RACE TO THE TOP

# Rhode Island Report

## Year 4: School Year 2013–2014

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

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# Executive Summary

## Race to the Top overview

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. ARRA provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top fund, of which approximately $4 billion was used to fund comprehensive statewide reform grants under the Race to the Top program.[1] In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded Race to the Top Phase 1 and Phase 2 grants to 11 States and the District of Columbia. The Race to the Top program is a competitive four-year grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and improving high school graduation rates; and ensuring students are prepared for success in college and careers. Since the Race to the Top Phase 1 and 2 competitions, the Department has made additional grants under the Race to the Top Phase 3, Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge,[2] and Race to the Top – District[3] competitions.

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

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

Since education is a complex system, sustained and lasting instructional improvement in classrooms, schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and States will not be achieved through piecemeal change. Race to the Top builds on the local contexts of States and LEAs participating in the State's Race to the Top plan (participating LEAs)[4] in the design and implementation of the most effective and innovative approaches that meet the needs of their educators, students, and families.

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

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

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

[4] Participating local educational agencies (LEAs) are those LEAs that choose to work with the State to implement all or significant portions of the State's Race to the Top plan, as specified in each LEA's Memorandum of Understanding with the State. Each participating LEA that receives funding under Title I, Part A will receive a share of the 50 percent of a State's grant award that the State must subgrant to LEAs, based on the LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A allocations in the most recent year, in accordance with section 14006(c) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

## Race to the Top program review

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting States as they implement ambitious reform agendas, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top program. The goal of the ISU was to provide assistance to States as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes. Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is also designed to identify areas in which Race to the Top grantees need assistance and support to meet their goals. Specifically, the ISU worked with Race to the Top grantees to differentiate support based on individual State needs, and helped States work with each other and with experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes. In partnership with the ISU, the Reform Support Network (RSN) offers collective and individualized technical assistance and resources to Race to the Top grantees. The RSN's purpose is to support Race to the Top grantees as they implement reforms in education policy and practice, learn from each other, and build their capacity to sustain these reforms.[5] At the end of Year 4, the Department created the Office of State Support to continue to provide support to States across programs as they implement comprehensive reforms. The Office of State Support will administer programs previously administered by the ISU.

Grantees are accountable for the implementation of their approved Race to the Top plans, and the information and data gathered throughout the program review process help to inform the Department's management and support of the Race to the Top grantees, as well as provide appropriate and timely updates to the public on their progress. In the event that adjustments are required to an approved plan, the grantee must submit a formal amendment request to the Department for consideration. States may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget, provided such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. In the event that the Department determines that a grantee is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets, or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR section 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).[6]

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

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

# Executive Summary

## State-specific summary report

The Department uses the information gathered during the review process (*e.g.*, through monthly calls, onsite reviews, and Annual Performance Reports (APRs)) to draft State-specific summary reports. The State-specific summary report serves as an assessment of a State's annual Race to the Top implementation. The Year 4 report for Phase 2 grantees highlights successes and accomplishments, identifies challenges, and provides lessons learned from implementation from approximately September 2013 through September 2014. Given that Delaware and Tennessee's initial four-year grant periods ended in June and July 2014, respectively, for Phase 1 grantees, the Year 4 report includes the beginning of the no-cost extension year (Year 5).

## The State's education reform agenda

In January 2010, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education (Board of Regents)[7] approved the *Transforming Education in Rhode Island* strategic plan, which established five priorities to guide broad-based education reforms in the State: (1) ensure educator excellence, (2) accelerate all schools toward greatness, (3) establish world-class standards and assessments, (4) develop user-friendly data systems, and (5) invest resources wisely. The new strategic plan had statewide stakeholder support and formed the basis for the State's Race to the Top initiatives. In September 2010, Rhode Island received a $75 million Race to the Top grant. Under the terms of the Race to the Top grant, the State distributed at least half of the award amount to participating LEAs with nearly 100 percent of the State's LEAs participating during the grant period.

## State Years 1 through 3 summary

Throughout Year 1 Rhode Island increased its capacity to implement Race to the Top programs by strategically aligning the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) offices to the components of the State Scope of Work and by implementing performance management processes. Through EdStat sessions, State-level leadership tracked project implementation and identified areas for improvement on an ongoing basis with project teams. In addition, the State became more engaged with LEA-level implementation through Collaborative Learning for Outcomes (CLO) meetings that brought together leadership teams from all participating LEAs to discuss implementation and share progress with RIDE.

The State prepared educators to transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through professional development opportunities and CCSS-aligned classroom assessments. The State's initial training, called Study of the Standards, reached more than 5,800 mathematics and English language arts (ELA) educators by the end of Year 3. To further support educators in transitioning to new standards, RIDE released CCSS-aligned fixed-form interim assessments for every grade band in ELA and mathematics in Year 3 and an interim assessment item bank from which educators could create CCSS-aligned assessments. In addition, the State developed and piloted four modules to train educators in formative assessment practices and released them for LEA use in Year 3. Educators continued to deeply engage with the standards by developing CCSS-aligned curriculum guides with colleagues from multiple LEAs. This collaborative curriculum design resulted in the development of 10 educator-developed ELA, mathematics, and science curricula by the end of Year 3, which guided instruction beginning in school year (SY) 2013-2014.

In Years 1 through 3 the State designed, developed, and released multiple cross-cutting data systems for State and local use. With limited time to test and modify the systems before statewide release, some systems encountered significant challenges. The State's instructional management system (IMS) went live to LEAs in Year 3, pre-loaded with LEA-created curriculum documents and State-developed interim assessments. However, LEAs faced difficulties completing the data cleaning necessary to access the system and, once in the system, most LEAs did not find the system to be user-friendly. By the end of Year 3 the vendor announced it would no longer support the IMS product; consequently, the State pursued alternative plans for Year 4. The State's plans for an early warning system (EWS) within the IMS shifted due to vendor challenges with regularly updating student data. Instead, LEAs accessed the State's EWS indicators through a connection to existing student information systems or through RIDE-managed dashboards. With a vendor, the State supported LEA use of the Educator Performance Support System (EPSS) to organize implementation and gather data for the evaluation system implementation. The EPSS was first available to LEAs in Year 2 and underwent significant redesign for Year 3. All LEAs use the EPSS to submit final evaluation data to the State and many LEAs use it to manage the evaluation cycle locally. The State received feedback from the field on each system and made adjustments, such as streamlining navigation of the system and creating new reports. Finally, most components of the State-based certification system, eCert, went live during Year 3, resulting in web-based administrative services related to teacher certification and personnel data and reporting.

Through Year 3 of the grant period Rhode Island made progress supporting teachers and leaders in implementing new evaluation systems based on multiple measures of educator practice. In Year 2, all LEAs took part in gradual implementation by engaging with all elements of the evaluation system, except student summative assessment growth. The State gathered lessons from gradual implementation to inform the final evaluation system model. In Year 3 all Rhode Island LEAs implemented their evaluation systems that included rubric-based observations, feedback conferences, and student learning objectives (SLOs) to measure educator impact on student performance, and every teacher and building administrator received a final effectiveness rating. Statewide, 94.8 percent of

[7] As of January 1, 2013, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education was dissolved because of a change in State law. As of that date, all powers and authority of the former Board of Regents became vested in the Rhode Island Board of Education

teachers were rated Effective or Highly Effective.[8] In both Years 2 and 3, the State provided extensive guidance documents, training, and technical assistance to superintendents and building administrators to implement the new evaluation systems. In Year 3 the State included more resources directly for educators. In addition, the State solicited survey feedback to understand educators' experience with the system and to inform changes to the cycle and in educator supports. Finally, in Year 3 two LEAs began planning to pilot alternative approaches to compensation for principals and teachers.

The State's other work supporting teachers and leaders included a statewide induction program, multiple alternative certification programs, and professional development for teams of leaders at turnaround schools. The induction program served every first-year teacher in the State and all second-year teachers in the lowest-achieving schools. All principals with beginning teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the induction program. Teach For America (TFA) and TNTP continued to recruit and support cohorts of teachers, placing a total of 101 teachers across charter and traditional LEAs in Years 2 and 3 of the grant period. While cohort sizes increased through Year 3, it was unclear whether the State could fund both programs going forward. The State's newly created principal certification route for turnaround leaders supported its first cohort to four leadership positions in Priority and Warning schools, and recruited a second cohort of eight leaders.[9] Lastly, in Year 3 the State began engagement efforts with representatives from Rhode Island preparation programs to rewrite the State's educator preparation program approval standards.

After encountering challenges early in the grant period, the State supported the lowest-achieving schools in developing school improvement plans and providing team-based professional development. In Year 2, five Rhode Island persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools implemented one of the four school intervention models and the State selected eight additional schools to begin interventions in Year 3.[10] Through the RIDE-based Academy for Transformative Leadership, the State developed and disseminated multiple professional development opportunities for educator and leadership teams in the lowest-achieving schools, including job-embedded coaching for principals and summer programs for school leadership teams. In addition, RIDE supported new charters opening schools for the first time in the State. In Year 3 two new charter schools opened in the State that were supported by Race to the Top charter development grants, Achievement First and Village Green, increasing the diversity of school options for students and families.

While the State was successful in designing, developing, and releasing many programs statewide, LEA implementation remained mixed and some projects faced challenges through Year 3. The number and intensity of the initiatives was challenging for some LEAs and difficulties with some systems, like the IMS, reduced buy-in for some reforms. The State responded with targeted trainings, plans for new systems, and LEA-specific technical assistance. The loss of product support for the IMS put the State's plans related to data use, interim assessments, and CCSS-aligned test construction at risk in Year 3. Lastly, the State developed multiple strategies for supporting local implementation of new educator evaluation systems in Years 2 and 3, including face-to-face training, online modules, and additional staffing. However, many LEAs expressed concerns about burden and capacity to implement the system with quality in addition to existing responsibilities.

## State Year 4 summary

### Accomplishments

Building upon the successes of Years 1 through 3, in Year 4 the State continued implementation of all planned projects and supported LEAs in building their capacity to continue this work after the grant period. The State maintained its performance management processes within RIDE and between RIDE and LEAs to ensure projects were being implemented as planned. The CLO sessions provided LEA leaders with an opportunity to problem solve and share best practices. With many work streams occurring at the LEA level, RIDE shifted its focus to providing targeted technical assistance to LEAs through trainings, online modules and materials, and face-to-face supports across project areas. In addition, RIDE worked to draw connections between initiatives, in particular the State's work around standards and assessments and evaluation system implementation.

By the end of Year 4 the State provided all planned supports for the standards transition and completed development of the full range of planned CCSS-aligned interim assessments. Teams of educators produced a total of 14 model kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) curricula in ELA, mathematics, social studies, and science. These model curricula were made available to educators statewide and form the first common, high-quality, and teacher-developed curricula in the State. While the State was successful in creating CCSS-aligned interim assessments for grades 3-11 and in developing a test-construction tool and item bank, vendor and system issues prevented

[8] Final effectiveness ratings in school year (SY) 2012-2013 did not include student growth on statewide summative assessments.

[9] Rhode Island's Priority and Warning schools are identified using the Composite Index Score as described in the State's approved request for flexibility from some components of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Rhode Island's request was approved on May 29, 2012.

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

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

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

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

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

most educators from widely using these resources in SY 2013-2014. Though all participating LEAs implemented the interim assessments to some degree in Years 3 and 4, it was not on a scale that supported the standards transition in the way the State had initially planned.

In SY 2013-2014 all Rhode Island LEAs implemented new educator evaluation systems for the second year and the State provided multiple kinds of professional development to support instructional practice. Teachers and leaders took part in the evaluation cycle by developing and tracking SLOs as well as participating in feedback conferences and classroom observations. While the final effectiveness ratings distribution resulted in Effective or Highly Effective ratings for most teachers, the State reported that the evaluation process provided important opportunities for feedback on instruction and brought greater attention to assessment and standards-based instruction. The State used feedback from the field and ratings data to make adjustments to the types of trainings it offered LEAs throughout Year 4. This targeted approach centered on areas of need among evaluators, including SLO development and approval processes, providing feedback to teachers, and observing professional practice. The State also provided new report functionality in the EPSS, which allowed building and LEA leaders to dig deeper into data coming out of evaluation system implementation. Educators also engaged in a variety of professional development opportunities, including formative assessment modules, mentoring for beginning teachers, and a series of sessions on using data to support instructional decision-making.

The Board of Education approved revised educator preparation program approval standards in November 2013 that focus on five standards: Professional Knowledge; Clinical Partnerships and Practice; Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Assessment; Program Impact; and Program Quality and Improvement. These standards increase expectations for preparation program providers to work with LEAs, include explicit language about the role of standards-based instruction in the program's curriculum, and include information about educator impact once in the classroom. In Year 4, RIDE worked with preparation programs to develop resources to implement the new standards. In addition, RIDE released educator preparation program profiles online, which include the number of program completers to attain certification and find employment in the State, evaluation data on newly hired completers, demographic data, and information on the academic achievement of candidates.

Overcoming challenges in previous grant years, the State's monitoring of and supports for PLA schools complemented each other well in Year 4. The State held quarterly meetings with school and LEA leaders to review data dashboards that included leading and lagging indicators and a discussion of evidence of the school's progress toward goals. The State reports that the quarterly meetings are building local capacity to connect school reform goals to actionable data collection and analysis. In addition, the State's planned Race to the Top supports for schools implementing intervention models continued in Year 4. School achievement and educator evaluation implementation specialists met unique needs in these schools; LEAs found their support integral and will continue funding the positions beyond the grant period. Finally, the State provided during-the-year coaching for principals in identified schools and developed and released a suite of professional development modules for educators in these schools.

## Challenges

In Year 4 the State worked to complete most of its grant activities with quality, however, a few projects faced challenges. Most notably in Year 4, the State made plans for a new approach to develop an Instructional Support System when the initial vendor discontinued product support for the IMS. The lack of a sustainable or user-friendly system in Year 4 impacted LEA access to CCSS-aligned assessments and student data, but the State's new approach has the potential to provide educators with the tools, data, and resources to support instruction, although on a condensed timeframe. The new system capitalizes on existing data infrastructure at the State and LEA levels and will ultimately provide more resources for educators than the original IMS design. In June 2014, the State released historic student data dashboards for LEA and building leaders to use, which the State hopes will increase use of the system as other functions go live throughout SY 2014-2015.

LEA implementation of teacher and leader evaluation systems occurred for the second year in SY 2013-2014, revealing ongoing challenges such as burden on principals and SLO development. While the State worked with stakeholders to adjust implementation to reduce burden on principals, the State reported that principals believed it was not enough. Recently passed legislation reduced the frequency with which teachers with Effective or Highly Effective ratings will be evaluated to two or three years, respectively. The State reported that this may diminish the connections being made between instructional feedback and discussions about student progress on an annual basis. In addition, the State reported that challenges with SLO development revealed gaps in local curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices that impacted the rigor of SLOs. In addition, final effectiveness ratings do not yet include student growth on statewide assessments for teachers of tested grades and subjects. However, the State made growth data available to educators through the EPSS as one source of data among many to inform SLO development and instructional decision-making.

As the four-year grant period drew to a close, the State's ability to sustain the level of support for LEAs was limited. Fiscal constraints prevented the State from funding State- or LEA-level work on core reforms, such as the standards and assessment transition and educator evaluation and development. During the grant period, both the State and LEAs engaged in extensive training and implementation activities that demonstrated a rigor and quality that matched the urgency of the reforms. Going forward the State will consider ways to embed its lessons and approaches from the grant period into existing work streams and with existing resources.

## Looking ahead

Rhode Island executed nearly all its Race to the Top plan by the end of the four-year grant period, with a few projects planned for the no-cost extension period. During the grant period the State added value to LEAs' efforts by drawing attention to critical implementation components, for example, by providing analyses of new data sources like the evaluation system, and by convening groups of teachers, leaders, and superintendents to discuss the assessments transition and data system updates. As of the end of Year 4, the State's fiscal constraints limited the extent to which the State could provide supports or create opportunities for LEA collaboration, which will require the State to consider alternative strategies.

Having developed a wealth of training and resources, the continuation of core reform work achieved during the grant period will likely be driven by LEAs. Many of the resources developed by the State over the last four years will continue to be available to LEAs, building leaders, and teachers after the grant period. The collaborative curriculum development work produced 14 curricula that will continue to be available for local use and modification. In addition, LEAs will have access through the Instructional Support System to historic student data, dashboard and reporting functions, and CCSS-aligned interim assessments. The formative assessment professional development course and using data turnkey exercises will be available on the RIDE website for future use. These resources may be critical in supporting local development of comprehensive assessment systems that provide actionable student data. Regarding educator evaluation systems, the State and LEAs made considerable progress in building the structure and practice of observation, student achievement goal setting, and feedback cycles. The EPSS will continue to be available to LEAs after the grant period and offers mechanisms for leaders to analyze evaluation system data to inform decision-making.

Some of the State's Race to the Top projects will be sustained while others will be discontinued after the grant period ends. For example, the State plans to continue using EdStat as an accountability structure within the agency for high-priority work streams. While the induction program will not continue as a State-operated program, a group of LEAs agreed to continue using the same model that was used during the grant period. Further, some programs, like TNTP and the Turnaround Leaders Program, will not continue due to funding and capacity challenges, respectively. The virtual mathematics modules will continue to be available for LEAs' optional use, and the project-based learning pilot will inform local efforts but will not continue as a State initiative.

The Department approved the State for a no-cost extension of some of its Race to the Top projects in SY 2014-2015, or Year 5. During this timeframe the State will continue to develop the Instructional Support System, a more sustainable option for a statewide instructional data system to replace the IMS. In Year 5, the State plans to release the CCSS-aligned interim assessment functionality and a teacher resource library through the Instructional Support System. Focusing in on a State priority related to data-driven decision-making, the State will support local efforts to analyze and use data through mini-grants ranging between $5,000 and $50,000. LEAs may work individually or with other LEAs, for example, to improve leadership data routines, use data to assess graduation readiness, or to calibrate SLOs using multiple data sources. The State also intends to develop a technology platform for professional development access and engagement, which will include all course series developed under the grant. Lastly, in Year 5, the State plans to continue supports for leaders and teachers in the lowest-achieving schools, including the professional development opportunities and job-embedded coaching developed during the grant period.

# State Success Factors

Race to the Top States are developing a comprehensive and coherent approach to education reform. This involves creating plans to build strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain the reforms initiated by the Race to the Top grant program.

## Building capacity to support LEAs

During Year 4 Rhode Island continued to use a combination of EdStat performance management sessions, the Adaptive Leadership Team, and the Internal Oversight Committee for State-level oversight of strategic education reform priorities and the progress of Race to the Top projects in supporting those priorities. The EdStat process focused on four key priority areas: Educator Excellence, Accelerating Schools toward Greatness, Data Use and Data Quality, and Standards and Assessments. Senior level leadership continued to engage in EdStat sessions, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel, Chief of Staff, Chief of Educator Quality and Instructional Effectiveness, Race to the Top Coordinator, and others. As Race to the Top projects encountered challenges or decision-making needs, the Internal Oversight Committee composed of grant-specific leaders elevated issues to the Adaptive Leadership Team composed of senior leadership across RIDE. The State maintained the EdStat routine with memos that shared the project team's information about progress, risks, and issues for decision-making with leadership. In Year 4 the State adjusted its use of EdStat by increasing oversight for projects that were at risk and high-priority, rather than monitor all Race to the Top projects. Projects not managed through EdStat were considered stable and shifted to the State's project-team monitoring through quarterly benchmarks. The State also shifted responsibility for the data elements of the EdStat memo to the project team, rather than the Performance Management Executive, which may build sustainability within RIDE for continuing EdStat routines.

The Internal Oversight Committee monitored the progress of each Race to the Top project and made sustainability recommendations for the Adaptive Leadership Team to consider. RIDE used information from implementation during the grant period and their work with LEAs to inform the fiscal year 2015 budget request. The Governor was unable to include this amount in his budget request due to other State fiscal constraints, requiring RIDE to consider sustainability options using its existing budget.

Across the State's Race to the Top projects, program teams used a combination of internal monitoring processes and LEA feedback loops to ensure implementation of Race to the Top professional development projects progressed as planned. Many of the State's projects had already begun implementation in Year 3, which allowed the State to both support LEAs in engaging with professional development and resources and to refine these offerings based on feedback. Some LEAs continued to take advantage of the State's professional development and resources or implemented them for the first time in Year 4. For example, the State released fixed-form interim assessments for grades K-12 in Year 3 and continued to support local use and reporting of these assessments in Year 4. In addition, the State used survey and implementation data from Year 3 to inform LEA technical assistance on aspects of the educator evaluation systems that needed greater attention.

During Year 4, the State made a significant change in course related to its data system, the IMS, which was intended to provide curricular resources and student data, and adjusted its internal management processes to ensure success of the project. Rather than continue the Project Management Office Coordination structure composed of a sponsor, business lead, and technical lead, RIDE centralized management with the Director of the Office of Data Analysis and Research and instituted SCRUM to manage the development process.[11] By the end of Year 4 there was some evidence that the changes in approach might mitigate many of the State's challenges in developing this particular data system.

## Support and accountability for LEAs

Throughout Year 4 RIDE continued to convene groups of LEAs in CLO sessions. In the final year of the grant period LEAs continued to submit quarterly reports on their progress in each reform area and the State shared data memos on LEA progress with the leadership teams that attended CLO sessions. The State adjusted its approach to CLO sessions to reflect the fact that LEAs were in the midst of implementation of nearly all aspects of the State's Race to the Top plan. A beginning-of-the-school-year survey revealed that LEA leaders had five priorities to discuss at the CLO sessions: indicators of school-level CCSS transition readiness; evidence used to determine professional development investments; levers for engaging stakeholders; use of instructional technology systems and strategies; and fostering cage-busting leadership. The State reflected at the end of the year, based on survey feedback, that these sessions provided a frame for LEAs to engage on these topics and met LEA needs given where they were with implementation.

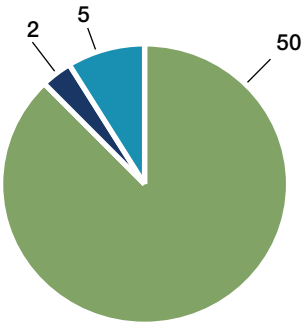
The Internal Oversight Committee engaged with LEAs regularly throughout Year 4 to ensure LEAs were on track to spend funds according to their Race to the Top plans. Most LEAs expended funds within the four-year grant period, with just five LEAs continuing work into Year 5. Some of these LEAs have reported plans to continue Race to the Top-like investments using local funds (see *Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools* for detail).

[11] SCRUM refers to an agile software development model that uses real-time decision-making processes to track the project's progress; SCRUM is particularly useful for projects that require regular testing and ongoing flexibility.

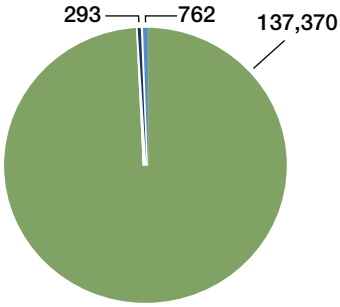
## LEA participation

Rhode Island reported 50 participating LEAs as of June 30, 2014. At the time of its Race to the Top application in June 2010, 48 LEAs were participating in the State's plan; two additional participating LEAs joined the grant during Year 1; in Year 2, two charter schools joined as involved LEAs. As depicted in the graphs below, LEAs participating in the State's plan serve 99.2 percent of the State's K-12 students and 99.3 percent of its students living in poverty.

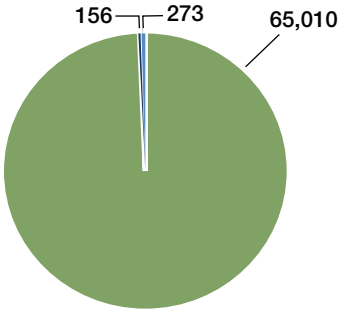
### LEAs participating in Rhode Island's Race to the Top plan




### K-12 students in LEAs participating in Rhode Island's Race to the Top plan




### Students in poverty in LEAs participating in Rhode Island's Race to the Top plan




- Participating LEAs (#)
- Involved LEAs (#)
- Other LEAs (#)
- K-12 students (#) in participating LEAs
- K-12 students (#) in involved LEAs
- K-12 students (#) in other LEAs
- Students in poverty (#) in participating LEAs
- Students in poverty (#) in involved LEAs
- Students in poverty (#) in other LEAs

The number of K-12 students and number of students in poverty statewide are calculated using pre-release data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD). Students in poverty statewide comes from the CCD measure of the number of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch subsidy (commonly used as a proxy for the number of students who are economically disadvantaged in a school) under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program. The students in poverty statewide and number of K-12 students statewide counts are aggregations of school-level counts summed to State-level counts. Statistical procedures were applied systematically by CCD to these data to prevent potential disclosure of information about individual students as well as for data quality assurance; consequently State-level counts may differ from those originally reported by the State. Please note that these data are considered to be preliminary as of September 4, 2014.

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

# State Success Factors

## Stakeholder engagement

The Rhode Island Race to the Top Steering Committee continued to meet quarterly throughout Year 4 to receive updates on the State's progress and provide feedback on communication strategies.[12] In addition, RIDE maintained its communication efforts with education leaders through weekly field memos, curriculum director meetings, regional superintendent meetings, and the Commissioner's Twitter and Facebook feeds. Rather than focus on work under the Race to the Top title, the State's communication efforts shifted in Year 4 to emphasize the work LEAs are engaged in regardless of the funding source. For example, a newspaper series highlighted the success of the induction program among beginning teachers. Also, RIDE worked closely with the Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association (RISSA) to make adjustments to evaluation systems to improve implementation. While the State continues to engage stakeholders in various ways, there was increased opposition to some of the reforms in Year 4, particularly around implementation of new evaluation systems. For more information on how RIDE addressed this concern, please see *Great Teachers and Leaders*.

## Continuous improvement

The State's suite of performance management processes, including EdStat, CLO sessions, and the Adaptive Leadership Team, continued to provide the data and discussion opportunities for the State to track its progress and respond to challenges. Most notably in Year 4, the State made plans for a new approach to develop an Instructional Support System when the initial vendor discontinued product support. The lack of a sustainable or user-friendly system in Year 4 impacted LEA access to CCSS-aligned assessments and student data. The State's new approach has the potential to provide educators with the tools, data, and resources to support instruction, although on a condensed timeframe. For many of the State's other projects, the State continued LEA supports through Year 4. The State responded to feedback from SY 2012-2013 implementation of evaluation systems into SY 2013-2014 implementation by focusing on areas of LEA need given multiple years of implementation (see *Great Teachers and Leaders* for more detail). The State's implementation efforts with LEAs during the grant period also revealed areas for integration in State and LEA work, in particular between assessment practices, data routines, and using data to inform decision-making. As the State's work in these areas matured, trainings and messaging signaled the importance of integrating these activities at the LEA, school, and classroom levels.

## Successes and challenges

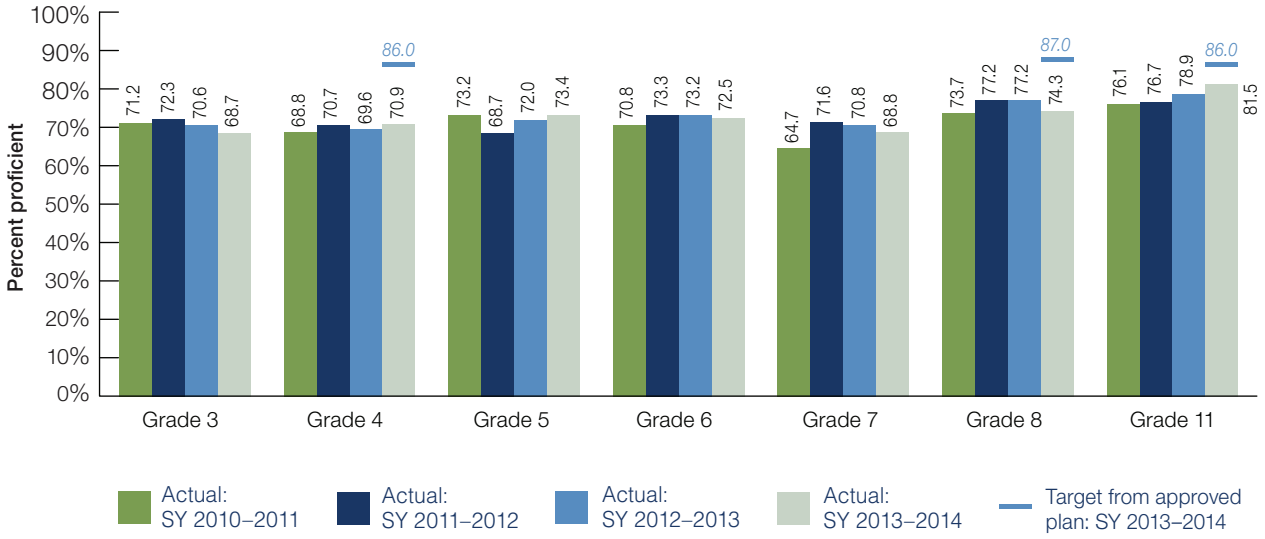
Over the course of the grant period, Rhode Island experienced success in developing and disseminating professional development and resources to support local implementation of the standards transition, supports for teachers and leaders, new evaluation systems, and supports targeted for the lowest-achieving schools, among other projects. The State's close management of these projects through EdStat and other processes ensured their deployment to LEAs, but work remains in ensuring that LEAs have the capacity to integrate implementation across the reform areas. The State experienced a significant challenge with its data system, which was intended to support educator integration of student data, CCSS-aligned assessment resources, and professional development. The State's plans to develop a user-friendly and sustainable Instructional Support System in Year 5 that will support the State's ability to lay the foundation for comprehensive reform. Finally, while the State remains committed to Race to the Top, its fiscal constraints make sustainability of progress unclear. RIDE and LEAs may have to consider flexibility in budgets to determine which work streams are priorities to continue for educators and students.

[12] The Race to the Top Steering Committee was composed of leaders from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Governor's office, and the non-profit and business communities. The Steering Committee serves in an advisory capacity and acts to engage education stakeholders and connect RIDE to previously unengaged constituencies, such as business and community leaders.

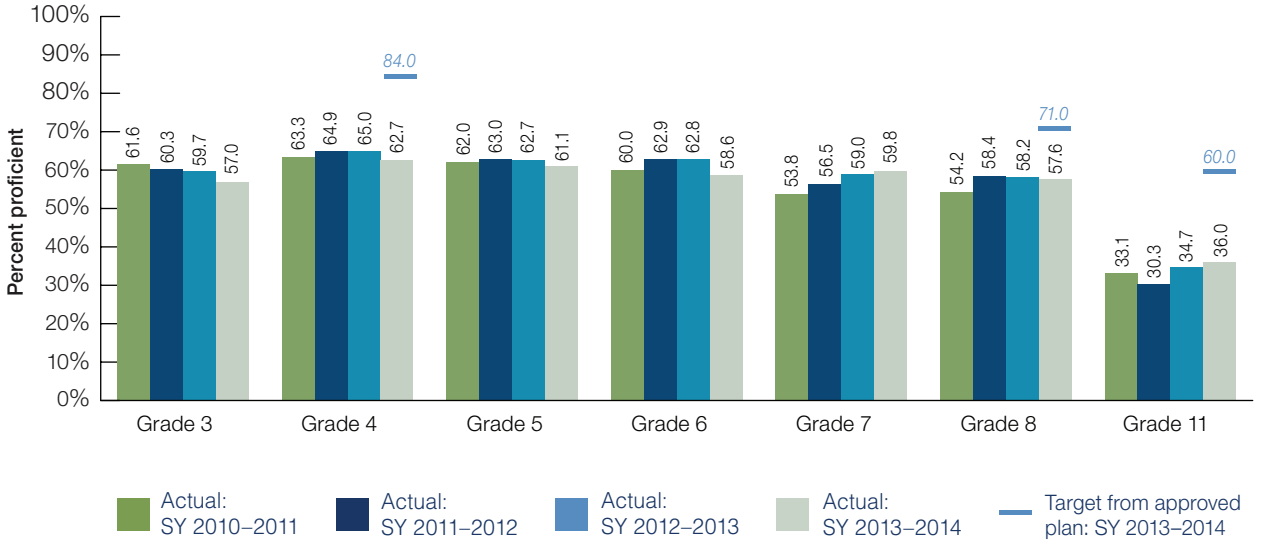
## Student outcomes data

Results from the State's ELA assessment over the grant period were mixed across grades, except for grade 11, which showed an increase in proficiency from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2013-2014. On the State's mathematics assessment, proficiency rates increased over the grant period in grades 7, 8, and 11, but decreased in all other grades.

### Student proficiency on Rhode Island's ELA assessment




### Student proficiency on Rhode Island's mathematics assessment




Preliminary SY 2013-2014 data reported as of: November 10, 2014.

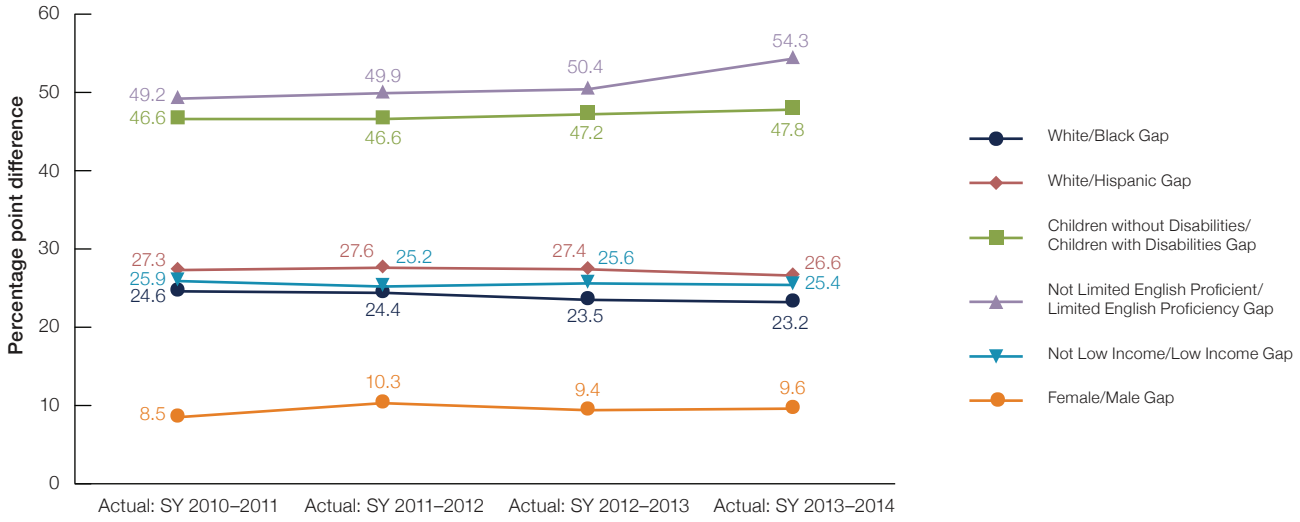
NOTE: Over the last four years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

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

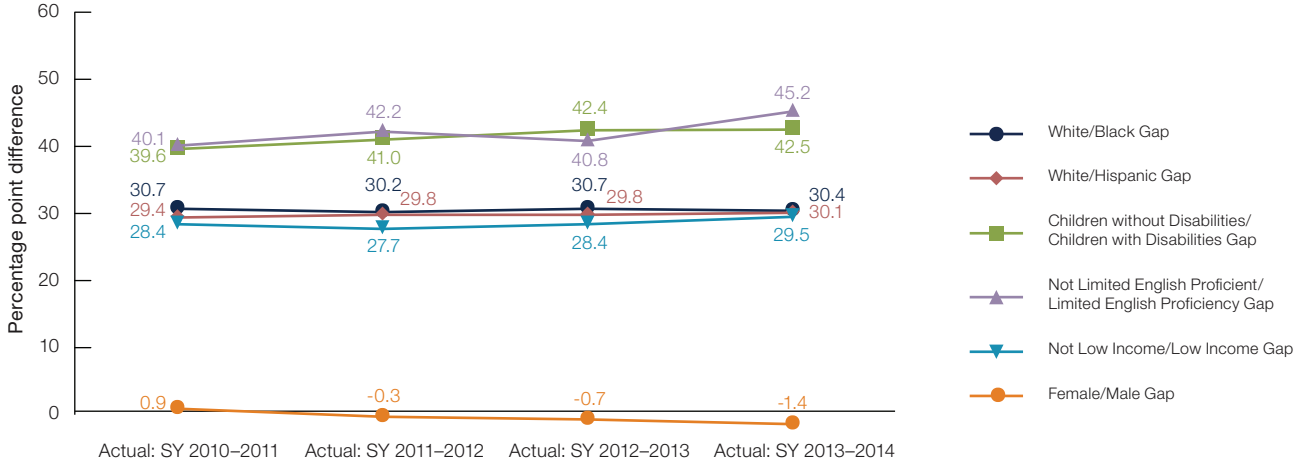
# State Success Factors

From SY 2010-2011 to SY 2013-2014, achievement gaps on the State's ELA and mathematics assessments remained about the same across most sub-groups. Over this time period the achievement gap between not limited English proficient and limited English proficient students increased in both subjects.

## Achievement gap on Rhode Island's ELA assessment




## Achievement gap on Rhode Island's mathematics assessment




Preliminary SY 2013-2014 data reported as of: November 10, 2014.

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

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

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

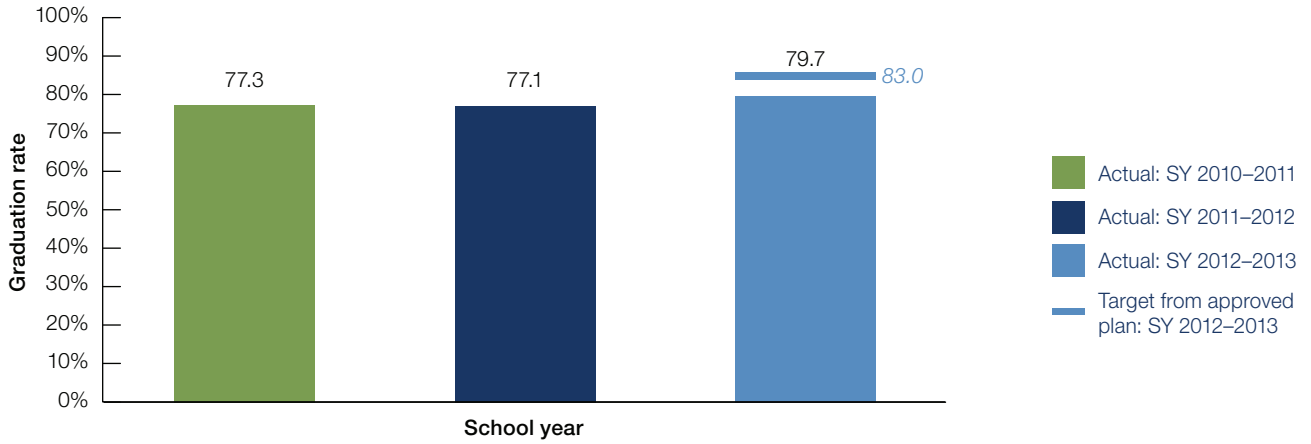
NOTE: Over the last four years, a number of States adopted new assessments and/or cut scores.

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

# State Success Factors

The State's high school graduation rate increased from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2012-2013. Rhode Island's college enrollment rate also increased from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2013-2014.

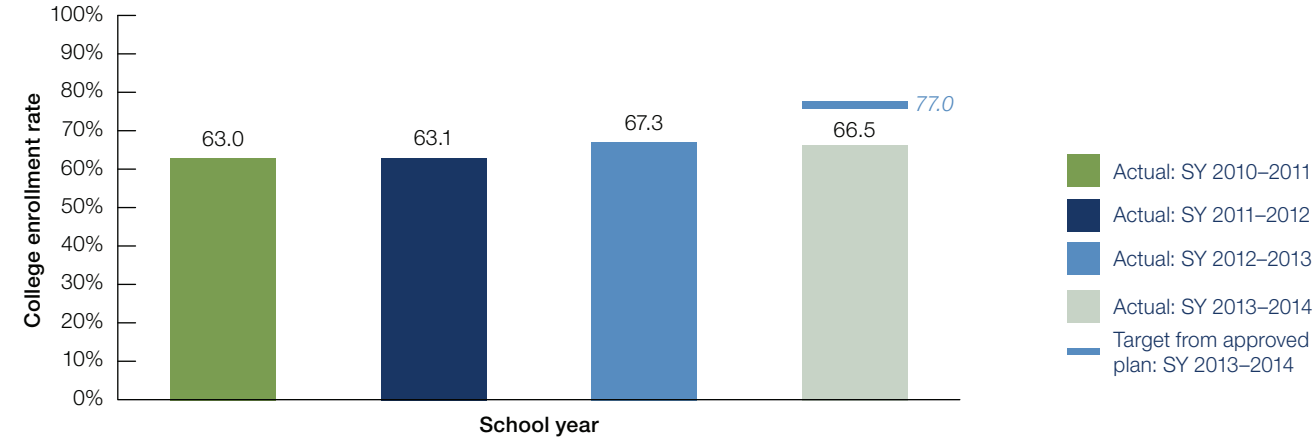
## High school graduation rate




Preliminary SY 2012-2013 data reported as of: September 15, 2014.

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

## College enrollment rate




Preliminary SY 2013-2014 data reported as of: October 16, 2014.

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

The Department provided guidance to States regarding the reporting period for college enrollment. For SY 2013-2014 data, States report on the students who graduated from high school in SY 2011-2012 and enrolled in an institution of higher education (IHE).

# Standards and Assessments

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

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

In July 2010, the Rhode Island Board of Regents adopted the CCSS, and committed to fully implementing the CCSS statewide in SY 2013-2014. Rhode Island joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) as a governing member in 2010 and will adopt PARCC's assessments in SY 2014-2015.

## Standards

By the end of Year 4, Rhode Island LEAs completed their work to create model curricula and CCSS-aligned lesson plans and units. With vendor support, teacher teams from groups of LEAs met over the course of the grant period to ultimately develop three ELA, six mathematics, one social studies, and four science K-12 model curricula. In Year 4, an additional 155 Rhode Island educators were involved in this curriculum development work. Leaders at some LEAs developed curriculum transition plans and received training on CCSS walkthrough protocols. Each completed curriculum was available to all educators statewide through a RIDE-hosted SharePoint site. Many LEAs reported to RIDE that the State's investment in teacher-developed curriculum produced the first common curriculum in the State that is being used widely and provides a foundation for ongoing curriculum revision.

Following the initial training in Years 1 through 3 for all ELA and mathematics teachers, called Study of the Standards, in Year 4 RIDE provided supplemental professional development on the instructional shifts in the CCSS. Over 1,800 educators attended these sessions, which represents about 15 percent of all teachers. To increase community engagement and understanding of the new standards, RIDE leveraged funding from a GE grant to provide training and stipends to 18 educators to act as CCSS ambassadors. The State's CCSS Ambassadors developed their own presentation materials to engage with community members and parents in over 30 community events.

In Year 4, the State funded several professional learning community grants to support local efforts to dig deeper into the CCSS in grade bands and subject-specific groups. The State reports that LEAs' proposals for these mini-grants, and others funded through State funds, have demonstrated that LEAs are thinking strategically about their preparedness for the transition and that LEAs seek opportunities to work with other LEAs.

## Assessments

During Year 4 the State continued to make State-developed CCSS-aligned interim assessments available for local use but encountered challenges with reporting functionality in the IMS. In SY 2013-2014, LEAs implemented these grade 3-11 assessments in ELA and mathematics, which model the type of questions that students will see when the State transitions to PARCC in SY 2014-2015. Educators from six LEAs administered 2,236 interim assessments in the fall testing window, and educators statewide administered 1,603 assessments in the winter window. These implementation figures confirm a much lower participation rate than during SY 2012-2013, when over 30,000 interim assessments were administered over the year. However, the figures align with the State's expectations given that the State warned against widespread use of the assessments until the reporting functionality could be addressed. As an interim solution, RIDE provided paper score reports to educators who administered these assessments; however, these reports often were not timely to support instructional decision-making (see *Data Systems to Support Instruction* for the State's solution going forward). Though all participating LEAs implemented the interim assessments to some degree in Years 3 and 4, it was not on a scale that supported the standards transition in the way the State had initially planned.

The State released a test-construction tool in fall 2014 after delays in Year 3 associated with the scoring and reporting of functionality in the IMS. In addition, the State worked with a vendor to develop, vet, and release interim assessment items for an item bank. The item bank includes ELA and mathematics CCSS-aligned items in grades 3-11, science items that are aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards, and social studies items that are aligned to the Rhode Island grade-span expectations. Educators may use these items to develop their own interim assessments, to use during lessons, or for professional development purposes. RIDE continued to vet and add items throughout Year 4 to the test-construction tool and the item bank. The State continued to ensure items were of high quality and aligned to standards. Ongoing reporting functionality issues within the IMS limited educators' use of the item bank and test-construction tool in Year 3, though usage increased after the State implemented a web-based scoring and reporting system in fall 2014, in Year 4. As of March 2014, educators created 176 tests using the tool that students could access online. The State reports that some educators may have printed assessments and distributed them to multiple students but that use in this way cannot be captured through the reporting system. While the State's vendor contract produced the expected number of items, challenges with ensuring quality caused delays such that educators will not have access to the full complement of items until SY 2014-2015. The State reports it plans to continue item development beyond the grant period.

# Standards and Assessments

In SY 2013-2014, LEAs continued to use the formative assessment professional development that the State first made available in SY 2012-2013. Thirty-six of 52 LEAs implemented the professional development series, an increase from 15 LEAs in the previous school year. The State supported local implementation by training 90 facilitators who guide the course at schools, which includes individual modules and a professional learning community focused on formative assessment practice. A mid-year survey indicated that 90 percent of participants reported that they understood the role of formative assessment as part of a comprehensive assessment system. RIDE received feedback on how to improve the modules, which will inform modifications to the course for SY 2014-2015, after the grant period. During Year 4, these modules were available via RIDEmap, a State-hosted platform, which is not able to capture usage data. It is unclear whether the State will be able to monitor use of this professional development in the future until it migrates the content to a platform with better functionality, possibly in 2015.

Given challenges with the IMS, the State continued to keep LEA- and school-level leadership informed of developments, timelines, and progress updates related to accessing materials to support the standards transition. In spring 2014, the State shared with LEA leaders its plans to develop an Instructional Support System that would provide educators with student data, assessment scoring and reporting, and other resources (see *Data Systems to Support Instruction* for more detail). In Year 4, the State continued to communicate via weekly field memos, updates on the RIDE website, and quarterly Comprehensive Assessment System newsletters. RIDE's Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness used quarterly meetings with LEA-level curriculum directors to provide more in-depth technical assistance and solicit feedback.

## Supporting educators in implementing common standards

The State's approach to supporting LEAs in the standards transition in Year 4 was similar to previous years in that it focused on curriculum, assessments, and professional development. Groups of educators continued to meet in subject-specific cohorts to develop model curricula, which have resulted in multiple models of the State's first K-12 curriculum described above. State-developed interim assessments and the test-construction tool were available to educators to support the transition but were not widely implemented due to technology and usability challenges. In fully transitioning to CCSS, LEAs reported struggling with identifying high-quality and aligned instructional resources, though the State reported that educators are becoming less likely to lean on textbooks as curriculum.

Survey respondents identified the formative assessment professional development modules as successful and noted that they provided a common language for the cohorts of educators that participated. The course series also advanced the State's goals in supporting LEAs as they develop coordinated assessment plans that provide actionable data on student achievement and growth.

## Successes and challenges

As this portion of the State's Race to the Top plan draws to a close, the State successfully supported LEAs in the standards transition by providing avenues for local curriculum development, creating CCSS-aligned assessments, and creating training and guidance on assessment practices. In Year 4 the State's educator-led curriculum development work produced 4 new model curricula in ELA, mathematics, and science, in addition to the 10 model curricula created in Year 3. While the State was successful in creating CCSS-aligned interim assessments for grades 3-11 and in developing a test-construction tool and item bank, vendor and system issues prevented most educators from widely using these resources in SY 2013-2014.

Given that the curriculum portion of the IMS would not continue after SY 2013-2014, the State developed a plan to create a different system so educators can administer, score, and report results for interim assessments. Development of this system through fall 2014 provides another window for educators to use these assessments. RIDE's standards and assessments work during the grant period supported the State's efforts in Year 4 to provide guidance on LEA comprehensive assessment systems that integrate standards and assessments with instruction and educator feedback. RIDE's release of the new Instructional Support System may support LEAs' capacity to bring these components together and improve implementation.

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

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

## Accessing and using State data

During SY 2013-2014, the State and its LEAs were in their second year of implementation of a variety of new data systems that were initially released in SY 2012-2013. These systems range in purpose from processing teacher certification applications to collecting and storing evaluation data to providing data to inform student-centered instructional and intervention decisions. The State's success in its second year of data system implementation varied depending on the system, with the State focused specifically on designing and beginning development of a new Instructional Support System. The State reports that each data system complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

After learning in Year 3 that the vendor would no longer support the IMS product, the State worked in Year 4 to identify a sustainable solution. With support from the Department's RSN Instructional Improvement and Data System Community of Practice, the State considered alternative approaches to the IMS and determined that the most sustainable option was to integrate existing data sources and systems with code being used by the Georgia Department of Education. The State began development of the new system, the Instructional Support System, in Year 4 and will continue development into the no-cost extension period with a phased release beginning in summer 2014.

The development and deployment of the Instructional Support System will occur in three phases, two of which were completed in Year 4. In the first phase the State worked to create dashboards with five years of historic student data on assessments, attendance, enrollment, and growth model data. In spring 2014 the State held training with educators in two LEAs to pilot the dashboards and obtain feedback to improve them. After making some adjustments, the State released this level of functionality statewide in June 2014 and incorporated Instructional Support System training in other summer trainings, such as the evaluation system academies. During summer 2014 the State worked through the second phase in which the State developed the assessment functionality of the system for the already-developed interim assessments, item bank, and curriculum documents (see *Standards and Assessments* for detail on these items). By October 2014, Rhode Island LEAs should be able to access these assessment and curriculum materials through the Instructional Support System and will be able to score and report student responses within the system.

During winter and spring 2014, the State worked quickly to establish a project management routine, called SCRUM, to ensure each component of the system was clearly laid out and timed. In addition, RIDE shifted management of the Instructional Support System project from the Project Management Office Coordination structure used in Years 1 through 3 to the Director of the Office of Data Analysis and Research, which manages existing RIDE technology systems. The State reported that this shift increased collaboration between RIDE and the new vendor and ensured that the new system is integrated with RIDE's existing technology infrastructure. With the assessments and curriculum materials already developed, project teams were less involved in the system development stage in SY 2013-2014. As of the end of Year 4 there was evidence that the State's change in approach to management of the Instructional Support System was leading to a better product than the IMS.

The State continued to make assessments, assessment items, and curriculum documents available to educators through the IMS in Year 4. Knowing that vendor support would be discontinued, RIDE advised LEAs to limit their use of the IMS and to discontinue training on it. The State developed alternative methods for educators to score and report interim assessments, but the results often came back to educators too late to inform instruction. Most educators did not use the IMS to access their curriculum documents. Challenges with the IMS have reduced local support for State-developed data systems and have resulted in limited access to the data sources needed for the standards transition and the feedback and supports aspects of the evaluation system. The Instructional Support System should be responsive to educator needs in the future.

In Year 4 the State supported LEAs in adopting one of two methods for incorporating early warning indicators into school-level practices. After discontinuing use of the IMS for this purpose, the State made the early warning indicators developed in Year 2 available to LEAs with robust student information systems (SIS). These SIS vendors incorporated the indicators into their systems for school guidance counselors to identify students for interventions. LEAs without robust SIS could access static dashboards through RIDEmap, a State-managed privacy-protected system, where the early warning indicators are applied with each LEA's student data. As of August 2014, the State reported 404 unique visitors and over 3,400 page views to the RIDEmap dashboards, which indicated a level of use that matched regular use by guidance counselors and school leaders, the expected users of these dashboards. While these methods provide LEAs with information necessary for identifying students at risk of not graduating, they do not necessarily support local practice in documenting or tracking interventions to determine their effectiveness on student outcomes. The State is exploring sustainable solutions to provide LEAs with a data system that does this.

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

Portions of the State's online certification system, called eCert, released in Year 3 continued to be used in Year 4, and the State worked to develop and release additional components of this data system. The public-facing Public Educator Verification Portal, launched in May 2013, allows anyone to search for and verify work assignments of Rhode Island educators, administrators, and support professionals. In addition, RIDE processed all 600 applications for teacher certification completed online through the "My eCert" function for the first time in SY 2013-2014. Individuals with Rhode Island teaching certificates must now renew their licenses online and can access their certificate status online. The State reports that shifting this government function from paper to the web has greatly reduced paperwork management and burden and improved access and reliability for both RIDE and applicants. Required LEA reporting of personnel data now occurs through eCert, in the Personnel Assignment System. RIDE worked in fall 2013 to improve the data quality of this information. Finally, in fall 2013 the eCert system provided three new features for superintendents to verify educator certification, request priority processing for certification applications, and verify the highly qualified status of educators.

The EPSS was greatly improved for educator use in SY 2013-2014. All LEAs have access to EPSS regardless of the evaluation system being implemented and all are required to submit final effectiveness ratings and component ratings through the system. While the system continued to offer a variety of tools to support implementation of evaluation systems, local use varied. Some LEAs reported using the EPSS for scheduling observations and conferences, sharing feedback with educators, and tracking progress while other LEAs used it only to transmit final effectiveness ratings. In Year 4 the State launched new functions within EPSS to support school and LEA leader use of the rich data that results from evaluation system implementation. The rubric-explorer reports provide leaders with aggregate data showing results for each component of the observation rubric across selected teachers. These reports are intended to support decision-making around professional development needs, for example, for teachers of a certain grade band or subject area. In addition, the EPSS provides leaders with detailed caseload review reports, trend explorer reports, and an evaluation data report. The State tracks use of the EPSS in conjunction with educator evaluation system implementation, but only for submission of final effectiveness ratings.

In Year 4 the State continued to convene the Data Governance Board to oversee data collection activities through Race to the Top-developed systems and other State systems. The State recognizes that data collection and quality is a critical growth area for LEAs and is developing strategies for addressing this skill set. The State reports that most Rhode Island LEAs no longer need significant support to upload student, teacher, and course information, which was a barrier to implementation in Year 3. As more LEAs engage with the Instructional Support System and its resources, it will be critical that RIDE continues to emphasize data quality since the system's success relies on accurate and regularly updated local data.

## Using data to improve instruction

During SY 2013-2014, the State completed its second year of a 10-day professional development series on data use with 156 new schools. The State was able to serve 97 percent of the State's schools with this professional learning opportunity during Years 3 and 4 of the grant period. The year-long training cycle pairs a data coach with a school data leadership team (SDLT) and engages them in a combination of professional development modules, onsite coaching, and action planning. During the year, data coaches work closely with each SDLT to provide tailored onsite coaching depending on the school's needs and level of implementation. Feedback from the series has been overwhelmingly positive, with 81 percent of SY 2013-2014 participants agreeing that the professional development improved the data practices at their schools and 92 expressing confidence in supporting their colleagues in developing data practices. SDLT members have expressed being highly satisfied with their data coaches. The State reports that the appetite for this kind of professional development is high as it builds capacity to use data for a variety of purposes, such as student instruction, educator observations, and SLO development. SDLTs that completed the training cycle in SY 2012-2013 expressed a desire for continued supports; planned funding opportunities for SY 2014-2015 may meet some of these needs. All training documents, turnkey exercises, and supplemental materials are available on the RIDE website for educators to continue using.

### Analyzing and using data to inform instruction

School Data Leadership Teams (SDLTs) participating in Rhode Island's Using Data professional development worked as a cohort with other schools with similar needs. Each SDLT went through the following series of trainings and support over the course of school year (SY) 2013-2014:

- *Three-day training:* SDLT cohort participates in trainings on foundational data analysis skills and plan for implementation
- *Off-site workshops:* SDLT cohort learns advance data analysis skills using local educational agency- (LEA) and school-specific data
- *Onsite coaching:* Data coaches provide job-embedded support and feedback to each SDLT
- *Sustainability planning:* SDLT develops plans for continuing data practices

# Data Systems to Support Instruction

## Successes and challenges

By the end of Year 4 the State had successfully released a number of critical data systems, began development of a new Instructional Support System, and supported statewide implementation of a data use course. In combination, these systems and resources have increased educator access to data and capacity to use that data for various kinds of decision-making. The EPSS supports local leaders in collecting and tracking implementation of the educator evaluation system, and new reports increase access to data about teacher and leader skills and areas for growth. The State's eCert system has effectively shifted some RIDE functions to a web-based format and has streamlined certification and data collection processes for educators. Finally, the State was able to provide early warning indicators to LEA and school leaders to support identification of students at risk of not graduating, though work remains in tracking the effectiveness of interventions. Together these systems create the data infrastructure to provide teachers and leaders with a wealth of information about students and teachers. The State's work to fully develop the Instructional Support System will complete the suite of tools available to educators.

In Year 4 the State charted a new path to create a user-friendly data system that provides educators with student data from previous school years, assessment materials, and curriculum documents. The State's development of the Instructional Support System has had early success in providing educators with historic data dashboards, but achieving widespread use will be challenging given the negative experience with the IMS. The State will know more about uptake of the new system in Year 5. Problems with the IMS affected LEAs' ability to access curriculum and instructional resources, State assessment data, and interim assessments. It is critical that the State focus on LEA engagement, training, and use to ensure that the new system supports educator practice and instructional decision-making.

# Great Teachers and Leaders

Race to the Top States are developing comprehensive systems of educator effectiveness by supporting high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals, ensuring equitable access to effective teachers and principals, improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs, and providing effective supports to all educators. As part of these efforts, Race to the Top States are designing and implementing rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals; conducting annual evaluations that include timely and constructive feedback; and using evaluation information to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, and tenure decisions.

## Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals

In Year 4, Rhode Island continued to support two alternative certification programs: the Rhode Island Teaching Fellows (operated by TNTP) and TFA. Both increased their cohort sizes. The SY 2013-2014 Rhode Island Teaching Fellows cohort included 25 new teachers in English, mathematics, and science. This represents the largest TNTP cohort in the State. According to survey data, 75 percent of principals rated TNTP teachers as "much better than," or "better than," other first-year teachers. Local economic constraints and the State's inability to continue funding led TNTP to decide to no longer continue the program after the current cohort completes its commitment in SY 2013-2014. In SY 2013-2014, TFA placed 31 corps members in Rhode Island classrooms. In fall 2013, TFA proposed becoming an alternative certification provider for secondary education to meet local needs in high-needs schools. The proposal is currently being reviewed. TFA successfully recruited 31 corps members for SY 2014-2015.

The State-operated alternative certification program for principals, the Aspiring Turnaround Leaders Program, continued to support its first cohort of leaders and welcomed its second cohort of eight candidates in SY 2013-2014. The program's first cohort of four leaders was hired into leadership positions at four of the State's priority and warning schools and received onsite coaching supports and mentors. In preparation for the second cohort, the State revised content and curriculum for the SY 2013-2014 program based on feedback from an advisory council convened by the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity's Principal Residency Network. The second cohort of aspiring leaders engaged with this curriculum, which included coaching, coursework, residency experiences, and mentorship. The State and vendor jointly facilitated the Turnaround Leaders Program curriculum. Seven candidates in the second cohort will be leaders in Rhode Island schools in SY 2014-2015. The State was unable to find

a suitable university partner to continue the program after the grant period. As a result, the State plans to support the second cohort of leaders through SY 2014-2015 and then discontinue the program in the State.

## Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

During SY 2013-2014, all Rhode Island LEAs completed their second year of implementation of new evaluation systems for teachers and building leaders and LEAs completed their first year of gradual implementation of new evaluation systems for support professionals. As in Year 3, four evaluation systems were implemented across the State that meet the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation System Standards and include both observation and student growth components: 35 LEAs and 15 public charter schools use the Rhode Island model evaluation system (RI model); six LEAs use the Innovation model; one LEA uses the Coventry model; and one charter LEA uses the Learning Community Teacher Evaluation System. In Year 4, for all Rhode Island teachers and building leaders the growth component of the evaluation model was represented by SLOs. SLOs are long-term, measurable academic goals that educators set for their students. The SLO process requires educators to focus on priority content in a subject area, define sources of evidence of mastery or progress, and set targets for student mastery or progress. Educators' SY 2013-2014 final effectiveness ratings are the second set of ratings that determine certification renewal. Statewide, 98 percent of teachers and 98.7 percent of building administrators were rated Effective or Highly Effective at the end of SY 2013-2014. The State's plan included growth on summative assessments for teachers of tested grades and subjects as part of the growth component in final SY 2013-2014 ratings. However, final ratings in SY 2013-2014 did not include summative assessment growth for teachers of tested grades and subjects. Rather, the State provided superintendents with growth data to share with principals and teachers to support beginning-of-the-year conferences, SLO development, and instructional practice.

### Statewide implementation

All building leaders and educators went through the entire evaluation system cycle for the second full year. This process included rubric-based observations, submission of artifacts, development and measurement of SLOs, and feedback conferences. Prior to the start of SY 2013-2014, the State worked with the RISSA to respond to feedback that implementing evaluation systems caused significant burden for building leaders. RISSA and RIDE agreed to a differentiated evaluation process for teachers to alleviate the burden on building leaders. The process maintained the requirement of an annual evaluation for every teacher but differentiated the number of evaluation conferences and the number and kind of observations in a school year depending on the teacher's final effectiveness rating from the previous year. The State reported that while the differentiated approach helped with capacity concerns, RISSA and the Rhode Island Association of School Principals did not believe it was sufficient to alleviate burden.

In June 2014, the Rhode Island legislature passed Rhode Island House Bill 7096 which, effective August 14, 2014, adjusts the frequency of evaluations to every three years for tenured teachers with Highly Effective ratings and to every two years for tenured teachers with Effective ratings. The State reports that such a measure may impact the fidelity of evaluation system implementation and would limit the amount of feedback teachers would get. Since passage, the State released guidance to superintendents and principals on how to stagger the implementation cycle to reduce burden. In the State's application and throughout the grant period, every educator was to go through the evaluation cycle every year.

Throughout SY 2013-2014 the State demonstrated strong continuous improvement practices and engagement with the field to support LEAs not only in completing the evaluation cycle, but in doing it well. In fall 2013 RIDE held regional feedback sessions with superintendents. In these meetings RIDE shared multiple aggregate LEA-specific data with superintendents: LEA-level effectiveness data, New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) data, Student Growth Percentile data, survey data, professional development expenditure data, and summer training attendance data. RIDE used these data to inform a conversation about how evaluation results could inform professional development decisions. The State also provided superintendents with aggregated NECAP student growth data for the students each of their teachers taught in the previous school year. The purpose of sharing this information was to inform beginning-of-the-year conferences, SLO development, and instructional practice.

To better understand the quality of SLOs in the State, RIDE established data-sharing agreements with four LEAs to examine 131 SY 2013-2014 SLOs across content areas and grade levels. The SLOs were measured by priority of content, rigor, and quality of evidence; quality was measured by five ratings from "exceeds expectations" to "significantly below expectations." While the audit revealed that most SLOs did not meet expectations, RIDE reported that several SLOs would have become "meets expectations" with a few minor adjustments. Together with survey feedback, the audit reinforced the need for additional supports on assessment literacy and target setting, which the State created for educators to use in spring 2014.

The winter 2014 survey provided during-the-year feedback about completion and fidelity and quality of implementation during SY 2013-2014 and indicated improvements in teacher and principal perceptions since the SY 2012-2013 survey. Survey respondents in 2013 represented 90 percent of Rhode Island LEAs and over 70 percent of all teachers and principals. As of the time of the survey, 87 percent of teachers and 96 percent of administrators reported making some change to their practice as a result of feedback received, as compared to 66 percent last year. Seventy-two percent of teachers reported that the observation feedback and scores were more accurate in SY 2013-2014, as compared to 53 percent of teachers saying this

in SY 2012-2013. Regarding SLOs, 29 percent of teachers believed the SLO/Student Outcome Objectives (SOO) approval processes were more rigorous this year than last, as compared to 70 percent of administrators who believed this.

The State made individual teacher and principal student growth data available on the EPSS in fall 2013. Through the winter 2014 survey, the State learned that just 21 percent of teachers with NECAP growth data had accessed their results in the EPSS by logging in and viewing that page. As of the survey, 26 percent of teachers and 50 percent of administrators reported reviewing their growth data in the system. Though NECAP growth data was not part of final effectiveness ratings in SY 2013-2014, the State believes that individual student growth data can be one among multiple sources of data to inform instructional decisions. The State provided guidance to teachers and leaders on how to read and interpret growth model data. In January 2014 the State made fall 2013 NECAP results available online for educators to view and analyze.

RIDE staff contributed to and participated in many RSN convenings, seminars, and webinars on evaluation system implementation with colleagues in other Race to the Top States. The State was featured in RSN publications, such as the "SLO Quality Control Toolkit 2.0" and "Measures of Learning: State Approaches for Gauging Student Growth in New Evaluation Systems," and participated in a convening on SLO target setting. In addition, the State continued its participation in the Quality Evaluation Rollout workgroup.

## Evaluation supports for LEAs

In its second year of implementation in SY 2013-2014, supports for evaluation system implementation shifted from being State-led to LEA-led. The State continued to fund Intermediary Support Personnel to support all participating LEAs using the Rhode Island model evaluation system. As in previous years, evaluation Intermediary Support Personnel assisted with practical and substantive issues related to evaluation system implementation, such as scheduling conferences, analyzing data, and overseeing implementation. Most Intermediary Support Personnel transitioned into other positions during spring 2014 in anticipation of grant funds ending, which caused many LEAs to consider local sustainability options for managing evaluation system implementation.

Many Rhode Island LEAs began to successfully develop local strategies for ensuring evaluation systems were being implemented with quality. Under the State's educator evaluation system regulations, each LEA must have a District Evaluation Committee that considers solutions and may create policies to guide local implementation. For example, one LEA's District Evaluation Committee met with the goal of generating consensus about what the system should achieve in the LEA, which impacted its approach to defining growth across the LEA's schools. In another LEA the District Evaluation Committee responded to concerns about SLO quality by creating a menu of acceptable grade- and subject-level assessments to use for the evidence aspect of the SLO. In these ways, LEAs are increasing local ownership over implementation. The State continues to be involved by providing targeted supports, as described below.

### State and LEA efforts to continuously improve and use educator evaluation data

*Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)*

- Using survey feedback and ratings distributions to inform training and professional development
- Providing guidance, handbooks, and technical assistance to LEA leaders
- Creating reports that display trends in evaluation results and sharing reports with superintendents

*LEAs*

- Creating District Evaluation Committees to work through local issues with implementation
- Using evaluation results to inform professional development needs
- Establishing LEA-specific policies and standards for developing Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

## State training and dissemination of resources

Results from SY 2012-2013 surveys of educators, the statewide ratings distributions, and stakeholder feedback informed the State's approach to training and technical assistance to evaluators for SY 2013-2014 implementation. In particular the feedback indicated a need for supports on evaluator feedback to educators and on SLO development. During summer 2013, RIDE held one and one-half day in-person trainings for personnel evaluating teachers and one-day trainings for personnel evaluating building administrators to review changes to the system and new EPSS functions. New evaluators received four days of training. The State also held optional sessions focused on deepening understanding of the professional practice rubric and improving assessment literacy for developing SLOs. About 120 teachers from 28 LEAs attended these sessions.

Throughout SY 2013-2014 RIDE held four kinds of calibration sessions to improve the accuracy of ratings and to increase the focus on educator development. These sessions addressed approving high-quality SLOs, observing professional practice, providing feedback and development, and scoring SLOs. All participating LEAs were required to attend two of the four sessions. The State was deliberate in timing the delivery of each session to a time in the year when it would be most relevant for practice.

Challenges with creating rigorous SLOs and setting appropriate targets led the State to develop and release guidance on comprehensive

assessment systems and provide an audit tool early in SY 2013-2014. The guidance details the components and considerations for a coordinated approach to assessments within an LEA to ensure that the assessments provide actionable data and ensure all students are making progress toward learning goals. The toolkit includes an online module and a series of guidance and protocols on developing and selecting quality assessments, using baseline data, evaluating assessments, and analyzing and scoring student work. These tools were designed to be used by educators, groups of educators, or administrators in the beginning of the school year as they develop SLOs. In addition, the State released nine 8- to 10-minute modules covering a variety of SLO topics, which ranged from writing an objective statement to using the assessment toolkit to using baseline data and information in order to set SLO targets. Other modules targeted support for professionals and teachers of students with disabilities.

### Gradual implementation of evaluation systems for support professionals

Recognizing the importance of raising expectations for all personnel who impact student achievement, in SY 2013-2014 the State gradually implemented a statewide evaluation system for support professionals. This system uses SOOs and observation data to evaluate support professionals whose roles in LEAs do not fit with the educator evaluation system (*e.g.*, nurses, counselors, librarians). RIDE created a guidebook and parallel set of training materials for support professionals and opened up the EPSS for implementation. In the winter 2014 survey, 61 percent of support professionals felt their evaluator provided useful feedback on their SOOs.

### Compensation reform pilots

The State's two compensation reform pilots made considerable progress during Year 4 in two LEAs.[13] In Providence, the grant provided an opportunity to develop a model that would support more competitive salaries for principals and account for the complexity of the assignment and the individual's performance. As such, the Providence program changed principal compensation from a salary system rooted in qualifications and years of service to one based on school and student body characteristics and principal performance. Through December 2013, Providence convened a team of central office administrators and building-level principals from all grade levels to develop a new model, which would be based on a School Assignment Index (SAI). The SAI generates a base salary depending on the level of challenge presented by the school, as measured by size, academic status, and percentage of students who are in poverty, limited English proficient or have individualized education plans, and stability. In SY 2013-2014, the LEA increased the salary of its 37 principals by a percentage that matched the index (*e.g.*, an index of 0.426 results in a 4.26 percent increase in salary). The LEA committed to revise the SAI prior to SY 2016-2017 to reflect changes in data. In addition to the SAI, the Providence model established criteria for individual performance compensation based on leadership in the LEA and on principal effectiveness ratings. These bonuses of $2,000 for evaluation results and $1,000 for leadership were paid at the end of SY 2013-2014. Finally, Providence designed a career ladder structure for principals to embed in the compensation structure described above. Beginning in SY 2014-2015, principals will be differentiated into three steps: "principal," "proficient principal," and "distinguished principal." Providence will begin to use the Vanderbilt Assessment for Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) to place a principal on a step.

The second compensation pilot occurred in Barrington and focused on teacher pathways to leadership. Barrington's approach to the compensation pilot sought to diffuse leadership throughout the LEA by building skill sets among exemplary teachers who can then lead initiatives and assume responsibilities at the school level. To that end, the Barrington pilot program, called the Lead, Educate, and Promote the Profession (LEAPP) program, created a leadership pathway for teachers to prepare them for leadership roles within their schools or within the LEA. After developing the model and releasing the application process, the LEA selected a cohort of 22 educators for the LEAPP program in SY 2013-2014. These teachers, called Teacher Leader 1 or TL1s, met for 35 hours in professional learning communities to work on classroom walkthrough processes, debriefing strategies, setting strategic goals, mission development, generating and posting data charts, and using Plan, Do, Check, Act routines. A second group of teachers, called Teacher Leader 2, or TL2s, trained for their role to provide school-level leadership around continuous improvement models to ensure progress in school-level initiatives, including oversight of TL1s. The LEA is considering ways to continue the program and plans to develop a Teacher Leader 3 cohort in SY 2014-2015.

## Ensuring equitable access to effective teachers and principals

The State's funding for a statewide educator recruitment portal ended in Year 3. As a result, LEAs had to determine what version of the portal they would continue to support to deepen and broaden the recruitment pool. About 60 percent of participating LEAs signed on to use the recruitment portal using local funds beginning in SY 2013-2014. Of those that signed on about 40 percent paid for a version most similar to the one RIDE supported during the grant period, which allows for the most functionality such as posting positions, managing applications, and coordinating interviews. About 52 percent of these LEAs continued with a more basic version of the product that provides them with access to a wider applicant pool but does not provide interview coordination or other advanced functionality. The State reports that LEAs believe the recruitment portal has been successful in shifting the local applicant pool from limited and predominantly in-State to wider and including out-of-State applicants.

[13] For detailed reports and resources on each compensation pilot program, please visit http://ride.ri.gov/TeachersAdministrators/OtherToolsInformation/PerformanceBasedCompensation.

The State continued its human capital policy guidance work in SY 2013-2014, and, though LEAs are early in their implementation of these policies, the State has signaled the key policy considerations and data sources. With one year of educator evaluation data available, the State considered ways to support LEAs in using the data to make human capital policy decisions related to equitable access, hiring, and diversity. The State developed draft policy guidance documents to facilitate local conversations among local stakeholders, such as superintendents, principals, school committees, and unions. The State released the first in April 2014, titled "Implementation Assistance: Educator Evaluation – Staffing, Promotion, Tenure and Dismissal Policies and Practices." RISSA disseminated the remaining five policy documents, which are available by request from RIDE.[14] The State recognizes that the extent to which LEAs implement such policies depends on the quality of evaluation system implementation.

## Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

During Year 4 Rhode Island made significant progress toward development of an educator preparation program index and implementation of new program approval standards. After convening representatives from each of the State's postsecondary institutions, alternative preparation programs, and current educators, the State presented draft program approval standards to the Board of Education. In September 2013, the Board of Education approved the standards for public comment, and in November 2013 the standards were approved in their final form. The new standards outline five standards for program approval: Professional Knowledge; Clinical Partnerships and Practice; Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Assessment; Program Impact; and Program Quality and Improvement. The State reports that the biggest changes to the standards relate to increased expectations for preparation programs to work with LEAs, explicit language about including standards-based instruction in the program's curriculum, and a focus on the impact of the teacher once placed.

In partnership with representatives from educator preparation programs and the field, the State led a sub-committee to redesign the program approval process. The sub-committee produced a rubric outlining the extent to which a program might be rated as "meets," "approaching," or "does not meet," for a given standard. The sub-committee also provided guidelines for how the combination of ratings could come together to inform the approval category, which determines how long a program is approved for operation in the State. The State and Educator Preparation Partnership worked throughout summer 2014 to finalize the rubric definitions, process components, and evidence expectations in anticipation of piloting the entire process with one program in fall 2014. The State reports it will implement the entire process with all Rhode Island preparation programs, depending on the timing of their renewal, beginning in fall 2015.

In addition to redesigning the program approval process, the State worked to develop and release the first educator preparation program index. The index provides public data about each educator preparation program's completion, certification, employment, and evaluation data. During spring and summer 2014, the State compiled the data elements and created an online display of each index component. RIDE shared this with each program prior to releasing it publicly to ensure accuracy; programs had an opportunity to make changes or edits. RIDE released educator preparation program reports in early December 2014, which included the number of program completers to attain certification and find employment in the State, evaluation data on newly hired completers, demographic data, and information on the academic achievement of candidates.[15]

## Providing effective support to teachers and principals

The State continued its beginning teacher induction program in SY 2013-2014, for the third year, and supported LEA efforts to determine ways to sustain the program after the grant period. In Year 4 the State's induction program matched 13 full-release teachers as induction coaches with 196 beginning teachers in 38 LEAs. Both beginning teachers and induction coaches attend instruction- and coaching-specific professional development. Additional support was provided through biweekly forums and onsite coaching and classroom observations.[16] Beginning teachers also attended three seminars focused on topics aligned with the educator evaluation system. The beginning teacher induction program continues to be considered a success by a variety of education stakeholders. A mid-year survey of beginning teachers and principals with beginning teachers indicated a high level of satisfaction with the new teacher induction program. Eighty-three percent of beginning teachers and 78 percent of administrators from 32 LEAs responded; 96 percent of beginning teachers and 79 percent of administrators agreed that work with the induction coach impacted student learning. Ninety-seven percent of administrators were satisfied with the coaching provided to their beginning teachers. In fall 2013 the State worked with LEAs to develop options for local leaders to consider as the program moves beyond the grant period. As of August 2014 the State reported that a collaborative of LEAs was planning to continue the induction program for beginning teachers in those LEAs in SY 2014-2015 using the same model as was used during the grant period.

RIDE's Academy of Transformative Leadership worked with a vendor to develop virtual and in-person professional development modules

[14] The educator evaluation implementation assistance documents are titled as follows: *District Responsibilities and Opportunities*; *School Committee Policies on Evaluation*; *Staffing, Promotion, Tenure, and Dismissal Policies and Practices*; *Professional Development and Improvement Plans*; *District Ownership and Support Tools*; and *Setting Student Learning Objectives and Using Quality Assessments*.

[15] The Rhode Island Educator Preparation Program Index is available at http://www3.ride.ri.gov/RIEdPrepIndex/Default.aspx.

[16] Classroom observations with an induction and mentoring coach are separate from observations for evaluation purposes and are intended to provide beginning teachers with formative feedback and support on instructional practice.

aimed at educators in the lowest-achieving schools.[17] LEA teams from three LEAs engaged in a three-day summer session focused on building principal skills for facilitating professional learning communities. Through the Academy, the vendor also released seven face-to-face professional development sessions. For principals and their leadership teams, these modules focused on developing school leaders' capacity to implement their school reform plans using ongoing data collection, data analysis, and strategic decision-making. Teams from eight schools participated in these training modules between March and August 2013. Lastly, RIDE and New York City Leadership Academy released six online professional development modules that are available on the RIDE website through RIDE Map. The modules, designed to be used by principals, school leadership teams, and district leadership teams, cover topics related to using data for strategic planning. Because usage remained low in Year 4, the State developed plans to work with the vendor to disseminate these modules more widely during SY 2014-2015 as part of the no-cost extension year.

## Successes and challenges

In Year 4 Rhode Island made considerable progress in its teacher and leader efforts, particularly in demonstrating strong continuous improvement in its evaluation system implementation. The State's Year 4 trainings and supports were a direct outgrowth of educator experiences and feedback in Year 3. The State's calibration sessions with evaluators and engagement with superintendents around data analysis effectively signaled to the field which components of the system needed additional attention and how evaluation data could be used. The vast majority of teachers earned Effective or Highly Effective final ratings, indicating that students in these classrooms met or exceeded their SLO targets; 56.5 percent of educators and 44.1 percent of building administrators statewide received the highest possible rating for student learning, which indicates superior student mastery or progress. These results show that educators need continued work on designing and selecting assessments for SLOs, aligning assessments for varying purposes, and setting rigorous targets for student growth or mastery to ensure that the student learning component truly represents student learning outcomes. The State anticipated these outcomes and created the assessment literacy toolkit and offered calibration sessions to support educator implementation. It will take time for changes in local practice to take place. Growth on standardized assessments is not yet part of final evaluation ratings. Finally, the State's draft policy guidance provided the field with a starting point in using effectiveness data to inform decisions around equitable distribution, hiring, and diversity.

Though the State made adjustments to implementation in response to concerns from the field about burden on time and capacity to implement the full evaluation cycle, there continued to be apprehension in the field about high-stakes annual evaluations for every educator and support professional every year. Recent legislation related to teachers with Effective or Highly Effective ratings may address this issue. However, with more than 95 percent of educators in these two ratings categories, LEAs will have to be strategic in ensuring that they structure the evaluation cycle to reduce burden on principals but also provide educators with feedback to improve instruction.

The State also supported multiple alternative certification programs for teachers and leaders and saw increasing cohort sizes in Year 4. However, of the three grant-supported programs, only TFA will continue beyond the grant period. This provider places teachers in a select few traditional and charter LEAs that see value in hiring teachers from this pathway. Given that the State reports not having a statewide teacher shortage and that alternative certification programs have had limited success, the State may need to reevaluate its data to determine which populations of students need access to effective educators.

The State's educator preparation program work progressed significantly in Year 4. After making the links between programs, State certification, and employment data, the State worked closely with representatives from the educator preparation community to develop a preparation program index. The State released the initial version of the index in August 2014. In addition, the State worked with preparation program representatives and the field to develop a new approval process aligned to the new program approval standards, which will be piloted in fall 2014. The program approval standards and corresponding process bring greater emphasis to standards-based instruction and data use in K-12 schools, increase expectations for working with and for Rhode Island communities, and focus on teacher-candidate outcomes once in the classroom.

During the grant period, Rhode Island made significant progress in providing high-quality professional development for specific groups of educators. The State's induction program continued to effectively support beginning teachers as expressed by participants, coaches, and principals. Having successfully demonstrated the model during the grant period, a group of LEAs committed to implement the program beyond the grant period in the same way RIDE implemented it during the grant period. However, the State is unable to financially support it statewide after the grant period. In Year 4 the State developed professional development modules on best practices in turnaround environments for educators in the lowest-achieving schools, but the modules were not widely used due to competing priorities at the school level. Demonstrating its commitment to supporting educators in these schools, the State plans to use a blended learning approach with the modules in SY 2014-2015.

[17] In Rhode Island, Race to the Top turnaround resources are available to schools identified under 1003(g), School Improvement Grants, and schools identified using the Composite Index Score under the State's ESEA flexibility request.

# Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

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

## Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools

Since schools previously identified as lowest-achieving completed their second year of implementation intervention models in SY 2012-2013, in Year 4 no new schools implemented Race to the Top intervention models. RIDE worked closely with 31 schools, which includes the 13 already identified as persistently lowest-achieving for School Improvement Grant funding and an additional 18 schools identified as the lowest-achieving through the Composite Index Score, as described in the State's approved Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver.[18] Many of the Race to the Top supports described below are available or being implemented in identified schools.

Students in several Rhode Island schools identified as lowest-achieving prior to SY 2012-2013 demonstrated gains in mathematics and ELA achievement in SY 2013-2014, the second full year of intervention implementation. Over the two years these schools invested in teacher coaches, leadership capacity, professional development and evaluation, use of early warning systems, and improving school culture and climate. The percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the State's mathematics assessment at Charles E. Shea High School increased from 13.6 percent in SY 2011-2012 to 15.1 percent in SY 2013-2014; reading proficiency increased from 54.6 percent to 58.9 percent in the same time frame. At William E. Tolman Senior High School, mathematics proficiency increased from 17 percent in SY 2011-2012 to 21.7 percent in SY 2013-2014; reading proficiency increased from 67.1 percent to 75.9 percent in SY 2013-2014. Graduation rates increased and dropout rates decreased at both high schools.

In SY 2013-2014, Central Falls High School completed four years of implementing the Transformation model focusing on professional development and evaluation, improving school culture and climate, and developing robust curricular and instructional resources. Mathematics proficiency increased from 7.9 percent in SY 2011-2012 to 15.7 percent in SY 2013-2014 and Hispanic students' mathematics proficiency rates increased from 10 percent to 18 percent in the same timeframe. Reading proficiency increased from 42.3 percent in SY 2011-2012 to 53.4 percent in SY 2013-2014 and African American students' reading proficiency increased from 0 percent to 47.6 percent in the same timeframe.

During SY 2013-2014 the State used a new approach to monitor outcomes in lowest-achieving schools that the State will continue to use going forward. While all identified schools already developed and began implementing approved school reform plans, the accountability strategies by which the State engaged with these schools varied from previous years. Beginning in April 2013, the State began a quarterly monitoring process that incorporated processes used with schools identified under 1003(g) of ESEA as well as processes being used for schools identified through the Composite Index Score.[19] Using a State-developed data dashboard called the "quarterly monitoring tool" as the foundation, the State, LEA leaders from LEAs with identified schools, and leaders from the identified schools engaged in quarterly meetings about progress, adult behaviors, and student outcomes. Early in Year 4 the meetings were co-facilitated by RIDE and LEA leaders; LEA leaders with leadership teams at identified schools now facilitate the meetings. Prior to each meeting, the school gathers data and evidence to demonstrate progress toward the school's goals as outlined in the school reform plan. The State reports that the approach has been successful in creating a common language and set of expectations about the kinds of evidence to measure progress and about how to collect data about adult and student work that is aligned to student achievement goals. Each quarter, once the school-level meetings are complete, the Commissioner meets with each superintendent that has identified schools for a conversation about the data and progress toward goals.

## Supporting leadership

Each of the 13 schools identified in Years 2 and 3 of the grant period hired school achievement specialists and educator evaluation implementation specialists to support school-level operations in Year 4. Designed to be flexible positions that meet the unique needs of schools implementing turnaround interventions, each school made use of the additional support in different ways. For example, at one school, reading interventions for elementary students were a priority. As such, the school achievement specialist was a reading specialist. At a large high school, the educator evaluation implementation specialist met teacher demands for classroom observations and supplemental instructional feedback purposes. LEAs with identified schools found these positions to be effective in supporting implementation of school-level reforms and have committed to sustaining them beyond the grant period.

[18] On September 23, 2011, the Department offered each interested State educational agency (SEA) the opportunity to request flexibility ("ESEA flexibility") on behalf of itself, its LEAs, and its schools, regarding specific requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive State-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. For more information on ESEA flexibility, see www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility.

[19] The Composite Index Score is an index based on high expectations and multiple measures, including student achievement, growth, and graduation rates. Rhode Island places schools into six levels based on their Composite Index Score: Commended, Leading, Typical, Warning, Focus, and Priority.

# Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

The State supported leadership teams at seven schools with new leaders during SY 2013-2014. Since attending the two-week 2013 summer institute, school teams worked to implement their school reform plans in SY 2013-2014. These plans, in conjunction with the summer planning, formed the basis for school leader participation in the quarterly monitoring process described above (see "Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools"). Survey feedback indicated that the two-week summer institute met leadership teams' needs and that it prepared them for the upcoming year. In addition, building leaders in these schools received job-embedded coaching during the school year to support their effectiveness in implementing their school reform plans. Due to competing priorities in the State's largest LEA, the State adjusted delivery of supports to teams in schools implementing interventions in SY 2014-2015. Rather than provide a two-week 2014 summer institute, the State adjusted its plan to deliver a shorter three-day summer institute and support and engage school-based teams with professional development modules and job-embedded coaching during the school year.

## Successes and challenges

In Year 4 the State's progress and quality of implementation improved from previous grant years as it provided the full range of planned supports for leadership teams at identified schools and engaged LEA and school leaders in a quarterly monitoring process that uses data to track progress toward outcomes. The State reported that having both the data-driven monitoring routine and intervention supports in place for an entire year has shifted the way the State, LEAs, and schools discuss progress, identify barriers, and solve problems. In addition, the State reports that the quality of the participants' experience with the summer institute and coaching services has shifted the way these schools and LEAs think about professional development services. Finally, LEAs demonstrated their satisfaction with flexible positions such as the school achievement specialist and educator evaluation implementation specialist by continuing to fund these positions in the future. While the State was able to execute its planned supports for its lowest-achieving schools, competing priorities at the local level challenged full participation in professional development. The State's modified approach for SY 2014-2015 may be responsive to this challenge.

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

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

## State's STEM initiatives

In SY 2013-2014 the State continued to support the second year of a project-based learning (PBL) pilot with three courses in one LEA. Thirty-five teachers in these courses received onsite professional development and support during common planning time to develop PBL units. Some of these sessions focused on formative assessment strategies for CCSS and the Next Generation Science Standards. In addition, during Year 4 PBL experts observed PBL teachers for their use of PBL strategies and received feedback and coaching to improve practice. In May 2014, the PBL team partnered with educators to host a PBL showcase for educators from other LEAs in the State. The showcase included student-led presentations of PBL work in construction and computer technology, building trades and mathematics, forensics, and culinary and fine arts. The State reports that it does not plan to sustain this project after the grant period but that it may continue locally.

Rhode Island adopted the Next Generation Science Standards in May 2013. The State's science curricular work centered on developing K-12 model curricula, lesson plans, and units of study, which will be made available in the Instructional Support System by the end of Year 5.

## Successes and challenges

The State completed the PBL pilot and generated interest in one LEA; however, it is unclear to what extent there is appetite for such an approach elsewhere in the State. During Year 4 the State was successful in developing draft K-12 curricula and lessons aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards, which will be available to all educators statewide.

# Charter Schools and Other Initiatives

## Expanding charter schools

During Year 4, the State's four charter school expansion and development grantees completed their plans to expand into new grade levels or to support their first year of operation, respectively. In September 2014, Village Green and Achievement First opened their doors to their first ninth and tenth grade, and kindergarten classes, respectively. As the State's first virtual, blended learning model high school, Village Green, through its development grant, supported technology infrastructure, classroom materials, and community engagement and student recruitment. Achievement First's development grant supported needs leading up to the school year, including recruitment, community outreach, facility planning, and developing a financial system, among other things. Together, these schools created 313 new seats for Rhode Island students in charter schools in SY 2013-2014.

One of the charter school expansion grantees, International Charter School, focused on creating a facilities development plan for when the school transitions from a K-5 to a K-8 school. In addition, this school supported educator training on International Baccalaureate pedagogy in anticipation of the grade expansion in SY 2014-2015. The State's second charter school expansion grantee, Paul Cuffee Charter School, transitioned from a K-8 to a K-12 school system during the grant period and graduated its first class in spring 2014.

RIDE reported that the grants have informed its knowledge of conditions for charter school success, such as the way the school works with local government and communities to meet local needs. The number of charter schools in the State is increasing each year and community demand for them continues to grow.

## Multiple pathways innovations

In Year 4, the State implemented the Virtual Learning Math Modules project for the second consecutive year. Intended to support students needing additional mathematics supports in high school, the modules were available to students online and students had access to online tutoring for additional support. The State encouraged LEA use of the modules to support students working toward mathematics graduation requirements. While there was an increase in use during a few months in the school year, educators and students did not engage with the online tutoring option and may not have gone through the course modules as they were designed to be used. LEAs will continue to have access to the modules after the grant period.

## Successes and challenges

The State's charter school grants supported development and expansion needs for four schools, two of which opened their doors in SY 2013-2014. These new schools contributed to the diversity of options for students and families in the State, as the State intended, and created a track record for success for new charter schools in the State in the future, including those from national charter management organizations like Achievement First. The Virtual Learning Math Modules project did not reach as many students as the State initially planned to reach. The State reports there may be opportunities for this work to inform future efforts to implement blended learning programs in the State.

# Looking Ahead

Most Race to the Top States developed plans to continue their comprehensive reform efforts for an additional year (through the no-cost extension) and are developing plans to sustain many of their projects beyond the grant period.

Rhode Island executed nearly all its Race to the Top plan by the end of the four-year grant period, with just a few projects planned for the no-cost extension period. The State and LEAs made significant progress toward developing and implementing CCSS-aligned assessments and educator evaluation systems, providing a model for induction programs, improving professional development for educators, and supporting its lowest-achieving schools. While the State made important one-time investments in the infrastructure and educator training needed for reform, supporting LEAs with the rigor or regularity that the State did during the grant period will be challenging to sustain. During the grant period the State added value to LEAs' efforts by drawing attention to critical implementation components, providing data analysis of new data sources like the evaluation system, and convening groups of teachers, leaders, and superintendents. The State will have to consider alternative strategies to sustain the lessons learned during the grant period, for example, by modifying existing job descriptions or using the Basic Education Program as a lever for convening.[20] Though the support may take a different form or depth, the State plans to continue supporting LEAs as they implement new standards and assessments, implement educator support and evaluation systems, and leverage data to inform decision-making.

[20] Rhode Island's public education regulations are known as the Basic Education Program. Revised in 2009, the regulations outline the rights of students in Rhode Island public education and the basic standards to ensure a high-quality education is available to all students, regardless of where they live or go to school.

# Looking Ahead

With Race to the Top-funded foundational systems and resources in place, LEAs will likely be the main drivers of sustainability and quality of core reforms. During the grant period the State worked diligently with LEAs to develop the infrastructure for CCSS-aligned curriculum and assessments and an evaluation system that emphasizes professional feedback and student outcomes. The formative assessment professional development modules and interim assessments, which support CCSS-aligned instructional practices, will continue to be available to all LEAs. In addition, LEAs have access to multiple versions of teacher-developed curriculum to adapt and revise. The State's plans to develop an Instructional Support System will expand the type and number of CCSS-aligned resources available for educator use. This level of support will be critical as the State prepares for PARCC implementation in spring 2015. While the State will not implement qualifying evaluation systems that include student growth on statewide assessments until after the grant period, considerable progress has been made toward a system that provides educators with regular feedback on their performance and creates opportunities for dialogue about assessment and instructional practice. Though the frequency of evaluations will change for teachers with certain ratings, all Rhode Island LEAs share a common vocabulary about excellent teaching. The EPSS will continue to provide ample opportunity for LEA and building leaders to analyze and act upon evaluation data, including making decisions about professional development needs.

The extent to which other grant-funded projects will continue varies. The State articulated plans to continue using EdStat to track progress in high-priority work streams within the agency. Many professional development series and modules remain available for educator use, including the formative assessment series and the modules geared toward educators in schools implementing turnaround models. The State's plans to develop a professional development technology platform may promote use of professional development created during the grant period. While the State was unable to continue the induction program beyond the grant period, a collaborative of LEAs saw such value in it that they agreed to fund the program at a comparable level as during the grant.

The State does not have plans to continue several projects beyond the grant period. The original mathematics modules model with online coaching ended, though the modules will continue to be available to students. In addition, State support of PBL will not continue, though the pedagogical practice may continue at the LEA level. The Turnaround Leaders Program and TNTP will close after the grant period and do not have plans to recruit additional cohorts in Rhode Island.

The Department approved the State for a no-cost extension for some projects, which allows the State to continue working through June 2015, Year 5. In addition, five LEAs will continue components of their plans into Year 5. In Year 5, the State plans to continue development of the Instructional Support System to provide reliable access to the State-developed interim assessments and interim assessment items, including scoring and reporting functionality. The State also plans to develop the system's capacity to link with CCSS-aligned resources through a Teacher Resource Library, which would include lessons, instructional materials, and formative assessment items. In addition, the State plans to support local data access and use of the Instructional Support System through mini-grants. Given the positive experience LEAs had with the Using Data professional development series and the increased appetite for using data to improve instruction and outcomes, LEAs can use the mini-grants, for example, to focus in on leadership data routines, using data to assess graduation readiness, or calibrating SLOs using multiple data sources. Finally, the State plans to develop a technology platform for educators to engage with online professional development modules created during the grant period, which may in the future include other State-approved courses.

In Year 5 the State also plans to continue supporting leadership teams at the lowest-achieving schools through coaching and professional development. While in their placements during SY 2014-2015, the eight members of the second cohort of the Turnaround Leadership Program will receive job-embedded coaching. The State also plans to engage leadership teams at schools implementing interventions with the virtual and face-to-face professional development modules during the school year.

# Budget

For the State's expenditures through June 30, 2014, please see the APR Data Display at http://www.rtt-apr.us.

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

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

# Glossary

**Alternative routes to certification:** Pathways to certification that are authorized under the State's laws or regulations that allow the establishment and operation of teacher and administrator preparation programs in the State, and that have the following characteristics (in addition to standard features such as demonstration of subject-matter mastery, and high-quality instruction in pedagogy and in addressing the needs of all students in the classroom including English learners and students with disabilities): (1) can be provided by various types of qualified providers, including both institutions of higher education (IHEs) and other providers operating independently IHEs; (2) are selective in accepting candidates; (3) provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support such as effective mentoring and coaching; (4) significantly limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses; and (5) upon completion, award the same level of certification that traditional preparation programs award upon completion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Glossary

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

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

**Highly effective teacher:** A teacher whose students achieve high rates (*e.g.*, one and one-half grade levels in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). States, LEAs, or schools must include multiple measures, provided that teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth (as defined in the Race to the Top requirements). Supplemental measures may include, for example, multiple observation-based assessments of teacher performance or evidence of leadership roles (which may include mentoring or leading professional learning communities) that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

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

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

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

**No-Cost Extension (Year 5):** A no-cost extension provides grantees with additional time to spend their grants (until September 2015) to accomplish the reform goals, deliverables and commitments in its Race to the Top application and approved Scope of Work. Grantees made no-cost extension amendment requests to extend work beyond the final project year, consistent with the Amendment Principles (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/grant-amendment-submission-process-oct-4-2011.pdf) as well as the additional elements outlined in the Department Review section of the Amendment Requests with No Cost Extension Guidance and Principles document (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/no-cost-extenstion-submission-process.pdf).

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

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

**Persistently lowest-achieving schools:** As determined by the State, (1) any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring or the lowest-achieving five Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years; and (2) any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that (a) is among the lowest-achieving five percent of secondary schools or the lowest-achieving five secondary schools in the State that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds, whichever number of schools is greater; or (b) is a high school that has had a graduation rate as defined in 34 CFR 200.19(b) that is less than 60 percent over a number of years. To identify the lowest-achieving schools, a State must take into account both (1) the academic achievement of the "all students" group in a school in terms of proficiency on the State's assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA in reading/language arts and mathematics combined; and (2) the school's lack of progress on those assessments over a number of years in

the "all students" group. (For additional information, please see http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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