

(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	32	32	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(E)(2)(i) GA has identified low performing schools in a reliable and systematic way.				
(E)(2)(ii) GA has a good history of turning around low performing schools and schools in need of improvement (NI) but plans to extend those efforts by focussing on those schools that have had NI status for the last 6 years. GA has looked closely at its successes in turnarounds and identified six solid strategies or factors that fostered improvement and which will inform its future efforts. Its plan includes an office responsible for turn around and a suite of actions including partnerships with teacher preparation providers and education management units. It also makes good use of various programmatic supports covering a range of issues from professional development to drop out prevention. All of them are assembled into a comprehensive implementation plan with timelines and responsibilities which places this part of the plan towards the middle of the high range.				
Total	50	47	47	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(1)(i) GA's expenditure on education increased by 4% between FY08 and FY09 even though State revenue dropped. This meets the criteria.				
(F)(1)(ii) GA's school finance formula has a basic per capita element that equalizes allocations across schools and this is overlaid by needs based components that favor less wealthy communities. This meets the RTTT criterion.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	34	34	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(2)(i) GA does not prohibit, cap or inhibit the creation of charter schools.				

(F)(2)(ii) GA has laws that encourage the creation of charter schools that aim to increase student learning and which enroll populations similar to local school districts. It has acted against Charter schools that have fallen short in the area of student performance, showing a degree of accountability for performance.

(F)(2)(iii) GA's charters are treated "no less favorably" under financing formulae for state, federal and local revenue.

(F)(2)(iv) GA has a special charter schools facilities grant and a 2009 law makes unused facilities available to local charters at very advantageous terms but there is a limitation on facilities funding where a district is only required to "provide facilities funds if feasible".

(F)(2)(v) GA offers only one innovative public school pathway, "early college," as an example and it offers no examples of autonomous schools with budget control. This holds it to the medium range.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(F)(3) GA gives a reasonable overview of other reform conditions especially in the area of board governance, innovation, and leadership and teacher preparation. There is little in this section on early childhood education, although this is well covered elsewhere in the submission, or on community coalition building. But the overall environment for reform is well established in the plan.				
Total	55	48	48	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
GA's STEM provisions throughout the plan and in this section are very good. They build on successes in setting higher mathematics and science standards and personnel policies to attract, retain and compensate specialist teachers. The 20 plus activities summarized in the implementation matrix are impressive and some are innovative, like targeting women and minorities in teacher preparation programs for "career changers" and a public awareness campaign.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
GA's plan addresses all four RTTT areas of reform in a systematic way, with thought and with appropriate reference to past successes. It has chosen to concentrate on those LEAS willing to sign on to a comprehensive scope of work while directing resources to policy changes, materials, training and program development that will have relevance to the whole State. This concentrating and selection strategy is a credible if debatable theory of change.				

Oversight of the planned reforms is strong and clear and there is an impressive cross agency coordination structure that is already working effectively.

Most parts of the plan have specific goals, timelines and assigned responsibilities and in some cases identified funding sources. This shows the amount of time and effort that has gone into the planning process.

A lot of attention has been paid to how to strengthen the educational leaders and the teachers of the State. While the plan's timelines for better teacher assessment measures based on multiple ratings and student growth are relatively long, there is a clear process for getting to that point.

Total		0	0	
-------	--	---	---	--

Grand Total	500	456	458	
-------------	-----	-----	-----	--

Additionally, the state has partnered with Communities-in-Schools of Georgia to create small alternative schools to provide personal and intense academic support to students who are more than one year behind grade level and at risk of dropping out. Although such schools have served high-school aged students to date, three new small schools will be opened to serve middle or high school students. This earlier intervention option is a positive step.

To assist the individual schools involved in turnaround, Georgia's plan requires them to extend the school day and provide at least 60 minutes of common planning time per week to teachers. Based on an analysis of instruction, coaches will help teachers with issues like formative assessment, data-based decision-making about instruction, rigorous subject matter teaching, and use of state portal resources on standards and assessment. The state will assist turnaround schools find a vendor that offers high quality professional development for instructional improvement and standards-based teaching. Turnaround schools will be encouraged to offer students access to advanced placement and specialized courses through the Georgia Virtual School. STEM partners of the state will be encouraged to help turnaround schools improve STEM teaching and learning. These are all well supported strategies for school improvement.

In addition to direct intervention at the school level, Georgia understands the importance of building a district's capacity to meet the needs of its students, so it will assist in broadening options for the students based on a careful analysis of student need. For example, the state might assist the district to plan magnet schools, career academies, or technical schools.

In selecting school intervention models, Georgia has indicated to balance the ideal with the possible. In particular, considerations such as the willingness of any charter management organizations or alternative teacher preparation program to work at the location, will affect the extent to which the certain intervention models are available.

There may be some instances where the very turn-around model the state and district deem likely to work best for a particular school, is not feasible, limiting the achievability of Georgia's plan. Some of these schools have been in "need improvement" status for eight to ten years, but it is unclear whether they will be closed. If so, will their students' learning options improve? It is unclear how well the state will serve its most fragile populations in its most poorly resourced areas.

All things considered, Georgia's plan is of high-quality and focuses on essential elements necessary for school improvement: high quality standards-based instruction; continuous professional development; good instructional leadership; personal and intense support for at-risk students; accurate, complete data and good decision-making with those data; early focus on literacy; consistently high quality college and career readiness preparation; and improvement of the early learning pipeline. With a dedicated turnaround section within the SEA, it appears that Georgia is committed to do whatever it takes to significantly improve persistently lowest-performing schools.

Total	50	48	48	
-------	----	----	----	--

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9	9	

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education
 For FY 2009, Georgia increased its education budget by 4 percent.

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools

Georgia has taken some measures to equalize funding between poor and wealthy districts, but great inequities still exist, limited the quality of the equalization effort. Rural districts with large holders of land valued at low rates and poor families who use the public schools are disadvantaged compared to well-to-do suburban districts. By counting the actual millage value of LEAs and providing grant subsidies to less-wealthy districts, Georgia lessens this inequity. Within districts, the state allows for funds to be allocated to poor schools disproportionately to provide a base threshold of education quality and remediation.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	32	32	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	6	6	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"

Georgia law does not limit the number of charter schools. There are currently 121 charters, six percent of all schools in the state.

(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes

Georgia law requires charter schools to include improving student achievement in their purpose. Charter school authorizers include the Charter School Commission, a body created by legislation solely for that purpose, a local school district, or the state board of education. Since the state amended the law in 1998 to allow start up charter schools, the state board has authorized 117 charters and closed or not renewed 13. In general, the discontinued charters were deemed ineffective, denied licenses, or withdrew their applications due to poor academics, poor financial practices, low enrollment, and non compliance with the charter law. Some charter schools have had multiple years of inadequate yearly progress. The demographics of charter schools are similar to local districts.

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools

In Georgia, charter schools are entitled to the general school funding formula. They receive an equitable share of federal, state and local funds.

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities

The Georgia legislature created a grant fund to support charter facilities. Charter schools can apply annually for a share of this money. Under a 2009 law, local districts are required to offer their unused facilities for lease to charter schools on a no fee basis. This law has benefited about a dozen charter schools, primarily located in urban districts with declining enrollment.

(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools

The state board of education has the authority under Georgia law to grant waivers to establish autonomous public schools. It has used this authority to establish 12 early college high schools. These schools, which give dual high school and college credit, are run by the University System of Georgia. Funding comes through the local school district so fiscal autonomy varies. Early college high schools serve high minority and high first-generation college enrollees successfully. There are no other autonomous schools. It is unclear whether these schools have control over their staffing issues.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>To some extent Georgia has created other conditions favorable to education reform. SB 84, a recently passed law, sets standards for the operation of school system governance. School board members and superintendents are expected to act in the best educational interests of citizens in their district in setting policy, making fiscal decisions, avoiding conflicts of interest, acting ethically, etc. The state may intervene when a school board is determined to be dysfunctional. This is truly innovative and significant legislation. Unfortunately, low income and minority students are sometimes concentrated in districts where the governance is not functioning well or not operating in the best interests of its constituents. To make this law truly effective will require a support system for school boards (coaching, academies, etc.), which has yet to be put in place.</p> <p>High performing school districts may be granted waivers by the state to increase the flexibility and creativity with which they operate. As long as they meet mutually agreed upon performance based goals, these districts have greater local decision-making authority over issues such as class size, salary schedule requirements, expenditures, and certification requirements. One participating LEA, Gwinnett County, operates under these waivers. It is unclear in the RttT plan, whether Gwinnett County's MOU is or can be any different than the standard MOU that will govern the other participating LEAs.</p> <p>Georgia does not provide information on the extent to which these measures have closed achievement gaps, increased student achievement, or increased graduation rates overall or for specific subgroups.</p>				
Total	55	44	44	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia's plan for STEM addresses all three parts of the RttT requirements. It incorporates approaches and partners with a history of effectiveness.</p>				

More and rigorous courses

1. Georgia will make more STEM coursework available to students with no locally available advanced course through the virtual high school.
2. Adding science as a secondary adequate yearly progress indicator means LEAs will pay greater attention to the teaching of science in tested grades, devoting more time to science instruction and paying more attention to the rigor of the content.
3. Increasing the graduation requirements in mathematics will help prepare more students all along the STEM pipeline.
4. Adopting Common Core science and mathematics standards, providing related formative, benchmark, and value-added assessment tools, and offering professional development for teachers in science and mathematics will increase the rigor of STEM education.

Collaborate with industry and scholarly partners to integrate STEM across the curriculum

The Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing and Georgia Virtual High School will develop professional development modules for integrating STEM in the new standards based teaching and learning.

Prepare more students including minorities and girls

1. Georgia will contract with U Teach and other alternative certification groups to place more STEM teachers in high-minority schools.
2. Georgia will provide incentives to attract and retain STEM teachers in high-minority schools
3. Scaling their work with partners such as PRISM and Science + Math = Success, will help teachers and leaders identify and use effective strategies to help girls and minorities receive appropriate counseling at gate-keeping points, deal with negative peer pressure, increase family support, and address other barriers to their persistence in STEM education through middle and high school.

Since lack of foundation knowledge is a major barrier for high-minority and high-poverty students, one significant challenge will be the limited STEM content knowledge of elementary school teachers. The LEAs that are likely to be most successful in reaching these STEM goals are those that offer continuous high quality professional development and take full advantage of STEM partners experienced in collaborating with educators. Georgia has addressed these issues in part through its plan to provide a pipeline and increase the effectiveness of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects. While it will be a struggle to build industry and scholarly institution partnerships in portions of the state outside of metropolitan areas or places where there is immediate demand for a STEM-related workforce, it will not be impossible. It will require the state to devote time and attention to the issue, and Georgia appears to be up to the task.

Total	15	15	15	
-------	----	----	----	--

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

Georgia's RtT plan meets this priority. Georgia has a track record of progress in all four education reform areas of this initiative. Georgia seriously commits the state to rigorous subject matter content standards and, by making them matter, plans to ensure that all of its public school students have an equitable opportunity to graduate from high school, college or career ready.

Georgia has proposed significant changes to the way in which teachers and leaders are prepared and their workplace performance assessed. There is research that supports linking performance to compensation incentives and Georgia's plan will add to that knowledge base. The plan is innovative, for example including specific targets for closing achievement gaps for underserved groups in evaluation protocols and establishing a fund to encourage new ideas about methods for developing a pipeline of effective teachers and leaders.

Georgia's plan to turn around schools balances state intervention with local collaboration and works to build the capacity of both the affected schools and the district of which they are a part. Georgia excels in seeking and nurturing partnerships. This skill is evident in its plans for STEM.

Georgia's plan would have benefited from greater LEA participation in some parts of the state. The LEAs that are onboard, however, are committed to strongly worded terms and conditions and ambitious performance goals. With time, demonstrated success may win over converts in the future. Regardless, changes that become fixed in state policy will eventually affect change in all districts.

Total			0	0	
-------	--	--	---	---	--

Grand Total	500	420	431		
-------------	-----	-----	-----	--	--

For each of the four assurance areas, Georgia described a thoughtfully compiled set of state and LEA support strategies to be implemented.

For each of the major support areas, Georgia included rather general information on how it would continuously monitor and improve the effectiveness of the support. Points were withheld because evidence of a stronger approach could have been provided.

Total	138	118	120	
-------	-----	-----	-----	--

E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	10	10	
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
In its application, Georgia provided narrative describing its authority to intervene with persistently low achieving schools and LEAs. State regulations concerning the state accountability system were included as evidence. Georgia was one of several states approved to implement a differentiated accountability model.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia has a well-thought-out process for identifying persistently low achieving schools which includes the strategic identification through root cause analysis of at least one feeder school for each school that is otherwise identified.				
The state has a rather good track record with turning around low performing schools as indicated by the reduction from 414 schools needing improvement in 2003 to 278 schools in 2009. Georgia submitted a high quality plan for turning around the lowest-achieving schools. The plan includes three goals with 23 activities and includes timelines, and responsible positions or entities. The budget shows five projects (22, 24-27) supporting turning around the lowest-achieving schools. Georgia has set an ambitious performance measure target aspiring to increase the number of turnaround schools annually from nine during the baseline period to 34 per year for the next four years. In the application, Georgia described a comprehensive array of deep interventions that all turnaround schools will receive regardless of the specific turnaround model used.				
Total	50	50	50	

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
From 2008 to 2009 the proportion of state expenditures devoted to education in Georgia increased by 4% from 58 to 62%. Georgia's policies concerning the provision of funding for high need versus other LEAs and within LEAs for high poverty versus other schools assures equitable funding for high poverty schools.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	28	28	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	4	4	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	0	0	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia provided documentation showing that it has no restrictions on the number of charter schools, that it authorizes a wide range of charter school types, encourages charter school creation, and that it has 121 charter schools operating in the state currently. Georgia requires charter school applicants to address steps taken to assure representative racial and socioeconomic diversity for the school and data on enrollment suggests that goal has been achieved.</p> <p>Funding for charter schools is provided on a basis equal to non-charter schools with the exception that local capital expenditures for facilities need only be provided for charter schools "as feasible". Achievement outcomes are a consideration in the initial approval and the continuing approval of charter schools. A number of Georgia charter schools have been closed due to poor academic performance. Charter schools can apply annually to the state for up to \$280,000 per school for facilities support but it is not clear if the local and state funding is adequate to meet charter school needs in the state. Local school districts are required to make available unused buildings for use as charter schools and cannot require any lease fees.</p> <p>Georgia did not provide convincing information that it enables LEAs to operate innovative autonomous public schools other than charter schools. Georgia offered its innovative Early College program as an example but did not provide sufficient evidence that it functions as an autonomous school, has the authority to select and replace staff, or consistently has authority to control budget. The application included references to the state Board of Education's waiver authority for the Early College program but provided no information on specific waivers possible or granted.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3	3	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia provided information concerning several other meaningful reform initiatives such as Investing in Educational Excellence, and the redesign of teacher and principal preparation programs, but did not discuss the extent to which they have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes.				
Total	55	41	41	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>It is clear that STEM activities were integrated throughout Georgia's application. Georgia strategically added science proficiency as the required "other" AYP area for all elementary and middle schools assuring that science will not be ignored during the early but critical phase of student careers. Georgia submitted a high quality plan for STEM. The plan includes three goals with 21 activities, timelines, and responsible positions or entities. Georgia's extensive efforts include increased academic rigor in science and mathematics, partnerships with the Georgia Institute of Technology among others, and an innovative public awareness campaign.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Georgia's RTTT application described wide-ranging, thorough, and thoughtfully-developed reform activities in each of the four assurance areas. It is clear that many of these reform activities predate the RTTT initiative. Georgia's readiness and success in these areas is due in no small part to substantial funding obtained from private sources including the Gates and Wallace Foundations and previous IES competitions.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	440	445	
--------------------	-----	-----	-----	--

may need additional academic support, and plans to review resource allocation at both the district and state levels to address this.

(ii)

The criteria for this element requires the state to implement one of four school intervention models. The state refers to "School Turnaround," suggesting its plan to adopt of the turnaround intervention model. Based on data presented in this section, this approach has met with somewhat mixed results. For example, Georgia reports reducing the number of schools needing improvement from 414 in 2003 to 278 in 2008, a laudable 33% reduction in six years. Nevertheless, 12% of schools, 30 schools, have been unable to move out of the needing improvement category for six years. The application admits that this is "not acceptable."

As a possible solution, the state proposes the creation at the state level of a new office, the State Office of School Turnaround, to lead the effort to address the continuing problem. The state's plan also outlines structural initiatives and programmatic initiatives that appear well developed to encourage effective coordination at the state level to support LEAs in turning around their lowest achieving schools. Supporting evidence includes a detailed action plan describing various implementation steps.

Total	50	48	48	
-------	----	----	----	--

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Despite challenging economy conditions, Georgia's budget for education increased slightly from 58.2% to 62.5% of the total state expenditures from 2008 to 2010. The education budget includes funding for elementary, secondary, and higher education.				
(ii) Georgia documents various efforts to fund the highest needs schools. It provides a higher portion of funds to less wealthy districts through a grant called "Equalization." The state's funding formula in supporting regional educational centers is weighted towards rural and poorer districts, and in 2009, the state implemented special appropriations to supplement low income districts for renovation and special projects. The state meets the requirements of this element of the criterion.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	8	8	

(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>(i) Georgia's Charter Schools Act in 1993 (O.C.G.A. 20-1-2061 through 20-2-2071) offers no restrictions on the development of high performing charter schools in the state.</p> <p>(ii) Georgia's charter school legislation provides for authorizing charter schools and holding them accountable. Applications can be and have been denied if a proposed charter's creation does not align with charter law or does not have rigorous academic goals. Charter schools have been closed for a combination of performance related problems. Since 2004, 14 charters have been closed indicating the state's willingness to hold charters accountable for outcomes.</p> <p>(iii) In 2008-2009, Georgia's average per pupil expenditure in a charter school was \$8,456, and in a regular school, it was \$8,875. Funding for charter schools is not dependent on special state appropriations. Georgia charter schools appear to have equitable funding levels.</p> <p>(iv) A district is required to provide facilities funds to a charter only if "feasible." However, charter schools (except for chartered special schools) are entitled to state, federal, and local revenue. In addition, the state's General Assembly created a competitive grant program for a charter facilities fund in 2004, which has continued to be funded; annual awards range from \$20,000 to \$280,000 per school. Charter schools in the state often utilize unused school district facilities since the LEAs are required to make unused facilities available to charter schools. Based on this evidence, the state provides charter schools with adequate and equitable funding for facilities and assistance with facilities acquisition.</p> <p>(v) In this section, Georgia cites one example, its Early College Program, that benefits low income, minority students, and first generation college students. The program is a collaborative effort between LEAs and a state IHE, and allows students to graduate high school with two years of college. Its first graduating class was in May 2009, and total enrollment is 2,201 students. This appears to be a successful program. It is not clear from this one example, whether the state truly enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. In fact, from the description provided, this school is far from autonomous since the school's budget depends on the "principal's relationship with the superintendent." This suggests that the state does not fully support the creation of innovative, autonomous public schools.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</p> <p>To support its reform effort, Georgia adopted Senate Bill 84 in 2009, legislation that supports education. The state is also in the process of redesigning preparation programs for school leaders and teachers. Proposed efforts to redesign the educator preparation programs appear promising and realistic. However, these proposed reform conditions cannot be described as innovative. Their plan calls for the coordination of the state's plan at the state level, which appears well developed.</p>				
Total	55	50	50	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The state describes a commitment to address the needs of underrepresented groups and of women in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.</p> <p>Other elements include development of rigorous mathematics and science standards, cooperation with IHEs, and requiring science across all school levels. One of the innovative features includes a public awareness campaign designed to encourage support for science and mathematics. However, relying on alternative teacher certification candidates (UTeach), who are not likely to remain in the state or to have a commitment to the state, is a weak response to meeting the staffing needs of schools.</p>				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>Some parts of the state's application were strong. Overall, the state provided a comprehensive and coherent application that demonstrates a systemic approach to educational reform.</p> <p>Highlights of the state's plan includes description of interagency coordination at the state level; ambitious goals and a strong supporting budget; and well developed action plans that included detailed performance measures and timelines. Many times critical information was found in the supporting materials that was not always discussed in the narrative.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	434	437	
--------------------	-----	-----	-----	--

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The presenters explained that negotiations with charter management organizations continued, but that no commitments for additional charters can be made without a formal bidding process prior to a restart decision.

Total	50	45	48	
-------	----	----	----	--

F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10	10	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia has had to reduce state aid to public schools but by 3% rather than the 10% cut to many other state programs. This is not good, but results in a slight increase in the percentage of state allocations to education, from 58 to 62%.				
(ii) An equalization aid formula helps many schools in-need, and a \$10 billion school bond program rescues some of the worst schools lacking adequate facilities. There is a third of a billion dollars allocated for early intervention in failing schools, many in high poverty areas of the state.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	34	34	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	4	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) Georgia has no cap on charter schools and thus earns the maximum points. There are 7 types of charters authorized and 121 charter schools.				
(ii) A strong state Charter School Commission reviews the applications, screens and approves the best, and rejects those whose academic or financial plan is lacking. The Commission has denied 26 applications and, after careful scrutiny, not renewed 13 charter schools. This very strong process deserves full points.				
(iii) Charter schools appears to qualify for approximately 95% of the funds non-charter public schools receive. This policy meets the suggested federal percentage of comparable aid.				
(iv) Money for facilities is available only "if feasible" or an unused public school is available. This is less than perfect policy, not quite fair, and earns only some points.				

(v) There is limited capacity for other local Innovation schools. Georgia with 180 school districts has twelve early colleges that require collaboration with a college or university that serves only 2000 of students in the upper high school grades.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	4	4	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(3) Georgia is committed to using more Performance Contracts, to increased use of the very innovative Virtual School (mentioned elsewhere), expansion of AP courses and early college programs, and generally displays a keen appetite for innovation and reform. Missing was the explicit link to student scores or graduation rate improvements. There is a strong record of leadership for reform at the state level.				
Total	55	48	48	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
The commitment to STEM is very serious and appears throughout the plan. The American Diploma Project adopted by Georgia requires four years of science and math which represents a STEM upgrade. The increased use of math coaches, the STEM help from Georgia Tech, U Teach, TFA and others, expanded use of STEM AP courses and the Virtual School, all testify to a great emphasis on STEM. Allowing 100 teachers to have a research lab or industry internship can be highly beneficial to helping teachers get excited about STEM careers for their students. The plan includes 21 activities including four that mention serving underrepresented sub groups, although with little detail and no letters of community support. The plan lacks detail on how U Teach that reached hundreds of Hispanic teacher candidates in Texas might do that again in Georgia. This is not a perfect STEM plan but very strong in most of its components.				
Total	15	15	15	

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes	Yes	
Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Georgia is deeply committed to reform, to raising achievement and high school graduation rates and preparing graduates for the hundreds of employers that have moved to Georgia and expanded employment. Georgia has one of the best charter school laws in the nation and a strong commitment to value added growth models and more powerful assessments of schools and staff. LEA participation is an issue for the state and it will be important for local school leaders to understand the negative consequences of not catching up to the educational achievement of other nations. The plan is on the whole very strong.				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	453	461	
-------------	-----	-----	-----	--