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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

An Act to Improve Public Education
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Section I: Introduction

NC's Race to the Top (RttT) grant is supporting our State's ambitious plan to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps, and continue to increase graduation rates. The plan is built on the following two key ideas:

- **First**, every student should be held to *high academic expectations*, the achievement of which will enable him or her to graduate ready for life in the global economy.
- **Second**, the adults, specifically *teachers and principals*, in the school building are the most important factor in helping students grow academically and achieve.

Accordingly, all of the work streams supported by the RttT grant focus on ensuring that *every child has a great teacher and every school has a great principal*. As required by section 7(b) of S.L. 2012-77, this second of four semi-annual reports documents the State Board of Education's progress in implementing the following work streams of the RttT initiative:

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|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Transition to New Standards
Updating the NC Standard Course of Study to reflect a new set of career- and college-ready expectations for all students2) Instructional Improvement System
Establishing a suite of easy-access statewide technology tools that will enable teachers and principals to diagnose student need, design lessons, and collaborate efficiently across district lines3) NC Education Cloud
Providing a world-class information technology infrastructure to support all NC public schools4) Educator Evaluation
Ensuring every educator receives a fair, rigorous, data-based evaluation of his or her effectiveness to guide professional growth5) Performance Incentives
Providing bonuses to staff in low-achieving schools that achieve high student growth | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6) Regional Leadership Academies
Training leaders to transform low-achieving schools7) Teacher Recruitment
Expanding ways to get more well-prepared teachers into low-achieving schools8) Virtual Schools
Expanding virtual and blended courses for at-risk students in science and math9) Professional Development
Developing local capacity, via summer institutes and ongoing regional face-to-face and online training, to support continuous instructional improvement10) District and School Transformation
Expanding intensive, on-the-ground support and coaching for low-achieving schools and districts11) Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)
Establishing a network of STEM-themed high schools throughout the state |
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Section 2: Highlights since September 2013

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has continued to implement the State's detailed scope of work as part of its contractual agreement with the US Department of Education (USED) for the Race to the Top (RttT) grant. Highlights from the past six months include:

- NCDPI continued to roll out the new Student Information, Instructional Resources and Assessment, and Educator Evaluation components of Home Base in the 2013-14 school year; NCDPI worked with the vendor partners to address issues and enhance the performance of each of these technology components using feedback from LEAs and charter schools.
- NCDPI began rollout of the Collaboration and Learning Management tools for Home Base and piloted the first online courses in the Professional Development component of Home Base that will be available to educators later in the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI published student assessment data from the 2012-13 school year and provided support to LEAs and charter schools regarding how to communicate about the new assessments and data to stakeholders in their schools and communities.
- NCDPI partnered with UNC-TV to broadcast a program (titled "NC Schools and You: What Changes in Our Schools Mean for Parents and Students") statewide on September 19 and September 27 in order to inform parents about aspects of the READY initiative including the Standard Course of Study and Home Base. The show included pre-taped segments featuring North Carolina educators, as well as a session in which a studio audience of parents and community members asked questions of a panel of NCDPI officials. NCDPI distributed the link to watch the show online to superintendents, principals and teachers, and NCDPI also distributed the show in a format through which LEAs and charter schools could present it via local cable access channels.
- NCDPI submitted a request for "no cost extension" to the US Department of Education; if approved, this request would allow the state to shift unexpended funds to support work on certain elements of the state's Race to the Top plan through September 30, 2015. Spending on RttT initiatives not approved for extension will end by September 30, 2014.
- NCDPI continued to execute contracts through the NC Education Cloud (NCEdCloud) initiative that assist LEAs with updating and streamlining their information technology (IT) infrastructure. The Cloud Team awarded a contract for Identity Access Management (IAM) and began helping ten early adopter LEAs integrate the solution with their applications, and moved closer to releasing a request for proposal (RFP) for mobile device management (MDM) solutions.

Section 3: RttT Work Streams

1. Transition to New Standards and Assessments

Background

North Carolina's updated Standard Course of Study includes new standards in all content areas and at all grade levels. The State Board of Education's (State Board) goals for a successful transition to the new standards and the statewide assessments used to measure achievement related to them are as follows:

- Building and reinforcing educators' support of the new standards and belief that the new standards will improve student outcomes
- Ensuring that educators understand the new standards and are equipped with strategies and tools to help students meet them
- Ensuring that educators and other stakeholders understand and use summative assessments and data effectively to measure students' attainment of the standards
- Helping educators transition to the use of online assessments

In order to meet these goals, NCDPI has developed a variety of trainings, tools, and resources that are being provided to educators through regionally-based face-to-face meetings and online modules, comprising a year-round cycle of support.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished each of the following:

- NCDPI has expanded the number of materials related to the new standards and assessments on the Department's Wikicentral and in Home Base.
- NCDPI has continued to provide face-to-face trainings, virtual trainings, and training materials related to the new standards and assessments through the regional professional development meetings (described in section nine of this report) and through statewide webinars and online professional development modules.
- NC released assessment data from the spring 2013 administration of End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 assessments and used data to develop additional trainings and resources to support educators in implementing the standards.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Tools, Training, and Resources

Between September 2013 and March 2014, NCDPI continued to expand the availability of instructional support tools and materials to help teachers implement the new standards and assessments. NCDPI continued to expand resources, such as model lesson plans and instructional guides that offer concrete examples of how to address the new standards in classrooms. NCDPI has also worked to create resources for principals to help them determine how well teachers are implementing the new standards in the classrooms, as well as materials for parents that explain the new standards and how they will help students succeed.

NCDPI staff members have also continued to provide training and formative support on all content areas of the new NC Standard Course of Study to local teams from every LEA and participating charter school. NCDPI has delivered this training and support through face-to-face, webinar, and online sessions with district and charter professional development teams (in accordance with the professional development cycle described in section nine) to help teachers continue to understand and implement the revised Standard Course of Study.

Since the September report, NCDPI has worked to help educators link assessment data (see the following section for more detail on this) with the new standards. NCDPI staff examined results broadly to determine areas in which students in the state struggled in order to identify or create resources to help teachers. For instance, students struggled with fractions in the 2012-13 assessments, so NCDPI staff held webinar trainings for educators around the related standards and developed resources to assist educators in working with students. NCDPI is developing data visualization tools to help educators look at assessment data based on standards, and will hold a two day summit in February 2014 to help districts use student achievement data to identify strategies to increase student performance in math and English/Language Arts (ELA).

Additional information regarding the trainings, tools, and resources is available on the NCDPI Wikispace (<http://wikicentral.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/NCDPI+WikiCentral+Page>) and the professional development Wikispaces for each education region (<http://rt3nc.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Regional+Wikispaces>).

Implementing New Assessments

NCDPI has continued working to implement new assessments aligned to the revised NC Standard Course of Study. In the past six months, this involved continued implementation of the End-of-Course assessments and the NC Final Exams and releasing assessment data from the 2012-13 school year, continuing the move towards online assessments, and providing feedback on Smarter Balanced assessments.

In November of 2013 NCDPI released assessment data from the 2012-13 school year assessments. NCDPI worked with over 260 educators from around the state to determine cut scores for End of Course, End of Grade, and NCEXTEND1 exams in the late summer. This involved creating recommended achievement level descriptors that provided a summary of the expected knowledge, skills, and abilities of students at each achievement level (1-4), then establishing recommended cut scores that defined expected

performance for students within each achievement level. The State Board reviewed these scores and approved them at their October 2014 meeting.

These assessments reflected the first opportunity to examine student learning under the NC Standard Course of Study and, as in previous implementations of new standards and assessments, scores dropped for most schools across the state. NCDPI worked with LEAs and charter schools to communicate reasons for this drop, including developing information packets, talking points, and sample letters LEAs and charter schools could use to explain the drops in test scores. NCDPI also held webinars for LEA and charter school officials and local media prior to the release of the assessment data.

NCDPI also continues to work toward the goal of administering state assessments online rather than through traditional paper and pencil administration by the 2014-15 school year. More, but still not all, LEAs and charter schools feel prepared to administer assessments online at this point. To assist LEAs through this transition period, and to ensure standardization statewide, NCDPI printed copies of the NC Final Exams beginning in the fall of 2013 to help defray costs for LEAs and charter schools.

North Carolina continues to work with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium as it develops assessments to measure students' achievement of Common Core Math & English Standards that are a part of the NC Standard Course of Study. In 2013-14, the state will participate in the field test phase of the Smarter Balanced online assessments and will continue to serve on the working teams that are planning for sustainability beyond the consortium grant. However, at their February 2014 meeting the State Board of Education decided to continue administering the current state-created assessments through the 2015-16 school year and to convene focus groups of various stakeholders in the spring of 2014 to examine the possibility of shifting to different assessments for grades three through eight and high school and report back to the Board by the fall of 2014.

Additional information about the State Testing Program can be found on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/>) and the latest information from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium can be found on their website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org>).

2. Establishment of a Statewide Instructional Improvement System (IIS)

Background

The Instructional Improvement System (IIS) is a statewide technology system that will provide teachers, students, administrators, and parents with access to information, resources and tools to enable them to make better-informed decisions related to instruction, assessment, and career and college goals.

The IIS integrates with NC's Student Information System (SIS) and is a part of one complete platform called Home Base. Some highlights of the integrated system include:

- Portals for students, parents, and educators to access information

- NC standards-aligned instructional resources that have been developed and/or vetted by content experts
- Instructional tools, including a lesson planner and student grouping functionalities
- Assessment tools that can be used to diagnose student needs and track progress
- Tools to record and organize NC Educator Evaluation System observation and evaluation data
- Tools to connect key data sources to give educators the information they need to improve their instructional practices
- Customizable or preformatted reports to show appropriate data for specific needs
- Professional Development tools for cataloging professional development offerings, delivering online courses and recommending courses based on teacher evaluations

Some of these functionalities reflect a consolidation or streamlining of tools currently being used in districts and schools, while others reflect tools that are currently not available in all districts and schools. Home Base brings these together in one place to allow users to link data and resources quickly.

For instance, through Home Base a teacher will be able to search for or build lessons plans with standards-aligned resources available right in the system, create classroom assessments based on the content of the lesson, analyze the resulting data to adjust instruction, and then communicate student progress to parents. Likewise, a principal could monitor ongoing benchmark assessment data, compare it to mid-year observation ratings for teachers, and then find professional development modules or activities to address identified staff needs.

A cross-functional team of technology and program staff is working to make sure that the IIS meets the needs of the diverse user population described above. Working groups consisting of teachers, administrators, and local technology specialists provide continuous feedback on the IIS design and implementation plans.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NCDPI has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI continued the rollout of three of the Home Base components in the 2013-14 school year: PowerSchool (the state's new SIS), the Educator Evaluation System (see section four), and Schoolnet (Curriculum & Instruction, Classroom & Benchmark Assessment and Data Analysis tools).
- NCDPI began the rollout of OpenClass (the state's learning management system) in the fall of 2013, began pilots of the professional development tool components of Home Base with full rollout planned for the spring of 2014, and worked on planning for the build of the summative assessment component (TestNav) and options for conducting a pilot in TestNav in the 2014-15 school year.

- Continued the curation and loading of vetted, NC standards-aligned OER instructional resources into Schoolnet and continued reviewing and preparing to upload new assessment items into Home Base.
- NCDPI selected the Home Base partnership sites and began to work with them to address their specific needs with the rollout of Home Base; the partnership sites are Hertford County, Onslow County, Franklin Academy, Lee County, The College Preparatory and Leadership Academy, KIPP Charter in Charlotte, Rutherford County, and Avery County. There is one site in each region of the state.
- NCDPI continued communication and stakeholder engagement efforts to assist districts and charter schools with the transition to Home Base, and to continue gathering input regarding educator needs and preferences related to Home Base functionality and content; this communication and stakeholder engagement took the form of face-to-face meetings, trainings, fidelity support sessions, surveys, webinars, weekly newsletter updates, and providing a website that remains up to date with current issues and resolutions, updates, calendars and other materials.
- NCDPI conducted regional trainings for district and charter school trainers. The Home Base training plan operates on a train-the-trainer model, and offered all districts and charter schools the opportunity to send trainers to these training sessions held in all eight regions. In addition, NCDPI scheduled weekly webinars to reach a broader audience for continued learning opportunities on the Curriculum and Instruction, Classroom and Benchmark Assessment, Data Analysis, Online Collaboration and Learning Management, and Educator Evaluation components of Home Base.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Home Base Development and Implementation

NCDPI rolled out the main components of Home Base (the Student Information System, the Instructional Improvement System, and the Educator Evaluation System) on schedule at the start of the 2013-14 school year. However, there have been a number of issues through which teams from NCDPI and the vendors continue to work to improve performance for LEAs and charter schools. For example, the integration of these systems depends on having accurate information from the Student Information System and the correct configuration with the underlying Operational Data Store (ODS) for the components to function as intended. This has not always been the case, and NCDPI has worked with LEAs and the vendor teams to document and understand the issues, and to install appropriate fixes to improve performance of the tools in Home Base.

The Instructional Improvement System (Schoolnet) experienced a major upgrade at the beginning of December 2013 to fix various bugs and issues. The primary vendor pulled together an engineering team to improve the performance of the Student Information System early in January 2014. Then in mid-January the vendor established a performance improvement team consisting of hosting engineers trained to optimize the computing hardware architecture, network engineers to analyze and improve the efficiency of the flow of data across the network, and software engineers who specialize in optimizing

SQL calls (the “structured query language” searches) to the database for the Instructional Improvement System. The IIS has seen marked improvement in performance since those efforts began.

In November 2014, NCDPI began the rollout of OpenClass, the Online Collaboration and Learning Management component of Home Base, which will allow teachers and students to collaborate with one another and for teachers to manage instructional resources and activities. LEAs and charter schools began implementing the system in waves, based on when they expressed interest in using the tool. As of the end of January 2014, NCDPI had trained 43 LEAs on the tool and 19 LEAs were set up and able to use the system.

NCDPI has continued development of the professional development tools in Home Base ahead of their rollout in the spring of 2014. NCDPI completed the first pilot test of an online module in December 2013, and launched a second and larger pilot of a second module in January of 2014. NCDPI continues to work with the vendor to migrate existing modules and professional development resources to the new tool in Home Base.

NCDPI has initiated planning for the build of the final tool in Home Base, which will allow for delivery of summative assessments. NCDPI expects to have the build for this tool complete by the summer of 2014 and the system will be ready to pilot in the fall of 2014.

NCDPI continues to add high quality, NC standards-aligned instructional resources and classroom and benchmark assessment items on a rolling basis as they are developed or purchased. For example, Home Base includes over 12,000 vetted Open Education Resources, over 1,100 new *SAS Curriculum Pathways* resources and will soon have over 8,000 purchased science and social studies Online Learning Exchange (OLE) resources.

Additional Implementation Support for LEAs and Charter Schools

NCDPI continues to work with its eight partnership LEAs and charter schools to assist them with implementation of the Home Base suite of tools and share lessons learned with other LEAs and charter schools that can inform their implementation. The project managers assigned to these LEAs and charters have worked to document the needs of the LEAs and to develop plans to address these. NCDPI is working to collect lessons learned from the experiences of the partnership sites and how best to communicate those to other LEAs. NCDPI also plans to expand the number of partnership sites in the spring of 2014, as the initial partnership LEAs complete their projects and require less intense support.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

NCDPI staff members featured Home Base as a part of a program for parents and community members to familiarize them with the state’s READY initiative that was broadcast statewide on UNC-TV in September 2013. The show featured a segment on Home Base (along with segments on the new NC Standard Course of Study) and followed these with a panel discussion in which NCDPI officials fielded questions from an audience of parents and community members. LEAs and charter schools received a DVD copy of the broadcast to use in their schools, the show was available to view online, and UNC-TV provided the show formatted for broadcast on local cable TV to those

LEAs that have such access. NCDPI staff also continued providing communications to LEAs and charter schools about Home Base support and implementation. This includes a weekly email newsletter, the addition of a report on known issues and resolutions to problems related to Home Base posted on the Home Base website, and a weekly webinar for Superintendents.

NCDPI continued to provide information and training on Home Base to LEAs and charters since the September report. Several sessions provided “refresher” information on how to use components of Home Base, while other sessions helped LEAs and charters prepare to use new components of the system (such as OpenClass). NCDPI continues to hold regular meetings for stakeholder groups to gather district and school staff input on the system and vision for shared content. In addition to these monthly meetings, NCDPI has been holding webinars for district and school staff to demonstrate Home Base functionality and to gather feedback on the planned features and content resources.

Additional information related to Home Base can be found on the NCDPI website: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/>. You can view the statewide program “NC Schools and You” on the UNC-TV website: <http://video.uncvtv.org/video/2365082029/>.

3. Establishment of the North Carolina Education Cloud Technology Infrastructure

Background

The primary objective of the NC Education Cloud is to provide a world-class information technology (IT) infrastructure as a foundational component of the NC education enterprise.

To that end, the State Board has engaged a Cloud Team to facilitate migration from *local education agency (LEA)-hosted* server infrastructure to *provider-hosted* application and infrastructure services. The cloud-based model allows for the delivery of more reliable, more efficient, and more cost effective IT services across public schools in NC.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The Cloud Team began deployment of the Identity Access Management (IAM) solution to LEAs and began planning for integration of IAM with Home Base.
- The Cloud Team has continued its work with the NC Community College System to develop the Learning Objects Repository (LOR) for use in concert with Home Base and developed a RFP for a Learning Management System solution for LEAs.
- The Cloud Team has continued its work to modernize school business services in order to help LEAs realize cost savings.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

IAM Services Contract

Since the September report, the Cloud Team completed planning and began development of the IAM solutions for LEAs and charter schools; this service will allow LEAs to manage user accounts and login information across multiple systems, including those in Home Base. The Cloud team worked with the vendor for the IAM solution on the technical implementation plan for the rollout, meeting regularly with representatives from early adopter LEAs to help make the transition as seamless as possible for them. As of January, ten early adopter LEAs had IAM solutions that allowed them to manage usernames and passwords across applications such as Discovery Education, Follett Destiny, and zScaler Web Security, and the Cloud team was in the process of planning to help more LEAs and charter schools implement the solution. The Cloud team has also worked with the vendor for Home Base to integrate the IAM solution with Home Base in the 2014-15 school year.

Supporting Digital Classroom Instruction

Since the September report, the Cloud team has continued its work supporting digital instruction in LEAs and charter schools across the state. Work on the Learning Objects Repository (LOR) continues to move forward in collaboration with the NC Community College System. This project develops a sustainable model for the management of digital content, and will potentially enhance the long term viability of DPI's Home Base initiative that aims to deploy significant digital content to students, teachers, and parents. The Cloud team continues to deploy the production system of the LOR and work with the Home Base team to ensure proper interconnections of two systems.

Additionally, the Cloud team has developed a RFP to procure additional Learning Management System (LMS) capabilities for LEAs. While OpenClass, the LMS tool in Home Base (available without cost to the state), provides LEAs with basic LMS functionality, it was never designed to replace solutions for districts with full featured LMS needs (such as those housing extensive content in Blackboard platforms). The full-featured LMS envisioned in the Cloud team's proposal will better meet the needs of these LEAs, and will feature better integration with the tools in Home Base (specifically the roster and gradebook functions) that will be attractive to other LEAs. Once the RFP is approved and the vendor is selected, the Cloud team will provide extended migration assistance to LEAs to move to the LMS solution.

The Cloud team has also deployed and completed a survey of wireless capabilities and 1:1 computing initiatives across the state in an effort to develop a digital inclusion model to support instruction across classrooms across the state. This work will assist planning efforts around digital instruction in the coming months.

Modernizing School Business Services

Since the September report the Cloud Team has continued its work on the modernization of school business systems. For instance, the Cloud team has continued its work migrating LEAs to a cloud-based iSeries hosted business systems infrastructure; the Cloud Team has also continued to deploy a dedicated resource at MCNC to help LEAs and charter schools migrate to cloud based email and collaboration solutions. To date, 83

of 115 LEAs and 40 charter schools have migrated to cloud solutions (either Google or Microsoft Live).

The Cloud Team has continued its work on other services for LEAs. The Cloud Team continues to work with NC Information Technology Services (NC ITS) on moving forward with the request for proposals (RFP) for Mobile Device Management Services. The Cloud Team also continued working with NCDPI and LEAs to address needs related to their human resources systems. Currently, the Cloud team is working on a RFP for applicant tracking services that would allow a candidate for a teacher position to apply to positions in multiple LEAs through one system.

Additional information regarding the NC Education Cloud is available at:

<http://cloud.fi.ncsu.edu/>

4. Full Rollout and Enhancement of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System

Background

To ensure that every child has a great teacher and every school has a great leader, the State Board is using RttT funds to enhance the statewide evaluation instrument to include standard, objective data regarding the extent to which each teacher and principal contributes to the academic growth of his or her students.

The statewide Educator Evaluation System that was in place prior to RttT offered a standard evaluation instrument aligned to the five NC Professional Teaching Standards. Principals and district leaders used the system to gather information about observed practices and then to improve teacher and principal performance. The enhanced system adds a new standard (sixth for teachers and eighth for principals and assistant principals) based on student academic growth to the evaluation system. This addition will make it possible for every educator to receive a fair, rigorous, *data-based* evaluation of his or her effectiveness that includes specific feedback to fuel professional growth.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI completed the migration of the educator evaluation system (and its associated data) from the McREL online tool into the Truenorthlogic delivery platform in Home Base (see section two for additional information on Home Base).
- The State Board approved several proposed policies related to the NC Educator Evaluation System that, if approved by the US Department of Education, would allow LEAs to use alternative methods to determine Standard Six ratings for teachers in non-tested subjects and would change how teacher effectiveness statuses are calculated for the 2014-15 school year; the state submitted a request to the US Department of Education for approval of these changes.

- NCDPI launched an expanded pilot for the Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process to measure growth for subjects in which standardized exams are not practical (e.g., Arts Education, Healthful Living, World Languages) which will occur in the spring of 2014.
- NCDPI continued to implement a training plan and regional support for the new educator evaluation system to assist educators in using this system in the 2013-14 school year.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Migration of the NC Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) Tool into Home Base

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, the NCEES tool migrated from McREL into Home Base, allowing educators to access information about evaluations in the same place they access student information and instructional resources. Both teachers and principals now use this system to enter information for evaluations in the current school year, and teachers can view detailed information on their ratings for standards one through five.

NCDPI continued to provide access to the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) system for teachers to see detailed reports on their Standard Six rating (alongside their ratings for standards one through five) and student growth data. NCDPI continued to provide dashboards for teachers and principals in EVAAS to view their evaluation information and progress toward an overall effectiveness status of “effective,” “highly effective,” or “in need of improvement.”

Release of Value-added Data from the 2012-13 School Year

Since the September 2013 report, NCDPI verified and released value-added data from the 2012-13 school year to district staff, teachers, and principals; 40,812 teachers received student growth data for their classrooms, up from 29,412 in the previous year. This increase stems mainly from the administration of the NC Final Exams in the spring of 2013, which allowed many teachers who work in subjects without an EOG or EOC assessment to receive student growth data

NCDPI has worked to prepare the 2012-13 educator effectiveness data for release through a searchable online database (available to the public) in February of 2014. NCDPI loaded the data in the system, and LEA and charter officials performed quality assurance to insure that the data represented accurate links between their schools and teachers. Stakeholders can access aggregate school-level data on the evaluations of teachers, as well as aggregate district-level data on the evaluations of teachers and school administrators.

Policy Changes Related to NC Educator Evaluation System

In the fall of 2013, the State Board of Education (SBE) reviewed policies surrounding the NC Educator Evaluation System and approved several changes (both pending US Department of Education approval) at their October 2013 meeting:

- Districts would have the flexibility to petition the SBE to use either school-wide growth or their own assessments to determine the Standard Six rating for groups of teachers (e.g., middle grades social studies, chemistry); as of February 2014, twelve LEAs had requested permission to use school-wide growth to determine the Standard Six rating for some of their teachers.
- The first effectiveness status awarded to teachers in the fall of 2015 will use the highest two of three years of student growth data, as opposed to three consecutive years of student growth data; this different approach is intended to recognize that teachers implemented new assessments tied to the new standards during this period, warranting some flexibility in basing evaluations on the resulting data. After 2015, a teacher's effectiveness status will utilize three previous years of student growth data.
- Any consequences for an effectiveness status of "in need of improvement" will be delayed until the statuses awarded in the fall of the 2016-17 school year.

These changes provide LEAs and charter schools with flexibility in implementing the system, and, for teachers, recognize that the student growth data currently collected reflects a transition to new standards and assessments. These policy changes still must be approved by the US Department of Education (to comply with the state's waiver to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), to whom the state submitted a request for approval in October 2013.

Development of Assessment of Student Work (ASW) Process

In the spring of 2013, NCDPI completed an initial pilot Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process for 100 teachers in three subject areas (Arts Education, Healthful Living, and World Languages). Participating teachers submitted modified portfolios reflecting student work in their classes through an online platform, which were scored by content experts to help determine a teacher's overall rating for the sixth standard. NCDPI used this experience to refine the process and plan for the implementation of a larger pilot in the spring of 2014. Over 1,100 educators have signed up to participate in the process and have begun to complete training modules designed to prepare them. The state also plans to improve the data collection and review for the ASW process, and is preparing to award a contract for the creation of an online tool to manage the ASW process through Home Base for the spring 2014 pilot.

Communication and Training

NCDPI has continued to provide information and training to district and school personnel about the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). NCDPI provides regional "refresher" trainings on the use of the NCEES during the school-year for educators across the state, as well as regional trainings on how to interpret and use the data to improve instruction (see additional information about this work in section nine). NCDPI staff members also routinely speak about the educator evaluation system at regional and statewide conferences, and provide additional trainings when requested by LEAs or charter schools.

In addition to this direct/interactive communication, NCDPI maintains a comprehensive collection of manuals, presentations, and other documents on the Educator Effectiveness website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/effectiveness-model/>). NCDPI maintains a rapid response email address (educatoreffectiveness@dpi.nc.gov) through which any teacher, principal, or central office staff member can submit a question about educator effectiveness and receive a response within 48 hours.

5. Provision of Performance Incentives to Teachers in the Lowest-Achieving Schools to Improve Recruitment and Retention

Background

One aspect of the state's effort to improve student achievement is a push to increase retention of effective educators in hard-to-staff schools (both rural and urban). To this end, the State Board is using RttT funds to provide performance incentives for educators in the 118 lowest-achieving schools served through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section ten).

Certified staff (teachers, principals, media coordinators, counselors, etc.) working at qualifying schools that make *higher than expected* student growth on statewide assessments can earn a monetary incentive each year of the RttT grant period, paid the fall after the student data is gathered. If the educator has returned to his or her school that fall, he or she receives the full incentive; payment is reduced by 50% if he or she has not returned.

In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (prior to establishment of the enhanced system for measuring student growth for all teachers), up to a \$1,500 incentive was provided for all certified staff; beginning with the 2012-13 data, teachers can earn incentives based on individual teacher-level growth data (certified staff without individual growth data will still be eligible based on school-wide growth data). The maximum incentive is \$2,000 for a classroom teacher who has individual teacher-level growth data, while the bonus based on school-wide data remains at \$1,500.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report, NCDPI awarded incentives based on assessment data from the 2012-13 school year.

In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (prior to establishment of the enhanced system for measuring student growth for all teachers), up to a \$1,500 incentive was provided for all certified staff (teachers, principals, media coordinators, counselors, etc.) in schools that exceeded expected school-wide growth on statewide End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments. For the 2012-13 data, though, teachers can earn incentives based on individual teacher-level growth data (certified staff without individual growth data will still be eligible based on school-wide growth data). The maximum incentive is \$2,000 for a classroom teacher who has individual teacher-level growth data, while the bonus based on school-wide data remains at \$1,500.

Table 1 below provides a comparison of the expenditures over the past three years. The year of the award in each column represents data from the previous school year.

Table 1: School Personnel Receiving RttT Performance Incentives

	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14
FTE receiving school-wide student growth incentive (\$1,500)	884.37	1,625.21	1,692.58
Teachers receiving individual student growth incentive (\$2,000)	N/A	N/A	232
Expenditures	\$1,589,878	\$2,971,247	\$3,630,669 ¹

6. Establishment of Regional Leadership Academies

Background

The State Board has established three regional leadership academies to increase the number of principals prepared to lead transformational change in NC’s lowest achieving schools. These academies provide training and full-year administrative internships for participants who have been selected based on their potential to become effective school leaders. Participants earn credit toward a graduate degree and principal licensure. Participants agree to serve for three years in districts working with their RLA.

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, each RLA has continued to provide coaching and professional development to its cohorts as they go through their internships. PTLA and SLA cohort members continue to receive coursework and training over the course of the 2013-14 school year as they complete their administrative internship experiences. Participants in NELA’s third cohort began their administrative internships for the 2013-14 school year.

Table 3 provides data on the number of RLA graduates who had found employment as principals as of January 2014. This number will change as members of the most recent cohorts continue to interview for open positions.

¹ The figure for 2013-14 reflects the amount allotted to LEAs rather than expenditures. LEAs distribute bonuses at different points in the school year, and the September 2015 report will update this figure with expenditure data.

Table 2: Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) Program Details

	Administrative Unit	Program Duration	Education/ Licensure	Cohort 3 Participants	# of Districts Served
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	NC State University	2 Years	Master in School Administration (MSA) Program	20	14
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	Sandhills Regional Education Consortium (with UNC-P, FSU, NCCAT)	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	20	12
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	UNC-Greensboro	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	22	4

Table 3: Positions Held by Graduates of the Regional Leadership Academies (January 2014²)

	Principals	Assistant Principals	Central Office Staff	Other	Total
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	6	27	4	4	41
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	10	24	1	6	44
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	2	29	2	9	42

Additional information for each of the RLAs can be found on the following websites:

SLA: <http://www.sandhillsleadershipacademy.com/index.html>

NELA: <https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com/NELA+Home>

PTLA: <http://www.ptla-nc.org/>

² The figures for PTLA and SLA include members of cohort three who have found employment prior to the end of their intern year. For PTLA, one cohort three participant is included in the number for assistant principals and one in the number for central office staff. For SLA, two cohort three participants are included in the assistant principal number.

7. Expansion of Teacher Recruitment and Licensure Programs to Support Low-Performing Schools

Background

Using RttT funding, the State Board has expanded its existing teacher recruitment and licensure programs to provide added support to the lowest-achieving districts and schools. The State Board has increased the number of Teach for America (TFA) teachers in the State, established the NC Teachers Corps program (modeled after TFA), and developed a new Induction Support Program (New Teacher Support Program: NTSP) for novice teachers. Together these programs aim to increase the supply of quality teachers and provide support and training for the newest teachers in the State's lowest achieving schools that NCDPI is serving through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section ten).

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- TFA provided coaching and access to online resources to 278 first and second year corps members for the 2013-14 school year.
- The North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC) provided coaching and job placement support for 106 members of the first and second cohorts of the program.
- The New Teacher Support Program (NTSP) provided 1,190 teachers with instructional coaching and on-site observations.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Teach for America (TFA)

To address the need for highly effective teachers in NC's low-achieving LEAs, the RttT grant increased the number of TFA corps members placed in those districts in northeastern North Carolina. TFA is a national program that recruits highly successful college graduates to become teachers in low-performing schools across the nation. These teachers then receive intensive training in a summer institute before beginning full-time jobs as classroom teachers in partner districts. The TFA organization continues to provide coaching and professional development during each Corps member's two-year commitment.

In the 2013-14 school year, TFA worked with 100 second year corps members and 180 first year corps members (280 in total) in 11 LEAs and five charter schools across northeastern NC. TFA will continue to serve North Carolina schools after the end of the grant, but will not recruit another cohort of educators using Race to the Top funds.

NC Teacher Corps (NCTC)

The NC Teacher Corps, modeled on the TFA program (described above), recruits recent college graduates with connections to North Carolina to teach in low-achieving schools in targeted partner LEAs across NC. The program requires a two-year commitment from participants and provides intensive summer training, ongoing coaching and mentoring, and the ability to earn an NC teaching license. Eighty-nine individuals entered the second cohort for NCTC and completed the summer training in 2013, and as of January 2014 seventy-five of these cohort members found teaching positions in NC public schools. Nineteen of the 21 teachers from the first NCTC cohort continued their employment in LEAs in the 2013-14 school year.

The 2013-15 biennial budget passed by the General Assembly included a provision that transferred administrative responsibility for NCTC from NCDPI to Teach for America during the 2013-14 fiscal year. NCDPI officials have met with TFA about the transition and offered to share information, though TFA has elected to implement the program on their own without further assistance from NCDPI.

New Teacher Support Program (NTSP)

NTSP is a partnership between NCDPI and UNC General Administration designed to provide coaching and support for new teachers in North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools through the first three years of their work. NTSP provides participating teachers with summer training sessions, six days of professional development during the school year, and ongoing coaching in their schools.

NTSP served 532 teachers in SY 2012-13 and serves 1,190 in the 2013-14 school year, covering all 106 of the lowest-achieving schools identified for service through the RttT grant. These teachers receive ongoing instructional coaching and on-site observations to support them during their initial years of teaching.

Table 5: 2013-14 Participation in NTSP

Teachers	Schools	LEAs
1,190	129	29

8. Provision of Effective Teachers for Schools through Virtual and Blended Courses

Background

RttT funds are enabling the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to expand its offering of STEM related courses to ensure that students at risk of low performance in core science and math courses have access to effective teachers, quality course content, and innovative instructional practices designed to meet their needs.

NCVPS staff will develop seven new courses over the life of the grant. They first pilot these in a blended format, which involves a partnership between online teachers and on-site teachers specially trained to support students in using technology to support their learning. Following the conclusion of the grant, these courses will be available for use by LEAs and NCVPS will make modifications to convert courses into their traditional virtual model or to integrate course material into similar VPS courses already in their catalog.

Updates

Since the September 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCVPS deployed four blended courses in the fall 2013 semester and five blended courses in the spring 2014 semester, serving 325 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties.
- NCVPS began development of two additional courses (Math 3 and Biotechnology/Agriscience 2) and will pilot the courses in the fall of 2014.
- NCVPS provided training and support to help face-to-face and virtual teachers collaborate effectively, and to help teachers and students use mobile devices in the blended courses.

Piloting and Development of Blended Courses

NCVPS continued to deploy blended courses, in which online and classroom teachers communicate daily through logs to discuss the individual needs of students and differentiate instruction accordingly, to meet the goals of this initiative. NCVPS deployed three blended courses (Math 1, Forensics, and Earth and Environmental Science) and piloted an additional blended course, Math 2, in the fall of 2013 to 175 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties. NCVPS deployed these same four courses and piloted an additional course, Biotechnology/Agriscience 1 in the spring 2014 semester to 150 students in these three LEAs (for a total 2013-14 enrollment of 325 students). NCVPS is developing two final blended courses, Math 3 and Biotechnology/AgriScience 2, during the spring of 2014, and NCVPS plans to pilot these in the fall of 2014 (pending approval of the state's "no cost extension" request from USED).

Professional Development for Blended Learning

NCVPS has worked to expand the professional development provided to the face-to-face teachers who support students in taking online courses. NCVPS continues to deploy a year-round calendar of professional development opportunities for teachers working in the blended courses and worked with school and district officials to publicize these offerings for teachers. These trainings focus on topics such as science and engineering standards, and effective strategies for co-teaching.

Accessing Courses through Mobile Devices

Students and teachers in the blended class pilots use mobile devices (such as iPads) to access materials as a part of their courses. Since the September 2013 report, NCVPS has continued to refine its training materials and the introductory unit for students, based on feedback from students and teachers, to help them use these devices more effectively. For example, NCVPS completed revisions of an iBook guide for students ahead of the spring 2014 semester. NCVPS is also working to develop mobile applications for use with these devices, and has developed two RFP's for development of a mobile application to help manage course data across NCVPS platforms and to provide students with a field science notebook application for use in their courses.

9. Provision of Aligned Professional Development and Establishment of Professional Development System

Background

The State Board has used RttT funding to conduct a broad, intensive professional development initiative designed to do each of the following:

- Build LEAs' and charters' capacity to prepare all of their teachers and principals for implementing the updated NC Standard Course of Study, new educator evaluation procedures, and new state assessments.
- Ensure that high quality professional development on topics of core instructional importance will be available to all teachers at the local level during the Race to the Top grant period and for many years to come.

To these ends, NCDPI has provided face-to-face and online support to LEA and charter school professional development leadership teams through a year-round cycle of activities that includes the following:

- **Summer Institutes.** Each LEA and charter school has sent a leadership team to attend a two-day Summer Institute in the summers of 2011 and 2012 to receive training and resources on a variety of topics such as new standards and assessments, instructional design, and use of the building of leadership capacity. These teams include teacher leaders, administrators, and support staff who lead training efforts in the district or charter. NCDPI held a third round of Summer Institutes in July 2013 which featured the use of the Home Base, NC's statewide, instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators. Based on positive feedback from districts and charter schools, NCDPI is planning to hold a fourth round of Summer Institutes in 2014. This summer, LEAs and charters will share strategies and plans for building district and school capacity through teacher leaders, including how to use student data, Home Base and learning networks across districts and regions.
- **Regionally-based professional development sessions.** These are a series of trainings and formative meetings scheduled regularly throughout the school year that allow district teams to focus deeply on content, student data, evaluation

processes, and teaching standards. Building on district planning from Summer Institutes, fidelity support sessions are held each semester to review district professional development plans, problem-solve around issues that have emerged during the school year, and share promising practices across districts.

- **Online Tools.** NCDPI provides online resources such as training modules, live chats, facilitated and non-facilitated courses, and wikis that provide additional training and support to LEA and charter school personnel during the school year. Mini-modules serve as tutorials for educators needing “refreshers” on specific standards and specific 21st Century skill application.
- **Professional Development Leads.** NCDPI has deployed a team of State Professional Development Leads who each work with a portfolio of districts and charter schools to ensure that they get the customized service and support they need to build local capacity, as described above. The PD Leads live and work in all 8 regions, thereby strengthening our statewide learning network.
- **Feedback Mechanisms.** NCDPI uses continuous feedback gathered through the above scheduled activities, additional formative visits with local staff throughout the year, and formal assessment data from the RtT Evaluation team to examine the work and ensure that services are addressing the needs of districts and participating charters.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI is delivering over 325 face-to-face professional development offerings and 62 webinar trainings in SY 2013-14 to help prepare teachers, administrators, and district personnel for implementing new standards, assessments, and evaluation tools, and to use Home Base.
- NCDPI began planning for Summer Institutes 2014 which will focus on “Sustaining Success... Building on Achievement.” LEAs and charters will lead sessions sharing strategies, lessons learned, and how they currently use our Home Base system.
- NCDPI implemented ten new online modules and added a version of a Massive Open Online Course (called a MOOClet) course that can accommodate a larger number of online participants than current modules. Participants have the opportunity to share ideas and resources through this online course.
- NCDPI worked on the development of the professional development tool in Home Base, scheduled for rollout later in the 2013-14 school year; NCDPI completed the pilot of an online module in the new system in December 2013.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Regional Trainings

In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI is providing 325 regional trainings and 62 webinars that build on information presented at the 2013 Summer Institute sessions and address a range of topics, including the following:

- Home Base (NC's new statewide integrated suite of student information and instructional resource technology tools)
- Data literacy (the ability to use data about student performance to guide instruction)
- Instructional technology (using technology tools to support instruction)
- Universal design for learning (making learning accessible for all students)
- Digital and global learning (developing 21st Century teacher and student learning opportunities)
- The enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (which now includes a standard, objective measure of the extent to which a teacher's students have demonstrated growth in a given year).

This is a larger number of sessions than NCDPI delivered in previous years, and does not include additional presentations that LEAs request from NCDPI staff on a regular basis. The 325 planned sessions build on material presented in the Summer Institute sessions, and provide a chance for feedback regarding emerging professional development needs of LEAs and charter schools. In addition to content trainings, NCDPI conducts fall and spring fidelity checks to gather feedback from LEA and charter school professional development teams, review progress on their goals for delivering professional development during the year, and to share resources with one another. These play an important role in supporting the work of local teams and meeting the goal of enhancing the professional development infrastructure for the state.

A schedule of these meetings can be viewed on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/calendar/>).

Summer Institutes

NCDPI has initiated planning for Summer Institutes 2014. There will be eight, two-day regional meetings with sessions focusing on the theme of "Sustaining Success... Building on Achievement." Local teams take the lead this year in summer institute session planning, as individuals from LEAs and charter school professional development teams will create approximately 90% of all professional development offerings for the meetings. NCDPI has worked with local teams to strengthen the capacity for local professional development over the course of RttT, and providing the local teams with more responsibility for this event will help prepare them to carry on the work after the RttT grant period ends, when staff capacity at NCDPI will be at a reduced level. The September 2014 report will include an update on these meetings and the specific activities they covered.

Online Resources

NCDPI implemented ten additional online professional development modules for LEAs and charter schools in the 2013-14 school year, bringing the total number of modules to 23. In addition to the standard, self-paced versions of the modules, NCDPI has worked on alternative course designs to meet the needs of educators. NCDPI continues to work to expand the number of facilitated versions of the online modules, which guide teachers through the activities as a part of a group instead of assuming teachers will complete the course independently. NCDPI has also designed a “MOOClet” on effective digital classroom strategies. The MOOClet provides a self-paced course environment that is capable of handling a larger number of participants than current online modules.

In addition to working on these modules, NCDPI worked in the fall of 2013 with developers to prepare the professional development tool within Home Base, which will allow educators to access professional development resources on their own time and will eventually allow them to move from the results of their evaluations in the NCEES tool directly to professional development resources that may be of interest to them. NCDPI is in the process of moving online professional development materials (including the online modules) from their current site into the tool, and completed the first pilot of an online module through the tool in December 2013. NCDPI will conduct a second pilot in the spring of 2014 to help refine development of the system ahead of the full rollout later in the 2013-14 school year.

Additional information on the online professional development modules can be found on the NCDPI website (<https://www.rt3nc.org/>).

10. Expansion of District and School Transformation Work to Turn Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (TALAS)

Background

The State Board has used RttT funding to scale up support for NC’s low performing schools by significantly expanding the NCDPI team that has been guiding successful turnaround and transformation work across the state since 2006.

NCDPI’s District and School Transformation (DST) division has been implementing a comprehensive program that provides targeted coaching support to low performing-schools in response to state and federal legislative requirements and state judicial and executive direction. RttT funding has enabled that team to expand support to additional schools (the lowest-achieving 5% of elementary, middle and high schools, and all high schools with graduation rates below 60%) and 12 districts (the lowest-achieving 10% of NC school districts).

The goal of the RttT “Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools” (TALAS) work is to help these schools and districts develop their capacity both to increase and sustain student achievement. One objective of the TALAS work was to ensure that every NC school in the bottom 5% of academic proficiency, as measured by the ABC accountability model, improved to a standard where at least 60% of the students achieved

academic proficiency. A second TALAS program objective was that every high school in North Carolina achieves at least a 60% graduation rate.

The introduction in 2012 of a new statewide accountability model (READY) with higher academic standards resulted in a lowering of academic proficiency rates statewide. The initial progress of the 118 TALAS schools toward the 60% proficiency goal was significant (see September 15, 2013 Report to the JLEOC) but has been interrupted by the introduction of these more stringent standards; NCDPI is in the process of determining how to accurately assess each school's trajectory over the course of the RttT grant period, given the mid-grant shift in accountability models. The long term aspiration remains for the lowest performing 5% of schools to adapt to the higher expectations and standards and to continue on a trajectory to proficiency levels exceeding 60% and higher graduation rates.

Each of the 118 TALAS schools³ was required to implement one of four USED-specified reform models (Turnaround, Transformation, Restart, or Closure). To help the schools implement their chosen model strategically, the NCDPI team provides each of the following: comprehensive needs assessments, on-site coaching for district and school personnel, and a rigorous program of professional development for school leaders.

Additional information on the TALAS work can be found on the DST website at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/overview/>.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following activities with NC's lowest performing schools

- NCDPI has continued to support the recruitment, licensure and selection of effective turnaround principals with the Regional Leadership Academies providing additional licensed candidates. From the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA), several principals have been hired in RttT TALAS schools.
- NCDPI has continued to provide on-site coaching and support at the classroom, school, and district level for teachers, principals and central office staff.
- NCDPI developed and provided professional development for principals, teachers and central office staff through a four year professional development series. Examples of topics include Identifying and Retaining Effective Teachers, Using Data to Drive Decision Making, Effective Reading Instruction, Evidence of Student Impact in Teacher Behaviors, and Working with Challenged Learners.
- NCDPI has continued to work to coordinate TALAS efforts with other RttT initiatives such as NC Teacher Corps and the New Teacher Support Program to ensure these programs work together to benefit the TALAS schools.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

³ The original list of TALAS schools included 118 schools. The current number is 106, as 12 schools selected closure as their turnaround model.

Year Three Accountability Data for TALAS Schools

As stated previously, during the first two years of the RttT grant, the majority of schools served were making significant academic growth as measured by the ABC accountability model and exceeding or approaching our ABC proficiency and graduation rate goals of 60%. This year under the new READY accountability model there was a significant re-positioning of all schools in the state in proficiency rates with rates dropping significantly (between 20-40 points) in this baseline year. Though NCDPI is still determining the best method for tracking progress of the schools, given the change in accountability models, the state feels confident real improvement is occurring in the majority of the TALAS schools, as indicated by the following statistics: 74% of the schools made or exceeded expected growth on the new READY model (see Table 6 below), and approximately 50% of the schools that were initially in the bottom 5% (in 2010) would not be in the bottom 5% if the data were recalculated today. In addition, two of the TALAS schools are now above the current state READY median academic proficiency rate of 42.1, and all of the TALAS high schools have exceeded the goal of increasing their graduation rate above 60%.

Table 6: 2012-13 Growth Status for the 118 Schools Identified Under Race to the Top⁴

Growth Status	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
2012-13 (102 Schools) ⁵	27	44	31

Goal for Graduation Rate of TALAS Schools Accomplished

The goal of having no conventional school in NC with a graduation rate below 60% has been accomplished. Nine schools were identified in 2010-11 with a graduation rate below 60%. Seven remain open, and in 2012-13 all have graduation rates exceeding 70% in with two of the schools above the state graduation rate of 82.5% (see Table 7 below).

⁴ Growth is measured through the SAS Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) using relevant test scores.

⁵ Five schools did not have a growth status for the 2012-13 school year. Hill Middle School and Weldon STEM High closed during the 2012-13 school year; Weldon High opened during the 2012-13 school year. Ten schools closed during the 2011-12 school year. They used school closure as their transformation strategy.

Table 7: Longitudinal Data for the Graduation Rate Schools Identified Under Race to the Top

Graduation Rate (%)	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
2012-13 (7 Schools) ⁶	0	0	0	0	0	5	2 ⁷	0
2011-12 (7 Schools)	0	0	0	3	2	2	0	0
2010-11 (9 Schools)	1	0	0	2	4	1	1	0
2009-10 (9 Schools)	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0

Professional Development and Coaching and Support for Successful Implementation of Effective Leadership and Instructional Practices

To help the schools leverage their chosen turnaround model in order to build staff capacity and improve and student performance, the NCDPI team has continued to provide several services to personnel in the classrooms, schools and districts including the following:

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** NCDPI has trained teams to visit and work with schools and districts to collect and synthesize data on a school or district processes, procedures, and instructional practices to provide an objective report to help the school or district develop a plan for continuous improvement that will impact student learning. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment is conducted collaboratively with the LEA and includes self-evaluation, collaborative discussions with school and district leadership, classroom visits, focus groups with teachers, students and parents, and a final, actionable report. This past year, DST staff offered additional support to schools through the delivery of professional development modules (separate from the professional development modules described in section nine) in order to enhance their family and community partnerships.
- **Coaching For Transformation.** Transformation coaches work on-site in the schools to build the capacity of teachers, principals, and superintendents to implement and sustain reform and innovation and ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and work. There are two types of coaches working in each school, a leadership coach who supports principals and assistant principals in effective practices for raising student achievement and teacher coaches working

⁶ Atkins Computer Tech and E.E. Waddell closed.

⁷ Both schools above state graduation rate average of 82.5%.

directly in the classroom to model, co-teach, and provide professional development and materials and resources directly to classroom teachers. This is very important as many low performing schools have novice principals and assistant principals and large numbers of both new teachers and teachers with limited experience. When a district is also a focus, there is a third coach placed to team with the superintendent and central office.

- **District Leadership Coaching.** District Transformation Coaches work on site in the district with the superintendents, central office and school boards in each of the twelve RttT LEAs identified as the bottom 10% of LEAs in the state. Each coach has experience as a successful superintendent or central office administrator and has strong interpersonal skills, knowledge about effective instructional and financial practices, and an understanding of the change process.
- **School Leadership Coaching.** School Transformation Coaches are assigned to work with principals in each of the RttT schools and to develop these principals as instructional leaders, consistent with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Coaches are former principals who have successfully turned around a low-performing school, and who are knowledgeable about state and federal accountability models, understand change management processes, have the capacity to realize potential and provide support to ensure success, understand alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and have effective interpersonal skills.
- **Instructional Coaching.** Instructional Coaches are assigned to provide on-site support for classroom teachers. Instructional Coaches have successful experiences as classroom teacher leaders, are knowledgeable of state and federal accountability models, demonstrate a thorough understanding of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and have expertise in best instructional practices, classroom management, effective professional development, and curricular alignment.

Ongoing Professional Development

NCDPI's TALAS effort includes a series of 20 targeted professional development sessions for lowest-achieving school leaders over the course of the Race to the Top grant. In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI has provided opportunities that built on sessions from year one (which focused on understanding the expectations of the grant and the USED models), year two (which focused on high impact strategies related to improving student achievement), and year three (which focused on helping schools and districts to recruit and retain high quality educators, use data to drive decision-making, and learn from school visits to observe successful strategies and processes that are currently implemented at other similar schools in North Carolina).

The year four professional development has introduced concepts central to producing rapid gains in student achievement such as helping principals plan literacy instruction for their schools, understanding the needs of diverse learners (Exceptional Children, English Language Learners, African-American males), and visiting schools to hear about successful turnaround strategies from the principals implementing them. Additionally,

NCDPI provided a full week of content and grade-level specific professional development for the 400 employees of Halifax County Schools.

Coordination with Other RttT Initiatives

NCDPI has continued to emphasize coordination between the TALAS and other RttT initiatives to ensure strategic alignment and consistency of message and guidance. The coordination effort includes regular meetings and discussions among NCDPI staff administering the various programs (NCTC, NTSP, RLAs) to share information and coordinate efforts to maximize the benefit for schools and their personnel. DST staff has worked closely with the three Regional Leadership Academies and some RLA graduates have now been placed as administrators in some TALAS schools. DST staff also played an active role in providing training and support to members of the NC Teacher Corps as well as delivered professional development at each of the Summer Professional Development Institutes.

11. Establishment of STEM Thematic High Schools and Network

Background

The State Board is using RttT funds to partner with North Carolina New Schools to support districts in establishing a system of 20 STEM-focused high schools (four Anchor Schools and sixteen Affinity Network Schools) across the state.

STEM high schools use a curriculum infused with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to increase students' abilities to meet current and expected NC economic and workforce development requirements. Each STEM high school is a part of a cluster of schools organized around four STEM thematic areas (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability).

Each cluster has an Anchor School that will serve as a "hub" for professional development, curriculum development, technology use, and innovation for that thematic area. The other schools in the cluster are Affinity Network schools that participate in professional development and networking related to their aligned STEM area.

Updates

Since the September 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- All 20 of the Anchor and Affinity Network schools continued to operate their STEM programs.
- North Carolina New Schools is providing professional development and on-site coaching for the teachers and principals in each STEM school.
- NCDPI, in collaboration with STEM partners (schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions), created training materials for the NC STEM

Recognition application process for implementation across the state in the spring of SY 2013-14 that provides a standard definition for the “Attributes of STEM Education” and a rubric that allows schools to assess their progress in implementing their STEM program.

- The North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) has completed development of level two and three STEM courses related to the four STEM focus areas, and these are available in the 2013-14 school year.
- In January 2014, NCDPI began development of level four courses that will be available by the start of the 2014-15 school year.
- The 20 STEM high schools completed purchasing specialized equipment to help provide instruction in their STEM focus area.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

STEM Network Development

All 20 of the STEM Network schools continued to operate their STEM program in the 2013-14 school year, and Tables 8-11 at the end of this section (pages 30-31) provide an overview of the different schools in each of the STEM focus areas (schools can have a program in more than one STEM focus area).

North Carolina New Schools has provided both instructional and leadership trainings for teachers and principals from the 20 network schools over the past six months, and will continue to provide these services and on-site coaching on an ongoing basis.

STEM Recognition

In partnership with representatives from schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions, NCDPI created a NC STEM Recognition application that provides a standard definition of the attributes of quality STEM instruction along with a self-assessment rubric. Anchor and Affinity schools will use these to assess their programs on the rubric and identify evidences of accomplishments. Where schools do not meet the criteria, they can receive coaching from staff at NC New Schools to improve their programs. NC schools other than the 20 receiving support through the RttT initiative will be able to participate in the NC STEM Recognition application process, though they will not receive RttT-funded follow-up coaching from NC New Schools.

NCDPI finalized the rubric, application, and review process based on feedback from participants in a pilot during the 2012-13 school year. To help schools with the process, NCDPI streamlined application materials and worked with NC New Schools to publicize the process. STEM Anchor and Affinity Network schools, along with other interested schools across the state, were able to apply for STEM Recognition in early fall 2013. Submissions of final applications are due March 2014.

STEM Online Interdisciplinary Courses

The NC School of Science and Mathematics has completed the development of second and third year course materials for each STEM area (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing/Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability). NCDPI and STEM school personnel reviewed these course materials during the spring and summer of 2013; the materials are available to schools (both those in and out of the STEM Network) for use in the 2013-14 school year. NCSSM has begun initial development of the level four course materials for each STEM area, and work will be complete by the summer of 2014. By the end of the grant, sixteen sets of STEM course materials in total across the four focus areas will be available for use by teachers across the state.

Equipment Purchases

Each of the twenty schools in the STEM Anchor and Affinity Network was allotted a set amount of RttT funds to purchase equipment (such as specialized laboratory or manufacturing equipment) needed to implement their STEM program. All of these schools completed their purchases by the fall of 2013, enabling them to take advantage of the purchases during the 2013-14 school year.

Table 8: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the STEM Health and Life Sciences Focus Area

Anchor School	City of Medicine Academy (Durham County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Bertie High School (Bertie County) Davie County High School (Davie County) Middle College at UNC-G (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 9: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing/Automation Focus Area

Anchor School	Early College East High (Craven County)
Affinity Schools	Surry Central High (Surry County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 10: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Energy and Sustainability Focus Area

Anchor School	Wake NCSU STEM Early College High School (Wake County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Avery County High School (Avery County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County)

Table 11: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Biotechnology and Agriscience Focus Area

Anchor School	Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (Washington County: Beaufort, Martin, Pitt, Tyrell, and Washington Counties)
Affinity Schools	East Columbus High School (Columbus County) East Duplin High School (Duplin County) James Kenan High School (Duplin County) North Duplin Jr Sr High School (Duplin County) South Columbus High School (Columbus County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Wallace-Rose Hill High School (Duplin County) West Columbus High School (Columbus County)