



# Race to the Top and Teacher Preparation

Analyzing State Strategies for Ensuring Real Accountability and  
Fostering Program Innovation

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Edward Crowe March 2011



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# Introduction and summary

While there are many factors critical to improving America’s primary and secondary schools, strengthening teacher education is an essential part of any strategy likely to make a difference.

When the Obama administration created the Race to the Top or RTT Fund—“to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform”—and provided \$4.35 billion through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act toward these goals, a key focus was teacher preparation. A crucial aim of the RTT initiative is supporting funded states to implement plans for “recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.”

As suggested by its prominence as a priority in the RTT funding solicitation, improving teacher quality is one of the most pressing issues in education reform and school improvement. Increasing the number of effective teachers in specific subject areas and in high-need schools are goals that cannot be met without significant enhancement to the capacity of teacher preparation programs to produce and support effective teachers for the nation’s schools.

Improving the quality of teacher education is a vital focus of education reform, but it is also an enormous challenge with few obvious successes from a host of redesign and reform initiatives over the past three or more decades.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of obtaining significant and widespread change in the overall quality of teacher education in the United States is behind efforts to combine a carrot-and-stick approach—offering incentives to programs that embark on serious reform efforts as well as stronger accountability mechanisms to push the same programs in the right direction.<sup>2</sup>

In two rounds of competitive proposals, the U.S. Secretary of Education awarded RTT funds to 11 states and the District of Columbia. (For ease of reference, all 12 awardees are referred to as states throughout the paper.) This paper describes

and analyzes one component of the RTT proposals in these 11 states and D.C.—namely, state plans to promote improvements in teacher quality through enhanced accountability for teacher preparation programs in the state.

The teacher education components of Race to the Top ask states to adopt more vigorous accountability mechanisms and to establish or expand preparation programs “that are successful at producing effective teachers.” Thus RTT requires the funded states to:

- Link student achievement and student growth data to the teachers of these students
- Tie this information to the in-state programs that prepare teachers
- Publicly report the data on program effectiveness for each preparation program in the state
- Expand teacher education programs and teacher credentialing options that are successful at producing graduates who are effective teachers

It is also relevant to note that the RTT funding solicitation included specific definitions of three important terms: “effective teachers,” “student growth,” and “student achievement.” Precise definitions for these terms are building blocks in RTT’s efforts to produce high-quality teachers and report publicly on every preparation program in a state. Because they establish the “rules of the game” for the state teacher quality initiatives, these are worth quoting at length and should be used as markers in evaluating commitments from the 12 funded states.

“Effective teachers” are defined for the Race to the Top as those “whose students achieve acceptable rates (at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth.”<sup>3</sup> To make clear the goal of federal policy through these grants to states, the solicitation defines “student growth” as “the change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time.” It defines “student achievement” as, in part, “a student’s score on the State’s assessments under the ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act]; and, as appropriate ... other measures of student learning ... provided they are rigorous and comparable across classrooms.”<sup>4</sup>

Through RTT, therefore, states were asked to define effective teaching in terms of student achievement outcomes, aggregate teacher effectiveness data to the preparation program level, and make regular public reports of their findings.



A recent paper published by the Center for American Progress, “Measuring What Matters,” calls for a radical redesign of teacher education program accountability in the United States. It describes the components of an effective accountability system for preparation programs and showed how current policies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia have failed to provide meaningful or relevant accountability for teacher preparation programs.<sup>5</sup>

“Measuring What Matters” urged every state to adopt five key indicators of program and graduate performance, applied “equally to all programs in a state, whether the program is ‘traditional’ or ‘alternative,’ and no matter which organization is responsible for the preparation program.”<sup>6</sup>

The five recommended accountability measures are:<sup>7</sup>

- A teacher effectiveness measure that reports on whether program graduates help their K-12 students to learn
- Measures of classroom teaching performance of program graduates built on reliable and valid classroom observation instruments
- Persistence rates in teaching for all program graduates, disclosed to the public for up to five years post-completion
- Feedback surveys from program graduates and from their employers
- A new system of teacher licensure testing, with the number of current tests cut by more than 90 percent, and with every state adopting the same tests and the same pass rate policies

Race to the Top puts the emphasis on the first “Measuring What Matters” indicator: requiring states to measure and disclose program effectiveness results to the public. Funded states must treat all preparation programs the same, using specific definitions of student achievement and student academic growth to determine both individual teacher effectiveness and overall preparation program effectiveness.

A careful review of the 12 RTT state proposals as well as the reviewer notes made available through the U.S. Department of Education shows the range of commitments and actions that will be taken by the funded states.

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## Student achievement as a program outcome

Every state promised to use student achievement as an outcome indicator for teacher education programs. They all committed to public disclosure of preparation program teacher effectiveness findings through a reporting system for performance results. Yet only five states say they will use the teacher effectiveness of program graduates as an accountability measure, publicly reporting the results and using them to hold programs accountable.

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## Other program outcomes

Some states go beyond the minimum requirement of tying student achievement to teachers and to teacher education programs. Those efforts include reporting the persistence in teaching of program graduates, employer feedback survey results, job placement rates, and schools where program graduates teach and remain in the profession.

Several RTT states propose changes to their teacher certification examinations. Speaking to that issue, “Measuring What Matters” recommends a whole new system of teacher licensure tests, significant reductions to the number of tests used by each state, adoption of the same tests in all states, and the use of the same passing rate policies in every state. While no RTT state goes this far, three of them plan to revamp pieces of their current testing efforts.

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## Public disclosure of program performance

A key theme of Race to the Top’s selection criteria is information about education outcomes for key stakeholders in the states. RTT expects each state to “publicly report” data on the effectiveness of graduates from each in-state preparation program. All 12 RTT states made commitments to develop or improve reporting systems for public disclosure of these results.

Still, the length of time it will take for these systems to be accessible to the general public varies considerably. To meet these disclosure targets, data systems in most states will have to be upgraded. In addition, states will have to settle on and “test drive” a methodology for measuring student achievement gains and connecting them to individual teachers.

Five of the 12 funded states make clear commitments to use evidence of teacher effectiveness for program accountability. They also propose steps to close weak programs unable or unwilling to improve. This is a welcome development in state accountability for teacher education. The efforts of these five states clearly point the way to moving us beyond today's toothless state accountability policies, but they bear close scrutiny because states have no history of real accountability when it comes to the preparation of teachers.

A fair summary of these state commitments to preparation program accountability through RTT is that some states have stronger commitments than others, and some proposed state action steps are likely to strengthen state oversight. Specifics of these strengths and weaknesses are discussed in detail in this paper.

The good news is at this point we can predict progress on real accountability for teacher education if the states funded in these two rounds of proposal reviews do three things:

- Make good on all of their RTT proposal commitments
- Take the logical step of using enhanced capacity to replace ineffectual accountability systems with rigorous measures
- Assert their authority to impose serious consequences on weak and ineffective programs

Policy recommendations drawn from the analysis of the 12 funded Race to the Top initiatives in this paper are intended to maximize the potential for change through RTT:

- Develop high-quality state and data reporting systems
- Pilot stronger measures of preparation program accountability
- Foster innovative strategies to promote teacher and program quality
- Find ways to support good work by states not funded through RTT
- Monitor state performance

By asking states for new initiatives to build or expand high-quality teacher preparation pathways, it is clear that Race to the Top can be a powerful lever to improve teacher quality in the United States.

# Strong accountability for teacher preparation programs

A recent paper published by the Center for American Progress, “Measuring What Matters,” described what a strong system of preparation program accountability is all about and showed how current state policies have failed to provide meaningful or relevant accountability for teacher preparation programs in every state.<sup>8</sup> State policies mostly ignore the impact of program graduates on their K-12 students—a central feature of the RTT requirements—and they say next to nothing about other key outcomes, such as where graduates teach, how long they remain in the profession, and what they or their employers think about the program that prepared them for the classroom.<sup>9</sup>

This analysis also criticized the teacher tests used by most states, noting that they “don’t directly measure what teachers do in the classroom ... [and] essentially measure knowledge and skills at levels more appropriate to what eighth graders are expected to know.”<sup>10</sup> Teacher test passing scores are set low enough in many states to ensure that nearly every graduate will pass.

Perhaps the most telling critique of current state accountability mechanisms for teacher education is that states don’t even use their weak current policies to police programs under their jurisdiction. “Less than 2 percent of all teacher education programs in the United States have been flagged as low performing by the state in which they operate since Congress required each state to develop and implement a set of criteria to identify low performing programs in 1998.”<sup>11</sup> In a partnership with *U.S. News & World Report*, the National Center for Teacher Quality has begun a nationwide analysis of education schools using identical standards and methods of analysis in every state.<sup>12</sup> Their work will tell us more about the extent to which states take their oversight responsibilities seriously.

This obsolete and irrelevant “system” of accountability is a major reason why we need the Race to the Top provisions to ensure that states measure teacher effectiveness of program graduates and link the findings back to each preparation program.

“Measuring What Matters” urged states to adopt a strong system of preparation program accountability built on five key indicators of program and graduate performance. It recommended that every state adopt the same system of program accountability, with accountability policies applied “equally to all programs in a state, whether the program is ‘traditional’ or ‘alternative,’ and no matter which organization is responsible for the preparation program.”<sup>13</sup>

The five recommended accountability measures are:<sup>14</sup>

**A teacher effectiveness measure that reports on whether program graduates help their K-12 students to learn.** Only three states now incorporate value-added measures of student achievement into their program accountability systems (Louisiana, Florida, and Texas). Since high-quality instruction is the main driver for student achievement, it makes sense that teacher effectiveness measures ought to be part of preparation program accountability policies in every state.

**Measures of classroom teaching performance of program graduates built on reliable and valid classroom observation instruments.** Even when teacher preparation programs are able to measure teacher effectiveness, figuring out how teachers obtain these results is important. States—and programs—need high-quality measures of classroom teaching performance to understand whether new graduates are completing programs with the skills and abilities to help students learn. Large-scale national trials of observation instruments are now taking place, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Measures of Effective Teaching initiative.<sup>15</sup>

**Persistence rates in teaching for all program graduates disclosed to the public for up to five years postcompletion.** Such disclosure will stimulate progress in addressing high teacher turnover rates by drawing attention to the problem from teacher education programs, schools, districts, and policymakers. While preparation programs are not solely responsible for turnover or for its solution, many programs don’t even know if their graduates end up in classrooms, much less how long they stay in the profession. Incentives, rewards, and better public information about the problem will help to align producers and employers.

**Feedback surveys from program graduates and from their employers.** Survey findings can’t stand on their own as measures of program quality, but feedback from new teachers and from their employers tell programs (and the public) in specific detail how well the graduates feel they were prepared for classroom teaching.

Feedback survey data add to the overall picture of program performance if they're used along with strong data on pupil learning outcomes, classroom teaching skills, and persistence rates.

**A new system of teacher licensure testing, with the number of current tests cut by more than 90 percent, and with every state adopting the same tests and the same pass rate policies.** While teacher testing by itself is not responsible for the failure of current accountability policies, credible and effective accountability is undercut by the current tests themselves and how they are used. Many of them measure eighth-grade knowledge levels, and passing scores are set low enough to guarantee that nearly every graduate passes: Ninety-six percent of all test takers passed all state tests, according to a 2009 U.S. Department of Education report. Moreover, states have created a crazy quilt of basic skills, content knowledge, and professional knowledge assessments that add up to more than 1,100 different tests.<sup>16</sup> What's needed instead are a small number of high-quality tests, deployed the same way in every state and using the same passing score as a measure of success.<sup>17</sup>

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## Reporting teacher education program effectiveness

Race to the Top puts the emphasis on the first “Measuring What Matters” indicator—requiring states to disclose program effectiveness results to the public. Funded states must treat all preparation programs equally, using specific definitions of student achievement and student academic growth to determine both individual teacher effectiveness and overall preparation program effectiveness. If these steps are implemented fully, the country would see major improvements in the quality of state oversight for teacher education.

It is also noteworthy that the 12 funded RTT states must deal with the data system capacity issues that were raised in “Measuring What Matters.”<sup>18</sup> By improving data system quality (covered in other provisions of RTT requirements), these states will finally have the capacity to employ additional accountability indicators, including the ability to calculate and report teacher persistence rates by program and by year.

In addition, they will be able to support feedback surveys from program graduates and their employers because (a) each state will be able to link graduates to programs; (b) it will be able to link teachers to the schools where they teach; and (c) it will be able connect principals to schools and, by extension, to teachers in their school who are graduates of specific preparation programs.

Finally, these data system linkages will make it possible to report classroom observation data about teachers in specific classrooms and schools back to their programs.<sup>19</sup>

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## Testing the value of current teacher tests

In the realm of teacher testing, the ability of these 12 funded RTT states to generate information about teacher effectiveness will make possible systematic efforts to gauge the predictive validity of teacher licensure tests and state passing scores. This can happen through the RTT provision that requires making data available and accessible to researchers (see (C)(3)(iii)) of the Race to the Top requirements. For the first time, we will have the opportunity to develop and pilot teacher tests directly tied to pupil outcomes.

These are very positive developments in the quest for vigorous preparation program accountability. We can expect progress on real accountability for teacher education if the 12 states do three things:

- Make good on all of their RTT proposal commitments
- Take the logical step of using enhanced capacity to replace toothless accountability systems with rigorous measures
- Assert their authority to impose serious consequences on weak and ineffective programs

As the specific state strategies and activities are described in later sections of the paper, the reader will note that the 12 states are at different stages of development and implementation. This variation offers some promising opportunities for cross-state collaboration and for technical assistance over the next few years.

# Holding preparation programs accountable

The 12 successful RTT states have adopted a variety of strategies to hold programs accountable for producing effective teachers with a wide range of tactics and timelines to implement their promised new policies. “Measuring What Matters” and other analyses of preparation program accountability have faulted the states for failing to impose consequences on teacher education programs in the face of obvious weaknesses and failures.<sup>20</sup> It will be evident from descriptions of this work that the 12 proposals vary considerably in how clearly their strategies are described, raising some questions about just what a particular state has committed to do and when. A degree of fuzziness also applies to some state commitments to implement high accountability standards.

**TABLE 1**  
**The 12 states funded under Race to the Top**

Maximum grant awards and reviewer scores for the winners

State	Grant Awards	Reviewer score
District of Columbia	\$74,998,962	450.0
Delaware	\$119,122,128	438.4
Florida	\$700,000,000	452.4
Georgia	\$399,952,650	446.4
Hawaii	\$74,934,761	462.2
Massachusetts	\$250,000,000	471.0
Maryland	\$249,999,182	450.0
North Carolina	\$399,465,769	441.6
New York	\$696,646,000	464.8
Ohio	\$400,000,000	440.8
Rhode Island	\$75,000,000	451.2
Tennessee	\$500,741,220	443.4

As we examine the RTT commitments and how they will be implemented, it is best to maintain a healthy skepticism until we see concrete evidence of higher standards, including the forced or voluntary closure of many teacher education programs.

## State plans for preparation program accountability under Race to the Top

The 12 funded state proposals were rated by outside reviewers on the basis of U.S. Department of Education scoring criteria. Proposals could earn up to 500 points. Secretary Arne Duncan chose the top-rated proposals for funding up to a maximum amount of money. As of this writing, actual grant awards to the states have been announced. Table 1 lists the 12 states, their awards under RTT, and the number of reviewer points received for the proposals.<sup>21</sup>

Teacher quality and program accountability provisions are found under section D-4 of the Race to the Top program solicitation. States could earn up to 14 points for the quality of their commitments and action plans.<sup>22</sup> Additional RTT selection criteria



and points are tied to key implementation, capacity, and commitment actions that impinge directly on the teacher preparation portion of Race to the Top. These are woven into the analysis later in the paper. States were asked to take specific steps by adopting a definition of teacher effectiveness, collecting linked student-teacher data from across the state to measure the effectiveness of all teachers, tying this information back to preparation programs, and disclosing these results publicly. When fully enacted, these changes will bring into sharp relief the inadequacy of other existing preparation program accountability mechanisms in the same state. It is likely, for example, that some fully approved current programs will fail the effective teacher “test.” It also seems certain that work on these issues in the 12 RTT states will generate strong pressures on the remaining states and on the national teacher education accrediting groups to adopt meaningful evidence-based accountability standards.

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### Student achievement as a preparation program outcome

Table 2 of this report summarizes state commitments made in the successful Race to the Top proposals.<sup>23</sup> Every state promised to use student achievement as an outcome indicator for teacher education programs. They all committed to public disclosure of preparation program teacher effectiveness findings through a reporting system for performance results.

States have adopted different strategies for implementing these commitments, with some inconsistencies in the timeline by which student achievement data and teacher effectiveness measures will be linked to preparation programs and reported to the public. These are summarized in Table 3. It’s worth noting here that states have a lot of work ahead of them to develop and implement strong evaluation systems that use student achievement and classroom teaching performance to distinguish effective from ineffective teachers.

Only five states will use the teacher effectiveness of program graduates as an accountability measure: Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, and Rhode Island. These states plan to link student achievement measures to their teachers, aggregate this information to the preparation program level, publicly report the results, and use the results to hold programs accountable. The other seven funded states will stop at public reporting.

Among the latter group, North Carolina will calculate and publicly report teacher effectiveness data only for public universities, making no commitments about this for the nonpublic teacher education providers operating in that state.<sup>24</sup> Proposals

from Hawaii and Rhode Island are confusing in terms of when the program effectiveness data will be made public, while Ohio and Tennessee are vague about what the effectiveness measures will be and how they will be used.

**TABLE 2**  
**All RTT states promised to use student achievement as an indicator for teacher preparation programs**

State commitments on teacher preparation program accountability in Race to the Top proposals

State preparation program accountability commitments	D.C.	DE	FL	GA	HI	MA	MD	NC	NY	OH	RI	TN
Outcome-based performance indicators												
• Student achievement	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
• Persistence in teaching			Y	Y		Y			Y			Y
• Production of teachers (high-need fields)			Y						Y			
• Job placement of graduates in high-need schools			Y			Y			Y	Y	Y	Y
Revise certification examinations			Y	Y					Y			
Advancement to higher licensure levels				Y					Y	Y		Y
• Tied to teacher effectiveness/student achievement									Y			Y
Expanding alternative certification programs	Y	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y	Y		Y
Competitive grant incentives for innovative programs	Y	Y	Y			Y		Y	Y	Y		
• Funds committed for innovative program grants	\$5 M	\$150,000				\$5 M		\$5 M	\$21.8 M	\$2.2 M		

Despite inconsistencies and shortcomings in state responses thus far, the RTT requirement (and state commitment) for public disclosure will have an obvious impact in terms of public visibility through media coverage (see the *Los Angeles Times* article on August 14, 2010, for an example<sup>25</sup>) and in policy circles—especially if the publicly reported results of this work are understandable to nonspecialized audiences. Program-specific teacher effectiveness reports will enable hiring authorities in districts and schools to target teacher recruitment efforts to the strongest programs, thereby forcing others to change or close down. This means that information from these reports will make more visible and easier to find what many district human resources offices know and tell each other already: “We’d never hire the graduates of program X.”

Making poor results widely known through public reporting of program effectiveness is an implicit way of generating pressure for program change through shame or embarrassment. This was certainly one of the driving forces behind adoption of the federal Title II “report card” authorized in the 1998 Higher Education Amendments, or HEA, legislation. The lesson of Title II reporting to date, however, is that many university-based teacher education programs appear immune to the notion of professional shame. The Title II story suggests that public reporting by itself will be inadequate as a lever for inducing significant change.<sup>26</sup>

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## Other preparation program outcomes to be reported by the RTT states

Several states go beyond the minimum requirement of tying student achievement to teachers and to teacher education programs. These steps offer a broader set of useful performance accountability measures to the public—and to the programs themselves. State efforts include information about the persistence in teaching of program graduates, employer feedback surveys, job placement rates, and schools where program graduates teach and remain in the profession.

### Persistence in teaching

Table 2 shows that 5 of the 12 funded states include teacher persistence as a publicly reported measure for all teacher education programs in the state. These five states—Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee—are responding to a major challenge faced by schools across the country using disclosure to draw programmatic and public attention to the impact on student learning of teacher turnover. Only two of these five states, Massachusetts and New York, include teacher retention rates as program accountability measure.

The other 10 should watch Massachusetts and New York to see whether holding programs accountable for persistence rates helps to reduce teacher turnover. Similarly, states that were not funded by Race to the Top ought to watch the effects of both disclosure and accountability for teacher persistence in order to help schools cope with turnover. State and federal policy could also give greater attention to the issue of persistence rates for effective teachers, reporting these results for schools, districts, and preparation programs.

### Job placement and teacher employment rates

Teacher job placement by graduates of all in-state preparation programs will be disclosed publicly by Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. These six states address teacher job placement as a program outcome in different ways. Florida, for example, will track and report employment in high-need schools, a strategy also followed by New York and Ohio (“hard-to-staff schools”). Rhode Island will report by program the number of graduates employed in any school in the state, but will disaggregate this information by the poverty and minority enrollment status of schools. New York will calculate

and report the proportion of program graduates employed in shortage subject areas (not defined in the New York proposal), and Florida adds a focus on the production (but not necessarily the employment) of teachers in science, mathematics, and other technical (i.e., STEM) fields. Finally, it's worth noting that only Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island commit to using employment outcomes as accountability measures.

### Advanced certification and licensure

Many states now have two- or three-tiered licensure systems. A few of them require teachers to pass another test after a few years in the classroom in order to advance to “full” or “master” teacher status in the licensure and certification system. Others require teachers to obtain a master’s degree within two or three years of initial licensure to get full certification at the higher level. With growing evidence of a weak relationship between having a master’s degree and being an effective teacher, four of the funded states—Georgia, New York, Ohio, and Rhode Island—will use improved data collection systems to report the percentage of teachers from each preparation program moving from initial to advanced certification.

Georgia will report the rate at which program graduates advance to the “Career Teacher” level in its system, but teacher effectiveness is not required to attain Georgia’s higher level of licensure. Ohio commits the state to report the percent of program graduates who move from residency (initial status) to a professional teaching license in the state.

New York’s proposal says that the State Board of Regents will adopt a policy that prohibits teachers who are not rated as effective in the classroom from obtaining professional certification and continuing to teach. New York will develop and implement a new professional certification process for teachers by 2013 to ensure “that teacher applicants who have not raised student achievement over multiple years will not be able to receive professional certification and continue teaching in New York.”

Rhode Island goes one step beyond this linkage of advanced licensure and student achievement. The state will require evidence of teacher effectiveness<sup>27</sup> within three years of entering the state teaching force in order for individual teachers to advance to full professional certification. As an accountability indicator, Rhode

Island will use the rate at which program graduates earn this level of certification. Two of the 12 states thus link teacher effectiveness to advanced licensure, and one of these two uses this for program accountability.

### Other program indicators

Besides teacher effectiveness, persistence, and employment, several of the funded RTT states include additional indicators in their proposed designs. For instance, Ohio is the only state that will survey the employers of teachers and link findings back to the programs that produced them. This is one of the five accountability indicators “Measuring What Matters” recommends to all states. Florida will report to the public on the preparation programs that support their graduates through teacher induction programs.

And finally, Ohio proposes to develop a “performance-based finance system” for teacher preparation programs at public colleges and universities. The Ohio strategy, when implemented, “links subsidization of public colleges of education to performance metrics.” A few of the “metrics” are described in general terms but there is not much detail about the overall design of the performance funding system. Nonetheless, Ohio’s goal is to “reallocate state resources to favor those institutions that demonstrate high quality ... and diminish funding for those programs that are not producing results.”

If fully implemented, this innovative approach tying performance measures and state fiscal support would add a potent tool to state accountability for teacher preparation.

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### Revised teacher certification examinations

Several RTT states propose changes in their teacher certification examinations in addition to public disclosure of program-specific teacher effectiveness results and other indicators tied to each of the in-state preparation programs. “Measuring What Matters” recommends a whole new system of teacher licensure tests, significant reductions to the number of tests used by each state, adoption of the same tests in all states, and the use of the same passing rate policies in every state. While no RTT state goes this far, three of them—New York, Georgia, and Florida—plan to revamp pieces of their current testing efforts.

Florida promises to develop “more rigorous” certification exams in reading, mathematics, and science, aiming for “more rigorous content” in the tests themselves and higher passing scores to obtain certification. Since Florida programs reported an overall teacher test pass rate of 99.7 percent, revised certification exams ought to have much more stringent performance standards before graduates get the green light for a license to teach.<sup>28</sup>

Georgia will modify its current testing system to add a “data proficiency test” that assesses teacher candidate skills in analysis, interpretation, and use of data for instruction. New York proposes a redesigned system of teacher testing that revolves around “performance based assessment” and “more rigorous Content Specialty Tests,” with performance assessments incorporated into a “portfolio of artifacts” demonstrating candidates’ teaching skills and knowledge. Although knowledge and skills that would be captured through the portfolio are listed, there are few other design and implementation details. Portfolios are already in wide use by teacher education programs across the country—and in some states as well. Currently, there is some evidence of rigor or predictive validity in this approach to assessing the important knowledge and skills of prospective teachers. But more work is needed.<sup>29</sup>

These certification test changes are small steps in the right direction. Georgia’s focus on the data analysis skills of teachers will certainly bring some preparation program content closer to the needs of schools and practicing teachers. It remains to be seen what Florida and New York mean by “rigor” in certification exam content and whether they will follow through on setting passing scores that peg the definition of success higher than the bottom of the test score distribution.

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### Teacher performance assessments

Six of the 12 states (Massachusetts, Maryland, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee) are members of the Teacher Performance Assessment, or TPA, Consortium.<sup>30</sup> This initiative of three organizations (the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Stanford University) has partners from 19 state education agencies and about 70 teacher preparation programs. Through a three-year pilot now in the design stage, its goal is “to support the connection between teacher performance and student outcomes with valid and reliable data that can also be used to guide pre-service and in-service training.”

Anticipated outcomes from the TPA are relevant to the teacher preparation components of Race to the Top because this initiative has committed itself to develop a reliable and valid assessment, and “information that states can use to inform teacher quality initiatives, issue initial teacher licenses, and make accreditation decisions.” TPA aims to develop a multistate empirical approach to teacher quality assessment.<sup>31</sup>

Of the six RTT states already participating in the TPA consortium, only the New York and Ohio proposals make any mention of this work. In the case of New York, its portfolio-based performance assessment is consistent with elements of the TPA, but the TPA project itself is not mentioned. Ohio’s proposal briefly describes its work with the TPA group. The state is considering using the percentage of program graduates who pass the TPA as a public disclosure indicator but shows no sign of using this or any other measure for program accountability for the 51 preparation programs in the state. The other states say nothing about the teacher performance assessment effort, but Hawaii—not a member of the consortium—does report that its state professional standards board plans to join the group.

The TPA has potential to add to the knowledge base about effective teacher practices. If consortium states set high standards and use results to close weak programs, the effort will contribute value to RTT’s teacher quality goals.

# Public disclosure and program accountability

A key theme of Race to the Top’s selection criteria is access to and use of information about education outcomes for key stakeholders in the states. Proposals earned up to 47 points for “Data Systems to Support Instruction” (almost 10 percent of all possible points). Making effective use of information is central to the proposal requirements under “Great Teachers and Great Leaders,” for which state proposals could earn up to 138 additional points. Disclosure and reporting, access to “data from instructional reporting systems,” and the use of data to inform decisions at various levels of the education system (school, district, state) are tied to numerous activities for which the successful states described their strategies and goals.

Given its importance in Race to the Top, this section of the paper discusses the public disclosure commitments made by the 12 funded states, making a distinction between disclosure reporting and using results for accountability purposes. The fact is that most of the funded states stop short of holding teacher education programs accountable on the basis of outcomes information, even though Race to the Top funds are being used to develop or enhance the reporting systems that would enable the states to do just that.

**TABLE 3**  
**Most RTT states stop short of making programs use program results for accountability**

Public disclosure and accountability for preparation program performance

Public disclosure and accountability for preparation program performance	D.C.	DE	FL	GA	HI	MA	MD	NC	NY	OH	RI	TN
Reporting system for performance results	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year reporting system accessible to the public	2014	2012	2013	2012	2014	2013	2013	2011	2012	2014	2012	2010
Reporting and using results for accountability	Y					Y	Y		Y		Y	
Year accountability measures in force	2016					2013	2014		2012		2012	



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## Public disclosure of preparation program effectiveness

In teacher preparation, RTT expects each state to “publicly report” data on the effectiveness of graduates from each in-state preparation program. Table 3 shows that all 12 states made commitments to develop or improve reporting systems for public disclosure of these results. The year in which these systems will be accessible to the general public (which also means policymakers, educators, and the media) varies considerably. Within two years, seven of the states promise to make program effectiveness information public. We will have to wait four years for Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, and Ohio, and five years for Hawaii, before the public knows how in-state preparation programs are doing.

And while states will report on teacher effectiveness by program, there is ambiguity as to when the reports will actually be made public. “Hawaii is unable to provide student growth data until SY [school year] 2015-16.” North Carolina will calculate and report teacher effectiveness scores only for the graduates of public universities, leaving out teachers prepared at the state’s 33 independent colleges and universities with state-approved teacher education programs.<sup>32</sup> Georgia will report effectiveness data for only 30 percent of in-state programs by [the third year of RTT], a disclosure target that one proposal reviewer called “quite low and unambitious.”

Even to meet these disclosure targets, state data systems will have to be upgraded in most states, and they will have to settle on and “test drive” a methodology for measuring student achievement gains and connecting them to individual teachers. Teachers’ union support or opposition will play a role in meeting or missing implementation targets in New York, Florida, Rhode Island, and possibly other states as well. The states propose to make significant expenditure of federal and state funds toward these goals, and many of them are leveraging additional resources from the federal State Longitudinal Data System, or SLDS, program.<sup>33</sup>

Yet another challenge is the issue of how disclosure information will be used. Hawaii says that its program effectiveness findings will “encourage programs shown to be ineffective to make needed improvement” or be closed. But there are no target dates for these activities. Ohio promises to use findings to engage in “continuous dialogue” with preparation programs, but there is no indication how or when talk might turn to action against weak programs (Ohio has never identified a program as low-performing since the 1998 HEA rules were established). Tennessee, one of the first-round RTT states, plans to “inform program adjustments” by combining its teacher effectiveness data with other information

already shown to be a weak measure of program quality (Praxis test pass rates, for example). For the very weakest programs in the state, Tennessee’s state board of education “*may consider this* in program renewal decisions.”<sup>34</sup> The state hasn’t named a low-performing program since 2002.

The responses from Hawaii, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and Georgia don’t sound like full accountability. The RTT commitments are small steps in the right direction, but much more is needed.

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### Using effectiveness data for program accountability

A few of the funded states make clear commitments to use evidence of teacher effectiveness for program accountability. They also propose steps to close weak programs unable or unwilling to improve themselves. This is a welcome development in state accountability for teacher education.

Maryland commits “to use performance data to improve programs and close ... those with consistently poor track records.” The state’s performance data will include teacher effectiveness calculations for all program graduates. These actions would be a major advance for a state now wedded to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education’s, or NCATE’s, largely input-driven program quality standards.

Massachusetts will use findings on teacher effectiveness from its student achievement model to close ineffective programs after seeking their improvement through technical assistance. Rhode Island takes a similar approach, offering clear and direct language about using effectiveness data to expand strong programs and close the weak ones that do not improve. As noted earlier, Rhode Island also plans to tie licensure advancement for program graduates to their effectiveness in the classroom, and use the rates of advancement as a measure of program quality.<sup>35</sup>

Mirroring Maryland, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, the New York strategy is a direct link between teacher effectiveness and preparation program oversight. New York’s proposal includes clear language on closing ineffective programs by setting minimum standards for the percentage of effective teachers who complete each program and closing those whose graduates fall short of this standard. New York does not define its minimum performance threshold for teacher effectiveness, but its current oversight system requires 80 percent of program graduates to pass state licensure exams.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, in this group of states with real accountability measures, the District of Columbia pledges that any program where more than 25 percent of the graduates are found to be ineffective “may have their program approval subject to revocation by the state.” The language is direct and clear, but the implementation date of 2016 is farther into the future than any other state’s accountability system.

The efforts of these five—the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, and Rhode Island—are certainly significant enhancements to today’s largely ineffective state accountability policies. But they bear close scrutiny because states have no history of real accountability when it comes to the preparation of teachers. Only seven of the 12 RTT states have ever identified a teacher education program as low-performing, according to the secretary of education’s annual report to Congress.<sup>37</sup> Two of these seven—Maryland and New York—commit to real accountability in their Race to the Top plans, suggesting that we can have some confidence in pledges from these states.<sup>38</sup>

# Expanding successful teacher preparation and credentialing programs

By linking student achievement gains to several educational reform strategies, Race to the Top is a good example of systemic thinking in policy development and implementation. The systemic connections have several key components in Race to the Top, and these are also likely to help states that implement each piece successfully to build systemic policies and practices that will foster change well past the grant-funding period.

The first systemic step exists because RTT defines effective teachers in terms of student achievement gains. The program then asks states to use enhanced state data systems to identify their effective teachers. In effect, therefore, the rationale for having strong state data systems is to foster positive student learning outcomes.

Next, RTT funds the states to pool student achievement outcomes from individual teachers in a way that supports public reporting about in-state preparation programs. Through this action, state data systems and the calculation of student performance become leveraging agents for preparation program improvement.

Finally, each piece of this systemic strategy is brought together in a human capital development policy. Race to the Top aims to capitalize on teacher effectiveness identification and reporting strategies by expanding those programs with a track record of producing effective teachers.

Most of the 12 funded states proposed ways to build or grow programs and “credentialing” options to deepen the pool of effective teachers in their state. The pattern of state responses to this component of RTT is summarized in Table 2. Eight states made commitments to use teacher effectiveness findings to develop or expand preparation pathways. Several of these states will allocate funds as incentive grants to stimulate this work. Four states—Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, and Tennessee—did not signal clear intentions to use effectiveness data for these purposes.<sup>39</sup> This assessment of the RTT proposals is based on the author’s analysis and on reviewer comments by those engaged to judge and rate the proposals.

Massachusetts is a recipient of RTT funds with plans to use competitive grants to expand programs identified as effective based on student outcomes, building on a pilot that already exists in the state. A total of \$5 million in Massachusetts grant funds is allocated to competitive grants, but the state provided few specific details on how it will achieve this goal.

North Carolina also reports that it will spend \$5 million to expand its current Teach for America, or TFA, efforts and to build a state Teacher Corps from the TFA model. It is not clear from the state's grant proposal, however, how teacher and program effectiveness findings will be used to guide development of this initiative.<sup>40</sup>

In New York, program effectiveness data will be employed to develop two “clinically-rich” models of teacher preparation, one for undergraduates and another graduate-level pathway. Most New York design features are similar to the emerging “residency” approach to teacher preparation, but it is not clear how the state will use its program effectiveness reports to select providers for these new pathways. (A recent report from the NCATE recommended that teacher education programs be “fully grounded in clinical practice” and promised to revise program accreditation standards to reflect this recommendation.<sup>41</sup>)

Ohio, as outlined in its proposal, plans to allocate \$1.2 million to targeted programs “whose graduates effectively impact achievement in K-12 settings.” This expansion will focus on demonstrated areas of need (science and mathematics teaching fields, in particular).

For Rhode Island, expansion efforts to promote growth in effective pathways to the classroom will rely on Teach for America and the New Teacher Project, because “they have track records in other states” of producing teachers “who achieve strong academic outcomes.” It does not appear that the state is yet in a position to base these efforts on its own program effectiveness ratings.

The District of Columbia intends to develop “teacher pipeline models” sponsored by K-12 charter schools or charter networks. Like a few other states, Washington, D.C., will use competitive grants awarded in 2011 and 2012 to push this strategy forward.

In Delaware, one of the two first-round RTT states, the focus will be on allocating a small pool of grant funds to expand preparation programs with “a proven track record of effectiveness.” Florida pins its expansion strategy to “flagship programs,”

through competitive grants supporting “residency programs for job-embedded teacher preparation.” Whatever this phrase may mean, the linkage between program expansion and teacher effectiveness findings is not discussed in Florida’s proposal.

Perhaps the best way to sum up state plans to build or expand quality teacher preparation pathways is that the RTT projects are a mixed bag ranging from states with no plan to others with clear intentions but few operational details. It is striking that Washington, D.C., will use charter schools as incubators of preparation programs, and that so many states cite interest in teacher residency programs.

Certainly if deployed wisely, competitive grant funds can stimulate innovation in a field badly in need of radical reform. At the same time, the vagueness of state plans for program expansion suggests the need for targeted expert technical assistance to help states translate good intentions into solid practices.

# Delivering on state promises: Capacity and commitment

The capacity and commitment of states to implement Race to the Top was part of the proposal review and selection process. Specific review criteria awarded points for a state's capacity "to implement its proposed plans," and for "using the fiscal, political and human capital resources of the state to continue, after the period of funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success."<sup>42</sup>

Other selection criteria relevant to capacity and commitment were central to the proposal review process: the strength of state data systems; infrastructure created or improved to support RTT work; use of preparation program outcomes relevant to the real world of K-12 schools and students; and teacher tests with content and pass rate standards sufficient to ensure production of effective teachers. These enablers of state capacity will determine the success these 12 states have in putting their ideas and policy initiatives into practice.<sup>43</sup>

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## Capacity to achieve success: Data systems, state standards, and K-12 assessments

For the 12 funded RTT states, capacity starts with data systems that are critically important to:

- Measure student gains and associate student achievement with specific teachers
- Link teachers to their teacher preparation programs
- Implement comprehensive and transparent public reporting about teacher effectiveness, K-12 school results, and preparation program effectiveness
- Use program performance indicators such as student achievement, persistence in teaching, job placement, and production of teachers for high-need fields as program accountability measures

To assess state capacity in data systems, program reviewers looked at whether the state’s longitudinal data system currently has the 12 elements defined in the America COMPETES Act.<sup>44</sup> Most of the funded states do not have all 12 data system elements, a fact noted by reviewers as they examined the state proposals (see Table 4 for a summary of current state status on these data system components).

As another check on state capacity to implement the preparation program and accountability reforms, Table 4 shows how the states are rated (via self-report surveys) by the Data Quality Campaign, or DQC, on 10 longitudinal data system components deemed essential to measure student achievement, determine teacher effectiveness, and provide accountability reports to schools and to the public. According to the Data Quality Campaign, four states have all 10 elements—Delaware, Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee. Several states are close, with eight or nine of these key components (Hawaii, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ohio). Washington, D.C., appears to have the weakest current data system.<sup>45</sup>

**TABLE 4**  
**A look at each state’s data capabilities**

State capacity and commitment to implement rigorous preparation program accountability as measured by the Data Quality Campaign

	D.C.	DE	FL	GA	HI	MA	MD	NC	NY	OH	RI	TN
America Competes SLDS elements—all 12			Y			Y		Y			Y	Y
Data Quality Campaign—10 key elements	4	10	10	10	8	8	7	8	6	9	7	10
Data Quality Campaign—essential state actions	0	4	5	3	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	1
• Link data systems			Y					Y				
• Create stable, sustained support			Y									
• Develop governance structures		Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y		
• Build state data depositories		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y
• Systems to provide timely access to information												
• Create reports using individual student data			Y							Y		
• Create reports using longitudinal statistics		Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y			
• Strategies to raise awareness of available data							Y					
Adopted common core standards	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Partner in multistate assessment consortium	Y	2	Y	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	Y

Clearly it will be some time before most of the RTT states can measure teacher effectiveness for all in-state teachers, relate these findings back to their teacher education programs, and make full public disclosure of the information. For the few states that plan to use teacher effectiveness data for program accountability, implementation is also some years away (see Table 3).



How the state operates and makes use of its data system is another capacity question relevant to success of the RTT goals. Here, too, information from state surveys conducted by the DQC is helpful. States reported how they were doing in 2009-10 implementing what the DQC calls “essential state actions” that “states should take to change how data are used to inform policies and practices aimed to improve system and student performance.”<sup>46</sup> According to the findings summarized in Table 4, the funded RTT states have work to do: Washington, D.C., has taken none of these “essential” steps, while Florida—at five actions already in place—is the state showing the most progress. Given the Race to the Top goals of accountability, education reform, and public disclosure, it is worrisome that no funded state currently has systems that provide timely access to information for all stakeholders. Only Maryland has addressed the need to develop ways of raising public awareness of the K-12 data that become available.

So what do these findings mean? At the very least, the current status of state data systems and policies for their use show that Race to the Top investments in these areas are badly needed. The funded states should be able to make progress by effective use of federal funds coupled with major changes to state policies and practices. On the other hand, full implementation of the data system capacity measures is not just about technical issues. To be successful, elected officials, state bureaucracies, schools, and universities must be on the same page about the goals and outcomes that drive K-12 education in the state. They must be committed to results-driven education reform. This may take fundamental changes in beliefs that have guided the education community for many decades. As a result, full implementation of RTT is likely to be a tough slog for these states, even where public disclosure timelines are several years down the road.

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## Common standards and high-quality K-12 assessments

Unquestionably, more sophisticated assessments of K-12 student learning will strengthen preparation program oversight by providing broader and deeper measures of pupil achievement that can be linked back to teaching skills and program quality. This makes the quality of state K-12 student assessments a capacity issue for successful implementation, particularly to the extent to which current student testing is aligned with standards, curriculum, and teaching practices.

Race to the Top viewed these issues as important enablers of fundamental change as shown by points that could be earned by the state proposals: 40 points for adoption of the Common Core State Standards; 10 points for common

high-quality assessments; and 20 reviewer points for actions that support the transition to high-quality standards and assessments. Thus 70 out of 500 reviewer points could be earned for these components of state capacity to effect deep changes in K-12 education.

As Table 4 indicates, all 12 funded states have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Every state partners with one or both of the multistate assessment consortia that recently received large grants from the federal Department of Education.<sup>47</sup> Delaware, Georgia, and Ohio are participants in *both* of the funded assessment initiatives. Florida is the lead state in one of the initiatives.

Both the Common Core State Standards and the multistate assessment effort will improve the quality and relevance of preparation program accountability by promoting better alignment and generating a richer set of K-12 assessment instruments to measure student achievement and teacher effectiveness. As one reviewer pointed out, however, the Common Core State Standards are currently only for mathematics and language arts, meaning that about two-thirds of teachers are teaching in untested grades or subject areas. Still, state involvement in both sets of activities is a very positive sign of capacity to meet the goals of Race to the Top.

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### State commitment to successful implementation

States' engagement with the Common Core State Standards and participation in the multistate assessment consortia add significantly to capacity. But the current status of state data systems and related policies are problems for all 12 states. It's also important to assess state commitment to holding programs accountable for effective preparation, especially in light of the disappointing record of every state when it comes to setting high standards for teacher education programs and reluctance to close those programs with poor performance. Race to the Top did not require the states to use teacher effectiveness measures for program accountability, but five states took the pledge anyway.

Assessing state commitment to meaningful change both during and after the RTT funding period is, of course, a judgment call. This paper has cited examples where significant changes are promised and appear likely to be implemented by one or more states. This includes major and far-reaching policy changes, significantly

stronger accountability systems for teacher education, innovative plans to expand preparation pathways, and efforts to link these steps to high-quality K-12 standards and student assessments.

The language in some proposals is fairly vague about what will actually happen. For others, state actions fall short. North Carolina appears to exempt private colleges and universities from meaningful oversight, while Georgia plans to report on program effectiveness for only 30 percent of in-state programs by the third year of RTT. Several states that pledged to public disclosure offer only vague language on what they'll do with this information (“may consider” the findings, hold “continuous dialogue,” and “encourage” programs to improve).

It is also clear from any reading of the funded proposals that public disclosure timelines are many years down the road for some states. The history of ambitious and complex projects suggests that even these timelines are likely to slip—possibly past the end of the RTT funding period and perhaps beyond the tenure in office of governors and chief state school officers who back the commitments. All this bears watching by those who believe in and support the goals of Race to the Top. The challenges that states will encounter, if faced honestly as this paper tries to do, create opportunities to assist states in meeting their target goals and outcomes.

The upshot of any analysis of state commitment to real changes through RTT is that some states are clearly more invested than others. And within any individual state's plan of action, some proposed action steps are clearer and more focused than others.

To make this point, we have included a brief review of several state proposals. In the following section, three state plans for teacher preparation program accountability are profiled. The three states represent different approaches and exemplify the range of responses to RTT—from fairly weak in North Carolina to quite strong (potentially) in Rhode Island, with Ohio in the category of having an innovative and unique strategy (performance funding).

## Race to the Top state profiles

### Ohio

**Overview**—Ohio’s approach to Race to the Top is built on comprehensive recent legislation intended to be a systemic approach to education and higher education reform. Among other things, the state “will strengthen strategic initiatives that address graduation rates, achievement gaps and persistently struggling schools” (see <http://tinyurl.com/27khsxr>). This work includes data system infrastructure improvements, programs to strengthen K-12 leadership, developing a stronger supply of high-quality teachers, changing teacher licensure, developing a new K-12 assessment system that includes end-of-course exams, and creating a system of indicators to monitor performance and bolster accountability.

**State commitments**—Ohio will do the following to strengthen teacher quality and preparation program accountability:

- Measure and report teacher effectiveness information for all in-state preparation programs
- Calculate and disclose program graduates’ job placement rates in high-need schools
- Report on the percentage of program graduates who make the transition from initial licensure (which will be called residency) to a full professional teaching license
- Make this information available to the public by 2014
- Expand effective alternative certification programs and allocate \$2.2 million in grants for innovative programs

**Interesting innovation**—Ohio’s Race to the Top initiative includes developing a “performance funding policy” for teacher preparation programs at public colleges and universities. While the new policies are not yet in place, the Ohio Board of Regents intends to direct additional resources to effective programs and reduce fiscal support for weak preparation programs.

**What to watch for**—The Ohio plan for teacher quality and accountability under Race to the Top appears to stop at public disclosure. There are no plans right now to use teacher effectiveness findings as an accountability measure for in-state preparation programs. More details—and perhaps more reforms—are needed before we know for sure that program accountability will move away from process indicators like NCATE and state program review and toward real measures of program outcomes.

### Rhode Island

**Overview**—Rhode Island makes very strong commitments for preparation program improvement and for meaningful accountability. The state proposal says that Rhode Island will tie data from teacher and principal evaluations as well as “impact on student growth and academic achievement” to its preparation programs. The state plans an annual report card in a “consumer-friendly format” that offers the public an objective picture of all program graduates. Currently Rhode Island has efforts underway to involve charter school organizations in developing principal and teacher preparation programs.

**State commitments**—Rhode Island will:

- Use student achievement and job placement in high-need schools for public disclosure of preparation program accountability
- Require teacher effectiveness as a condition of advancement to higher teacher licensure levels
- Publicly disclose preparation program results by 2012 and use these indicators for program accountability by 2012
- Draw on experiences of other states with Teach for America and the New Teacher Project to develop new alternative pathways to teaching

**Interesting innovation**—The state’s Race to the Top agenda includes a commitment to link advanced teacher licensure to teacher effectiveness in the first three years of teaching. Rhode Island will tie the rates at which program graduates attain advanced licensure back to the program as an accountability indicator.

**What to watch for**—Judging from the proposal itself and reports from the Data Quality Campaign (see Table 4), the state’s data system needs significant work before teacher effectiveness calculations can be done routinely. Even though the state has committed to disclosure and accountability by 2012 using teacher effectiveness findings, it is just now designing a state-level value-added system. The RTT proposal itself suggests that “student achievement metrics” will become available only in 2013-14.

## North Carolina

**Overview**—With a long history of state commitment to K-12 education reform under governors of both parties, North Carolina has infrastructure and rich data resources for determining whether teachers and their preparation programs are effective. A recent study of public university teacher education programs by the University of North Carolina system found mixed results by grade level and subject area when university programs were compared on teacher effectiveness measures with graduates from other providers. This study has received wide publicity in the state, and it was cited in the RTT proposal. The state projects it will need about 13,000 new teachers per year over the next few years but in-state programs currently produce only about 5,000 new graduates per year.

**State commitments**—North Carolina proposes to:

- Hold public universities accountable for preparation program qual-

ity through public disclosure of student achievement and teacher effectiveness findings

- Expand alternative teacher preparation programs by devoting additional resources to Teach for America and by creating the NC Teacher Corps
- Allocate \$5 million in grant funds to develop or expand effective preparation programs

**Interesting innovation**—The state’s Race to the Top proposal doesn’t contain any particularly innovative proposals to improve teacher quality or strengthen program effectiveness. Despite rich data resources, the state is not planning any steps toward using program outcomes to hold teacher preparation providers accountable.

**What to watch for**—North Carolina’s RTT strategy includes no current plans to hold independent providers (programs or pathways other than those at the state universities) accountable for the quality of their graduates, and the state limits use of teacher effectiveness findings to public disclosure for the state university’s programs. Over the next few years, observers should watch for more clarity on the role of the independent programs and look to see whether North Carolina moves from mere public disclosure to real accountability for all in-state preparation programs. There is certainly a strong infrastructure of data systems and linked student-teacher data to support these steps: The state has been the scene of numerous sophisticated value-added studies of teacher effectiveness because of the pupil, school, and teacher data archived since 2000. See these resources at the North Carolina Education Research Data Center ([http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/project\\_detail.php?id=35](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/project_detail.php?id=35)), as well as important studies conducted with this information at the Urban Institute’s CALDER Center (<http://www.caldercenter.org/partners/northcarolina.cfm>).

# Challenges and policy recommendations

We can expect progress in the states on real accountability for teacher preparation when the 12 funded states have met all of their RTT proposal commitments, used enhanced state capacity developed through RTT work to replace toothless current accountability policies with rigorous measures tied to important outcomes for students and schools, and when they have taken forthright steps to assert their authority to impose real consequences on weak and ineffective programs.

Race to the Top can be a powerful lever to improve teacher quality in the United States. These policy recommendations are based on the analysis in this paper and are intended to maximize the potential for change through RTT:

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## Develop high-quality state data and reporting systems

**The challenge:** All 12 states made commitments to develop or improve data systems for public disclosure of preparation program results. Public disclosure target dates vary widely among the states, and states will have to develop and pilot reliable methods for measuring student achievement gains and connecting the results to individual teachers.

**Policy recommendation:** The federal government and interested foundations should support an organized program of technical assistance to enable the states to meet their commitments. The goal should be high-quality systems in each of the states, with uniform reporting mechanisms for all in-state programs making comparisons between programs easier for the public and for policymakers.

The key question for public policy is whether all teacher education programs routinely produce effective teachers as measured by student achievement results and other indicators. Cross-state consortia focused on data system development, teacher effectiveness research, and application of student achievement and student

growth measures should be encouraged by the Department of Education, state leaders, and outside funders so that we wind up with rigorous and fair judgments about teacher education programs.

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### Pilot stronger measures of preparation program accountability

**The challenge:** “Measuring What Matters” urged states to base program accountability on five indicators. No RTT state has adopted all five, but collectively the 12 states do employ these and others to measure the quality of program graduates and of programs themselves. Only five of the 12 states, however, will use teacher effectiveness for preparation program accountability. The remaining seven stop at public disclosure.

Still, even in these states, teacher effectiveness as a measure of program quality will show the inadequacy of existing preparation program accountability mechanisms: Some fully approved programs will probably fail the effective teacher “test.”

**Policy recommendation:** The Department of Education, the National Governors Association, and education reform groups should support state and cross-state efforts to pilot the full set of accountability indicators “Measuring What Matters” recommended. To the extent that a state’s teacher evaluation system is based on reliable and valid instruments and processes, it ought to be aligned with the classroom observation indicators “Measuring What Matters” recommended for program accountability. Work on these teacher quality issues in the 12 Race to the Top states will generate strong pressure on the remaining states to adopt meaningful accountability standards, creating new opportunities through technical support and policy changes that lead all states to adopt identical policies for program accountability.

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### Foster innovative strategies to promote teacher and program quality

**The challenge:** Several RTT states have proposed innovative strategies for developing and using new mechanisms to promote preparation program quality and to withdraw state approval from weak programs (see the Rhode Island and Ohio profiles). These proposals are in the design and development stage right now, and their actual use in practice will be some years down the road. Moreover, only a

handful of the states are experimenting with innovation. New teacher supply and demand are seriously out of balance in many states, with programs allowed to produce hundreds (or even thousands) of teachers in fields where there are no jobs. No state proposed tackling this problem, but taxpayers might appreciate knowing the extent to which state revenues (and tuition dollars) are used by programs to match new teacher supply with school and district teacher needs.

**Policy recommendation:** Federal and state policymakers should encourage individual states, as well as the multistate teacher assessment project, to move ahead with innovative approaches to accountability, such as Ohio’s performance funding and Rhode Island’s link between advanced licensure and teacher effectiveness as rapidly as possible.

A recent position paper from NCATE on “clinical preparation and partnerships for improved student learning” made numerous program improvement and accountability recommendations. If this report leads to concrete action steps, they could be another vehicle for broad-based changes across institutions and among the states.<sup>48</sup>

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### Find ways to support good work by states not funded through RTT

**The challenge:** Not every funded RTT state has proposed a credible way of holding preparation programs accountable for key outcomes affecting students and schools. Some states that were not funded (Louisiana and Colorado) put forward good ideas using teacher effectiveness data and other solid measures of program performance.

**Policy recommendation:** The Department of Education and other interested funders ought to engage some of the unfunded states in efforts to improve accountability for teacher education. At the very least, states like Louisiana and Colorado could provide expert advice to many of the funded states. Federal and foundation support to some of these states could leverage promising designs for preparation program quality, even if it is not possible to fully fund their entire RTT agenda.



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## Monitor state performance

**The challenge:** No state has a solid track record in developing and using high-quality measures of program performance. The evidence from the federal Title II “report card” also shows how little courage states have had to confront and close weak programs. Twelve states promise to do better through Race to the Top, but too few of them go beyond promises of public disclosure.

**Policy recommendation:** The federal government, funders, and governors ought to gauge state promises against performance over the next few years, particularly since implementation of these initiatives is being assigned to state departments of education—agencies not known for their commitment to high-quality education reform. Healthy skepticism is a reasonable stance until we see concrete evidence of higher standards, including the voluntary or forced closure of many teacher education programs in the 12 funded states.

In the meantime, the public and the policy community should get regular and candid reports on project implementation and its impact on preparation program oversight from the Department of Education and from chief executives of the funded states.

## Conclusion

For 11 states and the District of Columbia, Race to the Top created incentives to make important policy changes in teacher quality and preparation program accountability. Public disclosure of program performance through data on teacher effectiveness goes well beyond where we are now, where there is little real accountability and limited public disclosure about weak or strong programs. This has adverse consequences for K-12 students and schools.

Yet, disclosure by itself is not enough to ensure widespread improvement in teacher education across the United States. Recognizing this, 5 of the 12 funded RTT states have committed to use RTT and state funds to hold teacher preparation programs accountable for the effectiveness of their graduates. Stepping up to the program accountability challenge are the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island. These five states will use one or more of the preparation program accountability indicators recommended by the Center for American Progress's paper on "Measuring What Matters." The other seven funded states should move quickly from mere disclosure of effectiveness ratings to real accountability.

As noted, Race to the Top also asked states for new initiatives to build or expand high-quality teacher preparation pathways. Disappointingly, only 8 of the 12 states took up this challenge, suggesting that more pressure (and perhaps targeted technical support) is needed to break the inertia created by traditional thinking about how to prepare teachers for the nation's schools. States that haven't even proposed minimal levels of innovation in program reform are Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, and Rhode Island, although Rhode Island hopes to borrow from the Teach for America experience of other states.

We know that seven states promise to make program effectiveness information public. But the public won't know how in-state preparation programs are doing for at least four years for Washington, D.C., Massachusetts, and Ohio, and five years for Hawaii. State data systems will have to be upgraded in most states, and state offi-

cialists will have to agree on a method for measuring student achievement gains and connecting them to individual teachers. Moreover, every state except Florida has challenges ahead in delivering on the promise of a sophisticated state data system.

The efforts of five states—the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, and Rhode Island—will produce important enhancements to largely powerless state accountability policies. But this work in every state requires close scrutiny because states have no history of real accountability when it comes to the preparation of teachers.

The funded states should be able to make progress by effective use of federal funds and major changes to state policies. On the other hand, full implementation of this set of teacher quality improvement policies is not just about technical issues. To be successful, elected officials, state bureaucracies, schools, and universities must be committed to results-driven education reform.

These uneven responses across the 12 funded states bear careful watching by those who believe in real accountability as a source for change in teacher quality. Variations in how states plan to implement RTT create potential for major impact from cross-state, foundation-supported, and Department of Education technical assistance strategies.

In sum, Race to the Top will be responsible for major steps in the right direction. We strongly urge other states—with or without Race to the Top funds—to learn from these efforts outlined in this report and set about the same work of improving teacher quality by using rigorous performance measures to step up accountability for teacher education.

# Endnotes

- 1 The many examples of reform initiatives that appear to have had limited impact include the Holmes Partnership; the Teacher Quality Enhancement grants funded through the 1998 Higher Education Amendments, or HEA; Teachers for a New Era; the National Network for Educational Renewal, and similar efforts.
- 2 The first effort to combine incentives and sanctions was through Title II of the 1998 HEA.
- 3 The federal program solicitation and related resources can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>; criteria for teacher quality can be found on page 12.
- 4 *Ibid.*, page 14.
- 5 Edward Crowe, “Measuring What Matters: A Stronger Accountability Model for Teacher Education” (Washington: Center for American Progress, July 2010), available at [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/07/teacher\\_accountability.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/07/teacher_accountability.html).
- 6 *Ibid.*, page 11.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pages 2-3.
- 8 Crowe, “Measuring What Matters.”
- 9 *Ibid.*, page 1.
- 10 *Ibid.*, page 7.
- 11 *Ibid.*, page 10.
- 12 See National Council on Teacher Quality, “Ed Schools,” available at <http://www.nctq.org/p/edschools>.
- 13 *Ibid.*, page 11.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pages 2-3.
- 15 See Measures of Effective Teaching Project at <http://www.metproject.org/>.
- 16 National cumulative pass rates come from “The Secretary’s Sixth Annual Report on Teacher Quality” (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, 2009), page 36.
- 17 As described in “Measuring What Matters” (pages 21-27), professions such as medicine, nursing, accountancy, and engineering have uniform state accountability standards: Every state employs the same tests and every state has the same passing score.
- 18 Better state data systems are needed to link teacher and student data, rigorous attention to data quality issues will be crucial, and states will have to address confidentiality and privacy policies as well as make good use of appropriate statistical models; see “Measuring What Matters,” page 13, as well as the references cited in that discussion.
- 19 The role of high-quality classroom assessment as an indicator of preparation program quality is discussed in “Measuring What Matters”; see pages 14-16.
- 20 National Council of Teacher Quality, *2009 State Teacher Quality Yearbook*, available at <http://www.nctq.org/stpy09/>; Suzanne Wilson and Peter Youngs, “Research on Accountability Processes in Teacher Education,” in M. Cochran-Smith and K. Zeichner, eds., *Studying Teacher Education* (Washington: 2005); AERA; and Education Trust, *Not Good Enough: A Content Analysis of Teaching Licensing Examinations* (Washington, 1999), available at <http://www.edtrust.org/dc/publication/not-good-enough-a-content-analysis-of-teacher-licensing-examinations>.
- 21 For the discussion of state proposals, quotations appearing in the sections below come from the state proposal itself or from reviewer notes about a specific state proposal. Since the proposals and reviewer notes are accessible online and document paging varies from proposal to proposal, it seems simpler to acknowledge sources of quotations here rather than separately for each quotation. The proposals, appendices, and reviewer notes can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.
- 22 The RTT selection criteria can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2c63vbw>. Selection criteria and maximum points are:
 

A. State success factors	125 points
B. Standards and assessments	70 points
C. Data systems to support instruction	47 points
D. Great teachers and leaders	138 points
E. Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	50 points
F. General	55 points
- 23 Descriptions and analyses of the state RTT proposals draw on the Race to the Top criteria published by the U.S. Department of Education; on the proposals and proposal appendices from all 12 states; on reviewer scores and comments; and on RTT background and briefing materials from the U.S. Department of Education.
- 24 On the other hand, North Carolina has a richer array than any other state of student achievement tests to underpin teacher effectiveness calculations. The state will use end-of-course tests in reading, math, and science for the elementary grades; for high school grades, NC will employ end-of-course tests in algebra 1 and 2, geometry, English 1, physical science, biology, chemistry, physics, civics and economics, and U.S. history. The secondary subjects tested and used as the basis for teacher effectiveness calculations go far beyond what has been described by any of the other states.
- 25 Jason Felch, Jason Song, and Doug Smith, “Who’s Teaching L.A.’s Kids?” *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2010, available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-teachers-value-20100815,0,2695044.story>.
- 26 Public reporting of pass rates as well as state reports about low-performing programs were both intended to create incentives for weak programs to change or close down. The record since 1998, however, shows clearly that neither the teacher education profession nor the states that oversee programs has been willing to address profound and widespread weaknesses in program quality.

- 27 Unless noted specifically, all references to “teacher effectiveness” provisions in the state proposals are consistent with the Race to the Top definition of an “effective teacher” as one “whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth.”
- 28 The overall Florida pass rate of 99.7 percent is reported on page 75 of “The Secretary’s Sixth Annual Report on Teacher Quality: A Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Classroom” (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009). All of the other RTT states have pass rates high enough to strain credulity, with DC at 89 percent reporting the lowest overall rate.
- 29 Most of the portfolios now in use are home-grown collections of “artifacts” developed and used by individual programs. At the program and state levels, a significant problem is consistency in assessing the strength and quality of items submitted by individual teacher candidates. There is also no evidence that assessment scores assigned to teachers or teacher candidates through review of their portfolios bear any relationship to important outcomes such as student achievement, teaching persistence, or classroom teaching ability.
- 30 See American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, “Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium,” available at <http://tinyurl.com/yzgv38e>.
- 31 See the description and related materials found at <http://tinyurl.com/yzgv38e>.
- 32 See <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/ihe/approved/> for the list of approved in-state institutions authorized to prepare K-12 teachers in North Carolina. A recent report showed that the 33 independent colleges and universities produce 750 new teachers per year.
- 33 National Center for Education Statistics, “Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program,” available at <http://nces.ed.gov/Programs/SLDS/index.asp>.
- 34 Emphasis added.
- 35 Among the states with meaningful accountability provisions in the RTT initiatives, New York also ties advanced teacher licensure status to teaching effectiveness, but it does not appear that the Empire State will use the rates of advancement to professional certification by program graduates as a measure of preparation program quality.
- 36 Of course, 96 percent of all program graduates in the United States pass all of their teacher tests, so this threshold may not be as rigorous as it seems.
- 37 “The Secretary’s Sixth Annual Report on Teacher Quality,” pages 16-20.
- 38 On the other hand, a recent statement from Maryland’s chief state school officer casts doubt on the state’s commitment to using teacher effectiveness for program accountability. See “Major revision of teacher training programs urged by panel of top educators,” *Washington Post*, November 6, 2010, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/16/AR2010111600008.html>.
- 39 For example, one Tennessee reviewer commented, “It appears that the State is focusing on expanding or contracting current traditional teacher preparation programs; it does not provide a discussion on new programs that might be created outside of the traditional preparation routes.” Another reviewer of this proposal said that the state “has a plan to develop a high quality plan,” but the proposal reader could find no details about this “planning to plan” strategy that suggests teacher effectiveness data will be used for program expansion. A Georgia reviewer said that “very sketchy information was provided” about the state’s effort to expand effective programs; another observed that “this element of the criterion is not fully addressed [and] ... has not fully met the requirements.”
- 40 There have been extensive studies of Teach for America in North Carolina, thanks to the consolidated state data on K-12 students, schools, and teachers housed at the North Carolina Education Research Center (see <http://tinyurl.com/26ltvua>). It may be that the state will rely on these studies as the basis for expansion and further development, but the RTT proposal is silent on this question.
- 41 See “Transforming Teacher Education through Clinical Practice” (Washington: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010), available at <http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zeiB1OoqPk%3D&tabid=715>. This is a good first step in recognizing that teachers should be prepared in school settings, but the report contains no specific action steps that have deadlines and empirically based measures of quality associated with them.
- 42 See selection criteria (A)(2)(i) and (A)(2)(e) in “Race to the Top: Executive Summary” (Washington: U.S. Department of Education, November 2009), pages 6 and 7.
- 43 For examples of issues that need to be addressed for “putting it into practice,” see the discussion on state data systems and current K-12 assessment tests in “Race to the Top: Executive Summary” at pages 13-14.
- 44 See RTT selection criterion (C)(1), which awarded up to 24 points, and a list of the 12 elements from section 6401(e)(2)(D) of the Act, summarized in “Race to the Top: Executive Summary” on pages 14-15.
- 45 See Data Quality Campaign, “The Next Step: Using Longitudinal Data Systems To Improve Student Success” (2009), available at <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/resources/details/384> for more information about the 10 elements and current state capacity.
- 46 For a fuller discussion of the state actions and why the Campaign views them as important, see <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/actions>.
- 47 See U.S. Department of Education, “Race to the Top Assessment Program: Applicant Information,” available at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/applicant.html>.
- 48 See National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, “Blue Ribbon Panel,” available at <http://www.ncate.org/Public/ResearchReports/NCATEInitiatives/BlueRibbonPanel/tabid/715/Default.aspx>. About the author

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## About the author

**Edward Crowe** is a consultant on teacher quality policy for several organizations and projects, including the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. He previously worked as senior consultant for the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) on teacher preparation projects, and on research about the cost of teacher turnover; and as an adviser to the Hunter Foundation of Scotland and to the Scottish National Executive on teacher quality. He currently serves on the Advisory Council for the Texas Center for Research, Evaluation and Advancement of Teacher Education.

Crowe served as an evaluator for the NYC Partnership for Teacher Excellence, and wrote a commissioned paper for the Committee on Teacher Preparation Programs for the National Research Council (NRC). From 2002-2010, he was an adviser to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on implementation of the Teachers for a New Era initiative.

Crowe was the first director of the Title II Teacher Quality Enhancement Program for the U.S. Department of Education. He has experience in state higher education policy as well, having worked for the University of North Carolina system, with the Arkansas state higher education coordinating board, and as senior manager of a National Science Foundation-funded statewide math and science education reform project. Crowe is co-editor (with Dr. Rena Subotnik) of the forthcoming book series *Levers of Change in Education*, and recently published a chapter on "Teaching as a Profession" in the 2008 *Handbook of Research in Teacher Education*. In 2010, the Center for American Progress published his paper on teacher education accountability, "Measuring What Matters: A Stronger Accountability Model for Teacher Education." He is a graduate of Boston College and holds master's and doctoral degrees in political science from UNC-Chapel Hill.

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