

New Hampshire's Race to the Top Proposal

January 19, 2010

Overview

Students are at the core of NH's vision for enacting reform through Race to the Top (RttT). NH's mission is to support the ongoing development of a comprehensive and coherent statewide education system that is focused on personalized learning, instructional rigor and high levels of cognitive demand for all students. The goals of its RttT transformation agenda are:

- To ensure that all NH students graduate from high school prepared to complete college and/or pursue a financially sustaining career; and
- To build an educational system that supports each student in the development of civic and personal responsibility, thus creating the human and social capital that will strengthen NH's global economic position in the 21st century.

With full support from the Governor's office, local education agencies, professional organizations, human service agencies, higher education institutions, and community groups, the State has developed a comprehensive RttT plan to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase the percentage of students who annually meet state standards and growth targets;
- Decrease the achievement gap for all groups especially English language learners and students with disabilities;
- Increase the graduation rate, while decreasing the dropout rate;
- Increase the percentage of students enrolling and completing postsecondary degrees or credentials;
- Improve teacher and leader preparation programs;
- Ensure equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders; and
- Expand the use of proven practices, using evidence to determine what approaches are working and bring them to scale.

NH's RttT plan is designed around the four American Reform and Recovery Assurances (ARRA) for education reform:

1. *Standards and assessment;*
2. *Data systems to support instruction;*
3. *Great teachers and leaders; and*
4. *Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.*

In support of these education reform areas, NH will implement several key strategies:

- Provide intensive, comprehensive assistance to the lowest-achieving schools;
- Support LEA education reform projects in the four priority areas;
- Establish seven Innovation Networks to share lessons learned and develop common tools and approaches to addressing the priority areas;
- Develop, research, disseminate and refine effective education practices;

- Expand and formalize research and development capacity in a Research Group; and
- Use data and research to improve systems for student success and inform policy across the State’s P-16 educational system.

To attain its expected outcomes in these areas, the State will utilize seven RttT strategic levers. Three levers address standards and assessment, two great teachers and leaders, one turning around persistently lowest-achieving schools, and one science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The fourth education reform area, data systems to support instruction, provides the foundation upon which informed decisions will be made to ensure that progress toward the goals and expected outcomes is occurring.

1 – Turning Around the 5% Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

Based on two criteria—a school’s Title 1 status and student achievement data over four years for elementary/middle schools and two years for high schools—the State identified its persistently lowest-achieving schools and invited those districts and schools to participate in its RttT initiative. Ten districts, each with one or two schools, accepted the invitation and signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to implement the State’s RttT reform plan. With the intensive support and guidance from an external partner and the Department, these districts and schools will develop a tailored transformation plan to improve instruction, promote student engagement and narrow achievement gaps among subgroups that includes participation in programs described under Leadership Development and Great Teachers and Leaders.

2 – Standards and Assessment

NH’s efforts in this area are two-fold: the potential adoption of the national Common Core K-12 Standards and the State’s involvement in an effort to develop assessments of those standards. With its current New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) partners (Rhode Island, Vermont, and Maine), NH will assess the alignment of the national Common Core K-12 Standards with NECAP standards. Prior to adoption of the Common Core, opportunities for involvement and input from districts and the larger education community will be provided. NH has also joined 29 states in a Council of Chief School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governors Association (NGA)-sponsored Balanced Assessment Consortium. This group will focus on assessments of the Common Core K-12 Standards that are grounded in a standards-based curriculum and managed as part of a tightly integrated system of standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction and teacher development.

3 – Board Examinations/Move On When Ready System

In another standards and assessment effort, eight districts will implement one of five rigorous, nationally and/or internationally recognized high school board examination programs: Cambridge University, Pearson EDEXCEL, ACT/Quality Core, International Baccalaureate and the College Board. RttT funding will provide curriculum materials and training for educators who teach these courses. The National Center for Education and the Economy will conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of both student outcomes and the implementation process in NH and other states that are participating in the pilot to assess the feasibility of large-scale implementation.

4 – High School Transformation/Redesign

NH's districts have implemented changes to school calendars, scheduling, teacher contracts and methods of instruction and assessment aimed at finding the best fit for the learning styles and goals of individual students. RttT will fund a district-led network of high schools and higher education partners that will continue to explore alternative pathways to graduation. The network will evaluate the utilization of digitized student portfolios and innovative instructional mediums such as on-line and on-demand instructional systems.

5 – Leadership Development

Within the area of Great Teachers and Leaders, NH will use RttT funding to select organizations with proven track records in the State to refine and implement a leadership academy and mentoring program for school and district leaders. The academy will provide an intensive, job-embedded professional development experience that focuses on strategic thinking, instructional leadership, using data to inform instructional and programmatic decisions, and building collaborative teams to increase student achievement and narrow the achievement gap between student subgroups. Through a train-the-trainers process, the academy is expected to be self-sustaining by the end of the grant period.

6 – Great Teachers and Leaders

In addition to the leadership academy, NH will pursue three other initiatives to continue to strengthen its current and prospective pool of teachers and leaders. A statewide committee with representatives from professional organizations, teachers and leaders from across the state, faculty from preparation programs, and staff from the Department will draft standards for effective teachers and leaders. Based on those standards, the committee will also develop evaluation models for teachers and principals to be piloted in districts across the state. These models will utilize multiple measures and processes to evaluate effectiveness with data on student growth a significant factor. Training and support will be provided to districts implementing the models, and the effective standards and models will be refined based on feedback from the field.

NH will also design and implement the NH Mentoring and Induction Network for New Teachers (NH MINNT), a program to nurture beginning educators. Building on programs and strategies already in place, NHMINNT will create a mentoring and induction academy and online professional learning opportunities for new teachers and mentors. The comprehensive project, which will include the development of training and support materials, is expected to be self-sustaining at the end of the grant period.

7 – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

Embedded within the six strategies described above will be activities to increase access to high-quality STEM-related experiences for all students, but particularly for young women; to reduce the number of college freshman needing a remedial math course; and to recruit highly qualified math and science teachers.

Efforts by Districts or Consortia to Support the State's Reform Plan

In December, a request for proposals that addressed the four education reform areas was distributed to NH's district superintendents and professional organizations. After a rigorous review, proposals from 25 districts, consortia or professional organizations became part of NH's RttT reform plan. The districts, or lead district in the case of consortia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing to the adoption of all or a significant portion of the State's reform plan. These efforts, along with the statewide initiatives described above, will provide the testing ground for a variety of approaches that will be evaluated for effectiveness by the Department's Research Group. Through a continuous cycle of action, reflection, research and refinement, school districts will develop the personnel and systems needed for sustained improvement through the implementation of research-based policies and practices

Serving All NH Schools

The collaborative work with districts, schools, professional associations and other groups will increase the effective tools, approaches and resources available to NH's districts and schools. As results emerge from the work of the 35 participating school districts, professional organizations, external partners and the Department, they will be shared with all New Hampshire schools. Network meetings, webinars, forums and research briefs will be used throughout the grant period to disseminate findings.