

- Getting the most-effective educators to the children who need them.
- Targeted and coordinated resources
- Understanding the specific challenges and causes of persistent low-performance
- Behavior, safety, and health matter
- Support feeder schools that exhibit low levels of performance.
- Flexibility for district leadership

The pilot phase of the Breakthrough Center has seen some early success:

- In one year, with strong principal leadership, zero-based staffing, and intensive instructional work, the high school targeted in a large district made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). One more successful year and it will exit restructuring altogether.
- In a smaller district, three of the five schools were in some state of improvement with the high school at risk of moving into Restructuring Planning. In 2009, all schools in the district made AYP, making it one of only four *districts* in Maryland to make AYP. The high school did not move into restructuring status and is positioned to exit from improvement altogether if the trend continues in 2010.

The plan of action for turnarounds:

- Scale the Breakthrough Center services to provide coordinated turnaround services to the bottom 5 percent of schools.
- Establish a Breakthrough Zone that provides resources, assistance, flexibility, and authority.
- Drive turnaround with needs assessments, a focus on teacher and principal effectiveness, networks for persistently lowest-achieving schools and districts, technology and improved school culture, climate, and student support to increase performance.

MD is leaving the choice turnaround model to school teams, which leaves the process vulnerable to conflicts of interest (for example, difficult to choose a model where teachers and principals are removed.) If these teams include interested outsiders (parents, community leaders, researchers) that may help make the process more neutral.

MD has a relatively small number of schools that will need turnaround attention. Their Breakthrough Center has narrowed in on the elements that make a difference and they plan to focus resources (human and financial) as well as flexibility on these schools and districts. This is a detailed, piloted and refined plan that seems poised to make the changes MD is hoping for.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	6	6	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	3	3	

(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3	3	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education</p> <p>State appropriations for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for public K-12 and higher education demonstrate a consistent (virtually unchanged) level of support: 2008 = 47.8%, 2009 = 47.9%</p>				
<p>(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools</p> <p>Maryland's separate Compensatory Education grant provides additional State funding to school systems based on the count of students eligible for free and reduced meals. The amount per pupil used in this formula was determined using a professional-judgment approach, which established the effective weight associated with the additional support necessary to meet the needs of these students. MD's policies are designed to ensure equitable funding between high need LEAs and other LEAs.</p> <p>MD allows for flexibility at the local level to empower systems to target the funding to schools most in need. To ensure accountability for State funding, school systems are responsible for student performance outcomes and are required to submit annual comprehensive master plans detailing how programmatic and funding strategies will be combined to address the needs of these students and schools.</p> <p>More than 90 percent of the Bridge to Excellence funding is wealth-equalized: State aid per pupil is higher in low-wealth jurisdictions and vice versa. MD believes that this establishes available State funding for high-poverty schools within LEAs.</p> <p>MD's policies are designed to ensure equitable funding between high need LEAs and other LEAs. However, there are only loose ties between state funds and how districts choose to spend their money on their schools, high poverty or otherwise.</p>				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	21	21	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4	4	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	2	2	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	8	8	
(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities	8	2	2	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	5	5	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>3(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"</p> <p>Maryland technically has no charter school cap, nor does the State restrict student enrollment, however the schools are authorized by district boards of education, and each of these can put limits on charter school numbers.</p>				
<p>(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes</p>				

The state has a number of statutes that provide general rules for authorizing (granting charters, authorizing process and application, ensure that operators of the charter school are informed of the human, fiscal and organizational capacity needed to fulfill the school's responsibilities) and has developed some model guidance for each LEA to consider when authorizing charters (policies, application, founders manual, special ed, performance and closure.)

In the past five school years, three charter schools have closed and 45 applications have been denied for incompleteness and lack of quality (approximately half of those that applied). The three charter schools closed due to issues not directly related to student achievement.

MD notes that external groups have criticized their charter authorization and renewal process as not always transparent and that the State should do more to ensure that authorizers are incorporating effective processes to support the establishment and continuation of high-quality charter schools. As a result, Maryland has developed a policy to increase transparency in all chartering processes. The State Board of Education is scheduled to adopt the overall policy during the June 22, 2010, board meeting.

MD charter school teachers however are all bound by their districts' collective bargaining agreements, and it appears as though this will remain the case for the foreseeable future.

The state has some general policies about what districts ought to do when considering authorizing, but these are advisory, not binding. Constraining teacher work rules are also a concern for charter school autonomy and flexibility. Indeed, it's hard to see what makes them different from traditional public schools in MD. Low points are awarded.

(iii) Equitably funding charter schools

Maryland's charter school law requires that charter schools receive commensurate funding (Education Code 9-§109, Disbursement of Funds). The Maryland State Board of Education has established a definition for commensurate funding. This definition has resulted in the establishment of a funding formula for charter schools so that charter school students receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as their peers in non-charter schools in the same school district.

No details are provided on how this plays out—for example, figures from districts and what their charter schools receive. However, the reviewer gives MD the benefit of the doubt. Full points are awarded.

(iv) Providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities

MD does not provide funding, access or levies for facilities. If a charter school happens to be housed in LEA-owned properties, they are eligible for State Public School Construction Program capital funding, as a traditional public school would be. But they are given no extra help. They may use State operating dollars for facilities expenses, and the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools.

MD recognizes that charter schools face different facilities burdens than non-charter schools, and plans to seek and support opportunities for legislative changes that will increase facility supports to charter schools directly, however this is a future endeavor so low points are awarded.

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

According to the application, LEAs have wide latitude to open schools in such areas as dropout prevention, recovery of dropouts, and academically disadvantaged students.

In addition, Senate Bill 714, Education – Residential Boarding Education Program-At-Risk Youth established a Maryland boarding school under the supervision of MSDE, a public boarding school for at-risk youth.

Maryland's 24 LEAs also experiment with innovative school models. Baltimore City Public Schools began experimenting with innovation schools in 2001 to redesign, transform, and revitalize neighborhood high schools. Each school is operated by a nonprofit governing board with the authority to oversee the implementation of the reform efforts in the schools.

Baltimore City also has transformation schools, with specific themes and a unique curriculum designed for college readiness or alternative programs. Operated by experienced, independent education entities, these schools provide students and parents with additional choices for their grades 6–12 education. Presently, there are 12 transformation schools in Baltimore City, and the expectation is for 24 more to open in the next four years.

Though no explicit statute or code is mentioned, nor any absolute numbers of autonomous schools provided, it appears as though MD has several models in place. For this section, medium points are awarded.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

MD has taken some important steps that have prepared them for the RTTT opportunity.

Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness: In the 2010 legislative session, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Education Reform Act of 2010, among other things, increased the time to tenure to 3 years, and provides specific mentoring to teachers not on track to tenure. It also passed regulations on the use of student growth to be a significant component (50%) of the teacher and principal evaluations, annual evaluations, and teacher and principal ratings. It also authorizes the State Board to establish a program to support locally negotiated incentives including “financial incentives, leadership changes, or other incentives” so that highly effective teachers will be attracted to the lowest-performing schools.

Systemic Reform: MD revamped education funding in Maryland, creating an equitable funding system and increasing funding to Maryland public schools by more than \$1 billion. In response, each of Maryland's 24 school systems must submit a comprehensive Master Plan and annual updates to the State Board.

Establishing Innovative Schools—In 2006, MD passed a law to allow the establishment of a boarding school.

Early Childhood Education: In 2005, the Maryland General Assembly transferred the authority to regulate childcare providers to the MSDE which has allowed them to create an education program for pre-schoolers in childcare.

Education reform that builds on prior efforts is not new in MD, and for this section, full points are awarded.

Total	55	32	32	
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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>MD does a very good job emphasizing STEM throughout the application. In fact, it's a core piece of their RTTT effort, as they see this as the way to the world class education they hope to provide. They focus on attracting more students into studying STEM subjects in college, drawing more of these candidates into the education field, building stronger college programs with connections to industry, and steering graduates into MD schools. They have incentives to encourage this, and they have plans, with new standards, assessments and online professional development tools, to improve the teaching of STEM courses from elementary school through high school. They demonstrate a real commitment to STEM and are awarded the 15 points on this competitive priority.</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>MD has done very well for most of its students over the past 20 years. As they note in their application, they are regularly recognized as leaders in everything from standards and assessment to accountability, the collection of data, and to their overall NAEP scores. Their pride in accomplishments shows throughout. That said, there are subgroups of students who are not benefiting from the current array of reforms. MD has turned its attention to these students -- low income, urban, rural and African American and Hispanic students -- and seems to be realizing that success must mean ALL students. A new focus has been placed on improving the teaching in the schools where these children attend, increasing the standards and subject matter they are taught, and making connections for them to get to college or decent careers. The plan is clear and the reasoning is plausible. MD is a small state; however, its population is larger than its size would suggest. It is well poised to take the RTTT funds and target some of its successful programs into struggling schools, and develop models other states could use.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	416	421	
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(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The Maryland State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Schools use the powers given them by statute to supervise and administer the public schools in Maryland--Md.Educ.Code Am. 2-103. They do so by promulgating a comprehensive set of regulations governing schools in improvement, corrective action, and restructuring--COMAR 13A.01.04.07-.08. The State derives its district-and and school-level intervention authority from these two regulations. The response is compelling.

(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	35	35	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	30	30	

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

(i) Maryland has identified the 16 persistently lowest-achieving schools. These 16 schools include 5 in Tier I and 11 in Tier II. Maryland defines "persistently lowest achieving Tier I schools" as those Title I schools (PK-5 and 6-8) and combination PK-8 that are at the lowest 5 percent of all Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in the State. Maryland defines "persistently lowest achieving Tier II schools" as those Title I-eligible schools that are the lowest 5 percent of all secondary Title I-eligible schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. Maryland also identified Title I-eligible high schools (2) that have a graduation rate of less than 60% over three years.

(ii) Maryland has attempted to turn around 17 schools and two districts to implement and test the Breakthrough Center Approach. In the short time that the Breakthrough Center has intervened in these districts, there has been improvement in the districts capacity to organize and achieve success. The State plan is to use the Breakthrough Center Approach to provide coordinated turnaround services to the bottom 5 percent of schools. The establishment of a Breakthrough Zone will enable the provision of resources, assistance, flexibility, and authority to schools and districts identified for inclusion in the Breakthrough Zone. These schools and districts will have the resources to support one of the four intervention models; however, there is no plan to ensure that the most effective model will be chosen. Five core strategic priorities have been planned for Breakthrough Zone schools. The activities, timeline, and responsible person are outlined in detail.

Total	50	45	45	
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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) Maryland has slightly increased the State appropriations for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 education allocations for public K-12 and higher education. High points are earned if the total revenues are higher.

(ii) The State identifies high needs LEAs and high poverty schools and group them in a special category as economically disadvantaged. As a result, in addition to base level support, Maryland's Compensatory Education grant can provide additional State funding. This funding is based on the count of students eligible

for free and reduced meals. Extra funding does not necessarily translate into equitable funding because the needs are so much greater in high needs LEAs and high poverty schools.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	31	31	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4	4	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	4	4	
(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) Maryland has no charter school "caps" nor does it restrict student enrollment. However, charter schools are authorized by the LEAs and LEAs can set limits.

(ii) Maryland enacted its charter school law--- Maryland Education Code, Article 9-101 et. in 2003. It establishes charter schools as alternatives means within public schools. The charter school law identifies the responsibilities of public charter schools and authorizers, which in Maryland are the local boards of education. The local boards of education (LEAs) have the flexibility of supporting or not supporting the establishment charter schools.

(iii) Commensurate funding has resulted in the formula for charter schools so that charter schools students receive the same amount of funding as their peers in the same school district. The response is clear and direct.

(iv) Charter schools housed in LEA-owned properties are eligible for State Public School Construction Program capital funding. State operating dollars provided to charter schools may be used for facilities expenses, and the State does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional schools. The facility support is the same as traditional schools.

(v) Maryland has a record of expanding innovative initiatives. The Maryland State Board voted to support Senate Bill 714, Education Residential Boarding Education Program-At Risk Youth. The bill established a Maryland boarding school under the supervision of MSDE. LEAs have wide latitude to open schools in such areas as dropout prevention, recovery of dropouts, and academically disadvantaged students. One such school, the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women opened in 2009. There are other examples that make this response compelling.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation entitled "The Bridge to Excellence Act," that revamped education funding in Maryland. In 2005, the Maryland General Assembly established into law the Principal Fellowship and Leadership Program. Also, in 2005, the Maryland General Assembly transferred to the Maryland State Department of Education the authority to regulate childcare providers. In 2006, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law creating a residential boarding school for at-risk- youth. The Education Reform Act of 2010 proposed by the State Board, changed the rules for evaluating teachers and principals. The above five other reform conditions represent a significant number.

Total	55	46	46	
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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>(i) Maryland offers a rigorous course of study in STEM courses by revising the graduation requirements to align with college expectations, requiring four math credits and continuing with the requirement of three science credits. MSDE, district, higher education and interstate consortia will determine summative end-of-course assessments and develop STEM-ready high school exit criteria.</p> <p>(iii) Maryland plans to launch a STEM Innovation Network, which will be a comprehensive, physical, and virtual network to support communications, convey knowledge, and share resources among all of Maryland's STEM stakeholders. An electronic system will provide services and support to principals and teachers in the development and delivery of STEM instruction.</p> <p>(iii) Maryland plans to provide STEM internships, co-ops, or lab experiences for all interested high school and college students to jump-start their successful transition to the workplace.</p> <p>The State has a high quality plan which was incorporated throughout the entire proposal.</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>Maryland's application comprehensively and coherently address all four education areas as well as success factors criteria. The State has commitment from a broad base of LEAs to implement and achieve the goals in the RTTT. The plan clearly describes how the State, in collaboration with its LEAs, will use RTTT and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across subgroups, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	452	458	
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During the panel presentation and discussion, Maryland representatives clarified the process for selecting a turnaround model. There is robust involvement from all stakeholders, especially the community, and strong leadership from a state team. This should mitigate the concern of too much local investment in prior strategies.

Total	50	46	48	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8	8	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	4	4	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	4	4	

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

The percentage of the total revenues available to education for FY 2009 was slightly greater – one tenth of a percentage - than the percentage in the prior year.

Maryland's fiscal policies lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs. Principles of the state's funding formula include: high need districts receive additional funding, funding for education is wealth equalized, and funding for education is flexible so local boards of education and superintendents can decide where to spend the money. The state also provides Compensatory Education Program grants of additional state funding to districts based on the counts of free and reduced-price meals. The application clearly demonstrates the application of these principles by noting that four of the state's 24 school systems are considered high-needs LEAs and in 2009, more than 60% of state aid under the Compensatory Education Program was distributed to these four systems, whose combined student population represents 37% of the state's total enrollment. The state does not address in detail the extent to which funding is equitable between high-poverty schools and other schools, although the local flexibility provided to LEAs could address this component. The state clearly fulfills the equitable funding among LEAs but less clearly so the local schools' criterion.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30	30	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5	5	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	5	5	
(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	6	6	

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

Maryland has had a law allowing charter schools since 2003. There are no limitations – caps – on the number of schools allowed in statute. While there are no evident inhibitions to slow down the growth of charter schools in the state, the number of charter schools in the state is only approximately 3% of all the schools. The application states that the State encourages and supports the expansion of charter schools every year, but there have been only 3 new charter schools each of the last two years, plus number of

conversions. Because the only authorizers of charter schools are local boards of education, the state is not in a strong position to truly encourage more charter schools.

The state has laws regarding accountability. Student achievement is clearly required to be a factor in authorization or renewal. The law is not as clear about encouraging charter schools that serve student populations similar to local districts, although one document put out by the state does provide guidelines regarding serving special education students, but these seem to be guidelines only. In the last five years, three charter schools have been closed – none for student achievement problems – and forty-five have been denied. The state acknowledges that its processes may not always have been transparent, and thus made application more difficult, so it is working to improve that problem. Even though the application criteria do not call for a plan for what the state is going to do with Race to the Top funds regarding charter schools, Maryland provides one.

The state's law requires that charter schools receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as their peers in the non-charter schools in the same school district. State and federal program funding is guaranteed to charters as well. This meets the criteria of this section.

The state provides the same funding capabilities for facilities for charters that are in LEA-owned properties, but the application does not provide information for those facilities not in LEA-owned properties. The state does not impose any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than traditional public schools. However, additional problems for facilities must exist for charter schools in Maryland as the application states: "Maryland recognizes that charter schools face different facilities burdens than non-charter schools, and the State is committed to seeking and supporting opportunities for legislative changes that will increase facility supports to charter schools directly."

The application lists a number of examples of innovative autonomous schools, including a residential boarding education program for at-risk youth. On the local level, LEAs have the latitude to open schools to serve specific needs. Baltimore City Schools is cited as having quite a few of these schools. No other districts are mentioned and it is not clear if that is because the examples do not exist in other LEAs or if Baltimore's were just that outstanding.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The application reviews some of the key statutes and other efforts the state has created to encourage educational reform, most notably the Education Reform Act of 2010 which focuses specifically on improving teacher and principal effectiveness and buttresses the plans for Race to the Top in multiple sections by helping to overcome a potential perceived problem with lack of union signatures on the MOUs. By itself, this is a very strong piece of legislation, but it does not stand alone. Another impressive law was passed in 2002 that revamped and increased education funding significantly and mandated LEA master plans that the MSDE and Board of Education take very seriously. The state also made great strides in early childhood education with a law that was passed in 2005. The application does not spell out the extent to which these reforms have increased student achievement, but they are reforms consistent with and supportive of Race to the Top.</p>				
Total	55	43	43	

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 state has a high-quality plan for STEM that is integral to other sections of the plan. As with other aspects of school reform, Maryland already had initiatives in place prior to Race to the Top, including a \$2 million annual fund to spur local STEM activities. The plan is based on a series of recommendations emanating from a task force appointed by the Governor in 2009. To address the recommendations and bring them to fruition, MSDE and the Maryland Business Roundtable have created the Maryland STEM Innovation Network. Particularly noteworthy in the plan is the recognition that students of all ages, not just secondary students, need to be engaged in STEM, thus there is attention paid to elementary curriculum as well as secondary. The list of activities fulfills the criteria in the notice.

Total	15	15	15	
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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>Maryland's application comprehensively and coherently addresses all four of the education reform areas and fulfills all aspects of the criteria for this priority. It is an extremely well thought out, thorough and detailed application that clearly shows the connections between past successes – which are impressive – and its plans to accelerate gains in all four reform areas. Twenty-two of the twenty-four districts in the state have shown some level of commitment to the application, but of those twenty-two, only two MOUs had the signature of the local unions and those were conditionally committed for the sections on great teachers and leaders and turning around low-achieving schools, subject to collective bargaining. On its surface, this would seem to signal low commitment and low impact. However, the two LEAs with union signatures are two of the largest in the state and have a substantial portion of high-minority high poverty children and schools as well as schools in need of improvement. If these are the only participating LEAs, the impact of the plan would still be substantial. In addition, the state passed a law recently which commits all LEAs to many of the most important key activities in the application, furthering the potential for impact.</p>				
Total		0	0	
Grand Total	500	457	461	

Based on the evidence, the state appears to be making an effort to support LEAs by addressing a self-identified major weakness in its reform plan, which includes providing after school and summer programs to students in persistently low performing schools. Absent from the discussion in carrying out this effort are key stake-holders.

Total	50	45	45	
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	8	8	
(i) Allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education	5	5	5	
(ii) Equitably funding high-poverty schools	5	3	3	
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) The state's Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002, described as "landmark legislation," revamped Maryland's financing of public schools including universities and called for significant increases. In 2008, 47.8% of the states appropriations were for education; in 2009, it was 47.9%. The state has met the requirements of this element of its application.				
(ii) The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 had four major components. The second is "equity" funding for education that is "wealth-equalized." This means that per pupil funding of state aid in less wealthy jurisdictions is greater than per pupil funding in wealthier jurisdictions. The fourth component of the legislation is "flexibility," which provides state aid in the form of flexible grants leaving allocation decisions in the hands of LEAs and superintendents. This part of the legislation allows for the allocation of funding to schools that need it most. However, the state's application does not outline or discuss a system for the identification of high poverty schools. In addition, LEAs and superintendents have the flexibility, not the requirement, to fund high poverty schools.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	33	33	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4	4	
(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	6	6	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
(i) The state articulates a need to ensure both quantity and quality of its charter schools. The state established a charter school law in 2003, as an alternative within the public school system. The state has no cap on the				

number of charter schools it approves nor does it restrict student enrollment. The number of charter schools has varied since 2003, from a high of 16 in 2005 to a low of 4 in 2008. An additional four schools will open in 2010. Three schools have been closed. The state's application states that work needs to be done to create a culture where charter schools can be valued as sites for the creative transformation of schools, and *Race to the Top* funding will be used to create a new policy to strengthen the state's charter school law.

However, charter schools apply to the LEAs not to the state, a system that may limit their number and independence, and may hamper the creation of truly innovative efforts.

(ii)

Accountability is built into the state's charter school law that includes requirements for authorization and renewal. Three charter schools were closed for issues not related to student achievement, but for a variety of reasons, such as lack of financial responsibility, faculty issues, and a concern that the school was not meeting its mission (as an educational alternative for troubled youth). About half of the applications for a charter school were denied for incompleteness or lack of quality. Since the closing of the three schools, the state now provides additional support for charter schools to ensure effective management. There is a question about the effectiveness of the current and the proposed processes in authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes.

(iii)

Maryland's Charter School Law requires commensurate funding, and students in charter schools receive the same per-pupil funding as students in non-charter schools in the same district. Documentation of the state law governing this part of the education code was provided.

(iv)

Maryland provides the state's charter schools with several facility supports. Charter schools can be housed in LEA-owned properties and are eligible for Public School Construction Program funding. In addition, provided state dollars can be used for facilities expenses, and the state provides technical support to charter school operators as requested.

(v)

LEA's are allowed the flexibility to new open schools, such as schools that target dropout prevention. For example, Baltimore City Public Schools has 12 "transformational" schools with specific themes and unique curriculums designed for college readiness or alternative programs, which are operated by experienced independent entities, and the LEA has a plan to open 24 more within the next four years.

None of the schools described were devoted to the arts, science/math, or other academic content areas, and it appeared that most innovative schools in the state were designed only for at-risk youth. The only examples offered for innovative, autonomous public schools were in Baltimore.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

In this section of its application, the state refers to various laws that have strengthened public education that demonstrate significant reform conditions.

The state cites passage of the Education Reform Act of 2010, signed into law on May 4, 2010, that included various directives designed to improve teacher and principal effectiveness. Features of the legislation included increasing the time it takes for a teacher to gain tenure (three years); strengthening evaluation rules for teachers and principals that includes using student growth as an important component; establishing a program to support locally negotiated incentives to attract highly effective teachers to the lowest performing schools.

Existing legislation, the Principal Fellowship and Leadership Program, gives superintendents additional governance over schools that are entering a restructuring phase of improvement. Additional

evidence includes other legislation such as the following: the "Bridge to Excellence Act" that revamped how schools are funded and increased funding for public schools; a 2006 law that allowed the creation of residential public boarding schools for at-risk youth; and a 2005 law that transferred to the State Department of Education the authority to regulate childcare providers, legislation that was subsequently used to create strong pre-school programs.

Total	55	46	46	
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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 state is ranked number one in research and development per capita and anticipates a future increase in STEM related professional, scientific, medical and technical positions. Since 2007, the state awards \$2 million annually in local grants so that LEAs can develop STEM initiatives. School leaders also have access to federal and private funding of STEM related curriculums or projects. In 2009, a state task force composed of various stakeholders from education, business, the private sector, and government produced a report listing seven major recommendations that included a focus on supporting a STEM-based workforce, maintaining innovation, and providing an education for all students to remain or to become competitive on a global basis.

The state has met or exceeded the requirements of this priority.

Total	15	15	15	
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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)

The state has provided a comprehensive and coherent plan to address all four education reform areas and the State Success Criteria.

In addition, the state provided evidence of commitment to support its plan by a diverse group of stakeholders, a detailed outline on the proposed use of *Race to the Top* and other funds to support and to implement its plan, and an outline of the legislative changes and laws, especially those addressing a new educator evaluation system, that will support the components of its plan.

The state has articulated a commitment to a systematic approach of education reform that is largely consistent with the spirit of *Race to the Top*.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	450	449	
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Total	138	136	136	
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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) The State derives its district and school level intervention authority from two regulations. The State has a process for identifying persistently lowest achieving schools has identified the 16 schools to be improved in this reform effort; all of them are in restructuring. Direct intervention by the State in schools in restructuring is authorized by State regulations that mandate that the school implement an alternative governance arrangement like the ones required for the Title I School Improvement Grant Funds. The State must review and approve all restructuring plans.				
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	38	38	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	33	33	
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1) Progress has been documented by the applicant in turning around low achieving schools. The applicant states that in 2008 the US Department of Education gave the State the authority to fine tune the NCLB system of sanctions and rewards to better customize changes to specific needs of schools. The State reports a history of working successfully with more than 500 schools in the past 15 years in turnaround status. The State wanted to find a better way to sustain turnarounds and have them be successful sooner. Working with several outside agencies, a new model, The Breakthrough Center was created. This model has been very successful and will be used going forward. It focuses on building the capacity of the system to not only succeed, but to sustain the improvements by working comprehensively to provide the needed supports. Again, the applicant has already done the research, planning and has piloted a successful new model that it will take to scale with the RTTT funding. It is unclear how school level teams and family members, which are key stakeholders in a school, are involved in the planning for the turnaround process to ensure the necessary buy in for a smooth implementation.				
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)				

Education Funding is a priority in this State, as State support has increased by approximately \$1.3 billion over a 6 year period. Most recently, even with the economic turndown, funding for education increased slightly between FY08 and FY09 with the percentage being 1% higher.

The State supports equitable funding for high need LEAs and high poverty schools with a system that has guiding principles of adequacy, equity, simplicity, and flexibility. Using an example from FY09, more than 60% of the state funds were distributed to 4 high need systems which serve 37% of the total enrollment in the state. At the LEA level, it is the Superintendents who have been given the flexibility to move funding among schools. It is unclear in the application if the individual schools within the LEAs are getting equitable funding.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	23	23	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	3	3	
(ii) Authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes	8	3	3	
(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	5	5	

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

The State enacted its charter school law in 2003. 42 charter schools are currently serving 11,832 students in 6 of the 24 LEAs. This represents 3% of the total number of public schools in the State. There is an average rate of growth of 6 schools annually. In 2010 4 new charter schools will open. This represents 3% of the total number of public schools in the State. The State acknowledges that it is still in a very early development stage of charter schools, which is evidenced by the fact that there has been very little written about charter schools throughout this application. It is unclear if there are caps on the number of charter schools that can be authorized. From the information presented, the state has no caps. However LEAs which authorize charter schools can put limits on the number of charters within a district, thereby limiting the numbers approved. There appears to be no recourse for charter schools to appeal if they are denied by an LEA, as there is no information included in the application that the State or another authorizing group can intervene/overrule a decision made by an LEA.

The State intends to use RTTT funds and work with 2 school systems that have the greatest number of low achieving schools and provide an incentive for these to convert 2 of the schools to charter schools.

The State does provide equitable funding for Charter schools. Charter schools are eligible for State public school construction program capital funding if in LEA owned property. There is not a separate fund for charter schools to obtain money for facilities.

The State provides support to charters as requested, but there does not appear to be a proactive system of support for charter schools.

The State supports other innovative autonomous schools, but this is in the beginning stages of development. Only one LEA has autonomous schools. There is one school in existence for residential placements and one for young women in grades 6-12. The applicant states that this same district has 12 transformation schools operated by independent entities, with 24 more scheduled to open in the next 4 years.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
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(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)

The State has demonstrated significant reform conditions such as early childhood education which has documented positive results; the public residential school which was authorized through legislation; systemic reform through a series of legislative actions, such as the 2003 Bridge to Excellence Act, and, most recently, the 2010 reform act which mirrors the requirements of RTTT.

Total	55	37	37	
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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 applicant has made a conscious effort, over time, to focus on the integration of STEM across the state. The information included in this application is an extension of that effort. For example, the current Governor, after a needs assessment determined that not enough STEM graduates were available for the workforce, has had a focus on STEM and has been instrumental in spearheading several initiatives. In 2007 he began providing \$2 million annually for local grant funds to enable students and workers. In 2009, the Governor convened a task force with a group of diverse stakeholders to study STEM. The conclusion is that improvements must be made as the State is falling behind. Six out of seven recommendations by the group aligns with RTTT. The report is comprehensive and has action steps for K-12 public education, higher education, workforce development, economic development, research and development.

The State also has a STEM Innovation Network as a result of the 7th recommendation of the task force. This group is leading the partners forward to meet their goals, again aligned with RTTT.

The applicant matches the STEM activities of the Governor's Task Force and provides a guide in the application as to where each proposed STEM initiative is addressed. This fully documents that STEM has been carefully infused throughout the application in very meaningful ways.

Total	15	15	15	
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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)

The applicant has credibly, comprehensively and coherently addressed all of the four education reform areas of ARRA. In addition, the applicant has also addressed each of the State Success Factors Criteria and demonstrated that the State, and its participating LEAs, are taking a systemic and systematic approach to education reform.

The State has provided historical information on its documented successes (many of which are enforced by third party references noted by the applicant). These successes (increasing of student achievement, decreasing the achievement gaps across student subgroups, and decreasing the dropout rate while increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers) align with RTTT and have been funded with the integration of a variety of local, state, federal, and other external streams of funding. The applicant states that this process of integration of resources will continue with the awarding of the RTTT funds. The applicant also states that the forward movement on all that is proposed in

the application will continue with or without RTTT funding. Without the funding of RTTT, the process will take longer. The State is ready to move forward with a restructured department of education, cross divisional teams, each with a focus on one of the four areas of ARRA reform, hands on, consistent, focused leadership, and support from a broad constituency.

The State demonstrates participation of a great majority of LEAs who have signed MOU's indicating that they will participate in all aspects. Numerically, RTTT will be implemented in 22 of the 24 LEAs, which serve 79 percent of all students, including 77 percent of minority students, 94 percent of high-poverty schools, and 85 percent of students in poverty. While the State is lacking signed MOU's from all but 2 local teacher unions, and one school board member, it has confidently presented a plan that they claim will be successful over time. Many teachers have signed support and commitment letters even without their association/union support. All of the LEA superintendents have signed the MOU's. The state principal association and the state parent association have submitted signed letters of support. The recent passage of the new educational reform law, which closely mirrors the RTTT requirements, with the signature of the Governor makes all that is proposed enforceable, in every LEA with or without the signed MOU's by the leaders of the local teacher associations. The law, plus the State's past leadership with successful reform in each of the areas addressed, makes this a viable plan.

Absolute Reviewer Comments: (Tier 2)

The panel of presenters was very articulate, had a deep understanding of the proposal plans, was aware of potential issues, and was well prepared to answer the questions presented by the review panelists.

The panel clarified how they will provide high quality instruction for English Language Learners through ELL standards (aligned with the curriculum standards), co-teaching models, access to early childhood and dedicated dollars for professional development. They did not address the area of ELL assessment during the presentation or the question and answer period so the score remains unchanged..

The panel also clarified that a charter school can appeal to the state board if it is denied a charter. The charter school scores were not changed as the other concerns listed in the Tier I comments still exist.

It was apparent that the team works closely with each other and also with other stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	461	461	
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