



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** March 29, 2010

**To:** Alan Burke, The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Edie Harding, State Board of Education  
Judy Hartmann, The Office of the Governor  
Jana Carlisle, Washington State Race to the Top Project Manager

**From:** Partnership for Learning

**RE:** Recommendations for a Bold Race to the Top Application

The winners of the first round of the federal Race to the Top grant program, Delaware and Tennessee, have set a high bar for education reform and clearly indicate that the federal government is determined to fund only those states that are willing to drive bold policies. Signed into law by the Governor today, Washington's Race to the Top Legislation (SB 6696) takes steps in the right direction, but stronger reforms are needed to make Washington truly competitive for Race to the Top. The applications of both Delaware and Tennessee show that states can advance bold reforms and secure broad statewide support. Washington must strive for both if we are to be competitive for Round II of Race to the Top.

As Washington prepares its Race to the Top application for Round II, it is critical that the proposal represent a bold plan and coherent strategy for closing the state's growing achievement gap and ensuring that every student is prepared to succeed in college and careers.

We offer these comments and suggestions to help Washington take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate student performance and outcomes in our state.

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### A. State Success Factors

In our view, many of the sixteen Round I finalist states, in particularly Delaware and Tennessee, were selected because their Race to the Top applications includes three key components:

- 1) Evidence of a strong track record of driving reform and accelerating student outcomes;
- 2) A compelling vision, strategy and measurable goals; and
- 3) A robust implementation plan and sustainability strategy.

For Washington's application to be **bold**, we suggest this section include the following elements:

- **Make a persuasive and succinct case for why the state is a strong applicant for Race to the Top funding.** This section must not only identify the state's education reform agenda, but also excite readers about the reform opportunities in Washington. Highlight work that the state has already done to make progress in the four assurance areas and STEM (See Appendix A). And, propose a compelling strategy that will serve as a long-term education reform blueprint for the state regardless of whether or not Washington wins Race to the Top funding.
- **Establish compelling and concrete goals with timelines that are both achievable and reflect a sense of urgency, such as:**

- Ensuring all children are school-ready by 2015.
  - Preparing every high school student graduate to succeed in college, careers and life by 2015.
  - Ensuring Washington’s students are internationally competitive in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by 2015.
- **Focus on closing achievement gaps.** Given that Washington is one of the few states where the achievement gap is growing, the state’s reform agenda should be centered on turning around this trend and include provisions such as:
    - Increasing the rigor and alignment of standards, curriculum, assessments and instruction.
    - Increasing the performance bar of all Washington schools.
    - Improving the preparation and effectiveness of teachers and leaders, and improve the equitable distribution of talent so that the best teachers and principals are working with the most at-risk kids.
    - Providing greater access and training for the appropriate use of real-time, quality data and information to inform teaching, learning and accountability.
- **Identify and incentivize “Super LEAs,” a strategy used by Round I finalist Illinois, to provide greater support and resources to districts willing to implement bigger, bolder and faster reforms than other participating LEAs.** Such reforms could include, but are not limited to:
    - Implementing a new teacher and principal evaluation systems in which student growth data serves as a significant factor by 2011-12.
    - Implementing the Common Core standards in the 2012-13 school year.
    - Accelerating the implementation of CORE 24, college and career ready high school graduation requirements, by 2015.
    - Providing autonomous authority to school leadership to make independent decisions such as teacher compensation and resource allocation.
    - Incentivizing the design and use of student growth measures in tested grades and subjects, and untested grades and subjects.
    - Participating in a compensation innovation fund that provides resources to districts that implement performance pay for highly effective educators or differential pay to teachers working in high needs subject areas.
    - Implementing rigorous turnaround provisions that require low-performing schools to replace 50 percent of school staff, extend the school day, and institute performance-based evaluation and compensation systems.
  - **Propose a robust implementation plan and a strategy to sustain and scale reforms.** It is critical that the peer reviewers and the Department of Education are convinced that Washington will fully implement the proposed plans and meet the state’s goals, and that the state has a strategy to sustain and scale the reforms statewide.

It is critical that the peer reviewers and the Department of Education are convinced that Washington will fully implement the proposed plans and meet the state’s proposed goals, and that the state has a strategy to sustain and scale the reforms statewide. The state should establish a dedicated Race to the Top implementation department, led by an Executive Director reporting to the Governor, State Board of Education Chair and Superintendent of Public Instruction and staffed by full-time employees from each agency. This team will be responsible

for leading and coordinating all Race to the Top workstreams, as well as identifying opportunities to align state resources (and leverage additional federal resources) with the goals of Race to the Top.

Furthermore, the state should partner with the U.S. Education Delivery Institute (USEDI) to monitor implementation and evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms for accomplishing the stated goals.

## B. Standards and Assessments

Washington’s application in this area should build upon recent efforts to align Washington’s standards, graduation requirements and assessments with the expectations of college and careers.

Furthermore, clarification of the role and vision common assessments will have in the state should be included in this section. Addressing questions, such as the following, will demonstrate critical thinking and a long-term strategy to making data-driven decisions.

- How do formative, interim and summative assessments align?
- What other assessments are critical for adoption to accurately assess college and career readiness?
- How do we share assessment data and how often?
- When will state summative assessment data be vertically aligned to produce analyses of individual student growth and teacher/leader effectiveness measures?
- What is the role of state data? How do we begin thinking about defining measures of success for grades and subjects with no state-level exam?

Specifically, we suggest including the following points in this section:

- Commit to adopt and implement Common Core standards in participating LEA’s by July 1, 2012-13.
- Statewide implementation of CORE 24 by 2020, with Super LEAs commitment to implement by 2015. Accelerate CORE 24’s increased science graduation requirements by incentivizing districts to institute a third credit of science as the first step in implementing CORE 24.
- Commit to train and provide professional development to all teachers and principals affected by implementation of Common Core by August 2012.
  - Creation of professional learning communities to provide peer-to-peer training on Common Core.
  - Development of an online platform designed for teachers and principals to provide:
    - A virtual tutorial on the Common Core.
    - A 24-hour “Help Desk” for teachers and principals (through instant messenger).

### Section B Round I Finalist Example: Kentucky

The state of Kentucky has a strong, bold and innovative Standards and Assessment area. An effort to replicate this section in Washington’s application is encouraged.

#### **Kentucky’s plan includes the following:**

1. Adopted Common Core in February 2010.
2. Participation in four assessment consortia to develop aligned formative and summative assessments to new standards.
3. Focus on PK-post-secondary curriculum alignment.
4. Providing teachers and principals with a full set of tools to assist in the implementation of new standards:
  - (a) curriculum cross-walk between new standards and old standards;
  - (b) assessment resources to help identify data in formative, summative, interim and annual accountability testing;
  - (c) instruction resources to provide teachers with instructional strategies related to new standards;
  - and (d) professional learning resources to provide teachers and principals targeted professional development opportunities related to new standards.

- Disseminate new instructional units aligned to new standards.
  - A social network site for teachers and principals to share successful practices and post questions or comments.
- Develop a teacher, student and parent website that provides a cross-walk document between old and new standards and shares student-related and parent-related materials on how the new common core standards relate to college and career readiness.
- Implement formative and summative assessments aligned to the Common Core standards by 2015.
- Develop a student growth model to ensure assessments yield comparable and objective measures of student growth.
- Develop new state, district and school report cards that track progress on various measures in real-time and include more public reporting along the lines of college and career readiness indicators, alternative pathways usage, aggregated measures of teacher/leader effectiveness, higher-education reporting, PK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade alignment, reduction in dropout rates, CORE 24 participation, etc.
- Develop innovative ways to enable districts to award credits based on proficiency instead of “seat time.”

### C. Data Systems to Support Instruction

Washington shines above many states when it comes to its data system. The state fully meets 11 of the 12 components of the America COMPETES Act – including the ability to track teacher-to-student data. Yet, despite a strong data system, Washington has not built out the system to meet its full capabilities. This must be a priority area in Washington’s Race to the Top application.

Specifically, we suggest including the following in this section:

- Implement the remaining component of the America COMPETES Act by collecting and reporting student-level college readiness test scores.
- Build upon the three Data Quality Campaign action steps already in place (link data systems, create stable and sustained support, and develop a P-20 workforce research agenda) and implement the remaining seven state action elements identified and promoted by the Data Quality Campaign:
  - Develop governance structures to guide data collection, sharing and use.
  - Build state data repositories that integrate student, staff, financial and facility data.
  - Implement systems to provide all stakeholders with timely access to information.
  - Create progress reports using individual state data to improve student achievement.
  - Create reports that include longitudinal statistics on school systems and groups of students to guide school, district and state level improvement efforts.
  - Promote educator professional development and credentialing.

#### Section C Round I Finalist Example: Colorado

The state of Colorado’s ability to access and link PK-20 data from district’s across the state and key P-20 state agencies into a common portal, SchoolView, is a tool Washington should seek to replicate. Highlighting the state’s intent to build such a system in Washington’s application is encouraged.

#### Colorado’s SchoolView tool includes the following features:

1. User-friendly website, easily accessible.
2. Allows school, student, teacher and district achievement and growth to be tracked.
3. Develops individualized reports for teachers and leaders that include student growth data – these reports are used in evaluations.
4. Centralized location for all statewide school data – an easy “one-stop” data center.

- Promote strategies to raise awareness of available data.
- Technically link P-20 data and share results with different state systems such as social services, foster care, juvenile justice and health care systems.
- Establish “Data Coaches” in each participating LEA that are responsible for training teachers/leaders in reading, analyzing, and using data to improve instruction.
- Develop a robust online data website or portal that makes data readily accessible to teachers, leaders and parents. Included on this website would be the following types of tools:
  - Growth Model: comparison of performance of schools and districts in the state to gauge progress.
  - School Performance: access to performance data for all schools and districts in the state.
  - Learning Center: professional development videos and resources on how to effectively utilize data.
  - Community Connections: social networking capabilities to allow teachers and leaders to connect with colleagues about school improvement tactics.

#### **D. Great Teachers and Leaders**

Leverage Washington’s recent collaboration with The New Teacher Project throughout this section, such as recommendations to develop a new teacher evaluation model based in significant part on student growth data; use the new evaluation system to inform key human capital decisions (such as placement, tenure, compensation and targeted professional development); implement strategies to attract and retain the very best teachers and leaders, especially in our state’s highest needs schools; and drive efforts to enhance our teacher and principal pipelines.

Specifically, we suggest including the following points in this section:

- Contract The New Teacher Project to work with pilot districts to develop and implement the new teacher and principal evaluation systems, as called for under SB 6696.
- Mandate that educators cannot receive the highest rating in the new evaluation system unless their students achieve at least one year of growth.
- Require all LEA’s to use teacher and principal evaluation data to drive decisions around tenure, professional development, staffing, compensation and retention.
- Expand teacher residency-based alternative routes for aspiring principals – modeling on the

#### **Section D Round I Finalist Example: Delaware**

The state of Delaware, like Washington, is a strong union state. Yet Delaware was able to work with the union to develop a unique approach to modify and strengthen the current teacher and principal systems. Highlighting the state’s intent to replicate Delaware’s system in Washington is encouraged.

#### **Delaware’s plan includes the following:**

1. Statewide annual performance-based evaluations for teachers and principals.
2. Starting 2011-12, teacher and principal evaluations are based on student growth performance and will be used to make decisions surrounding tenure, compensation and promotion.
3. Teachers cannot be rated effective unless they met growth targets.
4. Teachers will not be granted tenure if rated “ineffective” more than once.
5. One-on-one coaching to administrators implementing the statewide evaluation system.
6. Retention bonuses to highly-effective teachers that take positions in high-need schools.
7. Model career ladder options for districts and merit-based opportunities for highly-effective teachers.

successful, but small, Danforth program at the University of Washington.

- A one-year, intensive program that includes a half-time internship and a rigorous academic program linking theory and practice; nationally recognized for the programs structure.
- Partner with Teach for America, The New Teacher Project and other non-higher education-based teacher preparation programs and teaching fellow programs to expand the pipeline of effective new teachers and more robustly support career changers.
  - Teach for America is an active partner in the Delaware and Tennessee’s Round I winning applications and worked with 11 of the 16 states that were identified as Round I finalists.
- Use student growth measures to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and close ineffective programs.
- Create an innovation fund to provide bonuses or supplementary pay to districts that want to provide performance pay or differential pay.
- Provide incentives to attract and retain effective teachers and principals.
  - Adopt a retention bonus program that provides annual bonuses to teachers and principals who are rated highly-effective and who agree to work in a high-poverty school for at least two years.
  - Launch a statewide marketing campaign to attract potential teachers and principals and encourage highly-effective teachers to work in high-need schools.

### E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

The recent legislation authorizing state intervention in low-performing schools and the development of an accountability index is a step in the right direction for the state. This section should build upon these advances by proposing that participating LEA’s implement greater measures to ensure that low-performing schools are addressed in the state.

Specifically, we suggest including the following in this section:

- Develop a similarly comprehensive and intensive approach to that of the Mass Insight Partnership Zone initiative – a three to five year, \$75 million public-private partnership focused on creating “proof-points” to scale successful turnaround strategies.
  - The six states participating in the Mass Insight Partnership Zone initiative were all recognized as Round I RTTT finalists (MA, CO, IL, LA, NY, DE).
- Develop a comprehensive accountability system and index that measures and incentivizes schools and

#### Section E Round I Finalist Example: Massachusetts

The state of Massachusetts application stood out amongst other finalists in its proposed reforms to address low-performing schools. Specifically, the state’s participation in the Partnership Zone Initiative—a three-five year commitment to create sustainable and scalable strategies for turning around low-performing schools—is recognized as a bold commitment to improve the state’s lowest-achieving schools.

#### Massachusetts commitment to the Partnership Zone Initiative includes the following:

1. Targeting funds to Partnership Zones in the range of \$750,000 per school per year for the first three years for up to 8-10 schools.
2. Altering operating conditions at Partnership Zone schools in order to achieve funding and regulatory flexibility, extending school days, and flexibility in hiring and program decisions.
3. Working with leading non-profit partners to provide support and guidance (e.g. The New Teacher Project and New Leaders for New School).
4. Building local capacity by supporting outside partners to hold districts and schools accountable.

districts' ability to prepare all students for college and careers.

- Provide signing and retention bonuses up to \$50,000 to highly effective educators working in low-achieving schools.
- Prioritize resources and supports to schools among the state's lowest achieving 5% that did not receive federal School Improvement Grants.

## F. General Selection Criteria

While Washington does not authorize charter schools, the state does allow for district-based innovation schools. The expansion and scaling of innovation models is necessary in order for Washington to be competitive in its application.

Specifically, we suggest including the following points in this section:

- Provide greater authority for district-based innovation schools; including provisions to provide principals the authority to select teachers, curriculum and manage budget.
- Scale innovation schools focused on providing rigorous and relevant STEM learning experiences (i.e. Aviation, Delta School and TAF Academy) with the assistance of the Washington STEM Center.

### **Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority – Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (15 points, all or nothing)**

Given Washington's STEM commitment and the development of the Washington STEM Center, the state's application should address this competitive priority.

Specifically, we suggest including the following in this section:

- Increasing science curriculum requirements – from three years to four years.
- Providing STEM-related online courses to allow rural LEA's to broaden their STEM curriculum.
- Scale innovation schools focused on providing rigorous and relevant STEM learning experiences (i.e. Aviation, Delta School and TAF Academy) with the assistance of the Washington STEM Center.
- Create STEM internships within STEM related industries and nonprofits (e.g. IT companies, hospitals, research institutes, etc.) for both students and teachers.
- Partner with MESA, Pacific Science Center and other nonprofits to offer more coordinated, rigorous and relevant STEM learning experiences to students.
- Develop an interactive web portal to provide a comprehensive, user-friendly guide to STEM teaching and learning resources to parents, students and teachers.
- Create a strategic partnership with the private

#### **STEM Competitive Preference Priority: Georgia**

The state of Georgia's application contains a strong STEM competitive priority section. The state proposes many similar strategies and priorities that Washington state is considering.

#### **Georgia's plan includes the following:**

1. Requiring all elementary and middle schools make Science their second AYP indicator.
2. Expanding the partnership with state higher-education associations and develop a STEM instructional toolkit to assist teachers with aligning college-level STEM work to the lessons and work in high-schools.
3. Developing a robust public awareness campaign with state STEM businesses to influence student selection of STEM courses, reinforce parental and guardian involvement to increase interest in STEM subjects and encourage public support for STEM in classrooms.

sector-led Washington STEM Center to dramatically accelerate STEM performance and outcomes through innovative strategies designed to:

- Improve the quality of STEM instruction.
- Forge strong connections between business, industry, higher education, schools and communities to provide students opportunities to learn from STEM professionals in classroom settings and the workplace that incorporate real-world STEM methods, tools and technologies.
- Create pathways that maximize opportunities for students from underrepresented minority groups to success in STEM education and careers; including STEM teaching.

**Appendix A: Washington’s Race to the Top Building Blocks**

**Washington’s Race to the Top Building Blocks**

<b>State Success Factors</b>	<b>Standards &amp; Assessments</b>	<b>Data Systems</b>	<b>Teachers &amp; Leaders</b>	<b>Turn Arounds</b>	<b>General Selection Criteria</b>	<b>STEM</b>
Legislative policies reflect a bi-partisan effort and invest in reforms targeted to accelerate student performance (e.g. HB 2261, SB 6696)	New math and science standards.  CORE 24 college and career ready graduation requirements adopted.	Robust data system with all 10 DQC elements in place and 11 of 12 America COMPETES Act data elements.	Alternative routes for teachers expanded.  Tenure extended from three to two years.	SBE/OSPI has the authority to intervene in low-performing schools.  Successful Summit Program track record of turning around low-performing districts.	Constitutional commitment to fund education; referencing it as the state’s “paramount duty.”	New math and science standards.  Innovative STEM schools (e.g. TAF, Delta, Aviation).  State support for independent and innovative STEM Center.
College Bound Scholarship program; designed to increase college attrition rates for low-income students.	Leading two common assessment consortia.  Provisional adoption of Common Core standards.  Participation in Achieve’s America Diploma Project.	P-20 link possible.	Pilot process in place for select districts to develop new four-tiered evaluation models systems.  Use of student growth data supported in evaluations if “available and applicable.”			