

Total	50	50	50
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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)

Massachusetts' annual expenditure for public and higher education has steadily risen, including expenditures for 2008 to 2009. They are projected to rise in 2010. Their funding formula is progressive and provides for equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs, and within LEAs, and between high-poverty schools and other schools. Full points are awarded *allocating a consistent percentage of State revenue to education* and *equitably funding 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	8	8	
(iii) Equitably funding charter schools	8	6	6	
(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)

Massachusetts law limits the number of charter schools that can be operating (4 per cent of the total number of students in the state). There also is law that limits district spending on charters. Its charter school law was amended in January of 2010, and on May 25, 2010, the state Board of Education adopted regulations that clear the way for the law to be implemented. Known as the "smart charter law" it allows the state to increase the number of charters serving low performing students. It doubles the percent that can be spent on these charters and also doubles the number of charters that can be developed in Boston. There are 62 charter schools in the state (6%); the current cap allows for 120 charters. The effort to amend the law capping charters appears to be a step in the right direction but has yet to be enacted, only serves low performing students, and constitutes a "high cap". Medium points were awarded *enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"*. The state has mechanisms in place that promote charter school accountability. It has a single authorizing agent for charters and has been recognized as a national model for charter school accountability. It has a rigorous application process, criteria and protocols for site visits, report guidelines, and annual independent audits. It provided a table showing the number of applications, approvals and closures over the past five years. Six charters were approved last year and three of four charter schools closed in the past five years were closed because of lack of academic success. Full points were awarded *authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes*. The state asserts that the funding formula in the state ensures that charter schools receive equitable funding. While there was a difference in per pupil spending (\$1826 per student) the state asserts it was because of differences in special education costs. No data supporting that assertion were provided and points were withheld. Because the per-pupil funding is at least 90 per cent of that provided to traditional students high points were awarded *equitably funding charter schools*. It was not clear whether charter schools facility funding is equal to other Massachusetts public schools. The applicant identified a number of initiatives that the state has put in place to promote

facility use for charters (ARRA funds and Reinvestment bonds). The applicant asserts that there is a set per pupil. High points were awarded *providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities*. In January 2010 the governor signed the Innovative Schools Initiative designed to provide exciting opportunities and create new in-district schools to leverage lessons learned from the nation's public schools. Boston supports autonomous schools by providing autonomy over staffing, curriculum, governance, policies, and budget. It is not clear how much autonomy innovative schools will be awarded. High points were awarded *enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools*.

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

The state has demonstrated a number of significant reform conditions. It funds two programs for increased time for academics that serves 23 high-poverty schools. It also funds a variety of programs aimed at helping students meet graduation requirements. *Connecting Activities* links students to the world of work through internships and academic support. They also fund WFI School of Excellence, a STEM-based school, and a number of other initiatives that align with RTTT and its goals. Full points were awarded *demonstrating other significant reform conditions*.

Total	55	48	48
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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)

Massachusetts has a high quality plan to offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology and engineering. Throughout the application, and in the letters of support, there was evidence it has cooperated with industry experts, museums, universities, and research centers to prepare and assist teachers, to prepare more students by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and women and girls in STEM areas. Massachusetts targeted STEM by proposing a number of sound initiatives woven throughout the application. It incorporated STEM into its Pre K-12 teaching and learning system by providing students access to high quality curriculum materials model units, lesson plans, etc. It plans to increase the number of STEM educators including Pre-AP and K-8 mathematics teachers. It plans to continue to emphasize STEM in MassCore which will become the state's default high school curriculum. The state funds programs that embed STEM curricula in high school and STEM Early College High Schools. The Governor also established a STEM Advisory Council to promote STEM, guide its work, and connect with educators and the state Board of Education. Full points were awarded *emphasis on STEM*.

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)

Massachusetts has comprehensively and coherently addressed the four education areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors criteria. It has demonstrated its application has sufficient LEA participation and commitment to successfully implement and achieve the goals in its plan.

Total			0	0	
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Grand Total	500	439	439		
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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)				
<p>(i) The amount of education spending as a percent of total state revenue increased by 4% between FY08 and FY09 while total spending for K-12 education increased by 3% over the same timeframe.</p> <p>(ii) The application presents clear evidence of existing State funding formula and policies that ensure equitable funds distributions between high-need LEAs and other LEAs as well as between high-poverty schools and other schools within LEAs. Funding is determined through the combination of Chapter 70 and the State's foundation budget resulting in an approximately \$2,000 per pupil increase for students in districts and schools with the greatest proportion of poor students. Additionally, the State utilizes a similar progressive formula in awarding grant dollars from Federal and State sources to ensure the students and schools with the greatest need are commensurately treated.</p>				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	37	37	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5	5	
(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	8	8	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(i) Massachusetts enacted new charter school legislation in January 2010 that eliminated the cap on the total number of students statewide who can attend charter schools and eliminated the cap on the number of district schools that can convert to what are organized as Horace Mann charter schools. The State does not restrict student enrollment in charter schools consistent with the requirements of the criterion. However, the law does restrict the total number of charters to not exceed 6% of all public schools in addition to a cap of 120 charter schools statewide resulting in a reduced score.</p> <p>(ii) Massachusetts has a proven track record of success with regard to its charter school authorization processes. Consistent with each element of the criterion, the application provides evidence that the State has had specific charter school laws in place since 1993 that prescribe a detailed protocol for approving charters, reviewing and monitoring them once granted, and, more recently, placing a focus on ensuring that charter schools serve a student population that is similar to the local district's student population. The statute requires specific adherence to accountability provisions with the ultimate responsibility belonging to one authorizer, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition, the laws provide for comprehensive five year reviews to determine whether to renew, not renew or renew with conditions any of the State's charter schools. The laws also allow for revocation of a charter at any time during the charter term. Three of the four charter schools closed in the past five years were closed for lack of academic success indicating that the State is closely monitoring its charters and willing to take action when they are not working.</p>				

(iii) As required by the criterion, the application provides clear evidence of a funding formula that ensures equitable funding between charter schools and traditional district schools. Federal grants are distributed directly to charter schools by the Department in accordance with Federal requirements consistent as required by the criterion.

(iv) The State's funding formula for charter schools includes a facility component, operates a quasi-public agency that issues tax-exempt bonds to finance the acquisition, rehabilitation or construction of charter schools, and, in the recently enacted 2010 legislation, that provides incentives to districts to offer unused school buildings to charters.

(v) The application provides robust evidence of legislation in place to encourage the development of Innovation Schools in Massachusetts including a description of the first Innovation School which was approved in May 2010. In addition, the Boston Public Schools currently operate a total of 23 pilot schools presenting further evidence of the State's compliance with this criterion.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
Massachusetts demonstrates a comprehensive, bold environment to support LEAs in the operation of a wide variety of innovative, autonomous public schools, other than charter schools. Both in this section and other areas of the application the State provides a compelling story to support its efforts in this regard.				
Total	55	52	52	

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)				
Throughout the application, Massachusetts has demonstrated its commitment to STEM through a high-quality plan that offers a rigorous course of study in mathematics, science, technology and engineering; presents a solid case that proactive steps are being taken to engage industry experts, museums and universities through the Governor's STEM Advisory Council and other initiatives to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines; and, an effort through MassCore to increase STEM college and career readiness in underrepresented groups. Finally, the State has a tight focus on leveraging Race to the Top funds to better prepare students for more advanced study and careers in the STEM fields.				
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)				
Massachusetts has presented a comprehensive, well-articulated, persuasive and compelling plan for its embrace of the spirit required and unique opportunity provided in this competition. The narrative				

consistently aligns with the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA and the State Success Factors Criteria in a detailed and clearly presented manner. It is important that the application support statewide reform with substantial participation by eligible LEAs and Massachusetts meets this criterion. Most important, the State's priorities are focused emphatically on student achievement, eliminating the achievement gap, and fully preparing students for college and careers. This is a truly high-quality plan for a robust statewide education reform agenda.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	468	468	
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These efforts are complemented by a current initiative to identify and intervene with middle and high school students at risk of dropping out; the state has piloted an early warning initiative with urban districts using the state's Student Information Management System and recommendations from the Graduation and Dropout Prevention and Recovery Commission.

The state's application includes some interesting highlights in their plan to turn around persistently low achieving schools. Current and planned efforts to address the non-academic needs of students in these schools are innovative and compelling.

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

During the State's presentation, additional clarification was provided on the state's ongoing process of selecting and using an intervention model to turn around the lowest achieving schools. Members of the State's panel gave a logical reason for no longer using the Restart Intervention Model, as described in the application. The State opted to use the Turnaround Model as it provides a better fit for their lowest achieving schools.

Total	50	45	48	
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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)				
In spite of challenging economic conditions, K-12 spending for 2009 increased to 31% in 2009, from 28% in 2008. This increase constituted 36% of the total state revenue in 2009.				
(ii)				
Under the state's progressive funding formula, districts that educate the highest percentage of low income students, based on eligibility for free or reduced lunch, receive the most school aid per pupil. The state provided relevant documentation.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	35	35	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4	4	
(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	8	8	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8	8	

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

(i)

Massachusetts charter law statute was amended in January 2010, to allow for significant expansion of high performing charter schools in the state's lowest performing districts. In lifting the cap, the Governor and state legislature recognized the successes of existing urban charter schools. In May 25, 2010, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted regulations for implementation of the new statute. The new law also eliminated the 4% cap on the total number of students who could attend charter schools. However, removal of the caps for enabling the creation of high performing charter schools only impacts charter schools in the state's lowest performing LEAs thereby inhibiting the creation of high performing charter schools in other LEAs.

(ii)

Massachusetts is one of two states with a single charter school authorizer, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. For this reason accountability is consistent. Under regulation 603 CMR 1.00, charter schools are held accountable in three areas: faithfulness to charter, academic success and organizational viability. The criteria in the three accountability areas create protocols for site visits, renewal inspection, and annual report guidelines. Charter applications go through a review process that includes interview with the founding group. Lack of academic success was a major factor in the closure of three of the four charter schools closed in the past five years.

(iii)

The state's charter school statute has three components in its funding formula: a per pupil foundation rate; an "above-foundation" adjustment rate, which adjusts rates upward when the amount the district is spending on students exceeds the foundation rate; a per-pupil facilities component. Charters receive the same amount per pupil as is spent in the sending districts. A higher percentage of low income students in charter schools receive relatively more funding per pupil; charter schools draw from the same local and state revenue sources as traditional public schools.

In fiscal year 2008, charter schools, according to the application, spent \$1826 less per SPED student who attended a charter school. The state attributed this to districts having higher costs for special education than do charter schools; districts must pay tuition for students placed in private SPED schools while charter schools do not. This explanation requires a full discussion.

(iv)

Funding for a charter school includes a per-pupil facility component adjusted for inflation, an interesting detail in the state's application. Recent education legislation offers incentives to districts that offer unused school buildings to charter schools. No facility requirements are placed on charter schools other than normal building codes and accessibility requirements. In 2009, the state legislature passed a law giving the Massachusetts School Building Authority authorization to use a portion of the state's allocation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Qualified School Construction Funds for Charter Schools.

(v)

State and local districts support the creation of innovative, autonomous public schools. The Innovative Schools initiative was a component of legislation signed by the Governor in January 2010; this legislation allows districts to create innovative schools while keeping school funding within the district. Unlike charter schools, innovative schools are entirely locally based, and the local school committee has the authority to approve an Innovative School. The state's first Innovative School, the Paul Revere Innovative School, was established on May 25, 2010. Additional schools are scheduled to open in September 2010.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions

5

5

5

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

Massachusetts cites a historic commitment to establishing innovative conditions to education reform. The state has two programs that increase time for academics to address the impact that additional time in school can have especially for low performing students. The state was the first in the nation to support a statewide Expanded Learning Program, funded at \$15.7 million in 2010, and serving 23 high poverty

schools. The state also provided \$2 million to fund after school and out of school time grants to improve the quality of after school and summer programs; these funds supported 48 programs providing services to 750 students, including 980 students with disabilities and 630 English language learners. Although no points were withheld, it would have strengthened the state's application if a plan for the collection and analyses of student performance data on the impact of additional time in school, an innovative feature, had been provided.

The state funds a variety of other programs designed to increase high school graduation rates, work place learning, students needing academic support, a STEM focused high school, and a full day kindergarten program; recent legislation was provided for literacy programs. All of these efforts are commendable.

Total	55	50	50	
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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)

Massachusetts plans to incorporate STEM instruction across the entire PreK-12 curriculum. In its plan, educators will have access to high quality instructional materials, model units, and lesson plans.

To expand the supply of STEM educators, the state proposes intensive recruitment and preparation programs to recruit an additional 250 teachers in STEM fields while also being attentive to retention efforts. A plan is outlined to provide pre-AP teachers with training in mathematics and science and professional development in science and K-8 mathematics for teachers (Massachusetts Intel Mathematics Initiative).

To increase STEM college and career readiness among under-represented groups, the state will continue to emphasize STEM in MassCore, which will become the state's default high school curriculum requiring a minimum of four years of mathematics and three years of lab-based science. The Governor established a STEM Advisory Council, composed of public and private stake-holders, with the task of increasing student interest and preparation for STEM fields.

With a comprehensive plan in place, the state has met 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 of Massachusetts has done an outstanding job at addressing all four educational reform areas and all other requirements of the *Race to the Top* notice. Their plan as outlined in the state's application was logical, concise, innovative and at times, inspiring. Sections of the state's plan served to showcase the state's historic and on-going commitment to educational reform. The state described comprehensive efforts including taking the appropriate legislative steps in preparing for the implementation of each component of its plan.

The state was able to secure enthusiastic support of its bold but doable plan from a variety of stakeholders in both the public and private sectors. Interesting features of their plan includes addressing the non-academic needs of students in the lowest achieving schools, and use of expanding learning programs for students in high poverty schools.

The state's plan as presented has the potential to serve as a national model for significant educational reform in the public school system.

Total			0	0	
Grand Total	500	482	483		

The District plan supports the LEAs by initiating activities and RTTT funds to establish an intermediary. This is done in year three of the grant and occurs when the State takes on five more restart models, as level 5 schools. No level 5 schools were identified for RTTT turn-around (because they would already be in complete take-over status) however, two of the 35 originally identified for RTTT funding are possible Restart models. The Restart model must have an intermediary in year one or two. Hence it appears that there is little to no State support for the two schools that may use the Restart model until year three.

Twenty-two of the schools opted for the Transformation model, and the State supports them through a comprehensive and intensive approach. All intervention activities are scheduled to be up and running by year three. Based on the narrative and accompanying documents, each of the four required areas of the Transformation model are broadly addressed and support structures are identified, for instance, to replace principals and scale up teacher quality; support comprehensive instructional reform strategies; increase learning time; and create community oriented schools.

As for the nine schools that selected to use the Turn-around model, the State provides a clear comprehensive system of support as well. Therefore, this subsection was scored high but toward the middle level for not clearly addressing how it would support the needs of two schools which may well opt for using the Restart model, which requires an Education Management Organization (EMO) or a charter management organization (CMO) in year one or at least by year two.

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

The State clarified that the 35 schools, originally identified for intervention, will be supported in the intervention model process in years one and two of the grant. The State plan supports the LEAs by initiating activities and RTTT funds to establish an intermediary as required for the Restart model. Full points were allotted this section.

Total	50	45	50	
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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)				
(F)(1) (i) The percentage of the total revenues available to the State that was used to support elementary, secondary, and institutions of higher education for FY 2009 was 1% greater than the percentage of the total revenues available to the State for that same purpose in FY 2008. Full points were allotted.				
(F)(1)(ii) The State's policies lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs so that the LEAs with the neediest students will get over \$2,000.00 more per student. For addressing equitable funding within LEAs, the State encourages grant funding. This section received full points.				
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	4	4	
(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	8	8	
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(F)(2)(i) The State has a charter school law that does not prohibit increasing the number of high-performing charter schools as measured by the percentage of total schools that are allowed to be charter schools. In addition, the Smarter Charter Cap Lift was passed in January 2010 and lifted the cap for charter schools. However, there is a spending cap of 9% which acts to effectively inhibit or restrict increasing the number of high-performing charter schools.</p> <p>(F)(2)(ii) The State has laws, statutes, regulations, or guidelines regarding how charter school authorizers approve monitor, hold accountable, reauthorize, and close charter schools such that:</p> <p>The State regulations indicate that student achievement is a significant factor for authorization, monitoring, re-authorizing and closing charter schools.</p> <p>The State requires that charter schools serve student populations similar to local district's demographics with a comparable enrollment clause that meets the requirements of this criterion.</p> <p>The State has closed and not renewed licenses for three ineffective charter schools in the last five years.</p> <p>The above sub-section was given full points.</p> <p>(F)(2)(iii) The per-pupil funding for charter schools is 95% of that which is provided to traditional public school students. In addition, a commensurate share of Federal revenues is available recognizing the State as one of the six highest funders of charter schools. All points for this criterion were allotted.</p> <p>(F)(2)(iv) The State's issues tax exempt bonds to finance acquisition, rehabilitation, or construction for charter schools. The State provides incentives for LEAs to offer their unused facilities to charter schools. In addition, charter schools were apportioned part of ARRA funds to use in construction bonds. There was no indication that the State imposes any facility-related requirements on charter schools that are stricter than those applied to traditional public schools. Therefore, this sub-section was given full points.</p> <p>(F)(2)(v) The State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools and the State extended the opportunities for these schools by legislation in January 2010. Currently there is one in operation that responds to the newer legislation (The Paul Revere Innovative School). There are 23 other pilot schools which operate flexibly within school systems. This sub-section was allotted full points for enabling LEAs to operate these types of schools.</p>				
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5	5	
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>(F)(3) The State has created conditions favorable to educational reform or innovation that have increased student achievement through programs that provide test preparation using grant funds. These programs are reported to increase the percent meeting state standards tests by 12 to 34%. In addition, there is another program that has increased the graduation rates and others have affected important educational outcomes for students in high poverty schools through increased time in after-school and out of school time through grant programs. This section was scored as high-high.</p>				
Total	55	51	51	

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1	Tier 2	Init
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15	15	
Competitive Reviewer Comments: (Tier 1)				
<p>The rigorous course work in STEM is seen across the application with targeted professional development in mathematics and science at the Regional Centers, through hiring mathematics coaches, and in providing professional development for teachers to provide Pre-AP courses in math and science for high need middle schools. In addition, RTTT will build on the successful STEM high schools and have at least six of them established across the state.</p> <p>In addition, there is a plan in place to involve stakeholders across education, institutes of higher education, industry, and museums through the important community and network that the new STEM Council will provide.</p> <p>The State has provided resources to increase the number of under-represented groups and of females in the STEM field in careers and in public schools. One approach is through U-teach which is noted for increasing the pool of STEM teachers, especially minority and female. In addition, the State describes programs that are in place to increase awareness for students to enter the STEM field and take advanced courses through improved requirements for high school graduates and for college careers. In addition, the State provides for the formation of the STEM Council that will focus on increasing STEM awareness encompassing females which is fundamental and well publicized nationally under other NSF initiatives. The State, therefore, has in place programs that will be successful in expanding choices and opportunities for increasing women and girls in the STEM fields.</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>This application meets the priority for comprehensively and coherently addressing all of the four education reform areas and the State Success Factors Criteria. The application makes a clear commitment to ambitious and achievable reform programs that will improve student outcomes as defined by RTTT.</p>				
Total		0	0	

Grand Total	500	477	484	
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logical and reasonable relationship between the barriers to successfully turning around failing schools and the State's choice of strategies/activities. Frequently, the State can also cite to successful experiences or research for additional support.

- The budget, strategies, and activities are integrated.
- Although the State did not point to successful experience as justifying the building of cadres of turnaround educators, the approach is sufficiently unique that it is worthy of support. It is an aggressive response to improving the equitable distribution of effective educators. It is a strong complement to the State's new gap-focused legislation which authorizes re-staffing, and can complement the use of the ARRA Re-Start model.
- The strategies of creating a nonprofit intermediary to scale up the capacities of "turnaround partners" who will, in turn, address and build LEA capacity to address conditions for effectiveness is innovative. The credibility of pursuing both strategies is bolstered by the success of the two models cited. The "conditions" to be first addressed have been identified by the State's analysis of in and out of state experience, data, and research.
- The same kinds of competent analyses have led the State to identify the need to build the capacity of poorly performing LEAs in the four areas described. The comparative brevity of the description of the activities to be undertaken here is mitigated by the many capacity building activities embedded throughout the State's RTTT application.
- The creation of "wrap around zones" is an innovative approach to implementing the State's "gap law" requiring social service agencies to engage in school improvement. The concept is also well conceived in that it addresses what the fragmented, not-systematic manner with which social services would be otherwise be delivered. This plan is bolstered by the fact that the State can model its zones on two existing, successful models.
- The timelines for implementation are competent.
- The opportunity for 10 Level 3 schools to become turnaround schools and garner turn around resources and support before falling to Level 4 is an ingenious way to encourage and reward proactive leadership at either the LEA or school level. It reflects laudable foresight among those drafting this plan. This added dimension adds to the plan's quality.

The Performance Targets are achievable and ambitious. The State's plan earns points in the high range.

Total	50	50	50	
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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): The total revenues available to the State that were used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education increased from Fiscal Year 2008 to Fiscal Year 2009. This remains the case if certain items not directly related to the education of the State's students in schools are removed from the expenditures—i. e. Transportation, Building Authority, and Retirement System. (See Table F1, "Education expenditures...").

(ii) The State's policies lead to equitable funding between high needs schools and other LEAs and between high poverty schools and other schools.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	36	36	
(i) Enabling high-performing charter schools "(caps)"	8	5	5	
(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	8	8	
(v) Enabling LEAs to operate other innovative, autonomous public schools	8	8	8	

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

(i): The State has recently passed legislation modifying its current charter school cap. In doing so it is acting to encourage the formation of charter schools within low performing LEAs. The overall effect of the State's various laws is to restrict the number of charter schools state wide so that if the cap it were filled, less than ten percent of the State's schools would be charter schools. Accordingly, the State earns points in the mid range.

(ii): The State has laws and guidelines which govern how its authorizing authority approves, monitors, reauthorizes, and closes its charter schools. Student achievement is a significant factor in authorization and/or renewal. Charters are encouraged to serve student populations similar to the local district(s) which they serve. The applicable rules require the implementation of a recruitment and retention plan that further assures a representative population, and the State's recent amendments to its charter school law place special emphasis on new charters serving high needs students. The State has closed ineffective charters in the recent past. Student achievement was a significant factor in one or more of these instances. The State's approach earns points in the high range.

(iii): The State's charter schools receive equitable funding compared to traditional public schools. This is because they receive state funding adjusted for demographic factors at the same level that the sending districts do. In addition, charters receive an additional increment to account for the amount that the sending district supplements its state aid with local fund.

The State says that the difference in average spending per pupil between charters and traditional (Charters spend 15 percent less on average.) districts is primarily caused by traditional districts' serving a higher percentage of special education students including all of those who are provided an out of district education. The State provides some compensation to districts on a per student basis for the students from the district who attend charter schools. The effect of this latter facet of funding on equity between charters and traditional schools is not clear. The State says that the intent of its funding laws is to make funding for charters and traditional schools essentially the same. The State earns points in the high range.

(iv): The State provides charter schools with funding for facilities, assistance with facilities acquisition, encourages districts to make its surplus facilities available, gives charters the ability to share in bonds, and/or provides other supports including loan guarantees. The State does not impose any facilities related requirements that are not also applicable to traditional schools. The State earns points in the high range. [8]

(v): The State has adopted legislation enabling LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools that meet the RTTT requirements. One such school has opened and others are being prepared for the fall. The ESE is required and has provided planning and implementation grants, providing technical assistance, and support to applicants. The State also notes that Boston Public Schools operate 23 "pilot schools" which meet the RTTT requirements under this sub criterion. The State earns points in the high range. [8]

(iii): The State's charter schools receive eatable funding compared to traditional public schools. This is because they receive state funding adjusted for demographic factors at the same level that the sending districts do. In addition, charters receive an additional increment to account for the amount that the sending district supplements its state aid with local fund.

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

The State's programs to help students meet high school graduation requirements and improve college/career readiness reasonably meet the requirements under this sub criterion, and the State provides comparative data indicating that the goals of these programs are being met when the participants are compared to similar students who are not involved in them. The WPI School of Excellence qualifies because it is innovative and has a positive effect on the student outcomes stipulated to be of concern under RTTT.

Because the State did not provide student outcome data regarding its Expanded Learning Time or its after school/out of school time grants programs, it is not clear that they meet both RTTT criteria—innovation plus positive student outcomes. Accordingly, the State earns points in the mid range.

Total	55	49	49
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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's plan reflects a consistent emphasis on increasing its students' engagement and success in STEM-focused educational activities. The State's results in its own assessments demonstrate improved student achievement in areas where STEM achievement is tested and reported.

The State's plan will increase the rigor of its courses in the STEM areas. The State's plan includes many activities and strategies where consultants and institutions including those with expertise in STEM areas will be engaged in improving educational conditions for the State's students.

There is a strong emphasis on activities that will result in teachers being better prepared to teach and integrate STEM content across grades and disciplines. There is a major emphasis on increasing teachers of STEM subject. There is a major emphasis on increasing the number of competent STEM teachers serving minority and poor students and placing these teachers in low performing schools.

There are activities designed to and likely to result in more students being prepared for advance study and careers in STEM areas. The needs of students underrepresented in these fields receive significant attention. Given the history of women being underrepresented in these areas and the considerable attention that their underrepresentation has been given, it is reasonable to conclude that they are intended to be and are subsumed under the "underrepresented" rubric. The State meets 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)

For the reasons stated throughout the comments above, the State's application comprehensively and coherently addresses all four of the education reform areas specified in ARRA as well as the success factors criteria. The State and the participating LEAs are taking a systematic approach to reform. The State's plan includes a number of highly innovative approaches.

Based on the analysis above and back-stopped in many instances by legislation, the State has or will have sufficient LEA participation and commitment to implement its plans and achieve its goals. The State has or will reorganize its bureaucracy to contribute strongly to the implementation of its plans. It is also refocusing and re-purposing existing funds from federal, state, and local funds to ensure its initiatives have sufficient resources. The State's Performance Targets reflect careful thought. This has made them ambitious and achievable.

The implementation of the reforms in this application is likely to result in increased student achievement, a reduction in achievement gaps, and an increase in both graduation rates and college enrollment. Graduates of Massachusetts high schools will be more college and career ready in the future compared to the past as a result of the planned reforms. The State has carefully planned so that the core of its reforms will be sustainable after the RTTT grant has run its course. The State meets the Absolute Priority.

Total		0	0	
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Grand Total	500	479	481	
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