MS, there is no letter representing the African American community. Due to the absence of these key stakeholders, points are awarded in the high/medium range.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	**30**	**17**
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	12

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

A3i) The application provides evidence of progress in all four reform areas, although principal leadership development does not appear to have gotten much attention. The passage of the Children First Act of 2009 and the New Start School Program and Conversion Charter School Act of 2010 indicates that the legislature and governor have made bold changes and are committed to an aggressive reform agenda. In addition, the state has completed valuable planning work on its evaluation system and its data system.

A3ii) Data indicate some modest gains on National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) data are difficult to interpret due to a laudable switch to a more rigorous assessment (MCT2) two years ago. At the launch of the MCT2 in 2008, scores declined as expected due to the higher level of rigor of the test, as well as the fact that it is a new test. Most grades and subgroups improved from that low point in 2008, but there is no way to know whether 2009 MCT2 scores represent a higher level of achievement than 2008 MCT scores (or, if there is a way to compare the MCT and MCT2 scores, it is not offered in the application). The gap between white and black achievement has been stubbornly stable over time, including following the shift to MCT2. The graduation rate improved a bit.

The applicant does not provide an analysis or rationale for why its performance is low and has made only modest gains over time, i.e. does not explain the connections between the data and its actions. Medium points are awarded due to the modest improvement trajectory and the evident commitment to holding MS students, schools and teachers accountable to high standards.

Total	**125**	**88**

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1

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

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

B1i) State is committed to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative, as indicated by its signed Memorandum of Agreement. The standards developed by this consortium will meet the requirements of Race to the Top (RTTT). CCSS includes 48 of 50 states, which meets the requirement of participation by a "significant" number of states.

B1ii) State intends to adopt CCSS standards this month (July), if they are ready for adoption.

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

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

State is committed to Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) for grade-level assessments and the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) State Consortium for Board Examinations, which will create internationally benchmarked high school end-of-course exams for consortium members. The PARCC consortium has 27 states and the NCEE consortium includes nine states, both of which are significant levels of state participation. Full points are awarded for both romanettes.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	**20**	**11**

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

MS needs to continue and accelerate its transition from low standards/expectations to high ones, and it must equip its schools and teachers to support children to achieve these higher standards. The applicant does not explain in the narrative its plan for the transition to the CCSS standards and the PARCC assessments, and the narrative does not refer to the appendixes. A transition plan for rollout of the board examination system is provided, but there is little explanation for the standards transition.

However, in the appendix, the implementation plan for Transformation Goals 1, 2, and 3 appear to be the relevant implementation plans for this criterion. The plan defers development of a full implementation plan until timelines are available from CCSS and PARCC, which seems appropriate. The plans are provided for one year only. They include significant detail for early literacy and secondary STEM, but not for those subjects at the other levels.

Low-mid-level points are awarded.

Total	**70**	**61**

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	**24**	**14**

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

Applicant is credited for elements 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Other elements are in development but are not yet in place. It is clear that the state understands the importance of the data system, has invested time and resource to develop it, and fully intends to follow through on its plans.

Points are awarded for element #1, although the unique student identifier does not extend into higher education.

Points are awarded for element #8, although there is some ambiguity about whether the link between teachers and students is functional for elementary students as well as secondary students.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	**5**	**3**

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

Appendix C1(B) provides an extensive plan that analyzes the strengths and gaps in the current longitudinal data system, describes the intended uses of the future system, and describes the implementation plan and responsible parties. However, neither the narrative response nor the plan in the appendix addresses the first part of this criterion, which is accessibility of the data to key stakeholders. The plan does include aspects that will make the data system useful for decision support, but MS does not provide a clear description of how it expects data to be used in districts, schools and classrooms, nor what analyses and other resources it will provide to stakeholders to help them interpret data.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	**18**	**9**
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	2
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3

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

Text sends readers to Appendix G for goals, activities, timelines and responsible parties, by which the applicant may mean transformational goal #6. The budget includes funding for wifi deployment throughout the state to low income districts, but the budget does not seem to cover instructional improvement systems (IIS's). The budget does cover data coaches for schools.

C3i) Application states the intention to require instructional improvement systems for all LEAs, and the intention to provide guidance about which systems are approved. Except for one activity that specifies when it is planned that the IIS's will be required, activities and timelines are missing for this deployment, as is related budget (other than for wifi). For example, there are no plans specified for vetting potential IIS's or providing technical assistance to districts to deploy the new systems. Partial points are awarded due to the incomplete plans.

C3ii) Application provides goals and activities, and some information about responsible parties, and transformation goal #6 describes training activities related to use of the instructional improvement systems, including the development of training modules and a regional training plan. However, only one year's worth of activities are delineated.

C3iii) MS has an existing relationship with Mississippi State, a partnership that has yielded its data system plan and a commitment to make data available to researchers. MS says it will "potentially partner" with state-level agencies and interstate agencies to conduct analysis. No specific research goals or activities are described.

Total	**47**	**26**

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	**21**	**6**
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	3
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	3
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	0

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

D1i) The applicant avers that the state has alternate routes to certification that are authorized and that meet all of the elements as defined in the application, and it offers a June 2008 evaluation study of its alternative routes as evidence, along with a statute (MS 37-3-2). However, MS 37-3-2, creates only one alternate route (the Teach Mississippi Institute) for teachers of grades 7-12, so no evidence of authority for the other alternate routes is provided. The application says there are four alternate route preparation programs not housed in schools or colleges of education, but does not list these either in the application or the appendix, other than Teach for America. The application lists each required element and states that its alternate routes meet the elements, but does not provide evidence to support the claims.

D1ii) Application refers to appendix D2 for evidence regarding this section, but probably the intention was to cite D12. The application cites 227 TFA teachers, 1,380 alternately prepared teachers, and 202 alternately prepared principals, and these are certainly significant numbers of alternatively prepared teachers. MS does not provide the required evidence, which is a list of the alternative certification programs, their compliance with the required elements, and the statistics on their teacher/principal production for the last school year (data in the D12 appendix is from the 07-08 school year).

D1iii) MS appears to have many efforts at recruiting/filling shortage positions, which is laudable. The application asks for "a process" for monitoring, evaluation and identifying shortages. Its last shortage analysis was in 2002, eight years ago, which is another indication that the state currently lacks a process to identify its teacher and principal shortages. The application offers as evidence for this criterion the Project Clear Voice report, which analyzes an educator survey and does not pertain to shortages. It also offers as evidence a 1.5 page document, "MS Reform Progress," which lists several alternative route and teacher incentive programs, but does not provide a "process" as required in the criterion. Since there is no existing process, or at least there is no evidence provided of an existing process, zero points are awarded.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	**58**	**31**
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	9
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8

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

D2i) MS plans to deploy two methods for measuring student growth: value added and growth projection. The descriptions of these data analyses are detailed and appear technically sophisticated. There is no plan for measuring growth in untested grade levels and subjects, which pertains to a high proportion of all teachers.

D2ii) Evaluation plan is impressive in regard to its goals and components. It will utilize multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, and uses multiple tiers - these are the required components in the application. The new system will be implemented beginning in the 2011-2012 school year and will be tied to teacher compensation (depending on availability of funding). The teacher value added calculation described in D2i

will comprise at least 50% of the evaluation. The implementation plan as provided in the appendix for "Transformation Goal 7" raises two concerns: (1) Though the application states that the system will be developed with the advice of the "MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System Council", the plan does not include any activities related to convening this group, and it does not provide time for stakeholders to provide input to the plan. There is an activity scheduled for this past May to collect input from teacher and administrator groups, but this is not the same as the Council that is named in the narrative. (2) The implementation plan includes only three months to design and field test the evaluation system and develop training modules for it. That timeline seems extremely aggressive and may be too short to result in a quality product that has sufficient buy-in. Finally, there are no goals or benchmarks provided for this work, which is complex and very aggressive. It is evident that the state has done important thinking about the system, but due to the concerns cited above, points are awarded in the mid range for this criterion.

D2iii) The evaluation plan as presented would fulfill all parts of this criterion by providing annual evaluations that include feedback and extensive data. The implementation plan, as cited above, is aggressive, but full points are awarded for this criterion since the required elements are in the plan and the state appears strongly committed to implementing all of these as soon as possible.

D2iv) The narrative includes aspirations to use the evaluation results for all four key decisions required in the criterion: professional development; compensation, promotion and retention; certification; and dismissal. However, the application refers to Appendix D3 for goals, activities, timelines and responsible parties, but Appendix D3 is missing. Points on the high level of the low range are awarded in recognition of the goals included in the narrative, yet the absence of required plan.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	**25**	**3**
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	2
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	1

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

D3i) The applicant does not state where to find the plan for these criteria, though the plan for Transformation Goal 8 may be the intended plan. The narrative states that MS aims to more equitably distribute teacher talent, and briefly refers to possible incentives and recruitment strategies, but the plan is not detailed. It has one activity for assisting schools and districts to develop recruitment and retention strategies for low performing schools and another activity that simply says that the state will use study results to develop and implement strategies to address shortages. These vague activities all occur in the first year of the requested four years of funding. Low points are awarded.

D3ii) Application is nearly non-responsive to this question, as the text refers to some existing programs (not plans for the future) and obliquely refers to possible new programs. No implementation plan is provided.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	**14**	**2**
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	1
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	1

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

D4i) The narrative states MS's intention to link teacher performance, as defined in the proposed new teacher evaluation system, to the entities that prepare teachers. The intentions are supported by the findings of a blue ribbon commission, which completed its work in Sept 2008. However, there is no budget to support the creation of the proposed "Teacher Development Agency," and there are no timelines or activities provided.

D4ii) MS states its intention to use data to foster the expansion of effective programs, and cites several alternative route programs it intends to expand. At present time, the state is unable to link teacher

performance to the entities that prepared them, so it may be premature to commit to expansion of particular teacher preparation programs. Traditional teacher preparation programs are not mentioned. The proposed TFA expansion is not supported by any requested funding, nor are there any proposed activities or timelines for this criterion.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	**20**	**7**
(i) Providing effective support	10	6
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	1

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

D5i) MS proposes to expand support for teachers through RESAs and LEA-based innovation teams that would include numerous data and instructional coaches. The proposal is supported by funding and several activities found in the transformation goal plans (such as goals 2, 3 and 6), though the notion of "innovation schools" that is introduced in this section is not supported by any activities in the implementation plans. Mid -range points are awarded.

D5ii) The proposed data system would allow for continuously monitoring the effectiveness of the support, but the reviewer cannot locate any specific activities among the transformation goals that relate to such monitoring/evaluation of professional development activities. Low points are awarded.

Total	**138**	**49**

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

Recent legislation provides for the authority for intervening in low performing schools and districts.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	**40**	**11**
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	6

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

E2i) The narrative and appendicies provide a clear definition of low performing schools, and a list of schools that meet the definition is provided in appendix E3.

E2ii) The state provides a narrative that describes the recommendations of its Underperforming Schools Task Force, and delineates which of that group's recommendations were and were not fulfilled in the recent Children First Act. The narrative states that MS "will determine what works best" to turn around low performing schools, though there are no activities or timelines to support this learning process or the implementation of the findings of that learning process. Appendix E2 provides plans, but it is not clear what year these plans were created, and they are not reflected in the implementation plans of the transformation goals. The narrative refers to an evidence chart for this criterion that is incomplete. The narrative does not describe how conversion charters and New Start schools, which would otherwise seem to be a primary strategy for the turnaround of low performing schools.

Total	50	21

F. General

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

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

F1i) Revenues allocated to education increased from 60.9% to 62.6% from 08 to 09.

F1ii) MS has a program to provide extra funding to low income school districts, but provides no analysis of funding per child in its low income-serving districts vs high income serving districts. It is possible that the Mississippi Adequate Education Program reduces the gap between well-funded districts and poorly-funded districts without closing it. The narrative also does not provide analysis regarding funding among schools serving differing communities. The reviewer has little basis for judging whether MS equitably funds its schools or districts, but a point is awarded because the MAEP program indicates awareness of the issue and effort to address it.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	**40**	**6**

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	1
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	2
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	2
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	1
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

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

MS had a charter law that did not function: no charter schools currently exist in the state. The recently passed law allows for persistently low performing schools to be converted to charter status, but only twelve charter schools can be authorized over six years beginning in 2013.

F2i) The scope of this law is limited only to conversions of low performing schools, and only a few of those. The law does not promote the spread of high performing charters.

F2ii) The application requests submission of evidence for this criterion, including a description of the state's approach to charter school accountability and authorization. A brief description is provided in the narrative and the law is included in the appendicies, but the law defers the specification of accountability provisions to the board of education, which apparently has not yet acted on this subject.

F2iii) Since the law is new, there is no basis for judging how much funding charter schools will actually receive. Though the law specifies that the schools will receive equitable funding, including the regular state per pupil allocation, it does not mention local per pupil expenditures, which may be a sizeable component of school funding.

F2iv) The charters will be conversions, so they will presumably be located in existing school buildings. However, the law does not address how the charters will access capital funds such as bonds or levies, nor does it discuss building maintenance and whose responsibility that will be.

F2v) The narrative includes a short paragraph about the state "moving toward" the concept of innovation schools led by teachers, but it is not clear from the text if this concept WILL exist or simply MIGHT exist, and there is no funding allocated towards this in the budget and no activities for this idea in the plan. The state touts its existing innovative schools, but these are not autonomous as required in the criterion.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	6	1

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

Healthy schools initiative will support improvements in student health, a key precondition to learning.

Total	55	13

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The Center for Professional Futures proposal is impressive, but the narrative overall was scant in its emphasis on STEM teaching and learning. Transformation goal #3 addresses STEM, but the activities listed under this goal are not referenced in the state's proposal, which implies that they are not central RTTT activities for MS.

Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		**No**

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Mississippi appears to embrace and commit to major changes in its education system. The teacher/leader evaluation and development system and the student/teacher/school data system as proposed are especially impressive. Buy-in from LEAs is extensive. The state seems to feel urgency to rapidly improve its education outcomes and inequities.

However, the proposal lacks "coherence" as required in this absolute priority. The proposal narrative and the implementation plan and budget do not align well, which makes it difficult to judge whether the proposed activities will take place and on what time scale. The implementation plan, furthermore, contains no benchmarks as required by the application and mainly includes activities only for the first year of the requested grant.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	258

Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Mississippi Application #3250MS-6

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	**65**	**47**
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	1
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8

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

(A)(1)(i)-Comprehensive reform plan

The overall plan is difficult to understand, makes very loose connections between goals, actions and outcomes, and is light on details. Worthy efforts may be underway and are at times better explained in other sections of the application; however on balance, they don't add up to a clear and comprehensive proposal for the future.

The application starts out with a mission and a vision of world class education that would lead to success in college and the world of work, and cites 3 goals to this end:

1. To mobilize resources and supports to help ensure that all students exit Third Grade reading on grade level by 2020.
2. To reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013.
3. To reach the national average on national assessments by 2013.

The 5 strategies to accomplish these goals are 1) to implement comprehensive reform, 2) increase quality and quantity of teachers and leaders, 4) change culture to value education and 5) redesign education for the 21st century workforce.

The goals are broadly linked via 9 "Transformational Goals" to the 4 ARRA assurances, but they are so loose as to be unhelpful. For example, 8 of the 9 Transformational Goals (which include the 4 ARRA assurances) will be met by goals 1-3 and strategies 1-5, and the final one will be met by goals 1-3 and strategies 2-5. These connections are not obvious - they are vague and repetitious and would be very hard to communicate to educators and administrators across the state.

In general, the state has had an interest in improving education since 1982's Education Reform Act. More recently Governor Barbour signed an Education Reform Act in 2006 and a Drop Out Prevention Plan in 2007 to monitor dropouts. In 2009, the Governor signed the Children First Act to place underperforming school districts in conservatorship, and in 2010 created a very restricted process for transforming failing schools into "new start" schools and conversion charter schools.

With regard to the 4 assurances, some progress has been made:

Making progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments

The state has worked to implement higher standards on state assessments to more closely align with NAEP, and through a high school redesign effort in 32 schools, they implemented college and career readiness goals. They earned a B+ on Quality Counts Standards and Assessment scale in 2010, with a past grade of D-. MS plans to adopt Common Core State Standards and to achieve greater rigor through higher standards.

Ensuring higher graduation rates;

They cite their On the Bus program, and a web site to help students and families plan for college enrollment. For the future, they plan to provide "world class education" that will promote college enrollment, though no details are provided.

Establishing pre-K-to college and career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement;

The application cites that the National Governors Association recognized MS data model as one of the most innovation and effective, yet the system has limited interoperability and data requests must go to the data warehouse where written permission must come from the owner of the data. Recent funding has been obtained to build and sustain a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).

Making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need;

The state currently has both traditional and alternative routes to certification for both teachers and leaders. In 2006, state institutions of higher learning also participated with the Governor's office, state legislators, and others on a Blue Ribbon panel to redesign teacher preparation—monitoring and review were to begin in spring 2010, four years later. Leadership programs also underwent a similar review. The state has an evaluation system for teachers and leaders in low performing schools, but no statewide evaluation system. The application plans to enhance evaluation tools and launch an evaluation system of districts, schools and teachers.

Providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

Recent legislation (Children First Act of 2009) established the state Recovery District and gave the Board of Education legal authority to intervene in failing schools and districts. There are currently 6 districts in this conservatorship.

The past efforts toward addressing the four assurances come across as scattered, and vague ideals like "world class education" are not defined. There is no clear connection for how they will get from these discrete efforts to their own goals of getting 3rd graders reading at grade level in 10 years, reducing drop outs to 13% (from where?) in 3 years, and reaching the national average on state assessments by in 3 years.

The state offers little to no data on where they stand nationally or what progress has been made and whether frequently cited programs have had any effect (On the Bus Dropout Prevention is

mentioned 5 times in this section with no evidence of its performance).

This seems like an early draft with missing steps that would explain why these goals are the right ones for the state or that makes a clear connection between these goals and emphasis in RTTT. For this reason, the score awarded to this section is low.

(A)(1)(ii) LEA Commitment

Statewide support includes 142 of 152 LEAs, or 93% of all school districts and 95% of students in poverty. The districts have signed the sample MOU, and agreed to implement all or significant portions of the state's RTTT plans. It is a right to work state, so union leader signatures are not applicable; however teacher and leader organizations offered letters of support. However, the commitments in the Scope of Work are loose, with lots of room for variation in district participation. Because of these loose commitments, this section is awarded high but not full points.

(A)(1)(iii) Translating LEA Participation Into Statewide Impact

93% participation is an impressive figure, and it includes their biggest urban cities, and 95% of students in poverty.

(a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics: According to the application, the goal is for all students to be reading on grade level when they exit third grade, all students will significantly improve math and science achievement and reach the national average by 2013 on all national assessments (NAEP).

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics: MS expects NAEP achievement gaps to decrease with the increased focus on LEAs submitting specific growth goals for decreasing the achievement gaps on the state assessment, MCT2. No targets are mentioned.

(c) Increasing high school graduation rates

MS Board of Education has set a goal to reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013 and to achieve an 85% graduation rate by 2018-2019, though they do not mention where they are starting from.

MS believes that a robust/growth model will help to identify students who have a low probability of passing future assessments and who are thus at-risk of dropping out in high school so that educators can develop intensive supports around those students and increase their projected proficiency. With a current graduation rate of 72% for the 2004-2005 cohort of first-time ninth graders, MS projects an increase in overall high school graduation rate to 79.9% by the end of 2014-2015 academic year. This seems overly optimistic given the past where little change occurred over the years and the plans for this acceleration are not well defined.

(d) Increasing college enrollment

MS's goals are to increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education and increase the likelihood of those students' success at achieving a credential of value. No targets are

mentioned.

The numbers of participating LEAs are impressive and suggests the possibility of MS being able to have a statewide impact. With so many LEAs signing onto the MOU, it appears that LEAs are interested in making headway on goals, however, as stated in (A)(1)(I) and evidenced in this section, these goals are sometimes not clear or targets not set or the work planned is not well enough connected to making this progress. For getting broad commitments, but for lacking targets, this section is awarded medium points.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	**30**	**21**
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	6

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

(A)(2)(i) **Ensuring the capacity to implement**

The application addresses the state's capacity to implement the proposed plans through:

Strong leadership—The plans will be managed and implemented by a new Office of Innovation and Reform, though no director is named. Departments at Mississippi Department of Education will be linked through an Innovation and Reform Team. Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA) will coordinate with districts, each of which will have an Innovation and Reform Team. They will all be trained in Michael Barber's Delivery Unit Approach, which could strategically aid implementation. A P-16 Council is also mentioned, though not clearly assigned to any tasks.

Support for LEAs – Information will be disseminated through the Regional Education Service Agencies (6 throughout the state). An unnamed external research and evaluation group will evaluate progress, identify best practices and determine what's not working and what to replicate.

Efficient operations include the Office of Innovation and Reform providing oversight, boilerplate budget reporting, monitoring and fund disbursement, a desire to transparently report on performance measures, and a public relations campaign to help change public attitudes about the importance of education.

Use of funds and repurposing

The state plans, with the use of an external review, to use all funding sources to meet and align with RTTT goals and targets.

Their plans to use state resources for sustainability include investing heavily in human capital and technology. There was no mention of whether and how future education funding would be sought and directed to support the continuation of RTTT plans once the program ends.

The combination of these efforts, while short on details, seem plausible, earning the application a high score of 15.

(A)(2)(ii)

Superintendents, higher education, a parent group, and two education associations are involved in the development and implementation of the plan. Surprisingly absent, given the very low test scores and high achievement gaps in the state, are any minority groups, especially African Americans, which comprise almost 40% of the state. Presumably, their support and involvement might be important with the proposed public relations campaign being planned to change public attitudes toward education. A letter or letters from principal groups were also absent.

Charter schools have had a complicated history in the state with the law expiring in 2009, and the revival/revision of the law in 2010. With this activity, and the plan to use charter schools as a way to transform persistently low-achieving schools, it is noticeable that no charter school advocates or leaders were involved in or supportive of this application. Those constituencies might be included in this list, but they aren't named as charter school advocates.

The omission of minority groups in this section limits the number of points awarded to 6, a medium score.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	**30**	**12**
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	8

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

(A)(3)**(i)** Making progress in each reform area

The state has been working on education reform for the past few years. They have aligned state assessments to more closely reflect NAEP assessments, have been making progress on a State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), allow several alternative paths to teaching and leadership and monitor effectiveness of all preparation programs, require a 3-tiered process for principal licensure, and passed a law in 2009 to provide support and intervention in failing school districts.

They piloted and evaluated 16 ways to measure student growth and determine accountability labels and selected the one that was most simple, accurate and easy to interpret. This kind of piloting, measuring, and learning is an encouraging process for what the state might do with the broader plan.

(A)(3)**(ii)** Improving student outcomes

Increasing student achievement in reading and math on the NAEP and state assessments:

Overall Grade 4 NAEP reading scores have gone up a few points since 2003 (from 30% to 33% basic, and 15% to 18 % proficient). In 8th Grade, the percentage of students scoring basic and proficient has not changed (with growth and declines).

For MS assessments, the state changed the test to make it more rigorous, so scores show an expected sharp drop.

Grade 4 NAEP math scores have gone up, though they are still 8 points behind the national average. Grade 8 NAEP math scores also increased. With only 55% of 8th graders scoring at basic or proficient, these scores are still low.

Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups:

Though the application shows graphs of the gaps between subgroups, the narrative never explicitly states the number of points in these gaps or whether any progress has been made, and simply clinically describes changes in tests as the source of fluctuations (the change in tests did affect scores, though they don't say whether it improved or exacerbated gaps).

From what can be deduced by the small graphs, there is a significant gap (35-40 points depending on the grade and subject) between scores of White and African American students, though inexplicably, White 8th grade student scores drop sharply (by 35 points) in 2008-2009 while African American scores go up by about 5 points, to pass White scores. There is no explanation or comment on this in the narrative.

Increasing high school graduation rates:

Between 2007 and 2009, all subgroups increased graduation rates by 1-2%. The overall graduation rate is 72%, and the rate for African Americans is at 66.5%. They cite 2008's On the Bus Campaign as a reason for these improved rates, and yet rates actually dropped on all fronts between 2008 and 2009.

The explanations for this section are not strong. In some cases the data are simply not reported other than in a generalized graph (achievement gap, for example). The state does not make a good case for what they have learned from the data and what might be causing low scores, other than a change in state tests. Increasing the rigor of the test is good, but they do not explain how they are preparing students to succeed on these more rigorous tests. With regard to graduation, their connections to a program and its effects do not hold up.

MS is missing an opportunity to look very closely at long standing, low performing data and use it to drive bold changes. This section warrants a medium score—they are making slight progress but missing some key elements.

Total	**125**	**80**

B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards

MS is committed to using standards that are internationally benchmarked and has signed a MOA to participate in the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS). They meet the criterion and are awarded 20 points.

(ii) Adopting standards

MS will adopt at the July Board meeting pending CCSS are ready for adoption. They are awarded high points - 20 points - contingent on Mississippi adopting common standards no later than August 2.

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

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

MS has entered into an agreement with Achieve-led consortium of states—Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC). The assessment consortium includes a majority of States. The state meets the selection criteria, and is awarded full points. 10 points.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	**20**	**7**

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

The state will rely on its participation with the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) State Consortium on Board Examination Systems to get started with implementing the CCSS standards right away, and the NCEE will serve as technical assistance coordinators, though the application doesn't explain how the NCEE will do this. The MS P-16 Council is also expected to provide support, though this is also not explained. Professional learning opportunities will be designed with NCEE, and delivered through the RESAs. New standards will be implemented in Fall 2011. Teacher and leader preparation programs will be part of these learning sessions. MS will develop curriculum materials and resources to support the standards and high quality instruction.

While there is nothing wrong with these plans, they don't add up to a high quality plan. There are no goals, activities, timelines or responsible parties charged with implementation. In addition, the activities abstractly address how the state might roll this out, but do nothing to address the serious deficits facing schools and teachers in the state, the generally low scores and high achievement gaps. There is no acknowledgement by the state of the challenge ahead and how they will deal with trying to get many low performing schools and districts to even higher standards.

Without these plans, and with so much relying on fairly traditional and in-house methods of delivery (RESA to district to school) it's hard to see how these standards will be implemented. Though the state expresses high hopes it offers few specifics. This section is awarded a low-medium score of 7.

Total		
	70	57

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	14

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

1.Unique student ID number – yes

2. Student demographic, enrollment and program participation information – yes

3. Student transition information P-16 – no

4. Capacity to communication to higher ed data systems -- no

5. Audit system to ensure data quality – yes

6. Yearly test records for assessment required under the ESEA – yes

7. Information on students not tested by grade and subject – yes

8. Teacher identifier to match teachers to students – yes

9. Student level transcripts containing courses and grades – yes

10. Student scores on college readiness tests – no

11. Transition data from secondary to higher ed – no

12. Data on the alignment and adequacy of student preparation for post secondary education – no

Total= 7 yes, 5 no

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	1

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

Available to key stakeholders

The application details a history of the creation of an integrated longitudinal education and workforce data system (State Longitudinal Data System-SLDS) that collects information across the Department of Education, higher education, workforce, human services, corrections and others. They don't explain how this data, when relevant, is made available to teachers, principals, superintendents and researchers.

Though it seems like a rich source of data, how the system can be used to support decision makers

in continuous improvement efforts in policy, instruction, operations, management and resource allocation is left unanswered.

Because the connection between data and its availability to schools is not made (there is plenty collected, but there are no plans mentioned to make it useful), this section is awarded low points.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	10
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	2
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5

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

(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems

MS will require all LEAS to acquire, adopt and use local instructional improvement systems. RMC Research Corporation will evaluate instructional improvement systems and develop a list from which LEAs can choose. MS has also allocated $15M to support a technology infrastructure. However, similar to the concerns related to how MS is connecting and making data accessible, simply requiring LEAs to use these systems doesn't help to increase their use. How superintendents will use it to understand their district policy making, how principals will know what their school needs to work on, how teachers will change their practices—these questions are left unanswered. For this reason, this section is awarded low points.

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

The 6 RESA's will be used for delivering professional development modules on the use of data to improve instruction. Through the use of a school-based data coach, weekly 90 minute collaborative planning sessions, and using rapid access web based assessments, the state will support teachers and principals as they learn more about how to use the data. In addition, preparation programs will be required to teach candidates about data, and training will also be tied to recertification. These are all practical avenues to bring data to teachers and principals, though the application lacks specifics beyond 12 months (goals, activities, timelines and responsible parties) and whether the data will be usable (for example, formats useful for diagnosing what isn't working or formative assessments at both the teacher and principal level) is still a concern. For this reason, this section is awarded medium points.

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

The state plans to make the SLDS data and instructional improvement systems available and easily accessible, and has already a partnership with MS State University. The public and other researchers will have access to data through SLDS. There are no assurances made about which data and how timely the requests will be processed. This section is awarded high points.

Total	47	25

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	**21**	**10**
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	3
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	2

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

(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification

MS has legal provisions that allow alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals and which are provided by programs outside of institutions of higher education, though until 2010 they have been limited to grades 7-12, except for Teach For America (TFA) teachers. The application offers no evidence for the state's alternate route authority, nor does it offer evidence that the programs exhibit the 5 elements of alternative education. For these limitations, they are awarded 3 points.

(ii) Using alternative routes to certification

During the 2008-2009 academic year, MS licensed 1,380 alternately prepared teachers and 202 alternately prepared administrators. MS has 32,000 teachers, and almost 900 principals, so these alternatively trained teachers and principals represent a significant portion of the state's teaching and principal workforce. The state however does not include evidence of numbers, programs, etc. as required in the RTTT application. Appendix D12 (misnumbered D2) provides some but not all of the required data.

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

It has been 8 years since MS has studied teacher supply and demand. To remedy this, MS plans to contract with an evaluator to conduct a statewide study of teacher/leader issues related to supply/demand/and equity impacted by recruitment and retention. MS commissioned a study in 2008 surveying teacher opinions on how to support and staff high needs schools in MS.

They have plans to put 4 specially recruited principals into high needs schools, though with over 900 schools in the state, this effort will be exceedingly minimal. The MS Principal Corps and the MS Turnaround Leadership Academy aim to better prepare principal candidates to serve in shortage areas (though no numbers of attendees/graduates are reported.)

MS has a loan/scholarship program to entice teachers in critical needs areas. There is mention that MS Critical Shortage Area (CSA) tracks hard to fill schools and hard to fill subject areas, but no numbers are provided either on the numbers of teachers taking advantage of these incentives nor what the shortage areas are nor how they are tracked.

MS has two different programs to better prepare principal candidates to serve in shortage areas — MS Principal Corps developed with the assistance of Vanderbilt University and MS Turnaround Leadership Academy. No information was provided about how many people attend/graduate and whether they actually end up serving in shortage areas.

The state mentions no detailed systems to track shortages across the state or within districts, and the current efforts at filling shortages seems minimal given the size of the state. Because of this, this section is awarded low points, 2.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	27
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	8

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

(i) Measuring student growth

The state has determined that its current accountability system (Quality Distribution Index) is one that works best at the school and district level rather than across LEAs so the state has plans to build a more useful student growth/gain model that could be applied across the state, though it appears they have yet to choose which method (growth or value added) to use.

Both seem robust, and each has its challenges, but they are commonly used in districts to measure student academic improvement. Given their pilot/evaluate/improve model for the accountability system, this seems like a serious effort to get the right measure for the state. They do not mention efforts to measure teachers in untested subects, however. For this reason, this section is awarded 4 points.

(ii) Developing evaluation systems

At a minimum, MS has determined that the evaluation system will contain a teacher value-added report (at least 50% of the evaluation), an observation evaluation instrument for teachers and principals, conferences on progress with teachers and principals, coaching for teachers and principals who are struggling, expectations for student growth that grow as teachers gain experience, and recertification for teachers based on evaluation rather than years of service.

The MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System Council (which includes parents, teachers, principals) will guide the creation of the state's evaluation system and full implementation is planned for 2011. There are few details about this commission, and how and when teachers and principals would be involved in the creation of the evaluation system.

The reviewer assumes that these evaluations will be for all teachers, even those in untested grades, though this is not stated.

As a whole, these are bold changes for MS; they have been agreed to by the LEAs, will be shaped by the Council, and MS will have the final say. However, the plan lacks goals and benchmarks that

are crucial for going forward. For this reason, this section is awarded medium points.

(iii) Conducting annual evaluations

MS will reinstate a statewide annual review system that is consistent across the state and to help jumpstart the process, MS will require a common statewide teacher and leader observation instrument. For teachers, they will use the Teach for America (TFA) rubric. For leaders, they will use the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education. These are both widely accepted tools. They plan to use the annual review process as a way to provide teachers and leaders with valid and reliable data to create goals for improvement at the individual, grade, school and district level.

These are solid plans for developing consistent evaluations, and with near total statewide LEA agreement, they have the strong possibility of being implemented. However, the sub-criterion asks how the State will ensure that participating LEAs will conduct annual evaluations; MS has focused its response to the actions the State will take and there are no details that explain how it will ensure the LEAs follow through.

(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions

a) Developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development.

The state acknowledges that uncoordinated efforts to mentor educators have been costly. MS plans to partner with Teach for America to implement a system that mirrors the Teach for America model for induction. This mentoring and induction program will be monitored through the six RESAs located throughout the state. For principals, MS will utilize the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL- ED) instrument and will also monitor use through the RESAs. By pairing mentoring and induction with the same entities that are providing the evaluation tools, MS is gaining consistency across their talent strategy from some high quality sources.

MS plans to supply coaches as a part of each school's RTTT team and will provide mentoring support for all teachers (including novice and career teachers). These coaches include at a minimum a literacy coach for language arts, a numeracy coach for mathematics, and a data coach for data analysis and use of data. Using data from the evaluation system, coaches will provide support for teachers at various levels of development in the Teach for America rubric.

While some professional development (PD) will be school, teacher, or leader specific, other PD will be systemic and offered statewide on topics such as— Common Core Standards, Value-Added and Growth/Projection Models, Evaluation System, Teach for America, Teaching as Leadership framework and rubric, Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education, Using Data to Make Informed, Instructional Decisions, Effective K-3 Literacy, Adolescent Literacy, and other topics. MS will contract with Technical Assistance Providers, such as SEDL and TFA, to develop the PD modules. In addition, MS will provide a list of approved PD providers and will monitor the effectiveness of PD using the evaluation system to link PD effectiveness to teacher/leader effectiveness to assist LEAs in making decisions based upon the data. This information will be published and disseminated to the public.

b) Compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals (both as defined

in this notice) to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities.

MS law allows for differentiated compensation. MS plans to redesign compensation packages with MDE taking the lead while including stakeholder input with the ultimate test for compensation based upon results from the evaluation system and ultimately upon student growth and achievement. LEAs will also have the option to develop a compensation plan that is approved by MDE that will mirror current LEA-driven supplements to the MS Educator Salary Schedule. They expect the "entire process will be conducted with transparency to ensure that educators are aware of the demands and the processes." With the opportunity in law and with freedom from collective bargaining, the state is able to pay based on evaluation results. The application is light on details, but indicates an interest in redesigning compensation.

c) Whether to grant tenure and/or full certifi cati (where applicable) to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

MS does not grant tenure to teachers and leaders, instead LEAs issue renewable contracts. It would seem simple to rid schools of ineffective teachers; however, in lieu of an effective/rigorous teacher evaluation system, MS has found that contracts are almost always renewed. MS plans to include a component in the evaluation system that requires certification renewal to be based upon data from the evaluation system where the CEUs earned match the areas highlighted as needing improvement (rather than in areas of individual interest). With the comprehensive evaluation system, MS can identify effective leaders and teachers, provide the data to support important decision-making, and make the process transparent, fair, and rigorous so that ineffective teachers and leaders can be terminated.

Once identified, ineffective teachers and leaders can be given opportunities to receive the support they need to become more effective teachers/leaders. After appropriate support mechanisms have been in place and teachers/leaders are labeled "ineffective," they can more easily be dismissed. The MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System will provide a tool for holding educators accountable. To better hold LEAs accountable for documenting dismissal of ineffective teachers, this data will be shared as a part of the LEA's accountability report. In addition, MS can use this data to better determine which LEAs are completing evaluation processes as required and how effectiveness correlates with students' progress and achievement. These are solid steps to address the problem of continued employment of ineffective educators.

(d) Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.

The data provided through the MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System will assist in dismissing ineffective educators and rewarding effective educators because the data will be based upon performance—the educators' and the students.' MS will follow due process laws and provide for those educators who are likely to be terminated an appropriate timeline for improvement. Also, MS will publicize these new conditions and provide support for current teachers, as well as require that teacher and leader preparation programs include the policy in their programs. These are clear and fair steps toward sorting and removing those who are not successful in teaching and leading

schools.

On the whole, the state has made an effort to connect the evaluations to solid support, salaries, and continued employment. It is light on plan details, however, for example, setting targets for adoption, timelines and responsible parties which are crucial elements of implementation. For this reason, this section is awarded 8 points.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	**25**	**7**
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	4
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	3

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

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

The Office of Licensure and Special Schools oversees Mississippi's Teacher Equity Plan to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. MS plans to use their future comprehensive evaluation system to identify highly effective teachers and leaders at other schools and offer incentives for those teachers to move to high-poverty, high-minority schools. They offer no ideas or plans on how to do this. The reviewer assumes that the Office of Licensure has some way of noting which schools and districts are most impacted by poverty, however, in section (D)(1)(iii), they also provide no resources for monitoring areas of shortage, so assertions in this section seem largely aspirational. There is no mention of any high quality, plausible plan to draw effective teachers and leaders into schools that are most in need. This section is awarded low points, 4.

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

MS will access its Critical Teacher Shortage, William F. Winter Scholarship Program and strengthen its TFA numbers and other alternative pathways to certification to expand the pool of teachers. Efforts are also underway to bring STEM professionals to schools in MS for adjunct-like work and/or to provide electronic STEM courses taught by STEM professionals from their workplace. MS will also utilize the CREATE Foundation's partnership with Toyota to create Centers for Professional Futures across the state to foster more emphasis on STEM courses and to build relationships between industry and education.

These plans have more details attached to them than do other sections; however, there is no mention of where the need is the greatest or how they will track or deploy these teachers equitably.

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

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

(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly

MS does not link preparation programs to their teachers' and principals' student achievement and progress. They do, however, complete an annual process and performance review for all traditional educator administration programs. In addition, MS completed an evaluation of the alternate route teacher preparation programs in the state using an outside evaluator.

Using the MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System, MS will have the capability to link value-added reporting to teachers and leaders with the ultimate capability of linking the data to the teacher and leader preparation programs. They plan to report this information in a timely manner on the MDE web site and the state Institutes of Higher Learning Web site. In addition, each preparation program will be required to publish the information on its own program's Web site and disseminate the information to stakeholder groups. The State does not set any targets for the future toward achieving these goals. However, these seem like reasonable plans, and this section is awarded medium points.

(ii) Expanding effective programs

MS plans to use evaluation data to expand successful programs. What they believe they know already (though they offer no proof) is that TFA has already proven successful and they will request more TFA teachers for the state (though they do not include this expense in their budget.) A TFA Training Facility currently exists in the state at Delta State University, and this is a natural expansion. In addition, MS will expand the teacher alternate route to include elementary teachers through another alternate route program for K-4 elementary teachers that will require coursework in literacy and numeracy education. In addition, these teachers will complete a residency year with an MDE-approved clinical supervisor (drawing heavily from the National Board Certified Teachers) who has exhibited effectiveness that is tied to the state's evaluation system and value-added reporting.

With regard to leaders, they hope to create another option for an alternate route principal preparation program using the National Institute for School Leadership Model (NISLM). Research related to this model has shown positive results that impact student growth and achievement.

Though they cite a plan to expand TFA and NISLM leadership program, they offer no proof of these programs' success. Beyond these programs, they don't explain how they would encourage the expansion of yet to be measured higher performing programs. For this reason, they are awarded 4 points.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	**20**	**6**
(i) Providing effective support	10	5
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	1

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

(i) Providing effective support

MS has a structure in mind to make sure that professional development will be relevant at the

school level by housing it with their RESAs. LEAs and schools will be required to use the Innovation Team (Captain, Data Coach, Interventionist, Transitions Coach, Parent Coach, Math Coach, Literacy Coach, Community Liaison, and Communications Manager). The members on the Innovation team at the school level will be charged with providing ongoing, job-embedded professional development. LEAs will be required to use the District Innovation Team to effectively analyze data to make decisions that impact the school, LEA, and student. LEAs must provide at least 90 minutes of common planning for teachers and leaders to consider student data and effective responses.

These plans are heavy on delivery and light on focus—there is no mention of narrowing PD to state identified goals, such as a reading by Grade 3, or how in concert they can reduce the dropout rate. For this reason, this section is awarded 5 points.

(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support

The application asserts that the state "will measure, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the systems of support throughout the state." Beyond this, though referenced as generally available in Appendix G, there are no details clearly linked.

In several sections of the application, the reader is referred to Appendix G for Implementation Plans. Appendix G was neither called Appendix G, nor is it paginated. In fact, it is found on page 1357 of a 1459 page application. These are perhaps the most important pages of the application as they spell out what is planned, who will be responsible and how they see these plans relating to goals. However, the narrative leaves out these important details, and the appendix is too brief to make the neccessary connections.

For this section, they are awarded 1 point.

Total	138	58

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

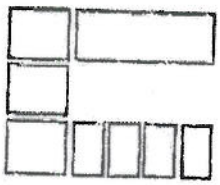
The state has legal authority to intervene in persistently low-achieving schools and LEAs.

The Children First Act of 2009 permits MS to provide support and intervention in failing school districts. With this act, the MSBE has legal authority to intervene in failing schools and district. In this section, full points are awarded. 10.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	8

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	3

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



(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools

MS used the guidance issued in support of School Improvement Grants and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds to define persistently low achieving schools in MS. Specific steps and procedures were followed in defining those schools.

Currently MS has 79 schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Because five percent represents only four schools, MS plans to use the lowest five schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring instead. In addition, MS currently has 127 secondary schools who are eligible for but do not receive Title I funds. Five percent of these schools represent seven schools. MS has gone through the steps of identification with SIG funds; therefore full points are awarded. 5.

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools

8 schools were listed under the previous identification model as schools needing intervention, but the application does not explain what was tried or what was learned.

The state suggests that a variety of efforts with wide and varied supports have been brought to the lowest performing schools in the past few years ranging from specific services defined in MS Code, school board training, federal SIG support, and options for schools to hire alternately prepared educators. They are unable to determine which, if any, specific strategy was successful in helping schools improve student achievement.

A task force was established by Senate Bill 2405 in 2008 to develop recommendations to help underperforming schools become successful, including areas that focused on accountability, leadership, teaching, funding, community involvement and takeover regulations. A Technical Assistance Specialist from the Office of Student Achievement and Growth is assigned to each school to aid the school and district personnel.

MS districts and schools have not been required to choose an intervention model; however, they will be required to choose a model beginning during the 2010-2011 academic year.

The state has a history of low expectations for school performance (8 schools identified as needing intervention in their prior identification system; with SIG fund criteria, 200 are considered persistently low performing.) They applied some interventions to these schools, but either make no effort in the application to learn from these efforts, or they simply aren't able to see any positive changes or know what might have caused them. Either way, they do not have a record they can point to of turning around low performing schools. Their plan seems to be to use the recommendations of the taskforce, but there is a leap between the recommendations, and the selection of an appropriate turnaround response and the work it will take to see success. For this section, they are awarded 3 points.

Total	50	18

F. General

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

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

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education

In 2008, MS appropriated 60.92% of all general funds for education. In 2009, MS appropriated 62.59% of all general funds for education, for a net percentage increase of funding. Full points are awarded in this section. 5.

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools

- between high need LEAS and other LEAS

The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) ensures that each school district can fund what it costs to adequately educate a child. The minimum guaranteed funding per pupil is known as the base student cost. In a further provision of the MAEP, Mississippi districts are given additional funding based on the number of at-risk students (those qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch.) The application does not list any actual figures as evidence of how this formula brings about equitable funding, however the reviewer will assume this is the case.

- within LEAS between high-poverty schools and other schools

There is not a specific state policy that addresses equitable funding at the school level, though school boards are empowered to use the MAEP to differentiate salaries in high-needs schools and to use the at-risk component of MAEP to target those schools within the LEA that have higher populations of at risk students.

This section is awarded 3 points.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	10
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	0
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	2
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	4
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	2
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	2

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

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

MS passed a new law in 2010, the New Start School Program and Conversion Charter School Act of 2010, to "provide a new process for transforming failing state public schools into New Start Schools and Conversion Charter Schools." This is an incredibly weak law—no new charter schools may open, only conversion schools. Where before 6 conversion charter schools was the limit, they are now allowing 12. The state is awarded 0 points for this section.

(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes

The state has a provision that a set of academic or vocational, or both, performance-based objectives and student achievement-based objectives are required of their future conversion schools. In addition, the schools must meet the 2009 Accountability Model and NCLB standards of student achievement. These are very basic guidelines, empty on important details and with no connection to important elements of the criteria—approval process, closure based on performance, priority to schools that would serve high needs students. For this section, low points are awarded, 2.

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools

Public schools converted to conversion charter school status would receive equitable state and federal funding compared to traditional public schools. This was included in the law. The state gets 4 points for this section because there is no reference to equitable local funding.

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities, funding for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, access, or the ability to share in bonds and mill levies.

According to the law, the state shall not impose any school facility-related requirements on conversion charter schools which are more restrictive than those applied to traditional public schools. The application does not address whether MS provides funding for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, access, or the ability to share in bonds and mill levies. Low points are awarded to this section. 2.

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

LEAs are given operational flexibility under the LEA School Board and Superintendent with the

exception of those that are under the Office of School Improvement, Oversight, and Recovery. LEAs may structure the schools within their jurisdiction in ways that meet the needs of the community and students. They cite 6 magnet schools in the Clarksdale Municipal School District. They do not include the minimum evidence as requested in the criterion to describe how the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. For this section, they are awarded 2 points.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	1

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

Governor Barbour's administration has passed several iterations of education reform laws, as well as legislation to promote children's health. The application lists a selection of offices and programs that have been established, but makes no connection to their having an effect on increasing student achievement or graduation rates, narrowing achievement gaps, or resulting in other important outcomes as requested in the criterion. For this section, 1 point is awarded.

Total	55	19

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

STEM is virtually unmentioned throughout this application. There may have been a misinterpretation on where to emphasize this priority, but it reads purely as an add on, and a minimal one at that.

Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		No

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

As mentioned at the start, this application comes across as a draft in need of much more review in order to better describe where MS is, and where they want to go, to develop a coherent strategy to get there and to explain why they think their plans will work. There are areas where MS has made some strong headway, but those areas are disconnected, and other areas are not at all well positioned for reform.

Total		0

Grand Total	500	257

Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Mississippi Application #3250MS-12

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	**65**	**49**
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	6

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

(i) Mississippi (MS) provided a comprehensive reform agenda in each of the four Race to the Top (RTT) reform areas. The State's RTT program is centered around its vision "to create a world-class education system that gives students the knowledge and skills that will allow them to be successful in college and the workforce and flourish as parents and citizens". MS has set three primary goals to make this vision a reality:

1) To mobilize resources and supports to ensure that all students exit third grade reading on grade level by 2020;

2) To reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013; and

3) To reach the national average on national assessments by 2013.

The State discussed past and future reforms in each area and has set transformational goals aligned with the RTT reform areas. The State presented an honest assessment of where it has made strides and where significant challenges remain in improving education for all of Mississippi's children and youth.

(ii) While the State did not secure universal participation of LEAs, it is commended for receiving support from 93% of school districts. These districts will reach 95% of all students. All of the superintendents and presidents of local schools boards in the participating districts signed letters of support for Mississippi's RTT initiative. As a right to work state, Mississippi was not required to obtain signatures from teachers' unions. The participating LEAs are committed to implementing all of the RTT reforms except using evaluations to inform tenure since the State does not grant tenure to teachers. There is, however, concern that the Scope of Work gives LEAs a great deal of flexibility in how they can carryout the RTT forms. The flexibility could undermine the State's efforts in aggressively implementing the RTT reforms. The score for this criterion reflects this concern.

(iii) While the participating LEAs will reach 95% of the State's students, the State did not present clear or ambitious goals for student outcomes including increasing student achievement, reducing gaps between subgroups, increasing the graduation rate or increasing college enrollment. The State indicated that in terms of student achievement all students will exit third grade reading at grade level by 2020 and that MS students will perform at the national average on NAEP assessments by 2013. The State did not set longer term goals for higher achievement, nor did it set achievement goals for subgroups. Similarly, the State has set it's goal for increasing its graduation rate to 85% by 2018-19 and does not set concrete goals for increasing college enrollment. The application states that participating LEAs will use the state goals and

LEA data to establish individual LEA goals in the final LEA scope of work. It is not clear why LEAs will not be using only the State goals or if they can set lower goals than those set by the State. Points were withheld because the goals set by the State do not appear to be ambitious enough to meet RTT's aggressive drive to improve student outcomes in both the short and long term.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	**30**	**13**
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	5
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8

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

(i) While the State provided an implementation plan, it lacked clarity and specificity in some areas. The State plans to restructure the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) by creating an Office of Innovation and Reform (OIR) which will be managed by a director, two regional coordinators, and an office manager. The applicant did not provide resumes of these key staff, so it cannot be determined with they have the necessary qualifications to manage a grant of this magnitude. While the applicant noted that the OIR will be assisted by other offices within the MDE including Business Services, Human Resources, Budget & Planning, and Quality Educators, the organizational chart did not detail the lines of communications and authority between the OIR and other offices. The State plans to assign one Innovation and Reform Champion to each Regional Education Service Area (RESA) to coordinate the reform agenda with districts, schools, regional postsecondary institutions and other entities within the RESAs. A job description could not be located detailing the roles and responsibilities of the Champions. The State plans to use the Delivery Unit Approach (DUA) to manage the project but does not indicate if it has found success with this approach in the past, or that the proposed OIR director has DUA experience. The budget sets aside $350,000 for ongoing DUA training but the application does not provide a clear rationale why this management program is a good fit for the SEA. The applicant indicated that the State will use several national agencies and/or individuals to help build its capacity to implement the RTT reforms, but does not discuss how it could best partner with these entities.

The State detailed its structure of support to LEAs through the Innovation and Reform Champions, but again, how these Champions will work with the State and the LEAs is not well-developed. The State plans to develop accountability measures and intervention procedures for non-performing districts, but none are in place at this time, nor does the application provide preliminary thoughts on how the State will hold LEAs accountable for implementing the RTT reforms. The State is investing considerable resources ($580,000) to develop a communications plan to disseminate information about the RTT reforms to stakeholders across the state. It is not clear why this is necessary if the state has already received genuine support and buy-in from LEAs as well as other critical stakeholders including teachers, administrators, and parents. One might assume that communicating the reform agenda to local constituencies could be a role best performed by the Champions and LEA implementation teams.

The State did not provide adequate information on how it will manage the RTT grant. The application indicated that the OIR will administer the grant, but information could not be located on who will have grant oversight authority and if this person has grants management experience. The application did not address its grants management system. The application noted that there would be several points of oversight for the disbursement of funds, but did not detail who or which offices would be involved in this process. The State intends to award a significant portion of RTT funds to vendors and other entities through a request for proposals (RFP) process, but again did not detail which office would oversee the procurement process. The State indicated that it could obtain performance measures through its State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) but does not provide even a basic description of what types of reports and data currently are in place to measure State and LEA progress in implementing the RTT reforms.

The State detailed how it will coordinate RTT funds with other Federal funding streams including a School Improvement Grant (SIG), ESEA funds, Phase II ARRA funds and SLDS funds, but it is not clear how State

and local funds will be leveraged to support the RTT reforms. The State provided little discussion on how it will sustain the RTT reforms after the grant ends other than by reorganizing the MDE to streamline functions. There is significant concern that without a strong commitment to institutionalizing these reforms through the State budgeting process that the State will not be able to sustain its efforts after the grant period ends.

(ii) The State provided evidence that it has the support af a broad range of stakeholders to implement the RTT reforms. In addition to receiving support from 93% of the State's LEAs, the State received letters of support from organizations representing teachers, administrators, parents, higher education, and the business community. While Mississippi is a right to work State and will not need to collectively bargain the human capital provisions of RTT, two teachers' organizations wrote in support of the State's RTT program; this suggests that the State has been seeking educator buy-in for the initiative. However, there is concern that letters were not submitted from charter schools, principals, organizations representing families in poverty, or organizations that advocate on behalf of minorities.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	15
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	10

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

(i) The State detailed the progress it has been making in each of the four RTT reform areas. Specifically, the State has made significant progress in developing rigorous college-ready content standards to ensure high expectations for all students, building its SLDS, and establishing alternative routes to education certification. The State recently passed legislation to support efforts in turning around low-achieving schools.

(ii) The State has not made significant progress in increasing student achievement, reducing achievement gaps, and increasing the rates of high school graduation since 2003. While NAEP reading scores for 4th graders have shown modest increases, they are still below the national average. NAEP reading scores for 8th graders have declined in recent administrations of the assessment. Modest increases were reported both for 4th and 8th grade NAEP math scores since 2003. It is difficult to accurately assess trends on the State assessments (MCT2) since a new assessment program began in 2008. The data presented on the State assessments suggest that gaps across subgroups have been fairly consistent since 2003. The State's low performance on NAEP and state assessments led it to overhaul its content standards and to implement the MCT2 assessments which the State believes to be better aligned with the content standards and with the NAEP assessments. The State has made modest progress in raising the overall graduation rate from 70.8% in 2002-03 to 72.0% in 2004-05 and attributes the increase to the "On the Bus" dropout prevention program. However, it is important to note that these rates have fluctuated over time for all students and for subgroup populations, so it is not clear if the State can sustain increases in the graduation rate. And while the State indicates that the "On the Bus" program led to increased dropout rates, the rates actually decline after the program was implemented. It is not clear if the program had any effects on increasing the graduation rate. While the State is slowly making progress on improving student outcomes, it has a way to go to ensure all of Mississippi's students receive a quality education.

Total	125	77

B. Standards and Assessments

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

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20

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

(i and ii) Mississippi provided a copy of the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) documenting that it is participating in National Governor's Association/Council of Chief State School Officers Common Core State Standards (CCSS) consortium which includes a significant number of states. The State provided a detailed timeline that will ensure that the Mississippi State Board of Education will adopt the standards in July, 2010.

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

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

Mississippi provided evidence that it is participating in the Achieve-led Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) which includes 27 states.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	5

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

The State's plan for transitioning to the enhanced standards was lacking in clarity and detail. The Implementation Plan for Transformation Goals found in the appendix suggests that the State will begin implementing the CCSS and PARCC assessment processes by August 2011 but provides little detail on the implementation process. The plan does not address the specifics of how the standards will be translated into curriculum and instruction or what materials will need to be developed to support teachers in incorporating the standards into their practice. There is no discussion of how the State intends to provide professional development supports to educators either directly or through the Innovation and Reform Champions. The plan does not address how the State's technology efforts could support educators through this transition. The application does not discuss the role of formative assessments in measuring student understanding of the standards and how these can be used to inform teacher practice. The State discusses that it has entered in to an agreement with the NCEE State Consortium on Board Examination Systems, but does not indicate how its assessments tools are aligned with the CCSS standards and PARCC assessments.

Although the State indicates that the standards will be embedded in educator preparation programs, it again provides no timeline for this transition. It is not clear if the State's teacher preparation programs are collaborating in this effort. The narrative states that all preparation programs will be required to include the CCSS/PARCC information, but does not elaborate whether this can be done by State Board rule or if it must be (or has been) legislated.

Total	70	55

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	14

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

Points were awarded for the following seven elements:

- 1--A unique student identifier
- 2--Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information
- 5--A state data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability
- 6--Student-level test records
- 7--Information on students not tested, by grade and subject
- 8--A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students
- 9--Student-level transcript information.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	**5**	**3**

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

It is clear the Mississippi has invested significant resources in cross-agency IT systems and is moving forward in building its SLDS. However, the State did not clearly address how it was going to make data available to stakeholders. The timeline provided in the application suggests that the State will develop a "one stop portal" to allow partners to access information and generate reports. It is not clear whether parents and the public will be able to access data through this portal. There is no discussion of the types of data that might be available through the portal. The implementation timeline found in the appendix mentions dashboards and decisions tools, but the narrative is vague on what these entail or who will use them. The State does not discuss how it would inform stakeholders of data available through the system or set any usage targets for various audiences.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	**18**	**10**
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	3
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3

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

(i) Mississippi is mandating that LEAs adopt local instructional improvement systems and is developing an approved list of IT vendors from which LEAs will chose their systems. It is not clear where the State currently is in this process and when LEAs must have their systems fully operational. Without this information, it is not possible to determine if LEAs will have their systems in place to support many of the RTT data-driven reforms.

(ii) The State provided evidence that it has developed a training plan to support LEAs, schools and teachers in using instructional improvement systems. The State plans to develop the capacity of the RESAs to provide this training to local systems. One of the strengths of the plan is that LEAs must provide at least 90 minutes of scheduled, collaborative, and facilitated planning for all teachers and leaders devoted to using instructional improvement systems. While these efforts are commendable, the State does not provide a detailed plan beyond the base year in supporting educators in using instructional improvement systems.

(iii) The application discussed the role of the State's universities in conducting research, but does not provide information on whether other researchers can access the data or if researchers must adhere to the State's research agenda. Prohibiting independent researchers from accessing the data could undermine the State's plan to promote reliable and valid research. The plan does not adequately address if it will make individual student- or teacher-level files researchers.

Total	**47**	**27**

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	9
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	3
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	2

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

(i) The State did not provide sufficient evidence, such as copies of legislation, that it has the legislative and regulatory authority to establish alternative pathways for teachers and principals that are both IHE and non-IHE-based. Descriptions of the programs could only be found in the evaluation of the State's alternative routes located in the appendix. The State did not provide its current rules regarding alternative routes. Points were awarded because the State is using alternative routes, and therefore, must have some authority to operate them. However, full points could not be awarded to to lack of sufficient documentation on these programs to judge their requirements against the rubric.

(ii) It appears that State is making wide use of its alternative routes. Although the State did not specifically address this criterion, in the previous section it indicated that 1,380 teachers and 202 administrators received their preparation through alternative routes; however, the State did not provide the denominator of all certified educators. An evaluation of the State's alternative routes found in the appendix suggested that 1/3 of all teachers certified in Mississippi between 2003 and 2008 were prepared through alternative routes. Full points were not awarded because the State did not provide clear data to justify this criterion.

(iii) While the State has opened up several alternative pathways for educators, it did not clearly address how these routes are targeted to shortage areas. The last State review of shortage areas occurred in 2002. The State did not provide any evidence on what shortages it is facing. The narrative the describes the Barksdale Reading Initiative that focuses on early reading achievement and placing principals in Barksdale-selected schools. However, it is not clear if these principals are prepared only through alternative routes. The State offers alternative routes for principals to help fill shortage areas, but does not discuss the challenges it is facing growing the administrator pipeline.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	23
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	6
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	7

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

(i) The State provided a thoughtful analysis of how it might measure student growth including a value-added model and a growth projection model. However, the application does not provide a clear plan and timeline for developing the growth models. The score reflects this concern since the growth model is critical in meeting many of the RTT performance measures.

(ii) It is clear that the State is moving forward in developing an evaluation system for educators that will include multiple measures including student growth, but the application provides little detail on how and when this system will be developed. In the past, LEAs were responsible for conducting the observational components of the system; the State is moving toward the use of a statewide, uniform rubric. The implementation timeline found in the appendix suggests that Phase 1 will be launched by September 2011.

but the State does not indicate what this phase entails or how many educators will be evaluated at that point. The State did not provide the requested benchmarks and goals for this criterion; therefore it is not possible to gauge the progress the State is making in developing the system or when all LEAs will be using it. It is not clear how involved educators will be in developing the evaluation systems. For example, the application did not discuss how the State is seeking educator input into the growth model or selection of the observational components (see below); both of these components are critical measures of educator effectiveness.

(iii) Again, the State is committed to moving forward in requiring LEAs to conduct annual evaluations of its educator workforce, but provides little detail on when this will occur. It also is not clear if educators have had input into designing these evaluations. The State has selected the Teach for America "Teaching as Leadership" rubric to observe teachers and Vanderbilt University's VAL-ED rubric to evaluate principals. The application did not discuss if educators were involved in selection of these rubrics. The application does not provide sufficient information on how educators will receive feedback on their evaluations or how they might access professional development (PD) supports to improve their practice in areas of weakness identified by through the evaluation process.

(iv) The applicant does not offer concrete plans on how it will use the educator evaluations to inform key personnel decisions. For example, in the area of developing educators the State discusses the weaknesses of its current PD delivery system, yet provides few details on strengthening PD beyond contracting with various technical assistance providers. The State did not articulate a vision on how PD supports would be linked to the evaluations. Similarly, the State appears to have the legislative authority to compensate teachers based on student performance, but does not provide even a basic discussion of how it might construct a performance-based compensation system. The State did not provide the requested benchmarks and goals for this criterion; therefore it is not possible to gauge the progress the State is making or its long-term goals for using the educator evaluation to inform personnel decisions.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	**25**	**2**
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	1
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	1

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

(i and ii) The State did not adequately address the nature of its equitable distribution of educators between high/low poverty schools or in hard-to-staff subjects or how it will ensure the equitable distribution of staff across and within LEAs. The State noted that it last conducted a study of inequities in 2002. The State did not address how it was moving its policy discussion from distribution of highly qualified to highly effective teachers. At a minimum, the State could have provided data documenting its hiring challenges in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas even if it currently does not have a measure of effectiveness. It is not clear whether the State explored--or has the capacity to explore--staffing inequities within districts where staffing inequities across schools and subject areas are most pronounced. The State provided no information on when it will have an equity plan in place. The State did not provide benchmark data or annual targets for this element. While the State currently does not collect these data, it could have set targets based on current assumptions of shortage areas. Points were awarded because the State plans to contract with an external evaluator to conduct a staffing study that will included analyses of inequities between high-and low-poverty schools as well as hard-to-staff subjects and schools.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	**14**	**5**
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	3
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

(i) While it is clear that Mississippi is in the process of developing its growth models and it appears the IT infrastructure is in place that will allow the State to link student growth back to the programs in which teachers were prepared, the State does not provide a plan or timeline for accomplishing this activity. The State did not provide the requested baseline data or annual targets for this element. It is not possible to determine the progress the State is making on linking student data to credentialing programs or when the linkages will be complete.

(ii) Mississippi appears to be committed to expanding effective preparation and credentialing programs. The State plans to expand the Teacher for America program as well as alternative pathways for principals. However, the State did not discuss any quantifiable evidence that these routes were producing effective educators.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	6
(i) Providing effective support	10	5
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	1

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

(i) The application reflects Mississippi's commitment to improving PD supports for educators, yet it does not provide a clear, cohesive plan or vision of how PD will be reformed. The State indicated that RESAs will be responsible for developing and providing training to LEAs, but it is not clear how this training will filter to the classroom. The application stated that LEAs and schools will be required to use the Innovation Team structure which includes math and literacy coaches, but it is not clear if these teams are in place. The applicant did not make a connection between the data systems being developed in Section C and how they might be used to deliver professional development to educators as well as provide the information they would need to inform their practice based on student needs. In short, the application does not provide sufficient information on how it will assess its current delivery model and revise it to provide effective job-embedded, data-informed PD supports to all educators.

(ii) Again, the State indicated that it will evaluate professional development supports but does not say how or when this will occur. The applicant does not identify data sources it could consider or research strategies it could employ to evaluate the effectiveness of PD supports and how policy makers and practitioners could use evaluation results to improve PD delivery and materials.

Total	138	45

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

The State provided the legislation demonstrating that that it has the authority to intervene in the lowest-achieving schools and districts.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	8
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	3

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

(i) The State provided its method for identifying its persistently lowest-achieving school and provided a list of these schools.

(ii) The State's plan for turning around its lowest-achieving schools lacked clarity and cohesiveness. The criterion specifically asks the State to detail which of the four intervention models the it will be using to turn around low performing schools. Information could not be located that describes the models the State intends to use. The applicant describes a series of recommendations from the Mississippi Task Force on Underperforming Schools and Districts, but does not indicate which recommendations have been formally approved by the MDE, the State Board of Education, or the legislature. It appears that the State's role is largely one of enforcement and not one of support or capacity building. The State did not provide information on lessons learned on models it has used in the past. The State did not indicate if it would support the firing of principals or other staff required in several of the turnaround models. The State did not address the issue of hiring or developing leaders for the specific mission of turning around the lowest-achieving schools in the state. Similarly, it is not clear what supports the State would provide to LEAs in aiding them in turning around low-performing schools. The State has budgeted $1.1 million for 50 leaders to attend trainings based on models developed by the National Institute for School Leadership and University of Virginia but the narrative does not discuss how these leaders will be selected for and assigned to turnaround schools.

Total	**50**	**18**

F. General

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

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

(i) The percentage of revenues available to the State used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education increased from 60.9% in FY2008 to 62.6% in FY2009.

(ii) Although the State's funding formula supports adequacy rather than equity between high and low poverty districts, district's receive supplemental funding based on the number of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Points were withheld because the State does not directly ensure funding equities at the school level.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	**40**	**20**
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	1
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	1
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4

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

(i) As the application notes, Mississippi historically has not been supportive of charter schools; furthermore,

current laws significantly restrict the creation and operation of charter schools. The current charter school legislation, passed in 2010, only allows chronically underperforming public schools to be converted to charter schools; no other types of charter schools may be authorized by the State or local authorizing bodies. At least 50% of the families must vote to convert an underperforming school to charter status. The legislation caps the number of conversion charters at 12 over a six-year period and allows for no more than three schools to operate in each of the State's four congressional districts. The legislation states that charter schools cannot being operating until July 1, 2013. While the State has taken a first step in reforming its charter school laws, the current cap and restrictions severely inhibit charter school growth.

(ii) While the recently passed charter school legislation requires schools converted to charter status to set performance-based and student-achievement based objectives, a clear and cohesive plan on how schools would be held accountable for student outcomes could not be located. It is not clear how schools will be monitored for student performance or if they can be closed if the schools do no meet performance targets. Because there are no charter school currently in operation under this new legislation, there is no historical evidence on how the State has held charter schools accountable for student outcomes.

(iii) Conversion charter schools are treated the same as any other school within the districts in which they operate in terms of school funding.

(iv) While the narrative indicates that charters have equal access to facilities, the legislation lacks clarity on if districts include charters in bond levies or other methods of accessing capital. It also is not clear if districts must pay for maintaining facilities.

(v) While the State has enabled LEAs to operate innovative public schools, cannot be determined from the evidence if these schools are autonomous. For example, the application discusses an open-enrollment program in Clarksdale Municipal School District that allows students to enroll in one of six magnet schools. It is not clear if these schools can set their own policies, develop curriculum, or have control over staffing or budgets independent of the district.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4

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

Throughout its application, Mississippi detailed its commitment to reform aimed at improving student outcome through legislative action including:

- The Education Reform Act of 2006 which supported reforms
- The MS Dropout Prevention Plan and "On the Bus" campaign designed to provide supports to youth at-risk of dropping out and to raise awareness of the dropout prevention program;
- The Children First Act of 2009 which allows for the placement of underforming school districts in conservatorship;
- The Health Student Act focusing on reducing childhood obesity; and
- The New Start School Program and Charter School Conversion Act of 2010 which provide a process for turning around low-performing schools.

Total	55	32

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

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

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Mississippi has met the criteria for the competitive priority addressing STEM. Mississippi demonstrated a strong commitment from many sectors of the STEM community, including significant financial support from

the Toyota Corporation which has funded an endowment to enhance the State's educational system. Members of the STEM community have collaborated to create the Center for Professional Futures (CPF) to offer a rigorous a STEM-centered course of study for students in three counties. Faculty from the State's colleges and community colleges will form an adjunct teaching corps for the CPF. Instruction will be provided in such fields as pre-engineering and architecture, computer graphics and animation, and health science technology. The CPF will target groups that have been underrepresented in STEM fields including those from low-income backgrounds, minorities, and females.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		No

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Mississippi has demonstrated that it is committed to implementing the RTT reforms and has received the participation of 93% of its districts in supporting the State's RTT reform agenda. The State has provided evidence that it will restructure the educational system beginning at the SEA and stimulate change at the local level through the existing RESA structure. However, throughout the application, the State lacked clarity and specificity in how it would implement its RTT program. The State failed to set benchmarks in several key areas making it impossible to determine if the State would be able to scale-up and implement the reforms within the grant period. The application was particularly disappointing in its lack of a cohesive approach to turning around the State's persistently lowest-performing schools. The State's plan lacked a commitment to the children in these schools who could most benefit from the intensive reforms required under RTT.

The application falls short in setting ambitious goals for improving student outcomes and aggressively implementing reforms in each of the four RTT areas with a high-quality plan. Therefore, the State does not meet the absolute priority for this competition.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	269

Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Mississippi Application #3250MS-4

A. State Success Factors

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

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

(A)(1)(i)

MS lays out a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that delineates a clear vision, mission, and specific targets and strategies for pursuing those targets. The State has established ambitious student outcome targets, including: (1) ensuring that all students exit Third Grade reading on grade level by 2020; (2) reducing the dropout rate to 13% by 2013; and (3) reaching the national average on national assessments by 2013. To pursue these targets, MS will integrate its current efforts at transformation with the four ARRA areas. MS will buttress its work in the area of standards and assessments by adopting world class standards and assessments developed by national state consortia. The State will continue to employ motivation campaigns and jobs programs to spur higher graduation rates. To advance its efforts to develop a state-of-the-art statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS), MS will take steps to link student-level PK-12 data with post-secondary data. To promote improvements in the quality of teachers and school leaders, MS will continue to employ various alternative routes to certification such as Teach for America (TFA). Moreover, MS is committed to the ongoing training and evaluation of teachers and principals. To aid its persistently lowest-performing schools, MS will continue to monitor these schools closely and, as applicable, intervene in their operation – for example, place them under receivership and/or develop policies that support the development of alternative schooling models (such as charter schools).

(A)(1)(ii)

The narrative and appendices suggest provisionally that all participating LEAs (93% of all LEAs in the State) are committed to the State's RTTT plan. However, key questions of interpretation arise.

The Scope of Work (SOW) indicates that LEAs will "adopt the mandatory *Statewide Educator Evaluation System (SEES)* linked to student performance." While work on the development and implementation of SEES would be well funded ($3.7 million for an outside contractor), it's not clear how and to what extent SEES would use growth in student performance as a basis for evaluating teachers and leaders. However, a later section of the application (Section D) refers to a *Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System (CEES)* that would, among other things, give a 50% weight to student performance growth in the evaluation of teachers and leaders. If one assumes that SEES is equivalent to CEES, the language in the Preliminary SOW seems adequate on logical grounds. However, it's not clear that this logic would hold up in efforts to enforce the SOW (since the SOW does not refer to CEES).

The application indicates that because Mississippi is a right-to-work state, signatures of local teachers unions are not applicable. However, that Mississippi is a right-to-work state does not necessarily imply the absence of teachers' unions. The narrative does not address this issue.

A)(1)(iii)

The MS RTTT plan enjoys a high level of committed participation (93% of LEAs, accounting for 95% of students in poverty). Performance targets for student achievement (including STEM) on various assessment measures, high school graduation, and college attendance are reasonably high. However, the State's prospects for closing the achievement gap rely on the assumption that the unspecified work of LEAs will help in this area.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	**30**	**23**
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	15
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8

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

(A)(2)(i)

The State has developed a viable strategy for assuring sufficient capacity to implement its proposed plan. MS would enhance its current organizational apparatus to facilitate effective implementation of RTTT. An Office of Innovation and Reform (OIR) would be created to stimulate and oversee RTTT implementation through staffed Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), LEAs, and schools.

(A)(2)(ii)

As reflected in the narrative and letters of support, MS has done a good job of garnering support from many key stakeholders, including LEA representatives (superintendents), leading teacher organizations, parent organizations, school board organization, institutions of higher learning, and elected officials. However, the application does not show evidence of support from other key stakeholders such as school administrator organizations and community-based organizations such as the NAACP.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	**30**	**9**
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	5

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

A)(3)(i)

The State has made considerable progress in recent years in RTTT's focal areas. MS has used ARRA, other Federal resources, and State funding to make improvements in the four reform RTTT areas over the past several years. The State has developed rigorous standards and graduation requirements to ensure high expectations for all students. MS has made significant progress in developing a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS). MS permits traditional (through institutions of higher learning) and alternative (Teach for America or TFA) routes for certification of teachers. Indeed, the State has funded programs like TFA to promote equity in the distribution of teachers in high-needs schools and STEM subject areas. To assist school districts in areas where it is difficult to attract teachers, several incentives exist to provide teachers with money or educational options. MS is also working to adopt standards for effective teaching. These standards will undergird a new teacher evaluation system that takes into account growth in student achievement. Similarly, in MS school leaders can be certified through the traditional college route or

alternative routes such as the MS Alternate Pathway to Quality School Leadership spearheaded by the CJC Foundation. The State's ***Children First Act of 2009*** authorized the MS Board of Education to intervene in failing schools and districts. The State has passed a charter school act, but currently has a cap that severely limits the number of charter schools in the state.

(A)(3)(ii)

Test scores have been relatively flat over the past several years for both the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT). No noticeable changes have taken place in the achievement gap, except that caused by an unexplained precipitous drop in the MCT2 (MCT version 2) math scores of 8th grade White students from 2007-08 to 2008-09. With the exception of the discussion of graduation rates, the application provides little background regarding the direct connection between student performance and the state's school reform initiatives, i.e., interventions the State has tried, which interventions worked and which did not, and the adjustments that are being made (with and without RTTT) to advance the State's educational agenda.

Total	125	77

B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

(B)(1)(i)

The State has joined the Common Core of State Standards (CCSS) initiative, which is spearheaded by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. CCSS, whose membership includes all but 2 states (Alaska and Texas), will produce world-class standards for math and language arts.

(B)(1)(ii)

The application indicates that the State will adopt the CCSS standards by July 2010.

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

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

(B)(2)(i)

The State is participating in the national Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), whose primary aim is "to measure and document students' college and career readiness and to measure students' progress toward this target throughout the rest of the system."

(B)(2)(ii)

PARCC has 27 members.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	**20**	**5**
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(B)(3)** This section of the State's application links well to the discussion of CCSS, NCEE, and PARCC as laid out earlier. However, the discussion provides limited information regarding how the transition work will be carried out, by whom, when, and using what resources.		
Total	70	55

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	**24**	**14**
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(C)(1)** Based on the narrative, the State satisfactorily addresses seven (7) of the 12 elements comprised in the America Competes Act (ACA), namely, ACA elements 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. For ACA element 3, data are available for P-12, but work on the grades 13-16 component has not been completed. For ACA element 4, this work remains in progress. Work is also in progress for ACA element 10; the State has requested ACT data for entry into the longitudinal student data system. For ACA element 11, the plan will include data in 2011.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	**5**	**3**
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(C)(2)** The application describes an ambitious plan to integrate the State's education data with data from other areas (e. g., employment, social services). However, the plan discusses neither which key stakeholders will have access to the data, nor the level of access.		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	**18**	**14**
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	3
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	5
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(C)(3)(i)** The State will require all LEAs to acquire, adopt, and use local instructional improvement systems. The RMC Research Corporation will continue to support LEAs in this area. However, the relationship between the narrative and the budget is unclear. For example, the narrative makes no mention of key related items in the budget: (1) $2.6 million for a WiFi Max – WiFi Mesh system in each of the 49 poorest school districts,		

including "one Net Book each year for each upcoming 9th Grade Student"; and (2) $15.8 million for Involved LEAs to implement innovations in technology use and data engagement.

(C)(3)(ii)

The State has developed an excellent approach for supporting LEAs and schools in making effective use of data. Support will be provided to LEAs and schools through the State's six Regional Educational Service Agencies (e.g., professional development modules), District- and school-level data coaches, as well as requiring schools to allot 90 minutes per week for professional development. Support will be provided in all key areas including, for example, instruction, interim assessment, and Response to Intervention (RtI).

(C)(3)(iii)

The State's clear, viable plan entails partnering with one of its major university research centers (National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center at Mississippi State University) in designing and establishing the Statewide Longitudinal Data System and making data accessible to researchers.

Total	47	31

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	**21**	**16**
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	6
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	6
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4

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

(D)(1)(i)

MS has several alternative routes for certifying teachers and leaders that operate independently of institutions of higher education and that satisfactorily cover the elements listed in the RTTT definition. Currently, however, with the exception of Teach for America, the State's legal provision for alternative certification for teachers is limited to teachers in grades 7 through 12.

(D)(1)(ii)

In addition to traditional routes of teacher and principal preparation, MS employs several alternative certification routes. The primary alternative certification programs for teachers are limited to grades 7 through 12. However, the one alternative teacher certification program that goes beyond these grades is Teach for America (TFA). About 225 TFA teachers currently work in MS schools. MS seeks to expand this number to about 400 teachers. An alternative certification program for administrators (MAPQSL) is offered by the non-profit Community and Junior College (CJC) Foundation in MS. A 2008 evaluation of Mississippi's alternate route programs reveals that about 85% of respondents felt that this program has been successful.

(D)(1)(iii)

The State plan describes strategies for identifying, monitoring, and addressing principal and teacher shortages. MS has conducted principal and teacher supply studies; however, the most recent study was completed several years ago (2002). The State has implemented several programs to address critical teacher and leader supply shortages including, for example, Teach for America and the Barksdale Reading Program's initiative to identify and place principals who have experienced success in high-need schools. With RTTT, MS expects to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives using data from growth models.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	**58**	**35**
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	10
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	14

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

(D)(2)(i)

The State has established a clear strategy for developing measures of performance growth for each student. MS will use a "value-added" and/or "growth or projection" model to measure each student's growth (i.e., change) in academic performance. While the plan does an excellent job of describing the technical issues surrounding the use of these models for summative purposes (e.g., student and staff evaluation), the plan lacks sufficient details regarding what assessment data these measures will draw on.

(D)(2)(ii)

Through a representative advisory group (MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System Council), the State will design and implement a state-of-the-art system for evaluating teachers and principals that gives 50% of the weight to student growth. The budget for the Statewide Educator Evaluation System includes resources ($3.7 million), a time table, and designates broad responsibilities for developing the new system. It's not clear, however, whether LEAs in MS will be required to evaluate individual teachers and school leaders partly on the basis of relative growth in student achievement. The discussion under (D)(2)(i) states that "Districts will be allowed flexibility in using the value-added and growth/projection models to recruit, retain, compensate, and develop teachers and leaders."

(D)(2)(iii)

Teachers and principals will be evaluated annually and provided with feedback and student growth data that will aid them in understanding their relative effectiveness and thereby provide guidance on the development of individualized professional development plans. Although not discussed in this section, presumably School Innovation and Reform Teams (SIRTs) will bear primary responsibility for assuring that data-driven evaluations of teachers and principals are conducted annually. Resources are denoted in the budget for training of SIRTs. However, the time table for implementation of the new evaluation systems is not clear.

(D)(2)(iv)

The application indicates that teacher and principal evaluation results will be used to inform the level and type of support to provide individual teachers and principals. The results might also be linked to compensation, promotions, tenure, certification, and retention. However, some of the language seems conflicting. On one hand, the application states that "For those teachers who are unable to improve their performance and continue to get unsatisfactory evaluations, the district will return the teachers to probation and consider possible dismissal." On the other hand, the application also states that "Districts will be allowed flexibility in using the value-added and growth/projection models to recruit, retain, compensate, and develop teachers and leaders."

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

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

(D)(3)(i)

The plan lacks details regarding how possible inequities in the distribution of teachers and principals would be addressed, e.g., specific goals, actions the State would take to achieve the goals, which LEAs/schools would be targeted, an implementation time table, designation of responsibilities, a description of how the effort would be monitored, and a specification how the initiatives would be funded.

(D)(3)(ii)

The application makes broad reference to several programs designed to increase the number/percentage of effective teachers. However, the narrative lacks details regarding: (1) the number of effective/ineffective teachers in the state by subject area; (2) which subject areas, LEAs, and schools are targeted; and (3) specific actions/plans for increasing the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and geographical areas.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	**14**	**5**
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	3
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

(D)(4)(i)

Amidst a broad discussion of varied strategies for improving the effectiveness of MS teachers and leaders, the application outlines a plan for linking "value-added reporting ... to teacher and leader preparation programs." The plan (targets/goals, specific actions, time table) for carrying out this work is not detailed.

(D)(4)(ii)

The application indicates that the State will expand use of programs it deems effective (e.g., Teach for America). However, no details are provided regarding specific targets, time tables, responsibilities, monitoring, and resources.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	**20**	**6**
(i) Providing effective support	10	5
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	1

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

(D)(5)(i)

This section sketches strategies for providing support to teachers and principals. Support would be provided through existing structures (e. g., RESAs and Innovation Teams). More details regarding specific plans for providing support would have been helpful.

(D)(5)(ii)

No details are provided.

Total	138	68

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1

(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	**10**	**10**
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(E)(1)** The State can legally intervene directly in failing LEAs and schools.		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	**40**	**13**
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	8
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(E)(2)(i)** The State employs a logical, balanced approach for identifying persistently lowest-achieving schools. **(E)(2)(ii)** This section discusses: (1) recommendations from the Mississippi Task Force on Underperforming Schools and Districts (established in 2008); (2) technical assistance provided by the Office of Student Achievement and Growth; and (3) technical assistance provided by the Federal Program Office. However, the discussion of the use of the four RTTT intervention models for turning around underperforming schools is limited. Elsewhere in the application, the State describes the State's New Start School Program and Conversion Charter School Act of 2010 which creates a new process for transforming some failing state public schools into "New Start Schools" and "Conversion Charter Schools." While it appears these initiatives could aid efforts to turn around the lowest-achieving schools, they are not integrated into this section. Hence, the section lacks clarity and coherence.		
Total	50	23

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	**10**	**9**
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) **(F)(1)(i)** K-12 funding as a percent of total state general fund revenue rose by over 1 percentage point from FY2008 to FY2009. **(F)(1)(ii)** State funding policy aims to make equitable the distribution of education funding among LEAs, but does not directly address funding equity as it relates to individual schools. The narrative notes, however, that LEA school boards have the authority to allocate district funding equitably among schools.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	**40**	**19**

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	1
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	2
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	2

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

(F)(2)(i)

"The State Board of Education ... may approve up to twelve (12) conversion charter schools during a period of six (6) years, ... which such conversion charter schools shall not begin operations before July 1, 2013," which is < 5% of the State's 912 schools.

(F)(2)(ii)

The new Conversion Charter School law details a set of logical requirements for charter school creation, approval, funding, evaluation, and reauthorization. Unfortunately, the cap and time table of the law render the presence of charter schools nominal.

(F)(2)(iii)

Statutorily, conversion charter schools would receive fair and equitable funding.

(F)(2)(iv)

All charter schools in the State would be conversion charters, so they would take over extant facilities.

(F)(2)(v)

The narrative notes that LEAs may structure their schools "in ways that meet the needs of the community and students." Examples offered include magnet schools and the concept of effective teachers running schools. While innovative, it is not clear that such schools are also autonomous (e. g., can select and replace staff or control their budgets).

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	**5**	**3**

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

(F)(3)

Effective education presumes certain critical prerequisites such as safety and good health. In this section, notably the application provides a list of other programs that aid the State's educational programs, with a focus on the Office of Healthy Schools.

Total	55	31

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	**15**	**0**

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Priority 2: STEM

The narrative describes an incomplete plan for STEM. The State embraces a plan developed by philanthropists for a Center for Professional Futures (CPF) (funded by Toyota), which emphasizes STEM. Based on the experience of CPF, which will operate in 3 counties and 8 LEAs, the State would expand the concept to its other approximately 80 counties. However, no plan (e. g., time table, budget) is delineated for this expansion.

Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

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

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Overall, the State's application meets the conditions of the Absolute Priority. The application lays out a somewhat comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that delineates a clear vision, mission, and specific targets and strategies for pursuing those targets. The State has established ambitious student outcome targets. To pursue these targets, MS will integrate its current efforts at transformation with the four ARRA areas. MS plans to adopt world class standards and assessments developed by national state consortia. To advance its efforts to develop a state-of-the-art statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS), MS will take steps to link student-level PK-12 data with post-secondary data. To promote improvements in the quality of teachers and school leaders, MS will continue to employ various alternative routes to certification such as Teach for America (TFA). Moreover, MS is committed to the ongoing training and evaluation of teachers and principals. To aid its persistently lowest-performing schools, MS will continue to monitor these schools closely and, as applicable, intervene in their operation – for example, place them under receivership and/or develop policies that support the development of alternative schooling models.

Total		0

Grand Total	500	285

Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Mississippi Application #3250MS-10

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	**65**	**51**
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	9

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

Mississippi has established a plan based upon and aligned with the Mississippi Board of Education's goals and strategies. In addition, the state has established transformational goals that align somewhat with Race to the Top. In the conclusion of this section the state has included an emphasis on technology, and the state sees technology as an important way to engage students and transform classrooms. In addition, they see technology as a way to prepare teachers and leaders. The description of the pathways to the accomplishment of the goals is not very detailed, but promises to be explained throughout the rest of the application.

There are 142 of the state's 152 school districts committed to participating in Race to the Top, including 95% of the students and 95% of the students in poverty. This is a huge commitment for the state. The MOU to which the participating LEAs committed is similar to the sample MOU in the Application. However, the Scope of Work has very soft language in what school districts are actually committed to, thus allowing for significant variation among school districts. Mississippi is a right-to-work state, so there are no union leaders at the LEA level. Two associations of educators have letters of support for the application, and one of the letters notes that representatives from the organization served on an advisory committee for the application and "is engaged in discussions with the Mississippi Department of Education regarding implementation of a statewide teacher evaluation system." While this is not a ringing endorsement of the proposed evaluation system, neither is there an obstructionist tone.

As noted above, Mississippi has a very large number of school districts committed to participation in Race to the Top which should translate into broad statewide impact. The goals that Mississippi has set are to have all students reading on grade level when they exit 3rd grade, reduce the dropout rate to 13% by 2013, and reach the national average on national assessments by 2013. Using data from (A)(3) in the narrative, only NAEP scores are relevant due to a significant change in the state testing program. These goals are very ambitious and possibly achievable. The goal related to graduation rates seems overly ambitious. An analysis of the data shows that there has been little change in the graduation rate over time and a move from the current graduation rate of 72% to a projected 79.9% by 2014-15 with a goal of 85% by 2018-19 is a huge leap. The application states that "LEAs will use the state goals and current LEA data to establish individual LEA goals for each area in the Scope of Work." These local goals could inject reality into the state goals but also make the state goals meaningless.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	**30**	**18**

(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	13
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	5

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

The Department will establish an office of innovation and reform (OIR) that will have a director and two regional managers. Each of the six regional education service agencies will have a person to direct and coordinate activities in the region. Each district and school will have an innovation and reform team. This is a logical and sustainable structure for communication and, depending upon the strength of each participant, should be able to drive the reform that Mississippi envisions. However, the support for participating LEAs in identifying and disseminating best practices will be left up to an external research and evaluation group. There is no detail on this component. The state's OIR will analyze data delivered by the evaluator to improve the process, but detail is lacking in this as well. The state will use current operations and processes to administer the grant. Mississippi has identified a myriad of funding sources to support various components of the grant and is to be commended for this effort. However, the capability to sustain the reforms after the Race to the Top funds have run out depend on efficiency and the hope "to make the RttT reforms so embedded in districts and schools that the reforms become the 'default' operational funds on permanent basis." This is a weak strategy and insufficiently detailed to provide a true understanding of how that would work.

The state has established a Race to the Top advisory committee and critical review team. These bodies represent a vast array of educational organizations, foundations, institutions of higher learning, businesses, and parent groups that is impressive. Many of these groups have provided strong letters of support. There are no letters from any organizations representing minorities. Given the state's population, this constitutes a lack of support from an audience crucial to the success of the state's plan. Also noticeably absent from the letters of support, are the principals' organization and the superintendents' organization. The narrative states that all superintendents have or will have participated in regional meetings and that the State Superintendent of Education has met with superintendents to provide information and solicit feedback, but there is no letter of support. The lack of a letter could indicate no organizational support from either the principals or superintendents which is cause for concern. Mitigating the concern (at least for superintendents), however, is the fact that each participating superintendent did sign his or her district's MOU.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	**30**	**11**
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	7

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

Mississippi has passed significant legislation or launched initiatives in each of the reform areas. Some of the reform efforts have been very recent, such as the charter school law, and others go back to the 1990s. A few stand out, such as Mississippi ranking 7th in the nation in number of National Board Certified Teachers, and an Administrator Sabbatical Program which allows participants to retain full teacher pay and benefits while completing an administrator certification if the participant agrees to work for 5 years in the sponsoring district after receiving the certification. The application states that they have spent ARRA, federal and state funds on these initiatives, but does not delineate which funds went to which projects.

As noted earlier, the state made significant changes in its testing program and increased expectations. Scores between years with the old tests and the new tests are not comparable, and if the state recalibrated the scores to make them comparable, it was not reported in the application. Thus, NAEP is the only indicator available. In NAEP grade 4 reading, the state has made modest progress of three points in both basic and proficient from 2003 to 2009 with the average up 6 points to 211. The goal to reach the average

national score of 220 is not only ambitious, it is unlikely attainable. An average gain of 9 points in two years is truly daunting if scores grew only 6 points in 6 years. In addition, the goal is to reach the national average and the state is assuming that the national average will remain constant. It is just as possible that the average score will increase with all the efforts from other states associated with Race to the Top and other reforms. Grade 8 NAEP reading scores have remained relatively constant overall, and in fact in some grade levels have gone down. The goal of reaching the national average here seems impossible in the time frame suggested. The pattern in math is very similar to the pattern in reading. An analysis of gaps among subgroups is difficult due to the changes in the testing program and the displays of information in the application. There seems to have been little change over the past 6 - 8 years. The graduation rate, calculated using the adjusted-cohort method, has shown some improvement over the past 8 years from 70.8 percent for the 2002-03 class to 72% for the 2004-05 class. This gain is attributed to the state's On the Bus campaign and their high school redesign program.

The application does not "explain the connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to" the changes in data as called for in the selection criteria. This lack of acknowledgement calls into question the state's ability to learn from successes and failures. In addition, the lack of data makes it difficult to determine the true situation with student achievement and probably hampers the state's understanding as well.

Total	125	80

B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

Mississippi is a member of the group developing the Common Core Standards and headed up by National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). This group is comprised of all but two states in the nation.

Mississippi Board of Education will adopt the standards in July 2010.

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

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

Mississippi is a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) consortium. They also are a member of the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE) State Consortium for Board Examinations System.

Twenty-seven states were members of the PARCC consortium as of May 25, 2010.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	**20**	**5**

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

Mississippi also is a member of the State Consortium for Board Examination Systems (NCEE) which includes a series of high level courses and examinations. The state is adopting the exams and their course of study with slight modifications to "Americanize" them. The application does not say the extent to which the CCSS align with the courses and exams under NCEE, which is a critically important factor in ensuring alignment among all standards and assessments. Without this explicit alignment, teachers and leaders may be addressing multiple, if not conflicting, standards and results from assessments. The state will begin with three examination systems "that are suitable and ready to use at the end of the sophomore year level." Pilot high schools (although the number and how they are chosen is not described) will be required to offer at least one of the exam systems. Successful completion of these courses will allow students the option of enrolling in open admissions colleges without having to take remedial courses, or they may stay in high school for a more rigorous program that provide options for selective universities. Schools implementing these programs would have to ensure that their teachers participate in the teacher training offered by the organizations providing the exam systems, but there is little description of the nature or extent of the training. The NCEE will serve as technical assistance coordinators in the implementation of the standards. The state will begin to develop professional learning opportunities and roll those out through the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). They will be mandatory. The roll out of the implementation from pilot schools to other participating districts is not described in sufficient detail. There is little description of what the training will cover other than CCSS and NCEE information, "use of meaningful assessment data to ensure student success, and resources available for educator use to facilitate implementation fidelity." The training will be coordinated with assessment training. The state also will require teacher and leader preparation program faculty to attend professional learning sessions and programs will be required to include the CCSS in their curriculums. The state also will develop curriculum materials and resources to support high-quality instruction and implementation. The state expects to work with other states to develop materials and resources. There is very little detail either in the narrative or in the budget describing what the training will entail or how it will be completed or judged effective.

This is a very weak plan with no detail on how it would be implemented other than requiring some pilot schools to do it and for those schools to require training for their teachers. There is little description of the training or a delineation of responsibilities.

Total	70	55

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	**24**	**14**

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

Mississippi has seven of the twelve elements delineated in the America COMPETES Act. Others seem to be close to fully operational and for others the data may be available in the system but not usable. The descriptions of the extent to which many of these elements is present is confusing.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	**5**	**1**

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

The application describes the history of the development of the Mississippi Integrated Education and Workforce Performance Management System as well as a governance structure that identifies who is responsible for the operations of the system and provides a common understanding of such issues as data ownership, management, confidentiality and access. This is the state's Longitudinal Data System. MOUs among various entities in education and workforce development have been developed and signed. The narrative, however, does not address how the data system will be accessible to key stakeholders, or how the data will be used to continuously inform various policy efforts.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	**18**	**8**
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	2
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	3

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

To increase the acquisition and use of local instructional improvement systems, the state will require all LEAs to adopt and use them. The state will assist by having a contractor evaluate systems and create an "MDE Approved List," provide a base system "which can be used as a beginning point for LEAs that wish to extend the effort with local funding," and create an approved list for local instructional improvement systems that align with the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). It is unclear if these two "approved" lists are one and the same. The state also will assist LEAs in using Open Source platforms such as Moodle. The application does not explain how the state will assist LEAs with Open Source platforms. Beyond having a contractor create an approved list to help in the adoption of systems, there is no plan evident for helping educators use the system that they might adopt.

To support LEAs to provide professional development to educators on how to use the systems and the resulting data to support continuous improvement, the state wants to train all teachers and leaders - and MDE staff. The six RESAs have been tapped to deliver the modules. The application provides a bulleted list of "general guidelines," such as requiring LEAs to adopt a system, providing support to LEAs via professional learning opportunities, appointing a data coach at each school, and requiring training in a variety of areas. However, while there are some commendable activities in this list, there is no plan for how to implement these activities, no responsible entities with specific responsibilities named, no information on funding, or any other factor of a high-quality plan in the narrative. The Transformational Goals have some semblance of a plan for the first year onlly.

The state is committed to making the data available to researchers. Since Mississippi State is a key partner in the development of the SLDS, they will also help in preparing data for researchers. In addition, the state will potentially partner with other research entities. The commitment to the cause is a major step to making the data available, and Mississippi State is a logical partner in this effort. However there is no further explanation about any process or future steps beyond making data available. In addition, the link to other state agencies is not completely clear.

Total	47	23

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	**21**	**10**
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	3
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	2

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

The application states that Mississippi has four alternative preparation programs not housed in schools or colleges of education and in 2008-09 the state licensed 1380 alternatively prepared teachers and 202

alternatively prepared administrators, so the state does allow alternative routes to certification. The programs, however, are only for participants who will teach in grades 7 - 12, but the state is working on programs for elementary teachers. The application does not name nor describe the alternative programs. The state also supports Teach for America with 227 teachers in 27 districts and 96 schools. The application states that the programs meet each of the 5 elements in the criteria, but there is no description of the programs to confirm that. The application simply provides a statement repeating the five elements of the criteria.

The application cites an appendix for evidence for the alternative routes that are in use. Appendix D12 is a 2008 evaluation of the programs. The evaluation does provide a description of the programs in place and the significant number of educators that are prepared through these programs.

The most recent study of supply and demand in the state was completed in 2002, but this is not recent enough to provide meaningful data for the upcoming decade. There have been a number of recruitment efforts underway. For example, Jim Barksdale gifted $100 million to the state to establish a reading program and the institute set up to administer this program also has committed support for placing high-success principals in schools. The Mississippi Principal Corps and Mississippi Turnaround Leadership Academy are designed to help do a better job preparing principal candidates to serve in shortage areas. Barksdale funded one of these programs. In the 1990s the state created a number of programs to address potential teacher shortages. One program was a teacher loan/scholarship program. It provides scholarships and other incentives to bring teachers into hard to staff areas like math, science and foreign languages. There is another scholarship program and a scattering of other efforts. The state has made various attempts over the years to address areas of teacher and principal shortage, but there is no clear plan or process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage. While the application states that a component of one piece of legislation is to track hard to fill schools and subject areas and determine the impact of the entire program on the hard to fill areas, no data or other information is included.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	**58**	**31**
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	7
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	12

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

The application describes a plan to develop a two-pronged method to measure student growth - value-added models and growth/projection models. The combination will be able to measure student growth for each individual student. The models will include multiple years and multiple subjects and multiple assessments. There is some discussion of protection for educators to ensure models are fair to educators, schools and districts. The state's plan provides for access to the data, training on finding and using the data as well as provisions that will be spelled out in later sections. This is a strong measure of student growth and the fact that it addresses access to data and training is very positive. The only weak point is there do not seem to be measures for non-tested grade levels.

For a plan to design and implement evaluation systems for teachers and principals, the application first describes conditions in place in the state regarding evaluations, such as a provision in statute that allows teachers and leaders to be rewarded for student achievement. The state believes this reward can help recruitment and retention. A drawback to this plan is that state funding for the program needs to be fully funded before the program is activated, and prospects for total state funding appear dim. In addition, the state has a comprehensive educator evaluation requirement in place, but it allows LEAs flexibility at the local level; thus, "MS does not have a system in place in which to become mired in the 'this is the way we

have always done it' mentality." The application goes on to provide a high-level vision for the evaluation system and ten key elements, but this is not a high-quality plan. Transformational Goal 7 lists some elements of a plan, but these are only for the first year. The application states that the MS Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System Council will guide the effort, but other than saying it is made up of teachers, principals and other stakeholders, there is no description of it anywhere in the application or appendix that a search on that title would reveal. There is no description of how that council would work, their authority, or any other factor to determine the extent to which teachers and principals would be involved as required in the criteria.

The application states that while annual evaluations of teachers and principals are required, there is little consistency across the state. The state plans to require a common, statewide teacher and leader observation instrument to be used in LEAs and teacher preparation programs. They are selecting the Teach for America rubric which identifies different levels of proficiency, is outcome oriented, and looks at skills present and skills absent. For leaders, they have selected the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED). They also will include Educator Proficiency Standards - including standards for technology - in the evaluation system. All will be informed by data as defined in Section (D)(2)(i). Starting with one system and requiring its use is a good strategy for a state with such lack of consistency for evaluations. The strategy does not address gaining teacher and principal buy-in or training on how to use systems that are new to the vast majority of educators in the state, although training modules on these evaluations are mentioned in the next section.

Mississippi acknowledges that it currently provides little coordination to induction and coaching support. The state has expended over $2 million for statewide mentoring, but that program lacked guidance and support from the state on how to mentor and professionally develop novice teachers . The state's plan is to use the Innovation and Reform Teams (IRTs, described earlier) at all levels and partner with Teach for America to mirror their system for induction. For principals, they will use the VAL-ED instrument and monitor both teacher and principals programs through the RESAs. They also will use the IRTs to provide coaches. All these efforts will be built upon the evaluation system in which each educator will develop a personalized professional development plan. In addition the state will provide statewide Professional Development on key topics and will contract with various partners to develop and deliver the training online and through the RESAs. This is an overall positive and expected use of the structure the state plans to put in place.

The state recognizes that it must create innovative ways to retain, compensate and promote the best educators and they must be tied to the evaluation system. The LEAs will be expected to report retention rates for effective teachers and the extent to which educators move along a continuum of effectiveness. They also will be expected to report on the number of teachers dismissed as ineffective. Public reporting can be a driver for greater scrutiny and a demand for more excellence, so this is a good idea. The state does allow for differentiated compensation and MDE will ask for recommendations for innovative career paths with differentiated compensation based upon the evaluation system. Teachers would receive training on the new system. Finding alternatives to the traditional step-ladder pay scale based upon years of experience is a good idea, but how this would actually take place and be implemented is not explained at all.

Mississippi does not grant tenure. The state is thinking about requiring all Continuing Education Units to be linked to the individual's improvement plan that is to be part of the evaluation system. If the support provided to educators based upon their plan still does not yield positive results, the evaluation system will provide the foundation of evidence for dismissal. The state intends to follow due process to ensure all is fair.

Like many other areas of the application, this section describes a relatively clear, high-level vision for using the evaluation to support teachers and principals, as well as how it could be used for promotion and other decisions, but it lacks key elements of a high-quality plan such as goals, responsibilities, timelines and metrics for determining when and how the program is successful. In addition, there are no performance

measures filled out for this section.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	**25**	**4**
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	1
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	3

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

The application says that the state does provide recruiting and retention assistance as well as professional development to LEAs, but does not describe what the assistance consists of or how it is provided. There is a Teacher Equity Plan to ensure that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified or out of field teachers. The "plan" to ensure effective teachers are equitably distributed is to use the evaluation system and offer incentives for highly effective teachers to move to schools with high poverty and high minority populations. There are no performance measures, nor is there a review of prior actions and data. Asserting that, "MS will no longer tolerate ineffective teachers and leaders serving students in this state. In order to more effectively ensure equitable distribution, MS will allow LEAs and schools opportunities to choose from existing options and other bolder options for recruiting," is not a plan. It does not meet the criteria for this section.

There are a number of existing activities to support and recruit teachers for hard-to-staff subjects. Included is a legislative program described earlier called Critical Teacher Shortage and a scholarship program. Another program is the Teach MS Fellowship Program for graduate students who work in high needs schools that provides laptops and strong online mentoring. This sounds to be an interesting and promising program, but there is little information about the number of teachers involved. The application makes reference to promoting more alternative route teaching pathways, more Teach for America teachers, and bringing STEM professionals to schools for adjunct like work and/or providing electronic STEM courses taught by STEM professionals from their workplace. The application also references Centers for Professional Futures and Middle School Academies. As in other sections, these are good ideas, but not a plan. Appendix G is referenced for goals, activities and timelines, but the connection between the activities in the application and those in Appendix G is not clear.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	**14**	**5**
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	3
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

The state's current model does not link student achievement and growth to teachers and principals and to their preparation programs. The state intends to use the Comprehensive Educator Evaluation System to do that. The information will be reported on various web sites, including each preparation program's site. Other ideas are to recruit from the top third of graduating high school classes and implement a series of recommendations from a Blue Ribbon Committee. The state also hopes to create a new Teacher Development Agency to launch a national recruiting campaign, allocate slots for training teachers and write performance contracts with all preparation programs. Providers that meet the state's performance requirements at a higher rate get more training slots. If a provider is not effective, it will be closed. Many of these activities are interesting and potentially successful, but there is a lack of detail and performance measures to determine their overall potential effectiveness.

The state is considering creating another alternative program for principal preparation through the National Institute for School Leadership Model. They also will request more teachers from Teach for America and expand the alternative preparation programs for prospective elementary teachers. This is a haphazard list of unconnected activities to expand successful programs. Nothing is mentioned about the traditional

programs which turn out the vast majority of teachers in the state nor is there a direct link to programs which produce effective teachers and principals. There are no performance measures.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	**20**	**7**
(i) Providing effective support	10	6
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	1

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

The application avers that the support begins with a strong preparation program and that each traditional program is required to have a P-20 Council to provide feedback and assistance for continuous improvement. Having a formal council, presumably made up of educators (although that is not made clear), should be valuable for preparation programs. However, feedback without teeth can have little impact. The application then reiterates its support structure from the Department, through the RESAs, and into the LEAs and schools with a designated team and a variety of coaches. The state will require that LEAs provide at least 90 minutes of common planning time for data analysis and decision making. Having a clear time and requirement for how that time is used should prove beneficial for instructional and student achievement. Also commendable is the idea to allow effective teachers to submit proposals to design and run schools that will improve student achievement. Innovation directly from the classroom could provide breakthroughs in effectiveness that could - if managed well - spread throughout the state. Unfortunately there is no plan in how to scale this idea beyond the first year as described in the Transformation Goals. Some of these ideas are potentially far-reaching and could positively affect teaching and learning in many schools. More detail in how they could work and be scaled would have been helpful.

The only idea to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the support mentioned in the application is to make it part of the evaluation plan. This is not sufficient information to meet the requirements of this section.

Total	138	57

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

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

The legislature passed a law in 2009 that provided the Mississippi Board of Education the legal authority to intervene in failing schools and districts.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	**40**	**11**
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	6

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

Mississippi has an approved definition for identifying its lowest achieving schools.

The state has an Office of Student and Growth which provides some technical assistance to schools in need of improvement, much of which is process-oriented, such as assisting in preparing for an Evaluation Team visit and assisting in developing and implementing a school improvement plan. The Federal Program office also provides assistance. Mississippi has created the Legislative Task Force to Study Underperforming Schools and School Districts with a membership representing the legislature, education,

local superintendents, businesses, and the governor. The task force created a series of recommendations focused on accountability, leadership, teaching, funding, community involvement, and takeover regulations. The recommendations are all high level and general, such as "The Legislature should consider..." and "The Legislature should provide funds..." Mississippi will transform the lowest performing schools by following the recommendations of the Task Force. They will use data to determine what works and as the practices are identified the state will be in a better position to support LEAs. Numerous concerns arise from this plan, the greatest of which is what would happen if the Legislature did not carry through on the recommendations of the Task Force. In addition, there is little detail about how a researcher will gather best practices and how these might be applied to the lowest performing schools. Mississippi has tried a variety of approaches to the lowest performing schools; however, "because of the many different types of support, it is difficult to determine which specific strategy was successful in helping schools improve student achievement." There is little data provided to determine the extent to which there was an increase in student achievement.

Total	50	21

F. General

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

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

The percentage of total revenues available to the state to support public education increased from 60.92% in 2008 to 62.59% in 2009.

Mississippi districts are given additional funding based on the number of at-risk students, defined as those qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch. This leads to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs. There is no official state statute or policy regarding equitable funding at the school level, other than school boards are allowed to use the at-risk component of state funding to target schools within the district that have higher proportions of at-risk students within the district. The policy of allowing, but otherwise not requiring, equitable funding within a district will not lead to equitable funding.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	**40**	**18**
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	1
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	2
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	2

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

Mississippi has an extremely limited charter school law. A law passed in 2010 that provides the capacity to create "Conversion Charter Schools" which can accept money from outside the normal funding stream, can receive money under the Race to the Top program, and are authorized to operate conversion charter and autonomous public school programs that are high-performing. It is unclear if a program is the same as a

school. A reading of the law indicates that these conversion charter schools are only for low-performing schools. The number of schools allowed is double the number allowed in the former law, but the application does not say how many schools that is or what percentage of all the schools that is. The law states that there may be no more than three per Congressional District. Mississippi has four Congressional districts, so no more than 12 are allowed. This is much less than 5% of the total number of schools in the state.

State law authorizes the State Board of Education to approve charters, and the Board can take them away. Because charters must meet standards of achievement in the Accountability Model charters are held accountable based, to some degree, on student achievement. The application does not explain how charter school authorizers approve, monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize and close charter schools, nor does it explain how it encourages charter schools that serve student populations similar to local district populations. The law enabling charter schools just passed, so the lack of detail may be due to the lack of time to put regulations and guidelines in place.

By statute, the Conversion Charter Schools are to receive full funding from the local, state and Federal governments and can receive additional funding from donations, grants, etc. There is no history to show how the law may be implemented, especially regarding local funding.

The application states that Conversion Charter Schools are to be treated no differently than traditional schools regarding facilities, "and that the state shall not impose any school facility-related requirements on conversion charter schools which are more restrictive than those applied to traditional public schools." However, the application does not address key criteria that are critical for on-going maintenance of facilities - "the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports." Without this assurance, charter schools' facilities could suffer over time.

LEAs in Mississippi have operational flexibility, but they are not autonomous, as called for by the criteria. The application provides two short examples of innovative schools, but their existance alone does not satisfy fully the requirements for this section.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	**5**	**1**

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

The application provides the example of the Office of Healthy Schools that has received support from a myriad of entities around the state. While this is an admirable effort, there is no information provided to show the extent to which this effort has increased student achievement or graduation rates or narrowed achievement gaps.

Total	55	27

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	**15**	**0**

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Mississippi describes an exciting program in support of STEM in the state called the Center for Professional Futures. With significant funding for ten years from Toyota and managed by the CREATE Foundation, the program will serve three counties in Mississippi. Students from area high schools will go to the CPF to get cutting edge, real world classroom experiences through a STEM-centered course of study. An adjunct faculty from universities and STEM-related companies and communities will help staff the facility. The CPF admirably has developed a marketing plan to appeal to groups that have been historically underrepresented in the STEM field such as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, minorities, and females. The program is not fully funded yet. The hope is to replicate this across the state "in regions that have the capacity and leadership to provide the type of education to workforce access in the STEM

fields needed..."

While this is an exciting and potentially impactful program, it does not satisfy all criteria of this priority. It looks to provide a rigorous course of study in the STEM fields, and it does cooperate with industry experts in offering applied learning. However, it addresses only high school students, and elementary and middle school students have no opportunity to get support in STEM. In addition, while the funding from Toyota is admirable, it is questionable if it is sustainable or scalable. According to the information in the Appendix, the CPF still needs to attract $35 million for the facility and equipment. It seems extremely difficult for another center to be able to attract both the money for the facility and a match for the Toyota grant.

Total	15	0

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		**No**

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Mississippi's application addresses all of the four education reform areas. The state has strong commitment from LEAs and is part of key consortiums for developing and implementing common core standards and high quality assessments. The state has envisioned a structure to deliver support and professional development to teachers and principals that should be sustainable and could build capacity statewide. Throughout the application, however, the state presents a high level vision for different components, but the application lacks detail in how that vision would come to reality, and no section of the plan has a high-quality plan to implement the vision. The budget lacks detail as well, and the activities described in the budget do not clearly match the activities in the application. Often the reader is directed to the Appendices for more information, but the information there seldom provides additional insight in how activities would develop into a high quality plan. In most places where performance measures are requested, the state has not provided any, usually due to lack of data. The lack of data and understanding why programs from the past may have been successful or unsuccessful also is a significant concern and brings into question the extent to which the state will be able to learn from experience. While the application does address all four reform areas, it is neither comprehensive nor fully coherent.

Total		0

Grand Total	500	263