

# Race to the Top at a Glance

## State Rules for Linking Student and Teacher Data for the Purpose of Teacher Evaluation

Evaluating teachers based in part on student growth demands important policy decisions concerning how student results are attributed to teachers. For that reason, teacher evaluation systems that include a component based on the growth of student achievement must specify how they will ensure that students are correctly linked to the teachers who are responsible for their learning.

This is emerging work. Many States are only beginning to develop guidelines or business rules. As they start, they are considering some fundamental issues about “teacher of record.”<sup>1</sup> They are deciding what aspects of the student teacher data link are uniform and defined by the State, and what aspects are determined locally. They are also deciding whether standards should be similar or different for teachers in subjects tested statewide and non-tested grades and subjects.

Defining the term teacher of record raises important issues about whom to count as teachers—including minimum attendance expectations for teachers, how to account for teachers who share students (such as special educators or English language acquisition teachers), and even what to do with teachers who switch jobs during the course of a year.

States are also considering rules that define how students are accounted for. They are deciding who is responsible for verifying class rosters—teachers, principals or people in other positions. They are deciding how to address attendance and mobility, and they are deciding how to address information about student characteristics, such as special education status or whether they are students in alternative schools.

In order to survey the work emerging in the field, the RSN collected publicly accessible policy data from eight Race to the Top grantees: Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, Rhode Island and Tennessee. The following examines the policy approaches taken by these States to four questions:

This publication provides a snapshot of the rules for including student growth data in evaluations of teacher performance in selected Race to the Top grantees.

The information was collected in response to a technical assistance request to the **Reform Support Network (RSN)** from the Georgia Department of Education, where education leaders charged with designing that State’s teacher evaluation system were interested in learning more about the policies, guidelines and business rules that other States have established to incorporate student results into their evaluation systems. It is not meant to be a comprehensive or exhaustive review of State policies on this topic.

<sup>1</sup> The Center for Educational Leadership and Technology has developed a definitional template for teachers of record. *A teacher of record is an “educator” who is responsible for a “specified proportion” of a student’s “learning activities” that are within a “subject or course” and are aligned to “performance measures.”* From this starting point, States and local educational agencies (LEAs) can build out how they intend to use the term. The definition requires that States and LEAs identify the data elements required to support their specific teacher of record definition. For more information, see <http://www.tsdl.org/TeacherOfRecord.aspx>.

- How long must a student be in attendance for his/her achievement results to be included in a teacher's student growth score?
- How long must a teacher be in attendance/teaching in the classroom to be evaluated using student growth scores?
- How is student mobility factored into teacher ratings on student growth?
- What rules govern the use of student profile characteristics, such as special education, blended learning or alternative schools?

The analysis does not attempt to present a comprehensive or exhaustive overview of teacher of record or growth and value-added rules in all Race to the Top grantees, nor is it an effort to recommend or assess the quality of these policies. The RSN did, however, identify some emerging patterns in the answers to these questions.

## Findings

- **Student Attendance.** Five States (Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New York and Rhode Island) do not, at present, have specific rules for how many days a student needs to be in attendance for his/her achievement results to be counted in growth or value-added scores for teachers. Tennessee includes growth data for students who attend a school for less than the entire school year at a decreased weight than growth data for students enrolled for the entire year. In Louisiana a student must attend a school for a full year to be included in a teacher's growth score. The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) controls for the proportion of days a student attends school in its value-added model for teachers' growth scores.
- **Teacher Mobility.** In general, States acknowledge and address teacher mobility as a factor in how and whether students will be linked to a particular teacher for evaluation purposes. But in most cases, there are no hard and fast rules in place. There are exceptions. Tennessee does not require teachers who have worked fewer than 120 days to be included in the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) evaluation system. New York specifies rules for teachers who change schools in the middle of the year or who have long-term absences from their jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- **Student Mobility.** States are also developing policies for addressing student mobility. The DCPS weights value-added analysis by the fraction of the year a student spends with a particular teacher. Illinois encourages LEAs to work to incorporate as many students as possible, and Louisiana allows teachers to review and verify rosters, providing comments on student mobility for consideration in final inclusion decisions.
- **Student Characteristics.** A number of States are still considering issues related to how special education students will be included in various student growth measures. Rhode Island expects all students, including special education students, to be included in student learning objectives (SLOs) set for all teachers in the State. New York, Louisiana and the DCPS weight student results by student status. Colorado requires that growth measures take factors like special education status into consideration. Florida leaves the decisions to LEAs to formulate special case criteria.

<sup>2</sup> For New York teachers or principals who change employers in the middle of the year, the student growth portion is to be part of their evaluation only if the teacher or principal was employed at the time that the assessment was administered, and, in such cases, the educator's score will be weighted in proportion to the percent of the course's duration that he/she was assigned to the course. For teachers who have a long-term absence or a leave of absence, New York State Education Department guidelines note that LEAs should end the teacher's designation as teacher of record (in the student information system or other LEA data systems, as appropriate) as of the first day of the long-term absence or leave of absence. The teacher's assignment as teacher of record begins again on the date that the teacher returns.

## Figure 1: Student Attendance

How many days does a student need to be in attendance in order to be included in a teacher's student growth score?	
Colorado	The State education agency (SEA) does not specify rules for student attendance and inclusion in a teacher's growth score.
District of Columbia Public Schools	The DCPS value-added model (VAM) controls for the proportion of days that the student attended school during the previous year. <sup>3</sup>
Florida	The SEA does not specify rules for student attendance and inclusion in a teacher's growth score.
Louisiana	Louisiana includes a student in a teacher's student growth score if that student attended school for a full year, remained enrolled at the same school from early in the school year until test time, took the regular State assessment, and is enrolled in grades 4–8. In addition, prior achievement data must be available for the student, and a teacher must agree that he/she taught that student for the year in question through a roster verification process.
New York	There is no minimum time that a student must spend on a teacher's roster for that teacher to be considered the "teacher of record." The New York State Education Department expects to weight partial-course enrollment (or teacher assignment) differently than full-course, but does not plan to set a minimum time before a student is included in the course. The differential weighting of student scores based on the duration of a student's assignment to the teacher(s) of record for evaluation purposes will be defined through the ongoing work of a Board of Regents Task Force, supported by a vendor contracted to perform the value-added analyses.
Illinois	The SEA does not specify rules for student attendance and inclusion in a teacher's growth score.
Rhode Island	The SEA does not specify rules for student attendance and inclusion in a teacher's growth score.
Tennessee	The State incorporates the growth scores of students who attend a school for less than the entire school year into a teacher's score at a lower weighting than growth scores of students who are enrolled the entire year.

<sup>3</sup> Because attendance is a measure of student motivation, the model uses previous rather than current year attendance to avoid confounding current year student attendance with current year teacher quality. According to Mathematica Policy Research, which helped build the DCPS VAM, a current year attendance measure will be influenced by teacher effectiveness because more effective teachers might be better at motivating students to attend class regularly than less effective teachers. The model uses past year attendance to avoid this bias.

## Figure 2: Teacher Mobility

How (if at all) is teacher mobility factored into how students are included in teacher evaluations?	
Colorado	The SEA does not specify rules for teacher mobility.
District of Columbia Public Schools	The VAM uses the full roster method, which links students to each of their teachers, thus creating unique records for each teacher-student combination. In the regression analysis, The DCPS weights each teacher-student combination according to the fraction of the year the student spent with the teacher.
Florida	The SEA does not specify rules for teacher mobility.
Illinois	The SEA does not specify rules for teacher mobility.
Louisiana	Louisiana's roster verification process allows teachers to review and verify accuracy of student rosters to provide feedback (which is then verified by administrators) on their own mobility.
New York	<p>For teachers or principals who change employers in the middle of the year, the student growth portion will be part of their evaluation only if the teacher or principal was employed at the time that the assessment was administered. In such cases, the teacher's score will be weighted in proportion to the percent of the course's duration that the teacher was assigned to the course.</p> <p>For teachers who have a long-term absence or a leave of absence, New York guidelines note that LEAs should end the teacher's designation as teacher of record (in the student information system or other LEA data systems, as appropriate) as of the first day of the long-term absence or leave of absence. The teacher's assignment as teacher of record will begin again on the date that the teacher returns.</p>
Rhode Island	The SEA does not specify rules for teacher mobility.
Tennessee	An educator who works 120 days or fewer is not required by statute to be evaluated using TEAM. If an educator's leave prevents completion of all required observations, summative evaluation scores will be based on observations completed.

## Figure 3: Student Mobility

How (if at all) is student mobility factored into how students are included in teacher evaluations?	
Colorado	The State requires growth measures used in teacher evaluation to consider outside factors, including student mobility.
District of Columbia Public Schools	The VAM uses the full roster method, which links students to each of their teachers, thus creating unique records for each teacher-student combination. In the regression analysis, each teacher-student combination is weighted according to the fraction of the year the student spent with the teacher.
Florida	The SEA does not specify rules for student mobility.
Illinois	The student growth component of a teacher's evaluation does not have to include all students that the teacher instructs during his/her two-year evaluation cycle, but the State encourages LEAs to work to incorporate as many of the students instructed by the teacher as possible when calculating the teacher's student growth score.
Louisiana	Louisiana's roster verification process allows teachers to review and verify accuracy of student rosters to provide feedback (which is then verified by administrators) on student mobility when determining which students to include.
New York	The SEA does not specify rules for student mobility.
Rhode Island	The SEA does not specify rules for student mobility.
Tennessee	As long as adequate data points for mobile students are available, those students can be included in the analysis of the teacher.

**Figure 4: Student Characteristics**

What rules govern allocation of student scores for special cases, including students with disabilities, English learners, students in alternative schools and other instances?	
<b>Colorado</b>	The State requires that growth measures used in teacher evaluation consider additional factors, including special education status and concentration of high-risk populations.
<b>District of Columbia Public Schools</b>	The special education and English learner status of students (among other characteristics) are weighted in the VAM that generates a teacher's growth score.
<b>Florida</b>	Florida uses a covariate-adjustment model that takes into account 10 factors, including special education or English learner student status, which influences the determination of the teacher's contribution to student learning. Each factor, along with the other factors controlled for in the model, determine the student's expected score—based on how similar students performed statewide. The difference between that expected score and the student's actual score represents the teacher's contribution to the student's learning.
<b>Illinois</b>	The SEA does not specify rules for the allocation of student growth scores in special cases at this time. However, the Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council is continuing to study these issues and expects to make additional recommendations at some point in 2012.
<b>Louisiana</b>	<p>The growth scores of students in a co-teaching, pull-out or other special circumstance will be weighted proportionally to the percentage of time spent with the teacher. Students' special education and English learner status (among other characteristics) are weighted in the VAM that generates a teacher's growth score.</p> <p>If a student was taught by two different teachers during the course of the year (i.e., Teacher A taught reading in the fall, while Teacher B taught reading in the spring), then the two teachers will each get half of the score.</p>
<b>New York</b>	<p>The State will distribute the guidelines for use of "student exclusion flags" once additional policies have been formulated, but students will be excluded from teacher of record aggregations for evaluation purposes only in extremely limited situations.</p> <p>Special education teachers assigned to a course as part of a co-teaching or inclusion model must learn outcomes of all students enrolled in the course. Therefore, the weighting of the duration of the teacher-student linkage should reflect the percentage of the scheduled course time that the student and teacher are present in the course.</p> <p>The proportion of time each student is assigned to a teacher is weighted in the VAM.</p>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	Student growth scores are generated through SLOs, and teachers are expected to set objectives for all students on their roster, including special education students.
<b>Tennessee</b>	The SEA does not specify rules for the allocation of student growth scores in special cases at this time, but evaluators will use the general TEAM rubric when observing special education teachers and a special rubric when observing alternative school educators.

It is critical for States to define rules to ensure appropriate attribution of student achievement and growth to the teachers who provide instruction to those students. States and districts are increasingly using this information to determine value-added and student growth scores for teacher evaluations, design targeted professional development for teachers based on their students' results, provide continuous feedback on effective instruction, and evaluate the quality of the programs that prepare teachers for the classroom. It is an area in which States may learn from each other by sharing their policies and emerging practices.

## Sources/Links

Colorado	<i>Overview of SB 191</i>
District of Columbia	<i>Design of Value-Added Models for IMPACT and TEAM in DC Public Schools, 2010–2011 School Year</i>
Florida	<i>Review and Approval Checklist for [District] RTTT Teacher Evaluation Systems</i>
Illinois	<i>Non-Regulatory Guidance on the Performance Evaluation Reform Act and Senate Bill 7</i>
Louisiana	<i>ACT54 Louisiana: Value-Added Q&amp;A</i>
New York	<i>Guidance on New York State's Annual Professional Performance Review Law and Regulations Section L: Data Management</i>
Rhode Island	<i>The Rhode Island Model: Guide to Evaluating Building Administrators and Teachers 2011-2012</i>
Tennessee	<i>TN Educator Acceleration Model, Selected Questions from TEAM Update Webinar</i> <i>Educator's Guide to Value-Added Analysis</i> <i>Implementing TEAM: Observation for Special Education Settings</i>

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