

The State does address the use of STEM as an intervention and utilizing other evidence based academic and social strategies to improve the instructional climate. The reform plan includes professional development, coaching, and other staffing initiatives to support reforms in teaching and learning and increasing teacher quality in content areas and critical shortage areas.

There was a lack of discussion about serving high need high priority sub groups like special education, homeless, teen parents and students with other unique social/emotional or behavioral needs. The State also ensures that RSD schools are evaluated annually. Annual evaluations do not provide immediate feedback necessary for real time mid course corrections. The State did not identify the types of turnaround models to be used for each school or district, and no mention was made of the restriction for LEAs regarding the transformation model for no more than 50% of schools in any one LEA.

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

The State, through their presentation, demonstrated the process for the identification and support of low performing schools through the Recovery School District, High Performing High Poverty Model and the support provided through District Support Officers and data management elements. Evidence was provided to demonstrate that these schools do in fact show growth greater than other schools state wide. The use of cohort support of like schools supporting like schools and the use consortium of research partners to guide local and national best practices in poor performing schools. The State expects to capture an additional 250 additional schools demonstrating poor performance.

Total	50	39	44	
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**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	
(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)**

The state reports that 2009 revenues increased by 4.37 % (134,549,219) from 2008.

The state uses a Minimum Foundation Program Formula (MFP) to calculate funding with an inverse ratio of state funding for wealthier LEA. This results in wealthier LEAs, which have a wealthier local tax base, receiving less state funding than a poorer LEA. Weighted variables are used to adjust for student sub groups to accommodate costs for education. In short these formulas ensure that LEAs with high poverty, high minority get equal funding sources as other wealthier LEAs. The weighted variables ensure that schools with high numbers of students with specialized instructional and or behavioral supports also receive equitable resources.

Legislation states that certain funds acquired for certain sub groups (special education, career and technology, free and reduced meals) be used directly for these students enforcing a "funding following the student "model"

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	6	6	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	6	6	

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	6	6	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	5	7	

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

The state provides authorizing statues that detail the process for application, selection, evaluation, monitoring, and closing of charter schools. Currently, the State has 77 Charters operating with 16 approved for next school year. Charters serve about 4.5% of the state student population, compared to 2.9% being the national average of state charters schools. The state details that there are no caps or limitations on charter development in the state and that the Recovery School District (RSD) have competitive process of review and selection of high performing charter schools. The State supports the growth of charter schools to help serve at risk and traditionally poor performing students as identified on national and state assessments.

In the last five years, more than 150 charter applications were submitted, and only 79 were approved. State law requires authorizers to engage in an application review process that complies with the Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, as promulgated by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). All authorizers are required to use third-party reviewers to conduct an independent review of each charter application. Charter renewal does include student performance targets. An annual report is developed at the end of year three and is used as the determining factor for continuation of the remaining two years of the 5 year contract. The state has a sliding scale for renewal year operations. Charters that perform high may be given an option for a 10 year operating contract, while schools not meeting performance targets could have the traditional 5 year contract reduced to 3.

The Minimum Foundation Program Formula (MFP) funding is equal to regular LEA based schools and RSD schools. The average range for per pupil funding (PPF) is from \$3,254 to \$4,879. The state funding per child is low and there is no evidence of plan to increase this funding or sustain this funding over time post RTTT. The state describes 3 funding options available for charter schools

The state provides facilities or support in finding facilities based on the type of charter school. 65% of charters are type 5 (State Board of Education authorized and operated by RSD) are provided facilities. Other types receive vacant buildings and or funding ( for first 5 years). The funding formula for facilities does not provide an example and unclear how that would equate for a school of 300 students in year one, for an example.

The state provides examples of innovative and magnet schools that are located state wide. It is clear that the state supports reform and innovation but did not address some of the criterion for LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools. The State did not address open enrollment, flexibility with curriculum and assessments, staffing plans, modifications of school day and year, or budget control.

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

State confirmed that it does support the operation of other innovative, autonomous public schools as defined in the Race to the Top definition. Examples were provided of these schools and the specific elements were addressed.

**(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions**

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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The state documents additional reform strategies - 4 in total. Considering the number of years they have been working on reform and the data showing student progress additional reform movements were expected. Again dramatic strategies are not listed including technical reform items (reading, math, business partnerships for employment, connections to high need at risk populations; teen parents, mental

health, juvenile justice, substance abuse, intensive community buy in, social development, climate change etc). The state has done a thorough job demonstrating examples of reform work and commitment to the future in planning and philosophical design.

The state did not include state, non public schools, and private schools that receive public funds. These schools serve public school students and need to be included in the state reform movement. Lacking are innovative strategies to engage the business and community partners to work with low achieving, high poverty, high minority schools and LEA's. The state provides a theoretical framework that demonstrates the desire for reform and the internal systems and processes to initiate and support reform. LEA support, technical academic and social interventions are not necessarily robust.

Total	55	41	43	
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**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15	15	
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The State included STEM initiatives throughout the entire grant proposal. STEM has been integrated into the reform plan to ensure that under served populations, including young women and girls, have not only exposure to STEM but increased opportunities to engage in high quality academic courses that included STEM and AP classes.</p> <p>The State has engaged a variety partners across the state to help design, implement and sustain the STEM initiatives. These organizations will create the Louisiana STEM Alliance and will provide guidance to course development, internships and preparation for workforce development. The reform plan will also provide opportunities for teachers and principals to engage in STEM professional development to assist with the promotion and sustainability of STEM programs across grades and contents. Human capital plans are critical to this initiative in that STEM teaching needs must be projected and met to ensure that qualified content teachers are available state wide to provide instructional delivery.</p> <p>SEA discussed the partnerships with required partners in industry, museums, and institutions of higher education, research continuums and other relevant community partners. The state discusses the role of STEM Office and advisory council and their strategy for bold reform - dual enrollment through STEM and AP, virtual schools to serve populations in remote areas for state where STEM and AP capacity are limited. Partnerships are strong and regionally diverse and have a plan for ensuring STEM success through professional development for teachers, business partnerships, and student activities and engagement. STEM clubs are encouraged for involved LEAs. Camps, programs, competitions are available to high poverty low achievement schools and direct mention is made of camps targeted for young women.</p> <p>The State plan on increasing STEM focused programs and high schools (NewTech Foundation), as well as create the regional STEM Hubs that are tasked with student and staff engagement for STEM. Each school is encouraged to engage in one type pf STEM program and in return be eligible to participate in STEM activities at no cost.</p> <p>The reform plan contains STEM initiatives embedded through all four ARRA target areas. It should be noted that although the State describes the increased exposure for minority students, females and students of poverty, no mention was made of inclusion of other at -risk sub groups who traditionally are not exposed to STEM activities (special education, behaviorally involved, etc.).</p>				
<b>Total</b>	15	15	15	

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		Yes	Yes	
<b>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The State presented a thoughtful and comprehensive reform plan to increase low performing students and schools. The plan has some robust and innovative approaches to improving teacher and principal effectiveness. The state has engaged a variety of partners that cut across regions and demographics representing cross sections of the state population. The state has addresses State Success Factors, as well as the four reform areas, and reform plans focuses on closing student achievement gap. The State</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Charter School Tools www.charterschooltools.org</p>				

has produced a plan, with academic and organizational strategies, that will address achievements gaps across student demographics. STEM is emphasized throughout the grants as well as discussion of the use of student and staff data to inform school and district based decisions about comprehensive reform. Throughout the grant reference is made to evidence based strategies being adopted and modified as needed to meet the specific needs of students and schools. Although LEA participation is below 50%, the LEA's participating serve 58% of students in poverty and of minority demographics. The State does provide opportunities for the reform to expand beyond participating LEAs through best practice sharing and regional cooperatives for training. The State does address dropout and graduation rates throughout the reform plan. Various partners are engaged in the reform plan to ensure consistency and sustainability across the state including rural and urban areas.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	409	423	
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<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	10	5	5	
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The state, through the Recovery School District (RSD), has the statutory authority to to remove from local control any school that has remained in academically unacceptable status for four consecutive years. After five years with the RSD, the state may recommend that the school be returned to the LEA, continue with RSD, or be closed. Without the inclusion of the statute in the application, it is unclear if the State has similar authority over LEAs.</p>				
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>(i) LA has a high quality plan to identify its lowest achieving schools.</p> <p>(ii) LA's Recovery School District (RSD) has become a model for improving consistently low-performing schools using all four of the school intervention models. RSD has shown academic improvements with three approaches: restart (charters), turnaround, and closure. RSD currently operates 117 schools. Given the early success of RSD, LA will use RTT funds to invest in more evaluative and lessons learned activities.</p> <p>Since LA estimates that there are an additional 300 schools where 50% or more of the students are performing below grade level, the state is proposing to use the RTT funds to create a high performing schools initiative (HPSI) to support districts to create RSD like programs before state intervention is necessary. LA is to be commended for not waiting four years for a school to fail before intervening given years of unacceptable performance. This will be a competitive program for districts that have the strongest commitment to turning around an additional 80 low-performing schools. Districts will be provided with resources and additional assistance.</p> <p>For those schools outside the RSD and HPSI, LA will bring other RTT areas to bear, such as 500 highly effective teachers and 60 highly effective leaders to assist in these schools, increasing STEM activities as well as sharing the lessons from RSD. Given the number of schools that are low-performing in the state, the combination of these approaches should lead to positive results.</p>				
<b>Total</b>	50	45	45	

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	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	
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>(i) State funding for education rose from 43.71% in 2008 to 48.08% in 2009 of the total state budget.</p> <p>(ii) LA funds high poverty schools equitably through its Minimum Foundation Program that considers the wealth of each district and provides state funding in an inverse proportion, i.e. the poorer the district, the</p>				

more state funding. In addition, the state is to be commended for requiring that funds within districts are spent on high need students.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	
(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	6	8	

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

(i) LA has no "caps" on the number of charter schools, the percentage of schools that can be charters, nor enrollment in charters. LA has high score for this area.

(ii) Charter schools may be authorized at either the state or local level and require the same approval process including a third party review. One factor in the review of existing operators is the academic performance of current charter schools. New operators are evaluated on the merits of the written application and the schools of the founding team. Out of 157 applications reviewed by either local or state authorities, 79 were approved. Of those 77 are currently operating. The renewal process is set in statute requiring annual monitoring with a comprehensive review at the end of three years. Student achievement is part of all the reviews. The framework included in the application specifies that charter schools will set academic performance expectations and that the charter can be revoked if academic performance does not meet those standards. The application indicated that one charter has closed primarily for academic performance issues. The statutory authority is clear and measurable allowing the state to hold charters accountable for their performance.

(iii) LA charter schools are funded in three distinct ways based on the formula used to ensure equitable funding across and within districts based on wealth and student characteristics; each of the methodologies guarantee equitable per pupil spending compared to the district in which the charter resides.

(iv) LA supports facilities funding at charter schools.

(v) A variety of innovative autonomous schools are supported both in the Recovery School District and traditional LEAs. Autonomy can mean the more traditional site based management, hiring authority, as well as setting the length of the school day and year. The applicant provides examples that range from magnet schools, career academies, and lab schools associated universities. While the applicant states that LEAs are permitted "certain flexibilities" it is not clear the extent of this autonomy and whether or not it meets the definition in the RTT application.

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

(v) The state clarified that the flexibilities provided to the autonomous schools meet the RTT requirements of open enrollment; flexibility and authority to define instructional models; ability to select and replace staff; implement new structures and formats for the school year and day; and control over the budget.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

The areas covered in this criteria were part of other state reform conditions with the exception of the high school redesign project. LA did not present other significant reform conditions outside those presented previously in the application.

Total	55	50	52	
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**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15	15	

**Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

LA has an aggressive STEM emphasis that flows through every aspect of the application from turning around low-performing schools to supporting high quality teachers. LA will have a dedicated STEM office in the SEA which will be responsible for ensuring that STEM activities are woven throughout the RTT implementation. The state is to be commended for its plan to expand the Advanced Placement programs as well its virtual school into rural areas. LA is very clear on the efforts it will make to address the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in STEM areas.

The state has also established a STEM Alliance to garner support from businesses and foundations to further advance STEM activities through five regional STEM Hubs.

Total	15	15	15	
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**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		Yes	Yes	

**Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

LA has integrated its Education Reform Plan throughout the RTT application to ensure that the priorities of standards and assessments, data use, teacher and principal quality and turning around low-performing schools are enhanced and extended. While only two-thirds of the LEAs chose to participate in RTT, the possibility of statewide impact is increased through the opportunities for non-participating to learn from the reform experiences of others. LA does seem committed to making this a more robust statewide effort than the numbers suggest.

Given the distance LA schools and districts need to travel to raise student achievement to acceptable levels, the state will need to not only monitor the implementation of RTT but also build the capacity of teachers and principals to improve teaching and learning.

Total		0	0	
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<b>Grand Total</b>	500	411	415	
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**E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs</b>	10	5	5	
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> LA has a state entity, the RSD, which has the authority to intervene in schools and has a proven track record (evidence provided in Appendix A3) of turning around a significant number of schools. The application offered no authority for the state to take over entire districts.				
<b>(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</b>	40	40	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b> (i) The LA state accountability system, with clear scoring guidelines, has been calculating a School Performance Score (SPS) for all schools (see a sample list in Appendix E3) that is composed of test and attendance scores for elementary; test, attendance, and dropout scores for middle grades schools; and test and graduation rates for high schools. The SPS will begin to include growth scores by 2011-12. The bar has continually been raised for what constitutes a school worthy of intervention. Schools enter the RSD upon four years of academically unacceptable scores. This system provides clear and appropriate criteria for identifying the persistently lowest achieving schools. The state anticipates that the number of schools in RSD will grow from the current 117 to nearly 200 by the time the RTTT grant has ended.  (ii) As noted in E1, LA has a nationally recognized state plan for turning around persistently low-achieving schools with the RSD. The application provides evidence that this institution has been working with the lowest-achieving schools and in 75% of the elementary schools and 66% of the high schools have boosted achievement to scores at or above the state average. The state plans to expand the RSD, which offers all four intervention models. The plan also calls for building the capacity within LEAs to create RSD-like institutions. To further the insights from that model the plan calls for using the RSD as an R&D engine to help drive innovation, yet the budget offers no clear delineation of which funds would be used for that purpose. The plan also proposes working with outside experts to identify ways to better prepare teachers in the RSD to deal with STEM content.				
<b>Total</b>	50	45	45	

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	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	
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				

(i) The evidence provided in the application suggests that total state funding for education increased by 4.37% from FY08 (43.71%) to FY09 (48.08%). In addition, the applicant offers evidence that the investment is paying off, citing the successes in the RSD.

(ii) The LA proposal is clear that the formula for state funding is in inverse proportion to wealth. That is, schools with low income students receive more state support than schools with higher income students. Furthermore, there are provisions in the law that calculate special weighting for certain student subgroups (e.g., at-risk and special education) and a provision that the funds must be spent on those students.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	
(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	7	7	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	7	7	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	4	7	

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

(i) The LA RTTT proposal delineates five kinds of charter schools within the state statute(s) and goes on to stipulate that there are no limits on the number or the budgets. The application adds further evidence that there are 77 currently existing charters, serving 4.7% of the state's school children, which is almost twice the national average. This adds credence to the argument that there is a positive culture in the state for promoting charter school growth.

(ii) The LA plan notes that there are clear, accountable laws not only for initial approval of charters, but also requirements for annual monitoring and renewal after five years. The application provides evidence of the teeth in the initial approval legislation with only about half of the applying schools gaining approval. There has been not enough time lag to assess the monitoring and renewal process, with most charter schools having been only in operation for a few years, but the guidelines (Appendix F3) clearly spell out three key criteria upon which the schools will be evaluated; student achievement, fiscal responsibility, and legal/contractual follow through. The intent of the legislation is that 'the best interests of at-risk students is paramount.'

(iii) The plan describes complicated funding guidelines for five different types of charter schools, but it appears as though charter schools get the same per pupil allocations as traditional schools. They also get equal access to any federal, state, or local flow through funding. The state has set up mechanisms to notify charter schools of competitive grant opportunities but there is no evidence offered about the degree to which charter schools avail themselves of those funds or the level of assistance offered by the state.

(iv) As noted in iii, there are five different types of charter schools and different regulations govern the facilities funding for each. But the majority of LA charters are type 5 and those schools are eligible for free facilities with capital repairs and renovations the responsibility of the LEA. It is more difficult to assess funding for the other four types but there appears to be legislation to at least provide priority access to vacant buildings for these schools.

(v) A range of options are described in the text, including magnet schools and tuition-free schools for highly talented youth in the arts and sciences. But the application is silent about whether these schools are open enrollment -- the primary criterion for assessing full points.

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

The state provided evidence in the presentation that the state's innovative, autonomous public schools meet all of the RTTT criteria. The state clarified that the schools meet the open-enrollment criterion. Thus, this section warrants a higher score.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	5	3	3	
<b>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The LA plan identifies five significant programs that highlight the commitment of the state to improve learning conditions and student achievement for students across the state. The majority of these (e.g., TAP, High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools) have been described in detail elsewhere in the proposal, so few new conditions are detailed.</p>				
<b>Total</b>	55	47	50	

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	15	15	15	
<b>Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The LA plan has built in two organizational arrangements that will help raise the level of priority regarding STEM activities: (1) creating a STEM director who will report directly to state leadership, and (2) tapping the expertise (they have already met once) of a broad-based group of STEM stakeholders to help build and support STEM activities. Their efforts will be carried out with a three-pronged approach: (a) ramping up the quality of STEM classes; (b) using regional STEM hubs to work with other partners to prepare and assist teachers (no mention of special actions for under-represented teacher groups) and to energize students about applied science learning opportunities (on this latter point the data on growth in student participation in school STEM-related clubs was a clear move in the right direction); and (c) preparing more students, especially under-represented groups, for careers with STEM emphases. An important first step in this last point was the state's plans to track and report course-taking and success in STEM classes, disaggregating the data by subgroups.</p> <p>In addition to the plans outlined in the section on the competitive preference priority, the application also makes reference throughout the body of the rest of the plan to ways in which STEM work will be integrated with the four federal education reform areas. Indeed, STEM is referenced approximately 90 times throughout the text of the proposal (excluding the competitive preference section).</p>				
<b>Total</b>	15	15	15	

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		Yes	Yes	
<b>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>The LA RTTT meets this priority by responding thoughtfully and completely to all four education reform areas with detailed plans, timelines, and proposed measurement outcomes. Indeed, the state's education reform agenda is organized succinctly around the four reform areas and much of the work to date (and evidence of success) either anticipated or was directly in response to the application criteria.</p>				

The LA SDOE has provided evidence of its collaborative approach in bringing key stakeholders into the planning and design process and has maintained a firm grip on what it expects of its collaborating partners, especially the participating LEAs, which represent two-thirds of the population of LEAs and about half of the state's students. The goals and performance measures focus clearly on increasing student performance and seeking ways to reduce any differences among subgroups.

Total		0	0	
Grand Total	500	437	448	

(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35	35	
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>i. Applicant has a established record of identifying persistently lowest-achieving schools since 1999. Applicant has a multi-factor system for identification of these schools as academically unacceptable and has impressively has adjusted its cutoff score to include more schools and has expanded its efforts through the years.</p> <p>ii. Applicant's RSD model provides a successful school intervention strategy that has resulted significant student achievement growth. The RDS model has used all four intervention models. Applicant, indicating a sense of urgency to address still a significant number of schools (300) where 50% or more of the student population is performing below grade level, has expanded its RSD model by creating a High-Performance Schools Initiative that works within LEAs to create RSD-like conditions in their implementation of one of the four intervention models. Applicant's Education Reform Plan outlines six strategies that are supported by nine key activities that aggressively advance turning around the lowest achieving schools. It is clear that the Applicant is not satisfied with the current status quo and aggressively wants to reach additional students. The challenge in decentralizing this successful program will be to maintain a comparable culture of the programs best practices in the LEAs.</p>				
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	

**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	5	5	
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b>				
<p>i. Applicant's percentage of total state revenues for education increased from 43.7% in 2008 to 48.1% in 2009 even as the Applicant's total budget decreased.</p> <p>ii. Applicant uses the Minimum Foundation Program that establishes an equity factor in the funding formula, that takes into account the wealth of each LEA thereby distributing funding in an inverse proportion to the LEAs wealth.</p>				
<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	8	8	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	7	7	
(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	7	7	

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

- i. Applicant charter school law does not have a cap and therefore does not prohibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools. Applicant's law allows five types of charters and gives priority to charter schools that will support at-risk students.
- ii. Applicant's criteria for accepting charter schools includes prescreening criteria that includes specific expectations. This prescreening has selectively eliminated some charter applications. Applicant has a monitoring and review process that uses student achievement data as a main factor in holding charter school accountable in the renewal process. In general, charter schools provide better student achievement results than traditional schools according to Educational Week article in Appendix E 4.
- iii. Applicant's charter schools receive comparable share of local, State and Federal funding as compared to traditional schools.
- iv. Applicant's law provides for funding for facilities and provides assistance with facilities acquisition that includes access to vacant public school buildings and funding strategies.
- v. Applicant has a provision for traditional LEAs to establish innovative, autonomous schools. Applicant provides over 30 examples of these schools across the state. The degree that these schools are autonomous is not explained.

**(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions**

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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Applicant has a variety of initiatives that support reform and have contributed to increased student outcomes as mentioned in this notice. Examples include: the High-Poverty High-Performing Schools Initiative, the High School Redesign Initiative, stipends for National Board Certified teachers and the implementation of the Teacher Advancement Program.

The above initiatives are in addition to the Applicant's significant reforms with its charter schools and acclaimed Recovery School District.

**Total**

55

53

53

**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	

**Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Applicant acknowledges that there is more to do for its STEM initiative to comprehensively reach its desired potential. The first statewide conference in 2009 on STEM resulted in establishing a statewide STEM initiative with regional STEM hubs throughout the state that will enable local resources and interested stakeholders to better collaborate and promote STEM. Specific emphasis is mentioned to increase enrollment of girls, low-income and minority students to enroll in rigorous STEM type courses. The Math Science Partnership and Scientific Work Experience Programs for Teachers will provide teachers with professional development to enable them to integrate real-world STEM applications in their daily lessons.

**Total**

15

15

15

**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		Yes	Yes	
<p><b>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)</b></p> <p>Applicant boldly meets the four required RTTT components that mirror their already established comprehensive Educational Reform Plan.</p> <p>In addition, the recent significant legislation to require the student growth criteria to be part of the statewide evaluation system requirement for teachers and administrators complements the Applicant's strategy that did not compromise its expectation that LEAs must buy in for the entire RTTT reform proposal.</p> <p>The Applicant placed its emphasis on the quality of LEA participation over the quantity of LEA participation in the initial years of the implementation of this proposal.</p> <p>At the same time, the applicant has provided inclusive strategies for all LEAs to benefit from many of the RTTT reform activities and provides recognized external experts that can "coach" all professionals in the significant changes and capacity building needed that this bold proposal demands.</p> <p><b>Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)</b></p> <p>Applicant's presentation team did an excellent job of providing support to the quality of their application that resulted in the excellent scores they received by this reviewer.</p>				
<b>Total</b>		0	0	
<b>Grand Total</b>	500	454	455	

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Louisiana's Accountability System measures the academic achievement of students in every school, whether Title I eligible or not, and converts it to a School Performance Score. All schools whose School Performance Scores fall below a level identified by the state are identified as Academically Unacceptable. Although there is nothing in the law or application that as of yet speaks to a particular percentage of Academically Unacceptable schools that are or will be subject to the turnaround strategies, the plan does begin with the step of identifying the persistently lowest achieving schools according to Race to the Top guidelines.

The State's plan to turnaround the persistently lowest achieving schools is centered on continuing to focus on charter school development and its already existing Recovery School District, which will continue to assume control of and operate failing schools; however, it also has a plan to support LEAs to turnaround schools. The plan includes the following:

- Creating the High-Performance Schools Initiative (in which districts agree to create specific conditions, including fully implementing one of the four intervention models in their struggling schools before getting to the point at which state intervention is required)
- Working with LEAs in the High Performance School Initiative on staffing, including by providing educators trained through the School Turnaround Specialist Program and using the Model Staffing Initiative Initiative, and
- Using a Memorandum of Understanding between the LEAs and the Recovery School District pursuant to which some districts (predominantly rural districts) can continue to operate the schools under strict conditions of cooperation with the Recovery School District

The plan is multi-faceted, strategic and based on analysis and learning that the State has done as a result of its successful turnaround of schools within the Recovery School District. The State's targets for the additional schools that will be turned around under its plan is both ambitious and, given its history, should be attainable.

Total	50	45	45	
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**F. General**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>(F)(1) Making education funding a priority</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	
(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)**

The State provided evidence that it increased the amount of funds provided to elementary, secondary and higher education from 43.71% in FY 2008 to 48.08% in FY 2009.

According to the application, Appendix F1 is the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) calculation, which applies an equity factor to funding allocations that considers the wealth of the LEA and applies categorical weights tied to students. Together (with recently enacted laws requiring that the funding be spent on the students whose presence generates the funding) these would be evidence of policies that lead to equitable



funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and within LEAs, between high-poverty schools and other schools. However, Appendix F1 does not appear to provide evidence to support this claim.

<b>(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	
(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	7	7	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	6	6	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	3	6	

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

Louisiana's charter school law, which provides for five different kinds of charter schools, does not prohibit increasing the number of charter schools, nor does it restrict enrollment in charter schools.

In Louisiana, charter schools can be authorized by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and by local school boards, and both are bound by laws regarding applications, monitoring of performance, accountability and closure. Student performance is at the heart of decisions regarding reauthorization and closure. The framework for evaluating charter school proposals is rigorous, and requires third party independent review as well as the state/board determination. Renewal and reauthorization is a multi-step process, and student achievement must be the primary focus in the several steps. For charters authorized by the Department of Education, the framework for charter school evaluation lays out performance standards that must be met for contract renewal. For charters authorized by local school boards there is more flexibility; the authorizers are to put into effect "effective policies for holding charter schools accountable for academic performance."

Louisiana state law makes clear that at-risk students are the intended beneficiaries of the charter schools, and charter schools are required to seek to attain an at-risk student population similar to, but not exactly the same as, that of the local district.

The application does not provide evidence of the reasons for which charter applications were denied over the past five years. Two charter schools have been closed over the past five years, one of them due "primarily" to academic performance-related issues. No explanation is given for the closure of the second school. Under the Accountability System, however, charter schools that are not meeting their performance targets may have shortened renewal terms, and those that are persistently low achieving must have their charters revoked.

Although funding for charter schools in Louisiana is calculated in different ways, it appears that in all cases the charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools.

Different types of charter schools are treated differently with respect to facilities and assistance for facilities under Louisiana law. The majority of charter schools, which are Recovery School District conversion schools, are provided with free facilities; some other charter schools are given priority for district facilities; and still others are provided with facilities related financing based on a per pupil amount. It is not clear, however, whether these different schemes for supporting charter schools result in completely equitable facilities support. All charter schools are eligible to access tax-exempt financing and there are no facility-related requirements for charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.

The application provides evidence that Louisiana allows its LEAs to grant significant flexibility to schools and allows them to grant successful schools flexibility with respect to important conditions, including many of the elements set forth in the Race to the Top definition of innovative, autonomous schools. However, the

application does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that these flexibility options amount to all of the autonomy required in order to meet the definition of innovative, autonomous schools in Race to the Top. While several of the elements exist in some schools, it is not clear that they exist in all of the schools.

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

The State's presentation clarified and confirmed that the innovative, autonomous schools described in the application meet all the requirements of the definition of innovative, autonomous schools in the Race to the Top application.

<b>(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
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**(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Because Louisiana's robust and creative education reform agenda is described as being aligned with the requirements of Race to the Top, most of the conditions described in this section have already been described in response to other State Reform Conditions criteria. The reform conditions put into place and already showing signs of success are impressive. However, the only condition in this section not previously described is the high school redesign project which appears to have successfully improved graduation rates where aggressively implemented.

<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>44</b>	
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**Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	

**Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

STEM content and growth is addressed throughout the State's application. The STEM agenda is supported by leadership at a high and broad level by the existence of the STEM Goal Office and the Louisiana STEM Alliance. The effort begins by aligning the curriculum with new STEM standards and then builds increased access for students as well as professional development for teachers. Access is increased by several efforts to prepare teachers in STEM-related content areas, providing support to increase the number of AP opportunities, broadening partnerships with community, research, museums and business, and several programs designed to spark interest and participation among students and in particular girls and under-represented student groups.

<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	
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**Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform**

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
<b>Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	

**Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)**

Louisiana's application undoubtedly comprehensively and coherently addresses all of the four education reform areas as well as the State Success Factors criteria. None of the areas of reform is new to Louisiana, which has aggressively been supporting reform for several years. Its plans in all areas are detailed,

supported, and evaluated --from the adoption of standards and assessments, to the improvement and increased access to a sophisticated data system, a welcoming environment for alternative pathways to teaching and leadership, and a well-analyzed and supported effort to turn around persistently low achieving schools. The support needed to implement all of the reform efforts throughout a very low achieving state in which many districts lack capacity is enormous, and the state's plan to include a district capacity building program among its Race to the Top initiatives is critical. While statewide impact is limited by the percentage of Participating LEAs, those that are participating are strongly committed to the program and the state has committed all LEAs to pieces of the reform agenda through law. In all of the reform areas, the application provides evidence that the state is looking at all funding sources and leveraging other federal, state, local and private funds to support its efforts. And importantly, all of the efforts are tied ultimately to improved student achievement and decreasing the achievement gap.

<b>Total</b>			0	0	
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<b>Grand Total</b>	500	422	429		
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