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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

An Act to Improve Public Education
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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 final of five 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 regional 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 2014

Since the March 2014 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 (RttT) grant. Highlights from the past six months include:

- As of July 30, 2014, 113 of 115 LEAs (representing 99% of traditional school students) and 52 of 126 charter schools (representing 41% of charter school students) have formally opted in to use Home Base as their instructional improvement system. The annual subscription fee to use the optional components of the service had been expected to be \$4 per student, but NCDPI was able to renegotiate terms with the software vendor, resulting in a full rebate in 2014-15, with the cost rising to the \$4 per student in 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- NCDPI completed evidence collection for the expanded pilot of the Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process, which measures student growth for subjects in which standardized exams are not practical (e.g., Arts Education, Healthful Living, World Languages), and planned for statewide launch of the ASW process in the 2014-15 school year.
- NCDPI produced a series of online videos to help to tell the story of how “Race to the Top” (RttT) looks in classrooms across the state of North Carolina. Each of the 20 videos provide demonstrations and/or testimonials related to RttT-funded efforts to remodel NC schools. Topics addressed include the updated Standard Course of Study, strong professional development, District and School Transformation work, and how teachers and administrators are already using the various elements of Home Base successfully.
- NCDPI worked with the Governor's Office to launch the Governor's Teacher Network, selecting through a rigorous application process 450 teachers from across the state to develop instructional resources or professional development materials for sharing with all NC educators through Home Base. Network teachers participated in a two-day training during the summer and will receive follow-up support during the 2014-15 school year.
- NCDPI received approval from the US Department of Education for the state's “no cost extension” request. This extension allows the state to shift unexpended RttT funds to support work on certain elements of the state's plan through September 30, 2015 (RttT funding for initiatives not included in the extension will end by September 30, 2014).
- NCDPI continued to execute contracts through the NC Education Cloud (NCEdCloud) initiative that assists LEAs with updating and streamlining their information technology (IT) infrastructure; in particular, the Cloud Team completed the development of the Identity Access Management (IAM) solution and is working to implement this with LEAs and charter schools in the 2014-15 school year.

Section 3: RttT Work Streams

1. Transition to New Standards and Assessments

North Carolina's updated Standard Course of Study includes new standards 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 formative and 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 materials related to the new standards and assessments on the Department's Wikicentral and in Home Base.
- 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.
- NC completed the spring 2014 administration of End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and NCEXTEND1 and NCEXTEND2 assessments.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Tools, Training, and Resources

Between March and September 2014, NCDPI continued to expand the availability of instructional support tools and materials to help teachers implement the new standards and assessments. NCDPI continued to expand resources, such as model lesson plans and instructional guides that offer concrete examples of how to address the new standards in

classrooms. One particularly helpful set of resources featured crosswalk documents comparing standards from previous secondary math courses (Algebra I and II, Geometry) with the integrated math courses (Math I, II, and III). This helped educators identify where to locate concepts in the standards for integrated math courses, and helped identify next steps for course development and training. NCDPI also launched the Governor's Teacher Network (GTN) in the summer of 2014. As a part of this program, approximately 225 teachers will create instructional resources and assessment items related to the Standard Course of Study that will be available in Schoolnet for use by teachers statewide. NCDPI staff will mentor participating teachers and provide feedback on this work over the course of the 2014-15 school year.

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 LEA 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) to help teachers continue to understand and implement the revised Standard Course of Study. NCDPI staff members also presented sessions on the new standards at the 2014 Summer Institutes (please see section 11 for additional information on this activity).

Additionally, on February 20 and 21, 2014 NCDPI held a statewide Curriculum Leaders' Student Achievement Summit on Reading and Math. The summit was in response to requests from curriculum leaders in the field for assistance in ways to support their LEA or charter school in improving student performance in reading and mathematics. The two-day event held in Greensboro featured sessions on: 1) strategically using data to improve reading and math instruction, including Goal Summary reports (linking student performance information to specific standards in the SCOS, described in the March 2014 report) and EVAAS data, 2) presentations on HomeBase and Wiki instructional resources in reading and math, and 3) updates on state initiatives in reading and math.

To help plan future work around resource development and professional development on the new Standard Course of Study, NCDPI conducted a statewide survey of all teachers related to their perceptions of the Common Core and NC Essential Standards and the implementation of Common Core and NC Essential Standards in their district, school, and classroom, as well as feedback on ways to improve the inventory of resources and professional development around the Standard Course of Study. Complete analysis of the data from the survey had not been completed at the time of this report.

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 aligned to the revised NC Standard Course of Study. In the past six months, this involved completion of the second

year of administration of End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments as well as the NC Final Exams, and continuing the move towards online assessments.

NCDPI continues to work toward the goal of administering state assessments online rather than through traditional paper and pencil administration by the 2014-15 school year. More, but still not all, LEAs and charter schools are prepared to administer assessments online at this point. To assist LEAs through this transition period, and to ensure standardization statewide, NCDPI again printed copies of the NC Final Exams for the spring 2014 administration to help defray costs for LEAs and charter schools. NCDPI is planning to offer some of the NC Final Exams online in fall 2014 and all of the NC Final Exams online in spring 2015.

North Carolina continues to work with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium as it develops assessments to measure students' achievement of Common Core Math and English Standards that are a part of the NC Standard Course of Study. In the spring of 2014, the state participated in the field test phase of the Smarter Balanced online assessments (this was optional, and not required for LEAs) and will continue to serve on the working teams that are planning for sustainability beyond the consortium grant. At their January 2014 meeting, the State Board of Education decided to continue administering the current state-created assessments through the 2015-16 school year. As directed by the Board, NCDPI staff are convening an advisory group, the State Board's Task Force on Summative Assessment, to examine the possibility of shifting to different assessments for grades three through eight and high school in 2016-17. The original intention was to have the advisory group complete its work in early fall 2014; however, pending legislation in the General Assembly necessitated a shift in this timeline to ensure the State Board's advisory group would have accurate information on the testing requirements prior to exploring testing options and making a recommendation to the board.

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 provides 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 integrates with NC's Student Information System (SIS) and is a part of one complete platform called Home Base. Some highlights of the integrated system include:

- Portals for students, parents, and educators to access information
- NC 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, delivering online courses and recommending courses based on teacher evaluations

Some of these functionalities reflect a consolidation or streamlining of tools currently being used in LEAs and charter schools, while others reflect tools that are currently not available in all LEAs and charter 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 can 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 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- As of July 30, 2014, 113 of 115 LEAs (representing 99% of traditional school students) and 52 of 126 charter schools (representing 41% of charter school students) have formally opted in to use Home Base as their instructional improvement system. The annual subscription fee to use the optional components of the service had been expected to be \$4 per student, but NCDPI was able to renegotiate terms with the software vendor, resulting in a full rebate in 2014-15, with the cost rising to the \$4 per student in 2015-16 and 2016-17.
- NCDPI continued the rollout of four of the Home Base components in the 2013-14 school year: PowerSchool (the state's new SIS), the Educator Evaluation and Professional Development System (see section four), Schoolnet (Curriculum & Instruction, Classroom & Benchmark Assessment and Data Analysis tools), and OpenClass (the state's collaboration and course management tool).
- NCDPI conducted pilots of the professional development tool components of Home Base in the spring of 2014, with full rollout scheduled for the beginning of the 2014-15 school year
- NCDPI continued the curation and loading of vetted, NC standards-aligned Open Educational Resources (OER) and many other instructional resources into Schoolnet, and continued reviewing new assessment items to load into Home Base.
- NCDPI continued to support LEA and charter school use of Home Base through the Home Base Support Center, Partnerships, regional trainings, and regular webinars. NCDPI Expanded the Partnership scope of work to engage more LEAs and charter schools through a regionally based approach.
- NCDPI continued communication and stakeholder engagement efforts to assist LEAs and charter schools with 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, fidelity support sessions, surveys, webinars, weekly newsletter updates, and providing a website that remains up to date with current issues and resolutions, updates, calendars and other materials.
- NCDPI completed READY IV meetings, which were face-to-face meetings held across the state in March and April 2014 to provide superintendents and key central office personnel with: 1) Home Base implementation updates and information about the opt-in process, 2) information about the Educator Effectiveness system (both the NC Educator Evaluation System and the Truenorthlogic platform), and 3) information on the School Performance Grades process ahead of the first school designations.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Home Base Development and Implementation

NCDPI rolled out the main components of Home Base (the Student Information System, the Instructional Improvement System, and the Educator Evaluation System) on schedule at the start of the 2013-14 school year. NCDPI has worked with LEAs and the vendor teams to document and understand the issues during implementation and to install appropriate fixes to improve performance of the tools in Home Base. NCDPI has been able to increase system performance for LEAs and charter schools over the course of the 2013-14 school year.

NCDPI began the rollout of OpenClass, the online collaboration and course management component of Home Base, which will allow teachers and students to collaborate with one another and for teachers to manage instructional resources and activities, in the fall of 2014. LEAs and charter schools began implementing the system in waves, based on when they expressed interest in using the tool. As of the end of July 2014, NCDPI has trained 77 LEAs on the tool and more than 40 LEAs have completed their set up and are able to use the system.

NCDPI continued development of the professional development tools in Home Base ahead of their rollout in the 2014-15 school year. NCDPI completed the build of the system and piloted its use to select LEAs in the spring of 2014. These LEAs received extensive training on the system and provided feedback to NCDPI about its functionality and the additional features needed. NCDPI completed registration for the 2014 Summer Institutes using this system (see section 11 for additional information on these).

NCDPI also continues to add high-quality instructional resources and classroom and benchmark assessment items on a rolling basis as they are developed or purchased. As of the end of July, educators can access over 30,000 instructional resources and over 33,000 assessment items through Schoolnet. There are also collections of resources available through the “Ed Cloud” in OpenClass, as well as resources that are a part of the NC Learning Object Repository (NC LOR). Additionally, NCDPI launched the Governor’s Teacher Network to expand the number of instructional resources, assessment items, and professional development materials available in the Schoolnet by the end of the 2014-15 school year (see section nine for additional information on this activity).

Additional Implementation Support for LEAs and Charter Schools

NCDPI continues providing targeted support to LEAs and charter schools through the Partnerships initiative. With this work, the NCDPI partners with LEAs and charter schools to support their adoption of Home Base, to document best practices and lessons learned from them, and to ensure that information is shared with all LEAs and charter schools in order to promote full statewide adoption and effective use of the Home Base suite of tools. NCDPI will expand the scope of work for Partnerships in the 2014-15 year to include more customized, as needed assistance to all LEAs and charter schools. The partnership team will focus on sharing best practices, building local networks, providing support and growing the instructional tools within Home Base.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement

The 2014 Summer Institutes, which took place in July, were held across all regions of the state and featured many district and state-led sessions, including many on Home Base. There were sessions on how to use Schoolnet, how to find and use resources in instruction, and more.

NCDPI continued to provide information and training on Home Base to LEAs and charters since the March report. Another round of formal, face-to-face trainings for LEAs and charter schools began on July 21, 2014. These trainings are being conducted in every region of the state and include sessions on the instructional components of Home Base (including Schoolnet, OpenClass and the professional development tool). In addition the state has continued to provide regular webinars on both new information and “refresher” information.

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 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- The Cloud Team continued deployment of the Identity Access Management (IAM) solution to LEAs and planning for integration of IAM with Home Base.
- The Cloud Team has continued its work to support the state's increasing use of digital teaching and learning strategies.
- The Cloud Team has continued its work to modernize school business services in order to help LEAs realize cost savings.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

IAM Services Contract

Since the March report, the Cloud Team completed development and began implementation of the IAM solutions for LEAs and charter schools; this service allows LEAs to manage user accounts and login information across multiple systems, including those in Home Base. The Cloud team worked with the vendor for the IAM solution on the technical implementation plan for the rollout, meeting regularly with representatives from early adopter LEAs to help make the transition as seamless as possible for them. As of July 2014, the IAM solution could manage usernames and passwords across applications such as Discovery Education, Follett Destiny, and zScaler Web Security, and the team will work to implement these solutions for LEAs and charter schools in the 2014-15 school year. The Cloud team will continue to work with the vendors for Home Base and the IAM solution during the 2014-15 school year to plan for integrating the IAM solution with Home Base.

Supporting the Shift to Digital Teaching and Learning Strategies

Since the March report, the Cloud team has continued its work supporting digital instruction in LEAs and charter schools across the state. Work on the Learning Objects Repository (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 Cloud team continues to deploy the production system of the LOR and work with the Home Base team to ensure proper interconnections of two systems.

Additionally, the Cloud team continues to work with the state IT agency on a Request For Proposal (RFP) to procure additional Learning Management System (LMS) capabilities for LEAs. While OpenClass, the LMS tool in Home Base (available without cost to the state), provides LEAs with basic LMS functionality, it was never designed to replace solutions for LEAs with full featured LMS needs (such as those housing extensive content in Blackboard platforms). The full-featured LMS envisioned in the Cloud team's proposal will better meet the needs of these LEAs, and will feature better integration with the tools in Home Base (specifically the roster and gradebook functions) that will be attractive to other LEAs. Once the RFP is approved and the vendor is selected, the Cloud team will provide extended migration assistance to LEAs who wish to move to this more robust LMS solution.

The Cloud team has also begun work on the development of a comprehensive Digital Learning Plan for the state to help prepare for various legislative requirements (e.g., the requirement in S.L. 2013-12 for the state to move away from textbooks to all digital content by 2017) and State Board policies to support digital teaching and learning efforts. As a first part of this work, the Cloud team is working on a wireless infrastructure plan that outlines the capacity of LEAs and charter schools to ensure adequate wireless services to support the move to digital teaching and learning; this part of the plan will be complete in September of 2015.

Modernizing School Business Services

Since the March report the Cloud Team has continued its work on the modernization of school business systems. For instance, the Cloud team has continued its work migrating LEAs to a cloud-based iSeries hosted business systems infrastructure; the Cloud Team has also continued to deploy a dedicated resource at MCNC (formerly known as Microelectronics Center of North Carolina) to help LEAs and charter schools migrate to cloud based email and collaboration solutions.

The Cloud Team has continued its work on other services for LEAs. The Cloud Team recently received approval from NC Information Technology Services (NC ITS) to move forward with the request for proposals (RFP) for two of these services: 1) Mobile Device Management Services to help LEAs support their mobile devices such as tablets and laptops (e.g., helping distribute software and security updates across devices, manage and track inventory of devices), and 2) applicant tracking services that would allow a candidate for a teacher position to apply to positions in multiple LEAs through one system. The Cloud Team is preparing to issue these RFP's.

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 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI released value-added data from the 2012-13 school year through a public, searchable website; NCDPI also completed the roster verification process for second semester courses, one of the prerequisite steps for preparing 2013-14 data for release in the fall.
- NCDPI received approval from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for changes to policies related to the NC Educator Evaluation System that allow LEAs to use alternative methods to determine Standard Six ratings for teachers in non-tested subjects and would change how teacher effectiveness statuses are calculated for the 2014-15 school year; NCDPI developed a process for LEAs to request this flexibility, and 11 LEAs have been approved through this process.
- NCDPI completed evidence collection for the expanded pilot for the Analysis of Student Work (ASW) process to measure growth for subjects in which standardized exams are not practical (e.g., Arts Education, Healthful Living, World Languages) and planned for statewide launch of the process in the 2014-15 school year.
- NCDPI continued to implement a training plan and regional support for the new Educator Evaluation System to assist educators in using this system in the 2013-14 school year.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Release and Preparation of Value-added Data

Since the March 2014 report, NCDPI released value-added data from the 2012-13 school year to the public through a searchable online database in February 2014. NCDPI loaded the data in the system, and LEA and charter officials performed quality assurance to insure that the data represented accurate links between their schools and teachers. Stakeholders can access aggregate school-level data on the evaluations of teachers, as well as aggregate district-level data on the evaluations of teachers and school administrators. The website can be viewed at the following address:
<http://apps.schools.nc.gov/pls/apex/f?p=155:1>.

In addition to the public release of the 2012-13 data, NCDPI has continued working towards the preparation of data for the 2013-14 school year for release in fall 2014. LEAs and charter schools completed administration of the End-of Grade, End-of-Course, Career and Technical Education, and NC Final Exams during spring 2014 and completed the roster verification process for these courses; roster verification allows teachers (particularly if they teach multiple groups of students or if they team teach) to ensure that their value-added data includes students they work with in the classroom. NCDPI worked to improve this process for teachers, making training modules available ahead of the spring roster verification window and holding weekly webinars for teachers and principals to receive training on the process and have their questions answered.

Policy Changes Related to NC Educator Evaluation System

In the fall of 2013, the State Board reviewed policies surrounding the NC Educator Evaluation System and approved several changes at their October 2013 meeting:

- LEAs and charter schools would have the flexibility to petition the State Board to use either school-wide growth or their own assessments to determine the standard six rating for groups of teachers (e.g., middle grades social studies, chemistry).
- The first effectiveness status awarded to teachers in the fall of 2015 will use the highest two of three years of student growth data, as opposed to three consecutive years of student growth data; this different approach is intended to recognize that teachers implemented new assessments tied to the new standards during this period, warranting some flexibility in basing evaluations on the resulting data. After 2015, a teacher's effectiveness status will be based on the three prior years of student growth data.
- Any consequences for an effectiveness status of "in need of improvement" will be delayed until the statuses awarded in the fall of the 2016-17 school year.

These changes provide LEAs and charter schools with flexibility in implementing the system, and, for teachers, recognize that the student growth data currently collected reflects a transition to new standards and assessments. NCDPI submitted a request for approval of these changes by the US Department of Education (to comply with the state's waiver to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) and received official approval in February of 2014. NCDPI developed a process for LEAs and charter schools to apply for this flexibility, and requests from 11 LEAs and 15 charter schools have been approved

through this process to use school-wide growth for the standard six rating of a subset of their teachers.

Development of Assessment of Student Work (ASW) Process

In spring 2013, NCDPI 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 through an online platform modified portfolios reflecting student work in their classes; the work was then reviewed and scored by content experts using DPI approved review criteria to help determine a teacher's overall rating for the sixth standard.

NCDPI used this experience to refine the process and implement a larger pilot in the spring of 2014 that covered the three original subjects as well as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Occupational Preparation, and two Social Studies Courses: 7th Grade Social Studies and World History. Over 1,100 educators expressed interest in participating and 350 submitted evidence for review through a new online platform in Home Base. As of the writing of this report, NCDPI had completed the training of volunteer reviewers and these individuals had begun providing scoring and other feedback to educators. NCDPI will use lessons learned from this expanded pilot to improve the process and online platform ahead of the statewide roll out of the ASW process in the 2014-15 school year. NCDPI has also scheduled regional trainings to help prepare teachers to use the ASW process in the 2014-15 school year.

Communication and Training

NCDPI has continued to provide information and training to district and school personnel about the enhanced NC Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). NCDPI provides regional "refresher" trainings on the use of the NCEES during the school-year for educators across the state, as well as regional trainings on 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/effectiveness-model/>). 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.

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 (teachers, principals, media coordinators, counselors, etc.) working at qualifying schools that make *higher than expected* student growth on statewide assessments can earn a monetary incentive each year of the RttT grant period, 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.

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; beginning with the 2012-13 data, teachers can earn incentives 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.

Updates

There are no updates to share for this initiative since the March 2014 report. NCDPI awarded incentives based on assessment data from the 2012-13 school year. Table 1 below provides a comparison of the expenditures over the past three years. The year of the award in each column represents data from the previous school year. There will be one final administration of the performance incentive initiative in fall 2014, based on data from the 2013-14 school year.

Table 1: School Personnel Receiving RttT Performance Incentives

	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14
FTE receiving school-wide student growth incentive (\$1,500)	884.37	1,625.21	1,692.58
Teachers receiving individual student growth incentive (\$2,000)	N/A	N/A	232
Expenditures	\$1,589,878	\$2,971,247	\$2,954,278

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 toward a graduate degree and principal licensure. Participants agree to serve for three years in LEAs working with their RLA.

Updates

Since the March 2014 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 cohort members completed their coursework and administrative internship experiences. Participants in NELA's third cohort completed their administrative internships for the 2013-14 school year. In June, all three RLAs graduated their third cohort of prospective school leaders. Table 2 provides program details on the RLAs.

Table 3 provides data on the number of RLA graduates who had found employment as school leaders as of July 2014. This number will change as members of the most recent cohorts continue to interview for open positions.

Table 2: Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) Program Details

	Administrative Unit	Program Duration	Education/ Licensure	Cohort 3 Participants	# of LEAs 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

*PTLA interns earn 24 university credits from UNC-G and may continue at UNC-G to earn their MSA.

Table 3: Positions Held by Graduates of the Regional Leadership Academies (July 2014)

	Principals	Assistant Principals	Central Office Staff	Other	Total
Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA)	12	28	7	4	51
Sandhills Leadership Academy (SLA)	14	28	1	13	56
Piedmont Triad Leadership Academy (PTLA)	6	33	6	18	63

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 added support to the lowest-achieving LEAs 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 March report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- TFA provided coaching and access to online resources to 280 first and second year corps members for the 2013-14 school year.
- The North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC) provided coaching and job placement support for 106 members of the first and second cohorts of the program.
- The New Teacher Support Program (NTSP) provided 1,190 teachers with instructional coaching and on-site observations.

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 LEAs and charter schools in eastern 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 LEAs. The TFA organization continues to provide coaching and professional development during each Corps member's two-year commitment.

In the 2013-14 school year, TFA worked with 100-second year corps members and 180 first year corps members (280 in total) in 15 LEAs and 5 charter schools across eastern North Carolina. TFA will continue to serve North Carolina schools after the end of the grant, but will not recruit another cohort of educators using Race to the Top funds.

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 the state. The program requires a two-year commitment from participants and provides intensive summer training, ongoing coaching and mentoring, and the ability to earn a teaching license. Eighty-nine individuals entered the second cohort for NCTC and completed the summer training in 2013 and as of January 2014 seventy-five of these cohort members found teaching positions in the state's public schools. Nineteen of the 21 teachers from the first NCTC cohort completed their second year of teaching and are finalizing licensure requirements for full teacher certification.

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 will provide support to the final cohort of NCTC teachers as they complete their second year of service in the 2014-15 school year; TFA began recruiting for its first NC Teacher Corps cohort (expected to start in the fall of 2014) and will recruit and support these teachers moving forward.

New Teacher Support Program (NTSP)

NTSP is a partnership between NCDPI and UNC General Administration designed to provide support services for beginning teachers during their first three years of teaching. The program provides participating teachers a week-long Institute at the beginning of the school year to target the knowledge and skills most needed by beginning teachers, instructional coaching throughout the school year, and six aligned professional development sessions.

The NC NTSP served 544 teachers in SY 2012-13 and 1,190 teachers during the 2013-14 school year, covering 112 of the lowest-achieving schools identified for service through the RttT grant.

Table 4: 2013-14 Participation in NTSP

Teachers	Schools	LEAs
1,190	129	29

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 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. Following the conclusion of the grant, these courses will be available for use by LEAs and NCVPS will make modifications to convert courses into their traditional virtual model or to integrate course material into similar VPS courses already in their catalog.

Updates

Since the March 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCVPS deployed five blended courses (Forensics, Earth and Environmental Science, Math I, Math II, Biotech/Agriscience I) in the spring 2014 semester, serving 150 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover Counties.
- NCVPS completed development of two additional courses (Math III and Biotechnology/Agriscience II) and will pilot these courses in the fall of 2014.
- NCVPS is waiting for guidance from NCDPI regarding development of a Math IV (possibly Discrete Math). If the decision is made to develop the course, NCVPS will begin development in fall 2014 and deploy it to the LEAs in Spring 2015. NCVPS is in the process of revising Forensics, Earth and Environmental Science, Math I, and Math II so that all STEM courses developed with RttT funds will be available to all LEAs to utilize in the year 2015-16 in both blended/non-blended and mobile/non-mobile formats.
- NCVPS provided training and support to help face-to-face and virtual teachers collaborate effectively and to help teachers and students use mobile devices in the blended courses.
- NCVPS continued to improve the use of courses through mobile devices, and has moved forward on adding two mobile applications to help with this effort.

Piloting and Development of Blended Courses

To meet the goals of this initiative, NCVPS continued to deploy blended courses in which online and classroom teachers communicate daily through logs to discuss the individual needs of students and differentiate instruction accordingly. NCVPS continued

to implement the four previously developed courses (Forensics, Earth and Environmental Science, Math I, Math II) and piloted an additional course, Biotechnology/Agriscience I in the spring 2014 semester to 150 students in Greene, Person, and New Hanover County Schools. NCVPS completed development of two blended courses, Math III and Biotechnology/AgriScience II, during the spring of 2014, and plans to pilot these in the fall of 2014. NCVPS is waiting for guidance from NCDPI regarding development of a Math IV (possibly Discrete Math). NCVPS will develop in the fall of 2014 and deploy to the LEAs in spring 2015.

Additionally, NCVPS staff are revising the blended versions of the courses developed through this initiative to make them accessible in non-blended (traditional online instruction) and non-mobile (i.e., not relying on applications that are not available to desktop/laptop users) versions through the NCVPS catalog. In some cases (e.g., Math I, II, and III) this means incorporating additional content (e.g., STEM grand challenges) from blended courses into existing versions of these courses in the NCVPS catalog; in other cases (e.g., Forensic Sciences) this means adding new virtual courses to the existing catalogue. This work will be ongoing through the 2014-15 school year, with a target of having these versions of the courses available for the start of the 2015-16 school year.

Professional Development for Blended Learning

NCVPS has worked to expand the professional development provided for the onsite, or “face-to-face,” teachers who support students in taking online courses. NCVPS continues to deploy a year-round calendar of professional development opportunities for teachers working in the blended courses and has worked with school and district officials to publicize these offerings for teachers. These trainings focus on topics such as effective strategies for blending learning and building relationships with teachers and students. Since the March report, NCVPS staff has worked to update the schedule of offerings for the 2014-15 school year using feedback from students and teachers from the 2013-14 school year.

Accessing Courses through Mobile Devices

Students and teachers in the blended class pilots use mobile devices (such as iPads) to access materials as a part of their courses. Since the March 2014 report, NCVPS has continued to refine its training materials and the introductory unit for students, based on feedback from students and teachers, to help them use these devices more effectively. NCVPS is continuing to develop mobile applications for use with these devices, and is in the process of initiating a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of a mobile application to help manage course data across NCVPS platforms, and an Invitation for Bid (IFB) to provide students with a field science notebook application for use in their courses.

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 leadership 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. These teams include teacher leaders, administrators, and support staff who lead training efforts in the district or charter. 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 LEAs and charter schools, NCDPI held a fourth round of Summer Institutes in 2014. LEA and charter leadership teams created approximately 90% of all professional development offerings during the two-day event. Topics included data literacy, Home Base, teaching methodology, and assessment.
- **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 focus deeply on content, student data, evaluation processes, and teaching standards. Building on district planning from Summer Institutes, fidelity support sessions are held each semester to review district professional development plans, problem-solve around issues that have emerged during the school year, and share promising practices across LEAs and charter schools.
- **Online Tools.** NCDPI provides online resources such as training modules, live chats, facilitated and non-facilitated courses, and wikis that provide additional training and support to LEA and charter school personnel during the school year. Mini-modules serve as tutorials for educators needing "refreshers" on specific standards and specific 21st Century skill application.
- **Professional Development Leads.** NCDPI has deployed a team of State Professional Development Leads who each work with a portfolio of LEAs and

charter schools to ensure that they get the customized service and support they need to build local capacity, as described above. The Professional Development Leads live and work in all 8 regions, thereby strengthening our statewide learning network.

- **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 LEAs and participating charters.

Updates

Since the March 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- NCDPI delivered over 325 face-to-face professional development offerings and 130 webinar trainings in SY 2013-14 to help prepare teachers, administrators, and district personnel for implementing new standards, assessments, and evaluation tools, and to use Home Base.
- NCDPI completed Summer Institutes 2014 which focused on “Sustaining Success... Building on Achievement.” LEAs and charters led 90% of all sessions sharing strategies, lessons learned, and how they currently use our Home Base system. Approximately 2,200 educators from all 8 regions assembled during the week of July 7 through 11, 2014 to listen and learn while sharing lessons from implementation to date and collaborating on new ideas.
- From July 2013 to December 2013, Professional Development Leads delivered 138 “by request” sessions directly to LEAs, in addition to the 325 face-to-face Professional Development sessions on the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) calendar described above. The major focus of these sessions was the Home Base system.
- NCDPI created six new online modules, and transferred these along with the 56 existing modules and courses to the Professional Development system in Home Base. NCDPI also completed a 6 week pilot of the new Home Base Professional Development system in which 12 LEAs volunteered to use the platform and report weekly on the successes and challenges with the system.
- NCDPI launched the Governor’s Teacher Network (GTN), selecting through a rigorous application process 450 teachers from across the state to work with NCDPI staff creating professional development materials and instructional materials for use statewide through Home Base.

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

Regional Trainings

In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI provided 325 regional trainings and 130 webinars that built on information presented at the 2013 Summer Institute sessions and addressed 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).

This is a larger number of sessions than NCDPI delivered in previous years, and does not include additional presentations that LEAs request from NCDPI staff on a regular basis. The 325 sessions build on material presented in the Summer Institute sessions, and provide a chance for LEAs and charter schools to engage with State personnel regularly throughout the school year regarding emerging local professional development needs. In addition to content trainings, NCDPI conducts fall and spring fidelity checks to gather feedback from LEA and charter school professional development teams, review progress on their goals for delivering professional development during the year, and to share resources with one another. These play an important role in supporting the work of local teams and meeting the goal of enhancing the professional development infrastructure for the state.

NCDPI will offer another round of regional professional development offerings during the 2014-15 school year. NCDPI staff worked with the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) to develop a schedule of 230 professional development sessions on themes such as the Standard Course of Study, “Read to Achieve”, data literacy, Home Base, and digital teaching and learning that will build on sessions from the 2014 Summer Institutes.

Summer Institutes

NCDPI completed Summer Institutes 2014, eight, two-day regional meetings with sessions focusing on the theme of “Sustaining Success... Building on Achievement.” Approximately 2,200 educators participated in the meetings, and local teams took the lead this year as individuals from LEAs and charter school professional development teams created approximately 90% of all professional development offerings for the meetings. NCDPI has worked with local teams to strengthen the capacity for local professional development over the course of RttT, and providing the local teams with

more responsibility for this event will help prepare them to carry on the work after the RttT grant period ends, when staff capacity at NCDPI will be at a reduced level.

Online Resources

Since the March 2014 report, NCDPI completed development of the new professional development system in Home Base and successfully transitioned State-developed professional development modules and other professional development materials to it. NCDPI used this system to register participants for the 2014 Summer Institutes, and completed a 12 LEA pilot of the system in July in which 259 educators from the twelve participating LEAs took at least one of the 43 courses in the professional development system created by participating LEAs; NCDPI staff are reviewing feedback received from the pilot LEAs and will use these to improve the platform and provide trainings for LEAs to improve their usage of the system. The system will be available for LEAs that chose to opt-in to usage of the voluntary components of Home Base for the 2014-15 school year, and additional training will be provided to these LEAs on how to use the system. NCDPI has also formed an LEA advisory group to provide regular feedback on the system moving forward.

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

Governor's Teacher Network

Since the March 2014, report, NCDPI partnered with the Governor's Office to launch the Governor's Teacher Network. This program used a rigorous application process to select 450 teachers (out of 1,198 applications) from across the state to create professional development materials or instructional resources that can be shared with teachers statewide through the tools in Home Base. Teachers proposed a "scope of work" for their projects and will work with NCDPI staff to receive training and feedback over the course of the 2014-15 school year to complete their materials.

NCDPI held a two-day orientation for these teachers in July, and has received and begun providing feedback on their modified work plans for the year. Additional information on Governor's Teacher Network can be found on the NCDPI website (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/rttt/gtn/>).

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 low performing 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 school districts).

The goal of the RttT "Turning around the Lowest Achieving Schools" (TALAS) work is to help these schools and districts develop their capacity both to increase and sustain student achievement. One objective of the TALAS work was to ensure that every NC school in the bottom 5% of academic proficiency, as measured by the ABC accountability model, improved to a standard where at least 60% of the students achieved academic proficiency. A second TALAS program objective was that every high school in North Carolina achieves at least a 60% graduation rate.

The introduction in 2012 of a new statewide accountability model (READY) with higher academic standards resulted in a lowering of academic proficiency rates statewide. The initial progress of the 118 TALAS schools toward the 60% proficiency goal was significant (see September 15, 2013 Report to the JLEOC) but has been interrupted by the introduction of these more stringent standards; NCDPI is in the process of determining how to accurately assess each school's trajectory over the course of the RttT grant period, given the mid-grant shift in accountability models. The long term aspiration remains for the lowest performing 5% of schools to adapt to the higher expectations and standards and to continue on a trajectory to proficiency levels exceeding 60% and higher graduation rates.

Each of the 118 TALAS schools¹ 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/>.

¹ The original list of TALAS schools included 118 schools. The current number is 106, as 12 schools selected closure as their turnaround model.

Updates

Since the March 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following activities with NC's lowest performing schools

- NCDPI has continued to support the recruitment, licensure and selection of effective turnaround principals with the Regional Leadership Academies providing additional licensed candidates. From the Northeast Leadership Academy (NELA), several principals have been hired in RttT TALAS schools.
- 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 developed and provided professional development for principals, teachers and central office staff through a four year professional development series. Examples of topics include Identifying and Retaining Effective Teachers, Using Data to Drive Decision Making, Effective Reading Instruction, Evidence of Student Impact in Teacher Behaviors, and Working with Challenged Learners.
- NCDPI has continued to work to coordinate TALAS efforts with other RttT initiatives, such as 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.

Review of Year Three Accountability Data and Graduation Rates for TALAS Schools

As stated previously, during the first two years of the RttT grant, the majority of schools served were making significant academic growth as measured by the ABC accountability model and exceeding or approaching our ABC proficiency and graduation rate goals of 60%. This year under the new READY accountability model there was a significant re-positioning of all schools in the state in proficiency rates with rates dropping significantly (on average, between 20-40 points) in this baseline year. Though NCDPI is still determining the best method for tracking progress of the schools given the change in accountability models, the state feels confident real improvement is occurring in the majority of the TALAS schools, as indicated by the following statistics: 74% of the schools made or exceeded expected growth on the new READY model (see Table 5 below), and approximately 50% of the schools that were initially in the bottom 5% (in 2010) would not be in the bottom 5% if the data were recalculated today. In addition, two of the TALAS schools are now above the current state READY median academic proficiency rate of 42.1, and all of the TALAS high schools have exceeded the goal of increasing their graduation rate above 60%.

Table 5: 2012-13 Expected Growth Status for the 118 Schools Identified Under Race to the Top²

Growth Status	Did Not Meet Expected Growth	Met Expected Growth	Exceeded Expected Growth
2012-13 (102 Schools) ³	27	44	31

The goal of having no conventional school in NC with a graduation rate below 60% has been accomplished. Nine schools were identified in 2010-11 with a graduation rate below 60%. Seven remain open, and in 2012-13 all had graduation rates exceeding 70% with two of the schools above the state graduation rate of 82.5% (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Longitudinal Data for the Graduation Rate Schools Identified Under Race to the Top

Graduation Rate (%)	0-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
2012-13 (7 Schools) ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	5	2 ⁵	0
2011-12 (7 Schools)	0	0	0	3	2	2	0	0
2010-11 (9 Schools)	1	0	0	2	4	1	1	0
2009-10 (9 Schools)	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0

The 2013-14 accountability data will be released in fall 2014. NCDPI looks forward to analyzing the results for the TALAS schools for growth in the second year of new assessments.

² Growth is measured through the SAS Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) using relevant test scores.

³ Five schools did not have a growth status for the 2012-13 school year. Hill Middle School and Weldon STEM High closed during the 2012-13 school year; Weldon High opened during the 2012-13 school year. Ten schools closed during the 2011-12 school year. They used school closure as their transformation strategy.

⁴ Atkins Computer Tech and E.E. Waddell closed.

⁵ Both schools above state graduation rate average of 82.5%.

Professional Development and Coaching and Support for Successful Implementation of Effective Leadership and Instructional Practices

To help the schools leverage their chosen turnaround model in order to build staff capacity and improve and student performance, the NCDPI team has continued to provide several services to personnel in the classrooms, schools and districts including the following:

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment.** NCDPI has trained teams to visit and work with schools and districts to collect and synthesize data on a school or district processes, procedures, and instructional practices to provide an objective report to help the school or district develop 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. DST staff offer 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 in the schools 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. There are two types of coaches working in each school, a leadership coach who supports principals and assistant principals in effective practices for raising student achievement and teacher coaches working directly in the classroom to model, co-teach, and provide professional development and materials and resources directly to classroom teachers. This is very important as many low performing schools have novice principals and assistant principals and large numbers of both new teachers and teachers with limited experience. When a district is also a focus, there is a third coach placed to team with the superintendent and central office.
- **District Leadership Coaching.** District Transformation Coaches work on site in the district with the superintendents, central office and school boards in each of the twelve RttT LEAs identified as the lowest-performing 10% of LEAs in the state. Each coach has experience as a successful superintendent or central office administrator and has strong interpersonal skills, knowledge about effective instructional and financial practices, 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 20 targeted professional development sessions for lowest-achieving school leaders over the course of the Race to the Top grant. In the 2013-14 school year, NCDPI has provided opportunities that built on sessions from year one (which focused on understanding the expectations of the grant and the USED models), year two (which focused on high impact strategies related to improving student achievement), and year three (which focused 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 four professional development has introduced concepts central to producing rapid gains in student achievement such as helping principals plan literacy instruction for their schools, understanding the needs of diverse learners (Exceptional Children, English Language Learners, African-American males), and visiting schools to hear about successful turnaround strategies from the principals implementing them. Additionally, NCDPI provided a full week of content and grade-level specific professional development for the 400 employees of Halifax County Schools.

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 played 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 Institutes (see Section Nine, page 24).

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 LEAs 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 Advanced Manufacturing; 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 2014 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, NC has accomplished the following:

- All 20 of the Anchor and Affinity Network schools continued to operate 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), implemented the NC STEM Recognition application process for in the spring of 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; NCDPI received 21 applications (including one from an Anchor and Affinity Network school) and is currently reviewing the materials for these.
- The North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) has completed the development of all four levels of STEM courses related to the four STEM focus areas, and these are now available to teachers and schools.
- The NCSTEM Center has launched their web portal for all connections around "STEM: Learn, Find, Share, Connect" (available at the website: www.ncstemcenter.org).
- Teacher Extended Summer Employment 2014 resource available for four teachers at each of the Anchor and Affinity STEM Network Schools

The following sections describe these accomplishments in more detail.

STEM Network Development

All 20 of the STEM Network schools continued to operate their STEM program in the 2013-14 school year, and Tables 7-10 at the end of this section (pages 33-34) 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.

Another activity featured in this initiative, the NC STEM Portal, launched at the beginning of June 2014. This is an online platform designed to promote STEM practices and help STEM programs across the state connect with one another to share ideas, resources, and ask questions. This is not as “hands on” a program as the coaching provided to the Anchor and Affinity Schools, but provides another way for NCDPI to work with other organizations in the state to support the STEM community.

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. Participating schools use these to assess their programs on the rubric and identify evidences of accomplishments.

NCDPI finalized the rubric, application, and review process based on feedback from participants in a pilot during the 2012-13 school year. The application was streamlined and launched in September 2013. NCDPI received 21 applications in March 2014 (one of these schools was from the Anchor and Affinity Network⁶), and 13 of the 21 applicant schools were identified to move on in the process and receive onsite reviews in the fall of 2014; schools recommended for STEM school recognition will be presented to the State Board in November 2014.

STEM Online Interdisciplinary Courses

The NC School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) has completed the development of all course materials for each STEM area (Health and Life Sciences; Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing/Automation; Biotechnology and Agriscience; and Energy and Sustainability). NCDPI, STEM school personnel, and teachers around the state have had the opportunity to review the course materials during the winter, spring, and summer of 2014; these sixteen sets of STEM instructional materials are currently available to schools (both those in and out of the STEM Network) and teachers for use in the classroom.

⁶ The Anchor and Affinity Network Schools have relatively new STEM programs and did not feel they had progressed far enough to be able to complete the application at this time and receive recognition. They will consider this option as their programs grow.

Teacher Extended Summer Employment and STEM Portal

Teachers at the Anchor and Affinity STEM Network schools again had the opportunity to select four teachers to extend their employment during the summer 2014 for work such as:

- Attending professional development opportunities offered by NC New Schools and other organizations that produce usable STEM products such as STEM project-based units, performance-based assessments, etc.
- Planning and using new curriculum from NCSSM to produce relevant useable STEM lessons and projects for the classroom related to the school’s STEM area.
- Creating and reviewing STEM project-based units of study for their classrooms with industry participation.
- Creating and implementing STEM opportunities for students in their school including industry and/or higher education partners.

All of the schools in the Network have teachers participating in this part of the initiative, and these teachers will wrap-up their work in August of 2014.

Table 7: 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 8: Anchor and Affinity Network Schools in the Aerospace, Security, and Advanced Manufacturing 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 9: 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 10: 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)