

RACE TO THE TOP

Florida Report

Year 1: School Year 2010–2011



U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

January 10, 2012

Executive Summary

Race to the Top overview

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

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

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

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

Race to the Top program review

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

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

State-specific summary report

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

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

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

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

Executive Summary

Florida's education reform agenda

As part of its education reform agenda, Florida set ambitious goals for students and educators in its Race to the Top application, including doubling the percentage of incoming high school freshmen who ultimately graduate from high school, go on to college, and achieve at least a year's worth of college credit; cutting the achievement gap in half by 2015; and increasing the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) by 2015 to or beyond the performance levels of the highest-performing States. The State is supported in these efforts not only by the projects funded through its \$700,000,000 Race to the Top grant, but also through its existing strategic plan. In December 2010, the Florida State Board of Education approved the Next Generation Pre-K-20 strategic plan to advance the State's education reform efforts. The six strategic areas of the plan include strengthening foundational skills, improving college and career readiness, expanding opportunities for postsecondary degrees and certificates, improving the quality of teaching in the education system, improving K-12 educational choice options, and aligning resources to strategic goals. In developing its Race to the Top plan, Florida carefully considered

the best approach for aligning the six strategic areas and the Race to the Top core education reform areas in order to build upon its existing education agenda.

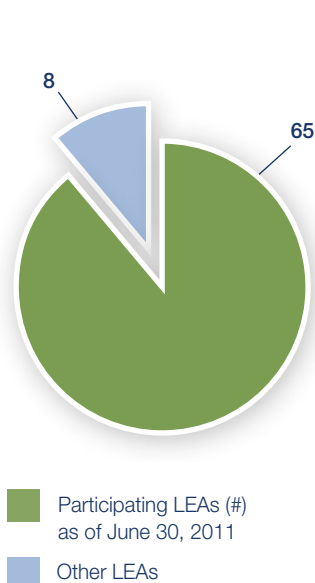
Florida's education reform agenda also includes the passage of the Student Success Act (the Act) in March 2011, which mirrored many of the goals in the State's strategic plan and Race to the Top application. The Act made the following changes: (1) established a comprehensive evaluation system for teachers and principals based on multiple measures of effectiveness, which include primary emphases on student growth and observations of educator practice; (2) tied compensation to evaluation results beginning in school year (SY) 2014-2015; and (3) eliminated tenure except for those instructional personnel who already had a professional or continuing service contract. The Act puts into law many of the elements of the teacher and principal evaluations proposed in the State's Race to the Top application.

The State is using its strategic plan, its Race to the Top plan, and the Act to further its education reform agenda. The State believes that the ambitious goals set for students and educators within these reform efforts will increase the academic achievement of its students.

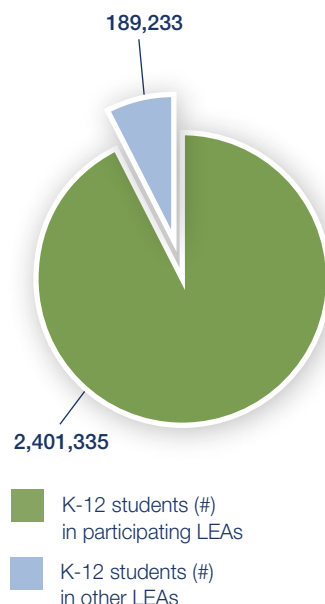
Local educational agency participation

As depicted in the graphs below, Florida reported 65 participating LEAs as of June 30, 2011 in its Annual Performance Report (APR). Participating LEAs represent more than 92 percent of the State's K-12 students and more than 93 percent of its students in poverty.

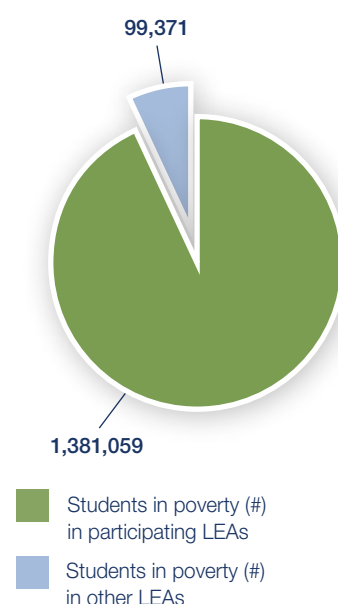
LEAs Participating in Florida's Race to the Top Plan



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



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



Executive Summary

Florida Year 1 summary

Accomplishments

Florida received a Race to the Top award in September 2010 as part of Phase 2 of the Race to the Top competition. Since receiving the award, the State has made progress in implementing several reform projects. These projects include assisting LEAs in designing new teacher and principal evaluation systems that use multiple measures, including a statewide value-added model for measuring student-growth; helping LEAs begin the transition to new Common Core State Standards (CCSS); launching the Local Systems Exchange (LSE) that allows LEAs to share information on their Local Instructional Improvement Systems; and engaging stakeholders through the creation and engagement of eight Implementation Committees.

Challenges

Florida encountered obstacles in implementing its Race to the Top plan during the first year of the grant. Since receiving its Race to the Top award, Florida has elected a new Governor and has had three Commissioners of Education. These leadership transitions have proven challenging as Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Race to the Top program staff work to update the new leaders on the Race to the Top plan. In addition, the State experienced difficulties in hiring staff at the State level and in the regions, which slowed the start of some Race to the Top activities. The State's most significant challenge is executing the large number and scope of contracts associated with its Race to the Top plan. Florida budgeted approximately 98 percent of its Race to the Top State-level funds for contracts. Despite its experience with managing contracts, the

State has struggled to issue contracts in a timely manner. Leadership changes, legal challenges, disparate vendor quality in some initial responses, the lack of staff needed to execute the large number of contracts, and difficulties in hiring qualified individuals contributed to significant delays in Year 1 and have resulted in the start date of many Year 1 activities shifting to Year 2 or beyond.

Strategies for moving forward

As part of its planning for Year 2 of the grant, Florida is considering ways to build on its accomplishments and address its challenges from Year 1. The State found the stakeholder input from the Student Growth Implementation Committee, coupled with national expertise, to be very valuable in the development of its statewide value-added student growth model. The State plans to use this collaborative effort as a model for continued work across reform areas. The State is also learning from its experience with Race to the Top contracts issued to date and is using the lessons learned to try and avoid contract delays in the future. Florida states that it is managing contract timelines in a manner that will allow it to make up for time lost on activities not started in Year 1. In addition, Florida is using a project management system to facilitate oversight of its many contracts once they are executed. Finally, the State is working with a vendor to conduct a formative and summative evaluation of its Race to the Top implementation that the State expects will provide insight into its progress and areas in need of improvement.

State Success Factors

Building capacity to support LEAs

Performance management

FDOE has chosen to integrate its Race to the Top efforts into its existing organizational structure rather than create a separate office to perform this work. The State believes that its Race to the Top plan aligns closely with its existing education goals and wants to perform this work in conjunction with its ongoing initiatives rather than as a separate project. To help guarantee that Florida meets its Race to the Top goals and objectives, each core education reform area of the grant has a Race to the Top team leader, who has project managers reporting to him or her. These team leaders meet frequently to gauge the progress that the State is making on its Race to the Top activities and determine how that work is supporting the desired implementation outcomes proposed under the grant. These team leaders also identify technical assistance needed by LEAs. In addition, FDOE is taking advantage of the State's regional administrative infrastructure, including the support of regional executive directors and program staff, to assist in implementing Race to the Top initiatives in the persistently lowest-achieving schools.⁴

FDOE has hired 18 staff members at the State level to support its Race to the Top efforts, as well as added staff in the regions to support the LEAs. In addition to the staff already in place, the State plans to fill four more positions in Year 2 for a total of 22 additional employees at the State level. The new staff will help FDOE execute, manage, and monitor the multitude of Race to the Top contracts, as well as provide support for other key Race to the Top initiatives.

Florida struggled with its performance management as it relates to executing contracts. This is evidenced by the delay in issuing the majority of its Year 1 Race to the Top contracts, which in turn led to a delay in starting activities. The lack of staff contributed, in part, to this protracted contract process, but even when fully staffed, the large size and scope of the contracts will continue to be a challenge that the State must overcome. To manage these contracts once executed, the State adopted a new project management system that provides FDOE with project-specific, real-time information related to the status of each task and deliverable in a contract and helps the State monitor vendors for compliance with project timelines, goals, and objectives.

Florida intends to contract with an external evaluator to conduct formative and summative evaluations of the State's Race to the Top programs. The State plans to use the results of the formative evaluation to monitor its progress toward meeting its strategic goals and, if necessary, to help it make mid-course corrections to its Race to the Top plan. The State intended to begin this work in Year 1 but did not execute a contract until Year 2 due to difficulties with choosing the vendor.

LEA implementation and accountability

To help ensure that the LEAs' Scopes of Work aligned with the State's strategic goals, FDOE provided multiple technical assistance sessions and a template to develop final Scopes of Work. In addition, the State established an Online Grant System that allows LEAs to submit requests for amendments to their budgets, timelines, and activities and provide proposed budgets and timelines for implementation activities.

To monitor the progress of Race to the Top projects, FDOE established a programmatic and fiscal monitoring system. The system is risk-based and involves continuous monitoring. It includes, among other tasks, an annual review and approval of budgets from each LEA, as well as review and approval of budget amendments as needed; a review of LEA key deliverables that program leads and staff approve; and an annual overall monitoring review. Key staff in implementing the monitoring process are the core education reform area leads and three staff members housed in the Office of Audit Resolution and Monitoring, whose specific function is to monitor LEA implementation of the grant. The efforts of these staff are supplemented by use of data from a variety of sources (e.g., reports from project managers regarding participation in various elements of the grant; information from deliverables submitted by LEAs; information provided by Regional Executive Directors working with the persistently lowest-achieving schools; and online systems such as the web-based Online Grant System, the ARRA quarterly reporting system, and the Cash Advance and Reporting of Disbursements System).

Stakeholder engagement

Key activities and stakeholders

Florida has eight Race to the Top Implementation Committees. These committees comprise teachers, school-based and LEA administrators, higher education representatives, parents, union members, and other interested parties. The committees have been crucial in facilitating stakeholder engagement on topics such as standards, assessments, data reporting, and teacher and leader preparation. For example, in Year 1, the State adopted a value-added growth model and an observation rubric for its new educator evaluation systems, and, as a consequence, the Student Growth Implementation Committee was particularly active in providing input, feedback, and recommendations during the development and implementation of the student growth model. Additionally, the Local Systems Implementation Committee helped plan the design and content of the LSE prior to its June 30, 2011, launch. The LSE allows LEAs to share best practices related to data system design and implementation. (For more information on the LSE, see the section on *Data Systems to Support Instruction*.)

⁴As part of its participation in the Differentiated Accountability Pilot, Florida created five regional offices to provide enhanced support for struggling schools.

State Success Factors

In Year 1, Florida created eight Race to the Top Implementation Committees to engage stakeholders. The committees comprise teachers, administrators, higher education representatives, parents, union members, and other interested parties. Across the committees, nearly 150 stakeholders are providing input in the following areas:

1. Standards Instructional Teacher Tool
2. Formative and Interim Assessment Design
3. District-Developed Student Assessments for Instructional Effectiveness
4. Portal, Dashboard, and Reports
5. Single Sign-On
6. Local Systems
7. Student Growth
8. Teacher and Leader Preparation

The State anticipates that its eight Implementation Committees will play a key role in maintaining stakeholder engagement over the next three years. While the level of engagement of each committee will evolve over the term of Florida's Race to the Top grant, the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders on each committee ensures that all stakeholders consistently have opportunities to voice concerns and opinions on a variety of topics throughout the grant period.

Lessons learned

Due to the large number and scope of the Race to the Top contracts, the State experienced difficulties in executing many of its Year 1 contracts in the first year of the grant. As a result, the commencement of some projects was delayed. For Year 2, the State is learning from the Year 1 contracting process and working to accelerate and improve the process, including by hiring additional staff and building quality-control checks into contracts to ensure contractors deliver a quality product and/or service.

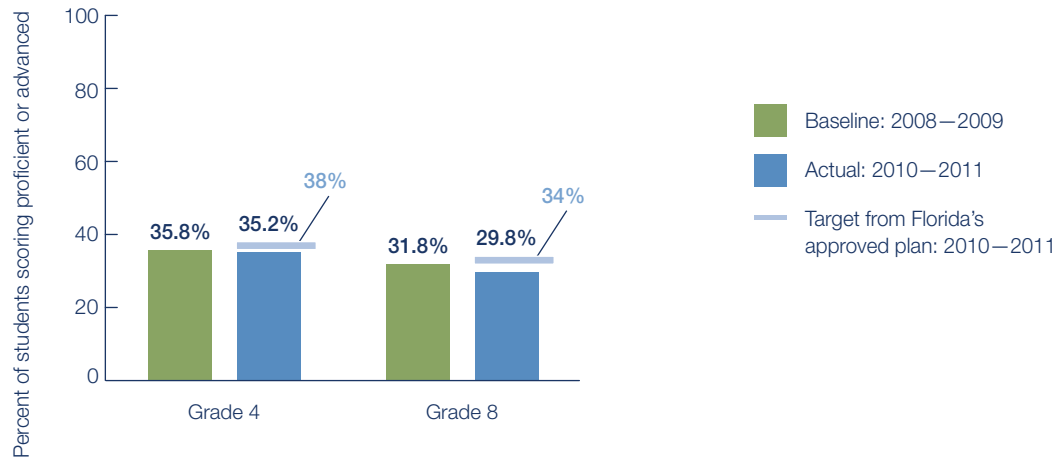
Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, Florida will hire additional staff for Race to the Top positions at FDOE and in its five regions. Full staffing will increase the capacity of the State to implement its Race to the Top projects. The State also will continue with the work started on formative and summative assessments. Finally, the State will be working to award its contracts currently in progress and will be working with all contractors to ensure that they are able to meet the ambitious amended timelines that will allow the State to meet its Race to the Top goals during the grant period.

State Success Factors

Student outcomes data

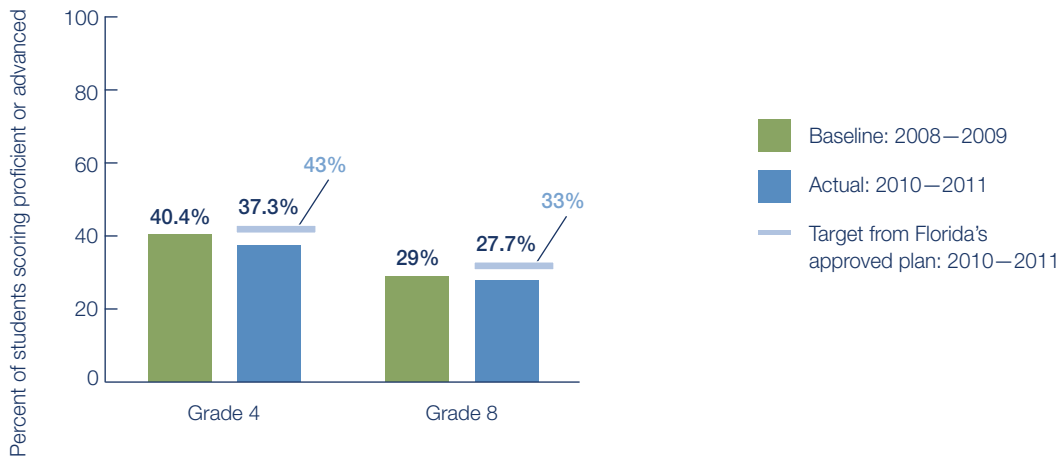
Student Proficiency, NAEP Reading 2011



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

The percentage of Florida's grade 8 students who were at or above Proficient in reading in 2011 was not significantly different than in 2009.

Student Proficiency, NAEP Mathematics 2011

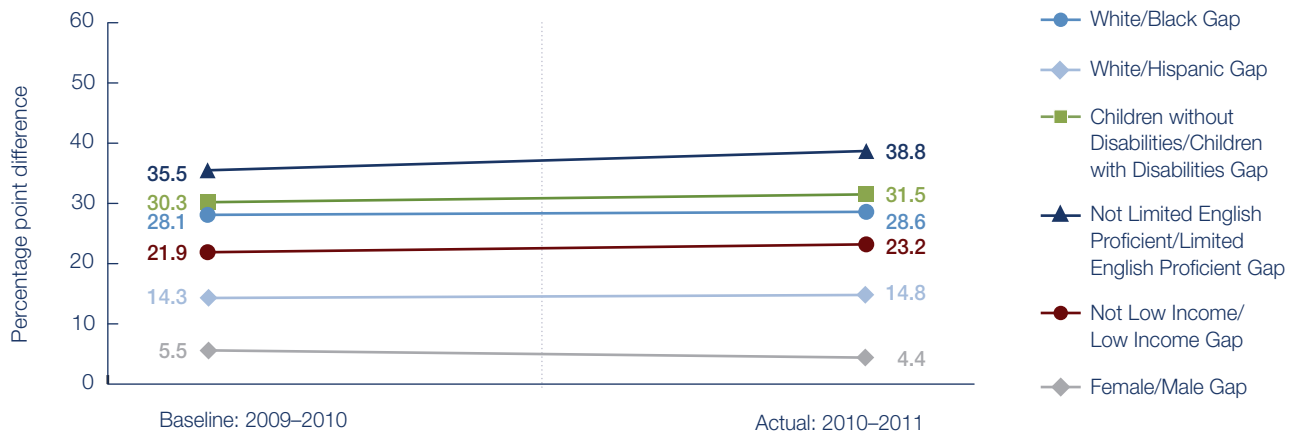


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State Success Factors

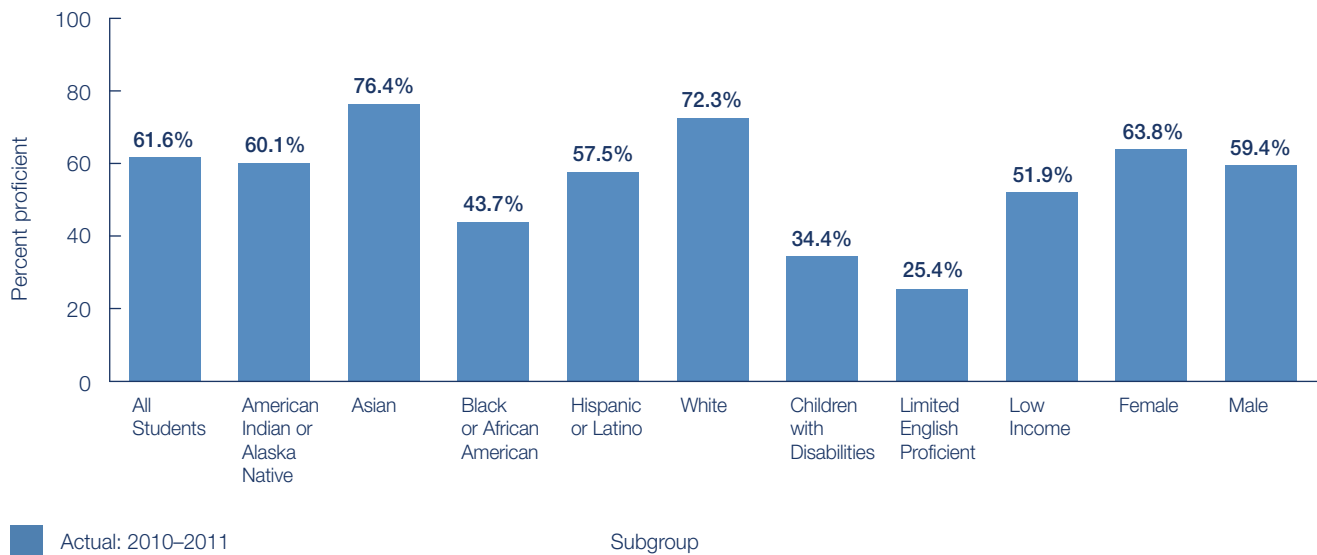
Achievement Gap on Florida's ELA Assessment SY 2010–2011



Preliminary SY 2010–2011 data reported as of: October 27, 2011

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

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

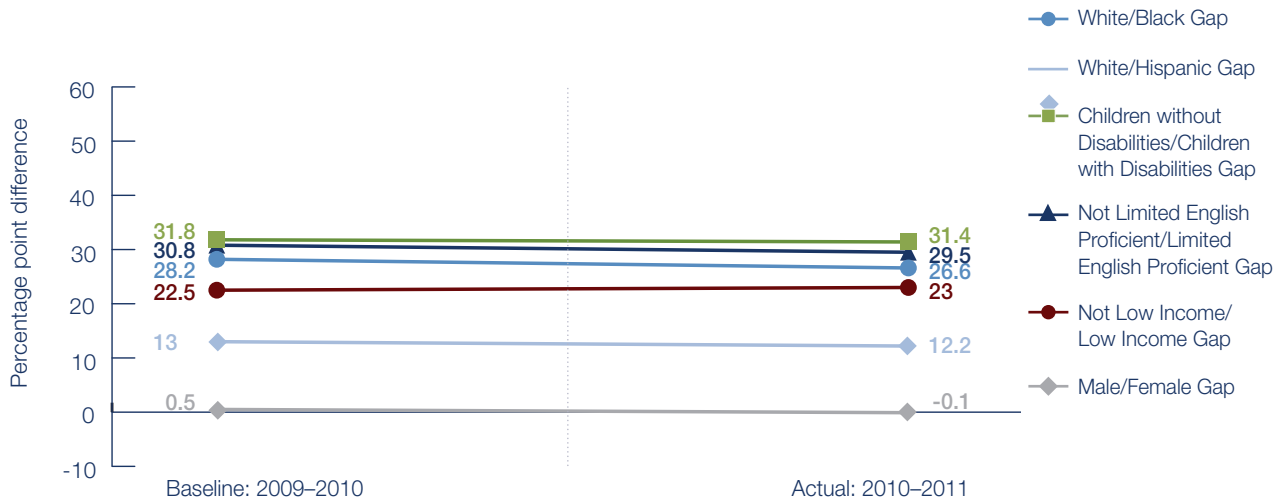


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State Success Factors

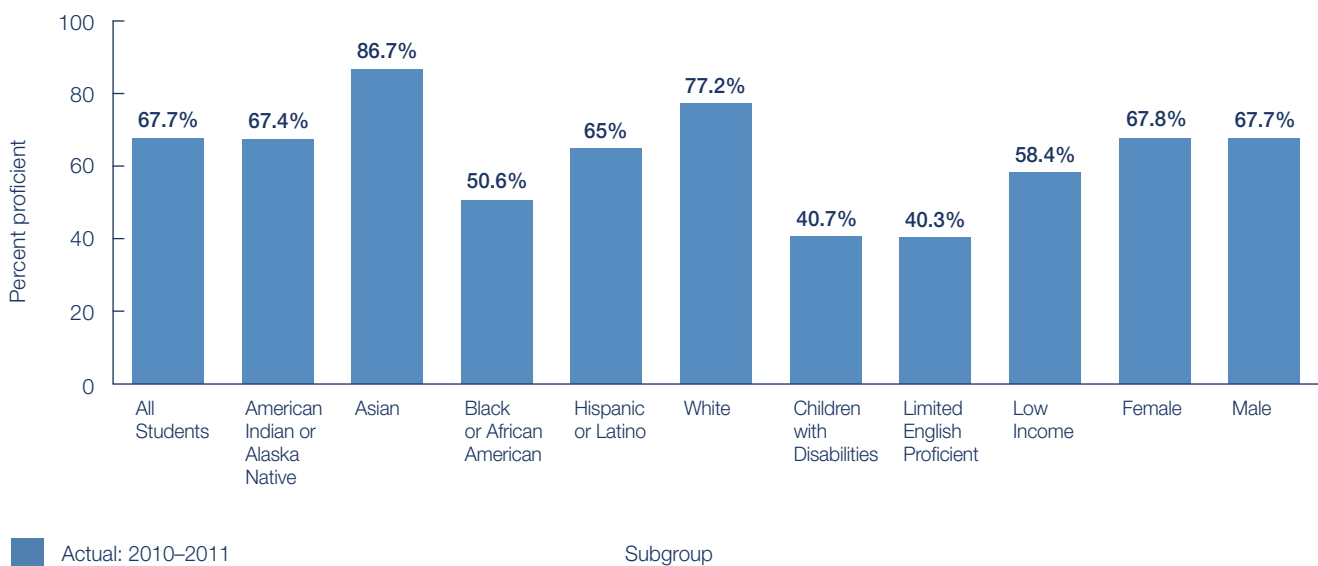
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Standards and Assessments

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

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

Florida's State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in July 2010. In addition, Florida is a governing member and the fiscal agent of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment consortium, which is developing new assessments aligned to the CCSS. The State intends to fully implement the CCSS by SY 2014–2015.

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

Florida has committed a significant amount of its Race to the Top resources to support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. This education reform area represents almost 40 percent of the State's portion of the Race to the Top budget. Examples of projects in this area include the development of interim and formative assessments, grants to LEAs to design and develop assessments in hard-to-measure subject areas, updating the teacher standards instructional tool to include the CCSS, and updating the student standards tutorial to align with the CCSS. A number of Implementation Committees are supporting work in this area, including the Teacher Tool Committee, the Formative and Interim Assessment Design Committee, and the District-Developed Student Assessments for Instructional Effectiveness Committee.

Florida will transition to the CCSS over a four-year period, with full implementation occurring in SY 2014–2015. During the transition phase, FDOE is providing professional development for LEAs and teachers based on the State's recommended implementation plan. In SY 2011–2012, the State recommends implementation of the CCSS in kindergarten and the content area literacy standards across all grade levels. In addition to English language arts standards, the content area standards set literacy standards for science, social studies, and history courses. In SY 2013–2014, grades 3–12 will receive blended instruction based on the old and new content standards, ahead of full implementation of the CCSS during the next school year.

Florida will supplement its PARCC assessments with formative and interim assessments that assist teachers in identifying student needs during the course of the school year. To support the development of these assessments, the State hired five content experts.

Florida also awarded a contract that will allow students to participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Through this contract, the number of Florida students taking these tests will increase, which will allow the State to have a large enough sample population to compare its students' performance to the performance of students domestically and internationally.

Dissemination of resources and professional development

Florida will use Lesson Study, a professional development program that encourages teachers to critically evaluate their instructional practices, as one method for supporting teachers to transition to the CCSS. Through Lesson Study, teachers analyze lessons and their outcomes and then use the results of their analysis to refine and re-teach the lessons. Florida will also use best practices from LEAs to provide additional professional development on the CCSS. Kindergarten teachers began implementing the new standards in SY 2011–2012 and, as a result, were the first group of teachers to receive training. In addition to supporting educators on the new standards, FDOE is working to provide technical assistance to its LEAs by disseminating resources that will help teachers integrate the CCSS into their daily practices. To date, FDOE has awarded one contract for the development of the mathematics formative assessment lesson study toolkit and another contract for the production of lesson study toolkits on the effective use of assessment data. The State is in the process of executing a contract for the creation of the reading formative assessment lesson study toolkit.

Standards and Assessments

Challenges

In Year 1, the State planned to begin work on updating its student tutorial content and teacher standards instructional tool, as well as begin development of the interim and formative assessments. The teacher standards instructional tool and the mathematics formative assessment system contracts were executed early in Year 2, and the work has begun. Florida has not yet executed the interim assessment and reading formative assessment contracts, and the State does not expect this work to begin until the second half of Year 2. Florida acknowledges that the procurement process is an area in need of improvement and is working to avoid delays in issuing future contracts. The State is now close to awarding many of its larger contracts and remains confident that it will fully implement its proposed reforms by the end of the Race to the Top grant period.

Looking ahead to Year 2

Florida has committed to moving forward with its timeline in Years 2 through 4 and making up for time lost in Year 1. In Year 2, the State will implement activities such as revising the student tutorial content in algebra, geometry, 10th-grade reading, and grades 3 through 5 reading and mathematics to reflect the CCSS; surveying high school texts and postsecondary texts to determine alignment for college readiness; beginning the process of developing interim and formative assessments; and working with LEAs to develop assessments in hard-to-measure subject areas.

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

Florida implemented a pre-K-20 data warehouse in 2003 and reported in its Year 1 APR that its existing data system contains all 12 elements required by the America COMPETES Act. This data system tracks students from the time they enter school in Florida through their high school graduation and transition to a postsecondary institution or the workforce. Under Race to the Top, the State will link the data systems maintained by FDOE and create a centralized access point that will allow users to access multiple applications with a single sign-on. The State will also assist LEAs, teachers, principals, and parents in learning to access and use the data through this single sign-on portal.

Accessing and using State data

To assist educators in accessing and using data to improve instruction, the State has hired data coaches and a data captain. As of September 2011, the State had hired seven of the eight data coaches and was in the final stages of hiring the last. The data captain will lead the data coaches in providing all LEAs with personalized professional development on how to collect and use data to improve instruction. The State assigned at least one data coach to each region with a focus on ensuring that the highest-need schools receive support.

Using data to improve instruction

The State is promoting the use of data to improve instruction by requiring all LEAs to implement a Local Instructional Improvement System (LIIS). FDOE, through the work of an Implementation Committee, established minimum standards in January 2011 that an LEA's LIIS must meet by 2014. These standards include the integration of a complete set of student data, methods of aligning curricula and accessing instructional materials, and seamless sharing of information among teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

Currently, Florida is assessing existing LEA capacity and providing assistance as LEAs develop their own local systems. In July 2011, the State launched the LSE, which allows LEAs to share information on their own systems and to seek information and support from one another as they strive to meet the standards. The State is also implementing an annual LIIS survey that will help the State and LEAs track progress toward meeting the State standards.

Florida recognizes that upgrading existing instructional improvement systems will require expanded capacity, which could be particularly challenging for small and rural LEAs. To address this issue, the State awarded 50 needs-based grants to such LEAs. The grants will cover the costs of purchasing and installing new hardware, as well as staff training costs.

Challenges

Florida recognized early in the implementation process that it needed to align its federal SLDS grant with its Race to the Top grant in order to ensure it completed the work efficiently. The State conducted an alignment study that it believes will support more streamlined and effective implementation, but this did lead to a delay in the State starting its Race to the Top projects related to the single sign-on portal. The projects were further delayed because Florida is in the process of consolidating its hardware and network resources, which caused these resources to be offline for a period of time. The State could not begin work on the single sign-on solution while the hardware and network resources were offline. Florida did not know the timing of this consolidation at the time of the Florida's Race to the Top application and, thus, did not factor it into the State's plan or timeline. Florida is fully committed to meeting its Race to the Top goals in the core education reform area by 2014 and has established a plan and revised schedule for moving forward.

Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, the State will begin working on its single sign-on solution. Additionally, the State will continue its work related to implementing LIIS and supporting the LSE.

Great Teachers and Leaders

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

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

Florida's Race to the Top plan and the Act set parameters for new evaluation systems that all LEAs are implementing in SY 2011–2012. The new systems evaluate teachers and principals using multiple measures, including student growth and observations of educator practice. Based on these measures, the system differentiates teacher and principal effectiveness using four rating categories: highly effective, effective, needs improvement/developing, and ineffective. All LEAs will perform the evaluations annually, and later during the grant period, the results will inform professional development, tenure, retention, termination, and compensation decisions.

The State chose to provide a well-established rubric to quantify the observation of educator practice and help ensure inter-rater agreement. Trained evaluators in the schools will use the rubric to assess educator practice in four areas: classroom strategies and behaviors, preparation and planning, reflecting on teaching, and collegiality and professionalism. Evaluators will observe educators multiple times every year. After each observation, evaluators will discuss the educators' strengths and areas for improvement to encourage educators to reflect on their classroom practices. LEAs must either adopt or adapt the State's rubric to meet their unique needs or request the State's approval to use another rubric, which must be grounded in research and fully implement the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices.

Per the requirements of the Act, the State will calculate student growth using a value-added model that takes into account school, classroom, and student-level characteristics. These measures will isolate the impact of a teacher on the growth in student achievement from outside factors that can influence a student's performance. For school administrators and teachers with three or more years of student performance data, student growth will account for 50 percent of the total evaluation score. However, if the school administrator or teacher has less than three years of student performance data, then the LEA may reduce the weight given to student growth to 40 percent of the final evaluation. Non-classroom instructional personnel may combine growth data with other measurable student outcomes specific to their job responsibilities; however, the performance of students must account for 50 percent of the final evaluation, or 40 percent if fewer than three years of data are available.

Providing effective support to teachers and principals

During Year 1, Florida provided support to LEA teams of superintendents, teachers, principals, and union representatives to help those teams design LEA evaluation systems that meet the expectations in the State's Memorandum of Understanding for participating LEAs and the requirements of the Act and trained educators on the new evaluation system. During the review of local educator evaluation systems, Florida worked collaboratively with LEAs to create principal and teacher evaluation systems that meet the new requirements. As of December 2, 2011, 35 participating LEAs have received full approval from the State on their evaluation systems, and the remaining participating LEAs are working to develop systems that meet the new requirements. In addition, all participating LEAs have submitted revised principal evaluation plans. In an effort to help educators adjust to the new evaluation system, Florida provided trainings to educators on the value-added growth measure and the State-selected observation rubric.

Great Teachers and Leaders

Challenges

Florida experienced delays in other projects such as its teacher and principal job-embedded preparation programs and recruitment efforts for minority teachers due to challenges in executing contracts. Florida also faced the challenge of ensuring stakeholder support of teacher and leader evaluation systems.

Lessons learned

Florida made great progress in this education reform area by adopting a value-added student growth model and working with teams from LEAs to develop new teacher and leader evaluation systems. Florida has stated that the process of selecting its statewide

value-added model (which combined national expertise with a statewide educator stakeholder committee) is one it holds up as a model for continued work across reform areas.

Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, the State has committed to implementing the activities not completed in Year 1 along with its Year 2 commitments. Examples of Year 1 and 2 activities the State intends to complete in Year 2 include launching teacher and principal job-embedded preparation programs and the minority teacher recruitment program and helping LEAs implement new teacher and principal evaluation systems. Despite some delays, Florida has committed to meeting all of the revised timelines and goals outlined in its Race to the Top application.

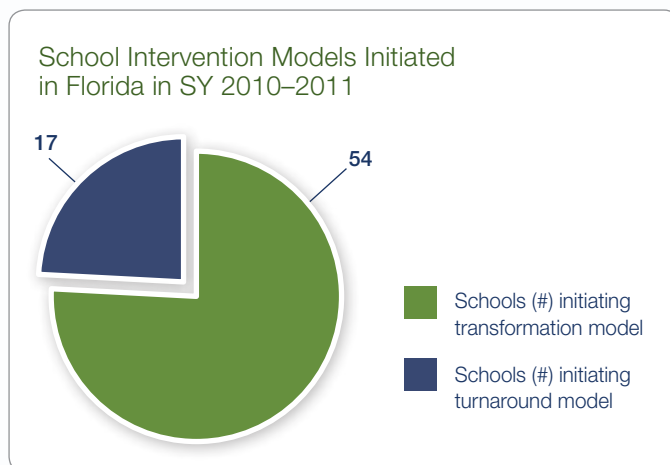
Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

In Year 1, Florida initiated several programs aimed at turning around its lowest-performing schools, including implementing summer professional development academies; awarding funds to the State's 22 lowest-achieving high schools to expand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs; and hiring regional reading, STEM, CTE and data coaches. The summer professional development academies focused on multiple areas, including response to intervention, effective instruction, and the Florida Continuous Improvement Model. The expansion of STEM CTE programs in 22 of the lowest-performing high schools will help students to be college- or career-ready upon graduation. Moreover, the State is adding STEM coordinators, CTE specialists, and data coaches to the regional offices to help support the lowest-achieving schools. Florida expects these coordinators will bolster LEA capacity by providing additional expertise in high-need areas which, in turn, will help improve student achievement.

Challenges

Florida made progress in some projects in this core education reform area in Year 1 but experienced delays in other projects because of difficulties with issuing contracts. The State found that it needed more time and resources than expected to develop and award the large number of contracts associated with this education reform area. Because of this delay, projects such as developing a leadership pipeline for intervention principals and assistant principals and building district-level capacity for intervention in rural schools did not begin in Year 1 as planned. The State learned from these delays and is working to avoid similar delays in the future. Florida is committed to meeting its goals associated with this education reform area despite the delays.



Looking ahead to Year 2

In Year 2, the State is committed to implementing planned Year 1 activities that were not completed, as well as its planned Year 2 activities. These activities include beginning the recruitment and training of teachers for persistently lowest-achieving schools and their feeder patterns in Miami Dade and Duval LEAs, beginning the development of a leadership pipeline for aspiring intervention principals and assistant principals, beginning professional development to build the capacity of 10 small and rural LEAs to support their persistently lowest-achieving schools, continuing the Summer Academies, and launching the expansion of charter schools in feeder patterns of the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

⁵Race 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.

Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Florida established two primary STEM goals: (1) increasing the percentage of students enrolled in STEM accelerated courses by no less than 3 percent annually and (2) increasing the percentage of students enrolled in Race to the Top-approved STEM career academy courses⁶ by no less than 3 percent annually. STEM accelerated courses are Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, dual enrollment, and industry certification courses. Examples of Race to the Top-approved STEM career academy courses include aerospace engineering, animal biotechnology, electrical drafting, and environmental resources. In Year 1, Florida supported these

goals by awarding a grant for a gifted and talented student STEM program. The grant will serve three rural LEA consortia. The State also hired STEM coordinators and placed them in its regional offices to support Florida's struggling schools in their STEM efforts. In SY 2010–2011, Florida exceeded its annual goal and saw an enrollment increase of 14 percent in accelerated STEM coursework. The State saw an enrollment increase of 7 percent in STEM career courses.

In Year 2, the State plans to implement a teacher preparation program that includes a dual focus on education and STEM.

Progress Updates on Invitational Priorities

In its APR, Florida reported the following progress as of June 30, 2011:

Innovations for improving early learning outcomes

- Florida's Office of Early Learning worked collaboratively with FDOE to create Florida's early learning and development standards.
- The State included strategies and environment considerations within the early learning and development standards to guide early learning teachers in understanding how the standards can be applied to the curriculum, classroom planning, and activities.
- The State partnered with the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University to create a screening, progress monitoring, and end-of-year assessment for its early learning program.

Expansion and adaptation of statewide longitudinal data systems

- Florida has had an SLDS for almost 10 years.
- The data system includes information on special education, English learners, pre-kindergarten and other early childhood programs, as well as at-risk and dropout prevention.
- Florida uses the data system to analyze questions related to policy, practice, and overall effectiveness.

Budget

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

⁶According to Florida's Annual Performance Report, a Race to the Top-approved STEM career academy is "a program that provides training for occupations requiring science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics (STEM). These programs must lead to a high-wage, high-skill career for a majority of graduates that supports one of the eight targeted sectors identified by Enterprise Florida and result in an industry certification. The program must include at least one Career and Technical education course that has significant integration of mathematics or science that will satisfy core credit requirements with the passing of the course and related statewide end-of-course exam."

Glossary

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

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

America COMPETES Act elements are (as specified in section 6401(e)(2)(D) of that Act): (1) a unique statewide student identifier that does not permit a student to be individually identified by users of the system; (2) student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information; (3) student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or complete P–16 education programs; (4) the capacity to communicate with higher education data systems; (5) a State data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability; (6) yearly test records of individual students with respect to assessments under section 1111(b) of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)); (7) information on students not tested by grade and subject; (8) a teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to

students; (9) student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned; (10) student-level college-readiness test scores; (11) information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework; and (12) other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in postsecondary education.

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

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

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

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

1. Standards and Assessments: Adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
2. Great Teachers and Great Leaders: Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;
3. Data Systems to Support Instruction: Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
4. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Restart model:** Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- **School closure:** Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other schools in the district that are higher achieving.
- **Transformation model:** Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, (2) institute comprehensive instructional reforms, (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools, and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

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

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

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

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

Student achievement means—

- a) For tested grades and subjects: (1) a student's score on the State's assessments under the ESEA; and, as appropriate, (2) other measures of student learning, such as those described in paragraph (b) of this definition, provided they are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.
- b) For non-tested grades and subjects: alternative measures of student learning and performance such as student scores on pre-tests and end-of-course tests; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.

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

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