RACE TO THE TOP

Georgia Report

Year 1: School Year 2010–2011

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

January 10, 2012

Race to the Top overview

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, of which approximately $4 billion was used to fund comprehensive statewide reform grants under the Race to the Top program.[1] In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded Race to the Top grants to 11 States and the District of Columbia. The Race to the Top program is a competitive four-year grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement; closing achievement gaps; improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers.

Since education is a complex system, sustained and lasting instructional improvement in classrooms, schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and States will not be achieved through piecemeal change. Instead, the Race to the Top program requires that States and LEAs take into account their local context to design and implement a comprehensive approach to innovation and reform that meets the needs of their educators, students, and families.

The Race to the Top program is built on the framework of comprehensive reform in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;

- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;

- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and

- Turning around the lowest-performing schools.

Race to the Top program review

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting States as they implement ambitious reform agendas, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top program. The goal of the ISU is to provide assistance to States as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes. Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU will work with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and help States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes.

Grantees are accountable for the implementation of their approved Race to the Top plans, and the information and data gathered throughout the program review help to inform the Department's management and support of the Race to the Top States, as well as provide appropriate and timely updates to the public on their progress. In the event that adjustments are required to an approved plan, the grantee must submit a formal amendment request to the Department for consideration. States may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget provided that such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. In the event that the Department determines that a grantee is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR section 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).[2]

State-specific summary report

The Department uses the information gathered during the review process (e.g., through monthly calls, on-site reviews, and Annual Performance Reports (APRs)) to draft State-specific Race to the Top reports.[3] The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's Year 1 Race to the Top implementation, highlighting successes and accomplishments, identifying challenges, and providing lessons learned from implementation to date.

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[1] The remaining funds were awarded under the Race to the Top Assessment program. More information about the Race to the Top Assessment program is available at www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment.

[2] More information about the ISU's program review process, State APR data, and State Scopes of Work can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html.

[3] Additional State-specific data on progress against annual performance measures and goals reported in the Year 1 APRs can be found on the Race to the Top Data Display at www.rtt-apr.us.

Executive Summary

Georgia's education reform agenda

Georgia's education reform agenda, supported with its $399,952,650 million Race to the Top grant, establishes five objectives:

1. Set high standards and rigorous assessments for all students—leading to college and career readiness;

2. Prepare students for college readiness, transition, and success;

3. Provide great teachers and leaders;

4. Provide effective support for all schools, including the lowest-achieving schools; and

5. Lead the way in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

## Local educational agency participation

As of June 30, 2011, 26 LEAs were participating in Georgia's Race to the Top plan. The participating LEAs enroll 40 percent of Georgia's K–12 students and 44 percent of the State's K–12 students who live in poverty.

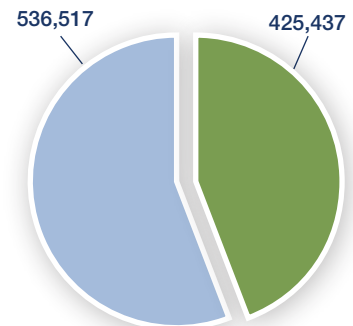LEAs Participating in Georgia's Race to the Top Plan

170   26
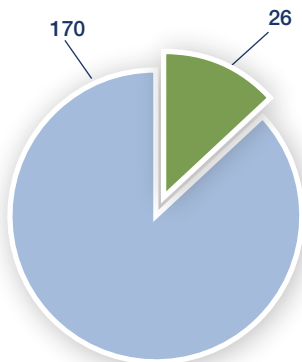
- Participating LEAs (#) as of June 30, 2011
- Other LEAs

K-12 Students in LEAs Participating in Georgia's Race to the Top Plan

1,012,853   664,214
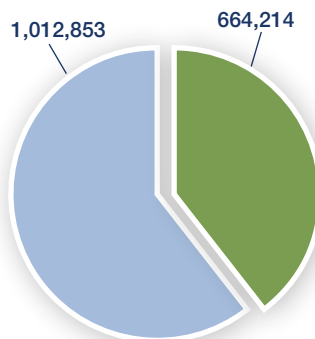
- K-12 students (#) in participating LEAs
- K-12 students (#) in other LEAs

Students in Poverty in LEAs Participating in Georgia's Race to the Top Plan

536,517   425,437

- Students in poverty (#) in participating LEAs
- Students in poverty (#) in other LEAs

Executive Summary

Georgia Year 1 summary

Accomplishments

Georgia's first-year accomplishments include awarding the State's first five Race to the Top Innovation Fund competitive grants, securing the Georgia Board of Education's approval for key contracts across the reform areas, and developing a comprehensive project management system.

Race to the Top Innovation Fund. Georgia awarded five competitive grants in summer 2011 under the first round of its Innovation Fund initiative. The Innovation Fund encourages the formation of partnerships among LEAs, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to identify new ways to increase applied learning opportunities, improve teacher and leader effectiveness, expand the pipeline of effective teachers, and promote STEM charter schools.

Georgia Board of Education's approval of key contracts. The Georgia Board of Education approved formal contracts with organizations to help the State fill teaching positions and offer teacher professional development. Specifically, the State partnered with Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to help increase the pipeline of effective teachers for Georgia's low-achieving schools. Another important partnership is with the UTeach Institute, a program that collaborates with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to offer teaching degree programs in STEM fields and increase the number of postsecondary students who pursue careers in teaching. This strategy will help to increase the State's supply of effective mathematics and science teachers. The State also partnered with the Georgia Institute of Technology's Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEISMC) to enhance teacher development and student learning opportunities in STEM areas.

Comprehensive project management system. During Year 1, Georgia began to design a comprehensive project management system through SharePoint, a document management and sharing website. The purpose of this system is to help ensure high-quality project management across the Race to the Top core education reform areas. The system assists with coordinating schedules and due dates, identifying projects at risk of falling behind schedule, and sharing of relevant information between the State and participating LEAs.

Challenges

Although Georgia enjoyed some success in Year 1, the State faced challenges related to maintaining the original proposed schedule, transitions in State and LEA leadership, and hiring qualified staff. The timeline proposed in the State's Phase 2 application had not been updated from the proposed Phase 1 application. This resulted in significant timeline delays and required numerous adjustments to the implementation schedule. The State revised its timelines as a part of the Scope of Work approval process.

Georgia also experienced State-level leadership changes, including the election of a new Governor and a new State Superintendent of Education in November 2010. In addition, six of the largest participating LEAs also experienced leadership changes, hiring new superintendents during the course of Year 1. Finally, the State encountered challenges in staffing its management team and the teams across the core education reform areas, hiring the bulk of its staff between March and May 2011. The final Race to the Top staff member was hired in September 2011.

Strategies for moving forward

Georgia intends to complete implementation of the SharePoint project management system, which will facilitate the sharing of information across LEAs and the State starting in October 2011. The SharePoint site complements the State's communications plans for the remaining project years. The communication strategy includes an online newsletter for all LEAs and stakeholders, as well as community- and education-related meetings across the State. The State also plans to support new superintendents in participating LEAs by connecting them with veteran superintendents in other participating LEAs.

Building capacity to support LEAs

Georgia indicated that it is on track with the timelines in its approved Scope of Work for the three primary projects in this reform area, which include Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes and the Innovation Fund competitive grant program, in addition to overall project management.

Performance management

Georgia capitalized on Year 1 of Race to the Top as an opportunity to plan and build a foundation for more ambitious reform efforts in later years of the grant. At the State level, Georgia integrated the Race to the Top reform efforts within the existing Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) organizational structure. The State created new positions (e.g., a deputy superintendent-level Project Director, Associate Superintendent of Race to the Top Implementation, and Deputy Superintendent for School Turnaround) and a Race to the Top management team to lead the initiatives. Georgia began building its management team in September 2010 and secured its Race to the Top lead in October 2010. As mentioned above, Georgia's efforts to recruit and hire high-quality management staff took longer than anticipated, with the final staff member joining the team in September 2011. Georgia also began development of a comprehensive project management system using SharePoint that will be complete in Year 2 (see *Executive Summary)*.

The innovations for improving early learning outcomes

Georgia prioritized providing professional development for pre-kindergarten educators across the State, since positive early learning experiences provide a foundation for school success. The State experienced an early set-back due to a decline in State revenues that were specifically targeted to provide resource coordination related to the transition of children from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten and elementary school to families of children in all pre-kindergarten programs that feed into the State's lowest-achieving schools. Nevertheless, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is moving forward with the other aspects of this project, with the overall aim of comparing the effectiveness of different professional development models for pre-kindergarten educators and making plans to scale-up the model found to be most effective. Examples of Year 1 progress reported in the September 2011 APR include providing professional development and a pre-kindergarten course to 50 teachers and providing professional development to 700 pre-kindergarten educators through a two-day workshop and access to an online training module.

The Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund is a competitive grant program that encourages new and innovative partnerships among K-12 schools, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses on projects to improve student educational achievement. The grant application stimulated new approaches to improve learning and engaged the business community in the development of education reforms moving forward (See *STEM* section for additional detail). During Year 1, Georgia issued a request for proposals from partnerships with innovative ideas to improve student achievement, reviewed 73 submitted applications, and awarded grants to the five partnerships that showed the most promise. According to the State, by limiting the awards to five applicants, Georgia believes it was able to establish a high standard for meeting the application criteria. More information regarding the Georgia Innovation Fund grant and winners can be found at the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget website.[4]

LEA implementation and accountability

Georgia partnered with 26 LEAs across the State for its Race to the Top initiative. As required in the application, all participating LEAs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining their full commitment to Georgia's Race to the Top plan. As part of these partnerships, the State offered LEAs flexibility regarding their Scopes of Work and the activities carried out to implement these plans. Therefore, the LEA plans vary widely. Additionally, participating LEAs submitted budget documentation for Year 1 that provided annual project-level details for Race to the Top initiatives. The Georgia Race to the Top Implementation Director must approve an LEA's budget before any funds are released for a fiscal year to ensure alignment with the MOU and LEA Scopes of Work.

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[4] See http://opb.georgia.gov/00/channel_title/0,2094,161890977_174362226,00.html.

Stakeholder engagement

Key activities and stakeholders

The Georgia Race to the Top management team engages with a variety of stakeholders, including local Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), State legislators, the business community, educator associations, and IHEs. As such, the State's communication efforts have included outreach to a wide audience, deploying the GaDOE and Governor's Office staff to speak at as many venues as possible to educate the community-at-large about and garner support for the Race to the Top education reforms. During Year 1, some Race to the Top stakeholders, including educators, national assessment experts, business leaders, and LEA leadership, were organized into steering committees that conduct work around three major components of the Great Teachers and Leaders work: Value Added/Student Growth, Evaluations, and Other Student Learning Measures. The State also established a Data Governance Committee to ensure that data governance policies and procedures are implemented and a Data Management Committee to ensure that the implementation of the P–20 system progresses according to plan. The State continues to enhance its communication plan to help ensure all stakeholders are informed of the Race to the Top work.

Lessons learned

The State reported that outreach and communication has been, and remains, an ongoing challenge. The State continues to enhance its communication plan and expand outreach efforts to ensure all stakeholders are informed and supportive of the Race to the Top work. In addition, in response to the leadership turnover in participating LEAs, the State has integrated early outreach to interim and new superintendents and school board members into its robust communication plan.

The State found that declines in State revenues had an unanticipated impact on the planned activities of its Race to the Top plan. Specifically, Georgia had to omit parts of its initial plan for the Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes project due to declines in State revenue that were intended to support one aspect of this project. With what remained, the State adjusted its strategy to influence pre-kindergarten programs more broadly.
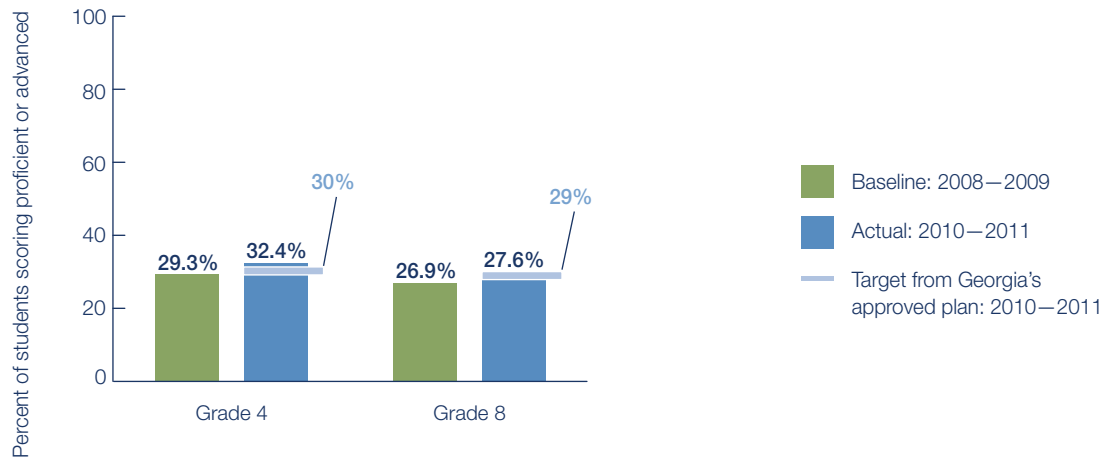
Looking ahead to Year 2

The State will award additional Innovation Fund grants by the end of Year 2. Georgia also plans to continue the professional development efforts that are part of the Innovations in Improving Early Learning Outcomes project. During Year 2, the State will provide training to approximately 800 teachers. To foster ongoing support and maintain engagement for Race to the Top activities, representatives of LEAs will continue to participate in steering committee meetings and assist in the development of the State's communication plan.

Student outcomes data
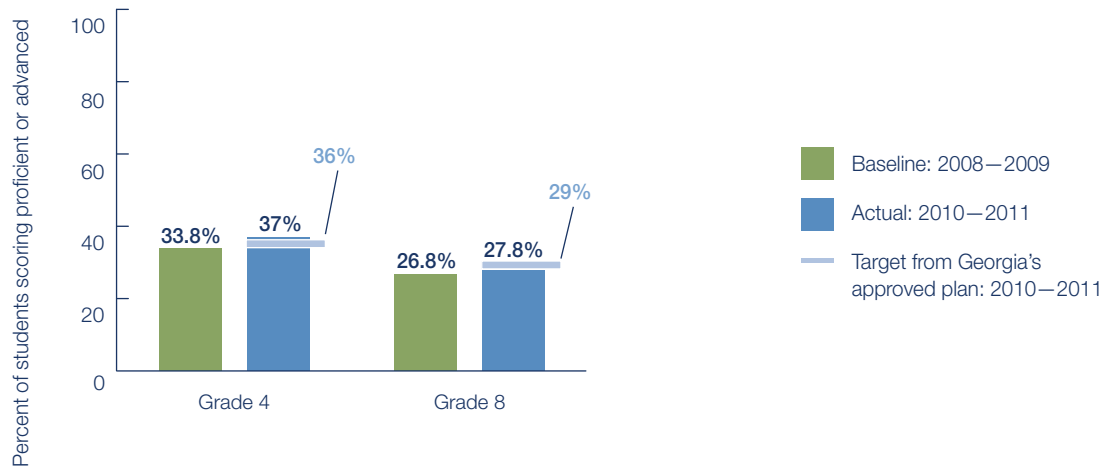
Student Proficiency, NAEP Reading 2011

Percent of students scoring proficient or advanced

Grade 4: 29.3% (Baseline), 32.4% (Actual), 30% (Target)

Grade 8: 26.9% (Baseline), 27.6% (Actual), 29% (Target)

- Baseline: 2008—2009
- Actual: 2010—2011
- Target from Georgia's approved plan: 2010—2011

The percentage of Georgia's grade 4 students who were at or above Proficient in reading in 2011 was not significantly different than in 2009.

The percentage of Georgia's grade 8 students who were at or above Proficient in reading in 2011 was not significantly different than in 2009.
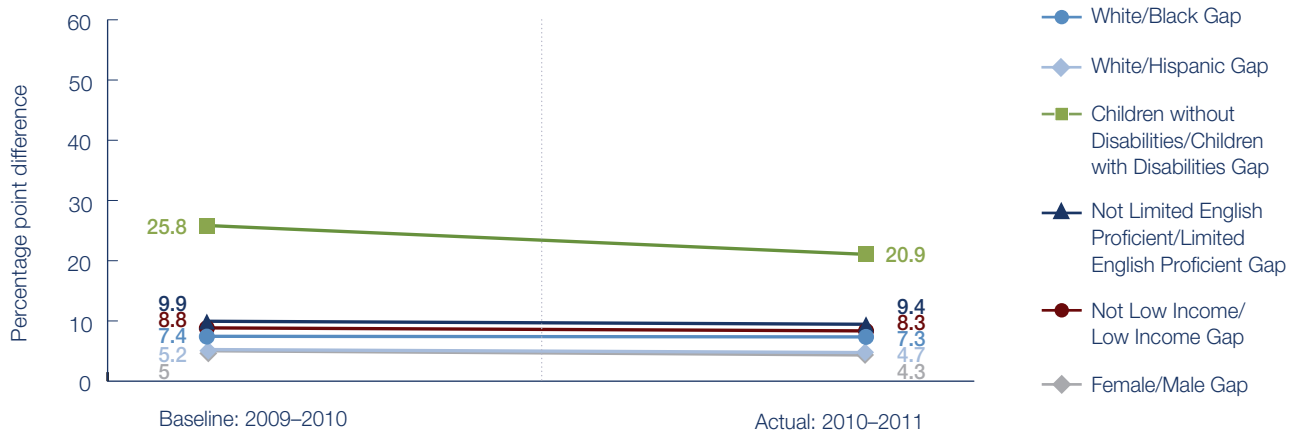
Student Proficiency, NAEP Mathematics 2011

Percent of students scoring proficient or advanced

Grade 4: 33.8% (Baseline), 37% (Actual), 36% (Target)

Grade 8: 26.8% (Baseline), 27.8% (Actual), 29% (Target)

- Baseline: 2008—2009
- Actual: 2010—2011
- Target from Georgia's approved plan: 2010—2011

The percentage of Georgia's grade 4 students who were at or above Proficient in mathematics in 2011 was not significantly different than in 2009.

The percentage of Georgia's grade 8 students who were at or above Proficient in mathematics in 2011 was not significantly different than in 2009.
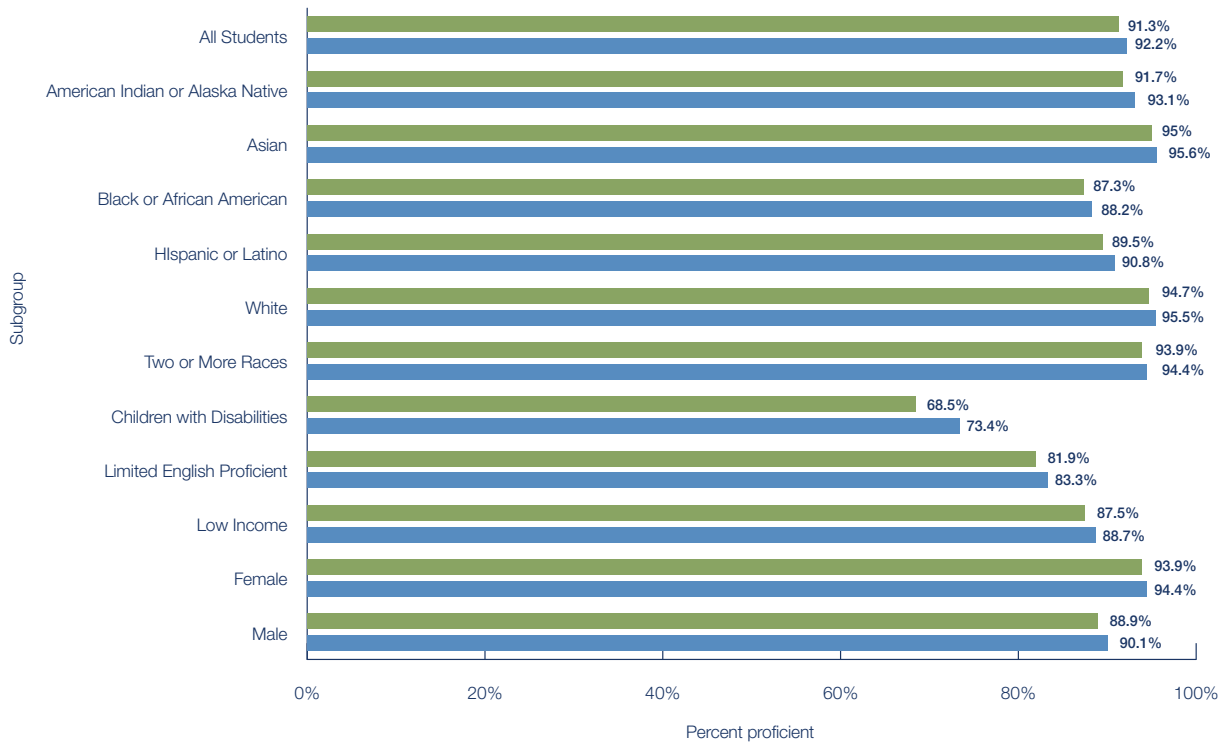
Achievement Gap on Georgia's ELA Assessment SY 2010–2011

Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: October 19, 2011

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.
For State-reported context, please refer to the APR Data Display at www.rtt-apr.us.

Overall Proficiency on Georgia's ELA Assessment SY 2010–2011

Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: October 19, 2011   Baseline: 2009—2010   Actual: 2010—2011

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.
For State-reported context, please refer to the APR Data Display at www.rtt-apr.us.

State Success Factors

Achievement Gap on Georgia's Mathematics Assessment SY 2010–2011

Legend:
- White/Black Gap
- White/Hispanic Gap
- Children without Disabilities/Children with Disabilities Gap
- Not Limited English Proficient/Limited English Proficient Gap
- Not Low Income/Low Income Gap
- Female/Male Gap

Data points:
- 33.1 → 26
- 17.5 → 14.7
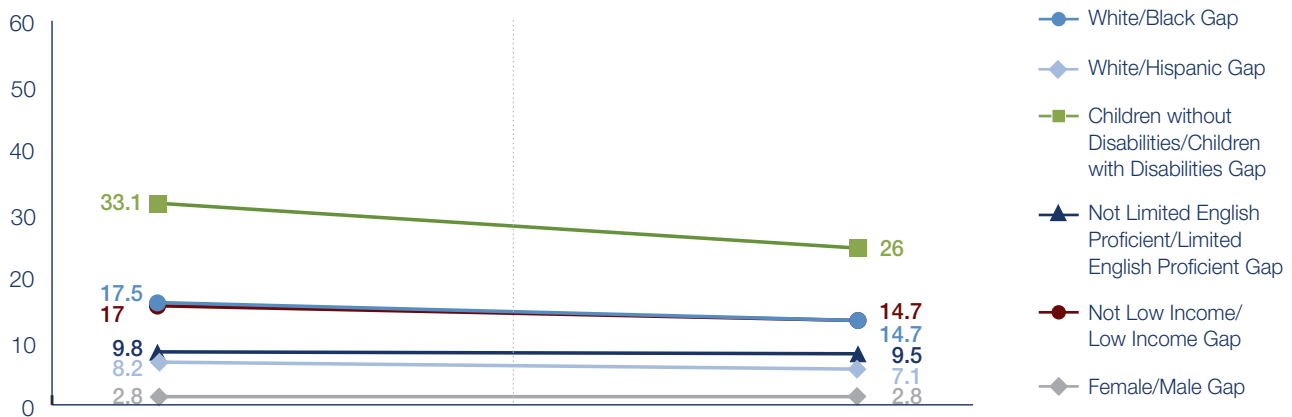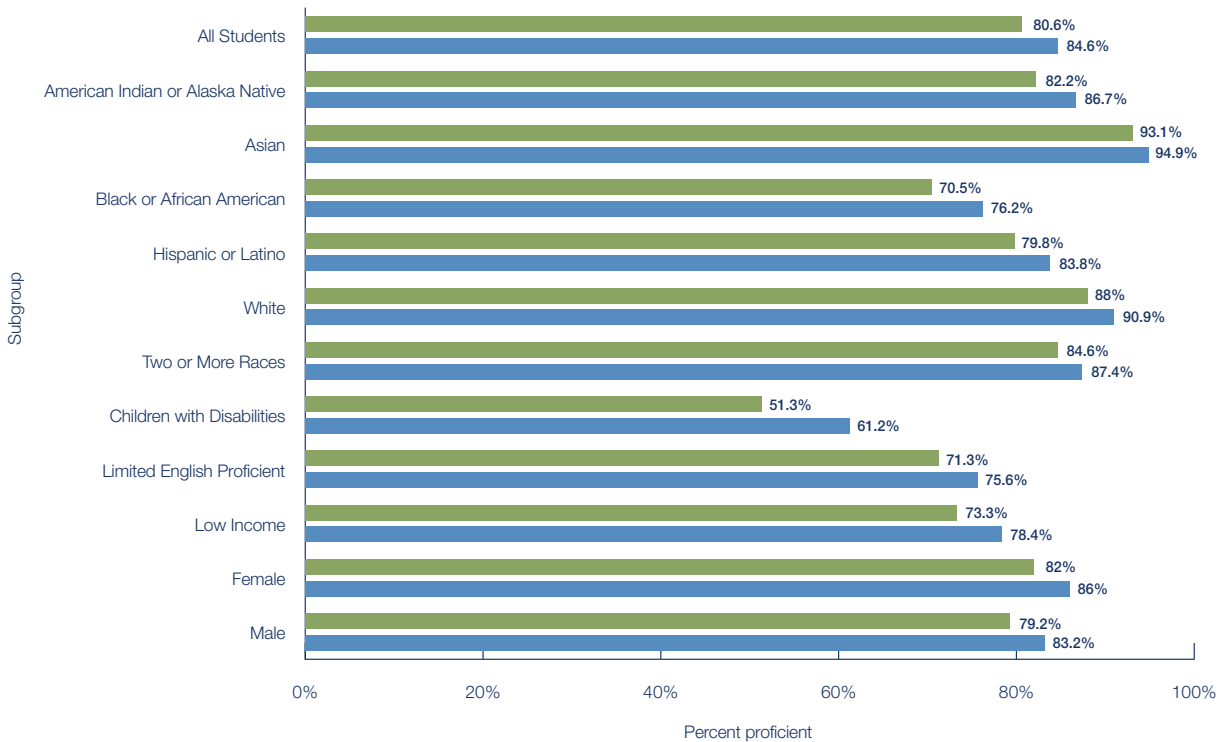- 17 → 14.7
- 9.8 → 9.5
- 8.2 → 7.1
- 2.8 → 2.8

Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: October 19, 2011

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores. For State-reported context, please refer to the APR Data Display at www.rtt-apr.us.

Overall Proficiency on Georgia's Mathematics Assessment SY 2010–2011

Subgroup	Baseline: 2009—2010	Actual: 2010—2011
All Students	80.6%	84.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	82.2%	86.7%
Asian	93.1%	94.9%
Black or African American	70.5%	76.2%
Hispanic or Latino	79.8%	83.8%
White	88%	90.9%
Two or More Races	84.6%	87.4%
Children with Disabilities	51.3%	61.2%
Limited English Proficient	71.3%	75.6%
Low Income	73.3%	78.4%
Female	82%	86%
Male	79.2%	83.2%

Percent proficient

Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: October 19, 2011

NOTE: Over the last two years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores. For State-reported context, please refer to the APR Data Display at www.rtt-apr.us.

Standards and Assessments

Implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and career is an integral aspect of education reform in all Race to the Top States.

Adoption of college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments

In July 2010, the Georgia Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics for grades K–12. The State will begin transitioning to the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in school year (SY) 2011–2012.

Georgia is a governing member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment consortium. The State will implement the PARCC assessments in SY 2014–2015.

Supporting the transition to college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments

Georgia's plans for transitioning to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments include strengthening its current assessments to more closely align to the newly adopted CCSS until it transitions to the new PARCC assessments. In Year 1, the State developed and educators reviewed new items for its grades 3–8 statewide assessments and will have new draft items for its high school assessments reviewed in October 2011. The State plans to pilot all new items in spring 2012. Georgia provided funding to approximately 1,000 high school sophomores throughout the State to take the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) to gauge students' college and career readiness and identify areas requiring additional support.

To facilitate the transition to the CCGPS, the State hired staff to develop and deliver in-person and online professional development. The State elicited feedback from all LEAs on the necessary resources for integrating the CCGPS into instruction. The State intends to emphasize the shifts in curriculum and instruction that emerged between the CCGPS and the State's previous standards in its professional development activities. For example, some mathematics content that previously appeared in grade 5 now appears in grade 4. Similar shifts emerged in the reading/language arts standards.

Dissemination of resources and professional development

Georgia contracted with Georgia Public Broadcast to produce, stream live, record, and archive 35 Professional Learning Sessions for multiple grades, courses, and subjects. The first session was held in September 2011. During Year 1, Georgia secured staff to design professional development on assessment literacy, the use of data to inform instructional decision making, and the formative assessment toolbox. Georgia contracted with nationally recognized experts in assessment development to inform their work in this area.

In addition, 15 of the State's Regional Education Services Agencies (RESAs) have hired ELA specialists to assist in the development and dissemination of resources aligned to the CCGPS. Existing RESA mathematics specialists will also assist in this effort.

Lessons learned

At the end of Year 1, Georgia recognized that it needed to supplement its existing professional development resources for teachers to effectively transition to the CCGPS. As such, the State has requested an amendment to reallocate Year 1 savings to develop Instructional Units and resources in ELA and mathematics, hire additional personnel, and provide additional training in each RESA. In addition, the State is proposing to provide funding for teams of teachers to develop Instructional Activities to supplement the new Literacy Integration standards for high school courses. The State is confident that this strategy will facilitate teachers' ability to transition to the CCGPS curriculum and will ultimately improve student learning.

Similar to other core education reform areas, Georgia revised its timelines for the Standards and Assessment reform area as part of the Scope of Work process. The State reports that it is on target to meet the timeline changes approved by the Department. Additionally, Georgia has decided to hire staff with the expertise to conduct work in this area instead of contracting out to complete project tasks.

Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, Georgia plans to continue to provide funding for all high school sophomores to take the PSAT. The State will also continue implementation of CCGPS, work with other States to develop common assessments aligned to CCGPS, develop formative assessments, and train teachers on the use of those assessments.

Student outcomes data

Statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) and instructional improvement systems (IIS) enhance the ability of States to effectively manage, use, and analyze education data to support instruction. Race to the Top States are working to ensure that their data systems are accessible to key stakeholders and that the data support educators and decision-makers in their efforts to improve instruction and increase student achievement.

Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system

Georgia reports that it began its implementation of the Race to the Top grant with a robust K–12 SLDS. Georgia indicated in its APR that its SLDS meets all 12 elements identified in the America COMPETES Act. Under the Race to the Top program, the State will build a new P–20 data system that will provide users greater access to information by connecting data from disparate systems via a data hub.

Accessing and using State data

By April 2011, Georgia had a P–20 SLDS project director on board to lead and manage the data system. Georgia began developing a P–20 SLDS, at the center of which will be a data hub that allows for the collection of data across the State and LEAs, other State government agencies (e.g., State Department of Labor), and other entities that maintain applicable data (e.g., the National Student Clearinghouse). The State established a Data Governance Committee, a Data Management Committee, and a group within the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to oversee the work. The Data Governance Committee will ensure that data governance policies and procedures are developed and implemented. The Data Management Committee will ensure that the development of the P–20 system continues to progress according to plan.

Using data to improve instruction

During Year 1, Georgia began working on its IIS. The State surveyed more than half of the participating LEAs to assess current district capabilities. The State intends to allow those LEAs that report having an effective IIS in place to continue using their current systems, modeling a process used by Florida and Ohio. The State found that there are participating LEAs that do not have any components of a high-quality IIS in place and plans to work closely with those LEAs to ensure their readiness to implement the IIS and Instructional Improvement Reports (IIR). Through the IIS and IIR, Georgia expects to increase the utility of a wider variety of data sources to help inform instruction.

Challenges

Georgia found that recruiting and hiring personnel took longer than anticipated. In particular, the SLDS director position was not filled until late in Year 1. The State reported, however, that regardless of this delay, the State is on track with its approved Scope of Work. Georgia changed its work strategy in this area, moving from hiring personnel in-house to contracting the work out.

Looking ahead to Year 2

With staffing completed, Georgia indicated that it is poised to meet the timelines in its approved Scope of Work. Georgia's Year 2 plans include continuing the work of the Data Governance and Data Management Committees and working on tasks to develop the core functionality of the P–20 SLDS. The State will develop plans for targeted professional development on the IIS and IIR systems.

Great Teachers and Leaders

Race to the Top States are developing comprehensive systems of educator effectiveness by adopting clear approaches to measuring student growth; designing and implementing rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals; conducting annual evaluations that include timely and constructive feedback; and using evaluation information to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, and tenure decisions.

Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers

Georgia entered into State-level partnerships with TFA and TNTP to provide alternative certification and recruiting services to increase the number of effective teachers in the lowest-performing schools. As explained by the State in its Scope of Work, TFA will provide services for four LEAs in the metro Atlanta area, while TNTP will provide services to six LEAs that span three primary geographic clusters across Georgia. The State placed over 100 TFA and approximately 50 TNTP candidates in schools for SY 2011–2012. Additionally, in Year 1, the State entered into an agreement with the UTeach Institute to create a pipeline for more mathematics and science majors into secondary teaching careers.

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

Georgia reported that it began work on critical project tasks related to the new evaluation system. The State has:

- Established stakeholder committees to inform the development of components of the evaluation system, including those related to the value-added/growth model and measuring student growth in non-tested grades and subject areas;
- Established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of measurement experts who will inform the components of the evaluation system;
- Significantly revised its existing observation tool, Classroom Analysis of State Standards Teacher Evaluation System (CLASS Keys), for use in the new evaluation system; and
- Administered a student survey in seven participating LEAs that addresses practice for grades 6–12 teachers in all content areas, which the State may use as a part of its evaluation system.

Georgia's Race to the Top application describes plans to pilot a new teacher and principal evaluation system during the 2010–2011 school year that included: (1) a qualitative, rubric-based assessment tool with multiple rating categories; (2) a value-added model; (3) an indicator of achievement gap reduction; and (4) other quantitative measures (e.g., student surveys). However, the State received approval to revise its timelines and pilot the new evaluation system one year later, in January 2012. The State is finalizing the student growth measure and student surveys for use in the pilot.

Providing effective support to teachers and principals

During Year 1, Georgia established a 50-member task force to develop teacher and principal induction guidelines that create structured and effective support for new teachers and principals. The task force consisted of teachers, principals, superintendents, college and university representatives, and other stakeholders. Additionally, the State hosted Summer Leadership Academies that focused on increasing leadership capacity to support teachers. Teams from all of the lowest-achieving schools in the State were required to attend the academies in either summer 2010 or summer 2011. In Year 1, the State allocated additional funding to Summer Leadership Academies to ensure that teams from each of the schools attended. To strengthen teachers' content understanding and pedagogical skills, the State partnered with CEISMC to provide professional development in STEM subject areas. CEISMC has begun work on the development of STEM instructional materials and online and face-to-face professional development course offerings.

Challenges

Georgia reported that it continues to struggle with identifying growth measures in non-tested grades and subject areas. The State has started working with participating LEAs to develop Student Learning Objectives to pilot in SY 2011–2012 and has proposed to hire additional personnel to work directly with participating LEAs in this area. Georgia also moved from contracting out project work to hiring in-house personnel to help ensure successful implementation of the new evaluation system.

Looking ahead to Year 2

During Year 2, Georgia plans to continue partnerships with TFA and TNTP to provide alternative certification and recruiting services to increase the number of effective teachers in the lowest-performing schools, as well as its partnership with CEISMC to provide support to STEM teachers. Georgia plans to pilot the new teacher and principal evaluation system beginning in January 2012. The State also plans to host Summer Leadership Academies in the summer of 2012.

Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

Race to the Top States are supporting LEAs' implementation of far-reaching reforms to turn around lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of four school intervention models.[5]

Georgia's efforts to intervene in its lowest-achieving schools focus on aligning efforts across programs, developing a robust assistance and monitoring plan, and providing summer programs to support staff in those schools. In Year 1, the State decided to coordinate the work under the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, Race to the Top, and its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) accountability system to assist each of the State's lowest-achieving schools to implement its selected intervention model.

As part of its effort to align and coordinate efforts across the GaDOE, the State developed a crosswalk between the requirements of the SIG and Race to the Top programs to ensure alignment between Georgia's approach to the two grant programs. To assess the quality of implementation of the intervention models in the selected schools, the State developed a robust monitoring plan that includes the work of two school improvement specialists per school (one is on-site weekly, and the other is on-site four times each school year) to provide assistance and support. One feature of Georgia's reform effort is that LEAs are required to identify a feeder school for each secondary school that is implementing one of the models. LEAs must develop a plan to work with this feeder school to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Georgia's monitoring plan includes detailed feedback and assessments of the quality of implementation in these schools.

Despite delays, Georgia made progress in this core education reform area in Year 1. Georgia hired a Deputy Superintendent for School Turnaround and moved approximately 45 school improvement staff from the Governor's Office to the newly established Office of School Turnaround. After reviewing its most recent student achievement data, the State received approval from the Department to increase the number of schools targeted under this education reform area from 34 to 40. Each of the schools received a diagnostic review from the State Office of School Turnaround, and LEAs have selected a reform model to implement in each school. Twenty of the schools began implementation during SY 2010–2011. The majority of these schools are using the transformation model. The remaining 20 schools will begin implementation during SY 2011–2012.

Additionally, to support intervention efforts, the GaDOE established an Instructional Improvement Taskforce that will develop Georgia's Instructional Improvement framework, and, as previously mentioned, the State enhanced its existing Summer Leadership Academies to ensure that teams from each of the lowest-achieving schools could attend.

Finally, the State opened two Performance Learning Centers (PLC) in Floyd and Richmond County Schools for SY 2011–2012. PLCs are small, nontraditional schools geared toward high school students who are not succeeding in the traditional school setting and have been deemed at risk of dropping out.

School Intervention Models Initiated in Georgia in SY 2010–2011

- 2
- 18
- Schools (#) initiating transformation model
- Schools (#) initiating turnaround model

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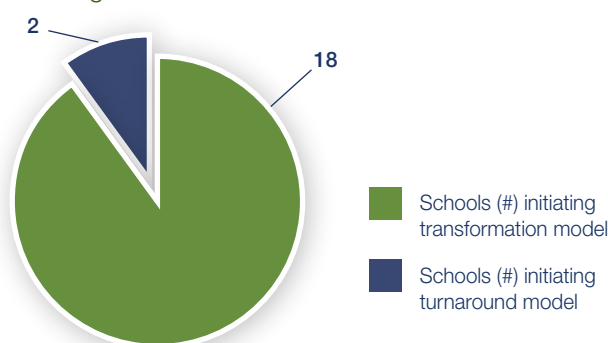
[5] Race to the Top States' plans include supporting their LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models:

- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms, (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

Lessons learned

An important aspect of Georgia's Race to the Top work in Year 1 was its decision to integrate Race to the Top school intervention efforts with efforts in the SIG program and the State's accountability system. While such integration took additional effort, the State believes it is the most productive way to leverage its resources and target supports.

Looking ahead to Year 2

Georgia plans to implement intervention models in the remaining 20 lowest-performing schools in Year 2. In addition, the State will continue its support to staff in the lowest-performing schools to attend Summer Leadership Academies. The State will also open a third PLC to support struggling students.

Charter Schools

In May 2011, Georgia's Supreme Court issued a ruling that affected how charter schools obtain approval to operate within the State. Specifically, the Court ruled that the legislation that created the Georgia Charter Schools Commission—a State-level, independent charter school authorizing entity—was unconstitutional on the grounds that the authority to approve and operate charter schools is vested within local Boards of Education. As a result of this decision, the Georgia Charter Schools Commission ceased operations in June 2011. All of the Commission-approved charter schools applied to and were approved by either the Georgia Board of Education as State Chartered Special Schools or their local Boards of Education. The Governor appropriated additional funds to the State Chartered Special Schools in order to prevent any operational interruption and to maintain funding at levels comparable to the prior year.

Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

STEM activities are one of Georgia's five Race to the Top over-arching objectives. As such, the State has integrated STEM initiatives across education reform areas.

The State entered into an agreement with the UTeach Institute, a program that collaborates with IHEs to offer teaching degree programs in STEM fields, as a means to funnel more mathematics and science majors into secondary teaching careers.

To strengthen professional development in STEM fields, the GaDOE partnered with CEISMC to provide professional development for teachers in grades 3–12 in STEM content and content delivery skills. This partnership will also create classroom-based modules, standards, and instructional materials that can be distributed throughout the K–12 school system to increase student success in STEM, especially for students from underrepresented groups. The State negotiated

contracts supporting these STEM efforts, and the Georgia Board of Education approved and signed off on project tasks, which allowed the State to initiate work on this project in Year 1.

Finally, the State will require all elementary and middle schools to make science their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) second indicator starting in SY 2012–2013.[6] The State's rationale for this strategy is two-fold: (1) student interest in and preparation for science in high school must begin at the elementary school level, and (2) requiring student achievement in science when determining whether schools make AYP will help ensure an instructional focus on teaching and learning. Previously, Georgia's AYP Accountability Workbook allowed LEAs to select second indicators from a menu of options for elementary and middle schools.

In summer 2011, Georgia awarded five grants to advance teacher and leader effectiveness and STEM-focused charter schools under the Innovation Fund (see *State Success Factors* for more detail). Awards include:

- *Drew Charter School Partners of Innovation*—A partnership among Georgia State University, the Georgia Institute for Technology, and Drew Charter School to create one of the State's first STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) schools.

- *The Regional Charter STEM Academy*—A partnership among White, Hall, and Lumpkin county school systems and North Georgia College & State University to create a tri-county STEM charter school.

- *The KIPP Teacher Fellows Program*—A teacher induction program that will train Georgia State University and Mercer University College of Education graduates and deploy them to high-need metro Atlanta schools.

Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2011, please see the APR data display at www.rtt-apr.us. For State budget information see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/awards.html.

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[6] Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act, each State establishes a definition of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) to use each year to determine the achievement of each school district and school. The definition of AYP is intended to highlight where schools need improvement and should focus their resources.

Glossary

Alternative routes to certification means pathways to certification that are authorized under the State's laws or regulations that allow the establishment and operation of teacher and administrator preparation programs in the State, and that have the following characteristics (in addition to standard features such as demonstration of subject-matter mastery, and high-quality instruction in pedagogy and in addressing the needs of all students in the classroom including English learners and students with disabilities): (a) can be provided by various types of qualified providers, including both institutions of higher education and other providers operating independently from institutions of higher education; (b) are selective in accepting candidates; (c) provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support such as effective mentoring and coaching; (d) significantly limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses; and (e) upon completion, award the same level of certification that traditional preparation programs award upon completion.

Amendment requests: In the event that adjustments are needed to a State's approved Race to the Top plan, the grantee must submit an amendment request to the Department for consideration. Such requests may be prompted by an updated assessment of needs in that area, revised cost estimates, lessons learned from prior implementation efforts, or other circumstances. Grantees may propose revisions to goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, provided that the following conditions are met: such revisions do not result in the grantee's failure to comply with the terms and conditions of this award and the program's statutory and regulatory provisions; the revisions do not change the overall scope and objectives of the approved proposal; and the Department and the grantee mutually agree in writing to such revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to approve such revisions or modifications. If approved by the Department, a letter with a description of the amendment and any relevant conditions will be sent notifying the grantee of approval. (For additional information please see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/amendments/index.html.)

America COMPETES Act elements are (as specified in section 6401(e)(2)(D) of that Act): (1) a unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system; (2) student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information; (3) student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P–16 education programs; (4) the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems; (5) a State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability; (6) yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)); (7) information on students not tested by grade and subject; (8) a teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students; (9) student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned; (10) student-level college-readiness test scores; (11) information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework; and (12) other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA): On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the ARRA, historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. The Department of Education received a $97.4 billion appropriation.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including States, governors, chief State school officers, content experts, States, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and careers. As of December 2011, the Common Core State Standards were adopted by 45 States and the District of Columbia.

Effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). States, LEAs, or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple observation-based assessments of teacher performance.

The Core education reform areas for Race to the Top are as follows:

1. Standards and Assessments: Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;

2. Great Teachers and Great Leaders: Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;

3. Data Systems to Support Instruction: Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and

4. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools.

Highly effective teacher means a teacher whose students achieve high rates (e.g., one and one-half grade levels in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). States, LEAs, or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple

observation-based assessments of teacher performance or evidence of leadership roles (which may include mentoring or leading professional learning communities) that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

Instructional improvement systems (IIS) means technology-based tools and other strategies that provide teachers, principals, and administrators with meaningful support and actionable data to systemically manage continuous instructional improvement, including such activities as instructional planning; gathering information (e.g., through formative assessments (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements), interim assessments (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements), summative assessments, and looking at student work and other student data); analyzing information with the support of rapid-time (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements) reporting; using this information to inform decisions on appropriate next instructional steps; and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken. Such systems promote collaborative problem-solving and action planning; they may also integrate instructional data with student-level data such as attendance, discipline, grades, credit accumulation, and student survey results to provide early warning indicators of a student's risk of educational failure.

Invitational priorities are areas of focus that the Department invited States to address in their Race to the Top applications. Applicants did not earn extra points for addressing these focus areas, but many grantees chose to create and fund activities to advance reforms in these areas.

Involved LEAs are LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement those specific portions of the State's plan that necessitate full or nearly-full statewide implementation, such as transitioning to a common set of K-12 standards (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Involved LEAs do not receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that it must subgrant to LEAs in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA, but States may provide other funding to involved LEAs under the State's Race to the Top grant in a manner that is consistent with the State's application.

P-20 data systems integrate student data from pre-kindergarten through higher education.

Participating LEAs are LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plan, as specified in each LEA's agreement with the State. Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year, in accordance with section 14006(c) of the ARRA. Any participating LEA that does not receive funding under Title I, Part A (as well as one that does) may receive funding from the State's other 50 percent of the grant award, in accordance with the State's plan.

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** is one of two consortia of States awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. (For additional information please see http://www.parcconline.org/.)

Persistently lowest-achieving schools means, as determined by the State: (i) any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and (ii) any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years. To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a State must take into account both (i) the academic achievement of the "all students" group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State's assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and (ii) the school's lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in the "all students" group. (For additional information please see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html.)

Qualifying evaluation systems are those that meet the following criteria: rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that: (a) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and (b) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.

The **School Improvement Grants (SIG)** program is authorized under section 1003(g) of Title I of the ESEA. Funds are awarded to States to help them turn around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools. (For additional information please see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html.)

School intervention models: A State's Race to the Top plan describes how it will support its LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools by implementing one of the four school intervention models:

- **Turnaround model:** Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the staff and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time and budgeting) to fully implement a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.

- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.

- **School closure:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.

- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms, (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

Single sign-on is a user authentication process that permits a user to enter one name and password in order to access multiple applications.

The **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)** is one of two consortia of States awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematic standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness. (For additional information please see http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/default.aspx.)

The **State Scope of Work** is a detailed document for the State project that reflects the grantee's approved Race to the Top application. The State Scope of Work includes items such as the State's specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures. (For additional information please see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/state-scope-of-work/index.html.) Additionally, all participating LEAs are required to submit Scope of Work documents, consistent with State requirements, to the State for its review and approval.

Statewide longitudinal data systems (SLDS) enhance the ability of States to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, and use education data, including individual student records. The SLDS help States, districts, schools, educators, and other stakeholders to make data-informed decisions to improve student learning and outcomes, as well as to facilitate research to increase student achievement and close achievement gaps. (For additional information please see http://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/about_SLDS.asp.)

Student achievement means—

a) For tested grades and subjects: (1) a student's score on the State's assessments under the ESEA; and, as appropriate, (2) other measures of student learning, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition, provided they are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

b) For non-tested grades and subjects: alternative measures of student learning and performance such as student scores on pre-tests and end-of-course tests; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

Student growth means the change in student achievement (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements) for an individual student between two or more points in time. A State may also include other measures that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

Value-added models (VAMs) are a specific type of growth model in the sense that they are based on changes in test scores over time. VAMs are complex statistical models that generally attempt to take into account student or school background characteristics in order to isolate the amount of learning attributable to a specific teacher or school. Teachers or schools that produce more than typical or expected growth are said to "add value."