



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

Semi-Annual Report
September 13, 2013

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Section I: Introduction

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.

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 second of four semi-annual reports documents the State Board of Education's progress in implementing the following work streams of the RttT initiative:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">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 students2) 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 lines3) NC Education Cloud
Providing a world-class information technology infrastructure to support all NC public schools4) Educator Evaluation
Ensuring every educator receives a fair, rigorous, data-based evaluation of his or her effectiveness to guide professional growth5) Performance Incentives
Providing bonuses to staff in low-achieving schools that achieve high student growth | <ol style="list-style-type: none">6) Regional Leadership Academies
Training leaders to transform low-achieving schools7) Teacher Recruitment
Expanding ways to get more well-prepared teachers into low-achieving schools8) Virtual Schools
Expanding virtual and blended courses for at-risk students in science and math9) Professional Development
Developing local capacity, via summer institutes and ongoing face-to-face and online training, to support continuous instructional improvement10) District and School Transformation
Expanding intensive, on-the-ground support and coaching for low-achieving schools and districts11) Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)
Establishing a network of STEM-themed high schools throughout the state |
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Section 2: Highlights since March of 2013

Since the March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has continued to implement the State's detailed scope of work as part of its contractual agreement with the US Department of Education (USED) for the Race to the Top grant. Highlights from the past six months include:

- The state's four-year cohort graduation rate increased from 80.4% in the 2011-12 school year to 82.5% in 2012-13. This continues an upward trend for this measure and is a testament to the hard work of teachers, principals, and students across the state.
- NCDPI rolled out the new Student Information, Instructional Resources and Assessment, and Educator Evaluation components of Home Base for the start of the 2013-14 school year. This roll out included providing training to Local Education Agencies (LEA) and charter school personnel across the state, establishing initial partnership sites to help early adopting districts and charter schools troubleshoot technical issues and figure out how to maximize instructional value of the new technology tools, and launching a Support Center to provide statewide over-the-phone support for all Home Base users. Work on an additional component focused on Professional Development is underway, and all components of Home Base will be ready for the start of the 2014-15 school year.
- NCDPI completed its third set of Summer Institutes, completing ten two-day regional sessions across the State that each provided professional development on Home Base, the revised NC Standard Course of Study and related assessments, data literacy, and other topics of interest to educators. 2,962 NC educators (teachers, LEA staff, principals, university personnel, and other education partners) representing leadership teams from 115 LEAs and 50 charter schools participated in the Institutes.
- In April and May of 2013, NCDPI senior leadership conducted eight web-based READY meetings to update teachers, principals, and other district and school personnel specifically about new assessments and Home Base. These meetings provided an opportunity for educators to hear from NCDPI about the status of initiatives in these areas and ask questions. Principals were invited to enable their personnel to watch the webinars together, and an estimated 23,000 educators across the state participated.
- NCDPI has executed contracts through the NC Education Cloud (NCEdCloud) initiative that assist LEAs with updating and streamlining their information technology (IT) infrastructure; 26 LEAs have migrated to new cloud-based business solutions, and 74 LEAs and 40 charter schools have migrated to cloud-based email solutions. These and other exciting NCEdCloud solutions are already providing substantial savings to LEAs and charter schools (approximately \$60,000 annually per participating LEA); future solutions under development (such as Identity Access Management) will provide additional savings to participating LEAs and charter schools.

Section 3: RttT Work Streams

1. Transition to New Standards and Assessments

Background

North Carolina's updated Standard Course of Study now 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 achievement related to them 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.

Updates

Since the March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished each of the following:

- NCDPI has expanded the number of the materials related to the new standards and assessments on the Department's Wikispace. Work on the development of additional resources such as professional development materials and sample performance tasks that can be used in the classroom has been completed and the resulting materials have been made available online for education professionals across the state.
- NCDPI has continued to provide face-to-face trainings, virtual trainings, and training materials related to the new standards and assessments through the regional professional development meetings (described in section nine of this report) and through statewide webinars and online professional development modules.
- NCDPI added links to the resources and trainings for new standards and assessments in Home Base; the material is tagged to standards or assessments to make it easier for teachers to access them in Home Base.
- NC schools have continued to shift to using online assessments; more assessments were administered online in the spring of 2013 than in the spring of 2012.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Tools, Training, and Resources

Between March 2013 and September 2013, NCDPI continued to expand the availability of instructional support tools and materials to help teachers implement the new standards and assessments. While initial documents and resources focused on how the new standards linked to previous standards, NCDPI shifted focus toward providing teachers with resources, such as model lesson plans and instructional scheduling guides that offer concrete examples of how to address the new standards in classrooms.

Teachers and NCDPI officials received training on methods and tools to help them evaluate materials to ensure they are of high quality. As resources are evaluated, they are posted to the NCDPI Wikispaces and “tagged” to the appropriate standards; links to these resources are included in Home Base (see section two) to enable teachers to access them in one location, along with other tools to help them implement the new standards and assessments. NCDPI staff members have also continued to provide training and formative support on all content areas of the new NC Standard Course of Study to local teams from every district and participating charter school.

NCDPI has delivered this training and support through face-to-face, webinar, and online sessions with district and charter professional development teams (in accordance with the professional development cycle described in section nine). NCDPI officials used feedback from these sessions to develop thirty different sessions for the 2013 Summer Institutes (see section nine of the report for more information on these) to help teachers continue to understand and implement the revised Standard Course of Study.

Additional information regarding the trainings, tools, and resources is available on the NCDPI Wikispace (<http://wikicentral.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/NCDPI+WikiCentral+Page>), and the professional development Wikispaces for each education region (<http://rt3nc.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/Regional+Wikispaces>).

Implementing New Assessments

NCDPI has continued working to implement new assessments associated with the revised Standard Course of Study. In the past six months, this involved implementing Common Exams, working with teachers to improve the testing process, continuing the move towards online assessments, and providing feedback on Smarter Balance assessments.

NCDPI administered thirty-five different Common Exams, along with math and ELA/reading EOGs and Biology, English II, and Algebra I EOCs to students in grades 4 – 12 during the 2012-13 school year. NCDPI administered 1,237,795 total Common Exams during the year, which was the first year of their implementation.

NCDPI worked with teachers to make sure this process provided accurate data. For example, NCDPI implemented a new process called “Roster Verification” statewide; this allowed teachers of courses that included an EOC, EOG, Common Exam, or Career and Technical Education (CTE) Exam the opportunity to verify their teaching assignments, their student rosters, and to indicate their percent of instructional responsibility and instructional availability for each student. This process is important as it provides accurate information for the calculations of a

teacher's impact on their students' growth (using the EVAAS methodology) that is a part of the Educator Evaluation System (see section four for more information).

In the past six months, NCDPI also worked with teachers to complete the standard setting process for the EOGs, EOCs, and NCEXTEND1 assessments. Two hundred and sixty educators participated in a week long process of standard setting that accomplished two goals: first, teachers created a set of recommended achievement level descriptors that provided a summary of the expected knowledge, skills, and abilities of students at each achievement level (I, II, III, IV), and second, educators established recommended cut scores that define the expected performance for students within each achievement level. The recommended achievement level descriptors and cut scores will be presented to the State Board of Education at the September meeting (September 4 and 5, 2013) for adoption.

NCDPI has also continued working to ensure that by the 2014-15 school year all state assessments will be administered online rather than through traditional paper and pencil administration. LEAs continued to move to that mode of operation in the spring of 2013; continuing the trend from the fall of 2012, schools administered a higher percentage of End-of-Course exams online in the spring of 2013 than in the spring semester of 2012 (see Table 1 for specific information).

Table 1: Percentage of End-of-Course Tests Administered Online (Spring 2012-Spring 2013)

	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Difference (percentage point increase)
English I	11.9%	No EOC	NA
English II	No EOC	83.3%	NA
Algebra I	15.6%	50.8%	+ 35.2
Biology	24.9%	55.1%	+ 30.2
Total Online	18.1%	61.5%	+ 43.4

North Carolina also continued to work with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium as it develops assessments that will be available to measure students' achievement of Common Core Math & English Standards beginning with the 2014-15 school year. In 2013-14, the state will participate in the field test phase of the Smarter Balanced online assessments and will continue to serve on the working teams that are planning for sustainability beyond the consortium grant.

Additional information about the State Testing Program can be found on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/>) and the latest information from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium can be found on their website (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org>).

2. Establishment of a Statewide Instructional Improvement System (IIS)

Background

The Instructional Improvement System (IIS) is a statewide technology system that will provide teachers, students, administrators, and parents with access to information, resources and tools to enable them to make better-informed decisions related to instruction, assessment, and career and college goals.

The IIS will integrate with NC's Student Information System (SIS) to become one complete platform called Home Base. Some highlights of the integrated system include:

- Portals for students, parents, and educators to access information
- Standards-aligned instructional resources that have been developed and/or vetted by content experts
- Instructional tools, including a lesson planner and student grouping functionalities
- Assessment tools that can be used to diagnose student needs and track progress
- Tools to record and organize NC Educator Evaluation System observation and evaluation data
- Tools to connect key data sources to give educators the information they need to improve their instructional practices
- Customizable or preformatted reports to show appropriate data for specific needs
- Professional Development tools for cataloging professional development offerings and recommending courses based on teacher evaluations

Some of these functionalities reflect a consolidation or streamlining of tools currently being used in districts and schools, while others reflect tools that are currently not available in all districts and schools. Home Base brings these together in one place to allow users to link data and resources quickly.

For instance, through Home Base a teacher will be able to search for or build lessons plans with standards-aligned resources available right in the system, create classroom assessments based on the content of the lesson, analyze the resulting data to adjust instruction, and then communicate student progress to parents. Likewise, a principal could monitor ongoing benchmark assessment data, compare it to mid-year observation ratings for teachers, and then find professional development modules or activities to address identified staff needs.

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.

Updates

Since the March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI rolled out three of the Home Base components with the start of the 2013-14 school year: PowerSchool (the state's new SIS), the Educator Evaluation System (see section four), and Schoolnet (Curriculum & Instruction and Classroom & Benchmark Assessment tools). NCDPI will roll out additional components of Home Base over the course of the 2013-14 school year (e.g., collaborative tools, professional development tools).
- NCDPI launched a partnership initiative to provide technical consulting to selected early-adopting LEAs and charter schools, and created a support center to provide technical assistance over the phone and via email during the rollout of Home Base.
- NCDPI continued communication and stakeholder engagement efforts to prepare districts and charter schools for the transition to Home Base, and to continue gathering input regarding educator needs and preferences related to Home Base functionality and content; this communication and stakeholder engagement took the form of face-to-face meetings, trainings, webinars, and providing website materials and other materials.
- NCDPI conducted regional trainings for district and charter school trainers. The Home Base training plan operates on a train-the-trainer model, and all districts and charter schools had the opportunity to send trainers to these training sessions held in all eight regions. In addition, NCDPI scheduled weekly webinars to reach a broader audience for continued learning opportunities on the Curriculum and Instruction, Classroom and Benchmark Assessment, and Educator Evaluation components of Home Base.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Home Base Development and Implementation

NCDPI began rolling out Home Base to year-round schools in July of 2013, and to all traditional calendar schools, including charters, at the start of the 2013-14 school year. The Student Information, Curriculum and Instruction, Classroom and Benchmark Assessment, and Educator Evaluation components will be available first; Professional Development, and Principal Evaluation components will arrive later in the school year. Statewide summative assessment functionality will be added in 2014-15.

High quality, standards-aligned instructional resources and classroom and benchmark assessment items were available when the system came online in July 2013, though additional content will be added on a rolling basis as it is developed or purchased. Professional development resources will be available by March of 2014.

Additional Implementation Support for LEAs and Charter Schools

In May and June of 2013, Staff met with districts and charters across the state in face-to-face sessions to discuss implementation strategies and to help draft implementation plans. This LEA Implementation planning was held in each region, providing the opportunity for every district and charter school to participate.

Also in June of 2013 NCDPI selected five LEAs and three charter schools as initial partnership sites to assist with the rollout of Home Base systems in the 2013-14 school year. NCDPI will assign project managers to each site to provide consulting services and help troubleshoot issues that emerge; each of these sites anticipates different specific challenges in implementation (e.g., integrating their content into Home Base, starting up new technology services). NCDPI will use the lessons learned from the partnership site implementations to inform technical assistance that the agency will provide to other districts and schools during the statewide rollout of the various components of Home Base.

To provide additional phone and email support to LEAs and charter schools during the rollout of Home Base and on a continued basis, NCDPI also created a support center to field calls and emails for technical assistance. Support Center analysts received training on the Home Base components in order to be able to solve customers' problems while on the initial call (Help Desk staff had traditionally referred callers to other personnel for solutions to problems). NCDPI expects a heavy call volume for the Center once the traditional calendar schools open in August 2013.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

NCDPI staff members featured Home Base as a part of the third round of "READY" meetings, held in April and May of 2013. An estimated 23,000 educators from across the state participated in these sessions, which NCDPI conducted via live webinars. These webinars provided an overview of the look and functionality of Home Base, as well as plans for the rollout of systems in the fall of 2013.

NCDPI provided information and training on Home Base at the 2013 Summer Institutes (see section nine for more information on these). Several sessions provide demonstrations of the look and functionality of the systems, and presenters in other topic areas (such as "middle grade math instruction") integrated Home Base into their sections where it was relevant (e.g., providing a look at how teachers could find curriculum materials in Home Base).

NCDPI continues to hold regular meetings for stakeholder groups to get district and school staff input on the system and vision for shared content. In addition to these monthly meetings, NCDPI has been holding webinars for district and school staff to demonstrate Home Base functionality and gather feedback on the planned features and content resources.

Additional information related to Home Base can be found on the NCDPI website:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/homebase/>.

3. Establishment of the North Carolina Education Cloud Technology Infrastructure

Background

The primary objective of the NC Education Cloud is to provide a world-class information technology (IT) infrastructure as a foundational component of the NC education enterprise.

To that end, the State Board has engaged a Cloud Team to 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.

Updates

Since the March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The Cloud Team awarded the contract for Identity Access Management (IAM) Services and completed the planning and design phases of the project.
- The Cloud Team has continued its work with the NC Community College System to develop the Learning Objects Repository (LOR) for use in concert with *Home Base*.
- The Cloud Team has continued market research to determine additional ways to modernize school business services in order to help LEAs realize cost savings; as part of one modernization effort already underway, the Cloud Team has migrated 26 LEAs to cloud-based iSeries services in the 2012-13 school year.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

IAM Services Contract

The Cloud Team awarded the contract for IAM services in the spring of 2013. This service will allow LEAs to manage user accounts and login information across multiple systems, including those in Home Base. In the past six months the Cloud Team has completed the planning and design phases of the contract work and services through this contract will be available to LEAs and charter schools by January 2014.

Learning Objects Repository (LOR)

Work on the LOR continues to move forward in collaboration with the NC Community College System. This project develops a sustainable model for the management of digital content, and will potentially enhance the long term viability of DPI's *Home Base* initiative that aims to deploy significant digital content to students, teachers, and parents. The schemas for the Standard Course of Study have been loaded into the LOR, enabling existing content to be tagged to specific instructional resources in order to make it possible for teachers to search for resources more easily.

Modernizing School Business Services

The Cloud Team has continued its work on the modernization of school business systems. Twenty-six LEAs have transitioned to a cloud-based iSeries hosted business systems infrastructure (exceeding the additional projection of 20 migrations by September of 2013) and work is underway to develop the next set of expansion sites.

The Cloud Team has also deployed a dedicated resource at MCNC to help LEAs and charter schools migrate to cloud based email and collaboration solutions. To date, 74 of 115 LEAs and 40 charter schools have migrated to cloud solutions (either Google or Microsoft Live).

The Cloud Team has continued its work on other services for LEAs. The Cloud Team and State Information Technology Services (ITS) are in ongoing discussions related to moving forward on the request for proposals (RFP) for Voice over Internet Phone Services and Mobile Device Management Services. The Cloud Team also has developed Finance and Human Resources systems specifications and roadmap documents for LEAs, and has conducted market studies on instructional content applications.

Additional information regarding the NC Education Cloud is available at:
<http://cloud.fi.ncsu.edu/>

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

Background

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 evaluation instrument to include standard, objective data regarding the extent to which each teacher and principal contributes to the academic growth of his or her students.

The statewide Educator Evaluation System that was in place prior to RttT offered a standard evaluation instrument aligned to the five NC Professional Teaching Standards. Principals and district leaders used the system to gather information about observed practices and then to improve teacher and principal performance. The enhanced system adds a new standard (sixth for teachers and eighth for principals and assistant principals) based on student academic growth to the evaluation system. This addition 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.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The State Board made decisions about the exact components and weights for the new sixth and eighth standards in the teacher and principal evaluation systems.
- NCDPI migrated the educator evaluation system (and its associated data) from the McREL online tool into the Truenorthlogic delivery platform in Home Base (see section two for additional information on Home Base) by the start of the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI completed an initial pilot for the Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process to measure growth for subjects where Common Exams are not practical (e.g., Arts Education, Healthful Living, World Languages). A larger pilot of this process will occur in the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI finalized evaluation rubrics and processes for eight school-wide position types (e.g., school psychologists) and made these evaluation instruments available for local use in the 2013-14 school year.
- NCDPI implemented a training plan for the new educator evaluation system to prepare LEAs and charter school personnel to use this system in the 2013-14 school year.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Components and Weights in Sixth and Eighth Standards

The State Board had requested that NCDPI run simulations to demonstrate the impact of the different proposed models for capturing student growth in the educator evaluation system (e.g. based totally on *individual* teacher growth or different combinations of *teacher* and *school-wide* growth). NCDPI presented the results of these simulations at the March SBE meeting, and the SBE made a decision based on this information: the sixth standard rating for an individual teacher will only be based (100 percent) on a growth value that represents his or her own students' progress in a specific content area. This measure will be combined with ratings on standards one through five of the evaluation system (based on observations from administrators and other artifacts) to determine a teacher's overall effectiveness status. The growth measure for principals (standard eight in their evaluation system) is based entirely on school-wide growth.

Migration of the Educator Evaluation System into Home Base

The McREL online tool originally housed the NC Educator Evaluation System. Following the awarding of a contract in January 2013, Truenorthlogic completed development of a platform for the educator evaluation system that would function within Home Base (see section two for additional information on Home Base). Following development of the platform, NCDPI worked with McREL to migrate existing data for teachers and administrators into Home Base in time for the start of the 2013-14 school year.

Truenorthlogic continues to work to develop links between information from the educator evaluation system and professional development content available in Home Base; these links will enable a teacher to use his or her observation ratings to immediately access suggestions on ways to improve his or her teaching. This functionality is scheduled to be available in the late spring of 2014.

Development of Measures of Student Learning

In conjunction with 800 teachers from across the state, NCDPI has developed Common Exams for courses and subjects in grades 4-12 English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics that do not have existing State End-of-Grade (EOG) or End-of-Course (EOC) assessments. Thirty-nine LEAs elected to begin administering Common Exams in high schools in fall 2012; all 115 districts and participating charter schools implemented these exams for middle and high schools in spring 2013. NCDPI has completed scoring of the spring exams, and will release the results in fall 2013. Common Exams for a handful of remaining courses (such as discrete math and various social studies electives) are still in development, and will be administered initially during the fall of 2013.

LEAs are assisting with the design of Measures of Student Learning for areas without Common Exams, such as Kindergarten-Grade 2 (K-2) classrooms and performance-based content areas. In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI will use K-2 literacy assessments piloted in the spring of 2013 to produce student growth data to measure the effectiveness of K-2 teachers.

In the spring of 2013, NCDPI also completed an initial pilot Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process for 100 teachers in three subject areas (Arts Education, Healthful Living, and World Languages). Participating teachers submitted modified portfolios reflecting student work in their classes through an online platform, which were scored by content experts to help determine a teacher's overall rating for the sixth standard. NCDPI has used the results of this process to plan a larger pilot of the ASW process in the 2013-14 school year.

Development of Evaluation Rubrics for School-wide Personnel

While NC had evaluation instruments for teachers and principals prior to receiving the RttT grant, the State Board has used RttT funds to develop instruments for evaluating other school-wide personnel licensed by the State. NCDPI completed work on evaluation rubrics that schools will be required to use for school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, school library media coordinators, and school instructional technology facilitators; NCDPI has also completed work on evaluation rubrics and processes that the state will provide for schools to use at their discretion for evaluating school nurses and for school based occupational and physical therapists. All of these newly created instruments are available for use in the 2013-14 school year. In 2013-14, NCDPI is also developing rubrics and processes for two additional school-wide positions (career counselors and academic coaches).

Communication and Training

NCDPI has continued to provide information and training to district and school personnel about the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System. NCDPI senior leadership discussed the Educator Evaluation System (as a part of Home Base) at four of the READY meetings in April and May of 2013 (see section two) and NCDPI has implemented a training plan to prepare LEA and charter school staff to use the online system in Home Base during the 2013-14 school year. Using a "train-the-trainer model," thirty NCDPI employees received training on the use of the system and then participated with vendor staff in regional trainings for 800 LEA and charter personnel

across the state in the summer of 2013; these LEA and charter personnel then returned to their districts or schools to help train other local personnel on the system.

In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI will deliver additional regional trainings regarding the educator evaluation system and how to interpret and use the data to improve instruction (see additional information about this work in section nine). NCDPI staff members also routinely speak about the educator evaluation system at regional and statewide conferences, and provide additional trainings when requested by LEAs or charter schools.

In addition to this direct/interactive communication, NCDPI maintains a comprehensive collection of manuals, presentations, and other documents on the Educator Effectiveness website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/educatoreffectiveness-model/>). The NCDPI maintains a rapid response email address (educatoreffectiveness@dpi.nc.gov) through which any teacher, principal, or central office staff member can submit a question about educator effectiveness and receive a response within 48 hours.

In the summer of 2013 NCDPI created a support center to provide district and charter school personnel with phone assistance regarding the new Home Base technology tools, including the online platform for educator evaluation (see section two for more information).

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

Background

One aspect of the state's effort to improve student achievement is a push to increase 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 served through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section ten).

Certified staff working at schools that make *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 four) to use a standard means of measuring a teacher's contribution to student growth at an *individual classroom level*.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, there are no updates to report. Incentives based on test scores from SY 2012-13 will be awarded in the fall of 2013-14 after accountability data has been released.

In the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years (prior to establishment of the enhanced system for measuring student growth for all teachers), up to a \$1,500 incentive was 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, the 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 who has individual teacher-level growth data, while the bonus based on school-wide data remains at \$1,500.

Table 2: School Personnel Receiving RttT Performance Incentives

	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13
School Personnel Receiving Incentive	1,096	1,990
FTE	884.37	1,625.21
Expenditures	\$1,589,878	\$2,971,247

6. Establishment of Regional Leadership Academies

Background

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. These academies provide training and full-year administrative internships for participants who have been selected based on their potential to become effective school leaders. Participants earn credit towards a graduate degree and principal licensure. Participants agree to serve for three years in districts working with their RLA.

Table 3: Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) Program Details

	Administrative Unit	Program Duration	Education/ Licensure	Cohort 3 Participants	# of Districts Served
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	NC State University	2 Years	Master in School Administration (MSA) Program	20	14
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	Sandhills Regional Education Consortium (with UNC-P, FSU, NCCAT)	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	20	12
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	UNC-Greensboro	1 Year	Alternative Licensure	22	4

Updates

Since the March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, each RLA has continued to provide coaching and professional development to its cohorts as they go through their internships. PTLA and SLA completed recruitment for participants in their third cohort and conducted summer training sessions for this group. These participants will continue to receive coursework and training over the course of the 2013-14 school year as they complete their internship experiences. Participants in NELA's second cohort completed their administrative internships, while participants of the third cohort completed their first year of the program and will begin their internships over the course of the 2013-14 school year.

Table 4 provides data on the number of RLA graduates who had found employment as principals as of mid-August 2013. This number will change as members of the most recent cohorts

continue to interview for open positions. Updated information will be available in the spring 2014 report.

Table 4: Positions Held by Graduates of the Regional Leadership Academies (August 2013)

	Principals	Assistant Principals	Central Office Staff	Other	Total
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	6	23	5	7	41
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	10	23	1	5	39
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	2	27	2	9	40

Additional information for each of the RLAs can be found on the following websites:

SLA: <http://www.sandhillsleadershipacademy.com/index.html>

NELA: <https://ncsunela.wikispaces.com/NELA+Home>

PTLA: <http://www.ptla-nc.org/>

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

Background

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. 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 (New Teacher Support Program: NTSP) 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 schools that NCDPI is serving through the Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools initiative (see section ten).

Updates

Since the September report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- TFA added 185 new teachers for the 2013-14 school year.
- The North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC) completed recruitment of its second group of corps members, increasing the number of participants completing their summer training from 34 in 2012 to 89 in 2013.
- The New Teacher Support Program (NTSP) has increased the number of teachers served from 33 in 2011-12 to 533 in FY 2012-13; it plans to serve 1,200 teachers in SY 2013-14.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Teach for America (TFA)

To address the need for highly effective teachers in NC's low-achieving LEAs, the RttT grant increased the number of TFA Corps members placed in those districts in northeastern North Carolina. 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 TFA organization continues to provide coaching and professional development during each corps member's two-year commitment.

In the 2012-13 school year, TFA worked with 88 second year corps members and 128 first year corps members (216 in total) in 11 LEAs and five charter schools across northeastern NC. Since the March 2013 report, TFA completed recruitment of its new cohort, inducting 185 corps members to teach in low achieving schools in the 2013-14 school year.

NC Teacher Corps (NCTC)

The NC Teacher Corps, modeled on the TFA program (described above), recruits recent college graduates with connections to North Carolina to teach in low-achieving schools in targeted partner LEAs 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. Twenty-four teachers from the first NCTC cohort had employment in LEAs in the 2012-13 school year; this is below the program's initial target of 100 teachers. The small number of corps members employed was the result of factors such as attrition prior to summer trainings and the availability of appropriate employment opportunities for teachers who completed the training. Based on the lessons learned from its first cohort, NCTC made several adjustments to the program to increase the size of subsequent cohorts:

- NCTC added additional requirements to its application process (such as requiring teachers to pass the PRAXIS exam *prior* to attending summer trainings) to ensure that candidates are ready for the classroom/employable.

- NCTC staff held an additional one-day training session at the beginning of the summer to prepare new cohort members for the interview process; NCTC staff also worked to educate principals and Human Resources staff in LEAs about NCTC and its corps members.
- NCTC offered a modest stipend to corps members, payable after the completion of their summer training. The stipend helped candidates with living expenses from the completion of the program through the beginning of their employment (a number of excellent candidates dropped out of the initial cohort, citing a need to continue working during the summer prior to employment as a teacher).

NCTC accepted 106 members into their second cohort in the summer of 2013, and 89 of those individuals completed the summer training program. As of the end of August 2013, 74 of these had found employment for the 2013-14 school year which is ahead of the placement rate for the first corps in mid-August of 2012.

The 2013-15 biennial budget passed by the General Assembly included a provision that transferred administrative responsibility for NCTC from NCDPI to Teach for America during the 2013-14 fiscal year. NCDPI officials will work with officials at TFA to make this transition as simple as possible for current corps members; however, the details of the transition have yet to be worked out, so the March 2014 report will have more details on this process.

New Teacher Support Program (NTSP)

NTSP is a partnership between NCDPI and UNC General Administration designed to provide coaching and support for new teachers in North Carolina's lowest-achieving schools through the first three years of their work. NTSP provides participating teachers with summer training sessions, six days of professional development during the school year, and ongoing coaching in their schools.

NTSP served 532 teachers in SY 2012-13 and is planning to serve up to 1,200 in the 2013-14 school year, covering all 116 of the lowest-achieving schools identified for service through the RttT grant. This number is an estimate based on the projected needs of these schools in the 2013-14 school year; the March 2014 report will include updated figures.

Since the March 2013 report, NTSP officials have led summer training sessions for new participants and planned for how they will serve the significantly increased number of teachers in the 2013-14 school year.

Table 5: 2012-13 Participation in NTSP

Teachers	Schools	LEAs
532	81	20

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

Background

RttT funds are enabling the NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to expand its offering of STEM related courses to ensure that students at risk of low performance in core science and math courses have access to effective teachers, quality course content, and innovative instructional practices designed to meet their needs.

NCVPS staff will develop eight new courses over the life of the grant. They will first pilot these in a blended format, which involves a partnership between online teachers and on-site teachers specially trained to support students in using technology to support their learning. By 2014, these courses will be available through the blended format and through the traditional virtual model used by VPS in its other courses.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCVPS continued to pilot three blended courses in the spring 2013 semester, serving 147 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties.
- NCVPS is developing three additional courses, with piloting of the courses scheduled to begin in the fall of 2013 and the spring of 2014.
- NCVPS has initiated conversations with STEM officials at NCDPI about collaborating in development of blended courses.
- NCVPS is developing two Requests for Proposals (RFP) for the development of two mobile applications; one will help manage course data across NCVPS platforms and the other as a field science notebook

Piloting and Development of Blended Courses

NCVPS piloted three blended courses in the 2012-13 school year: Math I, Earth Sciences, and Forensic Sciences. The courses had a total enrollment of 152 students in fall 2012 and 147 in spring 2013 spread across schools in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties. The blended approach has been implemented as planned, with online and classroom teachers communicating daily through logs to discuss the individual needs of students and differentiate instruction accordingly.

Three additional courses are currently being developed: Math II, Math III, and Biotechnology and Agriscience I. NCVPS will complete development and pilot the Math II course in the fall 2013 semester; development of the two additional courses will be completed by the fall of 2013, and the courses will be ready to pilot in the spring semester of 2014.

Accessing Courses through Mobile Devices

Students and teachers in the blended class pilots are using mobile devices during the 2012-13 school year to help NCVPS assess their compatibility with NCVPS materials. This work has provided the opportunity to use more STEM related mobile applications (or “apps”) in the courses, and has helped reveal issues students may encounter as they move between a desktop/laptop (which is the normal equipment used to access NCVPS courses) and a mobile environment. Based on feedback from students and teachers, NCVPS is revising its first three blended courses. NCVPS has improved course navigation and increased the number of activities to differentiate instruction in the Earth Science course, and has provided training materials for students on accessing the course using mobile technology. NCVPS is learning how to support students in using multiple ways to access their course materials across multiple devices.

These same lessons have allowed NCVPS to better provide professional development to the face-to-face teachers who support students in taking online courses. Since the March 2013 report, NCVPS has developed a year-round calendar of professional development opportunities for teachers working in the blended courses and worked with school and district officials to publicize these offerings for teachers.

Partnering with STEM Initiative

Since the March 2013 report, the NCVPS and STEM initiative staff have been collaborating regarding STEM course development. Through RttT, NCDPI has worked with the NC School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) to develop curriculum and content in each of the STEM focal areas (see section eleven). Staff members from NCVPS and the STEM initiative are examining how to leverage this content in the NCVPS blended course format. This work will make content developed through the STEM initiative available in a new format for distribution, and would enhance the offerings of the NCVPS format.

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

Background

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

- Build LEAs’ and charters’ capacity to prepare all of their teachers and principals for implementing the updated NC Standard Course of Study, new educator evaluation procedures, and new state assessments.
- Ensure that high quality professional development on topics of core instructional importance will be available to all teachers at the local level during the Race to the Top grant period and for many years to come.

To these ends, NCDPI has provided face-to-face and online support to LEA and charter school professional development leadership teams through a year-round cycle of activities that includes the following:

- **Summer Institutes.** Each LEA and charter school has sent a team to attend a two-day Summer Institute in the summers of 2011 and 2012 to receive training and resources on a variety of topics such as new standards and assessments, instructional design, and use of the building of leadership capacity. NCDPI held a third round of Summer Institutes in July 2013 which featured the use of the Home Base, NC's statewide, instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators. Based on positive feedback from districts and charter schools, NCDPI is planning to hold a fourth round of Summer Institutes in 2014.
- **Regionally-based professional development sessions.** These are a series of trainings and formative meetings scheduled regularly throughout the school year that allow district teams to build on the Summer Institutes by reflecting mid-stream on the application of what they learned in the summer, problem-solving around issues that have emerged during the school year, and sharing promising practices across districts.
- **Online Tools.** NCDPI provides online resources such as training modules, live chats, facilitated courses, and wikis that provide additional training and support to LEA and charter school personnel during the school year.
- **Professional Development Leads.** NCDPI has deployed a team of State Professional Development Leads who each work with a portfolio of districts and charter schools to ensure that they get the customized service and support they need to build local capacity, as described above.
- **Feedback Mechanisms.** NCDPI uses continuous feedback gathered through the above scheduled activities, additional formative visits with local staff throughout the year, and formal assessment data from the RttT Evaluation team to examine the work and ensure that services are addressing the needs of districts and participating charters.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI conducted over 214 regional trainings and 118 Individualized LEA/Charter workshops across the state in SY 2012-13 to help prepare teachers, administrators, and district personnel for implementing new standards, assessments, and evaluation tools; NCDPI has finalized the 2013-14 calendar, which includes over 325 regional training and 59 webinar sessions that build on Summer Institute sessions.
- NCDPI completed Summer Institutes 2013, which provided ten regionally-based two-day sessions on "Building District and School-level Leadership Capacity to Change Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes" for 2,962 participants representing leadership teams from all 115 LEAs and 50 charter schools.

- NCDPI launched ten online modules at the end of June 2013 to provide teachers with additional methods to obtain professional development during the school year; this brings the total number of modules available to 23.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Regional Trainings

In the 2012-13 school year, NCDPI delivered 214 regional trainings and 118 Individualized LEA/Charter workshops (in collaboration with Regional Education Service Alliances (RESAs)) to teams in all eight regions of the state. NCDPI finalized the 2013-14 professional development calendar, which includes 325 regional trainings and 59 webinars that build on information presented at the 2013 Summer Institute sessions and address a range of topics, including the following:

- Home Base (NC's new statewide integrated suite of student information and instructional resource technology tools)
- 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)
- Digital and global learning (developing 21st Century teacher and student learning opportunities)
- 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).

These sessions provide follow-up on discussions begun in the Summer Institutes, and provide a chance for feedback regarding emerging professional development needs of LEAs and charter schools. A schedule of these meetings can be viewed on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/calendar/>).

Summer Institutes

NCDPI conducted a third set of Summer Institutes, which focused on "Building District and School-level Leadership Capacity to Change Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes." NCDPI led ten, two day institutes at locations across the state, reaching 2,962 LEA and charter school teachers, other LEA staff, principals, IHE staff, and other educational partners who attended the institutes as part of local professional development leadership teams or supports for them.

Based on feedback from the RttT Evaluation team, the Summer Institutes 2013 offered a greater variety of topic-based sessions and more opportunities for teams from different districts and schools to connect and participate in discussions facilitated by NCDPI staff. The Summer Institutes continued to focus on supporting the transition to the new NC Standard Course of Study (including extensive resource overviews), effective use of the enhanced North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), and Data Literacy. Summer Institutes 2013 featured an

introduction to *Home Base*, NC's statewide, combined instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators. This introduction included specific demonstrations of components of the system, and presenters incorporated features of Home Base in additional sessions as well (e.g., demonstrating resources in Home Base that are useful in teaching the Standard Course of Study).

Online Resources

Based on feedback from the RttT Evaluation Team, NCDPI has worked to make it easier for teachers to find and access online resources, and interact online with other teachers and NCDPI staff. To make this happen, NCDPI has redesigned access to web materials and created an implementation guide to assist district and charter officials in using these resources more effectively.

NCDPI is currently developing ten additional online professional development modules that were available to LEAs and charter schools by June 30, 2014. These new modules will join the 23 that are already available.

Based on feedback from educators, NCDPI is also working to create facilitated versions of two of the online modules; these revised modules will guide teachers through the activities as a part of a group instead of assuming teachers will complete the course independently. This facilitated model has proven popular with educators, so NCDPI has worked to expand the number of offerings of this type.

Additional information on the online professional development modules can be found on the NCDPI website (<https://www.rt3nc.org/>).

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

Background

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 (DST) division 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 expand support to additional 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 LEAs).

The goal of the RttT “Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools” (TALAS) work is to help these schools and districts develop their capacity to increase and sustain student achievement. 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%. Tables 6 and 7 display the gains that these schools made over the first two years of RttT implementation (2012-13 data is not available yet to update these numbers, but the March 2014 report will include them).

Table 6: Proficiency of the 118 Schools at RttT Midpoint (2011-12)

Performance Composite	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Above 60%	7 schools	39 schools	Data not available until 10/2013
50 – 60%	54 schools	52 schools	
Below 50%	57 schools	16 schools	
Closed		10 schools	
Total	118	117*	

* West Charlotte did not test at least 95% of its students and does not have a reported Performance Composite for 2011-12.

Table 7: Graduation Rates of the 9 High Schools at RttT through Year 3 (2012-13)

Graduation Rate	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Above 60%		5 schools	7 schools
50 – 60%	8 schools	2 schools	
Below 50%	1 school		
Closed		2 schools	2 schools

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 implement their chosen model strategically, the NCDPI team provides each of the following: comprehensive needs assessments, on-site coaching for district and school personnel, and a rigorous program of professional development for school leaders.

Additional information on the TALAS work can be found on the DST website at:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/overview/>.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI has continued to support the recruitment, licensure and selection of effective turnaround principals.

- NCDPI has continued to provide on-site coaching and support at the classroom, school, and district level for teachers, principals and central office staff.
- NCDPI has continued providing ongoing professional development for school and district leaders through a four year professional development series.
- NCDPI has continued to work to coordinate with other RttT initiatives such as the Regional Leadership Academies, NC Teacher Corps, and the New Teacher Support Program to ensure these programs work together to benefit the TALAS schools.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Coaching and Support

To help the schools leverage their chosen turnaround model in order to build staff capacity and improve student performance, the NCDPI team has continued to provide several services to personnel at the classroom, school, and district level.

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** NCDPI staff members collect and synthesize data on a school's processes, procedures, and instructional practices in order to inform a plan for continuous improvement that will impact student learning. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment is conducted collaboratively with the LEA 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. This past year, DST staff offered additional support to schools through the delivery of professional development modules (separate from the professional development modules described in section nine) in order to enhance their family and community partnerships.
- **Coaching For Transformation.** Transformation coaches work on-site to build 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 are assigned to work with the superintendents in each of the twelve RttT LEAs. 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 are 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. 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 are assigned to provide on-site support for classroom teachers. Instructional Coaches have 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.

Ongoing Professional Development

NCDPI's TALAS effort includes a series of 15 targeted professional development sessions for lowest-achieving school leaders over the course of the Race to the Top grant. In the 2012-13 school year, NCDPI provided opportunities that built on sessions from year one (which focused on understanding the expectations of the grant and the USED models) and year two (which focused on high impact strategies related to improving student achievement). During year three, DST focused their efforts on helping schools and districts to recruit and retain high quality educators, use data to drive decision-making, and learn from school visits to observe successful strategies and processes that are currently implemented at other similar schools in North Carolina.

The year three professional development has introduced concepts central to producing rapid gains in student achievement such as “smart” teacher retention. Low-performing schools too often retain ineffective teachers, when a more effective strategy is to work hard to retain high quality (“Irreplaceable”) teachers while strategically removing ineffective personnel.

In the spring of 2013, one quarter of the principals from the TALAS schools entered the Distinguished Leadership in Practice (DLP) professional development program that is also supported by RttT funds. This year-long program is administered by the NC Principals and Assistant Principals Association, and uses a mix of face-to-face and online instruction to help participants reflect on what is needed to be a “distinguished” school leader (“distinguished” is the highest rating category in the NC Educator Evaluation System).

Coordination with Other RttT Initiatives

NCDPI has continued to emphasize coordination between the TALAS and other RttT initiatives to ensure strategic alignment and consistency of message and guidance. The coordination effort includes regular meetings and discussions among NCDPI staff administering the various programs (NCTC, NTSP, RLAs) to share information and coordinate efforts to maximize the benefit for schools and their personnel. DST staff has worked closely with the three Regional Leadership Academies and some RLA graduates have now been placed as administrators in some TALAS schools. DST staff also plays an active role in providing training and support to members of the NC Teacher Corps as well as delivered professional development at each of the Summer Professional Development Institutes. DST staff also supported training for Human Resource Directors in selected districts through a contract with Marstrats focused on helping twelve districts improve teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

11. Establishment of STEM Thematic High Schools and Network

Background

The State Board is using RttT funds to partner with North Carolina New Schools to support districts in establishing a system of 20 STEM-focused high schools (four Anchor Schools and sixteen Affinity Network Schools) across the state.

STEM high schools use a curriculum infused with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to increase students' abilities to meet current and expected NC economic and workforce development requirements. Each STEM high school is a part of a cluster of schools organized around four STEM thematic areas (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability).

Each cluster has an Anchor School that will serve as a “hub” for professional development, curriculum development, technology use, and innovation for that thematic area. The other schools in the cluster are Affinity Network schools that participate in professional development and networking related to their aligned STEM area.

Updates

Since the March 2013 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- All 20 of the Anchor and Affinity Network schools are operating their STEM programs.
- North Carolina New Schools is providing professional development and on-site coaching for the teachers and principals in each STEM school.
- NCDPI, in collaboration with STEM partners (schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions), has developed and piloted an NC STEM Recognition application process for implementation across the state in SY 2013-14 that provides a standard definition for the “Attributes of STEM Education” and a rubric that allows schools to assess their progress in implementing their STEM program.
- The North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) has completed development of level one STEM courses related to the four STEM focus areas; NCDPI is in the process of completing evaluation of the material for these courses and will make them available for use in schools during school year 2013-2014.
- NCSSM has completed initial development of level two STEM courses related to the four STEM focus areas and is in the process of evaluating these; NCSSM has begun work developing level three STEM courses.
- The 20 STEM high schools have continued purchasing specialized equipment to help provide instruction in their STEM focus area.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

STEM Network Development

All 20 of the STEM Network schools operated their STEM program in the 2012-13 school year; fifteen of the schools (three anchor and twelve affinity schools) were operating STEM programs in the previous school year. Tables 8-11 at the end of this section (pages 31-32) provide an overview of the different schools in each of the STEM focus areas (schools can have a program in more than one STEM focus area).

North Carolina New Schools has provided both instructional and leadership trainings for teachers and principals from the 20 network schools over the past six months, and will continue to provide these services and on-site coaching on an ongoing basis.

STEM Recognition

In partnership with representatives from schools, business and industry, and post-secondary institutions, NCDPI created a NC STEM Recognition application that provides a standard definition of the attributes of quality STEM instruction along with a self-assessment rubric. Anchor and Affinity schools will use these to assess their programs on the rubric and identify evidences of accomplishments. Where schools do not meet the criteria they can receive coaching from staff at NC New Schools to improve their programs. NC schools other than the 20 receiving support through the RttT initiative will be able to participate in the NC STEM Recognition application process, though they will not receive RttT-funded follow-up coaching from NC New Schools.

NCDPI piloted the STEM Recognition application process in the spring of 2013 and finalized the rubric, application, and review process based on feedback from participants. STEM Anchor and Affinity Network schools, along with other interested schools across the state, will be able to apply for STEM Recognition the beginning of fall of 2013. Submissions of final applications are due March 2014.

STEM Online Interdisciplinary Courses

The NC School of Science and Mathematics has completed the development of first year courses for each STEM area (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability). NCDPI and STEM school personnel reviewed these courses during the spring and summer of 2013; NCDPI will make the courses available to schools (both those in and out of the STEM Network) for use in the 2013-14 school year. NCSSM has completed initial drafts of second year courses for each STEM area and NCDPI has begun soliciting feedback on these. Development of third year courses for each STEM area is underway, and NCDPI is working to fulfill its goal of providing curricula that schools can implement for four courses in each of the STEM areas (sixteen courses total).

NCDPI staff members working on the STEM initiative are collaborating with NCVPS staff to determine which curricula and material from the courses developed by NCSSM may be incorporated into the blended courses developed by NCVPS.

Equipment Purchases

Each of the twenty schools in the STEM Anchor and Affinity Network is allotted a set amount of RttT funds to purchase equipment (such as specialized laboratory or manufacturing equipment) needed to implement their STEM program. All but one school is on track to complete these purchases before the start of the 2013-14 school year (that school has had a principal change and switched its STEM area of focus in FY 2012-13). Schools are to submit their final Equipment Expenditure report by September 2, 2013. This will enable the STEM Anchor and Affinity Network schools to take advantage of the purchases during the 2013-14 school year.

Table 8: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the STEM Health and Life Sciences Focus Area

Anchor School	City of Medicine Academy (Durham County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Bertie High School (Bertie County) Davie County High School (Davie County) Middle College at UNC-G (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 9: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Aerospace, Security, and Automation Focus Area

Anchor School	Early College East High (Craven County)
Affinity Schools	Surry Central High (Surry County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Valley Academy (Davidson County)

Table 10: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Energy and Sustainability Focus Area

Anchor School	Wake NCSU STEM Early College High School (Wake County)
Affinity Schools	Athens Drive High School (Wake County) Avery County High School (Avery County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County)

Table 11: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Biotechnology and Agriscience Focus Area

Anchor School	Northeast Regional School of Biotechnology and Agriscience (Washington County: Beaufort, Martin, Pitt, Tyrell, and Washington Counties)
Affinity Schools	East Columbus High School (Columbus County) East Duplin High School (Duplin County) James Kenan High School (Duplin County) North Duplin Jr Sr High School (Duplin County) South Columbus High School (Columbus County) Southern Durham High School (Durham County) The STEM Early College at N.C. A&T (Guilford County) Wallace-Rose Hill High School (Duplin County) West Columbus High School (Columbus County)