



# Investing in Educator Capacity

## An Analysis of State Race to the Top Spending

By Scott Sargrad, Samantha Batel, Melissa Lazarín, and Catherine Brown

December 2015

Center for American Progress



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# Introduction and summary

In the 2009-10 school year, states reported \$20.3 billion in K-12 and higher education shortfalls from a slowed economy and a decline in state revenues.<sup>1</sup> The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, or ARRA, directed nearly \$100 billion to restore education budgets, reward innovation, and advance reforms.<sup>2</sup> Half of those funds went to local school districts to prevent layoffs and cutbacks, 17 percent went to increase student financial aid, and 10 percent went to aid low-income public school students.<sup>3</sup> At \$4.35 billion, Race to the Top, or RTT—a competitive grant program to spur K-12 education improvements—constituted just less than 5 percent of the total education stimulus package.<sup>4</sup>

Within a year of its launch, RTT drove significant education reforms across the country. A total of 34 states modified their state laws and policies to bolster their chances of winning a federal grant award during the application process.<sup>5</sup> States such as Oklahoma and Iowa passed laws to facilitate access to charter schools.<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts and Michigan boosted their authority to intervene in chronically underperforming schools.<sup>7</sup> Maryland and California passed laws to strengthen their educator evaluation systems.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia adopted common standards in English language arts, or ELA, and mathematics on a timeline to be competitive in the first and second rounds of RTT.<sup>9</sup> With a relatively small price tag—less than 1 percent of all local, state, and federal education funding—RTT helped spur states to make most of these policy changes before one dollar of the federal program’s money was spent.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the main RTT program, ARRA authorized the Race to the Top Assessment Program, which funded two consortia of states to develop high-quality assessments aligned to college- and career-ready standards.<sup>11</sup> Race to the Top District, or RTT-D, which supports innovation and improvements at the local level, and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, or RTT-ELC, a grant competition to strengthen early learning, also grew out of ARRA’s RTT initiative through congressional appropriations beginning in fiscal year 2011. Twenty-one districts from 14 states received RTT-D grants in 2012 and 2013, and 20 states received RTT-ELC grants between 2012 and 2014.<sup>12</sup>

2015 marks five years since 12 states from a pool of 46 state applicants won RTT awards. In March 2010, Delaware and Tennessee won \$100 million and \$500 million, respectively, in the first round of the competition.<sup>13</sup> In August 2010, an additional 10 applicants—the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island—won second-round awards. Grant-winning states had four years to implement their proposed plans, but most states requested a one-year no-cost extension.<sup>14</sup>

This report examines the program's effect in the winning first- and second-round states over the course of their grants, as they spend the last of their RTT dollars. In compiling data and gathering information for this report, the authors talked to state education officials about the past five years of reforms and supplemented their understanding of RTT's footprint with publicly available information, including state spending data and policy reports.

The report's key findings include:

- State educational agencies, or SEAs, spent more than half of RTT funding on systems, programming, and supports that directly benefit educators.
- SEAs spent only 9 percent of their RTT funding on educator evaluation systems.
- States used RTT to take bold new approaches to turning around low-performing schools.
- RTT increased state capacity and redefined the role of SEAs.
- RTT generated unprecedented collaboration across states and districts.

While it is still too early to measure the full impact of RTT, what is clear is that the program inspired major policy changes at the state level. RTT enabled winning states to innovate and implement meaningful reform to directly benefit educators and improve struggling schools. This innovation transformed the culture of state agencies, a lasting change that will benefit districts, schools, and, most importantly, students for years to come.



# Circa 2009: The education landscape prior to Race to the Top

When Race to the Top was first established in 2009, well-designed professional development for educators was relatively rare, and few teachers had access to regular opportunities for intensive learning. Most teachers received substantially less professional development than the 50 hours needed to truly improve their practice, and the professional development they did receive was not useful, according to the National Staff Development Council, or NSDC.<sup>15</sup>

“The intensity and duration of professional development offered to U.S. teachers is not at the level that research suggests is necessary to have noticeable impacts on instruction and student learning,” a 2009 NSDC study noted.<sup>16</sup> The study observed that teachers were often left feeling dissatisfied and unsupported as a result.

Coinciding with this disconnect was a shift in focus from a teacher’s qualifications to an emphasis on effectiveness, or the measured impact of an educator on student learning. This new focus drew more attention to the reliability and validity of educator evaluation systems as a tool for identifying great teachers and providing them with actionable feedback on their practice.<sup>17</sup>

A 2009 report from the New Teacher Project, or TNTP, however, found that most evaluation systems did not have the capacity to distinguish excellent teachers from those who were chronically ineffective or required professional supports to improve their practice. Fewer than 1 percent of teachers surveyed for the TNTP report received a negative rating on their most recent evaluation, and with the majority rated as good or great, excellent teachers were neither recognized nor leveraged to improve their colleagues.<sup>18</sup>

Nor were districts and schools using evaluations as an opportunity to provide teachers with feedback on their performance and shape their professional development, according to the report. Evaluations took place infrequently and teachers had few opportunities to obtain formal feedback on their performance and practice on a regular basis.<sup>19</sup> To make matters worse, only 15 states evaluated teachers on an annual basis in 2009.<sup>20</sup>

And when teachers did receive feedback, they did not find it valuable. Three-fourths of teachers surveyed in 2009 by TNTTP said that their most recent evaluation did not help them identify areas in which they could improve.<sup>21</sup> As of 2011, only half of states required evaluators to share feedback on teacher performance evaluations. Moreover, only 12 states, including four RTT states, required that evaluation results inform professional development.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to RTT, teacher preparation programs were also failing to adequately prepare educators before they entered the classroom. In 2009, for instance, states reported 28 teacher preparation programs that were low performing or at risk of being designated as low performing. In 2010, this number jumped to 38.<sup>23</sup> Only three states collected data on student academic growth for graduates of teacher preparation programs once those teachers were in the classroom. Even more disturbing, not a single state was using the data to evaluate the performance of their teacher preparation programs.<sup>24</sup>

Adding to these challenges, state K-12 academic standards were of varied quality. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute periodically conducts an evaluation of state standards, and in 2010 it found that not only did state standards “vary dramatically” but most “lack[ed] the content and clarity needed to provide a solid foundation for effective curriculum, assessment, and instruction.”<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, state tests failed to measure up. Approximately one-third of states administered wholly multiple-choice tests in both reading and math to students in the fourth and eighth grades.<sup>26</sup> Many state assessments failed to test students on deeper learning concepts, and as much as half of the tested content did not correspond with state standards.<sup>27</sup>

Enter RTT. With a comprehensive approach to education reform, the grant competition prioritized the following:

1. Clearer and higher student learning expectations
2. Data systems that track student progress to enable data-driven decision making
3. A strong educator workforce
4. Dramatic action to improve the lowest-performing schools

RTT injected states with resources to focus on these four critical areas, develop their capacity, and ultimately support strong systems of teaching and learning. By asking states to address these key components of an effective education system, RTT inspired a new role for SEAs, helped break down program- and funding-based silos, and spurred unprecedented collaboration between states, districts, and other stakeholders.

# The current education landscape

So where are we now?

High school graduation rates are at an all-time high and national math and reading scores have ticked upward, including in some Race to the Top states.<sup>28</sup> The District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Tennessee have witnessed some of the greatest academic gains in the country.<sup>29</sup> However, scores have recently dropped nationally and in some states, which may be attributed in part to an implementation dip associated with the introduction of new standards.<sup>30</sup> But there are bright spots, which include increases for some groups of students and some states, including continued large gains in the District of Columbia.<sup>31</sup>

Still, this progress is frustratingly slow and inadequate to ensure that all children graduate high school with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college and career. And as the system wide reforms spurred by RTT will take years to demonstrate their effectiveness, the extent to which RTT reforms have moved the needle on student achievement is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, the competition provided states with the funds to develop the infrastructure needed to make meaningful progress. States and school systems are collecting data on everything from the quality of teacher preparation to students' understanding of a daily classroom lesson. Furthermore, teachers are obtaining more frequent and customized feedback about their performance and professional development that better meets their needs.<sup>32</sup>

To be sure, states and districts still have a great deal of work ahead of them. The quality and effectiveness of the professional support that teachers obtain once they are in the classroom, for example, is inadequate.<sup>33</sup> States are knee-deep in the work of implementing more robust standards and new assessment systems. States and districts are still struggling with how best to identify effective teaching. And while many of the lowest-performing schools are making significant progress, there are still too many students trapped in chronically failing schools.



There is no denying, however, that RTT has triggered a national conversation in which teacher development; high-quality standards and assessments; support for struggling schools; and the use of data to drive decisions are no longer seen as separate components of an effective school system. Instead, educators and policymakers are tackling these pieces of the puzzle together in an effort to create more holistic systems of teaching and learning. Doing so has both redefined the role of SEAs and prompted collaboration across states and districts. Meeting the priorities of RTT affected not only which initiatives states accomplished, but also how they achieved them.

# Key findings

State educational agencies spent more than half of Race to the Top funding on systems, programming, and supports that directly benefit educators

RTT states spent a total of approximately \$3 billion through June 30, 2014, which represents four of the five years of RTT spending. States were required to subgrant at least half of their awards to local educational agencies, or LEAs. According to CAP's analysis, states directed 55 percent—or \$1.6 billion—to the local level. Of the 45 percent—or \$1.3 billion—remaining at the SEA level, states spent more than half—or \$761 million—of their total funding on programs that directly benefit educators.<sup>34</sup>

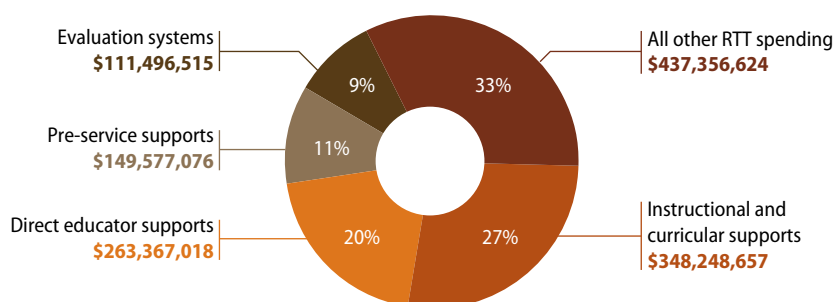
CAP used SEA spending data from the 12 RTT grant-winning states' annual performance reports in its analysis. CAP finds that, in addressing RTT's four focus areas—standards and assessments, data systems, great teachers and leaders, and school turnaround—states allocated:

- 27 percent—or \$348 million—on instructional and curricular supports
- 20 percent—or \$263 million—on direct educator supports
- 11 percent—or \$150 million—on pre-service supports
- 9 percent—or \$111 million—on evaluation systems

FIGURE 1

## Race to the Top expenditures

State educational agency spending from June 14, 2010 through June 30, 2014



Source: Authors' calculations are based on data from the Race to the Top annual performance reports. Data are available upon request to the U.S. Department of Education.

This spending cuts across all RTT programs and initiatives, not just those that specifically address the great teachers and leaders reform area in RTT, underscoring the fundamental target of states' efforts: educators.

### Instructional and curricular supports

RTT states invested a significant amount of funding in resources for teachers to improve instruction. New York is a notable example of this work. Using its RTT funds, the state developed its own comprehensive Common Core State Standards-aligned English language arts and mathematics curricula and made it available online for free through EngageNY.org. According to a March 2015 *EdReports* review, Eureka Math—developed for the EngageNY website—was the only K-8 math series fully aligned with the Common Core.<sup>35</sup> And according to a study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, educators across the country—not just those in New York—rely on EngageNY for instructional materials.<sup>36</sup> As of April 2015, the math and ELA modules had been downloaded nearly 20 million times.<sup>37</sup>

Florida, similarly, invested in the online sharing resource Collaborate, Plan, Align, Learn, Motivate and Share, or CPALMS. Through RTT, CPALMS expanded its access to all Florida educators and created more than 4,000 new resources, including 2,000 lesson plans that are rigorously reviewed and aligned to the Florida state standards. Today, CPALMS provides more than 11,300 freely accessible instructional and educational materials, averages nearly 50,000 visitors daily, and has had more than 20 million resource downloads since 2013. Originally designed for Florida educators in 2008, CPALMS now reaches across state lines; approximately 31 percent of U.S. site visitors are from states outside of Florida.<sup>38</sup>

To provide teachers with feedback on student progress, RTT states developed formative assessments aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Georgia, for example, invested in formative assessments to improve instruction and developed benchmark assessments to give teachers the opportunity to design curriculum and modify instruction as needed.<sup>39</sup> Delaware invested in the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System, designed to give immediate results to teachers on formative assessments to improve instruction.<sup>40</sup>

In New York, educators can access formative assessments through EngageNY.org.<sup>41</sup> Florida has made available more than 1,000 formative assessments in mathematics and ELA through its online portal.<sup>42</sup> And in Rhode Island, teachers have access to formative assessment professional development modules and interim assessments.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, RTT encouraged states and their districts to develop an instructional improvement system, or IIS. An IIS is a technology-based one-stop shop that allows educators to access a wide variety of data and tools from a common platform.<sup>44</sup> These platforms can improve educational efficiency by making the best use of teachers' time, as they no longer have to navigate multiple systems to get the information they need, and by digitizing information and tools such as lesson plans that can be shared virtually.<sup>45</sup> Among the technical assistance states received in developing an IIS was guidance on data privacy, which was key to the SEAs implementing stringent controls to protect student information.<sup>46</sup>

Georgia established its IIS—known as Path to Personalized Learning—using both RTT dollars and the state's longitudinal data system as the foundation. According to Susan Andrews, director for education reform in the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, “we were at the beginning of developing the system but we wouldn't have been able to complete it as quickly without Race to the Top.”<sup>47</sup> The Path to Personalized Learning allows teachers to identify their professional development needs based on evaluation data, incorporates online assessment tools, and includes digital content to support the Common Core. By the 2013-14 school year, 70 percent of Georgia teachers were using the state data system and Path to Personalized Learning system.<sup>48</sup>

North Carolina invested its RTT dollars to create Home Base, a cloud-based technology tool that integrates the state's instructional improvement system and student information system. Home Base encompasses instructional tools such as a lesson planner, Common Core-aligned instructional resources, assessments to track students' needs, and professional development tools. All of the state's school districts and nearly half of its charter schools are using Home Base.<sup>49</sup>

As part of its IIS, Maryland created a standardized curriculum management system, or CMS, and learning management system, or LMS, to provide teachers with instructional resources aligned with the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. The CMS and LMS include unit plans in ELA and mathematics, reading modules, and STEM and disciplinary lessons. Maryland also expanded its instructional toolkit to provide teachers with lesson seeds, simulations, and print and video resources.<sup>50</sup>

## Direct educator supports, including professional development

RTT states spent a significant amount of funding to directly support educators' performance in the classroom. A number of RTT states, for example, reported that their grant award allowed them to invest in professional development at a level that was never before possible. According to Rhode Island's Race to the Top Coordinator Mary-Beth Fafard, "the amount of professional development that was provided to principals, teachers, and the cadre of teams to implement evaluation, to understand the Common Core, and how to use data, would not have been possible without RTT."<sup>51</sup> Christopher Ruszkowski, chief officer for the Delaware Department of Education's Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit, also noted that "the amount of supports for teachers doesn't get a lot of attention. Most local [RTT] dollars were spent on educator supports."<sup>52</sup>

RTT states directed a substantial amount of professional development dollars to support the implementation of Common Core. According to Adam Levinson, North Carolina's Race to the Top director, "what we were able to do was blanket the state with professional development. ... We were able to start that PD [or professional development] in the '10, '11 year so we had two years to prepare [for Common Core]. The state spent \$60 million on PD that wouldn't have happened without RTT."<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Susan Andrews, director for education reform in the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, remarked, "I think we would have been a lot slower in adopting higher standards because we wouldn't have had the money to train teachers. We wouldn't have been able to do a wholesale change without Race to the Top."<sup>54</sup>

In Tennessee, state officials selected and recruited teachers, known as Core Coaches, to help train teachers statewide on the new standards.<sup>55</sup> In the summer of 2013, more than 700 Core Coaches led the state's mathematics and ELA training for 30,000 educators.<sup>56</sup>

"One thing that Race to the Top allowed us to do is provide centralized training for teachers and principals," said former Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Huffman.<sup>57</sup> "And, I think that training and development was really high quality. I don't think that Race to the Top is the reason for the standards adoption [in Tennessee] but I think it provided high-quality PD around the standards."<sup>58</sup> Meghan Curran, interim chief of staff and chief operating officer of district support at the Tennessee Department of Education, agreed. "The amount and number of teachers that we were able to reach as a result of Race to the Top is something that we would have not been able to do and probably will not be able to do again," she said.<sup>59</sup> Curran estimated that the state spent close to \$60 million on professional development alone over the course of the grant period.

An analysis of the Common Core math coaches in Tennessee in 2012 found that attendance at summer training sessions made a significant difference in student achievement and teacher effectiveness, as measured by observer ratings and value-added scores on statewide math tests. Participants who had a Core Coach working at their school made greater gains in certain instructional practices, compared to those without this support.<sup>60</sup>

RTT also encouraged states to provide the necessary professional development to enable educators to use data systems. During the duration of its RTT grant, Delaware assigned data coaches for teachers in each of its 237 schools.<sup>61</sup> The coaches participated in teachers' professional learning communities, or PLCs, where teachers met for 90 minutes once a week to discuss ways to differentiate their instruction based on student data. According to teacher survey data, 70 percent of participating teachers reported that "PLCs helped them to develop useful skills around the collection and use of data."<sup>62</sup>

Several states—including Hawaii, Rhode Island, Maryland, and New York—invested in supports for beginning teachers and school leaders, known as induction. With the New Teacher Center—a nonprofit dedicated to teacher development—the Rhode Island Department of Education developed a statewide strategy to deliver support to novice teachers at an estimated cost of approximately \$6,000 per teacher.<sup>63</sup> New teachers worked with an induction coach for approximately 90 minutes per week in their first year, and those in urban districts were offered two years of support.<sup>64</sup> Ninety-three percent of surveyed first-year teachers reported that their coach helped them be an effective teacher, and 95 percent of surveyed principals were satisfied with the coaching their teachers received.<sup>65</sup>

In Maryland, more than 900 new-teacher mentors and coordinators participated in induction academies or trainings to ensure that all new teachers were paired with a supportive mentor in their first years on the job.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Hawaii offered new principals weekly sessions with coaches. These principal coaches participated in six trainings and monthly sessions to practice and refine their coaching skills.<sup>67</sup>

States also invested their RTT dollars to support professional development for school leaders. North Carolina administered the Distinguished Leadership in Practice program, in which principals and assistant principals participated in 250 hours of professional development that took place both in person and online.<sup>68</sup> Of the school leaders who took part, 92 percent found the professional learning to be of "high quality," and 95 percent found it to be "relevant" to their needs, according to surveyed participants.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, 75 percent reported improvements in their school's academic performance since participating in the program.<sup>70</sup>



In addition to professional development, many RTT states funded compensation reform efforts to reward talented teachers and attract effective educators to high-needs schools. Tennessee, for example, established a revised minimum salary schedule that gives districts more discretion over teacher salaries.<sup>71</sup> Tennessee has also required all districts to institute differentiated pay.<sup>72</sup>

The Florida Department of Education worked with all RTT-participating districts to modify their staffing plans to attract effective teachers and leaders to schools with the greatest needs. The state leveraged federal professional development dollars, authorized by Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or ESEA, to “encourage [districts] to craft human resource policies that support equitable access to effective principals and teachers.”<sup>73</sup>

Delaware established the Delaware Talent Cooperative, which offers up to \$20,000 in so-called “attraction awards” to effective teachers and leaders who transfer to and stay at select schools for at least two years.<sup>74</sup> Effective teachers at select schools can also earn up to \$10,000 in retention awards if they stay for two years.

### Pre-service supports

To support incoming educators, RTT states implemented plans to expand high-quality credentialing programs. Some states—including Delaware, Florida, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island—did this by strengthening the program approval process for educator preparation programs and raising admissions and certification requirements for prospective educators.<sup>75</sup>

Delaware, for example, enacted S.B. 51, which strengthens admissions and exit criteria and requires teacher candidates to participate in a residency lasting at least 10 weeks.<sup>76</sup> The new Delaware law also requires teacher preparation programs to track candidates’ evaluation results and holds programs accountable based on the performance of their graduates teaching in K-12 classrooms.<sup>77</sup>

New York awarded grants to 13 teacher preparation programs to train teachers in high-need subjects, such as math and science. The 530 teacher candidates placed in 57 high-need schools across the state participated in extended residencies lasting an average of 10 months. Eighty-four percent of these teachers were teaching in high-need schools following their graduation.<sup>78</sup>

RTT states also allowed principals and teacher candidates to make better-informed decisions by publicly reporting K-12 student achievement data and connecting the data to educator preparation programs' graduates.

Several winning states, including North Carolina, New York, and Rhode Island, used RTT dollars to create online report cards or indexes to rate teacher preparation programs.<sup>79</sup> Tennessee has issued report cards for its teacher preparation programs since 2007, but RTT enabled the state to improve the reports by including effectiveness ratings from the state's teacher evaluation system, as well as placement and retention data on graduates.<sup>80</sup>

### Looking forward

RTT was instrumental in developing states' capacity to support stronger systems of teaching and learning. But will states be able to sustain these reforms?

RTT states reported that the amount of professional development that they have provided to teachers in the past five years will be particularly challenging to continue, at least at the same level. In many cases, districts will have to make up for some of the difference.

In Tennessee, officials credit RTT with its successful large-scale teacher training, an initiative that exceeded expectations. Sustaining such high-quality professional development will prove difficult, as many districts covered the costs of instructional coaches using RTT funds. The challenge will be figuring out how to continue this work at the end of the grant period.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, Rhode Island's induction work will not continue at the same level. Under RTT, the state provided induction coaches to 800 first- and second-year teachers. "The districts will pick up the cost of that," said Deborah A. Gist, Rhode Island's former commissioner of education. "The program is continuing but there are far fewer districts that will be able to participate," she noted.<sup>82</sup>

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## State educational agencies spent only 9 percent of their Race to the Top funding on educator evaluation systems.

To develop great teachers and leaders, RTT prioritized the design and implementation of teacher and principal evaluation and support systems based on student growth and educator performance. Despite the perception that RTT mostly served to drive teacher evaluation based on value-added scores, a minimal amount of money went to these efforts. In fact, based on CAP's analysis, SEAs allocated just 9 percent—or \$111.5 million—of their RTT grants toward educator evaluation systems.<sup>83</sup>

At the time of RTT's development, there was broad support for improving the way that teachers and principals were evaluated, including from union leaders and governors. In a 2010 speech, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, proposed implementing evaluation systems based on multiple measures, including classroom observations, self-evaluations, and measures of student growth. "Our system of evaluating teachers has never been adequate," Weingarten said. "This will allow for informed evaluations, rather than simply offering a snapshot from a brief classroom visit or one standardized test score."<sup>84</sup> In his 2010 State of the State address, Delaware Gov. Jack Markell (D) echoed this position. "We are requiring that new teachers show appropriate levels of student growth before receiving tenure," he said. "In addition, we have adopted a robust evaluation system under which teachers whose students do not show satisfactory levels of growth cannot be rated 'effective.' Teachers whose students do show satisfactory levels of growth cannot be rated 'ineffective.'"<sup>85</sup>

This priority, however, has been controversial, facing criticism and roadblocks to execution. Many SEAs introduced new assessments concurrently with their evaluation system rollouts, prompting states to pause and recalibrate based on new data. Most RTT states did not meet their target date for implementation, needing more time to develop student growth measures or challenged by capacity issues such as staff expertise.<sup>86</sup> Many have not substantially differentiated among teachers, and as of 2012, few RTT states have linked teacher evaluation results to compensation or career advancement.<sup>87</sup>

However, some states are on track. In the 2013-14 school year, RTT-participating local educational agencies or school districts in Massachusetts implemented local evaluation systems with all educators, and the remaining local educational agencies implemented their systems with at least 50 percent of educators.<sup>88</sup> Based on performance feedback, teachers can customize their growth and development plans, unless they are consistently low performing.<sup>89</sup> By respecting their judgment, Massachusetts gives educators a voice in the evaluative process.

In the 2010-11 school year, Tennessee piloted the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model, or TEAM, educator evaluation system. The state invested in TEAM coaches to support schools and districts in implementing the system and build in greater flexibility for leaders to schedule observations. By the 2012-13 school year, survey data showed increased teacher confidence in TEAM's usefulness. Furthermore, 90 percent of schools receiving support from TEAM coaches improved fidelity of implementation.<sup>90</sup>

In the 2013-14 school year, all Rhode Island LEAs completed their second year of implementation. Seventy-two percent of teachers reported that observation feedback and scores were more accurate, compared to 53 percent the previous year, while 87 percent of teachers and 96 percent of administrators reported making changes to their practice based on evaluations.<sup>91</sup>

To be sure, this work is evolving. A bulk of efforts thus far has been aimed at building capacity at the state level, but states did not spend much of their funding in this area. According to Gist, Rhode Island's former commissioner of education, "We had started moving in that direction prior to the grant but would not have been able to bring in people to design models for 800 evaluators, develop the platform, and do the professional development aligned with the model."<sup>92</sup>

States continue to innovate to link more aligned and tailored support to their evaluation systems so that the evaluations have value for teachers. A great proportion of RTT-participating districts and charter schools in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, New York, Ohio, and Tennessee have begun using their evaluation systems to inform professional development, compensation, and decisions related to promotion, retention, and dismissal.<sup>93</sup> Huffman, Tennessee's former education commissioner, for example, credits the evaluation system with the state's progress. "We've got differentiated compensation in districts all across the state. For the first time, we have movement away from step-in-lane [or a single salary schedule] in Tennessee. There's no way that would have happened without an evaluation system."<sup>94</sup>

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With the support of Race to the Top, states took bold new approaches to turning around low-performing schools

RTT encouraged states to develop plans and implement reforms to improve schools with a record of poor performance. CAP's analysis of state educational agency spending data finds that grantees spent approximately 21 percent—or \$281 million—of their awards on school turnaround efforts at the SEA level.

Some of these efforts—approximately 18 percent of the spending on turnaround efforts, or \$49.5 million—were also captured in the teachers and leaders spending analysis above, including spending on direct educator supports and professional development, and pre-service supports such as alternative certification and recruiting services.<sup>95</sup>

Grantees targeted their remaining school turnaround expenditures to implement bold new reforms for their states. To improve performance in the bottom 5 percent of schools, or in high schools that persistently had graduation rates of less than 60 percent, states adopted models such as a partnership zone; statewide district of low-performing schools; receivership; cluster of targeted interventions; or high-quality charter schools.

### School turnaround reforms

Hawaii linked its struggling schools together in order to provide targeted support through mentoring and partnership. The state's Zones of School Innovation include the majority of the state's lowest-achieving schools and have provided expanded learning time and wraparound services to students, more control over hiring, and access to financial incentives to attract effective educators and provide professional development for teachers.<sup>96</sup> School leaders are also able to make their hires two weeks before other schools so that they can choose from a larger teacher pool. These efforts already show signs of progress. The majority of the schools targeted by the state are, on average, making greater gains in math and reading than other schools in the state.<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, Delaware launched the Partnership Zone to turn around its lowest-achieving schools. Eight out of 10 schools that received comprehensive supports and monitoring met the exit criteria by the 2013-14 school year, and the majority of the Partnership Zone schools have shown improvement in student achievement in reading and mathematics.<sup>98</sup>

Tennessee established the Achievement School District, or ASD, a statewide district that encompasses the state's lowest-performing schools. RTT dollars provided initial funds for the district until it generated state and local dollars from student enrollment in its opening 2012-13 school year.<sup>99</sup> State officials attribute the creation of ASD to RTT, particularly on such a quick timeline.<sup>100</sup> The idea was generated during the RTT application process, modeled after the Recovery School District in New Orleans, and implemented thanks to the state's RTT award.<sup>101</sup>

Tennessee's ASD schools posted greater gains in reading and math in the 2013-14 school year than the statewide average, and six schools are no longer among the lowest-achieving 10 percent of schools in the state.<sup>102</sup> "The creation of the ASD has been a big lever for creating a sense of urgency that extends well beyond the schools that are a part of it," said Tennessee's Huffman.<sup>103</sup>

In November 2011, just more than a year after receiving its RTT grant, Massachusetts took over Lawrence Public Schools. A 2010 law gave the state's Board of Elementary and Secondary Education the ability to place chronically underperforming districts into state receivership, and Lawrence became the first school district to enter such status. The appointed receiver's turnaround plan—supported by RTT funding—focused on leadership, teaching, school design, and school support in three phases of implementation. By June 2014, Lawrence saw significant gains in math and moderate gains in ELA, rising from 28 percent proficient to 41 percent and 41 percent proficient to 44 percent proficient, respectively. The Lawrence district's graduation rate rose as well, from 52 percent to 67 percent.<sup>104</sup>

RTT also helped North Carolina increase its capacity to provide targeted support to a greater number of schools that would not have otherwise been possible.<sup>105</sup> The state embedded 70 district transformation, school transformation, and instructional coaches in schools across 48 districts to provide customized support.<sup>106</sup> Principals from low-achieving schools across the state also participated in trainings tailored to their specific needs.<sup>107</sup> Since the start of the grant period, the state has closed 14 schools, and academic achievement has improved so that 83 percent of the targeted schools are no longer ranked in the state's bottom 5 percent.<sup>108</sup> Proficiency rates in these schools have increased by an average of 8 percentage points, compared to a 1 percentage-point increase seen in schools statewide.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, some RTT states have increased the quality of school options by expanding access to high-quality charter schools. There is a great demand for charters in Rhode Island, where approximately 9,500 applications for 850 slots were submitted in 2014.<sup>110</sup> RTT enabled the state to fund two start-up grants for new schools and two charter expansion proposals, which will result in an additional 1,500 seats for students. Meanwhile, in Maryland, state officials drafted and disseminated the Maryland Quality School Standards for Charter Schools in 2013 to help guide the improvement of the state's charter schools.<sup>111</sup>



The reforms that states implemented as a result of RTT enabled these states to better leverage their federal School Improvement Grant, or SIG, funds, as states used both RTT dollars and SIG money to implement school-turnaround plans and build capacity.

Critics, however, often point to mixed results from early years of SIG implementation, and many schools are still failing.<sup>112</sup> But SIG schools are continuing to make progress overall, and recent rigorous evaluations of SIG's impact in Massachusetts and California, alongside promising RTT turnaround efforts, add to the body of evidence supporting this work.<sup>113</sup> And by using annual SIG funding—a total of \$1.5 billion over the four RTT grant years—in combination with the \$281 million of one-time RTT funds dedicated to school turnaround, states were able to create structures and systems to promote lasting reform.<sup>114</sup>

For example, New York spent nearly \$2.5 million of its RTT funds on an Office of School Innovation to support the state's low-achieving schools and a School Turnaround Office, which instituted a performance management approach for SIG recipients to better support schools in planning, implementation, and data-driven decision making.<sup>115</sup> The District of Columbia spent the fourth year of its RTT grant developing a plan to support its school accountability system by aligning the District's RTT work plan with its SIG funding and Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility plan.<sup>116</sup> And in Rhode Island, school districts have committed to fund school achievement specialists in SIG schools beyond the RTT grant period, since they found that these positions effectively supported school-level reforms.<sup>117</sup>

RTT also helped incentivize states to create legislative and regulatory frameworks that would last far beyond the grants themselves. According to Mitchell Chester, commissioner of elementary and secondary education at the Massachusetts Department of Education, “Our legislature passed legislation that allowed the state to be much more deliberate in intervening in the lowest-performing districts ... that did not exist prior to Race to the Top. I have little confidence that without Race to the Top, the legislature would have passed that.”<sup>118</sup> This authority to intervene in chronically underperforming schools and districts gave states a competitive edge in the application process, and in doing so, codified reform efforts that the RTT competition sought to implement.<sup>119</sup>

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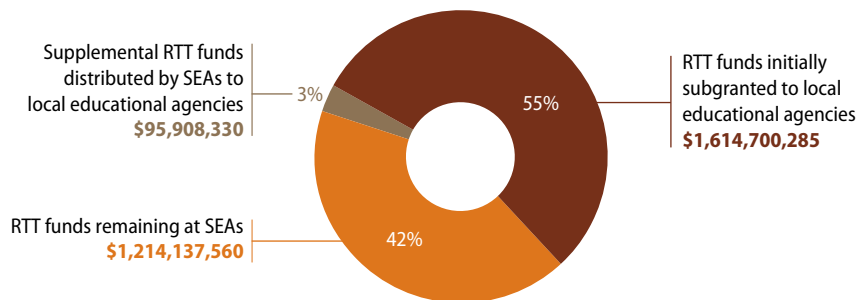
## Race to the Top increased state capacity and redefined the role of state educational agencies

Of the nearly \$3 billion that RTT states received through June 30, 2014, SEAs subgranted \$1.6 billion to the local level. Of the 45 percent, or \$1.3 billion, remaining at the SEA-level states allocated \$96 million to local educational agencies in supplemental funding.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, SEAs kept 42 percent of all RTT dollars, or 93 percent of SEA-level RTT dollars, for a total of \$1.2 billion at the state level.<sup>121</sup>

**FIGURE 2**

### State educational agency capacity

Race to the Top award distribution at the state and local levels



Source: Authors' calculations are based on data from the Race to the Top annual performance reports. Data are available upon request to the U.S. Department of Education.

With \$1.2 billion at their disposal, states took on a dramatically expanded role to support RTT reform efforts. Previously, a 2011 CAP analysis found that SEAs were more focused on compliance than innovation, faced bureaucratic obstacles to reform, and often operated in siloes.<sup>122</sup> With the infusion of RTT dollars, SEAs transformed from compliance-driven agencies into offices of innovation and support. Indeed, post-RTT, many state officials say the program has affected how they will do business in the long term.

“We were able to reposition this agency to be more of a catalyst for teaching and instruction. That’s a big shift for our agency,” said Massachusetts Commissioner Chester. “It has helped us shift from managing projects to managing results.”<sup>123</sup> According to state officials in Rhode Island, “Race to the Top led to a culture shift, as we moved from a compliance-oriented approach to a performance-management approach that emphasizes systematic reflection, collaboration, problem-solving, and ongoing communication between the Rhode Island Department of Education and the LEAs.”<sup>124</sup>

Ken Wagner, New York’s former deputy commissioner of education, said, “I don’t think we’ll ever go back to being just a compliance agency.”<sup>125</sup> Lillian Lowery, Maryland’s former state superintendent, agreed, saying, “The cultural shift has happened.”<sup>126</sup>

To understand the magnitude of increase in SEA resources that accompanied agencies’ cultural shift, the authors compared the dollars that remained at the SEA level under RTT to total funds available for state administration under Title I of the ESEA between 2010 and 2013. States are permitted to set aside the greater of \$400,000 or 1 percent of their Title I, Parts A, C, and D allocations for administration.<sup>127</sup>

Juxtaposing the estimated amounts that SEAs could set aside under Title I and their RTT funds, states’ RTT funds eclipsed their total Title I set-aside amounts during the years of the grant implementation.<sup>128</sup>

**FIGURE 3**  
**Federal sources of state educational agency funding, by state**

Title I set-aside funds compared with Race to the Top awards

State	Total Title I set-aside dollars	Total RTT SEA dollars	Title I to RTT ratio of funds
Delaware	\$1,697,607	\$36,088,511	1:21
District of Columbia	\$1,871,299	\$7,426,747	1:4
Florida	\$28,945,871	\$196,931,550	1:7
Georgia	\$20,249,987	\$135,965,288	1:7
Hawaii	\$1,834,201	\$68,862,017	1:38
Maryland	\$7,377,484	\$61,671,509	1:8
Massachusetts	\$8,578,082	\$76,689,011	1:9
New York	\$46,188,958	\$130,812,286	1:3
North Carolina	\$15,472,830	\$159,084,229	1:10
Ohio	\$22,458,589	\$141,480,793	1:6
Rhode Island	\$1,963,266	\$26,939,074	1:14
Tennessee	\$10,921,651	\$172,186,545	1:16

Source: Authors’ calculations are based on data from the U.S. Department of Education, “Budget History Tables: FY 2010–2013,” available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/history/index.html> (last accessed November 2015); Race to the Top annual performance reports. Data from annual performance reports are available upon request to the U.S. Department of Education.

One of the key benefits of this additional SEA-level funding was the ability of SEAs to attract and hire stronger staff to implement the reforms of RTT. Several state education officials made note of RTT's role in attracting new talent and resources, a common challenge for SEAs that are often bogged down by civil service rules, salary caps, and state legislative actors. According to Curran with the Tennessee Department of Education, "Talent was a bit of a surprise element. The grant enabled us to attract a great number of people. It helped position us."<sup>129</sup>

Delaware's Ruszkowski concurred. "Race to the Top drove major innovation within the SEA and in SEA thinking. ... It allowed the SEA to hire different profiles of people to do the work. It brought new talent to the SEA," he said.<sup>130</sup> Ruszkowski pointed to the state's partnerships with Relay National Principals Academy Fellowship to train school principals and the Harvard Strategic Data Project, which provided data analysis support of the state's human capital data, as examples.

Over the course of its RTT grant, Massachusetts hired 30 to 40 staff to build capacity at the SEA. Fewer than a handful were brought on to run the program through grant management, financial analysis, and federal reporting. The majority of staff members were deployed on programmatic work that the SEA committed to in its RTT application. Personnel funded by RTT, for example, worked on the SEA's educator evaluation rollout and helped districts implement new ELA and mathematics curriculum frameworks.

"Everything we accomplished was because of getting them on board," noted Carrie Conaway, associate commissioner for planning, research, and delivery systems at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "We wanted to build our own capacity to do the work; we didn't want to hire a bunch of vendors to do everything."

As its grant came to a close, Massachusetts transitioned staff to more stable funding sources. "We were able to retain most of the

people we hired through RTT in another state position in some way," Conaway said. And many have stayed on to continue what they had been doing under RTT. One staffer, for example, was hired to run a wraparound zone program during RTT and will continue working at the SEA on social-emotional supports in turnaround schools.

This capacity building has transformed how the SEA operates. "RTT allowed us to do our work faster, better, and with more resources in the field," continued Conaway. "This changed the field's expectations for us as a state agency." Now, the SEA is able to provide tools and expertise to districts, shifting the focus from compliance to implementation. Conaway noted, "If you look at the number of staff we have now compared to five years ago, the number is approximately the same. ... But the proportion of people who are working in a more supportive way is much greater."<sup>131</sup>

States spent 9 percent—or \$122 million—of their RTT funding on capacity-building initiatives. States allocated a portion of those funds to LEAs, but \$118 million remained at the SEA for programs categorized as state success efforts.<sup>132</sup>

Although the amount of money spent on these initiatives was relatively small compared to states' overall RTT grants, this funding allowed SEAs to consciously invest in their ability to successfully implement programs aligned with their RTT goals.

Maryland, for example, built capacity at the SEA to manage the day-to-day implementation of its grant initiatives. By establishing the Division of Academic Reform and Innovation, the state centralized management of its cross-divisional teams, each of which centered on one of the four RTT priority areas.<sup>133</sup> To build local capacity, the state of New York offered Network Team Institutes, which trained local teams of curricular, data, and instructional experts to support other educators in their LEAs.<sup>134</sup> North Carolina invested in its technology infrastructure, known as the North Carolina Education Cloud, to strengthen local ability to implement RTT initiatives and cut costs through shared services. The state estimates saving approximately \$6.6 million annually across LEAs through this initiative.<sup>135</sup> And Tennessee contracted with the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation, and Development to evaluate the execution of the state's RTT plan and guide implementation. The Tennessee SEA, for example, invested in its TEAM coaches to support schools and districts based on an analysis of initial data.<sup>136</sup>

This capacity building accompanied state efforts to restructure their SEAs, or accelerate plans for reorganizing, especially to support school turnaround. According to an Institute of Education Sciences report, the number of Round 1 and Round 2 RTT states that established a designated school-turnaround office jumped from three in the 2007-08 school year to 11 in the 2012-13 school year.<sup>137</sup> For instance, the Delaware Department of Education established the School Turnaround Unit, which supports the state's lowest-achieving schools' improvement progress through onsite monitoring, technical assistance, and regular data collection, as well as access to experts, mentors, partners, and best practices information.<sup>138</sup>

Alongside restructuring came improved efficiency. For example, RTT enabled Rhode Island to develop and implement a pair of performance management systems to monitor progress against the state and districts' work plans.<sup>139</sup> Prior to RTT, this was done less systematically. Georgia, too, instituted a new performance management system to track the agency's work. And the District of Columbia used RTT funds to create a grant management system for local and federal grants.

According to the District of Columbia SEA, the “streamlined grant processing system translates into higher-quality customer service for users and the more efficient use of local and federal dollars.”<sup>140</sup>

In addition to its effect on states’ grant management systems, the influence of RTT is seen in how states award the grants they manage. States have begun to make investments at the local level that are increasingly based on performance or have the potential for significant impact. Several RTT states, for example, have conducted their own RTT-style, competitive grant competitions.

Georgia established the \$19.4 million Innovation Fund, which awarded 23 competitive grants to schools, districts, and their partners to support innovation in science and math education and strengthen the teacher and leader pipeline.<sup>141</sup> Rhode Island competitively awarded grants to 15 districts to focus on the use of data to improve instruction.<sup>142</sup>

RTT inspired Delaware to shift a greater portion of the state’s education dollars to competitive grants, with approximately 25 percent of all state funds now awarded competitively.<sup>143</sup> The Delaware Department of Education disbursed approximately \$1.4 million to high-performing schools and those that have demonstrated exceptional academic progress.<sup>144</sup> Each school receives \$50,000 in recognition of its performance.<sup>145</sup>

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### Race to the Top generated unprecedented collaboration across states and districts

In addition to infusing dollars and energy into individual state educational agencies, RTT created a cohort of 12 leading states driving toward the same goals. Maryland’s former state superintendent Lowery credited RTT for providing what she calls “a common platform for change.” According to Lowery, the “fact that there were common expectations across many states engendered everyone to take the best and brightest from many states and figure out things together.”<sup>146</sup>

The Chief Information Officer, or CIO, Network is one such example. CIOs from RTT states began meeting within the first year of their grants, particularly to tackle implementing instructional improvement systems. States discussed vendors, shared code, and helped each other with technology rollouts.<sup>147</sup>



“[The] CIO [Network] was one of the greatest things to come out of RTT in terms of collaboration,” said Maureen Matthews Wentworth, program director for education data and information systems at the Council of Chief State School Officers, or CCSSO.<sup>148</sup> Through the CIO Network, for example, Ohio and Massachusetts released a joint request for proposals, or RFP, for an instructional improvement system vendor. According to Nancy J. Wilson, chief executive officer for Collaboration Synergy, Georgia saved an estimated “\$30 million based on all the different collaborations.”<sup>149</sup>

The CIO Network, now made up of 43 states, continues to meet four times a year as part of the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium, or EIMAC, of CCSSO and on their own.<sup>150</sup> Thirteen of these states have collaborated on a common set of digital tags for instructional and professional development resources to make them easily accessible and facilitate sharing across states.<sup>151</sup> And 10 states created the Multi-State Technology Collaborative, or MSTC, which operates as a subgroup of the CIO Network. MSTC states, including Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin, submitted complementary proposals for the U.S. Department of Education’s 2015 Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems, or SLDS, grants.<sup>152</sup>

To underscore the importance of collaboration, representatives from the 10 states penned a letter to the National Center for Education Statistics at the Institute of Education Sciences, stating, “[We] believe this innovative approach yields higher quality solutions, more reusable software, lowered overall costs, and faster parallel development efforts than any one state could achieve on its own within the timelines of our individual grants.”<sup>153</sup>

Discrete SEA projects have also become useful resources for educators in other RTT and non-RTT states. Teachers across the country, for example, access EngageNY.org for Common Core-aligned materials and resources. By the 2013-14 school year, the website averaged 22,000 unique weekly visitors.<sup>154</sup> Florida’s CPALMS, similarly, has become a resource for educators outside the state. On average, a CPALMS resource is downloaded more than 1,000 times 90 days after its release.<sup>155</sup>

This collaborative spirit has filtered down to the district level.

“Race to the Top created a culture of participation and partnership among districts that we didn’t have before,” said Lowery, Maryland’s former state superintendent.<sup>156</sup> State officials in Ohio agree and point to the Ohio Appalachian

Collaborative, or OAC, which is made up of 21 rural districts working together to support transformational change in rural education.<sup>157</sup> Serving more than 34,000 students, OAC focuses on collaboration, communication, technology, and training to prepare students for college and career.<sup>158</sup>

Additionally, for many states, RTT dollars enabled SEAs to go into districts and provide a level of technical assistance that had never before been possible. “The biggest thing that Race to the Top allowed us to do is work much more collaboratively with the field,” explained Conaway of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.<sup>159</sup> As an example, Conaway highlighted the SEA’s work with approximately 450 to 500 educators to develop 138 model curriculum units. The units cover all grade spans and a wide range of subjects, including English language arts, math, science, history and social science, arts, and career and vocational technical education.<sup>160</sup>

This model of collaboration has become the norm for the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance for both RTT and non-RTT states across multiple programs. Some of the cross-cutting state work, for example, was formalized through the Department of Education’s Reform Support Network, or RSN.<sup>161</sup> The department invested \$43 million in the RSN to provide customized technical assistance and support to states in their RTT implementation.<sup>162</sup> As a resource hub, the RSN shares best practices and lessons learned with states to implement bold reforms. In 2014, six states—Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, and Massachusetts—created the RSN Sustainability Work Group to continue priority reforms going forward.<sup>163</sup>

Based on lessons learned from RTT and other initiatives, such as the waivers granted to states under Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility, the Department of Education also restructured its internal system of program management and technical assistance, creating the Office of State Support, or OSS, within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The OSS redesigned how states interact with the Department of Education, shifting from a structure that was focused on individual federal programs to one that is focused on states. This approach allows the Department of Education to help states align and coordinate policy and financial resources around state-administered grant programs. It also enabled the department to become more responsive to states based on their particular context and needs, and provide more efficient and effective support.<sup>164</sup>

Similarly, at the state level, RTT states are rethinking the structure and function of their SEAs by creating comprehensive plans for improvement that cut across individual programs and funding streams. In designing and implementing its plan to transition to the Common Core, North Carolina brought together resources from across the SEA. The state's Title III/English as a Second Language Office and its Exceptional Children Division conducted and participated in professional development to ensure that teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities have the resources and supports needed to help these students successfully achieve to the new, higher standards.<sup>165</sup>

SEA collaboration also influenced the creation of the School Turnaround Learning Community, or STLC, a project of the Department of Education and the Center on School Turnaround at WestED, an education research nonprofit. First launched in 2011, the STLC offers resources and training on school-turnaround practices and lessons to support state, district, and school leaders in making the most of their School Improvement Grant dollars. Within a year of its launch, the site had more than 4,300 subscribers and offered in excess of 500 turnaround resources.<sup>166</sup> Today, STLC has more than 21,300 subscribers and nearly 1,300 resources.<sup>167</sup>

# Recommendations

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Congress should create state-level competitive programs that incorporate Race to the Top principles to spur reform and innovation

RTT drove progress in key priority areas that mirrored states' goals. The competitive grant program gave SEAs the opportunity to standardize high learning expectations, install data-driven decision making, cultivate strong teachers and leaders, and take dramatic action to turn around their lowest-performing schools. With a plan in place and the funding to make it happen, states were positioned to make big gains. Furthermore, not only did SEAs advance their agendas, most notably through an influx of educator funding and attention to school turnaround, but they also redefined their roles and collaborated across state lines.

Although another competitive program of RTT's scope and magnitude is not likely, in order to build on lessons learned and incentivize reform, Congress should authorize state-level competitive grants that incorporate key RTT principles into future competitions. Although these initiatives may be on a smaller scale, these competitive programs could drive cross-cutting innovation and cut across multiple areas of reform; link funding to systemic, foundational change; and require collaboration across stakeholder groups.

To ensure the biggest bang for its buck, the U.S. Department of Education should closely monitor states' compliance with their grant plans and take enforcement action if they do not deliver on their commitments. The department should also use competitive grant programs as an opportunity to build evidence of specific programs and activities that are effective in improving outcomes for students.

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The U.S. Department of Education should continue to support state collaboration and help states figure out how to sustain and build on Race to the Top work after the grants are completed

The Department of Education has taken a step in the right direction by restructuring its technical assistance strategies and creating teams to provide direct support to SEAs.<sup>168</sup> It should continue to support collaboration among states and, through technical assistance, help SEAs determine how to sustain for the long term the most effective RTT activities. For example, the department should formalize state networks and professional learning communities to support peer-to-peer assistance, convene state leadership and outside experts to discuss and address key problems of practice, and bring together state teams from across program areas to help dismantle silos.

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States should determine which Race to the Top projects and activities have been the most effective and should prioritize securing state and local funding to sustain these projects and activities to ensure their continued long-term benefits

RTT provided funding and motivation that enabled states to take enormous strides toward education reform. Although many states implemented systems and strategies with longevity in mind, sustainability will prove difficult for some initiatives at the close of the RTT grant period. Many RTT initiatives were time-limited, while others may not have had the effect that states had hoped. In order to successfully build on the work of the past five years, states should identify the most effective projects and secure funding—both from the state and local level—to maintain gains made during RTT. States should make these decisions not based on which programs are easiest to continue or most popular, but on what is the most effective and efficient use of limited federal, state, and local resources to improve outcomes for students and close achievement gaps. Moving forward, states should use these lessons to evaluate the effectiveness of all of their initiatives, not just those funded through RTT.

# Conclusion

The full impact and import of RTT is not likely to be identified for several more years. It is not yet known whether RTT has had a clear effect on student outcomes, which will be the ultimate test of the program's effectiveness. Admittedly, some of the reform efforts have caused real concerns among stakeholders in the winning states. But even as RTT funds run dry, it is clear that the federal program inspired and enabled states to implement aggressive policy changes. Many RTT states have underscored the fact that the federal program's goals and priorities mirrored their own and have made clear that they would not have been able to implement policy changes at the same scale without RTT support.

In particular, RTT states were able to provide more than \$760 million in additional support for educators, using funding that cut across all four of RTT's core reform areas. RTT states also leveraged both the program's application process and funding to develop and implement bold new approaches to turning around their lowest-performing schools.

Some reform activities will be difficult to sustain at the level that RTT allowed, such as professional development and technical assistance; however, many policy actions will far outlast the program's dollars. Among the long-term changes is RTT's effect on SEA operations and capacity. RTT states have shifted the way they allocate their dollars, attracted new talent and resources, and have begun to work more collaboratively with districts and other states with an eye on performance instead of simply compliance. This work has changed the culture in these state agencies—a transformation that is sure to benefit states, districts, and schools in future eras of reform.



# Methodology

In order to understand Race to the Top's effect and influence, the Center for American Progress conducted phone interviews with state officials from states that won RTT grants. Additionally, the authors of this report analyzed existing data in order to better comprehend how states used their RTT dollars.

CAP's funding analysis was based on RTT expenditures through June 30, 2014. The authors accessed grantees' annual performance reports, or APRs, and used data from the project-level expenditure tables to determine total SEA spending per state.

For the analysis of funds spent on educators, the authors analyzed all SEA programs—regardless of APR category—using definitions and descriptions in the RTT applications and APRs. Funding was categorized based on the program's intent, who the program impacted, and what the program accomplished. As Hawaii grouped together the funding in its APR teacher and leader category, the authors divided the state's funding to mirror how the 11 other RTT states spent their teacher and leader funds.

To calculate RTT school-turnaround dollars, the authors totaled programs included in the APRs' school-turnaround category. For the state capacity analysis, the authors relied on programs included in the APRs' state success factors category, which encompasses capacity-building programs. The authors excluded project-level SEA funds distributed to local educational agencies—categorized in the APRs as funding for involved LEAs or supplemental funding for participating LEAs—in addition to Georgia's early-learning investment.

To determine the amount of each state's Title I set-aside for administration, the authors calculated 1 percent of states' Title I, Part A allocations. States can reserve up to the larger of \$400,000 or 1 percent of what they would have received if \$14 billion were appropriated for Title I, Parts A, C, and D. As more than \$14 billion was appropriated in FY 2014 for Title I, Part A, for simplicity's sake, the authors calculated 1 percent of this funding stream as a rough estimate of states' Title I set-asides.<sup>169</sup>

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