



A(1)(i) COMPREHENSIVE REFORM AGENDA

In New Jersey, we believe it is possible for education to compensate for disadvantage, and that social justice demands that this possibility be actualized.

These beliefs are held in many states, but in no other state have the people and their government demonstrated so deep a commitment to these tenets.

The potential of education to compensate for disadvantage

Our citizens reject the idea that poverty is destiny. We acknowledge that parental wealth and education remain strong predictors of whether a child will succeed in school, but we reject the notion that this must always be so. Effective Schools Research long ago demonstrated that “No Excuses” schools can lift the learning and life prospects of even the most disadvantaged students to the same level as their advantaged peers.

Some apologists justify the educational failure of schools by arguing that great teaching and school leadership are natural abilities that cannot be taught. Yet research demonstrates that people who are dedicated to teaching well (of which there are many) can be taught to teach *very* skillfully with a hugely positive impact on their students’ learning.

Research accordingly is now focusing on the factors necessary to support effective teacher development and how it and key pillars of school excellence can be scaled up first in a school district, and then across a state. Some organizations – for instance, the KIPP academies – have demonstrated that they can establish one school after the next capable of dramatically increasing the learning and life prospects of disadvantaged children. However, no one yet knows how to manufacture such schools rapidly.

We are impelled to search for answers to these questions and to create the incentives and accountability mechanisms that will ensure they are applied in our education system.

New Jersey has long been committed to using public education to advance social justice

In New Jersey, our state constitution requires that we make a THOROUGH education available to every child. We have applied the power of the purse: New Jersey spends more per child on our public schools than any other state, and our courts and legislature have worked to ensure that the state's poorest school districts have financial resources on par with its wealthiest.

Beyond equalizing the financial resources of rich and poor school districts, social justice demands that greater resources be applied to educate children with greater needs. Here too, New Jersey stands out. We allocate dollars for a child's education based on the child's needs and these dollars follow the child to his or her school. In poor school districts, the state provides the resources necessary to make a free preschool education available to children. We were the first state in America to do this. In all districts, the State covers extraordinary costs which are attached to the education of special needs children.

Still, we know that money is not enough. Standards, practices, and people must change. To that end, we have long pursued a reform agenda aligned with Race to the Top.

For instance, in recent years, while other states lowered their academic standards and loosened their assessment procedures to obscure educational problems, we raised our academic standards and improved our assessments. With clear eyes, we confront our challenges.

One major problem is the size of our achievement gap. We are proud that our NAEP scores are among the highest in the nation. However, we are horrified that our achievement gap is simultaneously one of the largest. We have been working hard to close the gap, and have seen a modest narrowing. We will close it, even as we accelerate learning for all.

Standards-based reform depends on tracking student learning growth to support both planning and evaluation. We have made strides in our longitudinal data tracking capabilities, but are not yet where we want to be. We will accelerate our progress and make New Jersey a national model of data-driven education reform.

Of course, for data to drive reform a state must have the political will to act upon it. We have demonstrated that we do. We pioneered the use of alternative-route teacher certification. We were the first to have the state take direct administrative control of failing school districts. We were one of the first to pass charter school legislation.

New Jersey has a comprehensive reform agenda and is prepared for controversy

In the past, there has often been controversy as we have taken steps to progress towards our vision of public education's potential. Our citizens' commitment to social justice has propelled us forward in spite of the controversy, and in every instance our hope of what might be gained has been confirmed by empirical evidence, with the result that what was once debated has become increasingly affirmed by all.

We believe this experience will be repeated as we complete the implementation of the reforms highlighted in this grant application. There will be controversy. However, deep popular and political support for reform will enable us to press on, implement our plan, benefit our children, and prove the justice-advancing power of the Race to the Top reform principles to which both the Obama Administration and we are passionately committed.

New Jersey will be better for this. America too.

Our Race to the Top goals

New Jersey is seeking via its Race to the Top initiatives to:

- Close our academic achievement gap even as we substantially raise the achievement level of every cohort and sub-group of New Jersey students;
- Graduate our students from high school truly college or work-ready; and
- Substantially improve our college attendance rates.

To guide our steps in this effort, we will make student learning growth central to evaluating the educational effectiveness of our education policies and practices. It will be the yardstick by which we measure the success of everything we do. Specifically, we will:

- Incorporate the Common Core into New Jersey's high-quality academic standards;
- Develop and support multiple, curriculum-embedded assessments that support instructional analysis, and accountability;
- Deploy a cloud-based data system that supports longitudinal analysis, management of effectiveness, and instructional improvement;

- Create evaluation systems for our teachers, principals and school district leaders that are based upon student achievement;
- Implement merit pay and equitable distribution incentives for teachers and leaders;
- Do what it takes to boldly turn around our most struggling schools and districts; and
- Sustain reform conditions to advance and improve educational services across our state.

Together, these reform initiatives map directly to the assurances being sought by the United States Department of Education in this Race to the Top grant competition. More importantly, they form a coherent plan of action for a constantly learning, constantly improving public education system.

Incorporate the Common Core into New Jersey’s high-quality academic standards:

New Jersey is nationally recognized for the quality and high level of its academic standards. The recent collaborative effort between states has developed an even better set of Common Core Standards – a clear and high set of aspirations for students all across the country. We will adopt these standards for English Language Arts and for Mathematics, while retaining our own high standards in other subject areas.

Develop and support multiple curriculum-embedded assessments that support instructional analysis and accountability:

We will participate in two state-led assessment consortia, with expected availability in 2014-2015. We are enthusiastic about the consortia, but do not believe that our reform agenda can wait four years. Accordingly, we will deploy an assessment and curricular support framework – the “Curriculum and Assessment Spine” – to link formative and summative data with teaching supports and to support professional evaluations. We will establish multiple state assessment tools while allowing for local approaches to be used, so long as they meet rigorous quality criteria. Finally, we will provide large-scale professional development, coaching, and support to teachers to transition from our current system.

Deploy a cloud-based data system that supports longitudinal analysis, management of effectiveness, and instructional improvement:

Building on our new framework of standards and multiple assessments, we will use data to inform instructional planning in our schools, to establish professional development plans and evaluate their impact, to evaluate the effectiveness of our teachers and leaders, and to monitor and publicly report on the performance of our schools. By hosting a web or “cloud” based system to do so, we will create meaningful efficiencies for our school districts, support high-quality focused instruction, develop virtuous learning cycles about what works and why, and promote public stewardship of our school system.

Create incentive, support, and accountability frameworks for our teachers, principals and school district leaders that are aligned with student learning growth and success:

The quality of a child’s teacher is the single most important lever to improve his or her educational attainment; so we will do everything we can to recruit, develop, evaluate, distribute, and reward effective teachers in our classrooms.

We will **recruit** a new generation of committed educators in New Jersey by building on our groundbreaking alternative-pathway recruiting initiatives, extending provisional certification to qualified teachers from all other states, coordinating our efforts with LEAs and Executive County Offices to find the best teachers for hard-to-fill vacancies, and working with expert national partners in human capital recruitment.

We will **develop** better teachers and school leaders. For our provisional teachers, we will improve induction by providing high-quality coaching and support, both in our schools and off-site, to increase skill sets and content knowledge. We will also conduct rigorous annual educator effectiveness evaluations, which will provide feedback for developing teachers and school leaders and which districts will use in determining whether tenure should be granted.

To **evaluate** effective teaching and leadership, we will establish a state framework that bases 50% of the evaluation score upon student achievement and growth, and 50% upon high quality, student-learning correlated teaching and leadership practices. The framework, which will be developed by a stakeholder committee, will include locally determined, state-approved factors in addition to state-determined factors, and will be required in every Participating LEA. It will

enable the provision of professional development based on meaningful data and will inform the granting of tenure. Evaluations will also inform teacher dismissals. Participating LEAs will initiate action to remove for inefficiency teachers in persistently low-performing schools who receive three consecutive “ineffective” evaluations. Further, the Commissioner will work with New Jersey legislators to recommend statutory changes so that RIFs will be based on evaluations and our dismissal procedures will be streamlined to support the use of evaluations. Additionally, the Commissioner and the State Board will work to establish a career ladder, creating a path to “Master Teacher” or “Master Principal” status, will give our most effective professionals clear opportunities for advancement and influence.

To **distribute** our most effective teachers, we will provide financial incentives for Highly Effective and Master educators who are willing to serve in classrooms and schools with concentrations of high-needs students.

To **reward** teachers and leaders for accelerating student learning growth, we will implement merit pay that will reward exceptional student learning growth, with an extra emphasis on the growth of our most struggling students. We will pay individual teachers and teacher teams based on student performance, in addition to a bonus pool for school programs.

Finally, to encourage top notch school and district leadership, we will develop an annual measure of school performance to inform school and district decision-making, formalize minimum charter and district school performance criteria, and help school leaders see how the performance of their school or schools ranks versus that of others’.

Do what it takes to boldly turn around our most struggling schools and districts:

We will support local LEAs in their selection among the four U.S. Department of Education-approved models for reversing direction in our lowest-performing schools: turnaround, transformation, restart, or closure. To support turnarounds and transformation, we will create a network of “turnaround officers” to oversee and support the improvement of schools. For schools that are restarted, we will assist in the selection of a strong charter operator to manage the school. In the event that a district elects to close a school, we will support efficient use of the space in support of student learning.

We will also support the creation of local school board-authorized, small-scale Achievement Academies, embedded in the district. By establishing performance objectives and providing Master Teachers and Principals with an unusually high degree of school management discretion, we believe they can help provide many excellent new schooling opportunities to our children.

Sustain reform conditions to advance and improve educational services across our state:

Despite varying economic circumstances over the years, we have always maintained support for education funding. To ensure that our dollars go as far as possible, we will engage the offices of our Executive County Superintendents to facilitate shared services and contract consolidation between school districts.

We will also reorganize the New Jersey Department of Education with new divisions to support Professional Excellence (human capital strategies), Education System Efficiency (to improve service delivery and reduce costs), and School Effectiveness and Choice (to support board development, improved school design, school-level accountability and turnarounds).

New Jersey is uniquely aligned to deliver on these reforms

Ours is an ambitious reform agenda. Certain elements – particularly related to human capital – have attracted controversy in many states. In New Jersey, we have a stable political environment (our Governor’s term does not expire until 2014), a reform-oriented Commissioner of Education, and a Legislature that supports these reforms. We will deliver.

As evidence, consider: the enclosed letters from our Governor and the leaders of the New Jersey Legislature, the President of our State Board of Education, and the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education; the unanimous endorsement resolution of our state legislature; the nearly 400 memoranda of understanding from Participating LEAs; the full support of New Jersey's higher education community; the 65 accompanying endorsement letters from business, civic, and religious leaders and organizations; and the support of New Jersey's education leadership stakeholder organizations. Our state is fully behind the reforms embodied in this application.

.....

(ii) STRONG COMMITMENT FROM LEAS

(ii) The participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) are strongly committed to the State’s plans and to effective implementation of reform in the four education areas, as evidenced by Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) (as set forth in Appendix D)¹ or other binding agreements between the State and its participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) that include— (45 points)

- (a) Terms and conditions that reflect strong commitment by the participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to the State’s plans;
- (b) Scope-of-work descriptions that require participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) to implement all or significant portions of the State’s Race to the Top plans; and
- (c) Signatures from as many as possible of the LEA superintendent (or equivalent), the president of the local school board (or equivalent, if applicable), and the local teachers’ union leader (if applicable) (one signature of which must be from an authorized LEA representative) demonstrating the extent of leadership support within participating LEAs (as defined in this notice); and

Evidence for (A)(1)(ii):

- An example of the State’s standard Participating LEA MOU, and description of variations used, if any.
- The completed summary table indicating which specific portions of the State’s plan each LEA is committed to implementing, and relevant summary statistics (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b), below).

The completed summary table indicating which LEA leadership signatures have been obtained (see Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c), below).

New Jersey’s Participating LEAs are strongly committed to our reform.

Each of the participating LEAs signed a strong and binding MOU committing it fully to our reform agenda. We used the US Department of Education’s model MOU as our template, with two key modifications that make it even stronger.

First, we required each LEA to sign on to every significant element of our plan. Participating in RTTT means implementing new evaluation models and acting on effectiveness information to make meaningful changes to hiring practices, professional supports, and compensation systems.

¹ See Appendix D for more on participating LEA MOUs and for a model MOU.

Second, for those elements of the reform plan not statutorily mandated that require collective bargaining, we secured commitment from the superintendent in every participating LEA to negotiate the plan elements locally.

We are so committed to these reforms that should collective bargaining negotiations break down, or a collective bargaining agreement be signed that is inconsistent with the requirements of this plan, the LEA will lose its participation status and be required to return its RTTT funds to the NJDOE.

A sample MOU is available in Appendix I.

A substantial percentage of LEAs are participating in our Race to the Top.

We are extremely proud that 387 of New Jersey LEAs, including a high proportion of our urban, large, and high-need schools, signed MOUs agreeing to implement New Jersey's bold Race to the Top initiatives. We have a range of sizes, from LEAs representing 62 students all the way to the largest LEA, representing 39,440 children. The LEAs participating represent 59.1% of all LEAs and 1,626 of our schools. Roughly 950,000 of our students are represented, including 74.8% of the high poverty population in New Jersey.

The state's leadership fully understands that in order for reform to be meaningful and sustainable, it must be broadly supported by key education stakeholders. Consequently, we undertook extensive activity to engage districts, unions, legislators, and countless other stakeholders in this collaborative process.

Moving forward, individuals and organizations across New Jersey's education landscape are prepared for and committed to bold action.

Our local school boards fully support reform

99% of LEA MOUs have support signatures from both the Superintendent and the School Board President. In New Jersey, local School Boards are especially powerful as they are responsible for establishing the LEA budget and negotiating the teacher contract with the local union leadership.

Our local union leaders support reform

Our state AFT affiliate, the New Jersey Federation of Teachers, has endorsed our plan, and our key AFT districts (including the Newark School District, the state's largest) have unanimously signed MOUs.

While the NJEA is not endorsing our application, we did discuss our plans with them during its development. Our administration's firm commitment to strong policy around merit pay for individual teachers and retention decisions based on effectiveness was at odds with the NJEA's position. We are choosing to act boldly rather than seek perfect consensus.

The submission of this application does not represent the end of our outreach to stakeholders. We believe deeply in these reforms and the importance of consensus, so we will continue to engage local superintendents, school board presidents, and state and local union leadership to build additional support for these reforms. We see them as permanent and we want all education stakeholders involved in this reform effort.

Our state presents an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate the potential of public education to compensate for individual disadvantage and achieve a just society where every child is afforded a full opportunity to learn and succeed in life.

LEAs and educational associations have been intimately involved in the development of our plans.

This plan was given momentum by the state's new leadership and the participation of all key interest groups. Since Governor Christie took office on January 19th, 2010, the NJDOE has conducted a remarkable series of outreach and collaborative design sessions, including:

- Seven "town hall" meetings for superintendents, state board members, and teachers, including one marked by a four hour question and answer session. These meetings were conducted in every region of the state, to provide a briefing on the plan's key elements, answer questions, and collect feedback for plan refinement;

- Four stakeholder meetings with the leading educational associations, including the NJ Principal and Supervisors Association, the NJEA, the New Jersey School Boards Association, and many others.
- Additional meetings around the state with stakeholders, including one with over 500 Local Superintendents and Union Representatives, business organizations and elected officials.
- Meeting and follow-up discussions with a key group of 10 representative school districts, including both urban and suburban districts, to design and refine our evaluation and incentive frameworks.

Though we are committed to listening, considering, and improving our approaches, one principle has been non-negotiable from the start: student learning growth will be the yardstick for everything we do. We believe that children must come first, so professional decisions must be made on the basis of effectiveness.

Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(b)

Elements of State Reform Plans	Number of LEAs Participating (#)	Percentage of Total Participating LEAs (%)
B. Standards and Assessments		
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	377 (Y) 9 (C)	97% (Y) 2% (C)
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction		
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction:		
(i) Use of local instructional improvement systems	378 (Y) 8 (C)	97% (Y) 2% (C)
(ii) Professional development on use of data	380 (Y) 6 (C)	98% (Y) 2% (C)
(iii) Availability and accessibility of data to researchers	367 (Y) 15 (C)	95% (Y) 4% (C)
D. Great Teachers and Leaders		
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance:		
(i) Measure student growth	356 (Y) 31 (C)	92% (Y) 8% (C)
(ii) Design and implement evaluation systems	336 (Y) 51 (C)	87% (Y) 13% (C)

Elements of State Reform Plans	Number of LEAs Participating (#)	Percentage of Total Participating LEAs (%)
(iii) Conduct annual evaluations	357 (Y) 30 (C)	92% (Y) 8% (C)
(iv)(a) Use evaluations to inform professional development	361 (Y) 26 (C)	93% (Y) 7% (C)
(iv)(b) Use evaluations to inform compensation, promotion and retention	223 (Y) 164 (C)	57% (Y) 42% (C)
(iv)(c) Use evaluations to inform tenure and/or full certification	313 (Y) 74 (C)	81% (Y) 18% (C)
(iv)(d) Use evaluations to inform removal	318 (Y) 69 (C)	82% (Y) 9% (C)
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals:		
(i) High-poverty and/or high-minority schools	313 (Y) 34 (C)	81% (Y) 7% (C)
(ii) Hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	349 (Y) 28 (C)	90% (Y) 7% (C)
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals:		
(i) Quality professional development	378 (Y) 9 (C)	97% (Y) 2% (C)
(ii) Measure effectiveness of professional development	371 (Y) 14 (C)	96% (Y) 4% (C)
E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	273 (Y) 29 (C)	70%(Y) 7% (C)

Summary Table for (A)(1)(ii)(c)			
Signatures acquired from participating LEAs:			
Number of Participating LEAs with all applicable signatures			
	Number of Signatures Obtained (#)	Number of Signatures Applicable (#)	Percentage (%) (Obtained / Applicable)
LEA Superintendent (or equivalent)	387	387	100%
President of Local School Board (or equivalent, if applicable)	385	387	99.5%
Local Teachers' Union Leader (if applicable)	22	387	5.7%

Summary Table for (A)(1)(iii)

	Participating LEAs (#)	Statewide (#)	Percentage of Total Statewide (%) <small>(Participating LEAs / Statewide)</small>
LEAs	387	656	59.1%
Schools	1,615	2,465	65.5%
K-12 Students	949,329	1,372,449	69.2%
Students in poverty	317,268	424,310	74.8%

The detailed table for (A)(1)(iii) has been placed in Appendix I as Evidence. Please refer to the Appendix I Table of Contents and Bookmarks.

We have also included information in Appendix I on districts still being verified.



(iii) BROAD STATEWIDE IMPACT FROM PARTICIPATION

(iii) The LEAs that are participating in the State’s Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for—(15 points)

- (a) Increasing student achievement in (at a minimum) reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;
- (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;
- (c) Increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice); and
- (d) Increasing college enrollment (as defined in this notice) and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year’s worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education.

Our plan will achieve broad statewide impact

Our ambition is to help every child in New Jersey graduate from high school career- or college-ready. The support of so many LEAs, unions, and external partners ensures that we will be able to drive meaningful change across the state:

- **Participating LEAs serve New Jersey’s highest-need student populations.** 74.8% of our children in poverty will participate directly in the benefits of our plan. Overall, nearly 70% of our students statewide will participate in RTTT. By providing special incentives to support highly effective teachers in high-needs districts, and intensive support for the turnarounds of our neediest schools, we will meaningfully close our achievement gap and reduce our dropout rate.
- **We are leveraging all of our federal resources to reinforce this plan.** For example, LEAs will be required to coordinate Title II, School Improvement Grant, Title I, and IDEA resources in targeted schools in efforts that reinforce the turnaround strategies in this plan.

- **We are leveraging and scaling effective state initiatives as part of this plan.** For example, both our successful Progressive Science Institute and our “Traders to Teachers” recruiting program (each discussed in Section (D)(3)) will have their scale and impact increased as part of this plan.
- **All Participating LEAs will receive resources to support reform and ensure compliance.** New Jersey has 656 local school districts. In many of our suburban and rural districts, little to no Title I funding is distributed, meaning that the local LEA funding allocation under RTTT will serve to flow few or no funds. However, many of our reforms require substantial LEA effort – for example, revised evaluation and assessment practices. Accordingly, we are guaranteeing that every Participating LEA will receive a minimum of \$100,000 in directly allocated funds – and will be providing supplemental funding to LEAs from the state RTTT budget to do so. By supporting all LEAs financially, we have confidence that we will have a mechanism to ensure compliance and that significant local effort will be brought to bear on the RTTT agenda.
- **Our instructional reforms will reach every child in the state.** Many of our RTTT initiatives will provide resources and policies that will change instruction for every child in New Jersey. Specifically, the evaluation framework, new assessment protocols, Curriculum and Assessment Spine, and our instructional improvement data system, as articulated in this plan, will change practice and yield benefits for all children. Details of our plans for scaling and sustainability are described in section A(2).
- **Our human capital reforms will improve the teaching corps for the entire state.** Our plans to reform pre-service, recruiting, and induction practices will have an impact beyond the participating LEAs. Programs like “Teach for New Jersey” will recruit a generation of teachers to our state, and improved pre-service and induction practices will ensure all teachers are well-prepared and well-trained.

Our goals are ambitious but achievable

As detailed in section (A)(3) of this application, New Jersey has already made considerable progress in academic achievement and graduation rates in recent years, even as our standards

have risen. New Jersey’s test scores on NAEP, the nation’s report card, are among the highest in the nation, and performance gaps between whites and minorities are declining in important areas.

Still, we know we can do far better; so we have established ambitious but achievable goals for improved educational outcomes in our state. These are measurable goals that can be monitored, allowing us to track our progress on an ongoing basis. Achieving these goals will accelerate the improvement of our public education system, move forward toward our vision of social justice, and benefit our state’s children.

As we work to provide the best P-12 education in the country for *all* of our students, we will measure progress toward our three core goals whether we win RTTT dollars or not. These goals are:

- Closing the achievement gap by half even as we raise the academic achievement of all cohorts and sub-groups of students (including our highest performing students) by 2014;
- Graduating students who are college and career ready; and
- Substantially improving our college attendance rates.

We expect that gains will accelerate in the two years following RTTT as the benefits from the LEA and school efforts to measure and use effectiveness evaluations take hold. Our goals for each measure are ambitious yet grounded in New Jersey’s demonstrated capacity to make historic gains in performance.

(a) Accelerating Academic Achievement for All Students

New Jersey will accelerate academic achievement for all students by 15% between 2010 and 2012 and by 20% between 2012 and 2014. This will increase the share of students scoring Advanced and Proficient and reduce the share of students scoring below basic and basic on both NAEP and NJ ESEA assessments.

- 231 average scale score by 2014 in reading and 249 average scale score in mathematics for grade 4 on ESEA assessments (increase of nearly 25 points).

- 239 average scale score in reading and 237 average scale score in mathematics for grade 8 (increase of nearly 16 points).
- 56% proficient for all students in 4th grade reading and 65% proficient for all students in 4th grade math.
- 58 % proficient for all students in 8th grade reading and 60% for all students in 8th grade math.

Detailed annual goals are available in Appendix I.

.....

(b) Closing the Opportunity Gap

.....

New Jersey will close the opportunity gap for all students – by race and socioeconomic status – by half by 2014. On NAEP and ESEA assessment, New Jersey demonstrates impressive gains for student groups, with our African American and Hispanic students scores’ increasing at a faster rate than their peers. We believe closing the opportunity gap is achievable by 2014, and more importantly, the right goal to ensure social justice in our state.

- Reduce the achievement gap by half on ESEA mathematics assessments (16 points in grade 4 and 19 points in grade 8).
- Reduce the achievement gap by half on NAEP mathematics assessments (13 points in grade 4 and 17 points in grade 8).
- Reduce the achievement gap by half on ESEA English language arts assessments (11 points in grade 4 and 10 points in grade 8).
- Reduce the achievement gap by half on NAEP English language arts assessments (12 points in grade 4 and 15points in grade 8).

Detailed annual goals are available in Appendix I.

.....

(c) Graduating More Students College and Career Ready

.....

Our graduation rate currently stands at over 90% due to the fact that New Jersey uses a “leaver rate” rather than a more accurate longitudinal cohort method to calculate graduation rates. We expect our inflated graduation rate to drop for the 2010-11 school year because of the change to the longitudinal adjusted-cohort method for calculating graduation rates. However, New Jersey will not reduce our goal of a 90% four-year graduation rate. With nearly every LEA in the state committed to our application’s reforms – including a focus on preparing all students for college and work – we believe this can be achieved.

Detailed annual goals are available in Appendix I.

(d) Increasing College Enrollment

We have these two goals relative to increasing college enrollment:

- Increasing enrollment in our public, postsecondary education institutions by 5 percent per year from the 2010 baseline to 2014.
- Increasing the number of students who complete a year’s worth of degree-applicable college credit within two years of their initial enrollment by 5 percent per year.

Race to the Top will enable us to move farther and faster on each of these goals. New Jersey is committed to pursuing these reforms and achieving progress in these areas with or without RTTT funding. We will improve our academic standards, redesign our educator evaluation system to measure effectiveness, improve our data systems, and take bold steps to turnaround persistently low achieving schools. We have the support needed from stakeholders to succeed. But without the additional funding, we anticipate it will take five to seven additional years to achieve the results we believe are obtainable by 2014 with RTTT funding.

Full list of Goals

In Appendix A, you will find the full list of goals to which we are committed, and the advanced goals we believe we can achieve via RTTT.

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans (30 points)

The extent to which the State has a high-quality overall plan to—

(i) Ensure that it has the capacity required to implement its proposed plans by— (20 points)

- (a) Providing strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement the statewide education reform plans the State has proposed;
- (b) Supporting participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) in successfully implementing the education reform plans the State has proposed, through such activities as identifying promising practices, evaluating these practices' effectiveness, ceasing ineffective practices, widely disseminating and replicating the effective practices statewide, holding participating LEAs (as defined in this notice) accountable for progress and performance, and intervening where necessary;
- (c) Providing effective and efficient operations and processes for implementing its Race to the Top grant in such areas as grant administration and oversight, budget reporting and monitoring, performance measure tracking and reporting, and fund disbursement;
- (d) Using the funds for this grant, as described in the State's budget and accompanying budget narrative, to accomplish the State's plans and meet its targets, including where feasible, by coordinating, reallocating, or repurposing education funds from other Federal, State, and local sources so that they align with the State's Race to the Top goals; and
- (e) Using the fiscal, political, and human capital resources of the State to continue, after the period of funding has ended, those reforms funded under the grant for which there is evidence of success; and

(ii) Use support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans, as evidenced by the strength of the statements or actions of support from— (10 points)

- (a) The State's teachers and principals, which include the State's teachers' unions or statewide teacher associations; and
- (b) Other critical stakeholders, such as the State's legislative leadership; charter school authorizers and State charter school membership associations (if applicable); other State and local leaders (e.g., business, community, civil rights, and education association leaders); Tribal schools; parent, student, and

community organizations (e.g., parent-teacher associations, nonprofit organizations, local education foundations, and community-based organizations); and institutions of higher education.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. The State's response to (A)(2)(i)(d) will be addressed in the budget section (Section VIII of the application). Attachments, such as letters of support or commitment, should be summarized in the text box below and organized with a summary table in the Appendix. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(2)(i)(d):

- The State's budget, as completed in Section VIII of the application. The narrative that accompanies and explains the budget and how it connects to the State's plan, as completed in Section VIII of the application.

Evidence for (A)(2)(ii):

- A summary in the narrative of the statements or actions and inclusion of key statements or actions in the Appendix.

Recommended maximum response length: Five pages (excluding budget and budget narrative)

.....

(i)(a)BUILDING STRONG STATEWIDE CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT, SCALE UP, AND SUSTAIN PROPOSED PLANS

Introduction

Our Commissioner, a former big city mayor, has a national reputation for driving education reform in high-need urban districts, and our new Governor is fundamentally committed to ensuring that every class is taught by an effective teacher. Our state has demonstrated our ability to deliver high academic achievement, and we can say with confidence that we will fully and completely implement, scale up, and sustain our RTTT plan.

Of course, every RTTT application will promise scale and sustainability. Here are the reasons the U.S. Department of Education should be confident we will deliver:

Consistent political leadership and governance is critical to success.

Unlike the 37 states with gubernatorial elections in the fall of 2010, with the state DOE leadership changes that will follow, our administration will be responsible for the implementation of at least three and a half years of these RTTT reforms. The commitments we make in this plan will be ours to keep.

Governor Christie took office on January 19, 2010; Commissioner Schundler was confirmed by the Senate on March 11, 2010. Education reform was a key plank in Governor Christie's platform. He exhorted the prior administration to submit a Race to the Top proposal so that a planning foundation would be in place. When he appointed Commissioner Schundler, he chose a proven, reform-oriented leader to deliver on his agenda – and that agenda is completely aligned with RTTT.

A May 21, 2010 editorial in the Courier Post put it best:

The goals Democratic President Obama has set forth in Race to the Top and Republican New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie have set forth for improving education, particularly in urban areas, are amazingly similar. There's a recognition that, with failing schools,

major changes are needed -- smaller learning communities, charter schools, better teachers, etc. Race to the Top is the program designed to foster such change.

Our Governor, Legislature and State Board are strongly committed to reform and today's difficult economy has created an opportunity to address some very difficult issues.

While most elements of our reform agenda could be implemented via NJDOE action and LEA action supported by our MOU process, we are committed to implementing supporting legislation and regulations that will cement these reforms. The strong support letter from the majority and minority leadership of our legislature, the unanimous resolution of our legislature backing these reforms in their entirety, and the endorsement of this application by our State Board all signal our commitment to rooting our reforms in statute and code and implementing them according to our work plan's timetable.

The budget crisis that is impacting schools across the country has hit New Jersey hard. All levels of education leadership in education in New Jersey – state, county, and local – realize that we cannot deal with our education challenges by just spending more money. We need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our spending, and we believe that these reforms are the way to do it.

The NJDOE is reorganizing around key functional areas that map to RTTT reforms.

We are reorganizing our New Jersey Department of Education to align its operations with our reform agenda. The Commissioner has presented a reorganization plan to the State Board of Education that, when approved, establishes:

- **The Division of Academic Standards, Curriculum, and Assessments** - We believe that what we expect students to learn, what we teach, the curricular resources we make available, and our formative and summative assessments should all be aligned. Accordingly, this division is being organized to deliver an exceptionally high quality “Curriculum and Assessment Spine” to New Jersey’s schools and teachers.
- **The Division for Professional Excellence** - This division is being organized to improve our professional preparatory programs, recruiting, licensing, placement, induction, professional development, evaluation, certification endorsement, compensation, and

contract standards. It is charged with ensuring that our entering teachers are of the highest caliber and prepared to impact student achievement; that we continually improve the quality of our existing teaching corps; and that we make certain that the highest-need children in New Jersey are taught by our most effective teachers.

- **The Division of Student Support Services** – This division is being organized to ensure that individual students receive all of the support they need in-school and out to thrive; including at risk and special needs children.
- **The Division for School Effectiveness and Choice** - This division is being organized to support the development of our public school boards; to establish and/or support the establishment of an excellent school culture, climate, and student learning environment for every child; to support small learning communities and Alternative Academies within our district schools; to assist the expansion of school choice options including inter-district choice, intra-district choice, county academy and career-tech options, charter school options, online education and dual enrollment options, non-public school scholarship program options, and home-schooling options. Additionally, it is responsible for ensuring that all schools are held accountable for student achievement and ensuring that perennially low-performing schools are turned around, replaced, or closed.
- **The Division of Education System Efficiency** – This division is being organized to facilitate the countywide coordination of various school support services and the consolidation of district service contracts so that a large percentage of fixed costs, including facilities costs, can be moved out of individual schools districts. (This saves tax dollars and enables individual LEA enrollments to wax and wane with expanded school choice without the LEAs being financially destabilized.) This division will work with the Division of School Effectiveness and Choice and the Division of Finance to ensure that school districts have high quality systems in place and operate efficiently. It also prepares district performance information for school boards to use in reviewing the performance of the district’s superintendent.
- **The Division of Finance and Regulatory Compliance** - This division is responsible for ensuring that all LEAs have the financial resources they need to provide children a

thorough education, for ensuring that districts oversee their funds and grants prudently, and comply with all applicable state and federal regulations.

Each of these new divisions will report directly to our Deputy Commissioner.

Beyond these divisions, the NJDOE has a number of offices, most of which will report to the Commissioner's Chief of Staff, specifically staffed to support New Jersey's RTTT initiatives and its commitment to making its public education system one that constantly learns and improves, driven by high quality data, research, analysis, and education system reform. For a complete review of our proposed new organization chart presented to the State Board of Education, please see Appendix II.

The NJDOE has a comprehensive approach to project management for RTTT.

To successfully implement our RTTT initiatives and transform education practice in New Jersey, we are building the departmental capacity needed to manage our overall reform agenda, coordinate activities, and provide districts with support and oversight. As our RTTT initiatives represent not an add-on to our departmental work, but rather its core, we are completely integrating these initiatives into the NJDOE's day-to-day operations.

With Race to the Top funding, the Commissioner will establish the position of Chief RTTT Officer (CRO) to drive program implementation and ensure compliance with federal guidelines. The CRO will be supported by two Project Managers and a fiscal manager, report directly to the Commissioner, and work closely with the Deputy Director and Chief of Staff.

The job description for the role is included as Appendix II. The work will include:

- **Connections with stakeholders and integration with partners** - The CRO will act as the school, district, and county connection to RTTT activities as directed by the Commissioner and will regularly engage stakeholders and key partners to participate in this work. In addition, the NJDOE's newly proposed Office of Parental Information will work with stakeholder organizations across the state – including schools, libraries, community and religious organizations, and parent and education advocacy organizations – to develop their capacity to share information with parents and the public about RTTT research findings, and about

school and program performance, to help parents choose schools that are most suitable for their children, and to help the public drive continued public education system reform.

- **Integrated management within the NJDOE** - Overseeing implementation of the RTTT reforms in an integrated, coordinated fashion, including weekly meetings with all key NJDOE leaders for updates on deliverables and discussion of implementation issues. For each RTTT project task, an internal project manager will be assigned to track implementation by NJDOE or partners, report status to the CRO, and aggregate reporting to achieve U.S. Department of Education compliance.
- **Oversight of subcontractors** - While each team will have day-to-day ownership of tasks and deliverables, the CRO will oversee the contract process for RTTT as a grant and will have authority to settle significant issues. The CRO will be responsible for ensuring vendors are managed efficiently and responsibly. Vendor accountability, including incentives for strong performance and negative consequences for weak performance, will be enforced in accordance with state and federal law.
- **Coordination of LEA MOUs and Deliverables:** the CRO will manage the design and finalization of the Statement of Work developed with each Participating LEA.

The CRO would be responsible for implementing the following timeline:

Chief RTTT Officer responsibilities timeline

	Months 1-2 (from hire date)	Months 3-6	Months 7-48+
Supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer technical assistance to LEAs as they complete scopes of work • Providing regular report-outs to stakeholders, Commissioner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist NJDOE department and project leaders with project plans, performance management • Providing regular report-outs to stakeholders, Commissioner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Troubleshoot” implementation challenges at NJDOE, LEAs
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Assistant and Deputy Commissioners and other senior staff to modify job descriptions and goals to account for RTTT • Evaluate and strengthen proposed LEA scopes of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular conversations with implementers (LEA, NJDOE staff) • Evaluate their performance against stated goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular conversations with implementers (LEA, NJDOE staff) • Evaluate their performance against stated goals
Providing financial oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize “Return on RTTT Investment” metrics that recipient LEAs and NJDOE departments will use to share updates on their use of funds • Rollout financial reporting structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audits of programs or LEAs, as necessary • Analyze and report out on findings on uses of funds – medium level every month, “deep dive” every 6 months or where necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct audits of programs or LEAs, as necessary • Analyze and report out on findings on uses of funds
Sharing best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing a “What Works” database for RTTT programs within NJDOE as well as LEAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Populating the database • Actively “pushing out” the content of the database (e.g., monthly newsletters) to affected parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recommendations to all LEAs • Support NJDOE in contribution to national conversation about “What Works” in RTTT, with lessons for future policy and grant competitions

To *integrate* capacity, many NJDOE departments will be responsible for implementing this work. At the state NJDOE offices, some of the teams involved will be led by officials from critical offices within our agency divisions, including: the Office of Math and Science, the Office of Academic Standards and 21st Century Schools, the Office of Language Arts Literacy, the Office of District and School Improvement, the Office of Professional Standards, Licensing and Higher Education Collaboration, the Office of Early Childhood Education, the Office of Educational Support Services, and the Office of Career and Technical Education. The timelines embedded within sections account for specific responsibilities at all levels of the educational continuum on deliverables related to the proposed work.

New Jersey’s Executive County Superintendents found in the Division of Education System Efficiency will be a crucial communication and implementation partner in our work with LEAs and schools on our RTTT plan.

Within the NJDOE, our Executive County Superintendent Offices are responsible for the consistent implementation of statewide initiatives across the state. They communicate with, train, and consult with our LEAs. The 21 County Offices will have a central activity in

coordinating activities among LEAs, and providing day-to-day support for the implementation of our RTTT reforms.

With 387 LEAs of varying sizes and capacity participating in RTTT, this intermediary role is essential. To support this activity, the state will fund the hiring or designation of one full-time staff member in each county (two in our four most populous counties) who will be responsible for oversight and engagement of superintendents on district staff on RTTT reforms. These RTTT Coordinators will report to the Executive County Superintendents but day-to-day activities will be directed by the NJDOE Chief Race to the Top Officer to ensure aligned and consistent support for all our districts, schools, and students.

The Executive County Superintendents are also responsible for the coordination of shared services among LEAs. As part of our overall efficiency agenda, they will work with LEAs to consolidate recruiting and professional development across districts.

Lines of authority and accountability in LEAs are clear.

The staff working in the CRO will be responsible for direct communication with the Counties and also for the divisions within NJDOE. A plan of this magnitude requires clear communication structures and obvious decision making patterns. The CRO will establish the roles and day-to-day operations. NJDOE has solid communication patterns in place with the County Offices. We will set regular communications among County Offices around each of the four assurances to discuss upcoming major milestones, identify potential barriers, and problem-solve solutions. To ensure clear communication to the schools, teachers, and school leaders at the heart of our reform efforts, the NJDOE will use County Offices, the NJDOE website, and relationships with our partner associations and organizations. Similar to the NJDOE, County Offices will set regular communications among their LEAs around each of the four assurances to discuss upcoming deliverables, evaluation designs, and to identify promising practices. These critical communications will provide a necessary link through County Offices regarding how our reforms affect schools and classrooms across the state.

NJDOE has a solid financial plan for RTTT.

New Jersey is asking for \$399 million, to be spent primarily on getting good teachers to the neediest classrooms and on transfers to participating LEAs.

50% of the funds will be distributed to LEAs according to the Title I funding formula. The remaining 50% will be spent on key projects:

- 1) RTTT Administration: \$16.8M for stakeholder communication, county-level implementation support, and project oversight;
- 2) Supplemental Funding to Participating LEAs: \$31M to ensure every Participating LEA receives at least \$100,000 over the course of the grant;
- 3) Data Systems: \$47.4M to complete the development of our State Longitudinal Data System and deploy our Instructional Improvement System;
- 4) Curriculum and Assessment Enhancement: \$20.5M to improve our assessment systems, provide curricular support to the Common Core standards, and develop our evaluation system;
- 5) Teacher Effectiveness: \$63.5M to provide merit pay and incentives for equitable distribution of effective teachers;
- 6) Virtual Schooling: \$5.4M to provide virtual classes in high-needs subjects (including STEM) to at-risk students; and
- 7) School Turnarounds: \$14.5M to turn around our lowest-performing schools.

A detailed budget and budget narrative is provided in Appendix I.

We have developed a financial review process, as detailed below, to ensure that districts and the NJDOE spend RTTT funds with prudence and can measure the return on our federal government's investment:

- The Chief RTTT Officer will be hired based on his or her ability to lead change management in and across organizations. He or she will rely on our Division of Finance to carefully manage the RTTT budget and expenditures.
- The Division of Finance will fill an additional position- a financial analyst—who would have dotted line reporting into the CRO. These staff would be responsible for strengthening RTTT budgets, evaluating spending patterns, identifying best financial practices, and flagging questionable patterns requiring additional investigation.
- The RTTT budget includes an accounting fee of \$250,000 to hire an independent auditing firm to evaluate the programs' use of funds and financial controls.

- The CRO would be responsible for regular report outs on the program’s financial health—medium level reviews monthly, and deep dives every six months.

Our plan is designed for sustainability.

There are two key aspects to sustainability: whether the policies and practices will remain in place after the conclusion of the RTTT grant, and whether adequate funding will support the practices at the NJDOE and in the LEAs.

As highlighted above and described in the relevant sections, we intend to implement our reforms via NJDOE and LEA action, via regulatory revisions proposed to the State Board, and then ultimately work with the New Jersey legislature to fix these new practices in statute. While we believe that we could accomplish most aspects of our plan without new enabling legislation, we intend to enshrine in statute the key human capital, assessment, and evaluation strategies that are core to our RTTT reforms. We are deliberate in doing so – while we intend for our reforms to speak for themselves by driving student achievement, we also know that long-term sustainability will be enhanced by legislative action.

Financially, many of our costs are “front-loaded” – e.g., the development of our curriculum and assessment spine, longitudinal data tracking and instructional improvement system development, professional development transitions, and the creation of our new assessment and evaluation frameworks. While we anticipate ongoing maintenance fees and periodic updates to the curriculum and assessment spine, these expenses will be a fraction of up-front costs and we will easily be able to incorporate them into our state budget.

On the other hand, we are designing certain expenses to increase over time – for example, our merit pay program, which will grow over the course of the project as more districts elect to participate and more teachers move to support students in high-need districts. Here too, we are committed to incorporating these expenses into our state budget.

We believe these reforms will persist because it is ultimately no more expensive to pay for performance than for non-performance, and because the public armed with good data will always demand the former. Indeed, we are confident that as New Jersey’s experience with these reforms continues, support for them will only increase – from teachers, principals, parents, and other

community members. We do not believe that New Jersey will “turn back the clock” on these reforms and stop caring about the educational effectiveness of teachers, programs, and practices.



(ii) USE SUPPORT FROM A BROAD GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS TO BETTER IMPLEMENT ITS PLANS, AS EVIDENCED BY THE STRENGTH OF THE STATEMENTS OR ACTIONS OF SUPPORT

(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans

The extent to which the State has a high-quality overall plan to—

(ii) Use support from a broad group of stakeholders to better implement its plans, as evidenced by the strength of the statements or actions of support from— *(10 points)*

- (a) The State’s teachers and principals, which include the State’s teachers’ unions or statewide teacher associations; and
- (b) Other critical stakeholders, such as the State’s legislative leadership; charter school authorizers and State charter school membership associations (if applicable); other State and local leaders (*e.g.*, business, community, civil rights, and education association leaders); Tribal schools; parent, student, and community organizations (*e.g.*, parent-teacher associations, nonprofit organizations, local education foundations, and community-based organizations); and institutions of higher education.

Education stakeholders – including teachers, principals, superintendents and their respective associations – have all been involved in planning our RTTT initiatives.

We engaged a huge array of stakeholders in crafting these education initiatives and have been able to generate broad and deep support for this reform agenda.

Teachers, principals and their associations spent untold hours discussing and refining our plan elements with us. The leadership of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators and the Urban Superintendents Association intensely engaged with us and all have provided formal letters of support for this submission and its particulars. Our AFT affiliate – the NJFT – not only endorsed this plan but encouraged its local leadership to sign MOUs.

We also engaged the New Jersey School Boards Association, the Garden State Coalition of Schools, Excellent Education for Everyone, the New Jersey Parents and Teachers Organization, and numerous other education organizations in the development of this plan, and took testimony and input from a wide array of higher education, business, civic, taxpayer, and religious organizations.

By establishing a participatory process that included all of the aforementioned organizations, by fully demonstrating our commitment to collaboration, and by building in an adequate timeline for all of these diverse stakeholder organizations to continue to participate with us in the development of evaluation and assessment frameworks, we secured the endorsement of nearly every major education stakeholder organization in the state, as well as more than sixty other organizations within the diverse categories already mentioned.

We will continue to work with each of these stakeholder organizations – particularly our principal, superintendent, and school board organizations and others – so we can ensure a successful implementation of our RTTT reforms: one that produces confidence in the design of our evaluation methodologies and the plan developed for their deployment.

We are enjoying a powerful confluence of reform-oriented leadership and public buy-in.

The June 2010 issue of *Forbes Magazine* includes a profile of New Jersey’s Education Commissioner, Bret Schundler (available in Appendix II):

For Schundler... the key to improving New Jersey’s schools is improving the quality of the state’s 110,000 K--12 public school teachers. He would use state money to pay annual bonuses to the best teachers, especially if they volunteer to move to tough schools. He would make it easier for out-of-state teachers or career switchers to be certified in New Jersey...

The determined support for these reforms by Republican Governor Christie and his Commissioner of Education Bret Schundler, the strong support for them by the Democratic and

Republican leaders and members of New Jersey’s State Senate and Assembly, the broad and strong support for these reforms by New Jersey’s business, civic, and educational organizations, along with two-thirds of our school districts, creates an opportunity that is unique in the nation: New Jersey is positioned to deliver on a truly ambitious education reform agenda in a collective bargaining state.

As a result of feedback from Round I, we made a concerted effort to gather letters of support from our partners in this work. We know that such an ambitious reform agenda requires significant partnership from every facet of a child’s life. Our letters of support, available in Appendix III, evidence the deep commitment from the following groups.

Category of Support	Number of Supporters Expressed in Appendix III
State Agencies	6
Education Associations and Nonprofits	11
Business and Industry Leaders	19
Deans and University Presidents	19
Local Government Officials , Civic and Religious Organizations	10
U.S. Senators and Congressmen	1
State Legislators	1
Charter Schools	3
Editorial Boards	3

This extensive list of supporters provides evidence of the impact and sustainability of this work beyond the life of the Race to the Top Grant. Within state agencies, the secured cooperation and support of the Department of Children and Families and Agriculture, for example is critical in the implementation and long-term success of the work proposed in Section (E) when you consider the connections within services being provided by those agencies and the NJDOE to the schools identified as Persistently Low Achieving Schools.

Our plan enjoys the support of a vast collection of disparate groups – different religious groups, political affiliations, corporate competitors – have all united to support New Jersey in our effort to serve our children.

Consider the broad base of support represented by excerpts from the following endorsers:

New Jersey School Boards Association

Although New Jersey has made substantial progress in closing the academic achievement gap, every effort must be made to improve academic achievement in persistently low-performing schools. The grant application calls for implementation of innovative strategies to change the culture of these schools and provide essential opportunity for their students. Significantly, it would enable local boards of education to originate initiatives to turn around troubled schools through the creation of innovative” achievement academies.”

The New Jersey Reading Association

We truly hope that a Race to the Top award will support the implementation of New Jersey’s Education Reform Plan and propel our education system into a model of success and global competitiveness ... Our belief is that every child is a reader and working together we can make the necessary changes to accomplish these goals.

The New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities

New Jersey’s nine state colleges and universities are the state’s primary source of baccalaureate and graduate education, graduating annually, nearly 50% of all baccalaureate graduates, and serve as the state’s major teacher training institutions.

These colleges and universities are committed to strong, effective partnership with New Jersey’s schools. I believe that New Jersey’s proposal will help to ensure college and career readiness for our students, and will help to make New Jersey and America more economically competitive.

The proposal contains important innovative provisions regarding assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes and professional standards; it provides for systematic collection of longitudinal data; and provides a sound system of accountability to help sustain needed reform, and to ensure success over the long-term.

Support is not limited to our educational stakeholder groups:

Another measure of the breadth of our support is endorsement of the editorial boards from major state newspapers.

The *Asbury Park Press* Editorial Board wrote:

Gov. Chris Christie and Bret Schundler, his commissioner of education, have a sweeping vision for improving the quality of education in New Jersey – one that would benefit all of the state’s students and reward the state’s best teachers. Their common-sense reform agenda deserves bipartisan support....Many of Schundler’s proposed reforms are remarkably similar to the ideas found in the Obama administration’s Race to the Top fact sheet... designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments... assessing and using data to drive instruction... Every governor pays lip service to education reform, but often little is accomplished. This may be the moment in which real reform will happen. New Jersey’s students deserve it.

(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps (30 points)

The extent to which the State has demonstrated its ability to—

(i) Make progress over the past several years in each of the four education reform areas, and used its ARRA and other Federal and State funding to pursue such reforms; (5 points)

(ii) Improve student outcomes overall and by student subgroup since at least 2003, and explain the connections between the data and the actions that have contributed to — (25 points)

- (a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessment required under the ESEA;
- (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, both on the NAEP and on the assessments required under the ESEA; and
- (c) Increasing high school graduation rates.

In the text box below, the State shall describe its current status in meeting the criterion. The narrative or attachments shall also include, at a minimum, the evidence listed below, and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the State's success in meeting the criterion. The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the State believes will be helpful to peer reviewers. For attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the attachments can be found.

Evidence for (A)(3)(ii):

- NAEP and ESEA results since at least 2003. Include in the Appendix all the data requested in the criterion as a resource for peer reviewers for each year in which a test was given or data was collected. Note that this data will be used for reference only and can be in raw format. In the narrative, provide the analysis of this data and any tables or graphs that best support the narrative.

Recommended maximum response length: Six pages

.....

(i) MADE PROGRESS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS IN EACH OF THE FOUR EDUCATION REFORM AREAS, AND USED ITS ARRA AND OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING TO PURSUE SUCH REFORMS

.....

Standards & Assessment

.....

New Jersey has remained committed to rigorous academic standards that prepare students for college or work in the 21st Century. New Jersey has already raised, and redesigned, standards in 7 of 9 core content areas and has won national awards for its work. With the support of Title II funds under ESEA, New Jersey has created an innovative, systemic professional-development system that supports teachers in translating the new standards into classroom practice. We are equally committed to ensuring that our assessments are of the highest caliber. In a time when states are scaling back state assessment programs, New Jersey is building on its existing open-ended items for all state assessments and has pushed forward with the piloting of performance-based assessment as part of the state assessment in biology, as the only state to do so. New Jersey also recognizes the need for teachers to have daily formative-assessment tools to inform the adaptation of instruction based on student needs and performance. New Jersey has provided a state-funded service for LEAs to offer *Learnia*, an online formative- and interim-assessment platform. Finally, New Jersey has earned a national reputation for the quality of its state-funded preschool programs and has demonstrated that its high-quality preschool programs have a significant impact on New Jersey children through second grade.

.....

Data Systems

.....

New Jersey recognizes the need for relevant, timely, and accurate data to shape and inform education policy, and also to provide teachers with the information they need to support student

success. The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) has focused LEA attention on fidelity of implementation, evaluation of, and continuous improvement of programs. Through state funding, New Jersey has launched the NJ SMART data system providing new access and improved availability of state data in order to increase its use by the SEA, LEAs, and schools. With the support of ARRA funds, New Jersey’s LEAs have invested in new educational technology to transform their classrooms to reflect the 21st Century work environments.

Teachers & Leaders

New Jersey is a nationally recognized leader in alternative teacher certification. The first state to offer an alternate route, New Jersey has continued to innovate and research new ways to open the pipeline so that skilled professionals can become classroom teachers. Through state funding and support from non-profits and grant-making foundations, New Jersey has piloted innovative programs to redesign STEM teacher preparation and has laid the foundation for building a network of professional-learning communities within and across schools. New Jersey invests heavily through state and federal funds to provide high-quality professional development to grow and support outstanding teachers.

Struggling Schools

Through state funding and with the support of School Improvement Grants, New Jersey has developed a comprehensive system of supports and monitoring for schools and districts that have been identified for improvement under Title I of ESEA. The QSAC and the Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement (CAPA) tools gather information across a range of school leadership, performance, and operational indicators for use in designing improvement plans. New Jersey also recognizes that struggling schools are part of a struggling community. We have engaged a wide range of partners with the goal of graduating more students ready for

college and work. New Jersey’s High School Graduation Campaign demonstrates New Jersey’s willingness and success in working across organizations and state agencies to ensure that our students graduate from high school ready for college and work.

(ii) INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN READING/LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

New Jersey has achieved remarkable results—consistently one of the top performers on NAEP and demonstrated progress on closing the achievement gap. We attribute our successes to high standards, accountability, and support for teachers and students. Education reform in New Jersey has been powerful and effective but it remains unfinished. Even as our overall performance on state assessment and NAEP has increased, our students need performance to accelerate exponentially to graduate ready for college or work. While we are making progress to improve academic achievement for students in poverty, our eighth grade achievement gap between students in poverty and their peers is tied for second in the nation in reading and third for mathematics. With or without Race to the Top, New Jersey will enact reforms to give our students the academic tools they need to succeed in school, work, and life.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

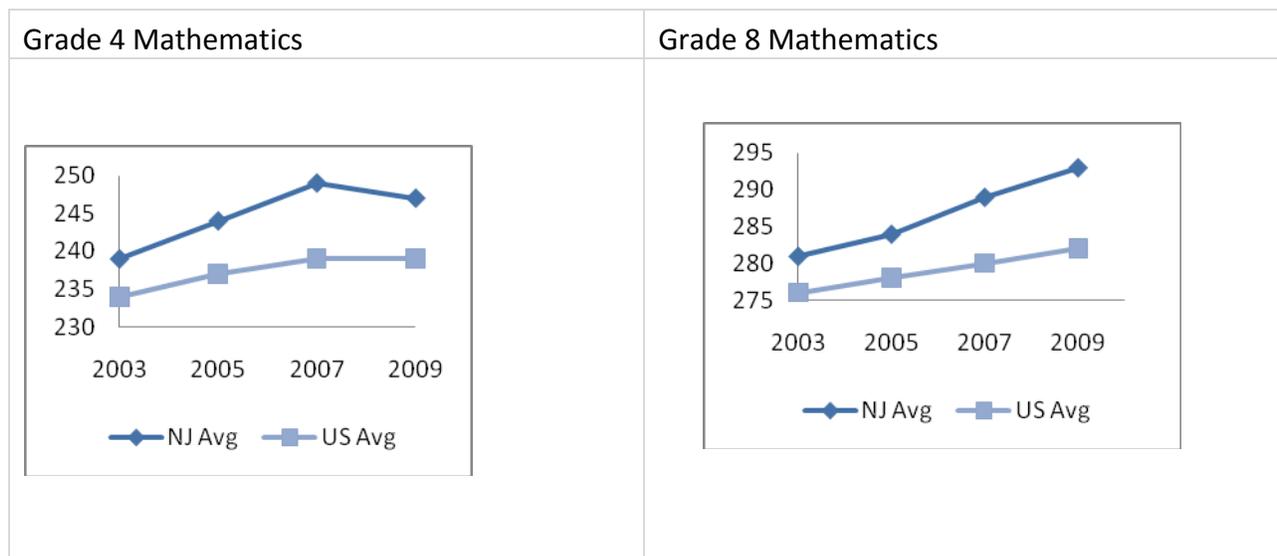
Mathematics results

- New Jersey fourth-grade scores surpass the national average by eight points;
- Eighth-grade scores in New Jersey are eleven points higher than the national average

On the 2009 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for mathematics, New Jersey 8th graders are the best in the country, and have improved significantly since 2003. Only two states’ students scored better on the eighth-grade test. New Jersey fourth-graders continue to score higher on the NAEP math test than students in all but three other states. The average math

score of fourth graders in New Jersey was 247, while the average score for public-school students across the nation was 239. The average scale score for New Jersey’s grade-eight students, 293, is twelve points higher than it was in 2003, and eleven points higher than the national average of 282. While there is still much more work to be done, the eighth-grade results, in particular, show that the investments New Jersey is making in education and emphasis on real world STEM experience for teachers and students is paying off, and that the efforts of our educators are yielding positive results. A partnership with Rutgers, which focused on resilience and perseverance in solving mathematic problems, helped to shape mathematics instruction in New Jersey. Through this program teachers learned that by giving students challenging problems, more difficult than those they have receive previously, the students worked at them longer and did not give up until a solution was found.

New Jersey students with disabilities showed particular improvement on the eighth-grade math test; the average score for those students increased from 251 in 2007, to 259 in 2009. The national average grade-eight math score for students with disabilities was 249 in 2009. New Jersey’s commitment to supporting both general education and special education teachers to improve instruction for students with disabilities is apparent in our results.



Reading NAEP Results

The newest grade four and grade eight reading scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) confirm that New Jersey students remain among the nation’s top

achievers in reading skills. The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests show New Jersey students trailing only one state in fourth-grade reading results, and tied with six other states. In eighth grade, New Jersey has the second highest average scale score in the nation.

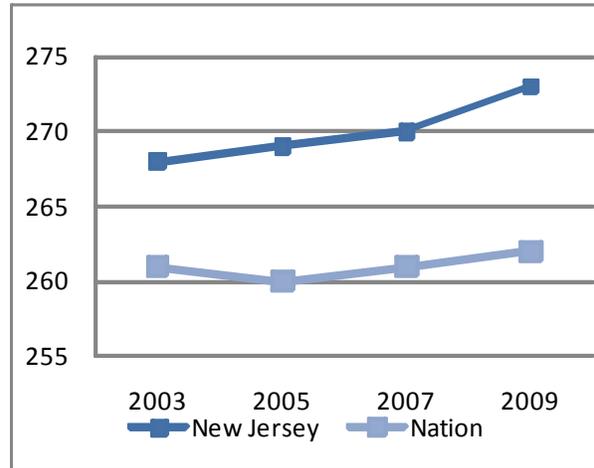
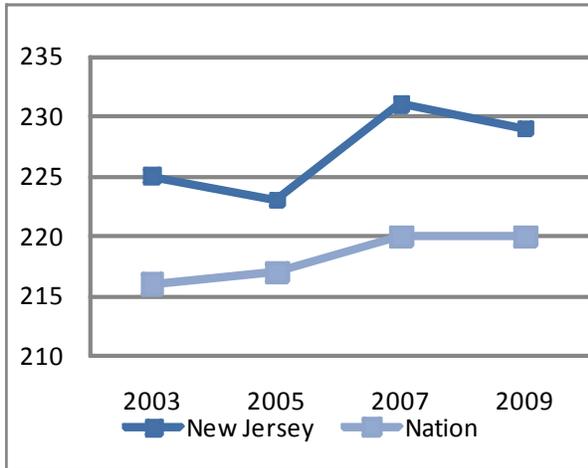
The jump in the statewide scale score from 223 in 2005, to 231 in 2007 is the second-highest increase in the nation- a direct result of our intensive investments in early literacy. Fourth-graders' scores increased across the board in seven out of the eight major demographic groups tested. The 2009 NAEP results exemplify New Jersey's commitment to improving educational attainment in our elementary schools. New Jersey attributes our increases to sound preschool- and early-childhood-education programs. For example, our K-3 literacy and Reading First programs have focused early childhood classroom teachers on teaching reading. These programs are providing our youngest students with a solid foundation of basic fundamentals, and the efforts are achieving positive results. New Jersey can trace its exceptional writing scores to the instruction of the state's teachers. New Jersey's project to shape writing instruction became one of the first to be validated in the nation. The program embedded proven pedagogical practice in writing instruction throughout the state and was successfully modeled in other states.

With regard to scaled scores, the 2009 average scale score in reading for grade 8 was 273 in New Jersey, compared to 262 in the nation. Also, the average score for male, female, black, white and Hispanic students, as well as students both eligible and not eligible for the National School Lunch Program has increased since 2005. These sustained increases are a direct result of our continued efforts to raise our expectations of student literacy as evidence in our redesigned assessments and standards. In grade 4, the average scale score for New Jersey was 229, compared to 220 for the nation.

New Jersey also demonstrates a strong record of our support for special education students. At grade eight, the percentage of New Jersey students with disabilities in the NAEP sample reading at grade level or above increased notably, from 46 percent in 2007 to 59 percent in 2009; their average scale score increased from 236 in 2007 to 250 in 2009.

Grade 4 Reading

Grade 8 Reading



New Jersey students have a history of strong performances on the NAEP tests. In 2007, New Jersey eighth graders were the best writers in the nation for their grade level, and fourth graders trailed only one state in reading scores.

.....

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK)

.....

New Jersey has made several changes to its assessment system between 2003 and 2009 in order to raise both the academic standards expected of all students and the quality of the assessment instruments. The NCES report “Mapping State Proficiency onto NAEP Scales: 2005-2007” demonstrates the high caliber of New Jersey’s Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (ASK) with academic-achievement levels in grade 8, for both reading and mathematics, well above the basic cut point on the NAEP. However, these changes do impact the validity of comparisons across years for New Jersey assessment data.

In 2007-08, New Jersey redesigned its statewide assessment and raised performance standards for students in grades 5-8. The 2008 results of the redesigned NJ ASK 5-8 Language Arts Literacy (LAL) and mathematics cannot be compared with those of previous assessments due to changes in test design. The redesigned NJ ASK 5-8 for LAL and mathematics differ significantly in terms of item type, passage length, and testing time. Additionally, New Jersey significantly

raised performance expectations for students on the grade-3 and -4 assessments during the 2008-2009 school year. Complete data for all assessment years can be found in Appendix I.

The recently-released 2008-09 assessment results allow for comparisons between grades 5-8 between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. As evidenced in the test results, New Jersey educators stand ready to meet raised expectations for students. In literacy, academic achievement increased significantly across grades 5-8, with greater increases in the percent proficient for black, Hispanic, and economically-disadvantaged students. In mathematics, the percent of all students scoring proficient or above increased in grades 5, 7, and 8, with accompanying increases in the percent of black, Hispanic, and economically-disadvantaged students scoring proficient or higher. The percent of economically-disadvantaged students scoring proficient or higher increased from 44% in 2008 to 51% in 2009, and the percent of black students scoring proficient or above increased from 37.8% in 2008 to 44.5% in 2009. As noted in a recent study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education, New Jersey was one of only 11 states that met NCLB accountability goals for ELL students.

With the continuation of efforts to translate higher standards into classroom practice, extensive professional development for teachers, and supports for students, New Jersey fully expects this level of progress to continue.

DECREASING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS BETWEEN SUBGROUPS IN READING/LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

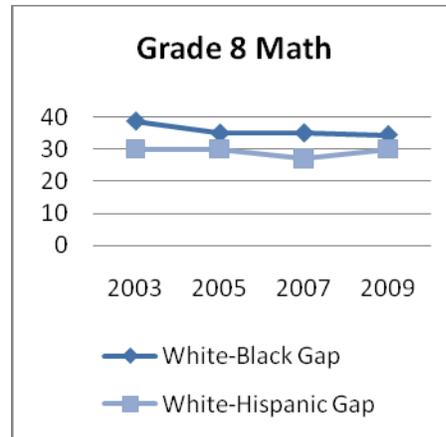
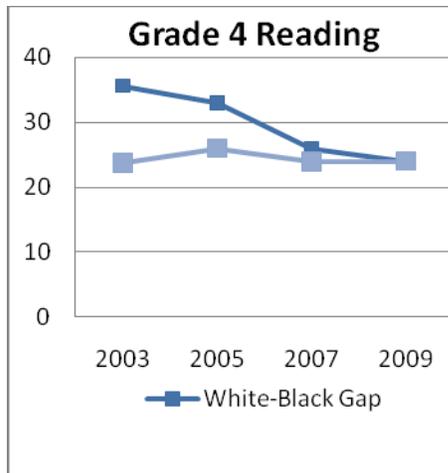
National Assessment of Educational Progress

An achievement gap exists in New Jersey between our Hispanic and Black students and their White peers. Further, New Jersey has responded to significant gaps between economically

disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers with leadership in school funding reform. However, the fact that New Jersey has the third largest gap between eligible and ineligible national school lunch grade 8 students is simply not acceptable. As evidenced on the NAEP, this longstanding gap is closing over time, but New Jersey intends to enact the bold and comprehensive reform effort laid out in this Race to the Top application to accelerate the elimination of the achievement gap in New Jersey.

We have proven our record with successes in grade-4 reading. From 2003 to 2007, the achievement gap between black and white students significantly decreased. Black students' scores increased by 12 points, and the gap between black and white students decreased by 10 points. This was the largest gap reduction in the nation, and New Jersey was one of only three states with a 10-point decrease.

In mathematics, the achievement gap between white and black students has decreased since 2003. The achievement gap between white and Hispanic students has narrowed slightly between 2003 and 2007. A recent education-trust report titled "Gauging the Gaps, A Deeper Look at Student Achievement" recognizes New Jersey as one of the top states in closing the achievement gap between low-income or minority students and their peers. The Education Trust's latest report confirms that New Jersey is closing the achievement gap while making gains among all groups of students. Likewise, New Jersey's low-income and minority students are outperforming their peers in other states. This analysis shows that New Jersey is a leader in closing the achievement gap among students, but our job is not done until all children are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to compete in the 21st century global marketplace.



New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK)

New Jersey's public schools are making notable progress in closing the achievement gap between African American, Latino and low-income students and their classmates. The center of Education Policy (CEP) released the report *State Test Score Trends Through 2007-08*, which indicates that between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of students proficient in math and reading has increased throughout New Jersey.

At the fourth-grade level, math proficiency for African American students increased from 63% to 68%. For Latino students, the proficiency rate rose from 72% to 76%, and for low-income students, math proficiency grew from 68% to 72%. Scores for White students rose from 90% to 92%, while proficiency scores for Asian students improved from 94% to 95%, and for Native American students, results rose from 78% to 83%.

Moderate improvements were experienced in fourth-grade reading scores. From 2006-2008, the percentage of fourth-grade African American students reaching reading proficiency grew from 63% to 67%. Proficiency rates for Latino students increased from 67% to 73%, and low-income student figures rose from 63% to 69%. For White students, reading proficiency grew from 88% to 89%. Asian students' scores improved from 91% to 93%, while Native American student proficiency decreased slightly from 73% to 72%.

As evidenced by this data, New Jersey is on the right track, but much hard work remains for us to make sure that every child in New Jersey has an equal chance at a quality education and a bright future. Improving educational opportunities for all children throughout the state is a priority.

.....

INCREASING HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

New Jersey recognizes the importance of reliable and timely data to inform high-school re-design. Through improvements to the data system, New Jersey will be able to report adjusted cohort graduation rates starting next school year. While we recognize the limitations of our current leaver rate, even this basic metric reveals significant differences in the preparation of student groups for college and work:

Graduation Rates			
	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
White	95.0	95.2	95.6
African American	83.9	87.0	88.0
Asian	98.8	97.0	97.8
Hispanic	83.2	84.9	85.1
Students with Disabilities		77.7	78.3

The New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign approximated that 19,000 students did not graduate from New Jersey’s high schools in 2007, and the lost lifetime earnings for that class of dropouts is estimated at \$4.9 billion. Estimates show that only 63% of African American and 67% of Hispanic high school students will graduate in New Jersey. Further, the number of young people, ages 18-24, who are not in school and also are not working increased by 34% in New Jersey between 2002 and 2006. In response, New Jersey has launched a High School Redesign initiative to raise graduation recruitments and increase standards, in order to create a public education system that is seamlessly-aligned from pre-school to college, and that ensures that students gain the requisite academic knowledge for life and work in the 21st Century.

New Jersey also recognizes that a challenge like this requires great partnerships. Through the collaborative efforts of state agencies, community associations and the business community, New Jersey has launched the New Jersey High School Graduation Campaign. The recent report “Forging New Jersey’s Cradle to College & Workforce Pipeline for All Children – Year One, Preliminary Findings and Proposed Plan for Action” provides a framework of much of New Jersey’s Race to the Top application.