

options and an outline of the processes and structures, ie. communication plan, community engagement) necessary for successful implementation would have been informative. It is unclear whether the applicant utilized previous data related to its efforts in addressing the lowest-achieving schools and how that data, lessons learned and data on the suggested models, will shape the design and plans. The process and criteria for determining the turnaround and restart models are unclear.

Total	50	35
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: (i)The percentage of the total revenues available to the State to support education increased in 2009 from 2008. (ii)The State's policies lead to equitable funding among its LEAS.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The State Charter School law does not prohibit the number of charter schools. There are guidelines for authorization to open and close charter schools. Student Achievement is one significant factor in the reauthorization or renewal of charter schools. Provisions and guidelines exist for the closure or non-renewal of ineffective charter schools. Charter schools are encouraged to serve student populations similar to the local LEA. Equitable funding compared to public schools exists. The State provides for facilities agreements with charter schools. The State enables LEAs to operate autonomous public schools. The State's efforts in ensuring high quality, rigorous charter schools is evident by the establishment of laws and provisions that address achievement, accountability, and standards of practice.		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: The establishment of the Council on Virginia's Future several years ago serves as an advisory for the State's education reform. Chaired by the Governor, the council focuses on necessary policies and practices that can positively impact the educational landscape. Key indicators of success have been developed and are used to assess success of the State's reforms. The State is proud of its strong governance structure for educational reforms.		
Total	55	55

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: The applicant has outlined a thoughtful and rigorous STEM plan as evidenced by the State's transition to common core international standards, establishment of external partnerships with higher education and industry and ambitious goals for increasing teacher and principal capacity for implementing a high quality STEM programming, through high quality professional development, coaching and support.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: The reform agenda as outlined in the application represents a robust, comprehensive and coherent approach to transforming the educational system in the State. The four education areas provided a roadmap for creating highly skilled students prepared for postsecondary life of college or the workforce. The State's plans build upon the best research-based strategies and the expertise of practitioners and national experts.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	348

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: E 1 Virginia does have the authority to directly intervene both in the lowest achieving school divisions and the local schools within the divisions		
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	40
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	5
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	35
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: E 2 i Virginia has a good plan to identify its persistently lowest-achieving schools. It includes Title I schools, a secondary school that is eligible for but does not receive Title I funds that has had a graduation rate of less than 62% for one of the past two years and any school that has not met AYP in the all students groups and has not decreased failure rate in reading and/or math by 10% in the last two years. They have identified the schools that meet those criteria. E 2 ii Virginia will support its LEAs in turning around the lowest-achieving schools: • first, by acknowledging that the traditional efforts that have been tried have started too late in schooling; • second, by admitting that the LEAs have not had the expertise or resources to compensate for all of the deficiencies; and • third, by accepting that much more expertise is needed to provide intensive intervention for the students and therefore high performing charter schools or contract schools should be established. These schools will have to engage outside management organizations. Virginia knows whereof it speaks as it has attempted turnarounds in over 200 schools using four different approaches since 2004-5.		
Total	50	50

F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: F 1 i The percentage of total revenues available to the state for the use of public education funding increased, but just barely. F 1 ii Virginia achieves equitable funding in two ways. It relies on a Composite Index consisting of three wealth factors for districts: the value of local real estate, taxable retail sales and adjusted gross income. The ratio derived from those factors determines the share of school funding that is paid by the district and the share paid by the state with the inverse ratio representing the state share. Thus the state provides more funding for the less wealthy districts. Also six state funds are distributed based on free lunch eligibility driving more funding per pupil to high-need LEAs.		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: F 2 Virginia has several sections in the code on Charter Schools including ones that establish a fund for them and one that releases them from policies and regulations. In 2009, the General Assembly removed the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. These schools are authorized and operated by local school boards and subject to the same accountability measures as all schools under the jurisdiction of the local boards. While it does not state explicitly that student achievement is a reason for authorization, it is implicit in the other reasons listed in the law. At no time has Virginia had more than 5 charter schools operating - the number in place before 2003 - and currently has 4. They have closed 3, one because it needed greater flexibility than allowed by state law. Altogether, there have been only 5 applications and 2 approved. It is difficult to ascertain if the funding is equitable or facilities supported because it depends upon the terms of an		

agreement with the local boards. Certainly, there is no state law stipulating any funding amounts. Given all of the above: • only FIVE charters operating in a big state like Virginia; • the General assembly having a cap on until last year; • local boards controlling the establishment of charters and therefore the exodus of students by refusing to let students leave even if parents would like an alternative to the local schools; and • considering that one of the reasons for denying a petition was that there was a lack of evidence that the curriculum was aligned with state standards – even though state law releases charters from state regulations, one can only conclude that Virginia is not hospitable to charters. It's possible to surmise that there are so few applications because there is so much satisfaction with the public schools, but the more reasonable explanation is that there is not much point in applying. Virginia is more tolerant of experimental schools in that it has 17 of those. There are some year-round schools that have demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap and better preparing students for the next grade. There are also regional career and technical centers and 8 STEM academies in addition to the Governor's residential and summer and regional programs that serve more than 7,500 gifted students.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: F 3 Virginia has demonstrated several other favorable conditions to reform and innovation including a state-funded pre-K initiative, a P-16 council, a program for developing a high-skill work force and the legislative-mandated and state-board produced standards of quality that require local boards to implement innovative programs.		
Total	55	45

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout its application, Virginia has demonstrated that it will be offering more rigorous courses in STEM subjects to better prepare students in these areas, including underrepresented groups. It will also be working with external STEM-knowledgeable partners to enhance instruction in the relevant courses and motivate students to become more interested STEM careers. One example of Virginia's commitment in this area is the Governor's Career and Technical STEM Academies that will focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics and involve partnerships between PK-12, higher education and the local business community. Another example is that Virginia will establish K-8 standards, providing educators with STEM concepts that they can integrate into their instruction. It will also develop K-8 STEM eLearning Modules to assist teachers in integrating engineering and technology into K-8 mathematics and science content. Also, Virginia will continue to benefit from a National Math and Science Initiative grant that enables the state to expand access to college-level courses for traditionally under-represented students. During its first two years, both the participation and performance of high-school students in math and science AP programs increased.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments:		

Absolute Priority Throughout its proposal, Virginia has demonstrated that it is dedicated to a comprehensive approach to education reform. It is particularly determined to increase student achievement as evidenced by its ongoing attention to high standards and achieving them. It grasps that the only way graduation rates will be increased is by putting into place strong deterrents to dropping out such as literacy screening in the early grades and providing highly qualified teachers which they are making a huge effort to do by first identifying them and then producing them. The State has been making progress in raising achievement scores for sub groups and it is making changes to close achievement gaps through such measures as increasing the number of at-risk children served in high quality pre-school programs demonstrated by participation increasing from 6,000 in 2003-4 to 16,000 currently. Virginia is also focused on increasing college enrollment, taking steps such as increasing the percentage of students successfully completing Algebra I by the eighth grade, the proportion of high school students earning an Advanced Studies Diploma and the percent of students enrolled in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment courses. Overall, there is an increased awareness of weak areas and serious attention to remedying them, made especially doable by the technology now available and the State's plans to use the data they plan to access to the fullest.

Total		0
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Grand Total	500	383
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Total	50	47
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(1) (i) Medium points were given to this subsection because the State of Virginia funding to public school both in terms of actual dollars and as a percentage remained substantially unchanged. There was \$7,595,533,607, appropriated for education in FY08 and \$7,819,254,912 in FY09. The percentage of the total revenues used to support elementary, secondary, and public higher education for FY 2009 was .31% greater than for FY 2008. For FY 2008, 24.54% was available and in FY 2009, 24.85%. (F) (1) (ii) High points were given to this subsection because Virginia does have policies that lead to equitable funding (a) between high-need LEAs (as defined in this notice) and other LEAs. "Virginia's funding policies include two mechanisms that increase equity in funding between high-need LEAs/other LEAs and between high-poverty schools/other schools: the Composite Index of Local Ability-to-Pay formula (Composite Index) and use of student free lunch eligibility in the funding formulas of various programs focusing on at-risk students. In FY10, the 40 high-need LEAs received \$6,215 per pupil in state funds while Virginia's other 96 LEAs received \$4,408 per pupil. This same amount also was true in schools within LEAs. There was no information about the actual range of funding between the wealthiest LEAs and poorest LEAs.

(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	30
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(2) (i) Medium points were assigned this section. In legal statutes, there is no limit on the number of allowed charter schools. Additional points could not be given because only local boards can authorize charter schools for students in their own resident area(s). The charter school law has been used very infrequently and for the past five years the number of charter schools in the whole state have ranged between 3 and 5. The Virginia General Assembly's most recent change to the charter school law was in 2009, and the change was to remove the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. "The Code of Virginia, (§ 22.1-212.5), defines public charter schools in Virginia as nonsectarian, nonreligious, or non-home-based alternative schools located within a public school division." (F)(2) (ii) Low points were assigned to this section because of limits on authorizers and low use. Public charter schools are operated by agreement with a local school board(s). Public charter schools are subject to the same accountability measures as any other public school within a school division since they were created by the same local boards of education. Consequently, the accountability structure (test scores and other benchmarks) used for state accreditation and for meeting federal benchmarks is the same as that for other public schools. Since 1998 when the initial charter school law was passed, only 10 charter schools have been approved by local boards of education. Presently four charter schools are in operation. Since school year 2004-2005, it appeared that approximately one new charter school has been approved in Virginia every year and one has been closed. The number went from three to four in the last two years. The main reason for closing charter schools was "lack of sufficient program in achieving academic goals." (F)(2) (iii and iv) Medium points are assigned this section. Virginia charter schools receive the same per-pupil funding that the student would have earned in the district of residence because they are schools in that LEA. They also get an equitable portion of funds for facilities. (F)(2) (v) High points are assigned this section. Virginia has no state laws or rules that would prohibit an LEA from creating an innovative, autonomous school. In fact, the Virginia charter school law is more designed to address innovative schools than charter schools. Virginia currently has 17 experimental, innovative, or year-round programs in five school divisions throughout the state.

(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: (F)(3) Maximum points are given this section because Virginia listed many other significant reform conditions that qualify for this section: It listed numerous laws, programs that have increased student achievement or graduation rates, narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes. Many of the program provided students with opportunities they would not have had if those reforms had not been made.		
Total	55	42

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: . Virginia demonstrated exemplary attention to STEM on many components of the proposal. The Virginia proposal does meet the STEM priority competitive requirements. The proposal was strong in providing assistance to teachers needing to develop content expertise. The proposal also was strong on continuing and developing State and LEA partnerships with businesses and numerous IHE entities. The proposal noted numerous special programs focused on STEM concerns that they intend to continue and expand. The proposal could have given more attention to programs that encouraged under represented populations. However, plans to expand the current number of Governor's Career and Technical STEM Academies by eight additional academies will likely help with this concern. Because the reviewers are required to give all or none points to this section, the proposal will be given 15 points.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: The Virginia RTTT proposal was a reviewer unfriendly document in some sections. This unfriendliness made giving points to the proposal difficult. Data was not easy to find and in many cases was missing. Some of the subsections were extremely good. At other times, the reviewer was sent to appendices that had only raw data that required extensive study to determine answers. On several occasions, the proposal (on required questions) had no responses or provided generalities that did not answer the questions. This was especially true of section C where there were many responses that promoted instructional use of technology and did not address required questions on "data systems." In sections B and D, the proposal in some subsections provided plans for resources and guidance to LEAs who have local control options to use or reject the guidance and resources as they wished. However, the Virginia proposal does address all of the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA. The Virginia proposal did meet the conditions required for the absolute priority. The proposal also had strengths in its emphasis on increasing student achievement and increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The Virginia RTTT proposal is given a yes for meeting the requirements of this section.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	323
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system." It does not appear that the state's current plan incorporates either of those lessons. It appears that the turnaround specialists that are being proposed will be external school operators and will be charged with working only with the school as opposed to building the capacity of the LEA. The disconnect between the lessons that the state has apparently learned from past experience and the proposal that it puts forth now raise questions about the likely success of this plan.

Total	50	23
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The percentage of state budget going to education increased slightly between FY08 and FY09. Clearly, education funding has remained a priority within the budget. This criterion was awarded 4 of 5 possible points, representing a score in the "high" category because while there was an increase, it a very small percentage increase. ii. Virginia has a number of policies to aid high need schools and LEAs. Data is provided indicating that the state spends considerably more per pupil in the high need LEAs than it does in the more wealthy LEAs. This does not, however, provide us with evidence that the actual funding that students receive in different LEAs is equitable. One could imagine a state in which high wealth LEAs vastly outspend low-wealth LEAs, despite significant infusions of state funds in the low-wealth LEAs. Without data to assess the equity of funding across schools and/or LEAs, it is impossible to reach a final assessment on this criterion. Points are given for the evidence that the application provides about the state's efforts in this area, even if the equity outcomes are not provided.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	40
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>i. The state does not limit the number of charter schools in a state or division. ii. Virginia has detailed regulations guiding the approval and reauthorization of charter schools. The guidelines about charter schools are based heavily on student achievement outcomes as well as compliance with the original terms of the charter contract, including adherence to state and local academic standards. LEAs have closed charter schools due to lack of student achievement and lack of adherence to standards (among other reasons). iii. Funds in Virginia are allocated to charter schools in the same way they are allocated to traditional public schools. iv. Charter schools receive funding in ways very similar to traditional public schools. The application states that this is "depending upon the terms of the agreement with the local school board." However, there is no evidence provided that would indicate that the charter school receives any more or less support from the state than a traditional public school would. In addition, the state has a public charter school fund to support the establishment of charter schools that "stimulate the development of alternative public education programs." v. The establishment of innovative and autonomous public schools is dependent largely on LEAs. The state has a waiver process for innovative schools that may need exemption from state requirements.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	3
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Virginia LEAs have flexibility in what they allow schools to do. For example, they can exceed required minimum school days, grant course credit for mastery of content rather than "seat time," or partner with other LEAs to grant charters. The state has authority to set minimum standards and guidelines. While all of the standards and supports that the state has put in place surely contribute to the achievement of Virginia's students, there is no evidence provided here that particular conditions for reform or innovation have contributed to increased student achievement, graduation, or other important outcomes.</p>		

Total	55	50
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Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: Throughout its application, Virginia has cited a number of initiatives that target STEM education in particular. The state has a regular revision process for science and math standards and works with several national consortia to ascertain that these standards would position Virginia graduates for college or career success. The state's UTeach program seeks to recruit more and high quality STEM teachers. The proposed development of 8 new Career and Technical Academies focused on STEM educational programs would enhance the offerings to students. And the eLearning modules that the state proposes would enhance the programs and materials that teachers could provide. These are only some of the initiatives that the application details to support STEM education. Though the scale of some of these programs is not always apparent in the application, it does appear that the state has made a conscious effort to improve its STEM offerings for both elementary and secondary school students and teachers.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		Yes
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Virginia has demonstrated some effort in all four education reform areas. It has also provided evidence that the state conditions would not significantly hinder reform efforts. The varying commitments of LEAs that are designated as "participating" is of some concern. The application makes clear that LEAs in Virginia have significant local control. This fact, in combination with the limited agreement of LEAs on the state MOU, may make it difficult to use the Race to the Top funds to directly achieve the state's goals and the improved student outcomes that are desired.		
Total		0

Grand Total	500	278
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already started advertising for potential partners and has a timeline to select these partners after the Race to the Top funding is announced. It also plans to have ongoing monitoring of these schools to evaluate the improvements along the way. Virginia's plan needs some improvement. Since the state's historic performance on school turnaround has not been strong, according to the narrative, it's not clear what lessons Virginia has learned from their history and results in this area. It's also not clear that the state has applied any lessons learned to their turnaround strategy for low-achieving schools moving forward.

Total	50	25
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F. General

	Available	Tier 1
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The percentage of state revenues spent on education in Virginia in FY 2008 increased by .31% in FY 2009. Virginia's policies seem to lead to equitable funding between high-need LEAs and other LEAs and between high-poverty schools and other schools within LEAs. According to the narrative, with federal funds like Title 1, additional funds have been provided to high-need schools. Additionally, in FY 10, the 40 high-need LEAs received \$1.1 billion in state funds, or \$6,215 per pupil while Virginia's other LEAs received \$4.5 billion or \$4,408 per pupil. The higher per pupil state funding driven to high-need LEAs would also impact the high-poverty schools within these LEAs.</p>		
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools	40	39
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Virginia's applicable laws regarding charter schools are listed in the application. The state recently passed a law in 2009 that removed the limit on the number of public charter schools that could be established in a school division. Virginia has laws in place governing charter schools and a list is enclosed in the narrative of the application for the past five years of the number of charter applications made, the number of charter schools approved, the number of charter schools denied and the number of charter schools closed. Public charter schools in Virginia are operated by agreement with a local school board and are subject to the same accountability measures as any other public school within a school division. Based on the narrative, it appears as if charters in Virginia have access to the same funding as traditional public schools. It does appear that based on the charter laws, school boards may establish contracts outlining funding provisions for a public charter school. According to the narrative, charter schools in Virginia could be eligible for the same facilities supports as other public schools, but this is all dependent upon the terms of the agreement with the local school board. The SEA also provides additional services like school building guidelines, facility conferences and training and playground safety to charter schools. Virginia currently has 17 experimental, innovative or year-round programs in five LEAs throughout the state. Virginia also operates Governor's Schools, which provide academically and artistically challenging programs beyond what is offered at students' home schools. These schools serve more than 7500 gifted students. There are also eight STEM academies.</p>		
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	5
<p>(F)(3) Reviewer Comments: Virginia has demonstrated other significant reforms in the state. The state recently revised its accreditation system for schools and defined a graduation rate for public schools. The Governor can also issue executive orders as a tool for education reform and this included establishing a P-16 Council in 2005.</p>		
Total	55	53

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM

	Available	Tier 1
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	15
Competitive Reviewer Comments: The applicant meets the STEM criteria given its focus on STEM throughout its application. Virginia has also taken some actions to strengthen the course of study in STEM. According to the narrative, the state has received national recognition for its STEM academic programs, with resounding student results. Additionally, the state is working with universities, state agencies, industry organizations and other STEM partners to prepare teachers in STEM, both in the individual subject areas, as well as in an integrated format. Finally, Virginia plans to prepare more students for advanced study and careers in STEM, including addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of STEM.		
Total	15	15

Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform

	Available	Tier 1
Absolute Priority - Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform		No
Absolute Reviewer Comments: Virginia's application did not comprehensively and coherently address the four education reform areas specified in the ARRA as well as the State Success Factors. Virginia did make a case for their state's standards potentially being more rigorous than the common core standards being developed. Given this, not having common standards will also mean not having common assessments, which is also problematic. Additionally, Virginia has a lot work to do to ensure that their data system meets at the America COMPETES act and given the state's hesitation to define teacher and principal effectiveness, most of the RTT initiatives to link student growth to teacher, principal and school of education results will also be challenging. Because the state has struggled with turning around low-performing schools, it will also be challenging for the state to do this if the data and assessment systems aren't aligned.		
Total		0
Grand Total	500	292