RACE TO THE TOP

North Carolina Report

Year 3: School Year 2012–2013

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

March 19, 2014

Executive Summary

Race to the Top overview

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. 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 Phase 1 and Phase 2 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, and improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers. Since the Race to the Top Phase 1 and 2 competitions, the Department has made additional grants under the Race to the Top Phase 3, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge,[2] and Race to the Top – District[3] competitions.

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

- Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices;
- Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools.

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. Race to the Top builds on the local contexts of States and LEAs participating in the State's Race to the Top plan (participating LEAs)[4] in the design and implementation of the most effective and innovative approaches that meet the needs of their educators, students, and families.

[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 on the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html.

[3] More information on Race to the Top – District can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html.

[4] Participating local educational agencies (LEAs) are those 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 Memorandum of Understanding 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 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

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 also designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU works with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and helps States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes. In partnership with the ISU, the Reform Support Network (RSN) offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to Race to the Top grantees. The RSN's purpose is to support Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.[5]

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 grantees, 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 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).[6]

State-specific summary report

The Department uses the information gathered during the review process (*e.g.*, through monthly calls, onsite reviews, and Annual Performance Reports (APRs)) to draft State-specific summary reports. The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's annual Race to the Top implementation. The Year 3 report for Phase 1 and 2 grantees highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation from approximately September 2012 through September 2013; the Year 2 report for Phase 3 grantees provides similar information from approximately December 2012 through December 2013.

[5] More information can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/index.html.

[6] More information about the Implementation and Support Unit's (ISU's) program review process, State Annual Performance Report (APR) data, and State Scopes of Work can be found at http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html.

Executive Summary

State's education reform agenda

North Carolina's READY initiative drives the State toward ensuring that every student graduates from high school prepared for success in college, career, and adulthood. This framework for reform is reflected in the State's Race to the Top goals and directs North Carolina to: (1) ensure its standards and accountability system reflect internationally benchmarked standards; (2) establish advanced data systems that measure student success and inform educator practice; (3) increase teacher and principal effectiveness, so that every student has a great teacher and every school has a great principal; and (4) turn around the State's lowest-achieving schools, so that all students get the support they need to be successful.

North Carolina's Race to the Top grant of $399,465,769 supports the State's commitment to "remodel" the public education system to provide every child with great teaching and opportunities to pursue college and a career. In keeping with the terms of the Race to the Top grant, North Carolina is using half of its grant funds to drive State-level work and distributing the other half of its award to support work aligned with the State's goals at participating LEAs.

State Years 1 and 2 summary

North Carolina's Year 1 work focused on preparing educators to implement the updated statewide Standard Course of Study, which is composed of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the North Carolina Essential Standards for all content areas not covered by the CCSS. To introduce educators to the full set of new standards and lay the groundwork for local leadership teams to support full implementation in school year (SY) 2012-2013, the State designed and delivered regional trainings in Year 1 that reached about 2,200 members of local professional development leadership teams selected for participation by each district and participating charter school. During Year 2, to continue to prepare for full implementation of the Standard Course of Study, the State provided professional development and disseminated curricular materials to LEAs and educators. More than 2,800 members of local leadership teams attended the 2012 regional Summer Institutes.

North Carolina also made progress in implementing a qualifying evaluation system for teachers and principals by officially adopting a statewide student growth model for tested subjects.[7] Additionally, the State worked with more than 800 educators from across the State to design and develop student growth measures, known as the NC Final Exams, for use in non-tested grades and subjects.[8] As a part of its plan to strengthen the quality of teachers and school leaders in North Carolina, Regional Leadership Academies (RLAs) trained school leaders in Years 1 and 2, and in Year 2 North Carolina recruited and trained its first cohort of North Carolina Teacher Corps members.

In Year 1, building upon existing regional and statewide professional development programs and resources, North Carolina established a framework known as the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). Through the PDI, the State worked in Years 1 and 2 to establish a comprehensive, targeted, and flexible system to increase the State's and LEAs' capacity to provide effective professional development to teachers and school leaders. Each annual cycle of PDI activities begins with a Summer Institute (as described above), and is followed by a variety of job-embedded regionally-based and online trainings and check-ins throughout the school year.

The State began to develop requirements for the North Carolina Education Cloud (the Cloud) and Instructional Improvement System (IIS), which is now known as "Home Base" (see *Data Systems to Support Instruction* for more information) in SY 2010-2011. In SY 2011-2012, North Carolina completed the design process for and began to implement several shared services through the Cloud. It also developed requirements for Home Base.

In Years 1 and 2, the State identified and provided support services to 118 low-achieving schools. In SY 2011-2012, 72 district, school, and instructional coaches provided customized support to low-achieving LEAs and schools, helping them to make progress in improving student achievement and graduation rates (see *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools* for more information).

In Year 2, the State launched its READY initiative and conducted READY outreach meetings (see *State Success Factors*) attended by approximately 4,100 educators representing each district and participating charter school. Through these meetings, North Carolina reinforced expectations about the State's reform agenda and offered resources to support local implementation.

In the first two years of Race to the Top implementation, delays impacted several of the State's Race to the Top initiatives. In particular, procurement challenges led to delays in North Carolina's technology initiatives and the implementation of the professional development, coaching, and curriculum development activities in the STEM Anchor School and Affinity Network project.

[7] North Carolina's evaluation system covers assistant principals as well as principals.

[8] NC Final Exams were previously referred to as "Measures of Student Learning" or "Common Exams."

Executive Summary

State Year 3 summary

Accomplishments

In Year 3, North Carolina fully implemented new college- and career-ready standards and continued to make progress in implementing the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). Additionally, the State advanced all areas of its comprehensive reform plan, building on progress it made in Years 1 and 2.

As educators fully implemented the Standard Course of Study in SY 2012-2013, the State continued to build local capacity for implementation through regional trainings, webinars, and instructional resources shared through online modules and collaborative workspaces. North Carolina also held its third round of annual regional Summer Institutes in summer 2013.

The State also made progress in implementing its qualifying evaluation system for teachers and principals, the NCEES, in Year 3. The State publicly reported aggregate teacher and principal evaluation data from SY 2011-2012 at the school and LEA level and collected the first year of data needed to provide teachers and principals with a summative evaluation rating, known in North Carolina as an educator effectiveness status, that included student growth (see *Great Teachers and Leaders* for more information). Additionally, North Carolina administered the NC Final Exams for the first time in SY 2012-2013.

During Year 3, North Carolina continued development and implementation of the technological infrastructure to support its Race to the Top grant. LEAs utilized shared services, including email, firewall, and filtering services through the Cloud. The State awarded contracts to develop the primary components and functionality of Home Base and began initial roll-out of its components to LEAs in fall 2013.

North Carolina continued its efforts to build capacity and raise student achievement in its lowest-achieving schools in SY 2012-2013. Schools and LEAs received customized support from coaches, and the State developed and provided professional development tailored to leaders in low-performing schools. Student achievement results from SY 2011-2012 and SY 2012-2013 indicate that the State's lowest-achieving schools are making progress in improving student achievement and graduation rates (see *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools* for more information).

North Carolina continued to provide educators and other stakeholders with information about the State's reform agenda through READY outreach meetings (see *State Success Factors*) held in fall 2012 and spring 2013. The State also created and disseminated READY outreach materials to support meeting participants in redelivering information at the local level. As of Year 3, the Evaluation Team had issued 30 reports, which North Carolina has used to inform continuous improvement across Race to the Top initiatives.

Challenges

Delays again impacted North Carolina's major technology initiatives – the Cloud and Home Base – in Year 3. As a result of challenges related to the State's procurement and approval processes, the State has a limited time frame for implementing these initiatives before the end of the grant period. Although the State appears to be on track to roll out all components of Home Base by summer 2014, and to complete the Cloud infrastructure during Year 4, there is limited time for LEAs and educators to fully experience the services and resources offered through these initiatives and for the State to adjust implementation as needed based on feedback from the field. Given the high level of investment in the Cloud and Home Base, it will be important for the State to provide support to the field and conduct careful monitoring as implementation proceeds in Year 4.

In Year 3, the State encountered challenges with the initial statewide administration of the NC Final Exams. North Carolina reported that challenges were related to logistics and local flexibility for implementation, such as printing issues and variability in whether LEAs counted the results as part of students' grades. The State considered feedback received following the initial administration and refined SY 2013-2014 implementation of the NC Final Exams (see *Great Teachers and Leaders* for more information).

The State provided varied and extensive resources and training support to LEAs and educators leading up to and during the first full year of implementation of the CCSS and NCEES in Year 3. North Carolina took into account feedback from the field to inform its support and made adjustments as needed. As implementation of the new standards and teacher and principal evaluation system proceeds in Year 4, it will be important for the State to continue to assess local capacity to implement these new systems with fidelity and to provide ongoing and differentiated support to the field for the reforms underway.

Looking ahead to Year 4

In Year 4, many aspects of North Carolina's comprehensive reform plan are to be fully realized. Year 4 will present an opportunity for the State to continue to refine implementation of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards, as well as the NCEES based on Year 3 experiences. Ongoing training and support, including regional trainings and online tools and resources, will be provided to LEAs and educators to promote consistent and rigorous implementation of college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments as well as the teacher and principal evaluation system.

The State's Year 3 preparations and awareness-building with LEAs and educators laid the groundwork for full roll-out of the Cloud and Home Base. In SY 2013-2014, most major components are scheduled to be completed and ready for LEAs and schools to access.[9] The State plans to support LEAs as they use Home Base and to assist additional LEAs in adopting shared services offered through the Cloud.

[9] The State anticipates that the summative assessment delivery component of Home Base will not be completed and ready for LEA use until school year (SY) 2014-2015. The Department expects to receive a no-cost extension request from North Carolina so that it may be able to continue this work during SY 2014-2015.

Support for new teachers and teacher and leader pipelines will continue in Year 4; the State will provide induction support to new teachers throughout the State; the second cohort of North Carolina Teacher Corps members will complete their first year of teaching in SY 2013-2014; and additional RLA graduates will provide potential leaders for low-achieving schools in the State. Coaches will continue to build capacity in low-achieving LEAs and schools, customizing support based on prior years' student achievement data and specific LEA and school needs.

The Race to the Top Evaluation Team plans to conclude its work in Year 4, providing the State with analyses of individual initiatives, as well as the State's Race to the Top program overall. As the end of the Race to the Top grant period approaches, North Carolina will continue to work to address the challenge of sustainability around the investments of its Race to the Top plan.

State Success Factors

Building capacity to support LEAs

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) created the Race to the Top Project Management Office (PMO) to manage Race to the Top implementation. The PMO facilitates and monitors local implementation, as well as implementation of the 15 State-led Race to the Top initiatives. Instead of working in silos, DPI project coordinators associated with each initiative are embedded within standing agency divisions (*e.g.*, Educator Effectiveness and District and School Transformation). The Race to the Top Director convenes DPI senior leadership, division directors, and project coordinators regularly to discuss progress, address issues, and foster collaboration across initiatives. The DPI also engages local leaders and other external stakeholders as partners in the implementation process through statewide trainings and awareness-building events, regional focus and advisory groups, and webinars.

North Carolina is instituting a technology infrastructure for LEAs known as the Cloud. Once fully deployed, the Cloud will support a wide array of district- and school-level shared technology infrastructure functions. Through the Cloud, the State aims to improve service reliability, increase efficiency, and decrease long-term information technology (IT) costs for all LEAs.

In Year 3, the State supported LEA pilots and migrations to Cloud-based services. Twenty-six LEAs migrated to a Cloud-based shared environment for financial, human resources, and licensure applications. The State estimates that the use of such Cloud-based services will result in significant annual cost savings for each LEA based on the use of shared services and lower personnel costs. North Carolina reported that more than 80 LEAs are utilizing Cloud email, firewall, and filtering services. Following procurement delays, the State awarded a contract for Identity and Access Management in Year 3, which will eventually allow for LEAs to access multiple systems through a single sign-on portal.

Support and accountability for LEAs

During Year 1, DPI contracted with a consortium of North Carolina universities to conduct an evaluation of its reform efforts overall, as well as of specific initiatives in key program areas such as LEA and regional professional development, educator pipelines, and turning around the lowest-achieving schools. As of spring 2013, the Evaluation Team had completed and publicly released a total of 30 reports detailing progress across projects in each of the evaluation strands: Teacher and Leader Evaluation, Supply and Distribution of Teachers and Leaders, Professional Development, District and School Transformation, Local Spending, and Overall Evaluation.[10] The State utilizes these reports to inform continuous improvement of Race to the Top initiatives and also intends to use them to guide future funding and policy decisions.

In Year 3, DPI continued to monitor Race to the Top implementation at the LEA level. The State required each LEA to submit a Year 2 Progress Report to assess and document progress against the commitments outlined in its local Scope of Work. North Carolina reported that it differentiated follow-up to LEAs based on an internal review by DPI and field-based regional staff of LEA Progress Reports. In early 2013, DPI followed up with 59 LEAs and conducted onsite monitoring visits with 9 LEAs.

[10] See http://cerenc.org/rttt-evaluation/executive-%20summaries/.

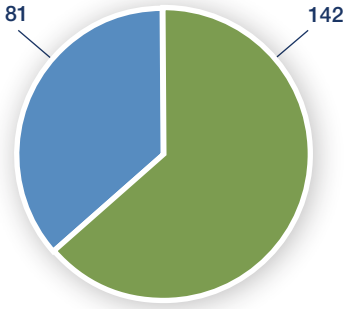
LEA participation

Based on the definition of "participating LEA" in the Race to the Top Notice Inviting Applications, in addition to North Carolina's 115 LEAs, 51 charter schools that receive Title I, Part A funding were eligible to receive funds from the LEA portion of the grant.[11] As depicted in the graphs below, as of June 30, 2013, North Carolina reported 142 participating LEAs, including all 115 LEAs and 27 charter schools. This represents 98.6 percent of the State's kindergarten through twelfth grade students and nearly all of its students in poverty.

Stakeholder engagement

DPI's READY communications initiative aims to provide educators with a cohesive understanding of North Carolina's Race to the Top reform agenda. In fall 2012, the State held its second round of READY meetings, reaching approximately 3,100 participants from 112 LEAs and 46 charter schools across eight regional sessions. DPI provided outreach materials, including podcasts, videos, and frequently asked questions on the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards, new assessments, and the NCEES for participants to use in redelivering information locally to educators and parents. The spring 2013 READY sessions were delivered virtually and focused on building awareness of Home Base, transitioning to new State assessments, and the State's new accountability system. North Carolina reported that approximately 23,000 educators participated in the six READY sessions held in spring 2013. Other regular communications efforts included weekly emails and newsletters, quarterly superintendent meetings, and a State Race to the Top website that features a variety of resources.

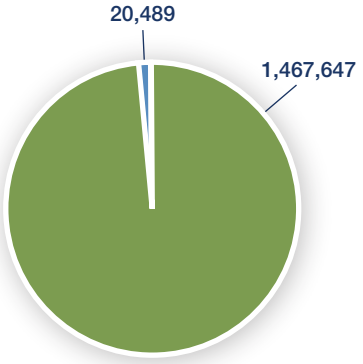
LEAs participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top plan



Participating LEAs (#)

Other LEAs

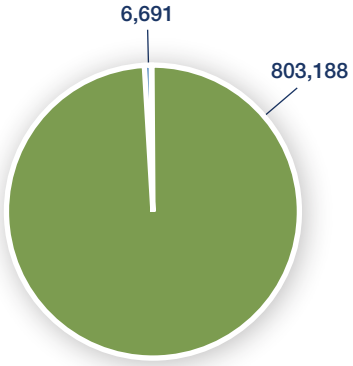
K-12 students in LEAs participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top plan



K-12 students (#) in participating LEAs

K-12 students (#) in other LEAs

Students in poverty in LEAs participating in North Carolina's Race to the Top plan



Students in poverty (#) in participating LEAs

Students in poverty (#) in other LEAs

The number of K-12 students and number of students in poverty statewide are calculated using pre-release data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD). Students in poverty statewide comes from the CCD measure of the number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch subsidy (commonly used as a proxy for the number of students who are economically disadvantaged in a school) under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program. The students in poverty statewide count is an aggregation of school-level counts summed to one State-level count. Statistical procedures were applied systematically by CCD to these data to prevent potential disclosure of information about individual students as well as for data quality assurance; consequently State-level counts may differ from those originally reported by the State. Please note that these data are considered to be preliminary as of August 21, 2013.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

[11] 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 at the time of the award, 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 ones that do) may receive funding from the State's other 50 percent of the grant award, in accordance with the State's plan.

Stakeholder engagement

North Carolina continued its READY initiative in Year 3 in order to provide educators and other stakeholders across the State with information about major reforms under way in North Carolina's schools. In SY 2012-2013, the State held fall and spring READY sessions, reaching thousands of participants in regions across the State. North Carolina also developed and disseminated READY outreach materials to support educators in redelivering content locally. In fall 2013, the State broadcast a television program designed specifically to build awareness among parents around the transitions taking place in classrooms across the State to ensure students are college- and career-ready.

See http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/ready/ for resources developed by the State.

Stakeholders played a key role in the development of a number of initiatives, including the Cloud, Home Base, and the NCEES. As these initiatives move from the planning and development to implementation stages, North Carolina continues to seek feedback from a variety of stakeholders. For example, the Home Base External Stakeholder Advisory Group – which consists of representatives from LEAs and charter schools, education association representatives, and other stakeholders – provided input on the State's roll-out strategy, including feedback on compatibility with existing LEA systems and aligning content to standards. The State has also taken into consideration LEA feedback on the first statewide implementation of the NC Final Exams to inform SY 2013-2014 administration.

In Year 3, North Carolina participated in research for an Reform Support Network publication of the Stakeholder Communications and Engagement Community of Practice. This publication highlighted findings on social media use and included data from 23 States and 11 LEAs.

Continuous improvement

DPI contracted with a consortium of North Carolina universities to conduct an evaluation of its Race to the Top initiatives. The Evaluation Team utilizes techniques such as statewide and initiative-specific surveys, focus groups, teacher observations, observations of State-developed professional development events, and site visits to gather information and assess progress and quality of implementation. Further, the Evaluation Team works extensively with a comprehensive longitudinal database to provide quantitative analysis in support of its qualitative work. North Carolina has worked with the Evaluation Team to create additional opportunities for DPI to receive formative feedback prior to the official release of reports to ensure that the State can make mid-course corrections in a timely manner.

The State used the Evaluation Team's 30 reports, described above, to inform continuous improvement in all major project areas. In particular, the State made revisions to the structure, content, and implementation approaches of the 2013 Summer Institutes based on findings from the Evaluation Team's analysis. These revisions included incorporating participant-recommended topics, delivering content through a menu of topic-based sessions, and including a facilitative team time session to allow LEA and school participants to collaborate. Surveys also continue to inform North Carolina's efforts to continuously improve in many project areas. For example, surveys following READY sessions allowed the State to gather information on participants' experiences and their plans for redelivering content from the READY sessions to educators and parents locally.

Additionally, project-specific mechanisms target improvement in individual Race to the Top initiatives. Fidelity support sessions provide LEAs with an opportunity to self-assess and allow the State to evaluate progress and quality of local implementation of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards. District Transformation Coaches (DTCs), School Transformation Coaches (STCs), and Instructional Coaches (ICs) create regular summary reports (see *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools*), and the State uses assessment results to track progress and differentiate support in low-achieving LEAs and schools.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

North Carolina has experienced ongoing delays with internal procurement processes and approvals needed to finalize awards for Requests for Proposals (RFPs) related to the Cloud. Given that the State's goal is to complete and implement the full Cloud infrastructure in SY 2013-2014, the State is now operating under a condensed timeframe to award contracts and roll out services to LEAs.

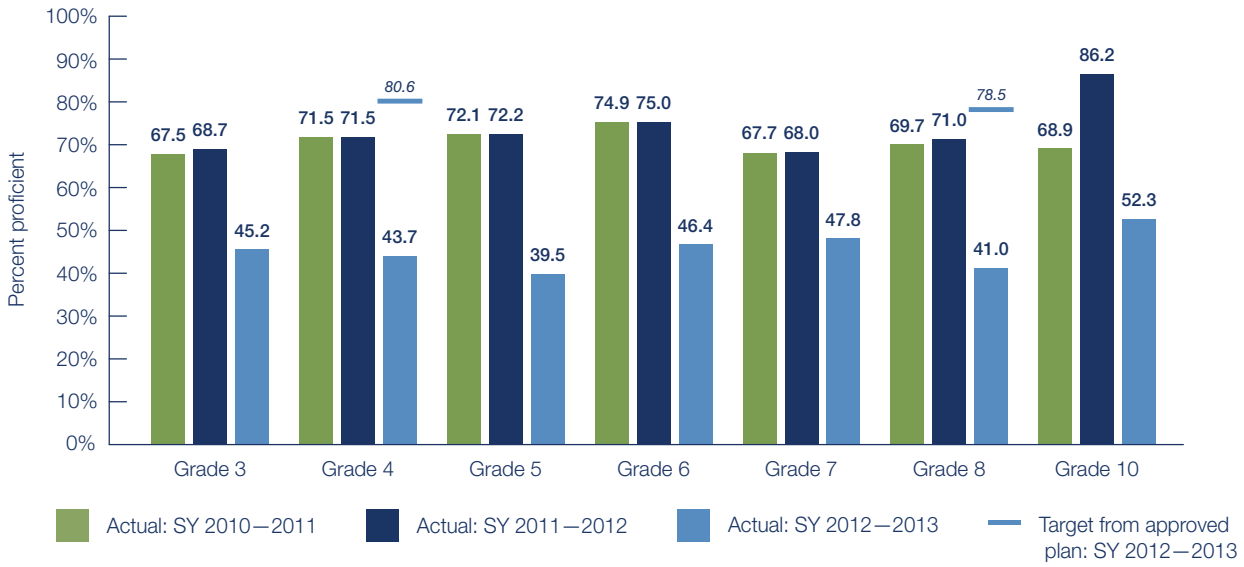
READY outreach meetings appear to be reaching a significant number of educators and building statewide stakeholder awareness of and enthusiasm for reforms underway. It will be important for the State to follow up on these sessions to determine areas in which additional engagement is needed and to provide differentiated support to LEAs to ensure the success of initiatives such as NCEES and Home Base.

The Evaluation Team's work continued to be an important element of the State's assessment of project implementation in Year 3. The State has applied findings from the Evaluation Team's reports across the State's Race to the Top plan to improve quality and inform adjustments to implementation.

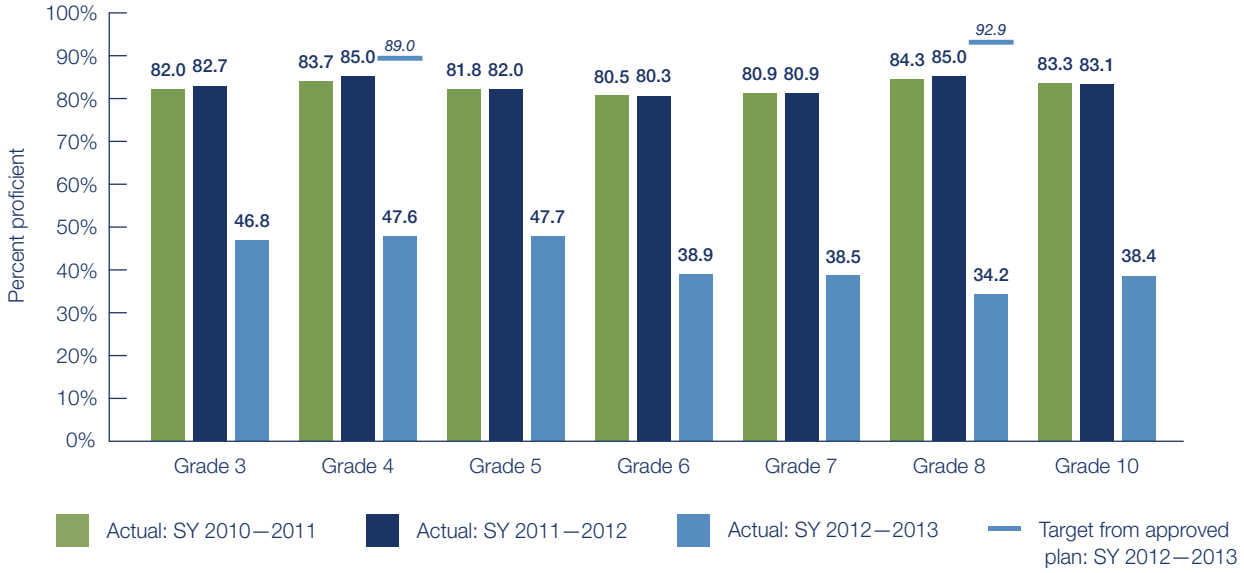
Student outcomes data

North Carolina maintained its commitment to increase the rigor of its standards and fully implemented new State assessments in grades three to eight in spring 2013. North Carolina's State assessment results from SY 2012-2013 show a decline in proficiency in all grades for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics as compared to SY 2011-2012 (see "Supporting the transition to college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments").

Student proficiency on North Carolina's ELA assessment



Student proficiency on North Carolina's mathematics assessment



Preliminary SY 2012-2013 data reported as of: December 26, 2013.

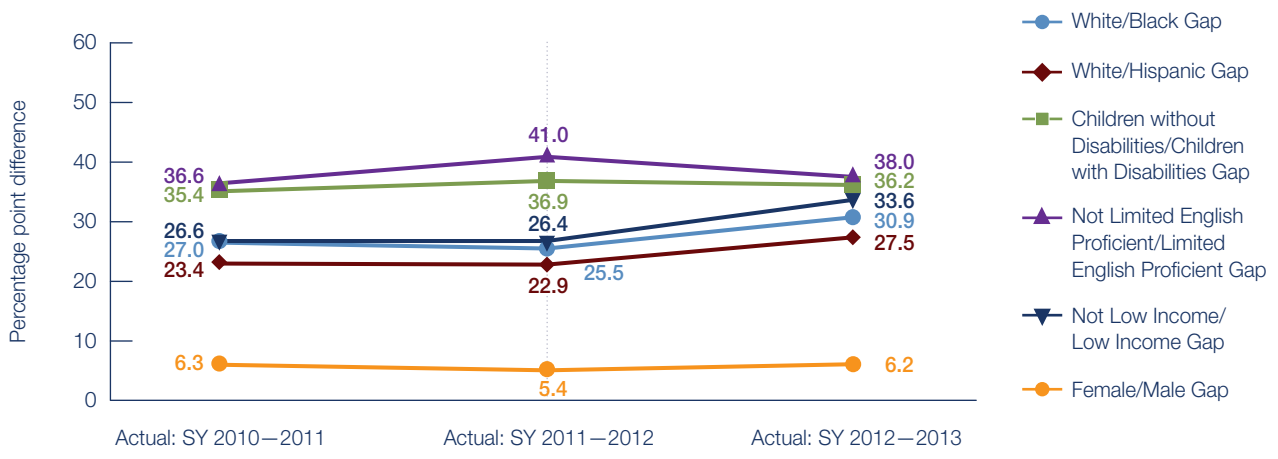
NOTE: Over the last three years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

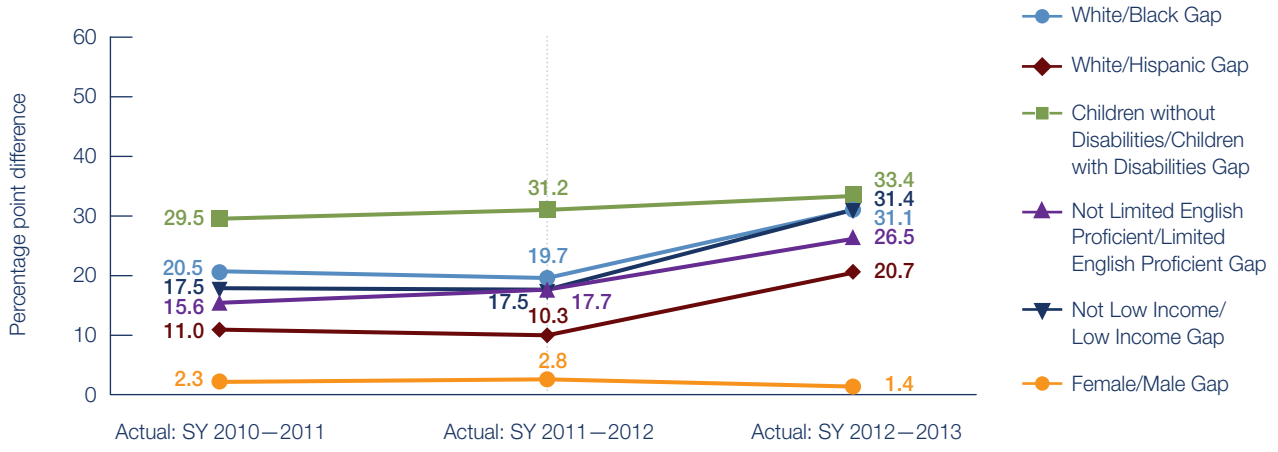
State Success Factors

Achievement gaps on North Carolina's State ELA assessment had mixed results between SY 2011-2012 and SY 2012-2013, whereas achievement gaps on North Carolina's State mathematics assessment increased for most sub-groups.

Achievement gap on North Carolina's ELA assessment



Achievement gap on North Carolina's mathematics assessment



Preliminary SY 2012-2013 data reported as of: December 26, 2013.

Numbers in the graph represent the gap over three school years between two sub-groups on the State's ELA and mathematics assessments.

Achievement gaps were calculated by subtracting the percent of students scoring proficient in the lower-performing sub-group from the percent of students scoring proficient in the higher-performing sub-group to get the percentage point difference between the proficiency of the two sub-groups.

If the achievement gap narrowed between two sub-groups, the line will slope downward. If the achievement gap increased between two sub-groups, the line will slope upward.

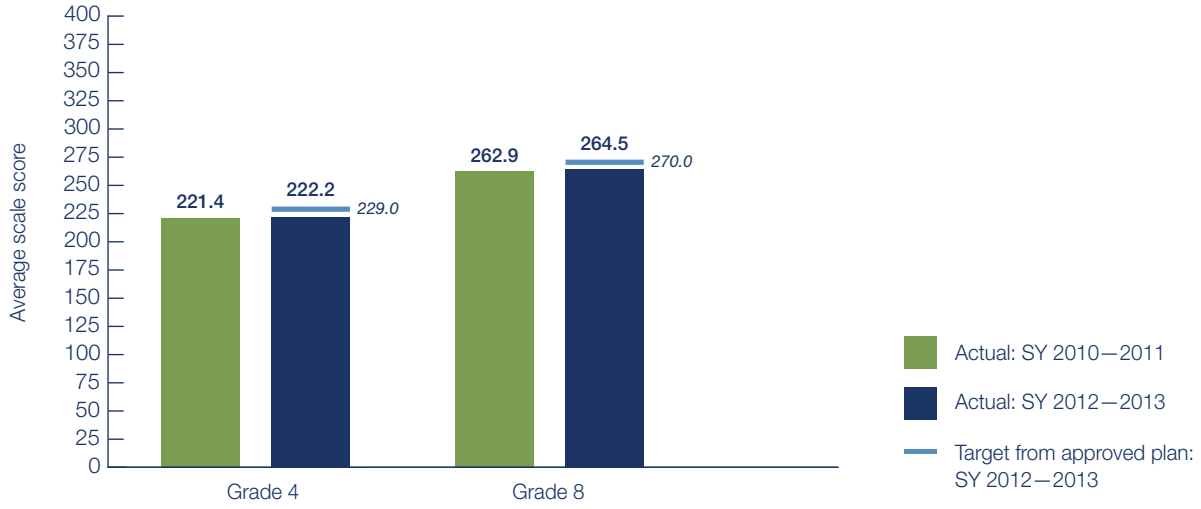
NOTE: Over the last three years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

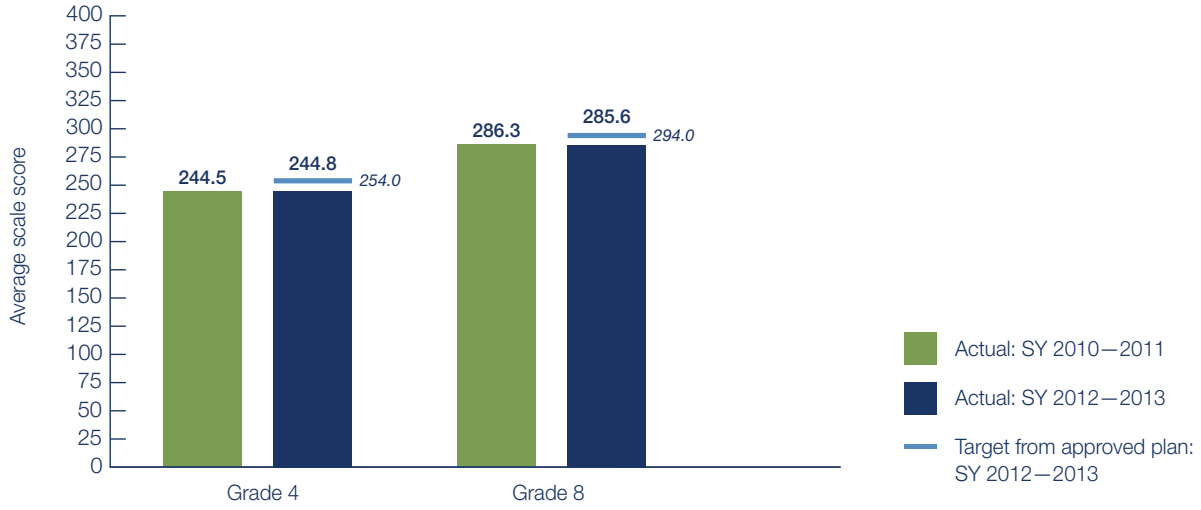
State Success Factors

Results from the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments illustrate that North Carolina's grade four and grade eight average scaled scores in reading and mathematics remained relatively the same in 2013 as in 2011

Student proficiency, NAEP reading



Student proficiency, NAEP mathematics

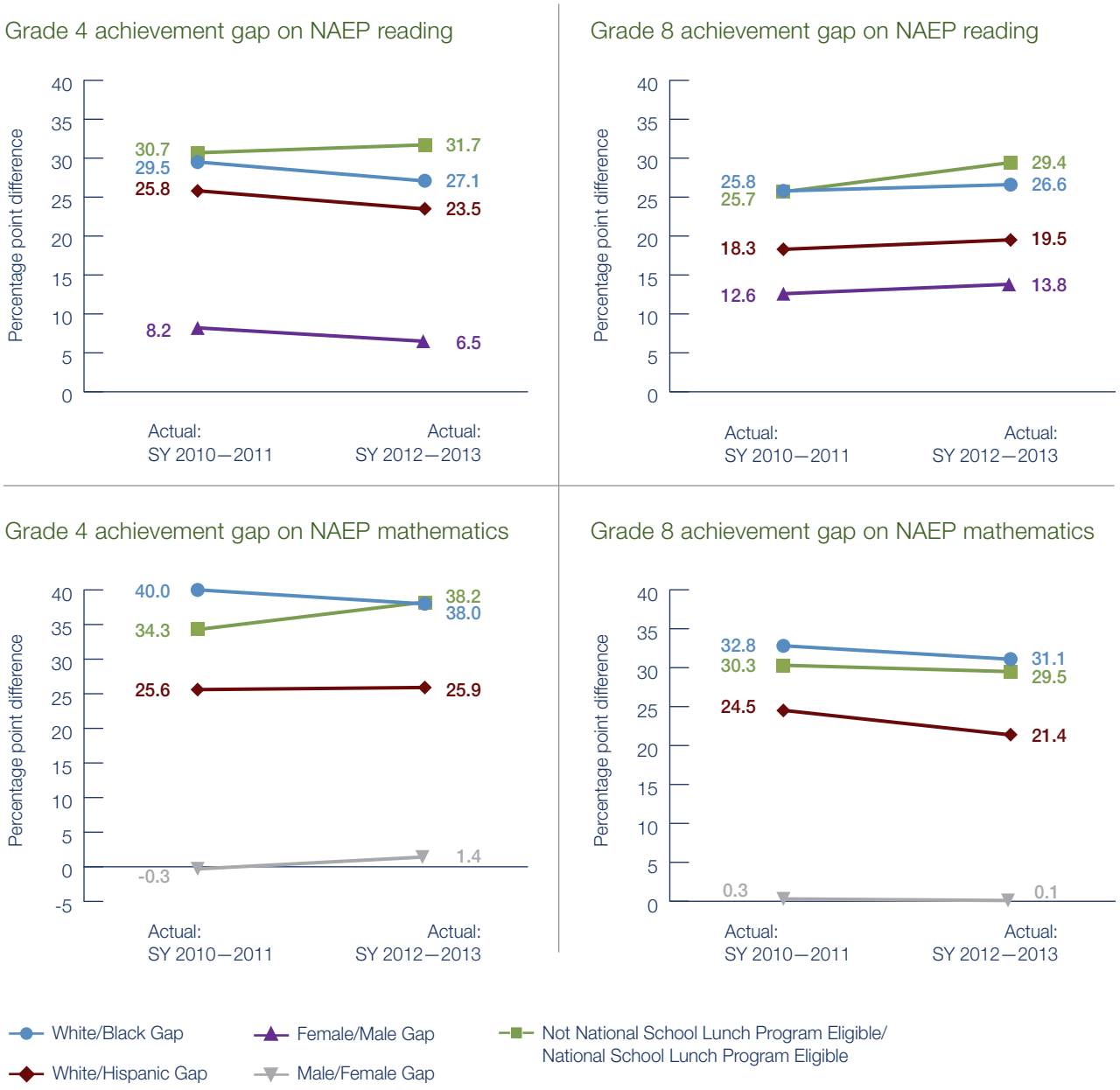


NAEP is administered once every two years. The two most recent years are SY 2010-2011 and SY 2012-2013. NAEP reading and mathematics results are provided by the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. To learn more about the NAEP data, please visit http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.

North Carolina's approved Race to the Top plan included targets for NAEP results based on students' average scale scores, not based on percentages.

State Success Factors

Achievement gaps on North Carolina's grade four NAEP reading assessment were mixed between 2011 and 2013, whereas achievement gaps for the grade eight NAEP reading assessment remained relatively the same between 2011 and 2013. Achievement gaps on North Carolina's grade four NAEP mathematics were mixed between 2011 and 2013, and achievement gaps for grade eight NAEP mathematics remained relatively the same.



NAEP is administered once every two years. The two most recent years are SY 2010-2011 and SY 2012-2013. North Carolina's NAEP reading and mathematics results are provided by the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. To learn more about the NAEP data, please visit http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/.

Numbers in the graph represent the gap in a school year between two sub-groups on the NAEP reading and NAEP mathematics.

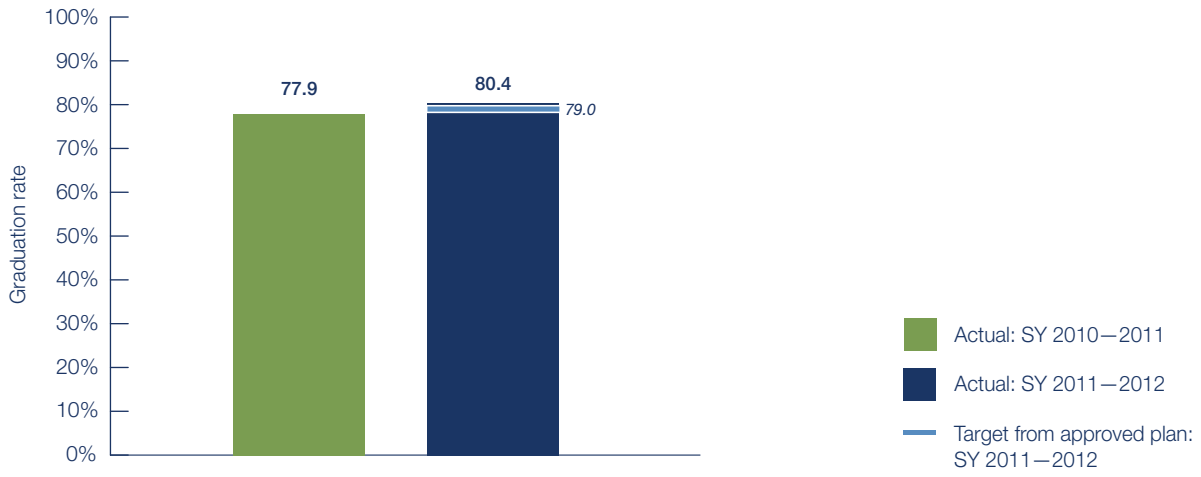
Achievement gaps were calculated by subtracting the percent of students scoring proficient in the lower-performing sub-group from the percent of students scoring proficient in the higher-performing sub-group to get the percentage point difference between the proficiency of the two sub-groups.

If the achievement gap narrowed between two sub-groups, the line will slope downward. If the achievement gap increased between two sub-groups, the line will slope upward.

State Success Factors

North Carolina's high school graduation rates increased from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2011-2012. College enrollment rates increased from SY 2011- 2012 to SY 2012-2013.

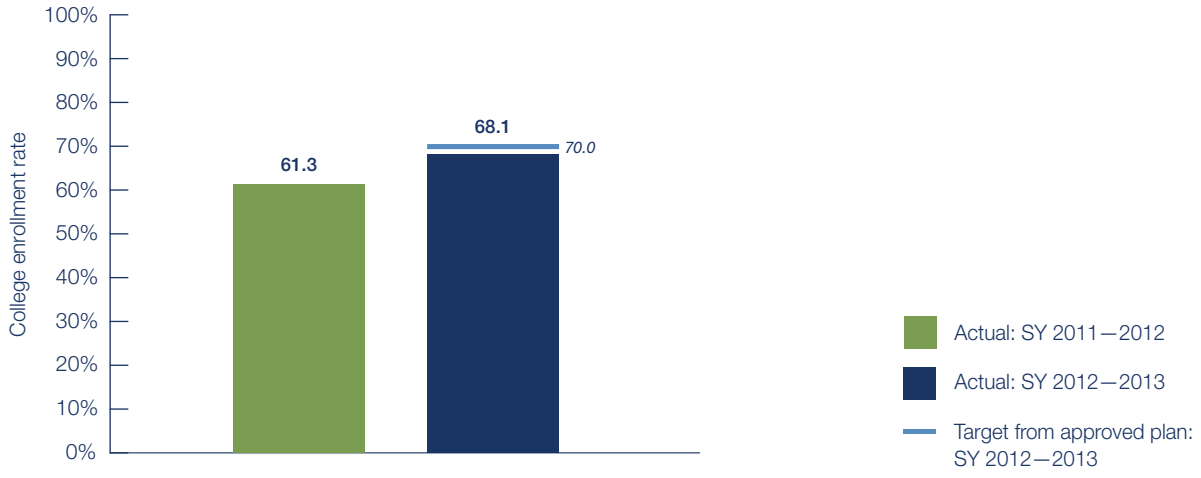
High school graduation rate



Preliminary SY 2011-2012 data reported as of: August 13, 2013.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

College enrollment rate



Preliminary SY 2012-2013 data reported as of: September 20, 2013.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

The Department provided guidance to States regarding the reporting period for college enrollment. For SY 2012-2013 data, States report on the students who graduated from high school in SY 2010-2011 and enrolled in an institution of higher education (IHE).

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.

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

In June 2010, North Carolina's State Board of Education (SBE) voted to adopt the CCSS. In SY 2012-2013, the State fully implemented its new college- and career-ready standards, including the CCSS for ELA and mathematics and the North Carolina Essential Standards for subjects not included in the CCSS. Additionally, North Carolina implemented new State assessments in spring 2013 aligned to the new standards.

North Carolina is a governing member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) and plans to implement the CCSS-aligned Smarter Balanced assessments in SY 2014-2015. North Carolina participated in the SY 2012-2013 Smarter Balanced item pilot and continued to present the Best Practices Guide for Online Assessments and case studies of best practices for utilizing online assessments to LEAs through conferences and regional meetings.

In Years 1 and 2, DPI devoted significant attention to LEA outreach and support to build local capacity for the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards transition. In Year 3, the State focused on continuing to build local capacity to implement new standards, while emphasizing the instructional content shifts expected of educators in their classrooms. North Carolina offered regional trainings in collaboration with Regional Educational Services Alliances (RESAs) and hosted approximately 40 webinars. In Year 3, 23 online modules were available to educators as a part of the State's efforts to support the transition to new standards and assessments. The State's Professional Development Leads – who serve regionally as professional development resource developers, workshop leaders, and professional learning community coaches – worked with LEAs to redeliver training locally. The State also offered professional development opportunities specifically to include Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs).

Dissemination of resources and professional development

In Year 3, DPI provided its third round of intensive professional development through the 2013 Summer Institutes. The State held 10 regional Summer Institutes – two-day, face-to-face sessions which were attended by 2,962 participants representing local professional development leadership teams from all eight regions. The 2013 Summer Institutes featured an introduction to Home Base and provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on the first year of implementation of new standards and the NCEES. In particular, the Institutes provided training on instructional practices by grade level and subject and focused on differentiation to support all learners.

Additionally in Year 3, North Carolina updated the State's initial set of tools and resources to support standards implementation and shared additional content and resources through online modules and collaborative workspaces. These "wikispaces" provided an opportunity for the State and LEAs to share curriculum maps, lesson plans, and assessment items. Based on demand and feedback from LEAs, the State has developed additional resources and expanded the scope of training offered to support LEA and school leaders in assessing and selecting high-quality curricular tools aligned to the CCSS.

Home Base will play a critical role in CCSS implementation, serving as the single location for educators and students to access instructional materials and online assessments. In Year 3, North Carolina continued to work with a group of 30 LEAs participating in the Home Base Resource Consortium to develop and share resources aligned to the new standards. North Carolina provided training to consortium members to promote shared practices to identify high-quality curricular tools that are aligned to the CCSS and the North Carolina Essential Standards. The resources shared across the Home Base Resource Consortium will be made available to all LEAs in SY 2013- 2014 through Home Base.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

Throughout Year 3, North Carolina continued to provide a variety of resources and professional development opportunities to support LEAs and educators during the first year of full implementation of the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards. The State has been particularly responsive to LEA feedback and requests for resources and support related to standards implementation.

Feedback from the field and Evaluation Team reports indicate a positive response to this support. For example, the Evaluation Team reported that a majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that Race to the Top-related professional development events helped their LEAs develop, refine, and implement the transition to new standards. Large majorities of participants also agreed or strongly agreed that the Summer Institutes would help them develop skills aligned to the State's standards for teachers and school leaders. It will be important for the State to continually assess the capacity of LEAs to implement the new standards and provide differentiated support as needed.

Data Systems to Support Instruction

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

North Carolina's pre-kindergarten to high school statewide longitudinal data system, the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS), contains data from more than 30 sources.[12] CEDARS uses a unique identifier system to link students and staff and matches data across various sources such as financial systems, teacher licensure programs, student information, and testing data. Analytical tools allow for analyses of trends and relationships over time. According to the State, this system is compliant with the privacy regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

CEDARS launched in October 2011, but did not achieve full functionality for reporting purposes until March 2012 due to unexpected issues with data quality and the quantity of data loaded into the system. The State began offering annual training for LEA CEDARS users on the expanded system functionality in fall 2012 and continues to offer monthly webinars to introduce LEA staff to CEDARS and to demonstrate the potential uses of the system's dashboards included within the system. In Year 3, North Carolina updated the State website and the CEDARS webpage to include a data loading schedule and data dictionary to assist LEA users.

As of Year 3, three full years of data were available in CEDARS – SYs 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 – and North Carolina improved data quality in CEDARS. Further, the State made additional reports available in CEDARS for limited English proficiency students and discipline data.

Accessing and using State data

In fall 2012, the State integrated the IIS concept and its updated student information system (SIS). Together, the two systems are referred to as "Home Base." Once complete, the State intends for Home Base to connect resources and data to provide tools to help educators manage assessments, student work, classroom activities, and their professional growth. It will also serve other key users. For example, Home Base will provide dashboards for students to access their schoolwork and instructional activities, for parents to view their child's attendance and progress, and for administrators to monitor data on students, teachers, and schools.

Following delays in Years 1 and 2, North Carolina awarded contracts for the primary components and functionality of Home Base in Year 3, including a professional development system and educator evaluation data system. The Department approved an amendment in Year 2 to allow the State to pilot and phase in the roll-out of Home Base beginning in SY 2012-2013, gradually piloting and rolling out components as it works toward implementation of most major components in summer 2014.[13] However, due to contracting delays and additional time spent thinking through dependencies across systems and initiatives, North Carolina did not begin initial roll-out of Home Base components until summer 2013. During SY 2013-2014, the State expects to make major components of its IIS (including Schoolnet and OpenClass) as well as the Truenorthlogic platform (which includes the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System online tool and professional development learner management system) available to LEAs as a part of the suite of technology tools available through Home Base.

Throughout Year 3 the State utilized communication and engagement efforts to build LEA awareness of Home Base. The third round of READY meetings (see *State Success Factors* for more information), held in spring 2013, focused on Home Base, and Home Base was also integrated into the 2013 Summer Institutes. The State updated stakeholders on Home Base development through bi-weekly newsletters, weekly demonstration webinars, and regional planning workshops. In order to monitor and learn from pilot implementation of particular elements of Home Base, North Carolina plans to work with a small group of partner LEAs throughout SY 2013-2014. All LEAs will be required to utilize some elements of Home Base in Year 4.

The State executed a contract in March 2012 to begin gathering, aligning, and tagging content for placement in Home Base, including developing new content and aligning existing content to the State's new educational standards. In Year 3, the State made progress aligning content to the Standard Course of Study. As of spring 2013, North Carolina estimated that Home Base will include over 12,000 teaching resources and more than 30,000 classroom or benchmark assessment items for optional use by educators. It will be important for the State

[12] The State refers to the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CEDARS) as "PK-13" because it contains data on all public school students from pre-kindergarten through high school, as well as students in early college high school whom the system codes as grade 13.

[13] The State anticipates that the summative assessment delivery component of Home Base will not be completed and ready for LEA use until SY 2014-2015. The Department expects to receive a no-cost extension request from North Carolina so that it may be able to continue this work during SY 2014-2015.

to ensure that there are adequate items and resources available for educators across all grades and subjects.

In collaboration with the Reform Support Network, DPI developed a publication to serve as a reference guide for States involved in the effort to map data elements to the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS). The guide walks the user through the process of aligning to CEDS, including the mapping process, collection of data sources, formatting and uploading data sources to the web-based tool, and alignment to the CEDS elements.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

CEDARS has allowed for expedited submission of required reports, particularly at the State level. Additionally, the State reports that the quality of data in CEDARS reports has improved. However, it is not clear how CEDARS reports are being used to inform instruction, programs and policies, as well as other decisions at the State and local levels, and CEDARS usage has been limited to date.

The State undertook significant efforts in Year 3 to build awareness and readiness in the field for Home Base. The State also made notable progress in Home Base development and implementation in Year 3, although components of the system were rolled out later than initially planned. Because of ongoing delays throughout the grant period in this initiative, there is a condensed timeframe for LEAs to utilize the system and make decisions about which components to opt into for SY 2014- 2015 and beyond. Additionally, as a result of operating on a later roll-out timeline than initially envisioned, North Carolina will have less time to assess LEA usage, gather data to inform decision-making, and make any mid-course corrections. Further, it will be important for the State to provide training and ongoing support to educators on the use of this system to help ensure that this initiative has the intended impact.

Great Teachers and Leaders

Race to the Top States are developing comprehensive systems of educator effectiveness by supporting high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals, ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs, and providing effective supports to all educators. As part of these efforts, Race to the Top States are 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.

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

First piloted in SY 2008-2009, NCEES standards require teachers to demonstrate leadership, establish a respectful learning environment, possess content knowledge, facilitate learning, and reflect on practice. Through Race to the Top, the State expanded its existing teacher and principal evaluation system to include data on student growth as one of its multiple measures.[14]

In Year 2, the SBE formally adopted student growth standards – the sixth standard for teachers, and the eighth standard for principals – for inclusion in teachers' and principals' evaluations. Teachers and principals receive separate ratings on each of the standards that comprise their evaluations and will receive an overall effectiveness rating that takes into account their performance on all of the standards. In Year 2, the State selected the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) as its model to measure student growth. In Year 3, the SBE determined that the sixth standard would be composed entirely of individual value-added data where available.

For SY 2011-2012, LEAs, school leaders, and teachers received ratings on both the observation-based and student growth standards that are used to inform professional development and human capital decisions. Teachers received their ratings on the five observation-based standards at the end of SY 2011-2012, followed by sixth standard

[14] North Carolina's teacher evaluation system includes six standards: (1) demonstrate leadership, (2) establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, (3) know the content taught, (4) facilitate learning for students, (5) reflect on practice, and (6) contribute to academic success. Data on standards one through five was reported in the aggregate in SY 2010-2011. SY 2011-2012 will be the first year including standard six based explicitly on student growth data. For more information, including the standards included in the principal evaluation system, see http://www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/effectiveness/.

ratings in winter 2013. In May 2013, North Carolina publicly released SY 2011- 2012 State, LEA, and school level aggregated data on standards one through five and intends to begin releasing data on standard six beginning in SY 2013-2014, based on SY 2012- 2013 results. Based on a SY 2011-2012 pilot in 47 LEAs, the SBE decided not to include student surveys in the evaluation process for SY 2012- 2013, but North Carolina reports that it may implement surveys as a part of the evaluation process in the future.

Approximately 800 educators participated in workgroups in SY 2011- 2012 and SY 2012-2013 to develop NC Final Exams to provide a growth measure for teachers in non-tested subjects. Twenty-two exams were made available for LEAs to administer on an optional basis in fall 2013, and approximately 41 LEAs administered the NC Final Exams at that time. Based on feedback from the field, North Carolina developed additional training regarding administration and scoring and created documents and webinars to highlight lessons learned from LEAs to support broader implementation in spring 2013. The State reported that there were challenges in the SY 2012-2013 administration related to logistics and local flexibility for implementation, including printing issues and variability in whether LEAs counted the results as a part of students' grades. The State considered feedback it received following the first statewide implementation and refined its plans for the SY 2013- 2014 administration. In SY 2013-2014, the State intends to print and ship copies of the NC Final Exams to all districts and charter schools. Additionally, the SBE approved in fall 2013 a policy that requires districts to use the high school Final Exams as a minimum of 20 percent of a student's final grade for the course.

In Year 3, DPI enhanced the online system for the NCEES. Principals and teachers utilized the system for all steps of the evaluation process, including self-assessments, observations, professional development plans, and summary ratings. In SY 2013-2014, the online system will be transitioned to a new vendor and hosted within Home Base to streamline educator access to this information. The State also continued training in Year 3 on the NCEES, providing inter-rater reliability training through 36 regional sessions and to district teams and delivering webinars on a variety of topics related to the NCEES.

North Carolina also provided performance bonuses to certified staff in 35 low-achieving schools in Year 3 based on higher than expected schoolwide growth in SY 2011-2012. In April 2013, the SBE passed a policy to allow incentives to be awarded to teachers based on individual educator results beginning with results from SY 2012- 2013. All low-achieving schools are scheduled to provide such bonuses through SY 2013-2014.

Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

North Carolina created three RLAs to increase the pipeline of high-quality principals in the State, particularly for low-performing schools. Each RLA accepts cohorts of aspiring principals each year and trains them through coursework, site visits, and administrative internships. In Year 3, two RLAs trained their second cohorts, and one RLA launched its third cohort. To date, 122 participants have graduated from the RLAs. Of those, 19 have received job placements as principals and 79 as assistant principals. As of fall 2013, a total of 35 RLA graduates are working in low-achieving schools or districts in the State.

Building teacher pipelines

In Year 2, North Carolina launched a State-designed alternative teacher preparation program. The North Carolina Teacher Corps is designed to recruit, select, develop, and retain teachers who want to expand the educational opportunities of students across North Carolina. The State targets recent graduates of North Carolina colleges and universities as well as mid-career professionals who have established success in other fields for participation in the program. In Year 3, the State made progress in implementation of the North Carolina Teacher Corps. Approximately half of the first cohort of 24 corps members was placed in high-need subject areas in SY 2012-2013, and the State provided professional development sessions, monthly onsite coaching, and ongoing support. North Carolina also recruited a larger second cohort of corps members, placing 74 in schools across the State at the beginning of SY 2013-2014.

The State utilizes two Race to the Top-supported alternative certification programs to increase the flow of effective teachers into North Carolina schools. In Year 3, the State provided ongoing professional development and coaching to members of the first cohort of the North Carolina Teacher Corps. Additionally, North Carolina selected and trained its second cohort, deploying 74 additional corps members in schools for SY 2013-2014. Although the rate of participation fell below the State's target of having 150 North Carolina Teacher Corps members participate in the second year of the program, the second cohort is notably larger than the initial cohort of 24 teachers who were employed in North Carolina schools in SY 2012- 2013. The State reports that this increase is due to enhancements to its Year 3 recruitment strategies and timeline adjustments. Additionally, Race to the Top supported the State's Teach For America expansion: 216 first and second year corps members served eastern North Carolina in high-need subjects areas in SY 2012-2013.

[15] The State initially anticipated releasing the Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) report cards in fall 2012.

The strategic staffing initiative provided customized support and consultation to the State's 12 lowest-achieving LEAs. In fall 2012, each LEA received a customized report based on historical economic, recruitment, and retention data as well as interviews with superintendents, human resource staff, parents, and other community stakeholders. This information informed the development of LEA-specific recruitment and retention plans for SY 2013-2014. Regional training to support human resource staff in developing individual recruitment plans through various strategies – including marketing, social media, and interview protocols – occurred in 36 of the 38 LEAs with low-achieving schools in Year 3.

In SY 2012-2013, the State provided induction support to 533 new teachers across 21 LEAs. Support included summer training on unit planning, behavior management, and professional ethics, as well as bi-weekly onsite mentoring and coaching. Although North Carolina served more new teachers through this program in SY 2012-2013 than previously, it fell short of its target to expand induction support to all regions of the State with low-achieving schools. Additionally, the State faced challenges with the quality and consistency of coaching supports provided to new teachers in Year 3. North Carolina addressed this challenge by collaborating with universities to deliver additional training to mentors.

Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

In Years 2 and 3, North Carolina redesigned and enhanced its IHE report cards to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for their performance. The report cards include graduates' evaluation data and measures of how each program's graduates affect student growth. Additionally, the report cards streamline display of data that preparation programs currently report for other programs, such as Title II of the Higher Education Act. The new report cards were released for the first time in early 2013, later than initially planned due to timing of availability and review of data.[15]

Providing effective support to teachers and principals

The State established the PDI framework to provide strategic support to educators around Race to the Top reforms. The PDI builds on the State's existing regional and statewide programs and resources to create a comprehensive, targeted, and flexible system that increases State and LEA capacity to support educators.

North Carolina provided extensive face-to-face and online trainings and resources to LEAs and educators in Year 3. This included over 200 face-to-face sessions, 40 webinars, and 18 online modules to support the transition to new standards and assessments, instructional technology, and the NCEES. The 2013 Summer Institutes, in which 2,962 participants representing local professional development leadership teams from all eight regions focused on reflection and continuous improvement following the first year of implementation of the new standards. Additionally, Home Base was a focus of the Summer Institute, as the State emphasized the system's potential to improve and integrate practices related to standards, assessments, data use, and educator effectiveness.

The PDI staff gathers ongoing data and feedback from the field to set professional development priorities. In Year 3, the State continued to hold semi-annual fidelity support sessions in each region of the State, as an opportunity for LEA teams to reflect on progress, establish connections across LEAs, and provide insight to State Professional Development Leads to help them target supports or highlight strong local practices. Formative feedback from the Race to the Top Evaluation Team also helped North Carolina to judge progress and quality of the annual professional development cycle. Two reports released in Year 3 provided recommendations regarding the professional development that was delivered in SY 2011-2012 based on surveys of participants, observations of training sessions, and an in-depth analysis of a selected group of schools.

During Year 3, approximately 259 principals and assistant principals participated in the State's Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) Principal Institute and approximately 800 principals and assistant principals have participated over the course of the grant. The DLP program offers ongoing training and networking opportunities to veteran principals and includes face-to-face sessions, online training, and coaching sessions.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In Year 3, some of the State's initiatives intended to promote equitable distribution of teachers and leaders made significant strides. The scale of both the North Carolina Teacher Corps and the State's induction support program increased markedly between Year 2 and Year 3. Still, induction support services have not yet been expanded statewide, and fewer RLA graduates have been placed in lowest-achieving schools than initially intended.

In Year 3, North Carolina made progress implementing components of the NCEES. The NC Final Exams were administered statewide for the first time in SY 2012-2013. While North Carolina reported that there were some logistical challenges related to the initial administration, the State utilized lessons learned to improve SY 2013- 2014 implementation and will monitor the quality and consistency of NC Final Exams administration.

Although additional time and data are needed to fully assess the impact of the PDI structure and the extensive training and resources the State has developed and provided, it appears that ample resources have been made available to LEAs and educators to support implementation of the CCSS and NCEES.

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.[16]

In SY 2012-2013, North Carolina continued to support the low-achieving schools that initiated school intervention models in Year 1, as well as 12 districts with clusters of underperformance. Nine schools, of the originally identified 118, used the school closure model, leaving 109 schools to complete implementation of one of the intervention models.[17] The State has made notable progress in this area of its Race to the Top plan, as many of these schools and districts have posted student performance gains. North Carolina reported that 55 schools are no longer in the bottom 5 percent of low-achieving schools in the State and only 22 percent of the originally identified schools did not meet growth projections in 2012-2013 based on prior year results. All seven high schools identified for having graduation rates below 60 percent now have graduation rates above 60 percent.[18]

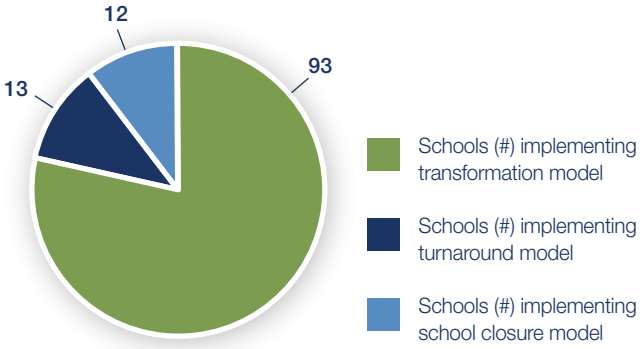
In Year 3, the State provided support primarily through approximately 70 DTCs, STCs, and ICs who were matched with districts and schools based on identified needs. The structure of the State's initiative to turn around the lowest-achieving schools embeds DTCs, STCs, and ICs in schools and LEAs. Coaches attend meetings and interact regularly with educators, a routine that has enabled DPI and the coaches to build strong, collaborative relationships with LEAs and schools. These coaches provide customized professional development based on assessed priorities and areas of need. Based on SY 2011-2012 assessment results, the State adjusted coaching supports for Year 3 and held conversations with schools regarding their progress to date.

DPI continued to utilize weekly reporting routines with the DTCs, STCs, and ICs. Coaches create summary reports after every site visit to evaluate school progress. The State reported that these routines encourage ongoing feedback and cooperation between field-based and DPI-based staff, as well as foster accountability and connections across supports for low-achieving schools and LEAs.

In Year 3, DPI supported leaders of low-performing schools through 10 regional professional development sessions that included content on hiring and retaining quality staff, family and community engagement, and measuring and examining the impact of interventions. Leaders also attended five Professional Development for School Leaders sessions. The State required this training to ensure principals in low-achieving schools understand the State's overall reform plan and Race to the Top requirements for implementing the intervention models. North Carolina has designed these trainings based on identified needs in its low-performing schools and LEAs.

North Carolina participated in the Reform Support Network's Performance Management for School Turnaround work group in Year 3. The State's team completed a performance management self-assessment and identified key priorities for improving performance management practices with school districts. North Carolina also participated in the Human Capital Strategies for Turnaround and Evaluation Turnaround Efforts webinar series.

Schools that implemented one of the four school intervention models



These data represent models implemented in SY 2012-2013 for schools that initiated one of the four school intervention models in SY 2010-2011. Schools that implemented the school closure model may have done so prior to SY 2012-2013.

For State-reported context, please refer to the Race to the Top APR at www.rtt-apr.us.

[16] 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.

[17] Following SY 2012-2013, an additional three schools selected the closure model, leaving a total of 106 schools to implement intervention models in SY 2013-2014.

[18] Initially, nine schools were identified for having graduation rates below 60 percent. However, two of these nine schools closed.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

The State has established collaborative relationships with LEAs to provide individualized support and build capacity to positively impact North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools. The improvements in student outcomes in many of the 109 schools served through this initiative in SY 2012-2013 noted above, evidence this positive impact. Additionally, North Carolina reports that districts and schools have provided positive feedback on the integration of the DTCs, STCs, and ICs at both the school and district level and cite the benefits of support provided by coaches.

Sustainability planning is a significant priority for the State in this initiative, particularly given that much of the support is funded through the State's Race to the Top program. As the end of the grant period approaches, it will be important for North Carolina to fully develop its plan for sustaining both supports for and improvements made in low-achieving schools and LEAs.

Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Race to the Top States are committed to providing a high-quality plan with a rigorous course of study in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In doing so, each State must cooperate with STEM-capable community partners in order to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students. A focus on STEM furthers the goal of preparing more students for an advanced study in sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including among underrepresented groups such as female students.

State's STEM initiatives

Through its Race to the Top plan, North Carolina expanded its partnership with NC New Schools[19] to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) Affinity Networks and Anchor Schools. The STEM Affinity Networks are intended to connect schools and help them implement and share innovative instructional practices, curriculum development strategies, models of collaboration with external partners, and uses of technology in the classroom. Anchor Schools are intended to serve as hubs for professional development, curriculum development, and technology use, from which Affinity Network schools can learn.

In SY 2012-2013, North Carolina operated 4 Anchor Schools and 16 Affinity Network schools, reaching the goal established in its Race to the Top plan. The curriculum in each school focuses on a STEM field critical to the State's economy: energy, aerospace, health and life science, and biotechnology and agriscience. In collaboration with NC New Schools, the State provided support to teachers and school leaders in the Anchor and Affinity Network schools, including over 2,000 days of instructional coaching, leadership coaching, and professional development across the schools.

Additionally, the State made progress in developing a STEM curriculum, in collaboration with the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Initial, "level one" courses were completed in November 2012, and "level two" courses in each of the four STEM focus areas were completed in May 2013. The State plans to pilot the STEM curriculum in Anchor and Affinity Network schools in SY 2013-2014 and make courses available for implementation statewide in SY 2014-2015.

As a part of its NC STEM Strategic Plan, the State established a STEM Attributes Implementation Rubric and STEM Recognition Program to identify schools that are implementing high-quality STEM programs. Schools complete a self-assessment of their status in developing a STEM program, and DPI staff and business and industry experts review the information to provide feedback to schools on the strengths and weaknesses of their programs. In SY 2012-2013, 15 schools piloted the process, and the State expects all 20 Anchor and Affinity Network schools to participate in the program when it is fully launched in SY 2013-2014.

North Carolina's Virtual and Blended Courses initiative aims to provide access to rigorous and high-quality STEM coursework for students at-risk of low achievement in science and mathematics. In Year 3, the State implemented three courses – Integrated Math I, Earth and Environmental Science, and Forensics – with more than 300 students in three LEAs. Throughout SY 2012-2013, the State provided ongoing site-based and virtual training and support to staff delivering the courses.

[19] NC New Schools was formerly known as the "New Schools Project."

Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Although the State intended to pilot both mobile and non-mobile versions of the courses, by the end of Year 3 it had only piloted mobile versions, due to budget and staffing constraints in pilot LEAs.[20]

North Carolina also continued development of three additional courses – Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, and Biotechnology and Agriscience. Although the State initially intended to begin delivery of all three courses in fall 2013, two of the courses will be delivered in winter 2013-2014 instead, due to development delays and LEA needs.

Successes, challenges, and lessons learned

In SY 2012-2013, North Carolina met its commitment to operate 4 Anchor and 16 Affinity Network schools. Following delays in providing professional development to teachers and principals in these schools in SY 2011-2012, the State met most of its coaching and professional development objectives in Year 3. As these schools continue implementation, and the end of the Race to the Top grant period approaches, it will be important for the State to establish clear and consistent mechanisms for assessing quality and for determining the impact and potential sustainability of the Anchor and Affinity Network program concept.

North Carolina piloted and was on track in Year 3 to launch the STEM Recognition Program statewide in SY 2013-2014. Given that the State's work in this area was in its initial stages in Year 3, it is important for the State to determine whether and how the STEM Recognition Program can be used in the future to identify best practices and create collaborative opportunities to refine and disseminate practices across STEM schools in the State.

Looking Ahead to Year 4

In Year 4, North Carolina will continue to implement the CCSS and North Carolina Essential Standards in classrooms across the State and will administer State assessments aligned to the new standards for the second time in SY 2013-2014. DPI will continue to support educators by conducting professional development and developing and refining curricular resources. The State plans to continue outreach through READY meetings and materials in SY 2013-2014.

North Carolina will continue to implement its teacher and principal evaluation system and plans to use NC Final Exams statewide in Year 4. DPI will continue its outreach to ensure that educators understand the evaluation system, and educators will receive data on their impact on student growth based on SY 2012-2013 assessment results. Additionally, the State's teacher and leader pipeline work will continue through RLAs, Strategic Staffing, and the placement of Teach For America and North Carolina Teacher Corps members in schools across the State.

The State plans to fully implement its key technology initiatives, with full roll-out of most major components of Home Base and the NC Education Cloud expected in SY 2013-2014. North Carolina intends to provide training to support use of Home Base by LEAs, schools, and educators. All LEAs will be required to use some elements of Home Base in Year 4 and will determine whether they will continue to access Home Base services beyond the required set in spring 2014. The State also targets full implementation of Cloud infrastructure and services in SY 2013-2014.

The State will continue to support low-achieving LEAs and schools through the implementation of intervention models and strategic placement of coaches in schools and districts based on identified needs and progress in increasing proficiency and graduation rates. DPI will continue to monitor implementation of intervention models in low-achieving schools and utilize SY 2012-2013 assessment results to track progress and differentiate supports.

Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2013, please see the APR Data Display at http://www.rtt-apr.us.

For State budget information, see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/state-scope-of-work/index.html.

For the State's fiscal accountability and oversight report, see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance-fiscal-accountability.html.

[20] Mobile versions of the courses were piloted with students using mobile devices to access course materials.

Glossary

Alternative routes to certification: 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): (1) can be provided by various types of qualified providers, including both institutions of higher education (IHEs) and other providers operating independently from institutions of higher education; (2) are selective in accepting candidates; (3) provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support such as effective mentoring and coaching; (4) significantly limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses; and (5) 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: the 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 the revisions. The Department has sole discretion to determine whether to approve the 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: The twelve indicators specified in section 6401(e)(2)(D) of the America COMPETES Act are: (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 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (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.

Annual Performance Report (APR): Report submitted by each grantee with outcomes to date, performance against the measures established in its application, and other relevant data. The Department uses data included in the APRs to provide Congress and the public with detailed information regarding each State's progress on meeting the goals outlined in its application. The annual State APRs are found at www.rtt-apr.us.

College- and career-ready standards: State-developed standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time students graduate from high school.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) English language arts and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including governors, chief State school officers, content experts, teachers, school administrators, and parents. (For additional information, please see http://www.corestandards.org/).

The **education reform areas** for Race to the Top: (1) Standards and Assessments: Adopting rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and career; (2) Data Systems to Support Instruction: Building data systems that measure student success and support educators and decision-makers in their efforts to improve instruction and increase student achievement; (3) Great Teachers and Great Leaders: Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; and (4) Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools: Supporting local educational agencies' (LEAs') implementation of far-reaching reforms to turn around lowest-achieving schools by implementing school intervention models.

Effective teacher: 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.

High-minority school: A school designation defined by the State in a manner consistent with its Teacher Equity Plan. The State should provide, in its Race to the Top application, the definition used.

High-poverty school: Consistent with section 1111(h)(1)(C)(viii) of the ESEA, a school in the highest quartile of schools in the State with respect to poverty level, using a measure of poverty determined by the State.

Highly effective teacher: 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): 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: 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: 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.

No-Cost Extension Amendment Request: A no-cost extension amendment request provides grantees with additional time to spend their grants (until September 2015) to accomplish the reform goals, deliverables and commitments in its Race to the Top application and approved Scope of Work. A grantee may make a no-cost extension amendment request to extend work beyond the final project year, consistent with the Amendment Principles (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/grant-amendment-submission-process-oct-4-2011.pdf) as well as the additional elements outlined in the Department Review section of the Amendment Requests with No Cost Extension Guidance and Principles document (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/no-cost-extenstion-submission-process.pdf).

Participating LEAs: 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 at the time of the award, 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):** 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: As determined by the State, (1) 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 (2) 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 (1) 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 (2) 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.)

Glossary

Qualifying evaluation systems: Educator evaluation systems that meet the following criteria: rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that: (1) differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor, and (2) are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement.

Reform Support Network (RSN): In partnership with the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU), the RSN offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to grantees of the Race to the Top education reform initiative. The RSN's purpose is to support the Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.

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: 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 (Smarter Balanced):** 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:** A detailed document for the State's projects 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): Data systems that 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: For the purposes of this report, student achievement (1) for tested grades and subjects is (a) a student's score on the State's assessments under the ESEA; and, as appropriate, (b) other measures of student learning, such as those described in number (2) of this definition, provided they are rigorous and comparable across classrooms; and (2) 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: 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): A specific type of growth model 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."