

Tennessee's Race to the Top Application: Key Provisions

Regina Riley, Associate Legislative Research Analyst
 (615) 401-7886 / Regina.Riley@tn.gov

May 2010

Race to the Top Overview

The Race to the Top Fund is a national competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are:

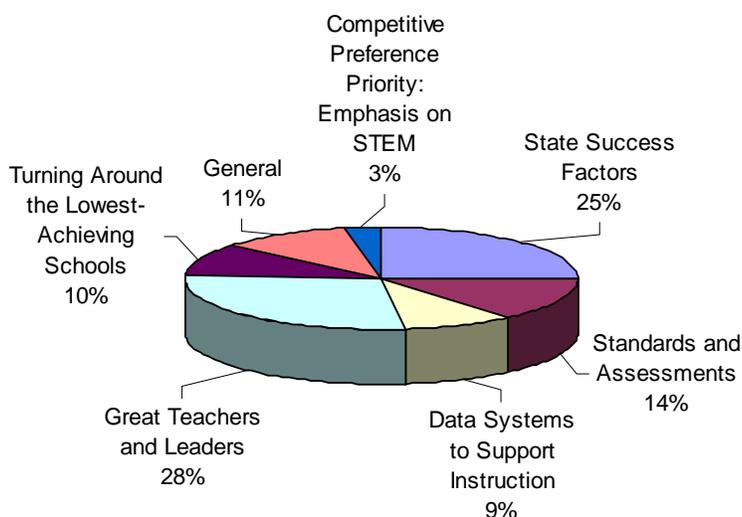
- Creating the conditions for education innovation and reform;
- Achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and
- Implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform assurance areas:
 1. **Standards and assessments** - Adopting internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
 2. **Great teachers and leaders** - Recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals
 3. **Data systems to support instruction** - Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices
 4. **Turning around struggling schools** - Improving student achievement in the lowest-performing schools

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund. There are two Race to the Top Fund competitions:

- State Competition: Approximately \$4 billion
- Standards and Assessments Competition: Approximately \$350 million

Visit OREA's [Stimulus Funds for Education: A Guide to Select Competitive Grants](#) page for a more detailed overview of the Race to the Top grant.

Exhibit 1: Race to the Top Points



Tennessee's Proposal

On March 29, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) announced Tennessee was one of two states to win a Race to the Top grant. Tennessee will receive \$501.8 million over a four-year period. Half of the Race to the Top funds - \$250.9 million – will be distributed directly to local school districts under the existing Title I formula. The other half will be used to underwrite a series of new investments.

Key provisions in the state's Race to the Top proposal are outlined below:

- **Selection Criteria:**
 - [State Success Factors](#)
 - [Standards and Assessments](#)
 - [Data Systems to Support Instruction](#)
 - [Great Teachers and Leaders](#)
 - [Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools](#)
 - [General](#)

- **Competitive Preference Priority:**
 - [Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(STEM\)](#)

Below is a budget summary of the key provisions of [Tennessee's Race to the Top application](#), along with the corresponding page numbers for reference.

State Success Factors *(125 total points, 25 percent)*

- **Tennessee's reform agenda consists of the following:**
 - **Implementing higher and clearer standards.** The state believes that the adoption of higher standards, along with new, aligned assessments and related professional development, will help students reach higher levels of proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).¹ (See p. 14.)
 - **Expanding the use of the state's data system.** The state believes that an expansion from a P-12 data system to a P-20 data system, as well as the creation of an early-warning system, will enable the state to reach the graduation rate goal of 90 percent. (See p. 15.)
 - **Finding and supporting the best possible talent for schools.** The state believes that a fair, transparent, and data-driven evaluation system, coupled with professional development targeted at specific teacher needs, will result in fewer than 10 percent of Tennessee teachers being defined as "ineffective." ["Ineffective teachers" are those whose annual Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) scores show their students fail to gain a year's worth of academic growth.] (See p. 15.)
 - **Focusing on low-achieving schools.** The state believes that expanded authority over low-performing schools and rapid, proven interventions will help students reach higher levels of proficiency on the NAEP and TCAP, while also giving the state a chance to share lessons of school turnaround with others. (See p. 16.)
 - **Tennessee's political and policy environment is conducive to innovation.** The state has a history of creative approaches to education, and support for the state's current education reforms ranges from Tennessee's Congressional delegation to the organization representing the state's urban superintendents. (See p. 16.)

- **All 136 Tennessee school districts and 4 state special schools signed the state's Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) committing them to the state's Race to the Top plan.** Tennessee gave its districts a choice. They could either participate in all of the reform agenda, as defined in the application, or they could decline to participate entirely. There was no middle ground of "involved" status. (See p. 17 and Appendix A-1-2.)

- **Tennessee’s achievement goals through 2014 include:**
 1. **Increasing proficiency levels in reading and mathematics on TCAP and NAEP.**
 - TCAP: 100 percent proficiency on reading and mathematics for all students in grades 3-8 and high school.
 - NAEP: 35 percent proficiency for all students in 8th grade reading (up from 26 percent) and 35 percent proficiency for all students in 8th grade mathematics (up from 27 percent).
 2. **Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading and mathematics on TCAP and NAEP.**
 - TCAP: 100 percent proficiency on reading and mathematics for all students in grades 3-8 and high school, with no achievement gaps.
 - NAEP: Significantly narrowed achievement gaps in 8th grade reading and mathematics. (See Appendix A-1-4 for exact percentages in each subgroup.)
 3. **Increasing high school graduation rates.**
 - Goal of a 90 percent four-year cohort graduation rate.² (See Appendix A-1-4 for information regarding changes in the graduation rate calculations and disaggregated information for race/ethnicity.)
 4. **Increasing college enrollment and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year’s worth of college credit applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment.**
 - Increasing enrollment in public postsecondary education to 48,000 students a year, up from 40,000 students.
 - Increasing the number of students who complete a year’s worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment to nearly 28,800 students a year, up from 20,000 students.

(See p. 19 and Appendix A-1-4.)

- **To oversee the state’s agenda, Tennessee will assemble a *First to the Top Oversight Team*.** This team, which reports to the Governor’s Office of State Planning and Policy, is responsible for coordinating reform efforts and serving as a liaison among involved state agencies, regional efforts, and other collaborative teams and networks that will provide implementation support. Members of the First to the Top Oversight Team include staff from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), and the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration, in cooperation with the Comptroller’s Office of Education Accountability. In addition, the philanthropic, business, and education stakeholders who served on the committee that oversaw Tennessee’s application will be invited to join the Oversight Team. (See p. 37 and Appendix A-2-1.)

- **The Commissioner of Education has outlined a reorganization plan for TDOE, in an effort to increase effective management and alignment of the work outlined in Tennessee’s Race to the Top proposal.** Specific changes will take place over the next four months. (See p.37 and Appendix A-2-2.) Further, the state is aligning all of its current and future state and federal resources (such as grants for School Improvement, State Longitudinal Data Systems, and the Teacher Incentive Fund) to the core goals and initiatives outlined in the Race to the Top application. The application states that there is intentional and significant overlap in the teams working on these initiatives to assure alignment and leveraging occurs to the greatest extent possible. (See p. 38.)

- **Tennessee’s application included letters of support from key leaders and organizations from across the state, including:**
 - General Assembly leadership;
 - Tennessee’s Congressional delegation;

- state associations representing school boards, superintendents, administrators, principals, and charter schools;
- Tennessee Education Association;
- all candidates in the 2010 governor's race;
- several national nonprofit organizations;
- the business community, including groups that signed on to support the Tennessee Diploma Project;
- civil rights organizations;
- parents' groups;
- higher education institutions;
- community-based organizations;
- STEM leaders; and
- philanthropic foundations. (All letters can be found in Appendix A-2-3.)

Standards and Assessments *(70 total points, 14 percent)*

- **Tennessee has joined the Common Core Standards Initiative, an education reform effort in which the state will adopt a common set of high-quality, internationally benchmarked standards that prepare students for college and the workforce.** The state plans to adopt the Common Core standards at a special State Board of Education (SBE) meeting during the last two weeks of July 2010. (See p. 50 and Appendices B-1-1, B-1-2, B-1-8.)
- **Tennessee is working collaboratively with several states to create a common set of formative and summative assessments.** (See p. 52 and Appendices B-2-1 through B-2-5.) The assessments will be aligned to the Common Core standards and a college- and career-ready curriculum for mathematics and reading/language arts. The Tennessee system will include formative assessments, benchmark assessments administered quarterly as early warning points of discovery and action, and an adaptive comprehensive (summative) assessment.³ (See p. 60.)
- **Beginning in the 2009-10 school year, the state's accountability system will begin to reflect measures tied to college- and career-ready expectations.** The primary indicator in the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determination is the percentage of students who score proficient on state assessments in grades 3-8 and in high school end-of-course assessments. The definition of proficient used on state assessments beginning in 2009-10 will reflect the higher expectation that students have achieved mastery of academic standards and are prepared for college-level study. (See p. 56.) Tennessee will incorporate additional end-of-course assessments at the high school level, including English III, algebra II, chemistry, geometry, and physics. The state's application states that the ACT must also be maintained as a benchmark exam because scores on this exam are used for lottery scholarship eligibility, institutional scholarships, and university admission. The state's current assessment system, TCAP, will be updated to reflect the new standards for grades 3-8 as well. (See p. 56 and Appendix B-3-1 for timeline on implementation and development of new standards and assessments.)
- **Effective in fall 2013, admission to Tennessee's public universities and community colleges will require completion of the Ready Core Curriculum of the new Tennessee Diploma Project.** Beginning in 2009, Tennessee's high school students must take four years of math and three years of science to earn a high school diploma. Students who do not complete the Ready Core Curriculum must complete the requirements through additional course work in high school before they can be admitted to an in-state public university or community college. (See p. 56.)

- **To help Tennessee’s teachers meet new expectations, TDOE plans to roll out in-person, online, and school-specific professional development.** In addition, the state plans to link professional development to teacher effect data for evaluation purposes. (See p. 57 and Appendix B-3-1.)
- **Tennessee proposes that teacher preparation programs be responsible for training pre-service teachers in the use of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS).** This module will be an eight hour component of a research methods course in all teacher preparation programs and will focus on the use of TVAAS data in modifying and improving classroom instruction. Through TVAAS, teachers will be trained in using predictive data to modify classroom instruction and enhance student learning of the state’s new standards. (See p. 61 and Appendix B-3-2 for timeline for training pre-service teachers.)

Data Systems to Support Instruction *(47 total points, 9 percent)*

- **Tennessee plans to expand its current P-12 longitudinal data system to a P-20 system.** Tennessee plans to implement the changes outlined in its statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) grant proposal with a successful SLDS award and/or a successful Race to the Top award.⁴ Expanding the longitudinal data system will increase the amount of continuously updated student data available to teachers, principals, and school district officials. (See p. 63 and Appendix C-1-1.)
- **The state indicates in its application that 100 percent of Tennessee’s teachers now have access to the TVAAS website.** Prior to January 2010, only 14 percent of teachers in Tennessee had their own accounts for directly accessing the TVAAS system. The state has also contracted with the SAS Institute to create a data dashboard, which is a user-friendly computer-based interface intended to make student growth, achievement, and other critical data available to teachers in a straightforward and helpful manner for decision-making. In 2010-11, all teachers and principals will be trained on how to access the TVAAS system and how best to use the data to inform instruction and improve learning. (See p. 68.)
- **The new data dashboard will integrate student longitudinal data to further expand the predictive capacity of TVAAS and create a “360-degree view of a child.”** The data dashboard will allow teachers to chart the academic growth pattern of individual students over time and determine whether they are consistently progressing academically. In addition, teachers can use the dashboard to see predictions of how well students will do in the future on state assessments or ACT exams. The dashboard will enable teachers to differentiate instruction and measure its effects. The dashboard will also include links to information and professional development available to help address the needs of students. The state has contracted with SAS to work with local education agencies (LEAs) across the state on creating teacher and principal professional development modules on how to interpret and use value-added data effectively. The data dashboard initiative is already being piloted in the state’s two largest districts – Memphis and Nashville – and will expand to other districts throughout 2010. TDOE will launch a comprehensive training effort for all LEAs in how to use the dashboard in the 2010-11 school year. (See p. 69, Appendix C-2-1 for explanation of SAS Dashboard, and Appendix C-2-2 for timeline for implementing new approaches to accessing and using state data.)
- **The First to the Top Act of 2010 requires the development and use of an annual multiple-measure evaluation of teachers and principals.** The First to The Top Act mandates 50 percent of a teacher’s or principal’s evaluation be based on student achievement data.⁵ Because the new evaluations are meant to inform human capital decision-making – including, but not limited to, tenure, professional development,

retention, and dismissal – understanding how data can be used to inform, improve, and reflect effectiveness will be of key concern to every teacher and principal. (See p. 71.)

- **The state is creating the Tennessee’s Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development (TN CRED) to assess the success of Tennessee’s innovative reform efforts and identify areas of greatest opportunity and challenge.** Led by Dr. Matthew Springer, Director of the National Center for Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University, and including a team of respected researchers and practitioners from Tennessee and across the country, TN CRED will be funded within this proposal and will actively seek outside grants for additional research to support its work. (See p. 73 and Appendix C-3-1.)

Great Teachers and Leaders (138 total points, 28 percent)

- **The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and SBE will conduct a School Leader Supply/Demand Study supported by Race to the Top funds to complement the [Teacher Supply/Demand Study](#).** The School Leader Supply/Demand Study will help school districts project future hiring needs. (See p. 79.)
- **Tennessee plans to expand alternative routes to certification for teachers and principals through four key strategies.**
 - One strategy is the replication of the nationally recognized UTeach program, begun at the University of Texas, Austin. Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville have already begun work on a UTeach program, funded through a partnership between the TDOE and THEC. Through Race to the Top funds, 2 more institutions will join them – University of Tennessee-Chattanooga and the University of Memphis – in the goal of significantly increasing the supply of math and science teachers statewide. (See p. 79 and Appendix D-1-6.)
 - Expanding residency programs for teachers and principals represents another strategy for increasing the educator talent pool.
 - Alternative pathways will expand. For example, Teach for America has committed to grow its current Tennessee membership of 100 teachers to 500 over the next 5 years.
 - The New Teacher Project, which recruits mid-career individuals looking to become teachers in shortage subject areas, has committed to recruit, select, and prepare an additional 750 teachers over the next 5 years. (See p. 80.)
- **The state intends to use TVAAS data as a major factor in teacher and principal personnel decisions by:**
 - Equipping every teacher with access to value-added data specific to his/her classroom and/or school.
 - Monitoring and reporting on TVAAS access and usage at the teacher, school, and district levels.
 - Training all teachers and principals in the use of value-added data through a partnership with a nonprofit organization.
 - Partnering with a nonprofit organization to train school district officials in the use of value-added assessment results for evaluation and compensation decisions.
 - Requiring public teacher preparation institutions to train students on the use of value-added data in classrooms, as part of a new eight-hour module starting in 2011. (See p. 82 and Appendix D-2-2 for a timeline for implementing new approaches to teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance.)

- **The First to the Top Act calls for the creation of a Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee.** The Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee is charged with developing and recommending to the State Board of Education guidelines and criteria for a multiple-measures teacher and principal effectiveness evaluation system, which will be administered annually to all teachers and principals in the state. (See p. 84.)
- **All participating LEAs in the state will be required under the First to the Top Act to use the new evaluation system (with some degree of district latitude)⁶ to conduct annual reviews of teachers and principals.** The evaluation system may be used to publicly report data that includes, but is not limited to:
 - differentiation of teacher and principal performance (percentage in each rating category),
 - the percentage of effective teachers and principals, and
 - the percentage of compensation based on instructional effectiveness.

To ensure accountability on improving performance of teachers and principals, the state will encourage LEAs to set annual improvement goals, with a minimum of 15 percent improvement in terms of the number of educators moving up in each rating category. The state will also develop reporting mechanisms to disseminate data on performance of LEAs and schools in developing more effective teachers and principals (reflected in the percentage of teachers and principals moving up in the rating categories). (See p. 86.)

- **Tennessee will track and publicize each district's teacher and principal retention rates.** As part of the school improvement planning process, districts will be required to differentiate their retention data for the top performing teachers and principals, report on the growth of teachers and leaders from lower levels of effectiveness, and document attrition rates for less effective teachers and leaders. (See p. 89.) Further, the state will analyze the impact of differential compensation strategies on retention of effective teachers and principals. (See p. 91 and Appendix D-2-5.)
- **Tennessee will work with and provide support for its LEAs to create clear, differentiated career paths for teachers and principals,** based on their performance levels under the new evaluation system. These career paths may include status categories such as Beginning, Intermediate, Professional, and Master, each of which would have a high bar for entry, as well as expanded roles and higher compensation. (See p. 89.)
- **Tennessee will create a competitive Innovation Acceleration Fund to support the adoption and implementation of alternative compensation systems at the local level.** Funds will be awarded to districts for the purposes of designing and/or implementing sustainable compensation systems based on alternative salary schedules. The 2010 First to the Top Act permits LEAs to adopt alternative salary schedules to the current statewide salary schedule, which is based on education credits and experience. Compensation packages will be aligned with the new career paths and include base salaries and bonuses tied to performance and retention. With \$12 million from the Race to the Top award, the state and local communities will also seek private matching funding. Districts must have the agreement of local teachers' unions, where they exist. If there is an ongoing additional funding burden at the local level, the district must have the full agreement of the local governing body in order to apply for an Innovation Acceleration Fund Award. The state consortium of five large urban districts have signed a letter of intent to adopt new compensation, promotion, and career path opportunity models, largely based on the Memphis Teacher Effectiveness Initiative model sponsored by a Gates Foundation grant. (See p. 90.)

- **TDOE will collect and publicly disseminate data, by LEA and school, on tenure-granting rates.** The Department will work with the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee to include tenure-granting rates in principal evaluations. Additionally, TDOE will annually assess and publish the correlation of tenure-granting rates with student outcomes (e.g., attendance, test scores, on-time graduation rates). (See p. 93.)

- **Tennessee plans to ensure that the state will reduce the percentage of ineffective teachers and principals to less than 10 percent within four years. The state will then strive to drive that percentage to zero.** Currently, approximately 30 percent of Tennessee’s teacher and principal workforce is not able to achieve a year’s worth of growth for their students. (See p. 93.)

- **The state will work to eliminate the gap in equitable distribution of effective teachers and reduce the number of ineffective teachers in high-poverty/high-minority schools and low-poverty/low-minority schools over the four years.** The state’s strategy to accomplish these goals includes:
 - Continuing work with the six districts with the largest teacher equity gaps, building on the 2010 Teacher Equity Plan.
 - Broadening the overall human capital pipeline of teacher preparation institutions and alternative providers to recruit, retain, and develop more effective teachers.
 - Equipping each principal and district leader with teacher effectiveness data broken out by levels for tested grades and subjects.
 - Holding principals and district leaders accountable for moving more teachers in to the upper levels of effectiveness, as well as improving or removing teachers in the lowest levels of effectiveness.
 - Creating a dashboard for each teacher’s classroom to help teachers determine students’ achievement patterns/trends and weaknesses at a glance.
 - Creating and administering a Teacher Working Conditions survey as another tool to gauge principal effectiveness in creating conditions for improving student achievement.
 - Re-engineering professional development so that it will be specifically linked back to teacher effect scores and a multiple measures evaluation to help teachers move into higher levels of performance.
 - Using teacher effect scores and school-level effect data as one component of annual multiple-measures evaluations of teachers and principals as well as determining other data-driven measures of effectiveness for teachers in non-tested grades or subjects.
(See p. 98 and Appendix D-3-5 through D-3-9.)

- **A panel of key education stakeholders will review the effectiveness of the state’s teacher preparation programs and create a work plan by the end of 2010.** A group including leadership from SBE, THEC, TDOE, Tennessee Education Association, Tennessee Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and other stakeholders will convene in 2010 to:
 - Examine the three variables studied (teacher effect data, placement and retention, and PRAXIS scores) and determine what other measurements accurately reflect effectiveness.
 - Study teacher preparation report card redesign options, if any, so the data are clear and easily understood.
 - Study and design report card options for principal preparation programs.
 - Work on issues of report card usage, such as the renewal or non-renewal of state approval for teacher and principal preparation institutions that are shown to be ineffective. Issues to be discussed include using at least three years’ worth of data to assess effectiveness.

Combined with other measures, the report card will inform program adjustments, policy changes, and funding for teacher education programs such that they will be rewarded not only for producing teachers, but for the quality of the teachers they produce. Successful programs will be expanded, while unsuccessful programs will be provided an opportunity to improve over a specified period of time. The SBE will use that data to reward programs that are successful and support or decertify those that fail to produce effective teachers. (See p. 110.)

Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools *(138 total points, 28 percent)*

- **The First to The Top Act of 2010 grants the Commissioner of Education the authority to create an Achievement School District (ASD). This district will include the state’s persistently lowest-achieving schools, which may be removed from their home districts and placed under state oversight.** For schools, state oversight can include:
 - Authority over the district’s financial allocation to the school.
 - Presentation of options for alternative governance, which can mean removing the school from the LEA’s jurisdiction, restructuring the school as a public charter school, and replacing the school staff and principal.
 - Management reorganization, including reduction of management authority.

For districts, state oversight can include:

- Assumption of governance powers over the LEA – i.e., a state takeover.
 - Recommendation of replacement of the Superintendent or members of the local Board of Education.
 - Replacement of LEA staff relevant to a school or district failure.⁷ (See p.119, Appendix E-1-1 for the full statutory language of the state’s accountability law, Appendix E-1-2 for a chart of the law’s application, and Appendix E-1-3 for a copy of the First to The Top Act.)
- **The ASD will include a collaborative partnership between the state and selected nonprofit organizations with a track record of education reform.** (See p.123 for information regarding: how a school enters the ASD; the role of the state and the LEA; the roles of partners; the planning year; and intervention models used in the ASD.)
 - **Tennessee has established a process for identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools, referred to as Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools.** (See p.121 and Appendices E-2-1 through E-2-3 for the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties for the identification of persistently lowest-achieving schools.)
 - Tier 1 schools are the persistently lowest-achieving 5 percent of Title I schools, as well as those Title I high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent for any 2 of the last 3 years. In 2009-10, Tennessee has 10 schools in this category.
 - Tier 2 schools are Title I-eligible high schools that are the persistently lowest-achieving 5 percent of non-Title I high schools, as well as non-Title I high schools with a graduation rate less than 60 percent for any 2 of the last 3 years. In 2009-10, Tennessee has 5 schools in this category.
 - A third tier of schools – not required to be identified under the Race to the Top guidelines – are Tennessee “High Priority” schools in other stages of accountability (School Improvement, Corrective Action, Restructuring) that do not fit the above definition of persistently lowest-achieving.

- **Tennessee plans to transform its lowest-achieving schools into schools of accelerated academic excellence through three key strategies:**
 - First, the state will evaluate 10 of the persistently lowest-achieving schools and the 3 schools in Restructuring 2 and beyond under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). These schools are eligible for possible inclusion in a state-run Achievement School District (ASD).
 - Second, the state will target the 18 schools in Corrective Action or Restructuring 1 with serious interventions before they reach the ASD level, and may require, for example, that they adopt a proven reform model while remaining in their home school district. These will be known as Renewal Schools. Tennessee will issue a Request for Information that will detail what quality expectations the state has for possible providers for schools in this level, identify providers to assist schools in this work, and engage the schools and providers. (See p. 127.)
 - Third, any school whose absolute achievement places it under the definition of “persistently lowest achieving” will implement one of the four turnaround models as outlined in the Race to the Top guidelines, no matter what its level of NCLB accountability or whether it becomes part of the ASD. (See p. 122 and Appendix E-2-7 for timeline for turning around low-achieving schools.)

- **Schools that have just entered the accountability continuum will be Focus Schools.** In 2009-10, Tennessee has 114 of these schools. They will receive support from the state's Exemplary Educators, Achievement Gap consultants, and System Targeted Assistance Teams – but in a more concentrated manner since these teams will work only with schools and districts in the first two levels of AYP status of NCLB (i.e., below Corrective Action). Institutions of higher education will provide these schools with concentrated professional development. Focus schools that continue to fail AYP will become Renewal Schools and will be required to work with a turnaround specialist to choose one of the renewal models to implement, in conjunction with one of the four required Race to the Top school intervention models. (See p. 128.)

- **Tennessee will establish a statewide college access network to support communities with persistently failing schools.** The state's application indicates communities with persistently failing schools often lack a college-going culture. With Race to the Top funding, the state will expand this proposed college access network and incubator beyond the approximately \$100,000 in state-funded start-up costs that are part of the Lumina Foundation's KnowHow2Go grant. This program also will provide consultation to other communities. (See p. 129.)

General *(55 points, 11 percent)*

- **Tennessee has made funding K-12 public education its top priority over the past several years.** (See p. 132.)

- **Tennessee believes that innovation can be found in both non-charter and charter schools.** The key is creating high-quality schools that can incorporate innovation within a variety of structures. Tennessee's charter school act and its statutes permitting districts to open schools of innovation allow both traditional school districts and charter authorizers to advance creative ideas to serve Tennessee's children. (See p. 137.)

- **The application also lists other conditions that are favorable to education reform in Tennessee, including:**
 - **Differentiated pay plans** - Tennessee Code Annotated §49-3-306, passed in 2007, requires districts to submit differentiated pay plans to TDOE. LEAs are required to submit differentiated compensation plans for recruiting teachers in hard-to-staff schools and in hiring and retaining qualified teachers.
 - **Creation of a charter school incubator in Nashville** – The incubator will recruit, develop, and train charter school leaders who want to open high-quality schools in Nashville. Contingent upon additional funding, the incubator concept could be expanded statewide. (See Appendix F-3-1.)

Competitive Preference Priority: Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (15 total points, all or nothing, 3 percent)⁸

- **Tennessee is launching the Tennessee STEM Innovation Network in partnership with the Battelle Memorial Institute.** Under the partnership, Battelle, which manages Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in a joint venture with the University of Tennessee, will work with the state Department of Education and local school systems to establish a statewide network of programs and schools designed to promote and expand the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, and math - the STEM disciplines. (See p.147.)
- **The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network will be modeled in part on previous STEM efforts led by Battelle in other states,** including its home state of Ohio. Working in concert with Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Battelle will manage the network, assist in leveraging, and connect existing Tennessee programs to:
 - Significantly increase the number of Tennessee students who graduate from high school successfully completing the expectations of the Tennessee Diploma Project and go on to complete college degrees in STEM fields.
 - Increase the number of students who make the successful transition from school to careers in STEM fields.
 - Tap the underutilized talent of female, minority, and economically disadvantaged students by motivating them to participate in STEM fields at rates that match the rate for white males.
 - Reduce achievement gaps and enhance overall student performance in STEM disciplines, particularly in higher level science and mathematics courses.
 - Create a self-sustaining STEM education network that engages Tennessee's public and private resources in improving the STEM curriculum, instruction, assessment, teacher content knowledge, classroom delivery, leadership, and community involvement.
 - Capture and manage knowledge across the Tennessee network to help identify, communicate, connect, develop, and spread innovation through professional contacts and personal relationships.
 - Spread knowledge of innovations in STEM education so that the state improves by sharing and working jointly toward common ends. (See p. 149 and Appendices Priority 2-STEM-1 through STEM-4.)

Endnotes

- ¹ For more information regarding Tennessee implementing higher and clearer standards, see [*On the Horizon: More Rigorous Standards and New Graduation Requirements*](#).
- ² For more information regarding the new federal requirements for calculating graduation rates, see [*On the Horizon: Calculating and Reporting High School Graduation Rates*](#).
- ³ The Race to the Top fund includes a separate \$350 million standards and assessments competition to help fund common assessments for states that adopt internationally benchmarked standards. USDOE will announce the winners of the standards and assessments competition in September 2010.
- ⁴ Tennessee was awarded a grant in 2006 to establish its current longitudinal data system. The state has submitted a separate [application](#) for USDOE's Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems to expand the to a statewide P-20 longitudinal data system in December 2009; however, at the time of publication, the 2010 grantees had not been announced.
- ⁵ 35 percent as represented by TVAAS where available, and 15 percent based on other measures of student achievement.
- ⁶ While the state will establish the evaluation framework, participating local education agencies may solicit teacher and principal input on the evaluation system.
- ⁷ In addition, Tenn. Code Ann. §49-1-602 outlines the accountability tools available to the Department of Education and the State Board of Education for intervention, in addition to the authority granted under No Child Left Behind.
- ⁸ USDOE will give a competitive preference to those applications that include STEM improvement plans over applications of comparable merit that do not.



OFFICES OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY
Phillip Doss, Director
Suite 1700, James K. Polk Building ■ 505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243 ■ (615) 401-7911
www.tn.gov/comptroller/orea

