



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Montana Application #3350MT-6



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	40
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	25
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	11
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state articulates a reform agenda that is comprehensive and ambitious, and addresses the four areas of education reform described in the Act consistently and coherently. The plan is heavy on "we will" and "we are committed to," but light on the timing and implementation plan for the reforms.</p> <p>The state has garnered a high level of commitment to its plan, with 82% of LEAs representing 94% of students and 92% of students in poverty, committed to the MOU. But while the narrative explains that all participating LEAs are committed to every element of the Montana plan, the scope of work does not cover all of the components of the RTTT agenda. For example, the scope of work (Exhibit 1) attached to the state's MOU only has 5 lines and is not linked to specific criteria, and the summary table for A(1) has lines that are not included in the detail table, which is missing several criteria -- e.g., C(3)(iii), D(2)(i), D(2)(iv), D(3), and E(2). Some of the wording in the scope of work exhibit departs from the RTTT definitions -- e.g., instructional improvement "processes" rather than "systems" in C(3), and "regular" rather than "annual" evaluations in (D)(2)(iii). It seems like the high level of commitment to the state's plan is a result of negotiating significant compromise to the scope of work, so medium points are awarded for the LEA commitment.</p> <p>The state is committed to increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation rates and college enrollment through the adoption of standards, the use of assessments and Response to Intervention (RTI), and specific grants and other programs. Because of the high level of participation and support, there is a high probability the plan will have statewide impact and allow the state to achieve its overall goals.</p>		
(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
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state plans to implement the proposals that would be funded through RTTT through its existing infrastructure of Regional Service Area (RSA) teams and the existing Strategic Direction Teams that were formed in 2009. One additional team would be formed, the Great Leaders and Teachers Strategic Direction Team, which will build upon the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development framework that already exists. The state also points to its successful statewide implementation of RTI and proven school-level</p>		

collaboration teams as evidence of its ability to implement its plans. Given the size of the state's budget request, this infrastructure provides an appropriate degree of capacity to implement the proposed plans, although there is no explicit accountability for the successful implementation of the plan other than the Office of Public Instruction in general. The state does not explicitly address administration of the grant, but does explain that the funding will complement other funding streams like School Improvement Grants, and indicates that the infrastructure already in place will likely continue to support the RTTT plans after the grant period ends.

The letters of support for the RTTT application represent buy-in for the plan from principals and teachers, with the notable caveat that the teachers' union letter discloses its bargaining units will need to "confab, collaborate, and bargain as necessary to implement the challenging changes our RTTT grant provokes." Nevertheless there is good support from other critical stakeholders across the state, so high points are awarded for (ii).

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	17
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	2
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state has only demonstrated moderate progress over the past several years in each of the key reform areas. While it has joined the CCSSO and SMARTER-Balanced coalitions, the implementation of Criterion Referenced Tests and the hosting of assessment conferences are only basic accomplishments. The Achievement in Montana (AIM) data collection system and Montana Comprehensive Assessment Systems (MontCAS) are ambitious but it is not clear to what extent they are functional today. The Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program is a positive step but it is not clear how aligned it is with the definition of highly effective teachers in the notice. The steps toward turning around low-achieving schools are not particularly ambitious and do not demonstrate a track record of clear progress in this reform area.</p> <p>The state has relatively high NAEP scores, although its rate of growth over the past six years is generally similar to the U.S. average. The state has made mixed progress reducing the achievement gap between white students and subgroups on the NAEP. On the state test, student achievement gains have been small and the evidence for achievement gap reduction over time is mixed. The state points to a relatively high graduation rate but does not provide data to show how it has steadily increased over time, as claimed in the narrative.</p>		
Total	125	80

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state has joined the Common Core standards consortium of 51 states and territories. The timeline for adoption outlined in Appendix B(I)-VI, however, shows that the effective date of adoption is in January 2011, so no points were awarded for criterion (ii).</p>		

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The state is a member of the SMARTER-Balanced assessment consortium with 32 other states. The narrative mentions the state is participating in two multi-state consortia but does not identify the second one.		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	13
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The state presents a high quality plan to implement the standards that builds on the experience of its RSAs with the RTI pilot program. The adoption and roll-out of the standards, despite the delayed adoption timeline noted in B(1)(ii) above, is likely to succeed. The state has demonstrated recent experience in adopting standards in math (through the Revision Team) and communication arts. Its implementation plan is reasonable, including the formation of a Professional Development Content Design Team and the utilization of online systems to provide on-demand support. With regard to the development of high quality assessments, the plan is less well-articulated. The state points to the existing RTI assessment structure, an online class called Formative Assessment for Montana Educators, and pilot programs for online writing, reading and math assessments. These are positive steps, but the number of teachers and students that have benefited so far from these efforts is low. The detailed standards roll-out plan presented in Appendix B(3)-III does not fully address how the development and implementation of high-quality assessments related to the standards roll-out is likely to succeed, and does not include any timelines.		
Total	70	43

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	12
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The state earned credit for the six elements of the America COMPETES Act that are in place today.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) The state's plan is solid, featuring thoughtful measures such as a data governance structure for P-20. It also has the benefit of an established link between Department of Labor and Industry that enables research and analysis beyond post-secondary education and into workforce performance. In general, because the data system has been led by the Montana University System, there is a good plan to integrate the system with a multitude of other government agencies that will inform broader policymaking choices. The narrative seems to focus on government and policy-makers rather than research and analysis by education researchers, teachers, administrators and the general public, and there is no apparent plan to promote the use of the data by these latter stakeholders, so medium points are awarded.		

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	7
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	3
(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	1
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state's response is somewhat confusing: the AIM system is described as "reliable and comprehensive", yet there is a need to "upgrade, enhance, and strengthen the use of data from the ground up so that student achievement in the classroom drives policy development in Helena." It is not clear whether the system itself needs improvement, or the use of the system in practice. The existing infrastructure and prior experience suggest there is a good probability of successful implementation. But the state does not clearly address the selection criteria with respect to the use of local instructional improvement systems.</p> <p>The state's plan to support LEAs, schools and teachers in using instructional improvement systems is somewhat passive -- if we build it, they will come. The state seems to be providing technical assistance through the existing -- and apparently under-utilized -- regional training, refresher core training, and value-added training, rather than create new mechanisms to promote effective professional development at the LEA level. The plan focuses more on making the data available than on how it can be used to support continuous instructional improvement.</p> <p>The plan for making the data available to researchers is short on detail and does not explicitly address the potential use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of materials, strategies and approaches to educating disadvantaged students and subgroups.</p>		
Total	47	22

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	12
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	3
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	5
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state meets the criteria for alternative routes to teacher certification that are independent of IHEs and include the elements defined in the notice. The state does not yet have similar provisions for alternative principal certification, but is considering revising the rules to create such provisions.</p> <p>The alternative pathways for teachers include the Northern Plains Transition to Teaching Program, National Board Certification, and the Class 5 Alternative License, but the number of teachers that have successfully completed these certification routes is very small.</p> <p>The state's Critical Quality Educator Shortage program is a formal methodology for identifying areas of teacher shortage annually based on rural location, income, and school performance. It is used to qualify teachers for the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program, which forgives student loans up to \$12,000 over four years. (The proposal does not indicate how many loans were actually paid under this program.) In addition, the Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative is intended to identify areas with STEM</p>		

teaching shortages, and the Indian Leadership and Development Program has effectively increased the number of Native American school leaders in the state. Overall, however, the existing programs in the state tend to be teacher rather than principal focused, limited in creativity to the loan assistance program, and focused more on identifying the need than on preparing teachers and principals to fill the shortages.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	18
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	6
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	2
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	5

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

The state's use of criterion reference tests (CRTs) to measure student growth meets the criterion for (i).

The state's plan to design and implement evaluation systems does involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders including teachers and principals. But it is weak in that it relies on LEAs to determine the optimal evaluation criteria, including the weighting of student growth, to be used to determine compensation and promotion. There is no mention of the use of multiple rating categories. As a result of these factors, medium points are awarded for (ii).

The state does not commit to annual evaluation or the use of data on student growth to inform the process, so low points were awarded for (iii).

The state is seeking to reform its educator evaluation and training programs in the context of its RTI emphasis, but it rejects the premise that it can or should create a plan to use an evaluation system for decisions that are left to local control in the state. Student growth is a factor in the essential components of teacher evaluation proposed by the state, but not for principal evaluation. The state's response opposes financial incentives related to student growth, but fails to address the many other aspects of criterion (iv) that could be effective evaluation outcomes, such as coaching and induction support, promotion and retention, tenure and certification, and removal from teaching of ineffective teachers. Despite the state's commitment to have 100% of LEAs with qualifying evaluation systems by the end of SY2011-2012, low points are awarded because of the state's rejection of the premise of criterion (iv).

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	4
(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	2

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

The state's ability to measure the distribution of effective teachers is constrained by its definition of highly qualified (99% of all teachers) and experienced (one year of successful teaching) -- inconsistent with the RTTT definition of highly effective teachers. The OPI's four step plan described in the application is weak. The state does not address the equitable distribution of principals in its plan. No targets are provided for this criterion because the state has no plan to measure teacher and principal effectiveness. Low points are awarded for this inadequate response.

While the state's lack of commitment to a formal definition of teacher and principal effectiveness limits its ability to achieve measurable improvement in the distribution of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, the state does describe several initiatives that already do, or plan to, address this distribution challenge. Again, no targets are included and low points are awarded for the plan.

(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
<p>(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state is not committed to linking student achievement and growth data to the in-state credentialing programs; rather it limits the use of data to supporting formative assessment systems at the classroom level. The staffing database project could be a starting point for establishing the linkage, but the state does not describe a plan to make this connection (i.e., the database does not include student achievement data). No targets are provided. Low points are awarded for this inadequate response.</p> <p>The state does seek to use RTTT funds to "boost our human capital development into the 21st century" by developing a tiered licensure system that would be aligned with the state's IHEs and the Board of Public Education rules. In general the state seems interested in using RTTT funds to enhance the existing programs, but not based on a commitment to the definition of effective teachers and principals in the notice. Low points are awarded for this inadequate response.</p>		
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	5
(i) Providing effective support	10	3
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	2
<p>(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state plans to build a system of providing effective support to teachers and principals on its successful experience implementing the RTI in 111 pilot schools in the reading curriculum. The benchmarks provided in the appendix are illustrative and represent more of a schedule for RTI professional development than a high quality plan with goals, actions, measures of success, and timelines all built around data-informed instruction. The narrative does not address any of the key examples provided in the criterion -- differentiating instruction, addressing high-needs students, and removing barriers to effective implementation.</p> <p>The existing survey tool provided in the appendix is rudimentary, does not sufficiently address the requirements of the criterion to improve student achievement, and does not include some of the elements of a high quality plan. Low points are awarded for an inadequate response.</p>		
Total	138	41

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	0
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state does not appear to have the ability to intervene in the lowest achieving schools and LEAs -- its ability is limited to "general supervision" and specific areas of operations that fall short of real control. The appendix provided does not appear to give the state the authority to employ "temporary and selective" interventions as described in the narrative, so no points are awarded.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	14

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	9
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state has a clear process for identifying the persistently low-achieving schools.</p> <p>The state plans to dramatically improve student achievement in these schools over the next three years, and provides a plan for doing so in Appendix E(2)-II. The state budgets \$4.5 million for this initiative, which includes hiring four FTE for each site -- a Turnaround Leader, Instructional Leader, Community Liaison, and a Coordinator. The plan does include a number of reasonable steps covering several important domains of school performance, but it is not sufficiently bold or intense to deliver the stated results. More importantly, the state's school improvement plan does not meet the definition of any of the four school intervention models described in the notice, so low points are awarded for (ii).</p>		
Total	50	14

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	2
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state's share of public education funding increased significantly from FY2008 to FY2009.</p> <p>The state's funding policies lead to a more equitable distribution of funding to lower income and higher need students and schools by virtue of the rural consideration given in the Per-ANB formula, the Quality Educator Payment, the At-Risk Payment, and the American Indian Achievement Gap Payment. But it is not clear these adjustments equitably offset the funding levels for school districts with higher mill levies, nor do the formulas fully align with the RTTT definitions of high-need LEAs and high-poverty schools. Consequently, medium points are awarded for (ii).</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	0
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	0
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	0
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	0
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	0
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>State law permits the authorization of charter schools only by school districts. Parent groups or community-based non-profit organizations have no alternative routes to open a charter school. The charter schools are subject to other constraints, such as the requirement for collective bargaining and the risk they may be discontinued at any time. These restrictions are severely inhibiting, as evidenced by the absence of any charter schools in the state. The appendix does not specify that student achievement is a factor in the</p>		

authorization or renewal of a charter, or whether the charter school would have access to equal funding or receive facility support. As a result, no points are awarded for criteria (i) through (iv).

The accreditation process described in response to criterion (v) does not meet the definition of innovative, autonomous public schools in the notice -- i.e., open enrollment schools with control over the instructional program, staffing and school budget.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	2
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state provides three examples of programs as evidence of other significant reform conditions. Three years ago the state funded full day kindergarten, which is likely to have improved outcomes for those children although no specific evidence is provided. No information is provided with respect to the funding or participation levels of the Best Beginnings/"Stars to Quality" rating system to improve the quality of pre-school programs, and the foundation-funded College!Now program that provides dual enrollment opportunities for high school students in two year colleges. These programs represent only moderate evidence that the state meets this criterion.</p>		
Total	55	9

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state emphasizes STEM through a focus on renewable energy in a "comprehensive package" of seven different programs, and the plan is simply to make \$5 million of mini-grants to schools for integrating renewable energy into the curriculum. The programs are all valid in their own right, but do not adequately address the criterion's requirement to offer a rigorous course of study in STEM. They do feature extensive cooperation with STEM-capable community partners, and they will likely prepare more students for advanced studies and careers in STEM. The plan does not explicitly address the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the STEM areas.</p>		
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)		
<p>The state does not meet the absolute priority of comprehensively and coherently addressing the reform areas specified in the ARRA. Its proposal opens by articulating the intent to do so, but the substance of its actions to date, and plans for the future, are neither integrated nor comprehensive. The state is trading on several key accomplishments -- high (but flat) NAEP scores, one proven success implementing a pilot reading curriculum using the RTI model, and an existing student data system -- but there are profound weaknesses in each key area of its proposal. Specifically, the state does not present high quality plans for transitioning to high-quality assessments, using data to improve instruction, developing great teachers and leaders in almost every respect, turning around low-achieving schools, or ensuring successful conditions for charter schools. Rather, the state is simply requesting additional money to fund the ongoing development of</p>		

the SAS data system and support the LEAs that did commit to a reduced scope of work relative to the RTTT model. Those funds, if awarded to Montana, would not likely deliver the results envisioned by the RTTT program.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	209
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Montana Application #3350MT-8



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	41
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	30
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	8

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

(A)(1)(i) The State has set forth an agenda that clearly articulates goals across the four educational reform areas. For instance, standards and assessments for success in college and the workplace are in place and moving toward adoption. However, the State is supported by many team efforts building a plan for a Data Warehouse with P-20 linkages. In addition, the statement that the system "will eventually tie data to teachers and leaders" indicates the timeline is less than ambitious, and that "teachers and leaders will use the data as they deem appropriate in their setting" references less than uniform implementation strategies.

Concerning how well the reform agenda addresses improving student outcomes (achievement, gaps, graduation rates, and college/career preparation) the State provided NAEP and CRT (criterion-reference test) results showing little and often no progress. The less than ambitious timelines, and the inconsistent implementation resulted in a medium-high score.

(A)(1)(ii)

(a) The State provided evidence through the MOU's terms and conditions that there is a strong commitment by the participating LEAs based on the participation rate of 82%; however, the MOUs did not contain a full slate of the required reform measures.

(b) The State provided a significant portion of participating LEAs to implement a scaled-down version of reform in the design of its scope of work descriptions. This resulted in a less than ambitious RTTT reform plan. The logic here seems to be: *had* the State included all elements of the ARRA reform in the scope of work form, as provided in the sample form, then a significant number of sections would *not* have been checked by the LEAs. In part, this resulted in a medium score at the high end.

(c) The State provided signatures for all 82% of the LEAs from superintendents, school board members, and representatives from the teacher unions as applicable, but it was for a scaled down and less than ambitious reform plan. Therefore, this section was scored as medium at the high end.

(A)(1)(iii) The State did not provide measurable and achievable student outcome-based goals for the four student improvement measures by sub-group and by all students. Therefore, because the State did not establish a measurable goal for each of its student outcomes, a medium score was allotted based on the summary of some of the planned programs as follows.

(a) The State plans to increase student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics by partnering with LEAs to determine individualized LEA needs, adopting standards, and an early intervention model. However, the State did not identify a target to set goals to reduce achievement gaps and increase student test scores.

(b) The State will use disaggregated data to identify needs, and implement programs in college and career readiness, in career and technical awareness, and to extend the digital course capacity K-12 in order to increase (c) high school graduation rates and, (d) college enrollments. Again, the State did not identify a target to set goals for increasing the high school graduation rates and college enrollments.

The State identified programs that will have impact. However, the impact must be measurable in order to determine that the programs are ambitious and achievable. Examples of Montana's goals are: excerpt one: *...will ultimately result in statewide achievement on NAEP and the ESEA Standards CRTs; and excerpt two: ...will enhance Montana's college enrollment and retention populations.* Also, it is noted that there are no measurable goals in the appendices of this section either.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	20
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8

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

(A)(2)(i)

(a) The State has strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement statewide education reform by building on a successful program of Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI teams and LEAs are supported by the Office of Public Instruction and a newly created Strategic Direction Team organized by the Superintendent of Instruction to oversee RTTT. Other teams are planned for turn-around and assessment programs.

(b) The State identified promising practices such as RTI and using standards, providing a delivery system of professional development, and an intervention for turning around schools. However, the State did not fully describe LEA accountability, and in particular how it would terminate ineffective practices by LEAs.

(c) The State provides grant oversight, and budget reporting through e-grants, but it did not address holding schools accountable for performance through example activities listed in this section (c) such performance measure tracking and reporting, and fund disbursement. Thus there is a less than clear control to carry out the provisions of RTTT reform with the participating LEAs.

(d) The State will use the funds from RTTT to accomplish plans and meet its targets based on the budget and summary. The State will coordinate Title I funding and State RTI funding to support the goals of this application including Longitudinal Data System Grants.

(e) The State's use of resources as building blocks under RTTT funding will continue after the period of funding has ended— if only for those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success. However, there was no allowance for continuing positions nor a clear narrative addressing specific commitments in resources resulting from RTTT programs. There were, however, general and sweeping references made to programs and initiatives having been created through RTTT funding which will be in place after the life of the grant.

A score at the upper range of the middle level was allotted for meeting some but not all of these (a) through (e) components.

(A)(2)(ii)

Although there was an ambitious outpouring of letters of support as identified in (a) and (b) of this section, a high score at the lower range was applied for using a form-letter format which hampered the strength of a number of the statements of support documented in the Appendix.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	15
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(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	12
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(i) Progress over the past several years using ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue reform includes E-grants, adopting standards and assessments across three content areas. Science standards are forthcoming, and data systems are focused on Early Intervention. However, even though there was a section on recruitment to fill shortage areas, the teacher and principal evaluation system was less than committed because the State only recently began to research a personnel evaluation system. To summarize, even though the State described how it utilizes ARRA and other state funding to pursue reform, the missing evaluation system for teachers and principals resulted in a middle score at the high end for this sub-section.</p> <p>(ii)(a) The State NAEP scores in math and reading are ranked in the top five or ten out of all the states. The state reading and math tests are only reported for grades four and eight and the narrative reports improvement with little detail or substance. The narrative does not provide reflections on progress as required in this section.</p> <p>(ii)(b) Upon examination of the Appendix documentation, the gap reduction statistics were presented with inaccurate placement of the grade labels. In addition, comparisons were drawn between the state and the national Native American group (for one example). The narrative does not address the gap statistics, but instead compares sub-groups to national groups (ie. Native American in Montana to all Native Americans nationwide) and refers to a narrowing gap in this fashion. Therefore, the gap reduction statistics are not readily available.</p> <p>(ii)(c) In 2008, using AYP reports, the State's graduation rate was 82.6%. However, the narrative does not provide progress indicators by sub-group since 2003, nor does it explain the connections to its programs. Because of this discrepancy, and the other discrepancies reported above, a medium score was given.</p>		
Total	125	76

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(1)(i)(a) Conditions exist such that the State is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards (CCSS), that are internationally benchmarked, and build college and career readiness in high school. (b) The work is supported by 51 states in a national collaborative effort. Full points were allotted for this section.</p> <p>(B) (1) (ii) The State Plan includes adopting these K-12 common core standards by January 11, 2011. No points were allotted as stipulated for States adopting standards after 2010.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5

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

(B) (2) (i) The State's regulations require LEA assessment based on content standards. Full points were allotted.

(B) (2) (ii) The consortium for the common set of K-12 standards includes SMARTER and lists 33 members. Full points were allotted.

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

20

15

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

The State defined a sweeping plan for reform through implementation of the standards and assessments in collaboration with participating LEAs. The plan was based on a *Vision for Montana Mathematics and Communications Arts*, and established K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. The plan is focused on supporting students' transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments through activities such as alignment of CCSS with MT's core mathematics program, developing expectations, performance rubrics, and curriculum in the communications arts. This sub-section also described a robust set of reform goals, the roll-out of professional development using on-line platforms, and instructional material units. There was discussion concerning learning communities and the design of assessment tools that the State will use to launch implementation of its standards and assessments. However, the cooperation with an institution of higher was not clearly evident, and the plan lacked specifics such as dates for accomplishing benchmarks and performance indicators. This resulted in a high score at the low end.

Total

70

45

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	12

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

1. The State has a statewide longitudinal system with a unique numbering system in place for each student.
2. The State has a statewide longitudinal system with student level enrollment elements.
3. The State has a statewide longitudinal system with student matriculation and status of school programs.
4. The State has a statewide longitudinal system but does not share linkages with higher education data systems.
5. The State has a statewide longitudinal system with a data audit system, including validity and reliability.
6. The State has a statewide longitudinal system with annual test records of individual students as defined under section 1111 (b) of ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)).
7. The State has a statewide longitudinal system including information on students not tested by grade and by subject.
8. The State has a statewide longitudinal system but does not have a teacher-identifier system connected to any type of student matching.
9. The State has a statewide longitudinal system but does not have in place a way to identify transcript information at the student level to collect data on course completion and grades earned.

10. The State has a statewide longitudinal system without a consistent assessment in place of college readiness.

11. The State has a statewide longitudinal system but does not have a report of student transitions to college and the extent of remedial work.

12. The State has a statewide longitudinal system but does not have an aligned assessment of adequacy for college preparation.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	2
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The State described how data and reports are available on college completers and state employment information, but it was not entirely clear how the information related to student achievement and growth. Parents, students, teachers, and principals need access to state data on student growth and achievement. This access is not evident in the narrative. The narrative described sources of state agency data, but did not make clear connections to schools and the policies that are of interest to school constituents, thus yielding a middle score at the lower end for this section.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	8
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	3
(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	2

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

(C)(3)(i) Achievement in Montana (AIM) is the State's data system that will link teacher and principal evaluation and student data. The State will partner with the SAS Institute (an organization that provides technical expertise for Montana's student information system) to support a Response to Intervention (RTI) program approach. The State includes a value added measure to ascertain "entities" as accelerating or impeding student progress. The connections are not fully apparent as to how the data system is used to inform classrooms for teachers, schools for principals, and districts for LEAs, outside of providing electronic Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for special education. Therefore, a middle range point was allotted.

(C)(3)(ii) The State has a plan to provide professional development for teachers, school leaders, and administrators using regional, refresher, and value added workshops to use the data system. The State will rely on two supports: (1) the SAS Institute for technical assistance, and (2) the School Advisory Group on Education (SAGE) to define the web tools (P-20) and assess local needs for professional development and classroom activities. In this way, the State plans its professional development for teachers, principals, and administrators about how to use data systems. However, the narrative does not describe clearly professional development relevant to informing instruction. In addition, the State does not provide quality plan indicators such as annual benchmarks, timelines, or performance measures. Therefore, points in the middle range were assigned.

(C)(3)(iii) According to the State plan, data from instructional improvement systems and statewide longitudinal systems will be made available and accessible to researchers, educators, and policy-makers. The plan for providing detailed information to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies, and approaches for ELL students, special needs, and those achieving well below or well above grade level were not fully described. In addition, SAS will be responsible for making the plan, and the State anticipates development of a plan. Therefore, there are no benchmarks, timelines, or performance measures to demonstrate the State provides a high quality plan for making the systems available and accessible to researchers. This resulted in a low-point for this sub-section.

Total	47	22
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	15
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7

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

(D)(1)(i) There are legal and regulatory provisions that allow alternative certification routes for teachers. The alternative route, Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT), contains four of the five criteria, and only leaves out a provision for coaching during the internship period. There is no non-IHE route identified for principals, and therefore a medium score at the higher level is allotted for this sub-section.

(D)(1)(ii) An alternative teacher route through NPTT is in use in the State with 31 teachers in the classroom now as part of a distance learning internship program that recruits mid-career professionals. In addition, the National Board Certificate (NBC) has been active in certifying alternative licenses within the regular licensure programs. A medium score at the high level was allotted because there is no alternative certification program for principals.

(D)(1)(iii) There is an advanced system documented to monitor, evaluate, and identify shortage areas. Also, the State provides a program whereby 70 Native Americans became licensed as school leaders or principals. In addition, the State provides a loan forgiveness program for critical shortage areas for teachers, well-documented, monitored, and reported in the Appendix documents. Therefore, the approaches for preparing and filling shortage areas resulted in a high score for this sub-section.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	20
(i) Measuring student growth	5	2
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	7
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	4
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	7

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

(D)(2)(i) The State has a system that can compare schools across the state to evaluate programs using summative criterion reference tests (CRT). New assessment tools, according to the plan, will utilize student achievement as a measure of benchmarked standards. However, benchmarked standards does not clearly address student growth measures that include measures of change in achievement between two points in time for an individual student. The score for this sub-section, therefore, was at the middle level and at the lower end.

(D)(2)(ii) The State has a plan that will implement rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation systems, but it does not include significant emphasis on student growth, along with other multiple measures of effectiveness, for the evaluation of teachers and for principals. In addition the State's plan does not address differentiated effectiveness of principals and teachers. Therefore, a medium score was allotted based on the State's description of its existing plan for a teacher and principal evaluation system and its involvement of stakeholders.

(D)(2)(iii) The State has not prepared a quality plan with annual targets, timelines, key activities and rationales for the annual evaluation of teachers and principals that will provide them data on student growth by student, by class, and by school. The means to provide feedback to teachers and principals on their students and on their schools is addressed. However, the lack of a quality plan to carry-out such evaluations resulted in a medium score in the lower range for this sub-section.

(D)(2)(iv) This sub-section received a low score at the higher end because the State plan does not help LEAs use student growth factors to inform decisions that affect principals' and teachers' (b) compensation, promotion, and retention; and does not (c) use the measures to help determine certification and tenure, and (d) does not use student-growth factors, in part, to inform removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers. It received a low score at the higher end even though several other elements were present. For instance, the State has a plan to use evaluations to inform decisions regarding (a) professional development and coaching support. The narrative indicates that individual LEAs have the means through RTI programs to better evaluate their teachers and principals, but these evaluations are informed by student learning for teachers, not principals.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	11
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	4

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

(D)(3)(i) The State has a plan for an equitable distribution of teachers based on the Montana Equity Plan utilizing a system that reports on the status of Highly Qualified teachers based on "novice" and "experienced" qualifications. The qualifications are used to administer intensive professional development where it is most needed. In addition, there is a four-pronged plan to assess the status of, and respond to needs in, teacher shortage areas. The narrative, however, provided little reflection on past practices regarding what has worked and what needs changing. In addition, it did not address how the State will determine rates of teacher and principal effectiveness and ineffectiveness. The Performance Measure Table indicates "not applicable" across every means of increasing equitable distribution of teachers and principals. Therefore, a medium score was assigned because of the State's plan only *begins* to address equitable distribution in staffing.

(D)(3)(ii) The State does not provide a high quality plan with ambitious and achievable targets for increasing the supply of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and in specialty areas such as mathematics, science, special education or teaching in language instruction. The State *does* provide loan forgiveness as a means to increase the supply of teachers in hard to staff areas. In addition, the State provides a reporting and monitoring system documented in the Appendix on teacher shortage areas. However, this sub-section received medium points for the lack of a high quality plan with ambitious yet achievable targets, benchmarks, and timelines to increase the number of credentialed teachers in hard-to-fill specialty areas.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	2
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	0
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

(D)(4)(i) The State does not have a plan to link student achievement and student growth data to teachers and principals, and there is not a plan to link in-state programs to them either. This means the State is unable to report data for each teacher preparation program, and a zero score was given.

(D)(4)(ii) The State has a plan to expand preparation and credential options by partnering with an IHE using RTTT funds to align new initiatives for growth opportunities for novice teachers, leading to expert and advanced-level certification. The State plans to evaluate the quality of the credential programs by developing a data system with measures of college degree completion, duration of programs, and certification results, etc. However, the State does not indicate that it will include measures of effective teachers, as defined by this notice. In addition, the State does not clearly address how it will expand the preparation, credential options, and programs for producing effective principals. Therefore, this section was scored at the lower range.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	7
(i) Providing effective support	10	3
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	4

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

(D)(5)(i) Based on its success with the Response to Intervention (RTI) model in reading across 111 pilot schools, the State plans to extend RTI to mathematics for all participating LEA schools. The model provides leadership training based on an implementation status survey, but the survey provided in the Appendix references reading and English language arts, not mathematics. In addition, the narrative addresses "across-the-board" or "across disciplines" RTI programs, however the narrative addresses mathematics.

There is collaboration and coaching using RTI consultants and State leadership teams. The plan provides participating LEAs effective, data-informed professional development focused on implementing a program in mathematics statewide. These activities are ongoing and job embedded and focus on data informed decisions about what and how to teach mathematics. The plan for RTI mathematics is designed to improve student outcomes based on the reported results in the reading pilot schools. A medium score at the lower level was given this sub-section for not including a high quality plan and ambitious yet achievable annual targets encompasses reading and language arts in addition to mathematics.

(D)(5)(ii) The State plan includes a survey on successful implementation factors to provide continuous evaluation of the professional development components for teachers and for school leaders. The plan has connections between classroom performance and student outcomes; however, it does not define student achievement to include rigorous and comparable tests across classrooms using State ESEA assessments. In addition, it does not consider measures of student performance on English language proficiency assessments. Therefore, this sub-section received a bit less than a middle level score.

Total	138	55
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	0

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

The State does not have legal, statutory, or regulatory authority to directly intervene in persistently low-achieving schools outside of setting standards for performance. The LEA, not the State, has authority to make policies based on those standards.

The narrative indicates that the State does not have the legal, statutory or regulatory authority to intervene in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status. However, the State seeks to broaden its authority to intervene, and there is progress in place through Chapter 55 procedures.

This section was rated as not meeting either criterion for intervention.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	12
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	7

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

(E)(2)(i) The State followed the prescribed formula to identify the persistently lowest achieving schools based on the academic achievement of the "all students" group in reading, language arts, and math CRTs. In addition, the formula computed an average lack of progress measure over a three-year. Full points were allotted for this sub-section.

(E)(2)(ii) The State describes that it plans to support its LEAs in a "transformational school improvement model". The State identifies many activities for supporting school turn-around, but does not describe how it meets the requirements for supporting implementation of a transformation model, specifically in regard to the following required activities:

(1) Developing and increasing teacher/school leader effectiveness

(A) Replace the principal

(1) Take into account data on student growth as a significant factor as well as other factors assessment of performance and ongoing practice reflective of student achievement and increased high-school graduation rates

(C) Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who have increased student achievement and high-school graduation rates and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so.

(E) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

The State plan does not include support activities required in a transformation model, yet the State indicates in its narrative that it will utilize a transformational (school improvement) model. The transformation model for RTTT requires all items listed above to be implemented (along with other items). In reference to items (1) and (C) in particular, and in reference in part to the other items, the State does not provide the required elements of a transformation model.

In addition, the State's plan for implementation, despite all its fine detail, does not identify ambitious yet achievable annual targets, and it does not provide performance measures as part of a high quality plan. The plan does not address the required activities for the transformation model as described above. Therefore, this sub-section was scored as low at the upper range.

Total	50	12
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F. General

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

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

(F)(1)(i) The percentage of the total revenues available to the State that was used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was greater than the percentage of the total revenues available to the State for that same purpose in FY 2008. This is because the State provided 4% more funding in 2009 compared to 2008 (from 42% to 46%). This sub-section was scored with full points considering the difficult budget crises involved over the last two years.

(F)(1)(ii) The State's policies lead to equitable funding between and within high-need LEAs and other LEAs based on a number of State funding formulas that provide unique and extensive fiscal outlays to support high-need LEAs and high poverty schools. The payments go toward Indian Education for All, at-risk payment, and the American-Indian Achievement Gap. Full points were allotted for the efforts and opportunities afforded by these equitable funding programs.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	3
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	1
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	0
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	0
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

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

(F)(2)(i) The State requires that charter schools be governed by an LEA, and even though there is unrestricted student access by law, and there are no-caps, still no charter schools are, or ever have been, in operation. This sub-section is allotted a low score at the high end based on several reasons. One, there is a charter school law in place; two, it does not cap the number of charter school applications or permits; but three, there is a semi-restrictive policy requiring an LEA system of governance for charter schools. By allowing only charters to be under LEA governance, other non-profit or specialized charter organizations (such as Green Dot or KIPP) could not apply as a charter school in this state.

(F)(2)(ii) The State has regulations regarding how it authorizes, approves, monitors, holds accountable, re-authorizes, and closes charter schools such that:

Student achievement is *not* a significant factor for authorization, monitoring, reauthorizing and closing them.

The State does *not* require that charter schools serve student populations similar to the local LEA's demographics.

The State has *not* closed ineffective charter schools.

Therefore, this sub-section receives a low score at the higher range for not including the above three conditions in its charter school regulations.

(F)(2)(iii) Concerning equitable funding, this sub-section was scored as zero because there are no charter schools in existence.

(F)(2)(iv) Concerning the State's charter schools, funding for facilities, and the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, no charter schools are in existence, and points cannot be awarded without a charter school in place.

(F)(2)(v) The State does not allow innovative, autonomous public schools as defined by this notice. Furthermore, there are no innovative programs operating in the State, and no points were allotted.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) (F)(3) The State has created a few programs that begin to address the necessary conditions favorable to educational reform or innovation. In addition, the State describes that these programs have increased student achievement. The programs are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A five year comprehensive State Education Plan 2. Increased graduate rates or achievement gaps through a CollegeNow! program, and 3. Other important outcomes through Best Beginnings in preschool, and a full-day kindergarten program However, even though these programs represent a fairly laudable start, it is not a full menu of reform programs and was allotted, therefore, a lower than perfect score.		
Total	55	17

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 State provides a robust STEM plan across the application, and implicitly addresses increased opportunities by planning to provide awareness of career opportunities; by addressing workforce development and equity across the state; and by setting a goal to increase diversity of math and science teachers. Equity in careers and diversity in the math and science teaching profession for anyone familiar with STEM includes increasing female and woman participation. However, the narrative did not address girls or women clearly for two reasons. First, there is not a content standards framework to provide or endorse gender/sex equity in the curriculum. Second, there is no recruitment funding that would capitalize on increasing female STEM teachers. Therefore, this application does not qualify for additional points for the STEM priority because there is no substance to increasing participation in the STEM field for females.		
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) The State application does not comprehensively address all four reform areas of ARRA. Student growth factors are not used in evaluations of teachers or principals. The Preliminary Scope of Work did not include equitable distribution of effective teachers, and a clear approach to planning and implementing a prescribed intervention model was not evident for the lowest performing schools. This application does not provide a systemic approach to reform, and therefore does not meet the absolute priority requirement.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	227
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1



Montana Application #3350MT-5

A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	43
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	34
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	5

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

A (1)(i) MT is committed to the 4 main areas in the Recovery Act (AARA) and the narrative summarizes actions it has or will take to pursue reasonable goals in three areas. It is less clear what its goals are in the turn around school area where its participation is conditioned by the large number of small schools and reasonable levels of performance. This places it in the low end of the high range.

A(1)(ii) MT has a good level of participation with 82% of LEAS; 92% of students in poverty and 94% of all students. All 82% of LEAS are committed to all elements of the MOU and there a solid range of signatures from relevant parties. The summary table seems to have a greater level of specificity about the element of the scope of work than Exhibit 1 of the MOU - headed "preliminary scope of work" but this can be clarified if need be at Tier 2. Pending that the participation is in the high range.

A (1)(iii) The good coverage of LEAs and especially those serving students in poverty, suggest that statewide impact will be attained but the narrative makes no explicit reference to subgroups of children such as American Indians or to decreasing between group achievement gaps. There are general references to increasing graduation rates and college attendance but these also lack specificity that might underpin an assessment of statewide impact. MT does not offer evidence or data about statewide goals overall or for subgroups as required by the criterion although there is NAEP sub group data in Addendum 3 (1) suggesting it is not due to a lack of information. These shortcomings produce a low score in the middle range.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	19
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	12
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7

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

(A) (2) (i) The MT Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has three dedicated teams and will establish a fourth (Great Teachers and Leaders) that align with the RTTT priorities although the three available action plans are of variable quality as some lack deadlines and specific objectives. The narrative for the fourth area stresses the importance of the Regional Service Areas in professional development- a reasonable assumption in a rural state. The budget appendix contains little by way of supporting narrative indicating how RTTT funds or State funds would support the activities in the plans with \$11.5 million going to grants to Regional Support agencies or to schools with little in the way of guidance as to what investments would

increase student performance or improve instruction. There is some commentary in A(2)(ii) on using state resources to support RTTT goals and activities and the strategic direction teams in the State Superintendent's office will oversee the use of funds. Overall this part of the plan lacks evidence that statewide capacity will be developed to meet the reform objectives. This places it in the low end of the medium range.

(A) (2) (ii) MT has assembled an encouraging set of letters to show stakeholder support although many of them are identical save for stationery and signature block. The AFT affiliate letter is a notable exception and, while it refers to partnership in plan development and how it urged local affiliates to sign on, it is weak in its support of the proposed reforms.

It is also notable that a group of business organizations paid for a consultant to help with the RTTT application.

There are STEM specific comments in the letters from the Economic Development Association and the mathematics and science teachers associations. There is nothing from State legislative leaders or mayors but there are letters of support from two American Indian groups.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	17
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	14
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(A)(3)(i) MT documents actions that are broadly consistent with three of RTTT's four reform areas but apart from one reference to MT's legislature voting funds for tuition loan repayments there is little mention of how State and Federal funds are being used to pursue reform. In effect there seems to be no sustained attempt by MT to look for those actions or policies which have improved student performance. This places the plan in the medium range.</p> <p>(A)(3)(ii) MT's NAEP data shows steady progress overall since 2003. The progress on narrowing achievement gaps is uneven with success on some dimensions and for some groups and not on others. MT's criterion reference test data shows the same mixed results although the three year data set could just be volatile for technical reasons. MT is clearly monitoring the issue within the context of its educating the whole child philosophy. The evidence on graduation rates is confined to the impressive AYP graduation rate of 82.6% for the class of 2008 and five paragraphs on actions that aim to increase graduation and college attendance. There is no data to allow for a cross year comparison. Overall this part of the plan is in the medium range.</p>		
Total	125	79

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(1)(i) MT has a memorandum of understanding with the Common Core Standards group which meets the criterion.</p>		

(B)(1)(ii) MT sets out the steps its State laws require before the standards can be adopted. The process ends sometime in 2011 depending on a "cost analysis." This falls outside the minimum range in the criterion.

(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(2)(i) There is some confusion in the narrative. MT claims to be a member of two "multi-state assessment consortia" but only includes documentation of the SMARTER consortium but this is sufficient to meet the criteria.</p> <p>(B)(2)(ii) There are 33 States in SMARTER according to the Appendix but no formal documentation from the Consortium. With a majority of States participating this falls in the high range.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	14
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(B)(3) The narrative shows that MT has devoted considerable time and intellect into how to roll out robust standards that build on existing State standards in Mathematics and Communication Arts and use established processes for professional development. MT has a good strategy for providing instructional and assessment materials to teachers; especially important in small and isolated schools. In general, MT's professional development and instructional support strategies are of a high quality and have been designed to meet the State's needs. The appendices have some broad phase in dates and general assignments of responsibility but the plan lacks specificity which, coupled with the apparent absence of active involvement of higher education institutions, puts it in the top of the medium range.</p>		
Total	70	44

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	12
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
(C)(1) MT has six of the required elements and plans to complete four more by September 2011.		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(C)(2) MT has has an impressive array of state partnerships between various databases across schools universities, children and family services and employment agencies that should inform better policy making and to improve teaching and learning. It is not clear who can access this data. For example, there is no explicit references to access by students, parents and researchers. Overall there is a lot of material on linking databases but little on ensuring accessibility. This places the plan at the top of the medium range.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	6

(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	2
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	2
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	2
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(C)(3)(i) MT recognizes that it needs to do more "to improve and standardize data acquisition, adoption and use of instructional improvement systems so that instructional practices are selected capitalizing on the best available information." But the plan seems to consist primarily of contacting an institute to "develop and implement a statewide plan." There are no specific timelines, goals or assigned responsibilities. This falls well short of a high quality plan.</p> <p>(C)(3)(ii) As there is yet to be a plan, there is little in the way of professional development related to it. But there are processes for consultation with users and existing data base and information system related training and support for district users and special education teachers. There are no targets for future training and no timetable. This produces a low score in the medium range.</p> <p>(C)(3)(iii) MT offers five pointers to ensure that its new longitudinal data base will be accessible to researchers and other users. If achieved, they will provide reasonable and ready access. But there are still no deadlines for when this might be realized. This again results in a low score in the medium range.</p>		
Total	47	21

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	14
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	4
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(D)(1)(i) MT's regulatory framework allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to certify teachers who have followed alternative preparation pathways independent of higher education institutions, which are selective in admissions, include school based supervised experience, and get equivalent qualifications and allow limited course work. It does not have an alternative path for principals. This meets the elements of a medium quality pathway.</p> <p>(D)(1)(ii) The pathways are in use "despite low interest" but the data provided to support this are poor- not in a time series, not for the most recent single year and omitting principals.</p> <p>(D)(1)(iii) MT has a sensible administrative system for identifying vacancies in hard to staff areas and fields, and arrangements with MT state university to address the needs of "Native American Learners" and "rural shortages."</p>		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	14
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3

(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	4
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	1
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	6

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

(D)(2)(i) MT has a reasonable plan to measure individual student growth although it has no specific timeline or delivery goals.

(D)(2)(ii) MT's process for establishing evaluation systems for teachers and principals does not seem to have adopted key features like multiple ratings categories - rather it seeks a "minimum level of standards", nor does it expressly make student growth a "significant" factor. The task force overseeing the process is representative of teachers and principals. Overall it is a weak process and scores in the low range.

(D)(2)(iii) The 5 lines of narrative in this section make no reference to "timely and constructive feedback" or to student growth data in annual evaluations for teachers and principals, which are the key elements of the criterion.

(D)(2)(iv) MT plans to use its teacher and principal evaluation system to inform local decisions about professional development but it leaves it "up to LEAs to establish compensation and growth mechanisms " for principals and does not favor "financial bonuses and rewards " for teachers. There are no references in the narrative to using evaluations for tenure or for removing ineffective educators. This sums to a low score.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

25 6

(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	2

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

(D)(3)(i) MT outlines a process to develop a plan to address the equitable distribution of teachers. It makes no mention of principals. There are no annual goals and no timeline. The plan is based on the premise that MT has "no intention to implement a rule that determines effectiveness of teachers and principals from the State level..." MT argues that it in doing so it respects "constitutional requirements for local control." The data in Appendix 3.1 purports that less than 2% of classes in MT are taught by teachers not highly qualified and hence no corrective action is needed. The State's definition of "Highly Qualified Teacher" is not as rigorous as the RTTT definition of "highly effective" which limits the plan's quality. Overall this part of the plan is minimally responsive to the RTTT criteria and falls in the low range.

(D)(3)(ii) MT describes various actions underway or planned to meet "HQT goals" but the goal for High Quality Teachers (HQT) is unspecified and without a timeline or quantifiable target. It also uses a definition that falls short of the RTTT criteria for "highly effective" teacher. Many of the actions are well conceived, like the teaching internships and regional sharing of specialist teachers, but there is little addressing the need for more science and mathematics teachers. The activities amount to a low quality plan.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

14 4

(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	2
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	2

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

(D)(4)(i) There are no references in the narrative to linking student growth with the student's teachers and principals nor in how the student performance data will be used to improve program effectiveness. This is a low quality plan in terms of RTTT criteria.

(D)(4)(ii) MT's Office of Public Instruction is collaborating with Montana State University on teacher preparation but the other actions outlined are not connected to assessments of which programs have been most successful in developing effective teachers and principals as required by this element. This earns a low score.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	5
(i) Providing effective support	10	3
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	2
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(D)(5)(i) MT has a reasonable approach to providing effective professional development - it is data driven and informed by a large scale pilot. It also addresses the needs of STEM teachers through a solid "road map." It would be strengthened by more specific goals and timelines and numerical targets. The absence of these milestones holds the proposal to the bottom of the medium range.</p> <p>(D)(5)(ii) The survey tool that MT cites as a way to ".. continuously improve" does not produce data on program effectiveness in terms of student outcomes. It is a checklist on training needs. The absence of this data or some reasonable proxy or process for assessment holds the proposal to the low range.</p>		
Total	138	43

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	0
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(E)(1) MT does not have authority to intervene in "specific areas of local school operation." MCA 20.3.106 suggests that the Office of Public Instruction has only supervisory powers. There is no clarity about MT's power to intervene in LEAs.</p>		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	14
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	9
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(E)(2)(i) MT has a clear plan to identify low performing schools.</p> <p>(E)(2)(ii) MT does have a plan to and a process to support LEAs in implementing a model of school turnaround which involves a comprehensive set of support services including "temporary alternative governance." But its approach is not directly related to the four models as set out in the RTTT notice, limiting the quality of the plan. There are no data about the number of schools involved or targeted, nor material that shows that MT has studied what is effective in school turnarounds or in strengthening school leadership through the use of data. This proposal earns points in the low range.</p>		
Total	50	14

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(F)(1)(i) MT increased the proportion of public expenditure on education even though overall outlays fell. This merits high points.</p> <p>(F)(1)(ii) MT's funding policies produce equitable allocations and recognize a variety of particular needs, including those of Native American and "at risk" students. These provisions meet the criteria.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	5
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	0
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	0
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	0
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(F)(2)(i) There are no laws directly prohibiting charter schools but there is a provision requiring potential charter schools to apply to the relevant LEA for approval to operate. This may inhibit applicants and LEAs with small numbers of students may seek to limit competition for students by rejecting applications in the name of efficiency. This is likely to limit the creation of charter schools in sparsely populated areas. In MT's case this provision is moderately inhibiting and falls in the medium range.</p> <p>(F)(2)(ii, iii & iv) MTs narrative does not respond to the criteria.</p> <p>(F)(2)(v) MT does not have provisions that allow for a public school to operate with control over its staffing and budget in the style of an autonomous school defined in the RTTT notice.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(F)(3) MT describes actions, activities and policies that combined suggest an overall environment generally favorable to the pursuit of improved educational outcomes. For example MT has acted to improve distance education and access to college, it has funded full time kindergarten targeted at low income children and invested in technology to reach all young learners in the State.</p>		
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)		
<p>MT provides a reasonable summary of various STEM activities in addition to those covered elsewhere in the plan. It has some interesting and innovative actions underway or planned around renewable energy. There are instances of partnerships with higher education and industry. But there is little specifically on STEM and women and girls and no specific deliverables and goals. That falls short of one the three criteria for this element.</p>		
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)		
<p>Despite a strong basis of State fiscal support for public education and teacher and practitioner involvement in plan development, the overall plan is weak. It does not "comprehensively and coherently" address all four areas of desired action. The sections of the plan dealing with data systems to support instruction and improving teacher and principal effectiveness are particularly weak. There is a noticeable lack of a credible approach to teacher and principal evaluation using student growth. The plan seldom includes quantifiable goals or targets or specific deadlines or delivery dates.</p>		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	220
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Montana Application #3350MT-7



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	54
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	38
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	12

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

(A)(1)(i) The State has set forth an ambitious but achievable reform agenda that articulates its goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas described in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and improving student outcomes statewide. The areas addressed include increasing student achievement in reading/language arts, decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, increasing high school graduation rates and increasing college enrollment. The overall process for reform in the ARRA areas will fall under the state's "Fifth to First" reform agenda. The state's from "Fifth to First" reform agenda is based on a 4 year, tiered intervention process with plans to use Race to the Top (RTTT) funds to implement fifteen integrated projects that are designed to accelerate current reforms, innovate new efforts requiring a radical redesign of current protocols, and reinforce the infrastructure required to sustain fundamental reform. Although the state's goals reflect high expectations and are very ambitious, they appear to be achievable.

A)(1)(ii) (a) The participating LEAs appear committed to the State's plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas, as evidenced by Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). Montana reports the substantial participation of 536 (53.1%) Local Education Agencies (LEAs) who have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to support the plan, which includes the terms and conditions that reflect some degree of commitment, although not a strong commitment (Statements of support are formulaic and general) by the participating LEAs to the state's plans.

A)(1)(ii) (b) The scope-of-work descriptions require participating LEAs to implement all or significant portions of the state's Race to the Top plans. Only 213 of Montana's 536 LEAs agreed to totally support of **all** reform initiatives, while 323 LEAs agreed to only conditionally support the great teachers and leaders components of ARRA. This lack of **total LEA** support of **all** ARRA education reform areas may inhibit the proposed statewide impact of Montana's reform efforts. With this reported variance in LEA participation, the state does not fully meet the RTTT terms and conditions that reflect strong commitment by the participating LEAs to the state's plans.

A)(1)(ii)(c) Montana partially meets the requirements of this component, which includes obtaining signatures from as many as possible of the LEA's superintendents, the president of the local school board, and the local teachers' union leaders, and one signature which must be from an authorized LEA representative, demonstrating the extent of leadership support within participating LEAs. The state reported required letters of support, including 100% of LEA superintendents or equivalent and presidents of local school boards; however, only 331 local teachers' union leaders provided letters of support. The state's explanation for less than 536 letters of support from local teachers' unions is that this requirement is not applicable to eight public school districts, 196 community schools, and one STEM school.

(A)(1)(iii) Montana anticipates serving 62% of its schools, 61.6% of its K-12 students, and 66.3% of students living in poverty of the LEAs that are participating in the state's Race to the Top plans. These percentages are significant in supporting the state's reform, and the state projects this will translate into ensuring broad statewide impact, allowing the state to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroups.

(A)(1)(iii) (a) The state's plan for increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA is achievable. Montana will work with schools and LEAs to implement reforms that will increase student achievement in reading and math on the NAEP and CRT assessments. These reforms include the adoption of the common core standards, which will raise the bar for student achievement across the state. These standards have been developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and experts, and are designed to ensure students are adequately prepared for higher education and rewarding careers. Participating LEA's adoption of these standards will give Montana schools common goals to work towards, and it is predicted that ultimately they will lead to Montana's goal of increasing statewide achievement on NAEP and the ESEA mandated CRT tests. Although Montana describes its goals of improving student achievement through the adoption of standards and the implementation of CRT testing, the state does not adequately establish a clear and credible path to achieving these goals.

A)(1)(iii) (b) Montana provides data on decreasing the achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA; however, the NAEP data indicates that the achievement gap between white and Native American students, between white students and students with disabilities, and between white students and students participating in the National School Lunch Program is not improving significantly. For example, the state reports that the achievement gap between the white student group and the American Indian student group for both 8th and 4th grade students in reading indicates, without exception, that the white student group has performed at a higher level. In addition, the state reports that the achievement gap between the white student group and the American Indian student group for both 8th and 4th grade students in math indicates, without exception, that the white student group has performed at a higher level. In the 8th and 4th grade, this difference has increased across the period. Also the state reports that the achievement gap between the white student group and the students with disabilities group for both 8th and 4th grade students in reading indicates, without exception, that the white student group has performed at a higher level. This difference has averaged about 37 points for both grades over the time period and there appears to be no definitive change in direction. Moreover, the state reports that the achievement gap between the white student group and the students participating in the National School Lunch Program group for both 8th and 4th grade student in reading indicates, without exception, that the white student group has performed at a higher level. This difference has averaged about 13 points for 8th grade groups and has decreased over the time period. The average difference at the 4th grade level is about 15 points and has also decreased over time. Finally, the state reports the achievement gap between the white student group and the students with disabilities group for both 8th and 4th grade students in math indicates, without exception, that the white student group has performed at a higher level. In the 4th grade, this difference has decreased slightly overall across the period. For 8th grade students there appears to be no definitive change in direction. Despite the state's past efforts, the achievement gap persists and the stated RTTT goals do not comprehensively address how the state can reverse this trend.

A)(1)(iii) (c) Montana reports that another indication of the success of the state's education programs is a steady increase in high school graduation rates. The class of 2008 adequate yearly progress (AYP) graduation rate overall was 82.6%. Although Montana states that it has successfully implemented several strategies to increase high school graduation rate, including implementing RTI at the secondary school level and the application of the whole child education model to secondary schools, the state only provides one data element, which is insufficient evidence for demonstrating changes in improving graduation rates.

A)(1)(iii) (d) The state did not provide adequate evidence to support how they plan to increase college enrollment and did not present any data on increasing the number of students who complete at least a year's worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education. Montana discussed how its schools are investing in college and career readiness

standards to better prepare students for post-secondary opportunities, and included examples of their initiatives such as the Montana's Big Sky Pathways program of study that prepares students for today's global economy and the Montana Career Information System (MCIS) which is a tool for career exploration and planning; however, the success of these initiatives is **not** evidenced by supportive details.

(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) (a)- Montana reports that building collaborative teams at the school level allows educators to meet and troubleshoot issues as they arise concerning assessment processes, data collection, and analysis in a broader contextual framework so that instruction and interventions can be adapted to meet student needs. At the school level, these collaborative teams exist as grade-level, subject area (communications arts and mathematics) and data teams. These collaborative teams conduct assessments and interventions, and provide these assessments to their school leadership, to Regional Service Area (RSAs), and finally to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) where new instructional tools, professional development, and additional supports are designed and distributed. Within this structure a continuous cycle of assessments and adaptations drives student success with locally inspired reforms. Standards are set by the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE), and OPI provides the centralized support necessary to ensure the RSAs meet common benchmarks for student success. Teams at the state level are managed through the office of the State Superintendent, and resulted from the Strategic Direction Action Plan. To administer and assess this plan the State Superintendent created Strategic Direction Teams that match the four assurances of ARRA, and these teams will supervise the administration of RTTT, focusing on student improvement, achievement, and success. The current Strategic Direction Teams include P-20 and Achievement, Analyzing and Using Data, Turnaround Schools, and the Great Teachers and Leaders Strategic Direction Team.

Montana describes each team with some degree of detail depicting what appears to be achievable team goals and action plans for each team. The OPI P-20 and Achievement Strategic Direction Team is a strategic initiative effort that affects many projects and units within the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and its interaction with external agencies, entities, and organizations. The plan is to reduce barriers to the smooth transition of Montana students into the K-12 system; help them navigate elementary, middle, and high school careers; and assist in the transition to college or career. Through the plan, OPI will support quality education, promote success, and collaborate with Montana education partners and families. The Analyzing and Using Data Strategic Direction Team focuses on improving teaching and learning in Montana by guiding the data management initiatives and priorities of the agency, focusing on making accurate, reliable, valid and timely information available, and emphasizing research and analysis to improve decision-making. The Turnaround Schools Strategic Direction Team identifies targeted schools and develops intervention plans that will result in persistently low-performing schools being better able to increase student achievement and examine internal OPI programs and activities related to student achievement in order to recommend programmatic realignments resulting in strategic interventions with targeted schools. The Great Teachers and Leaders Strategic Team will utilize the existing Regional Service Areas (RSAs) to implement cohesive and directed professional development opportunities that support a roll out of each of the reforms and innovations described in this grant. Although each team is described with goals and actions plans, it is not clear how the teams will function as a cohesive unit to ensure the success of the proposed RTTT reforms.

(A) (2) (i) (b)- Montana's plan for supporting participating LEAs in successfully implementing the education reform plans the state has proposed, includes widely disseminating and replicating their RTI pilot statewide, holding LEAs accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary. Montana's RTTT reform is based on the reported successes of its Response to Intervention (RTI) pilot and the proposed reform initiative is to be a broadened version of the RTI pilot that will be implemented systemically. Montana states that its RTI reform initiative creates a multi-tiered system that supports local

school principals as instructional leaders, the use of data to guide instruction, appropriate intervention and practice, parental involvement, and other research-based practices. Based on lessons learned from its RTI pilot, Montana will build upon strong leadership and successes from past experiences; and the lessons learned will inform the administration of the proposed RTI reforms in the state's RTTT proposal. The management structures that the state has built with the Regional Service Areas (RSAs) coupled with the successful implementation of the RTI framework will be the catalyst for ensuring that Montana achieves its goals and sustains these proposed reforms beyond the four-year term of this grant. Although the state is building on an existing RTI pilot, the state does not clearly depict how the roll out of the plan will be accomplished, nor how the state will develop a strong capacity to implement, scale up and sustain the proposed plan.

(A) (2) (i) (c)-The effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing Montana's RTTT initiative will be supervised through the State Superintendent's office with solid support from the Governor's Office. Grant administration and oversight, budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting and fund disbursement will be managed from the State Superintendent's office through Montana's Strategic Direction Teams. The Strategic Direction Teams will link programs and services to the Regional Service Areas (RSAs), and from there to the local school teams.

(A) (2) (i) (d)- Montana reports that all current funding, including school improvement funds (SI), Longitudinal Data System Grants, and Title I funding complements the stated goals of their RTTT proposal, and is critical to the success of their comprehensive reform proposals and to strengthening the state's schools. Existing financial resources will be used in order to scale up and implement the state's RTTT proposal, including federal resources like the Early Learning Council grant, School Improvement Grant (SIG), Workforce Investment Act, College Access Challenge grants which will all support the reforms planed in Montana's Race to the Top application. State resources and FTE will be utilized to implement the plans most specifically for those agencies under the direction of the Governor. The Office of Public Information (OPI) has begun the process of aligning its resources to the agenda to RTTT statewide.

(A) (2) (i) (e)- Montana plans to build on the successes of its pilot RTI initiative, utilizing its principles and methods to cohesively integrate their proposed RTTT reforms, with the goal of improving classroom outcomes, student achievement, and successful reforms across the state. By expanding current RTI initiatives, Montana has the potential for creating an achievable structure that may sustain education reform and build future success.

(A) (2) (ii)- Montana has received overwhelming support for the Race to the Top application. Stakeholders — including state and local education agencies, labor unions, parent teacher associations, rural education associations, school administrators, Indian education associations, teachers associations, banks, industry representatives, economic developers, and private business partners — have all made significant investment in Montana's public schools.

These entities will be fully leveraged to maintain the reforms implemented as part of Race to the Top.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	18
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	15

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

(A)(3)(i) Montana reports having made progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and used its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms. These areas include standards and assessments, data systems, great teachers and leaders, and the ability to turn around Montana's lowest-achieving schools. Montana has funded and implemented the Achievement in Montana (AIM) and E-Grants systems, and the state is currently developing the Staffing Data System which is slated to provide the foundation for the linkage of teacher and principal evaluations with student performance. An alternative teacher licensure protocol is among the initiatives that the state proposes to enhance the skills of teachers and leaders. Montana reports having taken a very broad approach to turning

around its lowest-achieving schools by collaborating with the state's teachers' union (MEAMFT), and addressing some of Montana schools' unique challenges through the School Improvement Grant process.

Although Montana has made some progress through these state initiatives the state did not clearly and adequately show how it used its ARRA and other federal and state funding to pursue such reforms. Montana reports that the state has been fully engaged in the common core state standards initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The Office of Public Information (OPI) has conducted state-level alignment processes and has implemented criterion referenced test (CRT) and CRT-Alternate in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and math as well as for grades 4, 8, and 10 in science. These tests fulfill the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). In the area of assessment evaluations Montana has implemented the Achievement in Montana (AIM) program, which is a centralized collection point for student information and a useful tool for categorization developed by the state. AIM is intended to streamline the reporting of student-related data from LEAs to the SEA including enrollment and demographic data, eligibility for state and federal programs, registration for statewide assessments, and special education planning and reporting. The AIM data collection system will link to a State Longitudinal Data System (LDS) beginning with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Early Childhood Advisory Council (MECAC) data through post secondary education and the Montana University System (MUS) BANNER data system and Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) Workforce Services Division data that will identify early success and failure indicators in student progress. Through the Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS) assessment data is provided by individual student and can be analyzed to identify struggling students, prepare curricular assistance, and recommend credit recovery options. Early intervention through this process will ensure students make progress toward content area benchmarks. In the area of great teachers as leaders, the Montana Legislature appropriated \$350,000 per cohort to OCHE for the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program. This funding will provide loan repayment assistance to educators in order to move highly effective teachers and leaders into high need content areas and/or high need geographic areas. For turning around low performing schools, Montana has implemented a statewide Indian Education program to address the cultural issues inherent in Montana's educational system; school improvement grants (SIG), where the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has partnered with communities to apply for SIG as part of Montana's Schools of Promise initiative which will allow OPI to provide direct services to schools that do not have the local capacity to provide the higher level of services needed for significant academic growth; full-time kindergarten, which made early childhood education an absolute policy priority and the state began to fund full-time kindergarten; investing in literacy improvement: OPI is collaborating with a local non-profit organization, the Hopa Mountain Foundation, towards a common goal of improving literacy. OPI has already purchased 5,400 high-quality books for young children in low income families, a purchase that will be matched by Hopa Mountain in 2010; dual enrollment courses, making Montana one of seven states to receive Lumina Foundation "Making Opportunity Affordable" grant, now called College!Now, to implement to increase access to dual enrollment courses encompassing "Running Start", concurrent enrollment, early college and early college high school coursework; and STEM, the Governor and First Lady's Science and Math Initiative for encouraging Montana's youth to discover opportunities to learn about STEM in K-12 schools and higher education, become aware of career opportunities, and explore Montana's resource rich surroundings, including wind and solar and other renewable energy opportunities.

Even though Montana has implemented and explained a significant number of gap reducing initiatives in the narrative; the state does not provide convincing evidence of improving student outcomes. For example, only one data point for high school graduation (82.6 % graduation rate) is provided in the narrative and this was not provided with comparative data to allow for the understanding of how the data changed and impacted closing the gap. Data provided in the NAEP charts show that within the state on NAEP the gap is widening between Native Americans and the white group, as well as students with disabilities and students receiving free and reduced lunches and white students. The CRT

(Criterion Referenced Test) data is presented in disaggregated format and shows little change in the achievement gaps.

Total	125	95
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

(B)(1)(i) (a) The state documents its participation in a consortium of states that is working toward jointly developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards that are supported by evidence that they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. In May 2009 Governor Schweitzer and Superintendent Juneau signed a Memo of Understanding committing Montana to participation in the development of common core standards. Additionally, Montana revised and adopted its own content standards and performance descriptors in Mathematics in September 2009 and in Communication Arts in January 2010.

(B)(1)(i) (b) Montana has joined 51 other states and territories in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, Achieve, ACT, and the College Board.

(B)(1)(ii) Montana plans to adopt its standards January 2011 and therefore does not meet the requirement for Phase 2 applications, which requires the state's adoption of a common set of K-12 standards by August 2, 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) Montana is working toward jointly developing and implementing common, high quality assessments aligned with the consortium's common set of K-12 standards. The Board of Public Education (BPE) in partnership with Governor Brian Schweitzer and Superintendent Denise Juneau have committed to standards-based education with common assessments utilized by every district to inform instruction and pedagogy. According to ARM 10.55.603 the assessment of all students shall be used to examine the educational program and measure its effectiveness based on content and performance standards put forth by the BPE. The state's pursuit of increased validity and reliability in state assessment mechanisms has led Montana into entering into two multi-state assessment consortia so that they may work with other states, pursue economies of scale in the development and design of assessment tools, and increase the accountability of their schools. Montana is a member of the Summative Multi-state Assessment Resources for Teachers and Educational Researchers (SMARTER-Balanced).

(B)(2)(ii) Montana is a member with a significant number of states and has provided a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding which indicates that The SMARTER-Balanced Consortium has 33 member states.

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

(B)(3) In supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments, Montana presents an achievable plan and states its goal of transitioning from large scale summative assessments to evaluate students, to using the RTI model of school improvement that integrates formative assessments into instructional plans. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will roll out the statewide RTI reform initiative incorporating professional development and collaborative leadership teams.

In addition, Montana articulates its plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation, and assessments tied to these standards. The state is developing a roll out plan for the standards together with supporting components; in cooperation with the State's institutions of higher education, aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements with the new standards and assessments.

The state is in the process of developing instructional materials and assessments (including, for example, formative and interim assessments; planning for delivering high-quality professional development to support the transition to new standards and assessments) and has established a timeline and committees that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice. Although, Montana's explanation for rolling out the standards includes specific activities for teams and team leaders, and Regional Service Areas, the plan needs clarity with supporting specific details explaining how this will be accomplished at the LEA level. Also the plan does not provide details regarding activities involved in rolling out the assessments.

Total	70	48
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	12
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(C)(1) Montana's plan does not reflect a fully implemented statewide longitudinal data system. Montana's fulfillment of the America COMPETES Act Data Elements includes data elements that are complete and some that are in progress. America COMPETES Act Data Elements 4, 11, and 12 are listed as in progress, and the explanations provided do not adequately address how the state will fulfill the requirements for the element. For data element 4 the explanation provided is "<i>Policies are not in place to require school districts to include the K- 12 statewide student identifier on the high school transcript</i>". The explanation for data element 12 is "<i>No new data needs have been identified yet, but may be identified in policy discussions</i>". Points are awarded for 6 of 12 data elements. Data elements 8,9, and 10 are listed as future initiatives. Although Montana has the capacity to fulfill the data elements, only six are fully implemented, plus the state does not clearly depict their linkages to higher education.</p>		
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	3
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>(C)(2) In the area of accessing and using state data the state reports working to improve its use of data by coordinating and aligning data systems with agency partners. The Office of Public Information is working with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE), the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS), and the Department of Labor and Industry to align organizational data systems with K- 12 with a focus on interagency governance structures that link data across information systems. This plan appears to be achievable because it links key components, providers, and processes, forming a comprehensive system of delivery; however, the details are not clear on how the state provides access to stakeholders outside of government agencies.</p>		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12

(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	4

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

(c) (3) (i)- Montana's student information system, AIM, is a comprehensive data collection system for student information. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) assigns each student a unique statewide student identifier at the first point of contact with the public school system. The identifier does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system, and this may limit the opportunity of using student data to inform instruction. OPI then collects student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information. Student-level information about exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or completion of P-12 educational programs is maintained in AIM. The Montana Board of Regents has adopted a policy requiring all Montana high school transcripts sent to the MUS include the K-12 statewide student ID. OPI stores the yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments and information on students not tested by grade and subject within the production data system and also has a basic data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability within the AIM system. Montana's schools embraced the concept of this system and use it at the LEA and SEA levels for reporting. Montana acknowledges that *"much can be done to improve and standardize our data acquisition, adoption, and use of instructional improvement systems so that instructional practices are selected capitalizing on the best available information"*. Even though Montana has expanded AIM and LEAs use the system, by the state's own admission, AIM does not adequately meet the highly effective guidelines of informing instruction.

(c) (3) (ii)-Montana plans to obtain input from teachers, leaders and other educators on how the AIM data system may be enhanced and implemented statewide, with a focus on quality and utilization. A group of K-12 statewide education associations meet monthly, forming an education forum, which includes representatives from the Montana Educators Association- Montana Federation of Teachers (MEA-MFT), the Montana School Boards Association, School Administrators of Montana, Montana Rural Education Association, AA School Districts, Montana Small Schools Alliance, Montana School Business Officials, and the Montana Indian Education Association. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) coordinated the Education Forum facilitating linkages and support from representatives of the Board of Education, the Board of Regents, and the Office of the Governor. Together the Education Forum provides support for the P-20 longitudinal data system grant articulation and planning process. The K-12 educator advisory group known as the School Advisory Group on Education(SAGE) is already in place and will continue its advisory role for the purposes of this project in order to ensure the ongoing involvement of diverse stakeholders. SAGE is comprised of 11 members representing schools of various sizes, geography, and approaches to student information systems. This group will help define the web reporting tools for users of P-20 data and in assessing local needs for additional training and integration of the new system into professional development and classroom activities. Montana has included all stakeholders in the process in an effort to build a structure for support that reflects the perspectives of its stakeholders. It appears that Montana's system of supporting schools and teachers in using instructional improvements can be effective because of the state's efforts to garner support and receive input at all levels. Though not comprehensive (lacks clear and achievable goals, specific supporting activities, persons responsible, timeline, evaluation, and follow up) there is a plan for incorporating professional development.

(c) (3) (iii)- In addition to the data integration and analytical capabilities that SAS is bringing to Montana, the state anticipates development and implementation of a plan that allows for quality reporting mechanisms that ensure the data are accessible and utilized by researchers and education professionals to adapt instructional methods and test effectiveness as judged by student achievement. Montana states that it plans to ensure that it informs education practice in classrooms and will look to the SAS Institute to provide guidance and planning so that the new AIM longitudinal data warehouse makes compliance reporting accurate and straightforward; includes provisions for users without significant statistical skills to access and explore the

data they need to make critical decisions; quickly integrates new data and provides access to pre-written summative and predictive reports and queries for users, requires minimal software overhead for end users, and enables access for multiple kinds of users, including analysts, educators and policymakers.

By expanding AIM data system with SAS, it appears that Montana is moving toward a more comprehensive data reporting system that better meets the needs of its stakeholders and that has the potential for providing data that are available to researchers. Montana presents an ambitious yet workable plan that includes clear goals and specific activities that, if successfully implemented, will provide much needed data integration, analysis and reporting and empower LEAs, schools, and teachers with easily accessible student information that they can use strategically to inform instruction and provide administrators with vital information for school improvement. The implementation of this statewide system will require monumental degrees of capacity building, merging an existing limited system (Montana's Student Information System- AIM) with a new upgraded system (SAS Institute partnership) and on-going professional development activities that require both technical skills and analysis at all levels and that are aligned regionally and with local LEAs. Given the need for planning to merge new and existing data systems and the need for massive statewide professional development, Montana's efforts to implement data system reforms will require tremendous structural changes. It appears that the state is preparing to successfully meet challenges and it appears that the stated goals are achievable.

Total	47	27
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

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

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

(D) (1) (i)- Montana provides high quality pathways to certification for aspiring teachers but not for principals, and is attempting to meet the requirements for this standard. The state clearly explained legal, statutory, and regulatory provisions that allow alternative routes to certification for teachers that are the result of the high standards set by the Board of Public Education (BPE) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), which are defined under Administrative Rule of Montana (ARM) 10.57.201 authorizing the responsibility of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue a license to an individual who submits acceptable evidence of completion of an accredited professional educator program. ARM 10.57.424 allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to issue an alternative license (the Class 5) which is valid for a three-year term. An applicant must submit a plan of professional intent that leads to a regular license within the three-year timeframe. Through these rules, OPI also encourages and supports National Board Certification, as well as the Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) program. Although Montana has in place varied alternative pathways for certification for teachers, there is low participation statewide in many of the initiatives. The state does not have similar options for administrators at this time.

(D)(1)(ii) Alternative routes to certification that are in use in Montana include National Board Certification, as well as the Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) program. NPTT is a high-quality, compact distance-learning program that has been a successful alternative route to certification that provides a path to teacher certification designed to meet the needs of career professionals who are interested in transitioning into the teaching profession seamlessly from prior careers. ARM 10.57.201(2)(C) provides an additional alternative path to certification via National Board Certification (NBC), and the Office of Public

Instruction (OPI), in partnership with the teacher's union(MEA-MFT) provides incentives and support to educators who wish to pursue NBC. This process is a series of performance-based assessments that includes teaching portfolios, student work samples as well as video and analyses of the teacher's classroom teaching and student learning. This collection of materials is compiled over the course of a regular school year and is submitted in the spring. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) also provides for a Class 5 Alternative license per ARM 10.57.424 (Appendix D(1)-II). This license is valid for three years while a mid-career professional completes an OPI approved plan of study to earn regular teacher certification. The Class 5 Alternative license is most typically used when a candidate holds a bachelor's degree in an endorsable subject area but still needs to complete an accredited teacher preparation program. The Class 5 provides an opportunity for professionals to bring their experience back into the classroom after completing training in curriculum and instruction, and these teachers enhance and broaden the knowledge base of our entire teaching force. The state reports that there is low interest in alternative certification and participation is not widespread. Because of low participation in alternative certification statewide and because there is no plan for principals, it is difficult to gauge the state's level of commitment to this required component. At this time it appears that the state may not be fully committed to providing and supporting alternative pathways to certification for both principals and teachers.

(D) (1) (iii) Montana's well organized process for monitoring, evaluating, and identifying areas of teacher and principal shortage and for preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage was implemented in 2007 when the the Montana Legislature responded to the critical teacher and principal shortage by passing MCA 20-4-502-506 implementing the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program requiring the Board of Public Education (BPE) to identify specific LEAs and licensure or endorsement areas impacted by Critical Quality Educator Shortages. To meet this statutory requirement and monitor, evaluate, and identify areas of need, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) conducts a yearly survey of Montana's LEAs. OPI has developed a rubric for scoring the needs Critical Quality Educator Shortage areas based on rural isolation, economic disadvantage, and low student achievement. These three factors are weighted to set a threshold for identifying impacted schools.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	22
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	7
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	3
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	7

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

D)(2)(i) Montana's plan has established clear approaches to successfully measuring achievement, but not student growth measures for each individual student. Currently, Montana utilizes a Criterion Reference Test (CRT) as a summative assessment data source for student achievement and growth; however, the CRT addresses student achievement but not individual student growth. Through the use of this data Montana is able to compare schools across the state to determine the efficacy of their education programs. Through the new assessment strategies including Achievement in Montana (AIM), and the state partnership with the SAS Institute, Montana proposes to integrate more reliable assessment tools in the classroom that will inform and direct instruction, determine professional development needs, and assess areas where schools need additional support and intervention. These assessments are being designed with the needs of the student as the central factor. Through RTTT, Montana will be able to better define student achievement, and LEAs, teachers, and administrators will have the tools they need to ensure their students meet benchmarked standards of achievement as set by the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE).

(D)(2)(ii) Montana has not successfully designed and implemented rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and are designed and

developed with teacher and principal involvement. BPE has established through administrative rule, ARM 10.55.701(5) requirements that local boards of trustees have written policies and procedures for regular and periodic evaluation of all regularly employed administrative, supervisory, and teaching personnel; however, there are no multiple rating categories and student growth (difference between point A and point B) is not a significant evaluation factor.

(D)(2)(iii) Montana's RTTT proposal calls for minimum standards for annual teacher and principal evaluation to be established as part of the review of Chapter 55 in the ARM. In addition, the state is planning on creating evaluation tools that are transparent, reliable, and serve to inform instruction and Race to the Top State of Montana Phase 2 Application. In order to achieve these goals, Montana plans to consistently implement these tools so that all stakeholders can rely on the data garnered. The state did provide adequate explanations of their RTTT plans to conduct annual evaluations of principals and teachers; however, the state did not provide convincing evidence of plans to conduct annual evaluations of teachers and principals that include timely and constructive feedback and provide teachers and principals with data on student growth for their students, classes, and schools.

(D)(2)(iv) (a) Montana provides a solid plan for developing teachers and principals, including by providing relevant coaching, induction support, and/or professional development. The state's new reforms in educator evaluation and related training programs will seek to fulfill four of the eight fixed essential components of RTI, including evidence-based curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, data-based decision-making, and ongoing training and professional development. This new model will give the educators the proper resources and support to effectively meet students at their specific educational needs, enlarging and stocking educator toolboxes with innovative instructional approaches that will drive student achievement and success of the whole child. The state provides detailed discussion of each of the four components and clearly explained how they will impact teachers and principals.

D)(2)(iv)(b) To complete the evaluation process, districts will determine appropriate teacher commendation, compensation, and transparent performance ratings through collective bargaining. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed evaluation standards for principals that will direct the reform process in Montana. The state reports that a Principal Professional Growth Plan *"could also be a natural outcome"* of the evaluation process, where the principal identifies goals and areas needing improvement as well as professional development opportunities or other means to achieving these goals. It will be up to LEAs to establish compensation and promotion mechanisms that appropriately reward principal effectiveness and leadership. The state reports that *"merit systems based largely on assessment scores change the educational dynamic in the classroom. Rather than encouraging teachers to develop the whole child and promote learning and leadership, these pay structures reward a financial motivation based on test scores that may or may not objectively measure student achievement Montana schools do not currently utilize merit pay structures based on student achievement, and yet our students are achieving"*. Although the state provided explanations of teacher and principal growth plans, Montana does not provide convincing evidence for compensating, promoting, and retaining teachers and principals, including by providing opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals to obtain additional compensation and be given additional responsibilities.

D)(2)(iv)(c) Montana did not adequately address whether to grant tenure and/or full certification to teachers and principals using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures; and

D)(2)(iv)(d) Montana did not adequately address 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.

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

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

(D)(3)(i) Montana reports that there is no system currently in place to accurately and consistently measure teacher effectiveness. Montana states that there is no intention to implement a rule that determines the effectiveness of teachers and principals from the state level in the requirements for LEAs teacher and principal evaluations. The state will propose minimum evaluation criteria for all LEAs be adopted by the BPE.

(D)(3)(ii) Montana presents plans to increase the number and percentage of highly qualified teachers **but does not** address highly effective teachers teaching hard-to-staff subjects. The state does not provide data showing the increase in the number and percentage of effective teachers in speciality areas including mathematics, science, and special education and teaching in language instruction educational programs. In reporting its high poverty profiles, the state evidence includes the number of core academic classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified and the percentage of core academic classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified; however this data does not reflect increases in the number and percentage of effective teachers.

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

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

(D)(4)(i) The state does not have a high quality plan in place to accurately link student achievement and student growth data to the students' teachers and principals. Montana reports that there is no system currently in place to accurately and consistently measure achievement and growth of students. The Office of Public Information has been funded by the state and is currently developing a staffing modules system which is projected to have the capacity to link such data. However, the state if funded plans to implement its RTI model, which includes evidence based curriculum and instruction, on-going assessment, data-based decision making, ongoing training and professional development.

(D)(4)(ii) A high quality plan includes clear goals, supporting activities, persons responsible and evaluation; however, Montana's plan does not appear to include these components. The state presents sketchy plans for expanding preparation and credentialing options and programs. The state mentions working with the university system and also the state mentions the Professional Educator Preparation Program Standards as partners in developing assessments; however, there is no clear plan for how this will occur.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	8
(i) Providing effective support	10	4
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	4

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

(D)(5)(i) The state provides a matrix detailing training and implementation plans for its proposed RTI model for providing effective support to teachers and principals. The RTI training model is a three-phased system with specific benchmarks and development processes. Within Montana's systemic Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, educators select and administer ongoing skill assessments that identify the instructional needs of all students. The best practice teaching cycle includes concept instruction, assessing for learning, and differentiating instruction based upon assessment data. When this cycle is ongoing, teaching is supported and student learning and achievement is optimized. Although the state asserts that the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) will work with LEAs to roll out the Montana plan, the state does not provide a solid plan or clear goals for providing data-informed professional development, coaching,

induction and common planning and collaboration time to teachers and principals that are on-going or job imbedded.

(D)(5)(ii) To measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of supports in order to improve student achievement Montana currently utilizes a survey tool to measure, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of RTI implementation in the 111 pilot schools. Using RTTT resources, the state plans to integrate this survey tool into their new data collection capabilities under development in partnership with the SAS Institute; however, the plan is not fully developed and is missing goals and timelines.

Total	138	65
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	0

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

(E)(1) Montana reports that the superintendent of public instruction has the general supervision of the public schools and districts of the state; however, the state description does not define the state's role as having the legal, statutory or regulatory authority to intervene directly in Montana's persistently lowest achieving schools and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status. While Montana's constitution provides support for local control, statutory and case law has resulted in structural partnerships between LEAs and the State Education Agency, allowing for high standards to be set at the state level while policy and administration is implemented by the LEA at the local level according to their own locally elected leadership. Although the state recognizes the need for change in expectations and practice in order to be more successful in making a difference with its lowest-achieving schools, the state's Office of Public Information (OPI) is currently limited but is seeking broader authority to intervene in persistently low achieving schools via administrative rule change with the Board of Public Education. Montana appropriately notes the reality of these challenges presented and that there is a great need for capacity building at all levels before improvement efforts can be realized.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	14
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	9

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

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest achieving schools- The state has a credible plan for identifying lowest-achieving schools that includes looking at high school graduation rates, Title I status, language arts and math proficiency rates utilizing the Single Percentage Method as defined in the USDOE guidance. Currently Montana's plan addresses only Tier I schools since the Tier II and Tier III classifications do not identify additional groups of schools that need support from the Office of Public Instruction.

(ii) Turning Around the Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools- The state plans to use the transformation improvement model, as it believes it works best with the current RTI initiative; however, the state does not include the required components of a transformation model as required for RTTT applications. For example, the state reports that one approach to the transformation model involves state support and a Turnaround Team Intervention (The team is called a Chapter 55 Review Task force). The task force is under the direction of the Board of Public Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction, who directed the 30 member stakeholder group to examine and recommend turn around models, which would allow

LEAs flexibility to focus on individual needs. Montana's plan has weak performance measures and lacks a high quality plan that clearly show the use of a transformational model nor does it provide a plan that adheres to the requirements for a turn around model. Also the state does not provide the required details on procedural guidance for the task force in selecting programs and strategies to be implemented in schools; nor did the state present clear supporting data for determining LEA needs and for identifying best practices that the task force would be recommending.

Total	50	14
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F. General

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

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

(i) The percentage of the state's total revenues used to support public elementary, secondary, and higher education appears to have decreased from 2008 to 2009. There appears to be a discrepancy in the reported percentage rates and the listed expenditures for K-12; the expenditure amounts show a drop between 2008 and 2009; however the reported percentages show an increase. Therefore, due to a possible discrepancy, the score for this criterion is low.

(ii) The state clearly reported its policies related to equitable funding between high-need LEA's and other LEA's or between high-poverty schools and other schools. Therefore the points for this criterion are high.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	9
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	1
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	0
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	0
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0

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

(F)(2)(i) State law permits the formation of charter schools by Montana's Charter School Act and does not cap the number of high-performing charter schools by percentage of total schools in the state that are allowed to be charter schools. The State does have a charter school law; however, the state reports that there are currently no charter schools in existence in Montana. Although the law has been in place for 12 years, no district has requested a charter school.

(F)(2)(ii) Although the state does permit charter schools by statute, the fact that there are no charter schools indicate the state's lack of commitment to operating innovative public schools and providing guidance and procedures for establishing, monitoring, accountability and supporting charter schools. Montana attributes its lack of charter schools to the rural and frontier districts that exist.

(F)(2)(iii) Since there are no charter schools, there is no evidence that the state's charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools, and a commensurate share of local, state, and federal revenues.

(F)(2)(iv) Since there are no charter schools, there is no evidence to determine if the state provides charter schools with funding for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, access to public facilities, the ability to share in bonds and mill levies, or other supports; and the extent to which the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools

(F)(2)(v) The state does not provide evidence that it enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charter schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>The state notes several programs that serve as examples of the state's commitment and effort in supporting reform conditions and improving important outcomes. Examples of these reform initiatives include the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, focusing on early childhood education; full time kindergarten, and the College Now initiative, funded by the Lumina foundation for Education to improve the productivity of the post-secondary system. Although the state describes these programs as examples of reform initiatives, the state does not clearly support or explain how these initiatives have increased student achievement or graduation rates, or narrowed achievement gaps.</p>		
Total	55	20

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	0
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>STEM initiatives listed include the Governor's vision of the Montana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Renewable Energy Plan with a renewable energy focus; the Big Sky Pathways, a partnership with the State Department of Labor and Montana University to foster career development; The Southwest Montana Science Partnership featuring a blended learning model for professional development; and Wind for Schools, a live project featuring turbines installed in communities to educate future leaders on the role of wind energy. The Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative focuses on rerouting, training, and retaining highly qualified math and science teachers. The Newslate program focuses on the integration of technology. Although the state reports many activities, the state does not provide a STEM framework in the budget, there is no rigorous course of study; and there is no recruitment money in the budget to increase STEM. The initiatives presented do not address the STEM criteria to increase the participation of girls and women.</p>		
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)		

Montana's proposal is an attempt to invigorate its public education program; however, the state's application does not comprehensively and coherently address the four ARRA education reform areas. The state has presented a proposal that demonstrates its attempt to address all of the RTTT reform areas. Although the state plans for the adoption of common core curriculum standards, Montana has not provided a solid plan for how their proposed reforms will improve student achievement. The state was unable to provide convincing evidence of providing for the increase of effective teachers, and has failed to provide cohesive plans to support the growth and development of principals. The state does not present a solid plan for school improvement efforts and the state longitudinal data system to evaluate the effectiveness of their proposed reform initiatives needs more development. The critical mass of participation has a degree of uncertainty as to the level of support and commitment for a statewide impact in the implementation of the state reform measures. While the state provides a host of activities and programs (some that appear to be promising), there does not appear to be a cohesiveness process to roll-out its plan. Overall, the plan lacks accountability measures for coherently implementing the state's proposed reform initiatives.

Total		0
Grand Total	500	269



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 1

Montana Application #3350MT-4



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	54
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	40
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	10
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>i. Applicant provides a reform agenda that incorporates all four RTTT components. The RTTT components are consistent with Applicant's vision and strategies for "evidenced-driven and standards-based education. Applicant clearly states its uniqueness in describing its long history of providing for local control of community-based school systems with appropriate oversight from the state level.</p> <p>ii. Applicant secured MOU commitments from 82% of the LEAs which represent 86% of its schools, 94% of its students and 92% of its students living in poverty. All of these LEAs have committed to each component of Applicant's reform proposal. In addition to the critical mass of LEAs, all of the MOUs are signed by local Teacher's Union leaders, where applicable.</p> <p>iii. Applicant's statewide impact will depend on how each of the participating LEAs implements the intent of the reform agenda within the guidelines of decisions that are subject to local control.</p> <p>Applicant's significant positive academic performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and its relatively high graduation rate, which are both above the national average, suggest that how the state partners with LEAs to determine the specific needs of each community and responds accordingly has produced positive student outcomes that should only continue to get better with the implementation of its reform agenda. The Applicant's statewide averages from its Criterion-Reference Test exams used for AYP purposes show positive results on trend data for decreasing achievement gaps among American Indians and Hispanic students as well as achieving significant progress for low-income students. However, data were not available to gauge progress on increasing college enrollment.</p> <p>However, the significant changes that are part of the RTTT assurances will represent a significantly expanded level for a change agenda that will challenge the delicate balance between traditional state and local control.</p>		
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	22
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	14
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		

i. Applicant has demonstrated its capacity to support reform efforts with 111 schools that represent 14% of its total schools with the successful implementation of its Response to Intervention. This successful comprehensive model for whole school improvement will be consistently integrated into the implementation of the RTTT reforms and innovations. However, building upon the success of a best practice model used with a small number of schools could become a capacity issue for statewide implementation. Applicant's use of new Strategic Action Teams and existing Regional Service Centers and its abbreviated P - 20 Achievement Strategic Action Plan does not address the needed details that should be included in a comprehensive implementation action plan.

Applicant in 2005 strategically created Regional Service Areas (RSAs) to provide support to individual LEAs and to serve as centers for collaboration among the LEAs. In addition, Applicant has developed a Strategic Action Plan which is supported by Strategic Action Teams that match the four assurances of RTTT. While the Applicant has outlined a budget that will support the reform initiatives, details how the existing funding structure will transition at the completion of the grant to continue to support the reform initiatives are not clear.

ii. Applicant has shown a broad level of stakeholder support by providing an array, but limited number, of stakeholder letters. Stakeholders include state and local education agencies, labor unions, parent associations, Indian education associations, and businesses. Additional support was received from four businesses in the private sector who funded the consultant for this proposal. Support is not evident from the State Legislature.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	24
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	3
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	21
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)		
<p>i. Applicant provides specific examples of progress made of initiatives that address each of the four RTTT reform areas. Examples include: implementation of a criterion reference test, the Achievement in Montana (AIM) data collection system for student information, the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program that provides assistance to educators recruited for assignments in high need areas, and the use of School Improvement Grants to support the transformation model for school improvement in low-achieving schools. Applicant's progress in each reform area is promising but not yet completely comprehensive in nature to support capacity for statewide implementation.</p> <p>ii. Applicant has provided documentation of significant positive trend data which shows impressive student achievement results on NAEP and its own ESEA- required criterion reference tests. Applicant's results are not only above the national average but are in the top 20% of all states. Applicant has documented the recognition it received from the Education Trust for their success in closing performance gaps for low-income students and in Indian and Hispanic subgroups of their population. However, the Applicant's state data actually indicates some widening of the achievement gap among some student subgroups.</p> <p>Applicant has shown a steady increase in high school graduation rates that in 2008 attained 82.6%. This is an an indication of successful academic programs that provide focused support for students.</p>		
Total	125	100

B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	20

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20
(ii) Adopting standards	20	0
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>i. Applicant has signed a MOU with the Chief State School Officers to participate in the Common Core Standards Initiative joining 48 other states.</p> <p>ii. Applicant is currently pursuing the adoption of the Common Core Standards through the Office of Public Instruction using the timeline indicated in Appendix B (1) - VI which indicates that the adoption process will not be complete before January, 2011.</p>		
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>i./ii. Applicant is a member of the Summative Multi-state Assessment Resources for Teachers and Educational Researchers (SMARTER-Balanced) Consortium which includes 33 member states. Applicant's intention is to implement assessments developed from its Consortium participation into its classrooms.</p> <p>Applicant's MOU is found in Appendix B (2) - II.</p>		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	14
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>Applicant's transition to Common Core Standards and accompanying high-quality assessments is in the planning stages. Applicant has begun the transition to standards-based education through capacity gained by its previous work with "Visions for Montana Mathematics and Communications Arts". The Office of Public Instruction will create a development and implementation plan using this successful model. Applicant will build upon the established structures of its Regional Service Areas, which will provide support for directed professional development, collaborative leadership teams and best practice tools to ensure the transition and implementation to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments.</p> <p>Applicant has embraced the concepts presented in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development report, "The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action, A Report of the Commission of the Whole Child."</p> <p>Because of the Applicant's rural landscape, the use of online learning and regional professional development initiatives will be expanded.</p> <p>Applicant outlines numerous statewide strategies to support different levels of training that builds upon lessons learned from the assessment structure embedded in the RTI programs currently being piloted in 111 schools.</p> <p>Applicant appropriately provides support for formative assessments and has partnered with New Hampshire and Nimble Tools to study implementation of accommodations online.</p> <p>The Applicant's transition plan for the Rollout for the Common Core Standards, PD Model: Roles and Responsibilities, and Training levels for the new Common Standards has many elements of a high quality plan but the plan lack details as to the oversight structure and targets for implementation that are embedded within the general timelines of the plan.</p>		
Total	70	44

iii. Applicant anticipates the development and implementation of a plan that will provide quality reporting mechanisms that will make data accessible to researchers and will be looking for guidance from SAS Institute in creating the new AIM longitudinal data warehouse.

i./ii./iii. Applicant, throughout this section on using data to improve instruction, has described some general structures and some evidence of progress with AIM and the expectation that OPI will develop a training plan that will provide technical assistance to users and the aspiration that data will be accessible to researchers. However, details for implementation with necessary budget support are lacking and impact the quality of this section.

Total	47	20
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	14
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	5
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	4
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	5

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

i. Applicant has the legal authority as defined under Administrative Rule of Montana (ARM) to have the State Superintendent of Instruction issue an alternative license through alternative routes to an individual who submits evidence of completion of an accredited professional educator program. Applicant does not mention whether institutes who operate independently of institutions of higher education are an option. Applicant does not have an alternative route to administrator certification.

ii. Applicant has received low interest for alternative routes for certification and, as a result, use of alternative routes seem to be a reduced priority. The Northern Plains Transition to Teaching program, for career professionals in programs other than teaching, provides a distance learning program that has been a successful alternative route for 109 candidates over the past two years.

Applicant has a task force that is reviewing the rules for alternative routes for administrators and teachers.

iii. Applicant's Legislature responded to the critical teacher and principal shortage by implementing the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program which provides a degree of support for attracting professionals in identified critical areas and for specific LEAs in need of support. The Indian Leadership and Development program that has resulted in licensure of 70 Native American school leaders is noteworthy.

Applicant conducts an annual survey to identify critical shortage areas. However, Applicant does not indicate results of this survey and the progress being made in meeting the needs of hard to fill vacancies in rural areas.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	26
(i) Measuring student growth	5	4
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	4
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	10

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

i. Applicant currently uses a state generated criterion reference test as a summative assessment for student achievement and growth. Applicant hopes to expand this system to include more robust assessments as part of its partnership with the SAS Institute. These expanded assessments will give LEAs additional "tools," which will include formative assessments, to ensure their students "meet benchmarked standards of achievement as set by the Board of Public Instruction (BPE)." However, details of how this will be accomplished are not evident.

ii. Applicant's BPE through ARM (Administrative Rule of Montana) requires LEAs to have written policies for regular and periodic evaluations of staff. The 2010 Annual Data Collection will contain a survey that will give the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) statewide baseline data of teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Applicant has assembled a Chapter 55 Review Task Force of 30 stakeholders, including principals and teachers, to review present evaluation systems and make recommendations for minimum standards and expectations for LEAs. Applicant has outlined a process to develop a plan but has not presented a high quality plan. Applicant does not indicate if the evaluation system will include multiple rating categories that will differentiate effectiveness for teachers and principals. In the new evaluation criteria, student growth "will be measured in terms of the whole child development and success, and achievement will be one of many factors that influence compensation and promotion."

As a result of the Task Forces work, accountability expectations for LEAs not aligned to minimum standards for evaluations are unclear. Applicant makes statement that, "local control is the essential element of sustainability and stakeholder investment in wholesale reform measures." And "it will be up to the LEA to determine the optimal evaluation criteria to meet or exceed state standards." The Applicant's criteria for the development of a standards-based statewide evaluation system and how the Applicant will monitor the quality of of the system statewide is not clear.

iii. Applicant, through the work of the Task Force, will establish minimum standards for annual teacher and principal evaluations. However, as previously stated, implementation will be dependent upon the acceptance of each LEA.

iv. Applicant, building on the successful experience using the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework will seek to include the four sound components of RTI: evidence-based curriculum and instruction, ongoing assessment, data-based decision-making, and ongoing training and professional development.

Applicant cites the quality work of Danielson's Enhancing Professional Practice: a Framework for Teaching as a best practice guide in the development of its evaluation and professional growth models.

Applicant's plan currently lacks details that address the criteria of this section as well as timelines and implementation strategies. Specifically it is the Applicant's belief that "centralized teacher and principal evaluation systems that tie teacher and principal compensation directly to student achievement are antithetical" to their system.

Applicant represents a collection of ideas in a culture that expects a carefully controlled balance between state and local control. The uniqueness of the Applicant's decentralized plan for improving teacher and principal effectiveness can not be adequately understood without more details and a better understanding who is responsible and accountable for its implementation.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	12
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	7
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	5

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

i. Applicant's Office of Public Instruction tracks the distribution of Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) and the converse in high-poverty and high-minority schools and continues to adopt strategies to ensure teachers in core academic content area meet the definition of highly qualified. Applicant expresses concern that

student achievement in high-poverty student populations is a significant concern that is compounded when majority of these districts have a significant number of American Indians. The OPI will measure, evaluate and publicly report the progress toward meeting equitable distribution of HQT.

i./ii. Applicant does not differentiate connection between its HQT and highly effective teachers.

Applicant will identify targeted LEAs, collect data and provide technical assistance to targeted areas and outlines four strategies the OPI will use to better meet the equitable distribution. While the strategies are appropriate implementation details and targets to measure progress are not evident.

ii. Applicant's OPI team will work to address equitable distribution of HQT in hard-to-staff subjects and speciality areas using the same four strategies. Again, appropriate details for implementation of these strategies are lacking.

Additional support options for LEAs for both i./ii. include: School Support Teams, teaching internship programs and the Mentorship Institute as well as coordinated support from Regional services for professional development and teacher sharing.

Applicant does not present details of present program strategies and a timeline for the implementation of the four strategies listed. Applicant does not establish performance targets to judge progress in addressing this concern.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

14

5

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

7

2

(ii) Expanding effective programs

7

3

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

i./ii. At the present time the Applicant does not have a system in place "to accurately and consistently measure achievement and growth of students." A staffing module system with the capacity to link this data is being developed. Applicant expresses its intentions to partner with universities to align new licensure initiatives with BPE rules and has begun discussions with MUS (Montana University System) to align Professional Educator Program Standards .

However, Applicant does not present a high-quality plan and has not developed annual targets for improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs.

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

20

12

(i) Providing effective support

10

6

(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support

10

6

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

i. The Applicant acknowledges the importance of professional development in working with LEAs to implement each component of its reform agenda. The Applicant continues to frame its efforts on the systemic framework currently being used in its successful RTI initiative.

Applicant has effectively described how its RTI training model will include a three-phased system with specific benchmarks and a developmental process. Applicant has developed an implementation matrix that includes goals, activities, responsible parties and timelines.

ii. A key component of Applicant's implementation plan will be a survey tool to measure, evaluate and continuously improve the effectiveness of RTI implementation. The use this data will enable the Applicant to make informed decisions to improve the effectiveness of its support over time. It is unclear if the survey

will connect the effectiveness of the staff development component of this program with the student achievement results in the classrooms it will serve.

Total	138	69
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	0

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

Applicant does not have the authority to intervene directly in its persistently lowest-achieving schools and LEAs. The Montana Constitution provides that "supervision and control of schools in each school district shall be vested in a board of trustees."

The Applicant is seeking to broaden its authority to intervene in persistently low-achieving schools through a policy change with the Board of Public Education.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	19
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	4
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	15

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

i. Applicant defines persistently lowest achieving schools as any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the lowest five percent of schools (5) based upon assessment data. Applicant outlines the process used to develop the list of schools. Applicant's three tiered process does not include any secondary schools since they are not eligible for Title I funds.

ii. Applicant's Office of Public Instruction offer of support was accepted for four of the five LEAs eligible for School Improvement. The Department will provide support for a three year grant to develop the transformational School Improvement model which will include many of the essential elements in RTI. Applicant does not mention any other intervention models. Applicant does not provide evidence of results of past efforts to turn around its lowest-achieving schools.

Applicant is hampered by its lack of authority to intervene in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Total	50	19
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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	4
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5

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

i. Applicant increased the percentage of revenues to public education from 33.1% to 35.2% from FY 2008 to FY 2009.

However, although the percent of funding increased, the gross amount of dollars decreased.

ii. Applicant has designed a funding formula that adequately addresses equitable funding by providing additional resources for high-need and high-poverty districts. Included in the supplemental funding is the American Indian Achievement Gap Payment.

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

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

i. Since 1989, the Applicant's Board of Public Instruction was granted the authority of accepting the State Superintendent's recommendation for the establishment of charter schools. Any school district may apply to create a charter school that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Montana school accreditation standards. There are no caps on the number of charter schools. The fact that individual LEAs must generate the charter schools places a significant limitation for creating charter schools..

Since 1989, there have been no requests to the Board of Public Education to approve any charter schools.

ii./iii./iv. Since there are no existing charter schools, Applicant chose not to present information on these sections.

Applicant did explain how the state's geography and "frontier" was not favorable for charter schools because they would create a duplication of effort for the limited number of schools that are present in small communities.

v. Applicant's Accreditation Standards provide for LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. Applicant presents an outline of six steps that provide guidelines for potential applications for such a school to the State Superintendent. However, Accreditation standards for these schools do not meet the definition as defined in this notice.

Applicant did not provide examples of any schools that have resulted from this option.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Applicant provides several examples that demonstrate its commitment to innovation and reform throughout the state.

Examples include:

The Five-Year Comprehensive Plan that each district develops to ensure continuous education improvement for all students and schools. This plan is based upon the Education Northwest Sustainable School Improvement Mode.

Best Beginnings/"Stars of Quality" Programs that are available for pre-school learners.

The establishment of full-time kindergarten for students.

The College!Now program that includes strategies for effective dual enrollment programs and opportunities for college access by high school students.

Applicant cites the above reforms as examples of improvement initiatives that have contributed to increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps and providing support for post secondary education.

Total	55	15
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

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

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Applicant's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Renewable Energy Plan is embedded to a degree throughout the proposal. This plan benefits from the Governor and First Lady's leadership and support of the State's Math and Science Initiative that uniquely focuses on new energy development "to meet the demands of a new energy economy".

Applicant outlines its commitment to STEM (and renewable energy) through an array of education programs.

Examples of these programs that are supported with appropriate annotation include: Big Sky Pathways, Southwest Montana Science Partnership, Wind for Schools, A World of Motion, NEWSLATE, and the Montana Math and Science Teacher Initiative.

However, the Applicant does not specifically address the needs of underrepresented groups and the array of programs are not organized into a comprehensive plan that describes implementation plans where appropriate.

Total	15	0
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Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

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

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Applicant does not meet the Absolute Priority for a Comprehensive Approach to Educational Reform.

The Applicant documents the cultural expectations and government policies that balance the tradition of local control and autonomy with general oversight from the Office of Public Instruction and the Board of Public Education.

The Applicant documents impressive student achievement results that are the result of its present reform agenda and are above the national average.

The Applicant has set in place strategies and committees to plan the plan which will result in recommendations to support each area of the reform agenda.

The Applicant, however, falls short in presenting sufficient details and plans that will provide organizational direction and an accountability structure with established targets that will support the successful implementation of the ARRA reform areas.

The Applicant does not comprehensively and coherently provide sufficient implementation strategies and details that address the uniqueness of its geographical challenges of its rural nature.

Further more, it is the Applicant's lack of a systemic approach to reform with a supporting accountability structure that decreases the probability that its reform initiatives would have statewide impact.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	267
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