



Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

North Carolina Application #3700NC-8



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	64	64	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	4	4	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	45	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15	15	

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

All four areas of educational reform that are required by RTTT are addressed coherently and comprehensively. A clear set of goals is specified to improve student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics; to increase high school graduation rates; and to increase college readiness and enrollment. The list of student achievement goals in Table 1 does not include a goal regarding narrowing the achievement gaps; however, the proposal narrative does indicate a goal as follows: "Our RTTT goals also include a reduction of at least 10% in the achievement gaps shown by ethnic- and language-minority students, students with disabilities, and low-income students..." All goals seem to be achievable. Most goals also appear to be ambitious; however, the college readiness goals seem to be less ambitious.

The MOU used was the standard MOU and signatures were obtained from all three parties. All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the state have committed to participate in all applicable portions of the work. With all 115 of the state's LEAs unanimously committed to all applicable initiatives in the scope of work, the proposed project can be expected to have statewide impact. All lowest-achieving schools, all students, including all students in poverty, statewide will be impacted by the proposed project activities. This commitment from all LEAs – as well as from teachers in every LEA – reflects the history of collaboration in the state.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	24	27	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	17	18	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	7	9	

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

The state has articulated a clear plan to implement, scale up and sustain the proposed plans. While the chief state school officer will have overall authority for the implementation of RTTT initiatives, the daily project management responsibilities will be assigned to a dedicated RTTT Project Management Office that will be established within the State Education Agency (SEA). This office will be headed by a Lead Project Manager. RTTT funds will be used to staff the office. With the exception of the concern noted below the level of staffing appears to be adequate to manage a project of this scope. Five existing members of the state's senior management team will assist by serving as initiative leaders. The proposal indicates that although their salaries will not be funded through RTTT, this work will not be additional to their existing duties. However, neither the proposal narrative nor the budget narrative indicates what portion of their time will be allocated to the proposed project. Even though the RTTT budget will fund one project manager to assist each of these five senior management staff, without knowledge of their Full Time Equivalent (FTE) commitment, it is not clear whether they can provide the needed direction in their areas of responsibility.

The state currently supports LEAs in a number of ways that will help ensure the implementation of this proposed project. SEA staff with expertise in major program areas operate in the field, helping school districts and schools assess their needs, identify and implement relevant evidence-based effective practices, and monitor effectiveness. Through RTTT the state proposes a comprehensive set of evaluations that will help ensure that the project stays on track and that lessons learned from the project can be used to support future efforts within the state and nationally. The state has an ambitious plan to implement a PK-12 Education Technology Cloud. The information and communications technologies available through the Cloud will greatly enhance the state's ability to communicate effectively and comprehensively with LEAs. The Cloud will also provide capabilities to support such project efforts as professional development and the transition to Common Core Standards. Additionally, it appears that the Technology Cloud will result in cost efficiencies in some areas which will allow funds to be reallocated to continue some of the RTTT activities after the grant funding ends.

The state also has a sound plan for monitoring LEAs' work to be sure that it stays focused on the proposed project's initiatives. Prior to allotting any RTTT funding to LEAs, the state will secure from each one a detailed scope of work that indicates specific implementation goals, objectives, measurable targets aligned with the state RTTT targets and activities that align with RTTT initiatives. The state will use these work plans as the basis for monitoring each LEA's progress toward achievement of their stated goals. As needed the state will work with LEAs to adjust their initially approved plans.

In order to help ensure sustainability once RTTT funding ends the state will largely allocate the RTTT funds to capacity-building activities, such as strengthening the education workforce, building a more effective professional development system and implementing next-generation technology. The state also believes that through the RTTT initiatives, it can identify cost efficiencies and opportunities for reallocating existing state and federal funding. The evaluation activities to be conducted as part of the RTTT Project will enable the state to document proven models for improving the lowest-achieving schools, increasing student achievement and the graduation rate, reducing achievement gaps, and strengthening the education workforce. With evidence of these proven strategies the state will be better positioned to seek legislative funding to sustain such efforts. However, it is not clear how the evaluation results will be used formatively to identify when an activity is not on track to achieve the desired outcome so that modifications can be implemented.

The proposed project has strong support from the governor, other state leaders, parent teacher organizations, charter schools, a variety of education associations, business leaders, academic institutions, and non-profits as well as partner organizations such as Teach for America. However, there did not appear to be letters of support from civil rights/advocacy groups.

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

The State clarified that the five senior staff will devote 100% of their time to leading the initiatives.

The State clarified that several civil rights groups are closely involved in planning education improvement; however, their direct involvement in the development of this plan is still unclear.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	21	21	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4	4	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	17	17	

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

The state has made progress in a number of reform areas. Recent and ongoing state initiatives have included:

- Developing revised statewide essential standards and aligned assessments;
- Enhancing the statewide longitudinal data system;
- Creating and implementing statewide comprehensive teacher and principal evaluations; and
- Reforming and expanding the program for transforming the lowest-achieving districts and schools.

Because the state is in the process of adopting new standards and assessments they have relied primarily on external assessment data in judging past progress and in setting goals for the future. While the change in state assessment results can not be used to compare current status to future status, it would have been helpful for past results to have been reported in order to provide a fuller picture of the success of past reform efforts. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data that are presented indicates that the state has had some success in improving student achievement in the area of mathematics. However, the NAEP data fail to reflect progress in improving student outcomes in reading. Also, the most recent NAEP mathematics data show a downward turn. The state indicates that the gains can be attributed to higher standards and more rigorous assessments, a focus on recruiting and training mathematics teachers and increased attention to mathematics in the elementary grades. The state does not explain why the higher standards and more rigorous assessments did not have a similar impact in reading. They do indicate that the reading results are disappointing given a recent focus on Reading First and the use of literacy coaches. Graduation rate data also illustrate some improvement. Achievement gap data is mixed indicating no clear pattern of success in narrowing the achievement gaps.

Total	125	109	112	
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

The state has a solid plan to adopt the Common Core Standards. In May, 2009 the state signed a Memorandum of Agreement to participate in the Common Core Standards Consortium which includes 50 states and territories plus the District of Columbia. The Consortium has used exemplar state standards to inform the writing process and has convened a strong group of experts to draft, revise and validate the Common Core Standards in mathematics and English language arts. International benchmarking was also used in the development of the Common Core Standards.

The State Board has authority to adopt the standards and the state intends to present the standards for discussion at the Board's June meeting with adoption to follow at the July meeting.

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

The State provided an amendment that verified that the Common Core standards have been formally adopted.

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

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

As a governing member of the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium which consists of 33 states, the state has a sound plan to develop and implement common, high-quality assessments. As a member of the consortium the state will participate in developing and submitting a proposal to the Race to the Top Assessment Program. It is anticipated

that this proposal will include plans for the development of high quality formative/interim and summative assessments directly aligned to the Common Core Standards.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	15	18	
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state proposes four goals that provide a comprehensive framework to guide the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments. Key to the success of these goals are plans focused on providing professional development and learning tools to shape teachers' and administrators' beliefs, knowledge, and skills in ways that will lead to improved student achievement. The state has established 7 training categories that will serve to guide professional development focused on assisting every teacher to have a deep, specific understanding of the standards and how they differ from the former standards. The state also proposes to develop 10 instructional resources to support the transition. Transition Goal 2 is a key part of the strategy and it does not include principals as a target audience.</p> <p>The state will secure or develop standards-aligned formative/interim assessment tools that will provide teachers with examples of the ways in which a particular standard could be measured. Through these examples teachers will develop a better understanding of the range of assessment items that could be aligned to any one standard and will be less likely to focus on "types" of questions and instead on complete mastery of the content or skill. The state will also provide a range of professional development in assessment literacy to increase teacher's skills in using data to improve student learning. Additionally, the state will ensure that schools have the logistical and technical knowledge and skills to move rapidly to an online testing environment. The state will develop a best-practices guide that includes case studies of schools that use school-wide online assessments. The guide will address issues of scheduling, financial planning, and technical requirements in order to move to online assessment.</p> <p>The SEA and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) plan to work together to ensure that the new summative assessments to be implemented through the state's participation in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium measure the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to be eligible for and successful in higher education. The state also indicates that it is currently revising its accountability model to include measures of achievement that are also meaningful to colleges and universities. However, only one very broad goal addresses aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements to the new standards. This goal indicates the State Board of Education and the SEA will conduct the activities to address the goal. There is no indication as to why LEAs and IHEs are not included nor does the narrative explain the approach that will be used to examine the alignment and to improve areas where gaps in alignment occur.</p> <p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)</p> <p>The State clarified that an Education Cabinet that cuts across K-12 and higher education will take the lead in aligning high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements to the new standards.</p>				
Total	70	65	68	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	22	22	
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The state has implemented a high quality statewide longitudinal data system across the K-12 spectrum with links to workforce and higher education enrollment information. Recent improvements such as adding unique student and teacher identifiers will enhance the usefulness of the system. The efficiency of the system is also being improved to automate many of the tasks associated with linking together data from various databases. The system satisfies 11 of the 12 elements specified in the America COMPETES Act. Element 2 is not satisfied since the Independent Colleges</p>				

and Universities and the Early Childhood Data Group "produce these data through other means" rather than as part of one unified longitudinal system that contains student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information for all PK-16 students.

(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	4	4	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state has a strong system to make data available to key stakeholders. The proposal details a strong array of sector-specific data and information products that provide data for parents and students, for teachers, for districts, for researchers, and for policy makers. However, it is not clear how the data provided are used for continuous improvement such as informing operations and management or to judge overall effectiveness. Reports are available either as paper copies or as web-accessible documents. In the financial arena the state also produces some reports as interactive spreadsheets that allow users to sort, filter, etc.</p>				
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	15	15	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	5	5	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	6	6	
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state has provided a list of activities, a timeline and the responsible party that are ambitious and timely.</p> <p>The state has already piloted diagnostic assessment systems in elementary reading and mathematics. The state will build on the information gained from the pilots to develop a statewide system that will provide data for four instructional purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily assessments embedded in instruction; • Diagnostic assessments based upon learning trajectories; • Curriculum monitoring; and • Summative assessment for teacher planning and student placement. <p>The state plans to develop a data-use guide and associated materials to define excellence in the use of data to improve instruction. The plans for this guide are well laid out and the use of vignettes of actual practitioners within the state will serve to provide credibility to the guide. However, the plans do not include sufficient focus on assisting teachers to know what to do instructionally once the data identify a need.</p> <p>The state will utilize a data center located at a university to serve as an intermediary to provide data files in easy-to-use, link able formats to researchers both within the state and nationally.</p>				
Total	47	41	41	

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	19	19	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	

(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7	7	

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

The state has statute and policy that support alternative routes to licensure for both teachers and principals. All five elements that are specified in the definition are included and licensure can be obtained through alternative pathways that operate independently of IHEs. These alternative pathways are in use and approximately 48% of teachers within the state hold at least one license that was achieved through an alternative pathway. For principals the alternative pathway method has not been as prominent with only 3% of all active principals having achieved a license through this route. Plans are in place to increase the number of alternative pathway programs for principals although the one currently prepared to open will not operate independently of an IHE. The state provides annual reports that identify areas of principal and teacher vacancies and of positions that are filled by teachers who do not meet standards for initial licensure. The state has established a 10-point statewide plan for addressing the identified areas of shortage.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	46	49	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	3	3	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	8	8	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	23	23	

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

The state has provided a list of activities and a timeline but no responsible party is indicated.

The state has a plan for measuring student growth although the details as to how growth is calculated are not delineated. Prior to NCLB the state had a local statewide accountability system that included a measure of student growth. The proposal provided very little specificity as to how this measure is calculated, especially with regard to the Lexile/Quantile measures. More recently the state has licensed and made available to Local Education Agencies for their use the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVASS) system which is a value-added approach to measuring student growth. The use of EVASS is not mandated.

The state has specified a plan for developing rigorous, transparent and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that take into account student growth. The evaluation system for teachers currently includes five elements with student growth to be added effective in 2010-2011. The proposal indicated that the growth measure would be a significant factor but no possible percentage range was provided. Student growth measures are also being added as an eighth component to the principal evaluation instrument. There was no indication of the weighting of the student growth measure in this principal evaluation instrument. The evaluation systems were developed with input from teachers, principals and a variety of other stakeholders. The proposal acknowledges many of the concerns related to using student growth measures within educator evaluation systems.

Evaluations of both teachers and principals are conducted annually (four times per year for "probationary" teachers). The state has provided a short, tentative list of growth data that might be included for teachers of grades/subjects that are not included in state testing. During the first years of the RTTT grant, the Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup will adopt a uniform, statewide set of acceptable measures of pre-approved student growth data. The state has also modified current definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and principals to include student growth measures.

The state will use the results of teacher evaluations to inform decisions involving compensation, licensure, dismissal, and professional development. Principal evaluations may be used to inform professional development and to inform dismissal decisions. The state will provide professional development tools and resources linked to each element of the Educator Evaluation System. In order for a teacher to be granted a full license the teacher must meet the definition of an effective teacher or a highly effective teacher. As noted above both of those designations include student growth data as a component. New state board policy effective in 2010-2011 specifies that teachers must achieve a rating of proficient or higher on all Educator Evaluation System standards, including student growth, by the end of their third year or they will not be granted a full license and, thus, may not continue to teach. The proposal also delineates the process for dismissing a teacher who consistently does not meet all of the standards, including student growth. Superintendents may also recommend directed growth plans or dismissal for principals that are judged to be ineffective for two consecutive years.

The school accountability system that has previously been in place in the state has provided for bonus payments to professional educators based upon school achievement results. The state will transition this to a system that rewards classroom-level performance. The state will also use RTTT funds to establish a bonus system for low-achieving schools that exceed student growth targets. In 2012-2013 this model will transition to a classroom-based model. Schools that are not classified as low-achieving, may use a portion of their RTTT funds to adopt one of the bonus models that are in operation in the state.

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

The State clarified that each of the components included in the teacher and principal evaluation systems must be satisfied for the teacher or principal to be judged successful. So, in a sense the student growth measure is weighted 100% as are all of the other individual components.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	18	18	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	11	11	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7	7	

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

The state proposes an ambitious, multifaceted plan including performance measures to increase the numbers of effective teachers and principals in high-poverty or high-minority schools and in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. The state has provided extensive background data related to this need including that the rate of unfilled teaching positions in the lowest performing LEAs is nearly 2.5 times the overall rate in the state. The proposed plans address the need to increase the number of effective teachers and principals to serve in these areas of need as well as the need to improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals already employed in the need areas and to retain highly effective teachers and principals in those areas of need. However, the state has included no specific list of activities and timeline designed to accomplish the performance measures.

For principals the essential proposed strategy is the implementation of regional leadership academies to recruit, prepare and support principals to make transformational changes in challenging school environments. The academies are designed to re-frame principal preparation from school management to instructional leadership with a focus on the principal as change agent. The academies will continue to provide induction support for two years following the principal's completion of the program. It is anticipated that the academies will produce 75 new principals per year. The academies will also coordinate with existing SEA staff to provide effective professional development for principals already serving in the lowest-achieving schools.

Previous experience in the state has shown very positive results for Teach for America (TFA) trained teachers. As a result the strategies for increasing the numbers of teachers in the areas of need will be focused primarily on increasing TFA activity and on developing a state-supported alternative pathways program modeled after TFA. The state will also

provide some financial incentives for new teachers who choose to work in a lowest-achieving school. And, as with principals, the state will provide induction support for new teachers in high-need schools.

As an additional strategy for addressing shortages of effective teachers in hard to staff subject areas such as mathematics and science in rural areas, the state will expand the use of virtual course offerings and of blended courses that involve both face-to-face instruction and virtual learning.

(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	8	10	
(i) Linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly	7	4	5	
(ii) Expanding effective programs	7	4	5	

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

The state has a comprehensive plan accompanied by performance measures to link student achievement and growth in English, mathematics and science to teachers and to the programs that prepared the teachers; however, no plan was provided to expand to other subject areas or non-tested grades or to include principal preparation programs. The state plans to prepare and publicly report an Educator Preparation Program Report Card that includes student achievement and growth measures for each preparation program in the state. In fact, the state has already utilized this data to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher preparation programs operated by the state university system, by Teach for America and for some private colleges. The state is expanding the capability to link to other teacher preparation programs in the state, such as independent colleges. Only very brief statements rather than detailed plans were provided as to how the results will be used to expand successful programs. Additionally, the state has included no specific list of activities and timeline designed to accomplish the performance measures.

(D)(4) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The State has clarified that data on the effectiveness of the Teach for America program was instrumental in the decision to expand that program. The State has also clarified the process for determining and using measures in non-tested grades and subjects.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	15	17	
(i) Providing effective support	10	8	8	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	7	9	

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

The proposal includes a list of activities with a timeline and aggressive performance measures but no responsible party is assigned to each activity. The state proposes to increase the state's and each Local Education Agencies' (LEAs) capacity to provide professional development. LEA-based professional development teams will be recruited and trained. Among the supports that the State Education Agency (SEA) will provide will be identification, evaluation and, as needed, creation of professional development resources. National and regional standards for resources will guide this effort. Special attention will be paid to e-learning resources since these represent a cost-effective method of delivering professional development through the use of the Technology Cloud, especially just-in-time professional development. The needs assessment data that will guide the design of the professional development will be comprehensive and will include student achievement data. There is no plan detailed as to how the time for teachers to participate in professional development will be arranged nor is there any plan for providing teacher and principal collaboration time. This is especially important given that a major portion of the project budget is allocated to professional development. The state proposes significant evaluations of multiple aspects of the RTTT effort including of the professional development component and these evaluations will be used as part of efforts to continuously improve the effectiveness of the support. However, of the 9 elements that the state lists as being addressed in the evaluations only 1 includes student achievement.

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

The State clarified that student achievement data will be used to inform and improve professional development in much the same manner as it will be used to report on the effectiveness of the teacher and principal preparation programs.

Total	138	106	113	
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

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

State statutes provide the authority for the state to intervene directly in both schools and districts. Further, state supreme and superior court decisions have upheld this authority and provided clarity as to implementation of that authority.

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

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	4	4	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	25	25	

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

The state has a plan for identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools, including high schools with a graduation rate below 60% in the prior year and one of the two previous years. While the state also includes any school with a state-defined performance composite measure under 50%, it indicates that the net result is that no additional schools are identified. In the future, the state plans to increase the performance composite criterion to 70% and then use state resources to serve the resulting additional schools.

The state has extensive experience intervening in the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The State Education Agency (SEA) currently contains a District and School Transformation Division comprised of a team of 70 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) staff. Between 2006 and 2009 this division assisted 66 high schools. Results of most student performance measures appear to indicate that these previous turnaround efforts generally have been successful. The proposal indicates that the Transformation Division monitors progress to determine whether more extensive intervention is required. Recent legislation allows for the implementation of "charter-like schools without charters" at the high school level. The intent of this legislation is to allow most of the flexibility normally accorded to charters without having the schools count toward the statewide cap of 100 charter schools. However, a review of the legislation that was provided in the Appendix does not clearly reflect this desire. The state indicates that it has engaged Cambridge Education to provide consultation and training that will further enhance the work of the Transformation Division. However, no information was provided as to the criteria that were used to determine that this group was the most qualified to provide this assistance.

The state has not selected a single intervention model for statewide implementation. Instead it has clearly indicated that each of the persistently lowest-achieving schools will be required to select one for the four models specified by RTTT. However, the proposal indicates that a principal will not be replaced unless he or she has previously lead the school for two years without adequate progress in improving student achievement. This does not appear to satisfy the requirements of the Turnaround and Transformation intervention models.

The state has provided a set of aggressive performance measures; however, the proposal contains no list of activities with a timeline and a designation of the party responsible for each activity.

Total	50	39	39	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	

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

The percentage of state revenue that supported K-12 and public higher education increased from 57.8% in FY08 to 64.3% in FY09. The state distributes aid to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) through 25 different allotment formulae. Targeted supplemental funding provides additional aid to 60% of the state's 115 LEAs that are classified as high-need. Once the funds are distributed to the LEAs, the LEAs determine the actual allocations to individual schools. Because the state exercises limited oversight as to how funds are distributed across schools within an LEA, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that funds are equitably distributed between high-poverty schools and other schools within a district.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2	2	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	6	6	

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

The state has a cap of 100 charter schools which is 4% of the total schools in the state.

The state has an established process for considering a charter application. This process includes consideration of student achievement. Since the first implementation of charters in FY 98, 425 applications have been submitted; 144 have received final approval; 30 charters have voluntarily relinquished their charter; 5 charters have been non-renewed; and 11 charters have been revoked.

Charter schools receive funding distributed exactly as it is for non-charter schools. The state does not withhold a portion of the funding as a "processing" fee.

Charters operate under the same facility requirements as required for any public school and have the same authority as that granted to non-charters to use state funds for facilities, including leasing facilities or for tenant improvements. The state requires local districts to work with charters when facilities are available and not in use by the district. There is no provision for charters to share in bonds nor any authority for charters to issue bonds for capital expenditures, and county commissioners are prohibited from providing charter schools with local funds for capital outlay projects.

The state has a vigorous program for encouraging innovative and autonomous public school in addition to charter schools. As a result, 106 schools that meet the RTTT definition of innovative, autonomous schools currently exist. State statute allows a Local Education Agency (LEA) and one or more Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to jointly apply to the State Board of Education, to establish a cooperative innovative high school program. Under this law the State Board has approved 70 Learn and Earn schools which are included in the 106 number given above. Additionally, recent legislation noted in section (E) provides another avenue for establishing charter-like high schools.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state has been a national leader in implementing programs for the youngest high need students and there is evidence that these efforts have had a positive impact on school readiness, especially for those most in need. The state has also implemented a federally-funded program to improve the quality and effectiveness of instruction for students with disabilities. State statute provides that any child who does not meet grade-level proficiency is eligible for a Personal Education Plan. A special appropriation from the legislature provides funding for grants focused on keeping at-risk students in school and increasing the number of at-risk students that graduate from high school. The state provides incentives to National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certified teachers and currently has the largest number of NBPTS teachers in the nation. The state university system operates a fast-track licensure program for science and math teachers.</p>				
Total	55	44	44	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>RTTT funds will be used to support to development of a set of four "anchor" STEM schools. Each of these anchor STEM schools will operate at the center of a larger network of STEM schools. The focus of this approach is to attract students traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. The state college operates a Women in Engineering Outreach Program the encourages young girls and women to consider careers in STEM disciplines.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The proposal provides a well articulated plan for reform that builds directly on extensive prior work in the state. All LEAs in the state have agreed to participate in all aspects of the plan that are applicable to them. The goals and plans for implementation are solid.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	419	432	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

North Carolina Application #3700NC-7



A. State Success Factors

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

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

(A)(1)(i) The applicant has communicated a coherent reform agenda that is based upon significant previous actions and successes; goals for improving overall student achievement; and all four education areas described in ARRA. The proposal's plans reflect a unified reform effort, with distinct components that support each other well.

(A)(1)(ii) All participating LEAs have agreed to the same Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and all contain signatures of the superintendent, board president and leader of the teachers' association. Furthermore, all districts have signed on to all aspects of the plan. For these reasons, this criterion was rated in the very high range.

(A)(1)(iii) As NC's reform plan addresses ambitious and achievable goals related to the four criteria outlined in (A)(1)(iii), and 100% of the school districts in the state have signed on to this proposal, with signatures from all three parties, a broad statewide effort should occur, leading to great chances of success in increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps among subgroups of students, and increasing the rate at which NC students graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college and careers. Thus, this section receives the highest number of points available.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	25	27	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16	18	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9	9	

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

(A)(2)(i)

The applicant has created an appropriate and viable table of organization to ensure that its ambitious plan can succeed and that there is sufficient fiscal and operational oversight. The NC Board of Education will be responsible for oversight, with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) CEO responsible for managing the implementation of all RttT initiatives.

The NCDPI has already begun many reform efforts that will serve as the foundation of NC's RttT initiatives; thus, the identification of five current senior staff members (Chief Academic Officer; Project Director for Assessment and Curriculum Reform; Project Director for the P-13 and P-20 Data System; Director of District and School Transformation Division; and Director of the Office of Educator Recruitment and Retention) to assist the CEO in leading the grant initiatives will assist in connecting RttT initiatives to current reforms. It is noteworthy that no grant funds are earmarked to pay a portion of current staff's salary.

In addition to the senior NCDPI staff members and others in the department who will assist in their areas of their expertise, NCDPI will use RttT funds to create a Project Management Office consisting of a Lead Project Manager and other project management staff. Given the huge federal monetary investment associated with NC's RttT plan, the proposed Project Management Office, with responsibility to ensure that the funds are spent appropriately across the state, is a necessary component of the proposal, representing just over 1% of the total grant budget.

The applicant also points out that other important organizations in NC will play important leadership roles and that ongoing evaluation of all components of the grant initiatives will inform efforts as they are proceeding. The significant evaluation plan outlined in the budget narrative should lead to gathering of much information that will support the LEAs in successfully implementing reform plans, especially in identifying effective practices that should be replicated.

The proposal seems somewhat weak in "coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other State, and local sources so that they align" with NC's RttT goals. The applicant states that it will "work with each LEA" in this effort but does not go the next step of requiring LEAs to explain how their recurrent allotments will be congruent to RttT initiatives in the district. Further, there does not appear to be a sufficient explanation about how the state will monitor and assess the efficacy of LEA activities funded by this grant and about how the state will intervene at the LEA level if necessary.

The budget narrative is well-organized by projects that cut across many sections of the proposal. However, there is a large reliance on outside contractors (\$90.6 million overall). For example, over \$5 million is designated for developing a method to measure student academic growth. The applicant proposes to triple its Teach for America contract in exchange for only a 40% increase in the number of TFA teachers in the state. Over \$5 million of RttT funds is earmarked for contractual services for creating a NC Teacher Corps. There does not seem to be sufficient explanations in the proposal narrative or the budget narrative as to how the applicant arrived at these numbers and whether there are companies they have identified that can do the required work.

Regarding sustainability of the RttT initiatives, the following areas of strength are particularly noteworthy:

- strong level of statewide cooperation from varied stakeholders in creating the plan;
- creation of ongoing infrastructures; and
- a high-quality evaluation component that will inform future education improvement efforts.

Despite the drawbacks explained above, the applicant has provided evidence of strong capacity to implement its plans and therefore receives a rating in the high range.

(A)(2)(ii)

The level of support for NC's RttT proposal is outstanding, reflecting significant collaboration that must have occurred to create it. There is no evidence, however, of support from grassroots groups such as civil rights organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs) and student groups.

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

During today's discussion, NC's representatives ensured the reviewers that the vast majority of investment in outside contractors will be to build infrastructure, such as the technology systems and alternative certification programs. Therefore criterion A2i will receive a higher score.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	16	16	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	4	4	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	12	12	

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

(A)(3)(i)

NC has long been deeply involved and successful in all four of the ARRA education reform areas. The proposal gives much evidence to prove this, (e.g., NC's rigorous standards and assessments; its comprehensive data systems; many initiatives to improve teacher preparation and effectiveness; and the work of NCDPI's Transformation Division). However, the applicant has not explained how it has used ARRA and other funds to pursue these reforms and therefore does not earn maximum points for this criterion.

(A)(3)(ii)

NC has shown strong progress in mathematics since 2003, as measured by the NAEP. However, in English language arts, NAEP scores have declined compared to the rest of the country.

There is concern here about the applicant's failure to provide data on recent results of its own statewide ESEA examinations, despite its explanation that a significant change in the rigor of the tests led to a decrease in proficiency rates in 2006-07. It is noteworthy that state assessment data was, in fact, cited to point out a decrease in the achievement gap between disabled and non-disabled students.

Overall, NC has not had much success narrowing most achievement gaps, especially between black and white students. Early College High Schools show promise in ameliorating this situation. Data does show progress by students with disabilities, especially in LEAs with State Improvement Projects. The mean graduation growth rate in the state since 2006 has been 3.4%, with Asian, Native American and disabled students showing most improvement and black students the least.

With growth in some areas but not others and limited information regarding achievement measured by statewide standards-aligned tests, NC has earned a mid level rating here.

Total	125	106	108	
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

(B)(1)(i)

NC has been a leader nationwide in creating and improving learning standards for instruction in its schools. As evidenced by the NC Board of Education's *Framework for Change*, the state has a detailed plan to revisit its standards and assessments. NC was one of 48 states that participated in the *Common Core State Standards Initiative*. The applicant offers a strong rationale for adopting common standards, including promoting national equity of educational expectations; taking advantage of economies of scale involving development of curriculum and assessments; producing comparable student achievement data; and being able to better identify the most effective instructional practices throughout the nation.

(B)(1)(ii)

The proposal clearly outlines the legal processes that have and will occur to ensure adoption of the Common Core Standards in ELA and Math by the end of July 2010. In other parts of Section B, the applicant describes extensive plans to strategically roll out these new standards to ensure their optimum use by teachers, schools and LEAs.

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

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

NC is a governing member of the recently created SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, a collaboration of 33 states that will cooperate to create a high-quality assessment program based on the Common Core State Standards. The principles of the MOU signed by State Superintendent Atkinson, reflecting a high level of thought about all aspects of student assessment, chart an ambitious path toward the production of common high-quality assessments.

(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	17	18	
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The four transition goals identified by the applicant are clearly aligned to all (B)(3) criteria.

Based on the applicant's expressed conviction that the impact of enhanced standards and high-quality assessments will depend "primarily upon the beliefs, knowledge and skills of educators who will use [them] to improve instruction," NC will embark on a journey of professional development and creation and use of teaching tools to ensure a successful transition to common standards and assessments. The communication plans and professional training plans outlined in this section are exemplary, and the Essential Questions for Standards Transition serve as an example of how strong professional development methodology should reflect the best teaching practices. However, greater details are needed regarding how LEA and school leaders will be sufficiently trained to ensure their capacity to provide ongoing support to teachers in implementing the new standards and assessments.

The plan for transitioning to higher-quality assessments is also quite strong. NC desires to have all its teachers teach to the standards, not to the accountability tests. However, NC also wants to have teachers optimally use the information from summative tests to guide instruction. Further, through the use of formative assessments that will be available in the Instructional Improvement System (Section C3), teachers will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and content/skill areas that might need more instructional time.

The proposal's Transition Goal 4, i.e., align HS exit criteria and college entrance requirements to the new standards, seems to have a greater chance of being met regarding high school completion criteria. The explanation regarding alignment of college entrance requirements is somewhat vague.

NC's overall plan to transition to common standards and assessments is carefully conceived and worthy of a score in the high range.

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

North Carolina's team elaborated about their plan to contract with professional development consultants to build training modules that will be customized for use in various school districts. They also spoke about the collaborative efforts of district and university representatives to mesh exit and entry criteria to the newly adopted standards. Thus, the score for this criterion is raised.

Total	70	67	68	
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	22	22	

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

NC has been working for two decades on its Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS). In 1992 several state agencies, including NCDPI, began the Common Follow-up System, a cooperative effort to link individuals' demographic and program participation data. Over the years, the Duke Data Center and the NC public institutions of higher education have contributed to the robustness of the ever-improving system.

Given the evidence provided in this section, NC should be granted points for having in place all of the America COMPETES Act elements except for element #5 that calls for a state data audit system. Based on information in the proposal, data audits are currently done

independently by various education sectors, not as a comprehensive systemwide audit. Also, it is unclear how LEAs are audited for the reliability of their data.

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

The current longitudinal data system (SLDS) developed by NC already provides most of the requirements of this criterion. For example, parent/student reports are issued after each state end-of-grade test. Reporting test data in Lexile and Quantile scores, as the state already does, should be quite helpful to teachers and some parents. Teachers receive standard reports on their students' test results. LEAs are granted secure access to the SLDS to assist in test management and to compare their students' results school by school and district to state. The proposal details other ways in which SLDS data is made available to community organizations, policymakers and researchers. Further, through the Fall 2010 implementation of NC's Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System's (CEDARS) longitudinal data repository and business tools, the Department of Public Instruction and every LEA will be able to access information in a customized manner for varied purposes. Based on the evidence provided, this criterion is rated very highly.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	12	14	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4	5	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3	4	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5	5	

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

(C)(3)(i)

Rather than take the direction of supporting the development of various local instructional improvement systems, the applicant has presented an ambitious plan to create a statewide Instructional Improvement System aimed at providing teachers and school leaders with myriad information that could significantly improve teaching and learning if used effectively. With the capacity to offer teachers much data about their students' achievement histories as well as real time results of diagnostic and formative assessments, this tool has the potential to guide instructional planning and delivery in meaningful ways and very well might be worth its steep price tag, (i.e., (a) about 8.5% of the total grant amount being earmarked for creating the Education Cloud technology infrastructure; and (b) lack of clarity related to the \$6.3 million in Other Costs identified for subscription fees).

The Educator Value Added Assessment System component seems to hold great promise for providing such important data as individual students' progress over time and patterns of sub-group performance.

Given the state's huge investment in this project, both fiscally and educationally, it is surprising that the applicant has not identified an NCDPI office or staff member(s) who will have ultimate responsibility for the creation and implementation of the system.

With considerable credit for the ambitiousness of this project but concern about its achievability, this criterion is rated in the low part of the high range of scoring.

(C)(3)(ii)

The Data Use Guide Sample Knowledge and Skills is an excellent set of standards for educators' use of data, upon which NC intends to base a manual for exemplary use of data in schools. It is unclear where the funds for the production of the Guide appear in the budget.

The Professional Development Leaders deployed as part of NC's efforts to improve teacher effectiveness (Section D) will be expected to serve as data coaches and must be fluent in the use of the Instructional Improvement System. Adding this important task to their already full plate of responsibilities may prevent necessary staff training from occurring effectively.

Compared to the careful pace identified in Section B for transitioning to common standards and assessments, there seems to be a rush for implementation of all components of the Instructional Improvement System, i.e., a rollout plan that may be too fast to ensure that NC educators are able to use the system well rather than be intimidated by it.

For the reasons identified above, this criterion is rated in the middle range of scoring.

(C)(3)(iii)

Through its partnership with the Duke Data Center and the University of North Carolina (UNC), the applicant states that it will determine key data sets of interest to educational researchers. These data sets will be made available as a constant in the state's data system. The proposal states that by linking the Instructional Improvement System to the state's longitudinal data system, researchers should be able to go straight to the NCDPI for its data needs, rather than having to use the Duke Data Center as the intermediary. There does not, however, appear to be any mention of which NCDPI office or staff member(s) will take responsibility for interfacing with researchers. The failure to include this information may have been an oversight; however, without a clear NCDPI liaison office, researchers' accessibility to data will be negatively impacted. Despite this concern, this criterion is rated in the high range.

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

Based on information clarified at today's session, criteria C3i and ii are both being raised. North Carolina's team is well aware of the need for ongoing training to ensure that its instructional improvement system is utilized optimally by the state's educators. Some of the training components were explained further today and are better understood by this rater.

Total	47	39	41	
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	18	18	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6	6	

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

(D)(1)(i) NC has granted complete decision-making responsibility regarding the licensing of teachers and principals to the State Board, granting the department flexibility in creating alternative pathways to licensure. Further, the legislation identifies specific alternative pathways that may operate independent of IHEs, e.g., through the Regional Alternative Licensing Centers. Also, through regulations for lateral entry programs, school systems or IHE's may apply to operate alternative licensing programs that include all of the elements of the definition of alternative routes to certification, with the possible exception of providing supervised, school-based experiences.

(D)(1)(ii) NC calls its alternative pathways for teaching certification "lateral entry programs." While most operate through IHE's or the state's four Regional Alternative Licensing Centers, the State Board of Education has approved four experimental lateral entry programs that are operated by an LEA or a consortium of LEAs. The state has also approved two LEA-based alternative pathways for administrative licensure, both of which are in operation. Of the 2,062 lateral entry teaching licenses granted in 2009, 988 were through UNC system schools; 1,055 were through Regional Alternative Licensing Centers; and 19 were through the four experimental lateral entry programs. All of the 60 principal licenses issued in 2009 were through traditional routes, with nine candidates currently enrolled in the New Leaders for New Schools program. With alternate pathways for school administrators just beginning, this criteria is rated in the low end of the high range of scoring.

(D)(1)(iii) NCDPI annually reports to the State Board all teaching and principal vacancies that exist in schools after October 20. This report breaks down data by license area and by LEA. Further, LEAs report to NCDPI positions that are filled by teachers not meeting standards for initial licensure. The applicant includes in the appendix two reports that compile longitudinal data based on these annual LEA reports. While this information seems to demonstrate improvement in filling vacancies in certain shortage areas, the proposal does not contain any discussion of shortage trends and specific strategies to meet them, other than Item 1 of 10-point plan for addressing teacher shortages. Further information contained in Part (D)(3)(ii) of the proposal allows this criterion to be rated in the high range.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	48	49	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	12	13	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	21	21	

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

(D)(2)(i) Before the availability of RttT funds, NC has been involved in efforts to measure individual student growth, especially through funding by the NC General Assembly for a statewide license granting access to all LEAs to the SAS Institute's Education Value Added-Assessment System (EVAAS). The state has developed a good calculation method for measuring student growth, i.e., "change from a baseline average of the prior two years' assessments." In the forefront regarding development of methods to measure student growth, the proposal earns a very high score for this criterion.

(D)(2)(ii) The applicant has described an inclusive process already under way to implement uniform evaluation of teachers and school leaders. The NC Professional Teaching Standards Commission, representing various stakeholders, developed five teaching standards and the Teacher Evaluation Process that has been piloted in 52 districts and will be implemented statewide in 2010-2011. The applicant also states that a sixth standard, measurements of student growth, will be added in 2010-2011, although there is not a clear explanation of how this measurement will be done, especially given a list of concerns about using such data for educator evaluation purposes. The same Teacher Evaluation Process that was already piloted will, in fact, not be implemented statewide because the addition of the sixth element (measurement of student growth) makes it a significantly different evaluation tool. There also exists a question of how significant a factor student growth will be in educators' evaluations when it is only one of five other measures, apparently carrying as much weight as "demonstration of leadership."

The applicant here presents a feasible timeline for the development of uniform statewide measures student growth, with full implementation of a uniform model for all teachers not occurring until the 2012-13 school year, giving the Teacher Effectiveness Workgroup sufficient time to study the process and make clear recommendations. The proposal also outlines a creative and seemingly appropriate way to identify effective teachers and principals, i.e., proficient in the original five teaching/leading standards and facilitating a year's growth in students. Similarly, the rating systems of highly effective teachers and principals make great sense.

(D)(2)(iii) As stated in the proposal, all NC teachers and principals receive annual evaluations. The new evaluation system appears to be one that will provide constructive feedback to school staff and will provide important information about their success in facilitating student growth, as evidenced by student achievement data. Thus, this section of the proposal warrants the highest score.

(D)(2)(iv) The applicant appears to give most of the responsibility to the NCDPI for the professional development required of less than effective teachers and principals. It appears as if there will be no requirement for LEAs to create local plans for devising intervention strategies for each of the components of the annual evaluation.

The proposal identifies clear requirements for the eventual discontinuance of a less than effective non-tenured teacher or principal. However, there seems to be no plan for removal of career status teachers based on a pattern of poor evaluations.

The state will continue to support pilot programs in LEAs that are compensating teachers for success at the classroom level and will study the effectiveness of these programs, continuing the most successful compensation-for-growth models after the grant period has ended. A question arises as to why more LEAs will not be implementing such compensation programs, given the unanimous approval of all components of the plan.

Overall, this criteria section is rated in the low end of a high level rating. The absence of discussion of removing tenured staff is the major reason for not receiving a higher rating.

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

The score for criterion D2ii has been slightly raised because of the clarification we received regarding the absolute importance of each of the six teacher evaluation standards, one of which pertains to student growth. This rater's concern about the possibility of excessively low weighting of student growth has been allayed.

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

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

(D)(3)(i) The applicant cites research that demonstrates clear inequities in the state regarding placement of effective staff in high-need schools compared to high achieving schools and even mentions inequities that exist within schools in relation to assignment of teachers to high-need students. The plan to remedy this situation is based almost entirely on recruiting and training new teachers and leaders to work in the state's high-need schools. The plans to significantly increase and retain the number of new and effective teachers for these schools are well conceived and already being piloted. Further, there is discussion of programs to provide incentives for effective staff in low-need schools to transfer to schools that may need them more. Despite the strengths mentioned above, there is reason for concern about the performance measures identified, in that the goals appear to actually increase the gap related to percentages of highly effective teachers in high-need versus low-need schools. This last factor reduces the score of an otherwise outstanding section.

(D)(3)(ii) The applicant is aware of shortages in certain license areas, particularly science, math, special education and ESL, and especially at the middle school level in high-need schools. The proposed NC Teacher Corps will be created to train quality people to fill these positions, with various incentives provided for those that choose to serve in high-need schools. This well-planned component of the proposal earns the applicant a high score for this section.

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

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

(D)(4)(i) The fact that UNC has begun to study the effectiveness of its IHEs' education programs and other pathways to teaching by identifying relationships of graduates to their students' achievement is a huge head start for the applicant and earns it a high level rating in this area. There is no mention of support from the state's independent colleges to participate in these studies and it is not clear that alternative pathway programs will be assessed, preventing this criterion from receiving the highest score possible.

(D)(4)(ii) The proposal describes plans to use this data to identify strengths and weaknesses of each program and to identify a few ineffective ones that perhaps should close. However, the only discussion about using the data resulting from the studies described in (D)(4)(i) to expand the more successful teacher preparation programs relates to preparation programs operated through the UNC system. This criterion is rated in the mid range of scoring.

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

(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(D)(5)(i)				
<p>Almost 10% of the entire RttT budget will be devoted to assisting LEAs with the professional development needs of their teachers and principals. Through the Professional Development Initiative, NCDPI will hire 19 Professional Development Leaders who will be placed in each of the NC regions and will work closely with LEA teams to provide them with resources and support for their staff training efforts. As mentioned in other parts of the proposal, these staff will concentrate first on rolling out the Common Core standards, on assisting with the use of the Instructional Improvement System and the new Teacher/Principal Evaluation Systems. Beyond these efforts, the PD Leaders will, based on regional and LEA needs assessments, assist with planning and conducting PD in LEAs and schools to meet the identified staff needs.</p> <p>Over \$12.4 million is budgeted for PD contractors, yet there is not much information in the narrative as to how these private providers will be selected, for what purposes, and the steps that will be taken to maintain coherent and consistent training throughout the state given the contracting of multiple PD providers.</p>				
(D)(5)(ii)				
<p>The extensive evaluation component of NC's RttT plan will involve ongoing assessment of all PD efforts, including the impact of training efforts on teacher practices and on student achievement. The key PD evaluation questions included in the proposal are important and will serve as a guide to this evaluation. However, the effect of PD on student achievement is found in only one of nine evaluation criteria, raising concern that student outcomes might not carry enough weight in the state's evaluation of PD efforts. Despite this concern, this criterion is rated in the high range.</p>				
Total	138	113	114	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>It is clear that the State Board has legal authority, both statutory and court ordered, to intervene in low-achieving schools. It is not as apparent that it has the statutory right to intervene in LEAs, but the May 2009 consent order authorizing the State Board to oversee Halifax County decisions in personnel, finance and curriculum is evidence that it does have such authority.</p>				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(2)(i)				
<p>The applicant has provided evidence that it has a fair and effective set of criteria for identifying its lowest achieving schools. Further, the proposal offers important information about the demographics and wealth status of the LEAs in which the schools reside.</p>				
(E)(2)(ii)				
<p>The proposal provides an excellent plan for school turnaround. Based on much success that the NCDPI has already demonstrated in assisting LEAs and low-achieving schools, mostly through the Transformation and Restart Models, the applicant has described a detailed course of action to provide support for significant change in troubled schools and LEAs, while having the ultimate authority to eventually order a school closed or take over a district if turnaround supports do not succeed. NC plans to invest over 10% of its RttT budget on these efforts, with the vast majority of these funds earmarked for 65 full time positions to serve as in-school, in-district turnaround coaches. The applicant has developed a model school turnaround plan which warrants a very high rating.</p>				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				

(F)(1)(i) According to evidence provided, the percentage of total revenues available to NC that was invested in public education increased in 2008-09 compared to the previous year, even when counting 08-09 cash transfers to balance the budget. Thus, this criterion is rated high.

(F)(1)(ii) 27% of overall LEA funding in NC comes from categorical funds to address the needs of special populations, demonstrating the applicant's clear attempts to "level the playing field."

The applicant states that 59% of state funding to LEAs is granted in positions, not dollars, raising a question about how these allotments translate to dollars when some districts, particularly more affluent ones, have higher paid teachers than others.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28	30	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2	2	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	5	7	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5	5	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8	8	

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

(F)(2)(i) The legal cap on the number of charter schools in NC reflects only 3.8% of the number of schools in the state. The applicant, however, makes a case for taking into consideration the significant number of regular schools that are allowed to operate, under the 2003 Innovative Education Initiatives Act, with charter-like autonomy. However, the scoring guidance suggests that this criterion has earned a rating in the low range.

(F)(2)(ii) The NC charter school law contains all the components of this criterion. However, it appears as if the student achievement measurements in the law are not as stringent as the state's new methodology for identifying lowest-achieving schools. It is noteworthy as well that of the 46 charter schools whose charters have been revoked, only one will have occurred (planned for June 30, 2010, pending legal decision) for student achievement reasons.

(F)(2)(iii) According to the proposal, public charter schools in NC receive the same state funding support as any other LEA or school.

(F)(2)(iv) Whereas about 3% of state education funding is for capital, charter schools do not get a portion of these funds. On the other hand, the state does not impose facility-related requirements on charter schools stricter than those imposed on traditional public schools.

(F)(2)(v) Since 2003, the State Board has approved 70 Learn and Earn High Schools that were created in partnership between an LEA and a NC IHE. As per state legislation, these are considered innovative, autonomous public schools. A much more recent state law will promote the creation of many more such schools.

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

Today's session clarified for us that North Carolina's charter schools are held to the same accountability standards as its non-charter public schools. Thus, the score for criterion F2ii has been raised.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The applicant has provided much evidence about its effective reforms relative to, among others, school readiness; personal education plans for high-risk students; and recruiting high-quality teachers. As per the requirement of this criterion, more evidence about the results of these reforms should have been included in this section.				
Total	55	41	43	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

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

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The proposal provides extensive evidence that NC has already been focused and will continue to work toward all components of this competitive priority. NC diploma requirements have been upgraded for 2010 9th grade students to include four math and three science courses. Rigorous courses of study are in place for all STEM subjects, including pre-engineering. NC is unique in requiring a State high

school examination in computer skills. There are 112 career academies in operation, including 60 based on the rigorous Project Lead the Way program for pre-engineering. RttT funding will support the development of regionally-based STEM academies that will focus on a STEM theme closely connected to the economies of the regions in which they are located. Further, close partnerships will be forged among LEAs, schools and organizations, businesses, and IHEs with special expertise in STEM subjects and endeavors. The applicant clearly meets the criteria of the STEM priority and is granted 15 points.

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

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

NC's plan for significant education reform through the use of RttT funds demonstrates many well-conceived and connected strategies that build upon years of reform efforts. For the most part, the proposal is seamless in its past-present-future continuum and in its coherence, addressing the varied RttT goals in a unified manner. There is tremendous statewide support for this plan, which carefully addresses all four education reform areas of ARRA.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	431	439	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

North Carolina Application #3700NC-4



A. State Success Factors

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

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

(i) NC has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that articulates its goals for implementing reforms in the four education areas: standards and assessments, data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, and turning around lowest achieving schools. The State outlines its plan under the central theme of continuing a strong tradition of education reform to improve education outcomes for all students.

NC has committed to developing and adopting new standards and assessment and provides strategies to accomplish the transition process. The Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS) is a data system designed to support instruction. The data collected by CEDARS will be used to support decision-making and continuous improvement processes. The strategies to fully implement the new NC teacher and principal evaluation processes will assist in the development of great teachers and leaders. An extensive professional development program and the addition of incentives will help to ensure effective teachers and leaders for all schools. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools will be one of the greatest challenges for NC because of the change in identifying lowest-achieving schools. It will also be difficult because of the diversity in school and LEA size, location and economic levels. NC in its plan has set as a goal to improve performance of all low-performing schools, with a specific target of moving all schools above the 60% performance level.

NC State summarizes in chart form the state success factors, initiatives, and goals. There is a credible narrative of strategies for each area. One of the strategies include plans for technology infrastructure improvement that will provide digital resources and prepare all teachers to make use of online resources. Policy analyses will also be conducted to determine the need for new policies to drive NC's reform efforts.

(ii) All NC Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have committed to participate in the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiatives as described in a strong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The scope of work in the MOU clearly indicates that the LEAs plan to implement all portions of the proposed plan. Superintendents of all 115 NC LEAs have signed the NC RTTT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), along with the Chairs of their local school boards and the local President of the NC Association of Educators, which is the state teachers' association affiliated with the National Education Association. The leadership support is all inclusive.

(iii) The completed summary table indicates that 115 LEAs or 100% will participate in the RTTT initiative. This then represents 100% of schools and 100% of the students in poverty, which will translate into broad statewide impact allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals. Goals that

include, increasing student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing high school graduation rates, and increasing college enrollment are addressed. The information is credible and complete.

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

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

(i) The NC RTTT plan is strengthened by the presence of a committed and experienced leadership team to ensure that all reforms will be implemented successfully. The State Board of Education will be responsible for the oversight of the NC's RTTT initiatives. Per its statutory authority and responsibility, the State Board sets policy and provides centralized state infrastructure. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), Chief Executive Officer, State Superintendent, and staff which reports to the State Board monthly on the status of these initiatives, will be responsible for managing the implementation of RTTT initiatives. Initiative Leaders will ensure that initiatives are properly scoped and inclusive of input from multiple stakeholders.

A separate officer, the RTTT Project Management Officer will be created to assist the existing NCDPI leaders in managing this expanded work. The overall budget and budget narrative appears in the appendix of the grant and appears to offer adequate support for the goals. Using work plans, the NCDPI leaders will monitor and support the LEAs through the established statewide system. In addition, NC will develop a centralized PK-12 Education Technology Cloud infrastructure to provide access for all LEAs to the resources and tools necessary to support the reform agenda. Funds from other sources, includes allocations for exceptional students, disadvantaged students, at-risk students and small LEAs are coordinated and aligned with the RTTT goals.

RTTT funds largely will be allocated for capacity building activity reforms that will continue after the period of funding has ended, such as strengthening the education workforce, building a more effective professional development system, and implementing a next-generation technology infrastructure for Pk-12 schools. Through related fiscal policy analyses, cost effective opportunities will be identified for reallocating existing NC and federal funds. The State has an overall high quality plan in this component.

(ii) The NC Association of Educators, NC Association of School Administrators, NC School Boards Association, and the NC Parent-Teachers Association have been actively involved in the RTTT proposal development process. Other stakeholders who submitted letters of support include legislative leaders, business leaders, local foundations, and community based organizations. The number and categories of support letters are extensive and represents broad stakeholder support.

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

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

(i) NC has been engaged in developing revised statewide standards and aligned assessments by appointing a Blue Ribbon Committee on Testing and Accountability in 2007. The Blue Ribbon Committee made 27 recommendations for improvement. In 2008, NC began to implement a two phase initiative to address the following recommendations: one on Accountability and another on Curriculum Reform.

NC has a data system that began phasing in during school year 2004-2005, Window of Information on Student Education (NCWISE), which is statewide, web-based, centrally maintained and capable of

capturing, assessing, and reporting student information. It is now implemented in all LEAs. The Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS) is a statewide longitudinal data system that provides ready access to data about P-12 students, staff, programs, and finances.

In the area of great teachers and leaders, NC has a new Educator Evaluation System. The new system is in response to the need for creating and implementing statewide comprehensive teacher and principal evaluations. In the area of recruitment, four programs have emerged: NC Teaching Fellows Program, NC Teacher Academy, NC Center for the Advancement of Teaching, and the NC Principal Fellows Program.

The State attempted to turn around five schools using the School Assistance Model during the 2004-2006 with minimal success. Improvements that were made with assistance quickly dropped when assistance was removed. The plans to reform and expand the program for transforming the lowest-achieving schools were based on lessons learned.

NC has used its America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and other funds to pursue reforms in a wide range of teacher and principal initiatives such as incentives for teachers and principals who work in low achieving schools and show student growth, professional development initiatives, Teacher Quality Reform, and the Dynamic Indicators of Literacy Skills (DIBELS) early reading diagnostic assessment program.

The information and examples provided in demonstrates that NC has made progress in each area.

(ii) NC students have shown steady progress in mathematics, moving to above the national average on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment at the 4th and 8th grade levels. Reading has not shown much improvement. NC continues to exhibit achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics. However, NC has several relatively new programs that are showing positive impact on achievement that will be taken to scale through RTTT and State funds. The high school graduation rate has increased overall and across all student subgroups. The State has shown substantial progress on one entire criteria, high school graduation rates, and partially on NAEP reading scores.

Total	125	118	118	
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) NC is a committed participant in, and signatory to, the Common Core State Standards Initiative. This Consortium is led by the National Governors' Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CSSO). The Common Core Initiative includes 48 states which is a significant number. A score of 20 was awarded.				
(ii) The State will adopt the Common Core Standards by July 31, 2010. The July 31, 2010 date meets the targeted date of August 2, 2010.				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	

(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) NC has joined the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium as a governing state. NC will help lead efforts to jointly develop common, high quality assessments.</p> <p>(ii) The Consortium currently has 33 members.</p> <p>The evidence meets the criteria.</p>				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	20	20	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The State will transition to the Common Core Standards by working in partnership with LEAs to achieve four (4) broad goals. The detailed plans to achieve them are included. Goals include: 1) build stakeholders belief in new standards by developing a detailed communication schedule that identifies opportunities to build knowledge and investment among key audiences using media tools,</p> <p>2) ensure understanding and ability of LEAs to implement standards to improve student outcomes,</p> <p>3) support new assessments and transition to online testing ensuring summative tests and test data are used effectively to measure skills, knowledge, and ability for higher education, and</p> <p>4) align high school exit criteria and college entrance requirements to standards. The transition goals are aligned with the activities, the timeline and responsible parties are included. The overall plan is strong in that it uses media, professional learning communities, differentiated professional development and engage in other strategies that translate the standards and information into classrooms.</p>				
Total	70	70	70	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	20	20	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The State is implementing America Competes Elements 1-4 and 6-11 for a total of ten. Elements 5 and 12 are included in the statewide plan but are in various stages of development. Element 5 states that the NCDPI, the NC Community Colleges and the University of North Carolina (UNC) all will implement independent processes and procedures for enforcing data quality, validity, and reliability. As part of a NC P-20 initiative all NC education sectors will collaborate to ensure the quality, validity, and reliability of the shared data set. Element 12 addresses the collection of data, but it is not clear that the data can provide information for the alignment and adequate preparation for success in post-secondary education.</p>				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>NC has a plan to ensure that data are accessible and understandable to all appropriate stakeholders. Strategy one speaks to sector-specific data for parents, students, teachers, LEAs, community members,</p>				

researchers and policy makers. All sectors are included and a concise explanation follows each sector. Parents and students receive end-of-grade and end-of-class State tests results in the form of Individualized Student Reports. These results can be used to set academic goals. Teachers also receive end-of-grade standard reports documenting their students' results in reading and mathematics. Teachers can use these for decision making in setting goals and diagnostic planning. LEAs compare statewide data. Communities access and use data as a quick reference on expenditures, personnel and student populations. Legislators and policy makers access and use data for fiscal allocations and policy planning.

Strategy two addresses cross-sector data analysis and information products. The NC Early Childhood Data GROUP, NC Community College System, and the NC Independent Colleges and Universities are examples of entities who practice cross-sector joint analysis of assessing and using data. The inclusion of sector and cross-sector accessing and using data to support decision making at many levels earns this component a high quality rating.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	13	13	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	6	6	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	3	3	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	4	4	
(C)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) The State has developed a high-quality plan to improve instruction. More than 400 schools in NC have participated in piloting the Dynamic Indicators of Literacy Skills (DIBELS) early reading diagnostic assessment. Another set of pilot sites have been using the Assessing Math Concepts (AMC) Anywhere diagnostic assessments. To capitalize on the lessons learned in the above pilots, NC proposes to extend the use of such instructional improvement systems to more grade levels and subject areas. The NC Instructional Improvement System will provide assessment tools that yield daily assessments, diagnostic assessments, curriculum monitoring and summative assessments. In view of having results from pilot testing, this component of the plan seems strong.</p> <p>(ii) NC will engage in a two part effort to ensure teachers and leaders use data to improve instruction. Part one will be the development of a data-use guide scheduled to begin September 2010 and be completed by February 2011 which is roughly six months. The data-use guide will include vignettes from schools and teachers who have significantly increased student achievement and will utilize audio and video student and teacher work samples. To develop a data-use guide and in-depth support materials for school leaders and teachers in six months does not seem feasible, which exhibits a weakness in this response.</p> <p>(iii) The data from the NC centralized Instructional Improvement Systems will be made accessible to researchers through CEDARS, the state longitudinal data system. Some of what works in classrooms is stated in C(3) ii of the plan; however it is not listed in reference to researchers having detailed information with which to evaluate effectiveness of instructional materials, strategies, or approaches for educating different types of students. This response seems incomplete.</p>				
Total	47	38	38	

D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	21	21	

(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	7	7	

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

(i) NC General Statutes and State Board Policy support alternative routes to licensure for teachers and principals through G.S. 115C-296 which grants full control of licensure decisions to the State Board. Relevant State Board policies include TCP-A-001, 002, 004, 014, and B-006. The Alternative Certification Programs for teachers include all five provisions as defined in the criteria. The State uses various types of qualified providers, non-Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and LEAs. Candidates must meet or exceed a certain grade point average, complete 18 hours of coursework, participate in school based supervised support and mentoring, and are awarded the same level of initial certification that traditional program award upon completion.

The Alternative Certification program for principals uses lateral entry criteria. It is very selective, accepting only 9 of 180 applicants during the 2009-2010 school year. The programs require a year long residency, limited coursework and award the same level of certification as traditional preparation programs. The response is strong because all criteria is evident.

(ii) The following two alternative routes to certification of teachers are in use: Lateral Entry for Teachers and Teacher for America. New Leaders for New Schools and Regional Leadership Academies are alternative routes for certification of principals. Four programs are in use with seemingly credible extensions and expansions planned.

(iii) NCDPI compiles and presents to the State Board an annual report of teacher and principal vacancies remaining in each LEA after October 20. LEAs are also required by statute to inform the State Board of positions that are filled by teachers who do not meet standards for initial licensure. The alternative licensure programs help to address the shortages indicated by these two collections. These actions are appropriate.

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

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

(i) NC teachers in all LEAs have access to the SAS Institute Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), a tool that uses historical test data to measure individual student progress over time, diagnostic opportunities for growth, and predict the probability that a student will succeed in specific course, based on her or his prior test scores. A revised version of the ABC Model for Measuring Student Growth is also used. The two methods used are appropriate.

(ii) North Carolina's Educator Evaluation System was designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement. The system for teachers and principals has multiple rating categories, five standards for teachers and seven standards for principals. An additional standard is planned for both the teacher and principal evaluation process to integrate student growth measures. This component is strong.

(iii) The State conducts annual evaluations of teachers and principals using the Educator Evaluation System that includes timely and constructive feedback. The Plan is designed to provide new Measures of Student Growth data for students, classes and schools beginning 2010-2011.

(iv) The Plan addresses using these evaluations to inform decisions regarding developing teachers and principals by linking new existing professional development opportunities to specific evaluation standards. The application of teacher and principal compensation to student achievement is first linked only to certified staff in the lowest achieving schools, but later in the plan it is linked to expected growth (\$750.00) and high growth (\$1500.00). It seems contradictory in language.

Teachers are granted tenure only after the results of multiple evaluations included in a rigorous review process. Principals are not granted tenure in the NC school system. Teachers who do not achieve a rating of proficient or higher on all Educator Evaluation Standards by the end of the third year may not continue to teach. Superintendents evaluate principals on annual measurable goals. Principals are evaluated mid-year and at the end of the year. If a principal rates ineffective for two consecutive years, the contract is not renewed or dismissal is recommended. The annual targets are consistent with and supported by the plan. It is very ambitious in all areas except teacher and principal compensation.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	20	20	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12	12	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	8	8	

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

(i) NC acknowledges a variety of inequities statewide in distribution of teachers and principals. The plan includes initiatives to increase the number of teachers and principals, strengthen preparation of novice teachers, employ strategic staffing approaches and make further use of virtual and blended classes. Increasing the number of teachers and principals will address the overall shortage of principals and teachers and may increase equitable distribution. Engaging the Strategic Management of Human Capital in Education group and the National Commission for Teaching and America's Future to provide technical assistance to LEAs about strategic staffing is a promising initiative. Providing effective teachers via virtual and blended courses is a compelling initiative. Overall, the plan to ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals has quality and is achievable.

(ii) The applicant has provided extensive plans for expanding recruitment and providing induction support that appear to be achievable. However, recruiting effective teachers and principals for high-poverty or high-minority schools is a constant challenge, because retention rates are extremely low in these schools. In response, NC has three initiatives planned to increase the number and percentage of teachers in hard-to-staff subject and speciality areas which include science, mathematics, and special education. The initiatives include expanding Teach for America, creating a NC Teacher Corps modeled in part on Teach for America, and improving preparation of novice teachers. In addition, offering incentives, such as vouchers for forgiveness of loans, tuition for advanced study, and housing are planned.

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

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

(i) NC has linked teachers and principals prepared for credentialing within the UNC system to their preparation program, and used the linked data to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs. The plan is to expand the scope to include assessment of NC Independent college and university preparation programs. The plan is based on the results of a study, The Impact of Teacher Preparation on Student Learning in North Carolina Public Schools. The NCDPI in partnership with UNC-GA is developing a comprehensive public Educator Preparation Report Card. The report card will be made public.

(ii) NC's proposed plan to expand preparation and credentialing options and programs is based on a workforce analyses conducted by UNC. The workforce analyses does not outline specific goals or strategies for expanding effective programs. It addresses the need to increase the number of teachers recruited and prepared. As a result, the plan is limited in its response to the criteria.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	20	20	
(i) Providing effective support	10	10	10	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	10	10	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) NC proposes to build on its Professional Development Initiative (PDI) by developing a cadre of Professional Development Leaders to serve as professional development resource developers, workshop leaders, professional learning community coaches, and content specific regional coaches. In addition, resources will be provided, core activities supported, and evaluation of the activities will be implemented. The list of strategies and the implementation schedule are all components of this high-quality, achievable plan.</p> <p>(ii) Embedded in the PDI is assessment of the need for current and new professional development offerings. The RTTT evaluation group will conduct ongoing evaluations of the PDI content and activities which will, include analyses of the impact on teacher practices and student achievement. The results will be used to inform quality control, updating, and continuous improvement. These actions are credible.</p>				
Total	138	127	127	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The NC State Board of Education has both the legal authority and responsibility to intervene directly in NC's lowest-achieving schools and in LEAs that are in improvement or corrective action status. The authority and responsibility are defined in the North Carolina Constitution, legislation, and Supreme Court decisions. NC statutes 115C-105.37 through 115C-105.41 provide the legal basis for State intervention in the lowest-achieving schools and districts.</p>				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) NC has revised the criteria for intervening in the lowest-achieving schools to ensure that the lowest-achieving 5% of all schools are eligible. Eligibility criteria are: any school with a performance composite below 50%, any high school with a graduation rate below 60% in the prior year and one of two previous years, and the lowest 5% of Title I schools currently in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring status. The response is a credible explanation.</p> <p>(ii) As part of the State's RTTT plan, NCDPI's District and School Transformation Division will transition to implementing the four school intervention models outlined by the United States Department of Education (USED). The plan is to follow the guideline of limiting use of the transformation model to no more than 50% of schools in LEAs with more than nine schools identified for intervention. The State has attempted to turn around five schools using the School Assistance Model during 2004-2006 with minimal success. Improvements that were made with assistance quickly dropped when assistance was removed. The School Coaching Model was deemed efficient and cost effective. The State plan is based on lessons learned from previous attempts to turn around low-achieving schools, which adds to its quality.</p>				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) The State appears to have decreased its budget to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education from FY 2008 to FY 2009 in dollar amounts. The percentage appears to have increased.</p> <p>(ii) NC distributes position allotments for teachers, instructional support, assistant principals, and principals directly to each LEA based on its number of students in average daily membership. The State distributes this funding equitably to local education agencies (LEAs) through three main funding vehicles and 25 different allotment formulas. The NC funding structure specifically addresses the sixty-nine (69) NC LEAs that are high-need by directing additional NC resources to these LEAs through categorical allotments.</p>				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2	2	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	5	5	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	7	7	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) The State has a low "cap" on the number of charter schools, if it were filled, <5% of the total schools in the State would be charter schools. The cap is 100 and it is filled. There are 2399 schools, 100 represent less than 5% so this response is in the medium range.</p> <p>(ii) Under NC law (G.S. 115-238.29A) the State Board is the sole body authorized to issue charters. All current charter schools use the same accountability model used in public schools. The State Board follows the authorizing legislation (G. S. 115C-238.29.Ga) to make sure student achievement is a factor in charter school authorization. In addition, the State Board ensures that the charter school provides expanded learning experiences for students, at-risk for academic failure, academically gifted, and other special populations. Expanded educational choices must be provided beyond the types in the local district. State Board policy requires that any charter be revoked if, for two of three consecutive school years, the charter school does not meet or exceed expected student growth. This response is compelling.</p> <p>(iii) In accordance with NC G. S. 115C-238.29, the State provides each charter school with the exact same level of appropriations, on a per pupil basis, as the State provides to LEAs. The response is compelling because it follows the law.</p> <p>(iv) NC law requires charter schools to operate under the same facility requirements as for any public school. However, charter schools do not have authority to raise funds through the sale of bonds. This limits charter schools' equitable access to facilities.</p> <p>(v) In addition to charter schools, 106 innovative, autonomous schools currently are operating in North Carolina. In 2003, NC enacted General Statute 115C-238.50, which authorized the Cooperative Innovative High School Programs. The State Board has approved 70 Learn and Earn schools under this law. The General Assembly has just established a new statute the gives LEAs increased opportunity to create charter-like innovative ,autonomous schools. The examples above supports the plan.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>NC has been a national leader in statewide early childhood programs: Smart Start and More at Four. Providing services for high-needs student through the State Improvement Project and the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention are examples of other reform conditions. These reforms have increased student achievement and graduation rates and ensured that greater numbers of students enter elementary school prepared to learn. The reforms are allowed by education laws, statutes or regulations which adds to their credibility.</p>				
Total	55	44	44	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) NC has a rigorous course of study in the STEM areas as documented in the Standard Core of Study for mathematics, science, computer/technology, and career technical education. NC's course of study has</p>				

changed beginning with the freshman class of 2010. In addition, special STEM-focused programs are used widely in NC schools, with, for example 112 career academies directly related to STEM, including 60 pre-engineering academies. Many initiatives in this proposal directly support a rigorous course of study in the STEM areas, including the following: ongoing development of new standards and assessments in STEM subjects, recruitment, preparation, and support of STEM teachers, professional development, building a network of STEM-themed high schools, and providing virtual courses in STEM areas to students statewide.

(ii) The NC Business Committee for Education has a specific focus on STEM areas and workforce development. The NC STEM Community Collaborative is designed to create a structure for local, regional and statewide STEM collaboration, The NC Learning Technology Initiative is supported by a combination of a private foundation (Golden Leaf Foundation), business (SAS, AT&T, CISCO and Lowe's), and the NC legislature. The K-12 STEM Education Group at NC State University is comprised of leaders responsible for engineering outreach programs.

(iii) To address the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, the State proposes a number of programs. For example, the Math and Science Education Network Pre-College Programs located on nine UNC campuses that prepare under-served students at the middle and high school levels for careers in the STEM areas. The NC State Women in Engineering Outreach Programs encourages young girls and women to consider careers in the STEM disciplines.

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

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>NC's application comprehensively and coherently address all four education reform areas as well as State Success Factors Criteria. The State has clearly demonstrated that it along with the LEAs are taking a systemic approach to education reform. The State has commitment from all 115 LEAs to transition to new Common Core Standards in the area of standards and assessment. NC proposes to ensure that teachers understand and use formative and summative models of assessment generated by the new standards to improve student achievement. In an effort to implement the Common Education Data Analysis Reporting System (CEDARS), which is the statewide longitudinal data system, NC has a plan to coordinate its data collection systems.</p> <p>NC is proposing a new evaluation system to ensure great teachers and leaders for its schools. The new evaluation system will translate to the classroom in the form of increased and differentiated professional development, extensive teacher recruitment, and expanded opportunities for leader (principal) development. In order to turn around its lowest achieving schools, NC has revised its criteria for intervening in the lowest-achieving schools to ensure that the lowest 5% of all schools are eligible. STEM-themed schools and Centers for Professional Development are also proposed.</p> <p>The State has commitment from all 115 LEAs to implement and achieve the goals in the RTTT plan. The plan clearly describes how the State, in collaboration with its LEAs will use RTTT and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	462	462	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

North Carolina Application #3700NC-6



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	62	62	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	3	3	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	45	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	14	14	
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range with (A)(1)(i) rated in the medium range. The reform agenda addresses the four ARRA areas and establishes an overriding reform goal to ensure that every North Carolina student graduates from high school ready to pursue a career or post secondary education. The State Board of Education's goal statement of 2007 aligns with RTTT goals and the Board's past actions to intervene in schools and districts that are not achieving benchmarks reflects deep commitment to these goals. The application provides plans related to each of ARRA's four areas; those plans are consistent with achieving the reform goal. The credibility of the path to the goal is weakened by (1) insufficient attention to the area of reading proficiency given current performance levels, and (2) whether the modest nature of objectives related to gains in performance are sufficiently ambitious.</p> <p>Participating local educational agencies (LEAs) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that uses the U.S. Department of Education (ED) model. Evidence is presented showing that these LEAs will be participating in every aspect of the reform agenda (with the single exception of Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools when an LEA has no identified schools). Evidence that the State's RTTT program will have statewide impact is ensured by the fact that every LEA in the state has agreed to participate and each MOU was signed by all three recommended officials. This broad participation will likely result in meeting the objectives related to increasing the percentage of students scoring at proficient levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reducing the achievement gap by ten percent, and increasing the graduation rate and college entrance rate by ten percent. There are no objectives related to performance on state tests as these tests are being revised and comparisons across years would be difficult. There is an intention to establish new baselines as the revised state tests are implemented and to generate improvement targets from those baselines that will be tracked over time.</p>				
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	25	25	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	17	17	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	8	8	
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range. Based on the included support letters as well as references within introductory narratives to specific reform plan initiatives there is strong support for this effort among important stakeholders including the legislature, the Parent Teacher</p>				

Association (PTA), business and foundation leaders, and education associations, including teacher unions. It appears that strong leadership for this effort will be provided by the State Board; appendices include examples of State Board policies and directives by the Board relevant to the reform agenda being presented in this application. Evidence is presented of the substantial involvement of senior leadership in the State educational agency (SEA), including the State Superintendent, the Chief Academic Officer, the Director of Policy & Strategic Planning, the Director of the District and School Transformation Division, and the Director of the Office of Educator Recruitment and Retention. Integrating the RTTT effort within the SEA organization increases the likelihood of sustaining the effort. Drawing across the SEA's organizational components to implement this comprehensive reform agenda will also promote coordination and provide a "big picture" understanding of how these strategies come together to foster greater student achievement. A high level of support for LEAs is reflected in the regionally-based assistance related to the new standards, as well as professional development and personnel evaluation. The plan to move from LEA-based computer information systems to a statewide education technology infrastructure (called a "technology cloud" in the application) is designed to provide cost-effective and robust networking opportunities for LEAs and to increase equity of opportunity for all school staff and students across North Carolina. This aspect of North Carolina's RTTT application is bold and holds promise of creating a lasting infrastructure for State support to LEAs and schools and increased opportunities for educators to learn from and share with their peers in the service of improving education. The application notes that expected cost savings from this approach can be used to support continuing and expanded reform efforts. Project budgets reflect an appropriate use of resources to accomplish stated objectives. The application makes reference to how resources from a number of targeted State programs will be aligned to the RTTT reform agenda as additional evidence of having the capacity to sustain the reforms.

The application could have devoted more attention to describing how the SEA would go about identifying emerging promising practices and disseminating these practices statewide. While an evaluation plan was laid out in the application, it was unclear how formative data would be shared and used to inform reform plan operations.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	21	21	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	16	16	

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

The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the upper end of the medium range, with (A) (3)(i) rated in the strong range.

North Carolina has a long history of education reform and the application includes extensive evidence of past initiatives related to each of the four education reform areas, supported with a combination of state and federal funds, as well as funding from foundations and businesses. For example, the 2007 report of a commission tasked with examining content and performance standards led to an Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort that is in the process of statewide rollout. The Education Data and Reporting System already includes data on students that can be linked with schools and teachers, as well as programmatic and financial data. The next generation will seek to link these data with information on students' post high school career and educational activities. The application demonstrates the State's impressive ability to make progress in each of RTTT's reform areas.

The portrait of improvement in student outcomes is mixed, with NAEP gains in math (attributed to a strong focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in the elementary grades reflected in professional development and staff recruitment) but no significant improvement in reading. Data from State end of year course exams in reading and math fell several years ago as more challenging assessments were introduced; gains have been realized since 2007. Another persistent challenge regards closing achievement gaps between whites and other racial groups. The application does note some newer initiatives that are showing promise. One is the establishment of alternative high schools where course

taking patterns are similar among racial groups, as well as the use of Sheltered Instruction Observation Tool (SIOP) with limited English proficient (LEP) students whose numbers are increasing statewide. The lack of progress to date regarding achievement in the core subject of reading as well as persistently large achievement gaps is a weakness in this criterion. Also of concern to North Carolina is the fact that the graduation rates for LEP students have fallen, even while the rates for other groups reflect small but steady gains. In discussing achievement evidence, the application also discusses efforts that may have contributed to results. An example is the connection between State Improvement Projects serving students with disabilities and their improved performance on end of grade reading tests.

Total	125	108	108	
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B. Standards and Assessments

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	40	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	20	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	20	20	
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.</p> <p>North Carolina has participated in the Common Core State Standards Initiative to develop national standards in collaboration with 47 other states. The application provides evidence of this participation as well as evidence, reflected in business coming up before the State Board in July 2010, of the intention of the state to adopt the common set of K-12 standards produced by the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The application provides a high quality plan for implementing those standards across the state during the period of the RTTT grant.</p> <p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)</p> <p>Evidence was presented in an amendment of North Carolina's adoption of Common Core State Standards on June 3, 2010.</p>				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.</p> <p>The application provides evidence that North Carolina is one of the 13 governing states leading the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that is working on the development of assessments aligned with the aforementioned standards. This Consortium has 33 members. A resolution passed by the State Board in support of this effort reflects North Carolina's official commitment.</p>				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18	18	
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p>				

The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.

The application sets out a comprehensive approach to realizing statewide implementation of internationally-benchmarked K-12 standards that includes the following strategies:

- Building stakeholder support
- Providing training around the standards
- Supporting the use of test data to improve instruction, and
- Aligning high school exit requirements to college entrance requirements.

The plan wisely intends to take advantage of resources developed by other States to assist in this effort. The emphasis on ensuring that educators have a deep understanding of the standards and that instruction is guided and informed by those standards will be helpful in achieving a successful implementation of new standards. The plan's intention of providing training customized for various audiences (e.g., training for principals will focus on management and coaching of teachers under new standards) is an excellent approach. The plan's inclusion of professional development on assessment literacy will also contribute to raising the comfort level of teachers around the standards, how formative and summative assessment data can be used to plan instruction for the benefit of students, and the value of a standards-based approach to instructional practice. The nature of the training and resource materials to be developed in support of transitioning to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments appears to be very suitable. Working with teacher preparation programs to enhance training of new teachers on the use of formative and summative test data to guide instructional practices is a very positive step. While North Carolina already has linkages between high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements, the plan includes an activity to re-examine those linkages with respect to the new standards. A weakness in the plan is its lack of specific activities designed for and focused on high poverty LEAs that might be expected to have greater difficulty making the transition to the new standards. Finally, the budget to support this effort is embedded in a larger budget related to all of the application's RTTT professional development making it difficult to assess the adequacy of support for implementation of standards.

Total	70	68	68	
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C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	22	22	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.</p> <p>Of the 12 elements in the America COMPETES Act regarding statewide longitudinal data systems, this application addresses 11 of them. The only one that appears to be lacking is "(5) a State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability." The application notes that each education sector has independent but complementary processes and procedures related to standards; however there does not appear to be a single system and the application fails to present evidence about the similarity of the current standards being used by each sector. In addition to the lack of a single set of quality standards around data, there is also the unanswered question of what activities are actually conducted by way of a data audit.</p>				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.</p>				

There is ample evidence in the application that North Carolina has thought about the array of audiences for its data. In addition to a number of regular and standard reports, the state indicates its intentions to generate reports on topics that may be requested from key stakeholder groups. The nature of the reports is appropriate for the intended audiences and these reports will be helpful for continuous improvement efforts. For example teachers will get reports with diagnostic information to help with instructional planning, and regional accountability coordinators who work with LEAs will receive data to help in planning technical assistance. The application includes descriptions of many reports that have been prepared to inform decisions around policy, operations, management, resource allocation, and instruction. The degree to which North Carolina's educator sectors (e.g., University of North Carolina, the community college system, the SEA) have cooperated in sharing data and conducting analyses to inform policies and programs is impressive. Finally, providing access to researchers (with appropriate confidentiality protections) is addressed in this high quality plan.

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

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

The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the lower portion of the strong range, with (C)(3)(ii) rated in the medium range. This application places a very heavy and useful emphasis on instructional improvement systems based on previous experience and positive results in the use of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) program by elementary school teachers in a pilot study. DIBELS will now be used by all elementary school teachers in the lowest performing schools and the application reflects the intention to identify analogous systems for use in middle and high schools. An important feature of the application is the interest in statewide applications of instructional improvement systems to capitalize on the statewide technology network for the provision of professional development to improve the quality of teaching. The envisioned instructional improvement system will provide teachers access to web-based tools to use data to individualize instruction and will also afford principals access to tools to track overall progress, review program effectiveness and inform decisions about resources and strategies. Even parents are considered as a user category as the systems will permit communication to the home. The plan describes how LEAs, teachers, and schools will be supported in using instructional improvement systems by augmenting the staff in the State's eight regional centers to work with LEA-based teams to coordinate the professional development and by contracting for the services of trainers and coaches to deliver on-site training as well as maintain web-based professional development modules. While significant resources are budgeted for this activity, this effort may not be sufficient given the need to reach all LEAs across the State within a period of two and one-half years. In addition, the approach is uniform across all LEAs; the application would be stronger if it had addressed any differentiated training or support for teachers in the lowest performing schools, or provided some evidence for the degree of past success in using a fairly standard dissemination strategy (e.g., a guidebook with follow up training) to achieve high quality and high fidelity adoption of new practices. In the past North Carolina has provided researchers access to data from its longitudinal data system. This plan improves on past practice by affording researchers data on assessment results that can be linked to data from the instructional improvement system. North Carolina will also determine key data sets that may be of most interest and make those data sets available proactively on a yearly basis. Researchers' access to other data upon request will also be maintained.

Total	47	42	42	
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	14	14	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	5	5	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	4	4	
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the lower portion of the strong range, with (D)(1)(iii) rated in the medium range.</p> <p>North Carolina currently provides a number of routes to alternative certification for teachers; moreover, the State Board has been empowered to approve programs provided by institutions/organizations in addition to institutions of higher education. For example, Teach for America participants can receive licenses based on that affiliation as of May 2010. LEAs themselves are able to operate alternative programs to certify principals and teachers independently or in collaboration with a higher education institution. Finally, there are regional alternative licensing centers that have operated since 2002 to oversee plans of study of aspiring teachers that are not tied to specific teacher training programs within a single institution. While State Board policy allows for innovative and experimental lateral entry programs, the only current alternative certification program for principals is for the Charlotte/Mecklenburg LEA to recommend full licensure for graduates of the New Leaders for New Schools Program. The application includes a table documenting alignment of its alternative certification routes for teachers and principals with the five characteristics enumerated in RTTT's definition that can be paraphrased as: (1)provided by a various types of providers, (2)selective in admissions, (3)content includes field-based experiences and ongoing support, (4)limited amount of required coursework or provisions to test out of courses, and (5)award of certifications identical to those received by graduates of traditional preparation programs. There is also evidence of the State Board's interest in reducing coursework even further in these programs. Evidence for the extensive use of such alternative certification methods is reflected in the statistic that 48% of North Carolina teachers hold at least one license earned through an alternative route. In contrast, although the application identifies a need to increase the numbers of effective principals, to date only nine principals have come through an alternate certification route; without expansion of alternative paths to principal certification, the supply will be inadequate to meet LEA needs. It appears that North Carolina does have the means of identifying areas of teacher shortage; the most serious ones are currently in the areas of math, science, and special education (secondary level) and the same report identifies principal shortages. The State is attempting to address teacher shortages, generally, through increased hiring of graduates of alternative certification programs (e.g., Teach for America). The application does not indicate how effective this strategy has been. An important issue is the degree to which the State has adopted effective strategies to address shortages in the identified areas. While the application does describe an effort to recruit candidates for math and science positions from undergraduates majoring in those fields, it is not clear whether this effort is extant and whether the State's actions are sufficient to address significant personnel shortfalls. Evidence of how the State currently addresses its critical need for special education teachers is absent. The application does not provide a coherent description of the State's approach to prepare teachers and principals to fill these areas of shortage.</p>				
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	43	47	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	

(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	8	12	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	20	20	

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

The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated at the top of the medium range, with (D)(2)(i) and (D)(2)(iii) being rated in the strong range.

North Carolina's statewide school accountability program, begun in 1995 and enhanced in 2007, has produced student level achievement data predating NCLB requirements, with data derived from statewide assessments at grades 3-8 in reading, math, and science, as well as end of course tests in high school in eight subject areas. Its longitudinal data system provides information on growth for individual students.

The addition of a value-added assessment system enabled educators and decision makers to analyze assessment data in terms of expected performance by individual students as well as subgroups. Evidence is presented of the ability of this program to measure student growth for each student. The State currently has a performance evaluation process, conducted annually (or more often) for teachers and principals that reflects State Board goals in its components and uses effective practices as indicators.

The application presents a plan to modify the evaluation system to include student growth; the planning process includes input from teachers and administrators to ensure the system's credibility. It also proposes to allow variability of approach during a pilot phase to inform a final statewide system; this aspect should prove valuable. The application is silent, however, on the weighting of student growth within the evaluation process making it hard to determine if student growth will be a significant factor. The application does not include a discussion about the development of multiple rating categories; related to this point is the failure to clearly define a rating of highly effective. The application does document how the use of performance evaluation is used in making decisions regarding tenure and removal, professional development, and the award of various incentives; incentives now given on a school basis will be moved to classroom level under the proposed plan. However, the goal for using the system to determine compensation (i.e., 25% of LEAs) is quite modest.

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

The presentation clarified that student growth will be a factor in performance evaluation of both teachers and principals. Rather than weighting individual factors, each factor is significant because deficient performance on any factor results in a rating below acceptable. The presentation also confirmed content in the application that the performance evaluation system includes definitions of "effective" and "highly effective" and is therefore not silent on the issue of multiple rating categories. With the change in score, the quality of the response to the (D)(2)(ii) subcriterion is now rated in the strong range.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	17	17	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	11	11	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	6	6	

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

The quality of the response to this criterion is rated near the top of the medium range.

The application includes ample evidence of inequities in the distribution of highly effective teachers and principals between high poverty/high minority schools and others and provides data on student outcomes confirming the severity of this issue. The approach in the application is two-pronged for teachers: (1) to recruit teachers with better content knowledge (e.g., more Teach for America staff and a new, similar NC

Teacher Corps), and (2) to improve current teaching staff through professional development (e.g., coaching, more intensive induction support, distance learning). These strategies have merit and the application contains specific activities and goals for their accomplishment. However, professional development takes time to plan and deliver; North Carolina's plan lacks a sense of urgency around resolving the issue of inequitable distribution of highly effective teachers and more immediate steps are not included. North Carolina plans to offer a tested principal leadership academy to improve the corps of building administrators as well as a program to encourage highly effective principals to accept positions in lowest performing schools by allowing them to bring five staff members with them. Given North Carolina's interest in changing school culture and developing strong school-based teams, this approach appears to be quite promising. However, there are no data on expected outcomes. There are two key weaknesses in the plan. First, the stated target of having leaders trained in academies deployed in 2013 falls below the criterion's standard regarding ambitious, annual targets. Second, the performance measures still reflect serious gaps between high poverty/high minority schools and others regarding numbers of effective staff. While the plan includes targets for increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers in math and science, the goal of reaching 85% at the end of four years does not appear to be sufficiently ambitious considering the appropriate focus on upgrading the teaching profession. The application does not address target goals in the fields of foreign language and/or special education.

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

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

The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.

North Carolina currently links student achievement and growth data to teachers and back to the University of North Carolina (UNC) system teacher preparation programs, and plans to expand this capability to other in-state preparation programs. However, although the plan states an intention to expand to include private institutions of higher education, accomplishing this task is not reflected in the performance indicators. The plan describes a new Educator Preparation Program Report Card that will be disseminated. Data are used to revise preparation programs that produce unsatisfactory results. North Carolina's new credentialing programs for both teachers and principals are designed to provide learning experiences reflective of the preparation programs whose graduates are most effective in impacting student achievement. Plans to expand such options are positive components of the RTTT plan. The plan includes activities for aligning teacher preparation programs' objectives with the personnel evaluation system and this step can lead to better articulation between teacher training programs and the performance needs of schools. A similarly sound approach is included regarding principal training programs.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	10	15	
(i) Providing effective support	10	8	8	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	2	7	

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

The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the medium range, with (D)(5)(i) rated in the strong range and (D)(5)(ii) rated in the low range.

Alignment between the planned professional development and (1) the RTTT components related to standards, teacher/principal evaluation system, and (2) the planned use of an instructional improvement system is strong. The professional development plan is appropriately wide (e.g., seeking to reach

statewide as all LEAs are participating), employing on-line resources as well as a system of regional professional development leaders tasked with building local capacity to deliver high quality, ongoing professional development. The budget for these activities is extensive and appears ample to achieve its goals. Seeking input from teachers and administrators and partnerships with professional organizations strengthens this plan. However, there are several weaknesses regarding the issues of needs assessment and how to use evaluation findings to inform continuous improvement. First, there does not appear to be the necessary focus on the needs of high needs students in the design of the professional development. Second, the evaluation plan pays insufficient attention to assessing the effectiveness of professional development through the lens of results for students, although the evaluation will examine many other aspects (e.g., behavioral, attitudinal) of those participating in professional development. Without a tighter focus on results for students in the evaluation plan, the results of evaluation work may not yield the type of information needed to change supports in order to improve student achievement.

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

The presentation clarified two issues related to the use of data to inform continuously improving the effectiveness of support provided to teachers and principals. Student performance data linked to teachers and principals will be used to inform professional development to be offered. However, the lack of specific attention to the needs of high needs students in designing professional development still remains. The presentation also made clear that student performance data will be an important evaluation component in analyzing the effectiveness of professional development; this was not as clearly emphasized in the application.

Total	138	97	106	
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E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	

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

The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.

The application provides an abundance of evidence including language from the state constitution, relevant statutes, and court decisions reflecting the State's ability to intervene in both districts and schools with low performance.

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

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	4	4	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	31	31	

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

The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.

North Carolina has identified 132 schools as lowest achieving and has further identified its 16 lowest achieving districts (that include 48 of these schools and are almost universally rural in character) as Transformation Districts. The State's reform plan usefully addresses issues at both school and district levels. Given the State's recognition of the unmet needs of LEP students, it is surprising that the identification process did not consider schools with large numbers of LEP students as a factor. The reform plan is a far-reaching effort in terms of the number of schools and issues of state size; the budget fairly reflects the investment that will be needed to accomplish the objectives. The plan reflects an intention to

use the specified intervention models for schools. A major approach appears to be a Turnaround Model being used at the high school level but planned for implementation with middle and elementary schools. This approach has shown good results in terms of clearing the overall student proficiency rate bar; the percentage gains over three years reached as high as 17% for a small number of schools. There is also a Restart model that provides a school with the flexibility in operation afforded to a charter school; this approach has produced generally positive results in student achievement and graduation rates. North Carolina will be supporting these efforts through its Transformation Office. The application provides a description of approaches tried in the past and their results, and it appears that this plan makes use of that experience to craft a reform strategy with good chances of success. The plan to work with the identified Transformation Districts is sound and has the possibility for sustaining progress for nearly half of the lowest performing schools. Overall, the reform plan presented here for turning around the lowest achieving schools is impressive. Its biggest drawback is the failure to set more ambitious goals for improvement given documented results. Whether achieving these goals will also lead to closing the gap in performance between subgroups is not discussed.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range.				
In spite of falling revenue from 2008 to 2009, the application presents evidence that the percentage of revenue available for education rose almost 7%, underlying North Carolina's commitment to education in the face of harsh economic circumstances. Since the State provides a high percentage of funding for education, there is a strong foundation for equitable funding between LEAs and between schools within LEAs (allotted on formula basis). To ensure equitability given the fact that localities may supplement funding, there are also sources of categorical funding to reduce disparities.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2	2	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	4	4	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8	8	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The overall quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the low portion of the strong range, with (F)(2) (iv) rated in the medium range and (F)(2)(i) rated in the low range.				

North Carolina has a charter school law and a cap of 100 schools. Since the application reports a total of 2,495 schools, the cap limits charter schools to less than five percent. It appears that only the State Board may authorize a charter school; the Board has established an Office of Charter Schools to provide oversight. Charter schools are required to meet the same accountability (for student proficiency) requirements as any school and the application cites instances of schools being closed for failing to meet such requirements. Charter schools are treated equitably in terms of financial support provided by the state and allocation of funds from the district; however, charter schools are not provided funding for facilities. The application is silent on whether charter schools are able to share in bond levies. Facility-related requirements for charter schools are the same as those for traditional public schools. It is helpful that the State requires LEAs to work with charter schools when its facilities are not being used. Other than charter schools, the State Board may allow LEAs to operate Innovative Schools that enjoy the flexibility of charter schools. Other than limiting the number of charter schools, North Carolina appears to have policies conducive to supporting alternatives to public schools operating within the established system.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The quality of the response to this criterion is rated in the strong range. The application includes noteworthy examples of significant reform efforts, established under Board policies, that have increased achievement and helped to create conditions favorable to future reform. Efforts have been made in the areas of early childhood education and training teachers in the area of special education, among others. The North Carolina State Improvement Project has increased the number of teachers able to expertly address the needs of students with disabilities and have realized significant growth on state reading and math tests. The More at 4 Program for at-risk students works on literacy, math, and social skills, and prepares these children for success in school. These efforts have mobilized Federal, State, and other resources, and have had strong backing by educational interests in the state, as well as the business community.</p>				
Total	55	44	44	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

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

Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The quality of the response to this criterion has satisfied the requirements to merit points under the Competitive Priority.

North Carolina's plan addresses the competitive preference priority emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in a substantive and extensive fashion and merits the priority points. References to STEM are infused throughout the application, whether in terms of the stronger standards for students, the activities designed to strengthen teachers and teaching in the STEM fields (e.g., recruitment, alternative certification, induction, professional development), and the reform model section's attention to creating/revamping schools to promote interest in pursuing college degrees in STEM fields and preparing students to succeed in such endeavors. The plan emphasizes a commitment to preparing more students for careers in STEM fields, especially students currently underrepresented in advanced courses including girls and minority students. NC State Women in Engineering Outreach Program is one of many such efforts, in partnership with the higher education and business communities. Finally, using the K-12 Educational Technology Cloud (a RTTT project to use information and communication technologies to extend educational resources throughout the State) to provide high level STEM courses to students in rural areas where highly qualified teachers may not be available will extend those opportunities to those now

underserved (and underrepresented). North Carolina's bold vision for the use of technology has the potential of stimulating the interests of many students in future technological developments and possibilities.

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

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The application meets and exceeds the threshold requirements for meeting this absolute priority. The plan addresses all of the four specified areas, sufficient LEA participation and commitment to achieve its goals, and links the use of funds (as described in the project budgets) to planned activities intended to achieve objectives related to increased achievement, closing achievement gaps, and preparing students to succeed in their pursuit of further education and careers.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	419	428	
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Race to the Top

Technical Review Form - Tier 2

North Carolina Application #3700NC-5



A. State Success Factors

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEA's participation in it	65	65	65	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	5	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	45	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	15	15	
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>i. Applicant clearly presents a comprehensive and coherent reform agenda that addresses each of the four RTTT components. Noteworthy, is that in 1997 the Applicant adopted its first comprehensive school accountability model, the ABCs of Public Education (ABCs) and then in 2007 significantly expanded this model to include 5 systemic goals and action plans for reaching these goals as part of the Governor's Career and College: Ready, Set, Go! agenda. The Applicant's Future-Ready Goals are complementary to their RTTT proposal.</p> <p>ii. All of the Applicant's LEAs have signed MOUs to participate in each component in the RTTT proposal. Applicant also has support from virtually 100% of the school boards and local teacher's associations.</p> <p>iii. With 100% of the LEAs participating in all elements of the proposal, there will be a statewide impact for all LEAs and all students. The comprehensive quality of the Applicant's proposal should result in strengthening its education workforce which in turn should provide the Applicant additional workforce capacity to attain its improvement targets for student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps, high school graduation rates and college enrollment.</p>				
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	25	27	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	16	18	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	9	9	
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>i. Applicant's implementation plan is well designed and builds upon a history of reform leadership. Leadership and accountability to guide and provide oversight for this initiative will be provided by the newly created RTTT Project Management Office. Specific leaders with appropriate expertise in their defined roles are part of network teams that are assigned to each RTTT reform area. The new Regional Model will provide coordination of supportive services to LEAs statewide. Also, the addition of an upgraded and expanded statewide technology infrastructure, "Technology Cloud", will provide expanded support to all LEAs. The Applicant's budget plan is clear and shows a credible connection between expenditures and plan function. Applicant, also, notes that the capacity-building activities when accomplished could result in identifying cost efficiencies and reallocation of existing funding.</p>				

However, as the Applicant has noted, its statewide capacity for implementation of its reform agenda can be achieved without improving the overall quality of its the education workforce, especially in equitable distribution of effective educators in low performing schools.

ii. Applicant documents a broad range of stakeholder support that will be tangible throughout the implementation process. Noteworthy, is the degree of representation from the post secondary sector. Applicant presents additional letters of support from professional associations, legislative leaders, business leaders, civil rights leaders, Educator Associations, Association of School Administrators , School Boards Associations and Parent-Teacher Associations.

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

A (2) i. Applicant presentation created a greater understanding of how the proposed RTTT infrastructure would continue to provide additional support and capacity building at the conclusion of the grant.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	22	22	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	5	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	17	17	

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

i. Applicant clearly demonstrates a long term record of progress for all four reform areas. Examples of significant progressive programs and initiatives include: 2007 Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability, the Window of Information on Student Education, numerous initiatives that support the educator workforce and a District and School Transformation Division.

ii. Applicant has made progress in increasing student achievement outcomes as demonstrated by local and national assessment data. There is evidence of positive trend data in overall graduation rates and across all student subgroups.

However, Applicant acknowledges there are some mixed results in regard to sustained achievement. Applicant's positive history of reform has not yet resulted in census student achievement positive trend data. For example, a significant weakness is apparent in the lack of progress for closing the achievement gap among minorities and low income students. In addition, Applicant does not provide an explanation why progress in recent years has slowed on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Total	125	112	114	
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B. Standards and Assessments

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

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

i. Applicant has a signed MOU with the Council of Chief State School Officers to participate in the Common Core Standards Initiative, which includes 48 states in an effort to design internationally benchmarked common standards.

ii. Applicant's State Board of Education, which has the legal authority to adopt the Common Core Standards, has indicated that this adoption will occur before July 31, 2010.				
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	10	10	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality assessments	5	5	5	
(ii) Including a significant number of States	5	5	5	
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
i./ii. Applicant has committed to the adoption of common, high quality assessments as a governing State in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that includes 33 states. Applicant is committed to collaboration with other states that will result in the development of balanced assessments, including technology-enhanced and performance-based items that will be implemented through an on-line system.				
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	18	18	
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Applicant's transition plan to provide support for enhanced standards and high-quality assessments has many components and is aligned to specific outcomes. Applicant articulately outlines 4 goals and an ambitious timeline for the transition which includes specific responsible parties to the Common Core Standards. The plan includes extensive professional development to ensure the alignment of teaching with the new standards and to provide on-line and job-embedded support to staff. A strong connection to post secondary education is evident.				
However, the plan to effectively support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments will be dependent on the Applicant's newly developed capacity to to work LEAs across the state and to recognize the appropriate degree of service necessary for each LEA.				
Total	70	68	68	

C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	22	22	
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Applicant provides detailed evidence that documents that its State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) fulfills and fully implements all criteria identified for each of the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act.				
However, Applicant's statement for element 5 ("As part of the NC P20+ initiative, all the NC sectors will collaborate ...") suggests that this element is not yet in place.				
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	5	5	
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Applicant outlines two strategies that will support access of data from their SLDS to key stakeholders ranging from parents to post secondary education and researchers. Strategy one addresses providing sector-specific data and information products to support improving student learning and provide information				

to access the effectiveness of policies and programs. Strategy two goes beyond the K-12 stakeholders to provide cross-sector data analysis and information products to external groups such as post secondary systems and early childhood groups.

These two strategies will effectively ensure that data will be available to support both decision-makers in continuous improvement efforts in such areas as policy as well as other stakeholders such as parents and community members.

(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	13	13	
(i) Increasing the use of instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(ii) Supporting LEAs, schools, and teachers in using instructional improvement systems	6	4	4	
(iii) Making the data from instructional improvement systems available to researchers	6	5	5	

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

i. Applicant outlines a comprehensive three part effort to expand instructional use of data to provide support for student outcomes. The parts include: increase the acquisition, and use of instructional improvement systems, support to LEAs that are using instructional improvement systems in providing effective professional development and ensure that data from the instructional improvement systems are made available to researchers through the SLDS.

Implementation timelines that provide details for this plan are ambitious and cause a concern about the pace of implementation of the Instructional Improvement System because there is not a description of what the Applicant will do to provide effective staff development so that teachers and administrators have the capacity to navigate the expanded systems. An additional concern is whether the allocations of resources is sufficient to support this challenging professional development project.

ii. Applicant has a comprehensive plan for supporting LEAs and will generate a rich assortment of data for continuous improvement. Implementation of the plan will provide customized training to teachers and administrators in the use of the proposed system. Applicant will develop a data-use guide that will include support materials and will provide training for educators through a cohort of Professional Development Leaders. However, there is not a clarity of detail as to how the Applicant will monitor the successful implementation of its professional development efforts in providing support to LEAs, schools and teachers in the use of instructional improvement systems.

iii. Applicant indicates its interest in sharing data and online assessment items that become available by the proposed ISS. However, the Applicants statement that it "will endeavor to make the core functionality of the System universally accessible" is vague. In this area, Applicant needs to provide additional details how this data will be accessible.

Total	47	40	40	
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D. Great Teachers and Leaders

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	19	19	
(i) Allowing alternative routes to certification	7	7	7	

(ii) Using alternative routes to certification	7	6	6	
(iii) Preparing teachers and principals to fill areas of shortage	7	6	6	

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

- i. Applicant has the legal authority to support alternative routes for certification for teachers and principals. Routes include programs operated independently of Institutions of Higher Education. Applicant's plan contains all elements in the definition of alternative routes to certification.
- ii. Applicant provides evidence of the significant use of alternative routes with 48% of all licensed teachers holding licenses through an alternative pathway. Alternative routes for principals are used less frequently (3%).
- iii. In 2006 Applicant implemented a broad-based ten point statewide plan for identifying shortage areas for teachers and principals that are documented in the Department of Public Instruction's annual report with appropriate comprehensive strategies to address these shortages. This plan clearly demonstrates the Applicant's commitment to continue improving the quality of its work force in areas of identified shortages. Trend data is beginning to indicate reduced teacher and principal turnover and shortages in some LEAs. However, Applicant acknowledges that that some areas of its 10 point plan are still in need of improvement.

(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	54	54	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	5	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	14	14	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	10	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	25	25	

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

- i. Applicant has developed an effective data system that has the ability to measure student growth for each individual student using adequate yearly progress and link that data to teachers and principals. A new Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) has been developed that includes a standards-based Teacher and Principal Evaluation Process and has the ability to generate trend data that can inform placement decisions and track teacher effectiveness. An addition to five standards used in the present Teacher Evaluation, a sixth standard, measures of student growth, will be added next year. The Measures of Student Growth standard will also be added to the Principal Evaluation process.
- ii. Applicant's Educator Evaluation System was designed and developed with teacher and principal stakeholder involvement. The system uses multiple categories. The rubrics and reporting methods are comprehensive and appropriately include goal-setting for professional growth. Noteworthy, is a unique component of the Principal Evaluation that includes a Teacher Working Conditions Survey which evaluators can use to help principals focus on how best to improve teaching and learning conditions in their schools.

Included in the Applicant's stakeholder involvement is a deliberate strategic and inclusive process where the Applicant will receive input from an Educator Effectiveness Workgroup. This group will report options on how to best incorporate student growth measures in the Educator Evaluation System.
- iii. Applicant conducts annual evaluations of teachers and principals using the Educator Evaluation System which, also, includes formative feedback. Applicant will introduce an achievement-based compensation model for teachers and principal's in the state's lowest-achieving schools. Applicant has outlined a thoughtful, deliberate plan with continued stakeholder involvement to develop an efficient way to incorporate student growth measures into educator evaluations.

What is not evident is what weight the student growth data (a "major component" in the Applicant's words) will have as one of the six evaluation standards.

iv. Applicant's Evaluation System is used to inform decisions about developing teachers and principals, compensating, promoting and retaining teachers and principals, deciding to grant teacher tenure and removing ineffective tenured and non-tenured teachers and principals. The Applicant has impressively implemented teacher and principal compensation pilot programs that will provide the basis to develop additional programs that will expand opportunities for highly effective teachers and principals to receive additional compensation for quality work. The Applicant's Educator Evaluation Plan Implementation Timeline seems challenging but purposeful.

The Applicant's Plan shows much promise. However, the Statewide implementation or roll out of the Educator Evaluation System will be dependent on effective implementation strategies that are not detailed in this section.

(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	19	19	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	12	12	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	7	7	

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

i. Applicant is clearly aware it does not have an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in high-poverty and high-minority schools. Applicant has comprehensively outlined a credible plan to address this inequity. Applicant's plan to increase the number of effective teachers and principals has a myriad of special programs to recruit, prepare and then retain teachers and principals in these areas of need and conversely reduce the number of ineffective teachers and principals. Examples include: Regional Leadership Academies, Teachers for Rural Schools Initiative, Teach for America, a new Teacher Corps program (based upon the Teach for America model), strategic staffing and a Virtual Public School. The success of the Applicant's programs described in Section D - 2 will be necessary to provide the type of support to expand the quantity and quality of equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in these areas of need.

ii. Applicant's plan for increasing equity in hard to staff areas such as STEM is embedded into its overall plan but targets are not identified for increasing the number of effective teachers and principals and reducing the number of ineffective teachers in these areas.

An important part of the Applicant's plan noted in the Performance Measures Chart, reduction of ineffective teachers and principals, lacks details.

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

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

i. Applicant links student achievement and growth data to specific teachers and principals and expands this link to include connecting this data to teacher and principal State preparation programs. In the future, the Applicant will develop an additional accountability measure, Educator Preparation Program Report Card, that will be a publicly reported document that will rate the effectiveness of post secondary preparation programs. These findings will appropriately help identify best practices for regular and alternative teacher

preparation programs and practices and programs in need of improvement or elimination. Additional details about implementation of this plan would be helpful.

ii. Applicant describes proposed expansion of alternative certification options. An example would be the creation of a new Teacher Corps program similar to the successful Teach for America model. Applicant's monitoring of trend data from the Teacher Recruitment Plan, Enrollment Growth Plan and Productivity Goals and the new Educator Preparation Program Report Card will help inform any adjustments necessary to this initiative and provide guidance for additional certification program options. Additional details about specific targets to gauge the Applicant's progress in expanding effective teacher and principal preparation programs are lacking.

(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	18	18	
(i) Providing effective support	10	9	9	
(ii) Continuously improving the effectiveness of the support	10	9	9	
(D)(5) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>i. Applicant's commitment to expand its support for teachers and principals has been embedded throughout this proposal. The Applicant's plan to expand this support through its Professional Development Initiative will better support LEAs by creating an agility to customize its services to the needs of its diverse group of LEAs. Noteworthy, is the Applicant's support for the effective use of technology-enabled eLearning tools to better meet the professional needs statewide. The significant amount of funds requested in the budget reflects the Applicant's recognition of the importance of professional development to expand the capacity of professionals to implement this proposed reform agenda.</p> <p>ii. Applicant's plan includes timely evaluations and capacity to enable evaluators to differentiate appropriate training to the programs that will best support student achievement. Through careful analysis of the evaluation data from individual programs, the Applicant will be able to make informed decisions about the effective implementation of these programs and delivery systems. These decisions will result in the continuation or elimination of present programs or making needed adjustments for improvements of specific programs.</p>				
Total	138	120	120	

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Applicant has the legal authority to intervene directly in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	37	38	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	32	33	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				

i. Applicant effectively uses a Performance Composite Score for identifying lowest-achieving schools and LEAs and lists its lowest 5% of LEAs.

ii. Applicant has demonstrated a history of using intervention models and will further expand its efforts with the addition of the District and School Transformation Division and New Schools Project. Applicant uses all four intervention models but the transformation model, which will be limited to no more than 50% of schools in LEAs, is the most used.

In 2007, Applicant established the District and School Transformation division that has a successful track record in turnaround efforts that are similar to the four RTTT models. This division will monitor the transition and alignment to the RTTT models.

In May, 2010 legislation (The Reform of Continually Low-Performing Schools) was approved that gives the Applicant authorization to approve requests from LEAs to reform continually low-performing schools by using any of the reform models.

The Applicant demonstrates how it has built upon the knowledge gained from past efforts in identifying what models work best in different regional settings and has made informed adjustments in implementing models that have the greatest probability of success in the development of its new strategies and resources that give greater local flexibility.

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

E (2) ii. Applicant's presentation provided greater clarity and examples of how their Leadership Academy is now in its third cohort of 25 future leaders.

Total	50	47	48	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	4	4	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
i. Applicant increased the percentage of revenues to public education from FY 2008 to FY 2009. However, although the percent of funding increased, the gross amount of dollars decreased.				
ii. Applicant's policies provide equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and between high-poverty schools and others within each LEA. Using the comprehensive McLoone Index, which includes 3 funding streams and 25 different allocation formulas, mechanisms are in place for distributing position allotments, categorical allotments for specific groups of students, low-wealth supplemental funding, small county supplemental funding and disadvantaged student supplemental funding.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	27	28	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	2	2	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	6	7	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	4	4	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	7	7	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>i. Applicant's laws sets "low cap" limits on the number of charter schools that can exist and the number of charter schools that can operate in any LEA at one time. There is no indication that there will be an expansion of charter schools in the future. However, Applicant does authorize additional schools that it characterizes as "charter like".</p> <p>ii. Applicant requires charter schools to have the same accountability standards that are in place for traditional schools. Applicant has established three strategies to benchmark work toward having to having all charters being high-performing. Student achievement is an important factor in a charter school's renewal process. In the past three years 9 charters have been identified as low-performing schools and they received additional support. There is not evidence that any charter schools were closed.</p> <p>Applicant did not present a strategy to encourage charter schools for high-need populations.</p> <p>iii. Applicant's charter school operational funding provides for comparable local , state and federal funding for charter schools.</p> <p>iv. Applicant provides charter school funding for facilities under the same facility requirements for public schools. Capital funding for schools is a local LEA expense and the minimal 3% state appropriation for capital projects does not include charter schools. This is an obstacle that impacts the number of charter schools.</p> <p>v. Applicant encourages LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools other than charters such as Early College High Schools and future STEM schools.</p>				
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)				
<p>F (2) ii. Applicant's presentation provided additional clarification and examples how their charter schools are under the same accountability system as their traditional schools.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Applicant has supported a variety of reforms and innovations that have contributed to improved achievement and graduation rates.</p> <p>Specifically, Applicant has several successful early childhood programs that ensure that a greater number of students are prepared to enter elementary school.</p> <p>Applicant's support for high-quality teachers is evidenced by the incentives it provides for teachers that have resulted in the Applicant's documented recognition as "leading the nation in the number of National Board-Certified teachers."</p> <p>In addition, the Applicant has a number of services for high-needs students such as State Improvement Project, Joint Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and Personal Education Plan.</p> <p>It is clear that the Applicant's innovations presented in this section have increased student achievement and graduation rates. Most impressive are the Applicant's statewide early childhood programs.</p>				
Total	55	41	42	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Applicant proposes a high quality multi-phase STEM plan that features several anchor STEM schools that are connected to the State's New School Project.</p> <p>Noteworthy, is the Applicant's integration of its STEM efforts throughout the proposal which demonstrates the comprehensiveness of this initiative.</p> <p>The Applicant's STEM initiatives and strategies are designed to prepare more students, including underrepresented groups and women, for advanced course work and career pathways in STEM disciplines and careers.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Applicant's reform plan is well organized and presents a comprehensive approach to each of the four RTTT areas.</p> <p>The quality of the content presented in this proposal provides encouragement that the Applicant's reform agenda can be accomplished.</p> <p>The largest portions of the proposed budget for the Regional Leadership Academies, technology infrastructure, evaluation systems and professional development are consistent with Applicant's core emphasis.</p> <p>The Applicant has acknowledged that to reach the next level of student performance it has to improve the quality of its educational workforce.</p> <p>The Applicant has throughout this comprehensive proposal successfully demonstrated its commitment to accomplishing this goal which will be of benefit to all its students.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	443	447	
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