Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

State Board of Education Progress toward Implementing the Race to the Top Initiative

S.L. 2012-77

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DPI Chronological Schedule, 2012-2013

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Section I: Introduction

North Carolina's future economic competiveness is dependent on the quality of our public schools. While our schools have made exciting progress over the last four years, including rapidly improving graduation rates (see Figure 1), we are not yet where we want to be. We must accelerate the current positive momentum to ensure that every child graduates ready for a career, college, and citizenship.

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

- **First**, every student should be held to *high academic expectations*, the achievement of which will enable him or her to graduate ready for life in the global economy.

- **Second**, the adults, specifically *teachers and principals*, in the school building are the most important factor in helping students grow academically and achieve.

Figure 1:
North Carolina's
4-Year Graduation Rate

Year	Rate
07-08	70.3
08-09	71.7
09-10	74.2
10-11	77.9
11-12	80.4
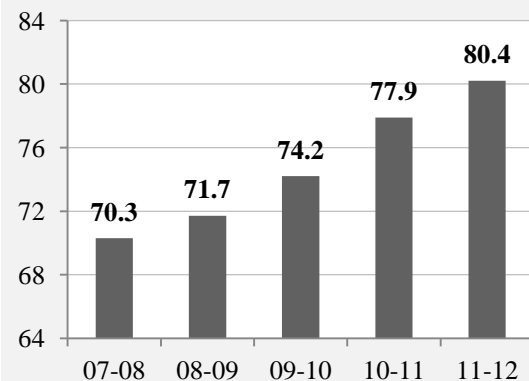
Accordingly, all of the work streams supported by the RttT grant focus on ensuring that *every child has a great teacher and every school has a great principal*. As required by section 7(b) of S.L. 2012-77, this first of four semi-annual reports documents the State Board of Education's progress in implementing the following work streams of the RttT initiative:

1) **Transition to New Standards**
   Updating the NC Standard Course of Study to reflect a new set of career- and college-ready expectations for all students

2) **Instructional Improvement System**
   Establishing a suite of easy-access statewide technology tools that will enable teachers and principals to diagnose student need, design lessons, and collaborate efficiently across district lines

3) **NC Education Cloud**
   Providing a world-class information technology infrastructure to support all NC public schools

4) **Educator Evaluation**
   Ensuring every educator receives a fair, rigorous, data-based evaluation of his or her effectiveness to guide professional growth

5) **Performance Incentives**
   Providing bonuses to staff in low-achieving schools that achieve high student growth

6) **Regional Leadership Academies**
   Training leaders to transform low-achieving schools

7) **Teacher Recruitment**
   Expanding ways to get more well-prepared teachers into low-achieving schools

8) **Virtual Schools**
   Expanding virtual and blended courses for at-risk students in science and math

9) **Professional Development**
   Developing local capacity, via summer institutes and ongoing face-to-face and online training, to support continuous instructional improvement

10) **District and School Transformation**
    Expanding intensive, on-the-ground support and coaching for low-achieving schools and districts

11) **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)**
    Establishing a network of STEM-themed high schools throughout the state

Section II: RttT Work Streams

1. Transition to New Standards and Assessments

North Carolina's updated Standard Course of Study, in effect beginning with the 2012-13 school year, includes Common Core Math & English standards and NC Essential Standards in all other content areas; this means that new standards are in place in all content areas and at all grade levels. The State Board of Education's (State Board) goals for a successful transition to the new standards, and the statewide assessments used to measure their achievement, are as follows:

- Building and reinforcing educators' support of the new standards and belief that the new standards will improve student outcomes

- Ensuring that educators understand the new standards and are equipped with strategies and tools to help students meet them

- Ensuring that educators and other stakeholders understand and use summative assessments and data effectively to measure students' attainment of the standards

- Helping educators transition to the use of online assessments.

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

Training

NCDPI has provided training on all content areas of the new NC Standard Course of Study to local teams from every district and participating charter school. Training offerings have included regionally based multi-day Summer Institutes for local teams from every district (required) and charter school (voluntary); and face-to-face, webinar, and online follow-ups with those teams throughout the school year. Along with the focus on teaching the standards, topics within the professional development sessions have also included data literacy (the ability to use data about student performance to guide instruction), instructional technology (using technology tools to support instruction), universal design for learning (making learning accessible for all students), and the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (which now includes a standard, objective measure of the extent to which a teacher's students have demonstrated growth in a given year).

Tools & Resources

NCDPI has made many new instructional support tools and materials available to teachers through the NCDPI website to help teachers understand - at a granular level - how the new standards differ from the old standards. These materials also provide "crosswalks" connecting the old standards to the new standards to help teachers understand the transition.

Through the professional development cycle described above, NCDPI will introduce sample instructional tools and assessments that teachers can use throughout the year to monitor progress towards meeting the standards. NCDPI will also release forms of these new assessments, and will provide online tutorials to help educators and students understand both how the assessments are aligned to the new standards and how the new assessments use different types of questions to measure what students know and can do.

To help districts and schools prepare for broader use of online assessments, NCDPI has developed and made available a best practices guide that draws on users' experience throughout the state with the current online assessment system. The transition to new assessments (and specifically online assessments) is also featured in the professional development described above. As a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), North Carolina continues to work with other states to develop the national assessments that will be available to use in 2014-15 for measuring students' achievement of Common Core Math & English standards.

Additional information regarding the trainings, tools, and resources is available at: http://wikicentral.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/NCDPI+WikiCentral+Page

2. Establishment of a Statewide Instructional Improvement System

The Instructional Improvement System (IIS) is a statewide technology system that will provide a number of tools for use in the classroom and at home by the 2013-14 school year. These tools will include online portals that students, teachers, parents, and school and district administrators can use to access reliable, high quality information and resources (such as data "dashboards," lesson plans, diagnostic assessments, and tutorials). Accessing this information and/or these resources will enable users to make better-informed decisions related to instruction, assessment, and career and college goals. The IIS will both provide tools that are not currently available in all districts and schools, and consolidate and/or streamline many tools that are currently being used. A cross-functional team of technology and program staff is working to make sure that the IIS meets the needs of the diverse user population described above. Working groups consisting of teachers, administrators, and local technology specialists provide continuous feedback on the IIS design and implementation plans.

In fiscal year (FY) 2011-12, NCDPI moved from planning and gathering input for the IIS design to executing against a detailed plan. Based on specifications reviewed and edited by stakeholders, NCDPI released a Request For Proposal (RFP) in February 2012 for a vendor to build the IIS. The State received bids in late April 2012 and is currently evaluating them, with intent to award a contract in September 2012. In March 2012, NCDPI also executed a contract with a content management service to begin "tagging" (that is, assigning standard codes, for purposes of indexing) existing content, such as curriculum materials and professional development resources, that aligns to the Common Core and NC Essential Standards. This tagged content will be a major source of value for someone who uses the IIS to find information and/or resources. In February 2012, Superintendent Atkinson invited school districts and charters to join an IIS Resource Consortium to help NCDPI ensure that there is an appropriate quantity and quality of content available for delivery through the IIS. The group is exploring the best way to facilitate simple, efficient online sharing of locally-created resources across the state.

Once NCDPI awards the contract for building the IIS, the NCDPI-vendor team will finalize a timeline for a phased rollout of the system that will begin with pilots in spring 2013. In fall 2012, along with the initial building and implementation work, NCDPI will shift the focus toward communication about what is to come. NCDPI will talk with districts and schools about what to expect from the IIS and provide the timeline for delivery of all the tools and resources that will be included.

Additional information about IIS is available at: www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/improvement/

3. Establishment of the North Carolina Education Cloud Technology Infrastructure

The primary objective of the NC Education Cloud (NCEdCloud) is to provide a world-class information technology (IT) infrastructure as a foundational component of the NC education enterprise. To that end, the NCEdCloud will facilitate migration from *local education agency (LEA)-hosted* server infrastructure to *provider-hosted* application and infrastructure services. The cloud-based model allows for the delivery of more reliable, more efficient, and more cost effective IT services across public schools in NC.

NCDPI has partnered with the Friday Institute at NC State University to manage the NCEdCloud work. The NCEdCloud project team bases its work plan on collaboration and planning methodology proven out in the statewide School Connectivity Initiative (SCI). During FY 2011-12 the NCEdCloud team conducted site surveys and interviews with 114 of 115 LEAs and 9 charter schools, interviewed representatives from states that have adopted cloud services in state level deployments, discussed E-rate consortium possibilities with peer state and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) leaders, and conducted live Request for Information (RFI) sessions with dozens of private sector service providers and vendors.

Based on the findings of the site survey and interview process, the NCEdCloud team documented an *NC Education Cloud Operating Plan* and program blueprint. The plan defines five strategies that address LEA requirements, deficiencies, and future instructional plans. These strategies include:

- Transitioning LEA infrastructure to a cloud-centric IT Enterprise service model

- Deploying an NC shared learning infrastructure that supports identity-, data-, and content-integration

- Modernizing statewide business operations systems

- Forming a dedicated NCEdCloud support organization and support network

- Initiating a digital inclusion model to address "anywhere, any time" access to the NC shared learning infrastructure platform.

The projects supporting these strategies emphasize procuring services, raising the bar on reliability, providing 24x7 access, increasing competition, avoiding custom integration, and adopting standards. MCNC content filtering, email, and managed firewall services are early examples of services that facilitate transitioning LEA infrastructure to cloud-centric models. Over 60 LEAs and charter schools are already taking advantage of the shared email service. Additional RFPs for vendors to provide other shared services, such as hosted Internet Telephone, are currently in process. Most services will be procured by the end of first quarter 2013 and all services will be operational by first quarter 2014.

Additional information regarding the NCEdCloud is available at: http://it.ncwiseowl.org/resources/RTTT_Cloud/ and http://cloud.fi.ncsu.edu/

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

The statewide Educator Evaluation System that was in place prior to RttT offered a standard evaluation instrument aligned to the NC Professional Teacher Standards. Schools used the

system to gather information about observed practices and then to improve teacher and principal performance. To ensure that every child has a great teacher and every school has a great leader, the State Board is using RttT funds to enhance the statewide instrument to also include standard, objective data regarding the extent to which each teacher and principal contributes to the academic growth of his or her students. The enhanced system will make it possible for every educator to receive a fair, rigorous, *data-based* evaluation of his or her effectiveness that includes specific feedback to fuel professional growth.

The State Board of Education and NCDPI have taken the following steps over the past two years to create the enhanced Educator Evaluation System that will be implemented statewide in the 2012-13 school year:

- Added a new standard to the teacher evaluation instrument that measures the amount of student progress in a teacher's classroom

- Added a similar standard to the principal evaluation instrument that measures the amount of student progress in a leader's school

- Determined that SAS Institute's Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) will be used to calculate the degree to which teachers and principals contribute to student growth (teacher and principal "value-added")

- Passed a policy that requires every teacher be evaluated annually

- Passed a policy establishing that an educator's overall effectiveness is determined by ratings in *all* standards of the Educator Evaluation System, including the new student growth standards (in other words, an educator must meet expectations on *all* standards in order to be considered effective)

- Partnered with 800 educators from 110 LEAs to design Measures of Student Learning (a library of common exams) for courses, subjects, and grades that do not currently have an accompanying state assessment

- Established an Educator Effectiveness Workgroup comprised of diverse stakeholders, including educators, from across the State to guide policy recommendations from a practical perspective

- Partnered with Cambridge Education to run a pilot administration of the Tripod Student Perceptions Survey (pilot included 150,000 students, 3,000 teachers, 900 schools, and 47 districts); will consider including student survey as part of the new quantitative standard

- Designed new evaluation instruments for non-classroom teachers, including school counselors and media specialists (note: quantitative student growth measures are not a component of these instruments)

- Posted aggregate data (linked to School Report Cards) indicating teacher and principal performance in the 2010-11 school year as measured by the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System

By December 2012, the State Board will make final decisions regarding the multiple quantitative measures (individual, and school-wide value-add scores; student survey) that may feed into the student growth component of the evaluation instrument. 2012-13 will be the first year in which Measures of Student Learning (common exams) are administered to capture student growth (for

purposes of measuring teacher effectiveness) in subjects other than those covered by the school accountability model.

Additional information is available at: www.ncpublicschools.org/educatoreffect/

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

One aspect of our effort to improve student achievement is increased retention of effective educators in hard-to-staff schools (both rural and urban). To this end, the State Board is using RttT funds to provide performance incentives for educators in the 118 lowest-achieving schools (those targeted for support through the RttT Turnaround of Lowest Achieving Schools initiative). Certified staff associated with *higher than expected* student growth can earn up to a $1,500 incentive per year, paid the fall after the student data is gathered. If the educator has returned to his or her school that fall, he or she receives the full incentive; payment is reduced by 50% if he or she has not returned.

The design of this incentive program adjusts over time as the State Board develops the overall State plan (described above in section 4) to use a standard means of measuring a teacher's contribution to student growth at an *individual classroom level*. In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (prior to establishment of the enhanced system for measuring student growth for all teachers), incentives were provided for all certified staff (teachers, principals, media consultants, counselors, etc.) in schools that exceeded expected school-wide growth on statewide End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments. In the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, incentives will be based on individual teacher-level growth data (certified staff without individual growth data will still be eligible based on school-wide growth data). The maximum incentive is $2,000 for a classroom teacher, while the bonus based on school-wide data remains at $1,500.

6. Establishment of Regional Leadership Academies

The State Board has established three regional leadership academies to increase the number of principals prepared to lead transformational change in NC's lowest achieving schools. The leadership academies provide training and administrative internships for participants who have been selected based on their potential to become effective school leaders. The academies are as follows:

- Northeast Regional Leadership Academy (North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC)
- Sandhills Regional Leadership Academy (Sandhills Regional Education Consortium Southern Pines, NC)
- Piedmont-Triad Regional Leadership Academy (UNC-Greensboro, Greensboro, NC).

The first cohort of 62 future leaders (for distribution, see chart below) graduated in the spring of 2012. Each regional leadership academy will have a second cohort graduate in 2012-13 and a third cohort graduate in 2013-14. By the end of the RttT grant period, the leadership academies will have prepared a cadre of 188 school administrators to lead transformational change in NC's lowest achieving schools.

Regional Leadership Academy	Cohort 1 Graduates (2011-12)	Cohort 2 Participants (2012-13)	Cohort 3 Anticipated (2013-14)	RttT Totals
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)*	21*	21*	21*	63
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	20	21	20	61
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	21	20	23	64
Totals	**62**	**62**	**64**	**188**

*NELA is a *two year* program, so the NELA cohort 1 graduates actually entered the program in the 2010-11 school year. The other academies are one-year programs.

Additional information is available at: http://www.srec.ccs.k12.nc.us/LeadershipAcademy-2.htm ; https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com/NELA+Home ; and http://elc.uncg.edu/ptla/ .

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

Using RttT funding, the State Board has expanded its existing teacher recruitment and licensure programs to provide special added support to the lowest-achieving districts and schools. Specifically, the State Board has increased the number of Teach for America (TFA) teachers in the State, established the NC Teachers Corps program (modeled after TFA), and developed a new Induction Support Program for novice teachers. Together these programs aim to increase the supply of quality teachers and provide support and training for the newest teachers in the State's lowest achieving districts and schools.

Teach for America (TFA)

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

Over the first two years of the RttT grant, RttT funding has supported TFA in providing an additional 105 teachers in classrooms in lowest-achieving districts in NC's Northeast region. TFA will provide an additional 129 teachers in 2012-13 and 125 more in 2013-14. By the end of the grant period, NC, in partnership with TFA, will have provided an additional 359 TFA teachers in the lowest achieving districts and schools in Northeastern NC.

NC Teacher Corps

The NC Teacher Corps, modeled on the highly-successful TFA program (described above), places recent college graduates with connections to North Carolina as teachers in low-achieving schools in targeted partner school districts across NC. The program requires a two-year commitment from participants and provides intensive summer training, ongoing coaching and

mentoring, and the ability to earn an NC teaching license. The NC Teacher Corps program is in the process of placing its first cohort of teachers in schools in the 2012-13 school year, and intends to increase the number of teachers in the lowest achieving districts and schools by 250 by the end of the RttT grant period.

Additional information is available at: www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/ncteachercorps/

Induction Support Program for New Teachers

The Induction Support Program (now retitled the "New Teacher Support Program") will provide intensive support, including coaching and training sessions, for new teachers in NC's lowest achieving districts and schools in order to improve their chances of being effective. The program served 30 new teachers in 2011-12 and is expected to serve 339 teachers during 2012-13 and approximately 300 additional new teachers during 2013-14.

Additional information is available at: www.northcarolina.edu/ntsp/participants.htm

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

RttT funds are enabling NC Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS) to expand its offering of virtual and blended courses to ensure that students at risk of low performance in core science and math courses have access to effective teachers and quality course content and innovative instructional practices designed to meet their needs. Blended courses involve a partnership between online teachers (as in a traditional distance learning model) and on-site teachers specially trained to support students in accessing the virtual courses. NCVPS is developing eight new STEM-focused virtual courses and will pilot six of those courses over the next two years in three partner school districts: Greene County, Person County, and New Hanover County. Three STEM courses are being offered during the 2012-13 school year (Integrated Math I, Earth and Environmental Science, and Forensic Science) in the pilot districts. Three additional courses (Integrated Math II, Biotechnology and Agriscience I, and Discrete Math) will be offered during the 2013-14 school year in the pilot districts. Two new courses will also be developed, but not piloted, during the final year of the grant (Integrated Math III and Biotechnology and Agriscience II).

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

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

- Prepare all of their teachers and principals for implementing the updated NC Standard Course of Study and state assessments
- Sustain high quality professional development on topics of core instructional importance at the local level for many years to come.

More specific goals of this broad professional development initiative include the following:

- Increasing the total number of quality professional development resources available statewide

- Ensuring appropriate and effective professional development is available to all teachers

- Conducting regional Summer Leadership Institutes to train local professional development leadership teams

- Conducting a continuous evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of district professional development plans and approaches, and identify the best local practices and strategies that can be shared across the state.

As described above in section one, NCDPI conducted Summer Institutes in 2011 (approximately 2,500 attendees) and 2012 (approximately 2,800 attendees) to provide district professional development leadership teams with the training, resources, and support they needed to understand the new standards and to be able help teachers know how to teach and assess the standards in the classroom. The Institutes covered material for all subject areas and grade spans, and also included training around topics such as using data to inform instruction, making learning accessible to all types of learners, making effective use of instructional technology, and evaluating educators. In conjunction with the Institutes, NCDPI has provided district teams with instructional toolkits, presentations, graphic organizers, sample assessment items, sample unit and lesson plans, and all meeting materials and resources used in the Institutes; district teams can then use all of these resources to re-create and expand upon the Institute training for local district and school audiences.

NCDPI has also developed a year-round cycle of regionally-based professional development offerings that build on the Summer Institutes, giving the local leadership teams opportunities to reflect mid-stream on how they are applying what they learned in the summer, problem-solve around issues that have emerged, and share promising practices across districts. In addition, NCDPI has been rapidly expanding the State's online professional development infrastructure through the use of online modules, wikis, and live chats. The online instructional modules provide additional support and tools to help teachers prepare for the transition to the new standards and assessments. NCDPI has provided the following modules to educators thus far:

- The Call for Change: An Overview of the Common Core and Essential Standards

- Developing Local Curricula

- NC Professional Teaching Standards

- Understanding the Standards

- Understanding Student Behavior in the Classroom

- Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

- NC FALCON (Formative Assessments)

- Understanding Young Student Behavior in the Classroom

- Connecting with our 21st Century Learners

- NC School Executive Standards

- Introduction to Data Literacy

- Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- Digital Literacies in the K-12 Classroom

- NC FALCON: Student Ownership Component (module for middle school students)

- The Online NC Educator Evaluation System Tutorial

- The NC Professional Teaching Standards Course (Facilitator Led) – at LEARN NC

NCDPI has used surveys, focus groups, and feedback documents gathered at meetings to determine the effectiveness of the professional development activities. Survey responses from the first Summer Institute were helpful in planning for year two and making sure to meet the needs of the LEAs and schools. The RttT Evaluation team is also involved in the evaluation of professional development and will continue to provide feedback based on observation, survey data, and LEA and school site visits. The information gathered through the evaluation process will determine what changes need to be made to the current plans and activities and what additional opportunities we may need to offer school and districts in order to support and sustain the work that has already been completed.

Throughout the 2012-13 school year, NCDPI will again offer regional professional development specific to standards, assessments, and evaluation. Periodic check-in sessions with local leadership teams will also continue as a way of monitoring district progress and gathering feedback on the usefulness of State-delivered professional development activities and resources. As NCDPI rolls out the Instructional Improvement System in 2012-13 and 2013-14, the professional development initiative will incorporate training on making use of the resources that the system has to offer.

Additional information is available at: http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/calendar/

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

The State Board has used RttT funding to scale up support for NC's lowest-achieving schools by significantly expanding the NCDPI team that has been guiding successful turnaround and transformation work across the state since 2006. NCDPI's District and School Transformation team has been implementing a comprehensive program that provides targeted coaching support to low performing-schools in response to state and federal legislative requirements, and State judicial and executive direction. RttT funding has enabled that team to help an additional 118 schools (the lowest-achieving 5% of elementary, middle and high schools, and all high schools with graduation rates below 60%) and 12 districts (the lowest-achieving 10% of NC school districts). The goal of the RttT TALAS work is to help these schools and districts develop their capacity to improve and sustain improvement.

The primary short-term objective of the TALAS work is to ensure that every school in the state has at least 60% of its students achieving academic proficiency and that every high school in the state has at least a 60% graduation rate. The long term aspiration is for the lowest-achieving 5% of schools to reach proficiency levels far exceeding 60% and for all high schools to have graduation rates approaching 100%.

Each of the 118 TALAS schools was required to implement one of four USED-specified reform models (Turnaround, Transformation, Restart, or Closure). To help the schools leverage their chosen model in order to build staff capacity and improve student performance, the NCDPI team provides each of the following:

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** The Comprehensive Needs Assessment involves collecting and analyzing data to assess a school's processes, procedures, and instructional practices and inform a plan for continuous improvement that will impact student learning.

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment is conducted collaboratively with the school district and includes self-evaluation, collaborative discussions with school and district leadership, classroom visits, focus groups with teachers, students and parents, and a final, actionable report.

- **Coaching For Transformation**. Transformation coaches are tasked with building the capacity of teachers, principals, and superintendents to implement and sustain reform and innovation and ensure that all students graduate prepared for college and work.

- **District Leadership Coaching.** District Transformation Coaches have been assigned to work with the superintendents in each of the twelve RttT school districts. These coaches have had successful experience as a superintendent or central office administrator and have strong interpersonal skills, knowledge about state and federal accountability models, and an understanding of the change process.

- **School Leadership Coaching**. School Transformation Coaches have been assigned to work with principals in each of the RttT schools and to develop these principals as instructional leaders, consistent with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. These coaches are former principals who have successfully turned around a low-performing school, and who are knowledgeable about state and federal accountability models, understand change management processes, have the capacity to realize potential and provide support to ensure success, understand alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and have effective interpersonal skills.

- **Instructional Coaching.** Instructional Coaches have been assigned to provide on-site support for classroom teachers. This coaching is designed to develop teachers as leaders who take responsibility for the progress of all students, a focus which is consistent with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Instructional Coaches have had successful experiences as classroom teacher leaders, are knowledgeable of state and federal accountability models, demonstrate a thorough understanding of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and have expertise in best instructional practices, classroom management, effective professional development, and curricular alignment.

NCDPI's work to turn around North Carolina's lowest achieving schools is yielding results for students in the targeted districts and schools. At the midpoint of the RttT grant period, 39 of the 118 originally identified schools now have performance composites between 60.0% and 94.4%, with an average increase of 15.0 percentage points. In addition, approximately half (52) of the TALAS schools are now approaching 60% proficiency, and are expected to make the short term goal of exceeding 60% by the end of the RttT grant period. The NCDPI team is increasing efforts with the 17 schools that still have scores below 50% by meeting with those superintendents and redoubling efforts to build teaching and leadership capacity.

The graduation rate in 21 high schools (out of the 23 remaining targeted schools; 6 have closed) is between 62.6 % and 92.9% with an average increase of 10.1 percentage points.

Additional information is available at:
www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/overview/

11. Establishment of STEM Thematic High schools and Network

The State Board is using RttT funds to partner with the New Schools Project to support districts in establishing a system of 20 STEM-focused high schools (4 Anchor Schools and 16 Affinity Network Schools). The purpose of the STEM high schools is to use a curriculum infused with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to increase students' abilities, particularly in areas of the state facing economic challenges, to meet current and expected NC economic and workforce development requirements. The four STEM focus areas are Aerospace, Security, and Automation; Health and Life Sciences; Energy and Sustainability; and Biotechnology and Agriscience. Each Anchor School will focus on a STEM thematic area and will serve as a "hub" for professional development, curriculum development, technology use, and innovation for that thematic area in order to support the spread of STEM focus and best practices across NC. Each Affinity Network School will align to at least one of the four STEM focus areas.

The planned Anchor Schools and Affinity Network Schools have all been identified and are in varying stages of development, depending upon their initial readiness. To date all Anchor Schools and Affinity Network Schools are open and implementing the STEM-thematic program. The New Schools Project is delivering coaching and professional development for these new STEM focused schools. RttT funds also provide funds to support equipment purchases and have extended (to 12-months) employment for several teachers at each school. The State Board has partnered with the NC School of Science and Math to develop curricula for the STEM-thematic courses in each of the focus areas that will be implemented in the Anchor and Affinity Schools and made available statewide.

The table below includes the STEM Anchor and Affinity Network schools, and identifies the focus area and date of school opening for each.

Anchor School	STEM Focus Area	School Opening
City of Medicine Academy (Durham County)	Health and Life Sciences	2010-11
Early College East High (Craven County)	Aerospace, Security, and Automation	2010-11
Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (Washington County: Beaufort, Martin, Pitt, Tyrell, and Washington Counties)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2012-13
Wake NCSU STEM Early College High School (Wake County)	Energy and Sustainability	2011-12

Affinity Network School	STEM Focus Area	School Opening
Athens Drive High School (Wake County)	Energy and Sustainability and Health and Life Sciences	2012-13
Avery County High School (Avery County)	Energy and Sustainability	2011-12
Bertie High School (Bertie County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
Davie County High School (Davie County)	Health and Life Sciences	2011-12
East Columbus High School (Columbus County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
East Duplin High School (Duplin County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
James Kenan High School (Duplin County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
Middle College at UNC-G (Guilford County)	Health and Life Sciences	2011-12
North Duplin Jr Sr High School (Duplin County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
South Columbus High School (Columbus County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
Southern Durham High School (Durham County)	Energy and Sustainability and Engineering, Biomedical, Renewable Energy	2010-11
Surry Central High (Surry County)	Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing	2012-13
The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County)	Engineering, Biomedical, Renewable Energy	2012-13
Valley Academy (Davidson County)	Health and Life Sciences	2012-13
Wallace-Rose Hill High School (Duplin County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12
West Columbus High School (Columbus County)	Biotechnology and Agriscience	2011-12