

Race to the Top Progress Update

Monthly Call (March 2011)

State: Maryland

Part A: *In preparation for monthly calls, States must answer the following questions.*

1. Describe the State's key accomplishments and challenges this month.

Accomplishments

- Hired personnel for various projects, including: specialists, coordinators, project managers, finance manager, and consultants
- Completed detailed project schedules for the first year and defined milestones for out years for all 54 RTTT projects
- Developed detailed cost proposal for RTTT technology infrastructure, in addition to co-location foot print calculations and environment profile for the projected co-location host.
- Drafted MOU to develop program evaluation for RTTT
- Developed application process for LEA's to recruit teachers in critical shortage areas in world languages, and to provide incentives to ESOL teachers
- Developed framework and content for three-day Educator Effectiveness Academies to be provided to 6,000 teachers and leaders in 11 regional sites in the summer of 2011
- Established cross-functional team for the Breakthrough Center to coordinate services being offered to low-performing schools through eight (8) RTTT programs
- Developed and shared SOW amendment process with liaisons from all LEA's
- Completed first draft of the Maryland Charter School Quality Standards
- Have begun to discuss how to incorporate SOW's into Master Plan

Challenges

- Educator Effectiveness Council – The teacher and principal evaluation system continues to be a challenge. The Council is working towards recommendations that are due in June.
- Baltimore City – Baltimore City is in the process of reorganizing internally. Some projects, particularly the Breakthrough Center and ancillary services, are affected by these changes.

2. Is the State on track to meet the goals and timelines associated with the activities outlined in its scope of work? If not, what strategies is the State employing in order to meet its goals?

- Considering the delay in getting the State Scope of Work approved, we are indeed on track with most of the projects. We will have to submit amendments to some projects. We are hopeful that we can catch up in those areas where we have fallen behind.
3. How can the Department help the State meet its goals?
- The biggest help we could receive is in the approval of our State Scope of Work so that LEAs can begin in earnest the work that will be necessary to accomplish their goals.
 - Continue to provide information from other states with the educator evaluation system

Part B: *In preparation for monthly calls, States must also answer the following questions for two application sub-criteria (e.g. (A)(2) and (D)(4)).*

Criteria: D

Sub-criterion: D5

Relevant projects: Teacher Induction Academies (39/25); Professional Development for Executive Officers (40/15); Educator Effectiveness Academies (41/24); Low-achieving Schools Academy (42/17); On-line Professional Development for Educator Effectiveness Academies (43/21)

1. What methods, tools, and processes is the State using to determine the progress toward goals and the quality of implementation of the activities described in this sub-criterion?

As with all sub-criteria, we are utilizing project management techniques for monitoring and controlling the program at the project/activity level and for determining progress towards goals. Microsoft Project Professional is being used to develop project level schedules. Project schedules have been detailed for 54 projects with specific activities planned for the remainder of the year. Each project manager reviews their respective project schedule with their program director to ensure that project activities, issues, risks, and concerns are discussed.

Three of the above projects have not yet begun. The Professional Development for Executive Officers will begin at the conclusion of the work of the Educator Effectiveness Council. The Low-achieving Schools Academy is essentially a year 2 project, with some groundwork being done at the end of year 1. The Online Professional development for Educator Effectiveness Academies is a year 3 and 4 project.

We have made great headway with the Teacher Induction Academies. The RFP has been completed and approved by the Attorney General. It has been published for vendor response. It was posted to the Bid Board. A pre-bid Meeting was held. The location bid process is complete and the contract has been signed. We have hosted a Teacher Mentor Network Meeting and solicited initial thoughts and input for the Teacher Induction Academies. We have visited LEA liaisons to introduce the new team and begin communication and collaboration.

The Educator Effectiveness Academies are also moving along very well. We have established dates and locations for all sites. We have tentatively identified and selected master teachers to facilitate the delivery of academy content. We have developed an approved framework for the three day academy. We have developed draft content for each day of academy. We have initiated the registration process. And we have secured input from state-wide stakeholders regarding academy plans.

2. Provide a narrative that demonstrates the extent of the State's progress toward its goals and alignment to the scope of work.

The State of Maryland is one of the few participating states that have gone to tremendous lengths to develop a Microsoft Project consolidated program schedule comprised of over 6,184 lines of activities and milestones. This consolidated schedule detailed activities by year and by quarter for each of the 54 projects. Each project manager is reviewing and updating their respective schedules; however, given the delayed approval for the State SOW from MSDE, coupled with the fact that amendments will be required to update various project schedules to reflect actual implementation timeframes, some of the revised timeframes are not actionable until full approval is received from USDE.

The progress on Criterion D(5) has been significant. As with all of our projects, we are tracking it closely, and at this point we have no significant concerns.

3. What is the State’s assessment of the quality of implementation to date?

The initiation phase for this project has progressed efficiently. To date, the quality of implementation has been excellent. There is a cross-divisional team doing the planning, and the collaboration has been outstanding.

4. If the State is not on track with the goals, timelines and quality of implementation outlined in the scope of work, why not, and what strategies is the State employing in order to meet its goals?

We are fine in terms of these projects.

5. What are the potential obstacles and/or risks that could impact the State’s ability to achieve its goals?

We really do not anticipate any obstacles and risks as long as amendments we are considering are approved. We are quite confident that we can meet the goals of this project.

Evaluation: Performance and progress to date (choose one)

Problematic (1) Weak (2) Adequate (3) Strong (4) ***Advanced (5)

Part B: *In preparation for monthly calls, States must also answer the following questions for two application sub-criteria (e.g. (A)(2) and (D)(4)).*

Criteria: E

Sub-criterion: E2

Relevant projects: 44/41 (Breakthrough Center), 45/67 (RITA), 46/57 (Extended Learning/Culture), 47/45 (Student services), 48/69 Health Services), 49/63 (Physical Activity), 50/58 (Extended Learning), 51/71 (STEM – Project Lead the Way), 52/77 (Primary Talent Development)

1. What methods, tools, and processes is the State using to determine the progress toward goals and the quality of implementation of the activities described in this sub-criterion?

In the previous discussion, we mentioned the project management we are following to monitor all of our projects, including this ones in this section.

A Cross-Functional Team, facilitated by Robert Glascock, the project manager for the Breakthrough Center, was established and meets monthly to coordinate the delivery of all services to the Breakthrough Center schools. The projects managers for projects #67, #57, #45, #69, #63, #58, #71, and #77 are members of the Cross-Functional Team. Each of these projects provides services that the low-performing schools, working through the Breakthrough Center, need to access to bring about improved student performance. In addition to the project managers, representatives from Title I, SIG, Special Education, Leadership Development, Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC), Academic Policy, Assessment, and Instructional Technology are also members of the Cross-Functional Team. During their initial meetings, the team defined their purpose/mission and established goals. During their monthly meetings, they are able to identify what services have been and/or need to be provided to the targeted schools and identify obstacles they are facing and generate solutions to those obstacles. Members of the team are in daily and weekly contact to help coordinate these services.

2. Provide a narrative that demonstrates the extent of the State's progress toward its goals and alignment to the scope of work.

There has been significant progress toward attaining the goals of these related projects (i.e. Breakthrough Center (41), RITA Team Audits (67), Extend Student Learning and Improve School Culture (57), Coordinated Student Services (45), School Health Services (69), Physical Activity (63), Extended Learning (58), STEM (71), and Primary Talent Development (77)). The formation of the Cross-Functional Team has enabled them to work effectively and efficiently. Their accomplishments are delineated below:

- Established oral and written a partnership agreement with the Prince Georges County Public Schools (PGCPS) and an oral agreement with the Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS).
- Expanded implementation of Maryland's innovative statewide system of support with the Breakthrough Center approach for transforming low-achieving schools and LEAs.
- With partner districts and through the federal 10003(g) program, negotiated the adoption of one of the four school intervention models (closure, restart, turnaround, or transformation, as defined by RTTT guidance and State regulations) and the development of a detailed and sound plan for implementing the model.
- Identified 10 feeder schools so far to the lowest-achieving School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools in Baltimore City (3 schools) and Prince George's County (7 schools)

- Participated in Title I school monitoring visits to learn baseline needs of selected RTTT schools.
- Implemented Gateway to Technology at Garrison Middle School (BCPS).
- Reached agreement with BCPS and PGCPs on the administration of the RITA assessment for the 10 feeder schools identified to date. Selected 15 RITA consultants and provided training for RITA leaders and team members.
- Hired the following individuals – Behavior Specialist, Health Services Specialist, Physical Activity Specialist, and Extended Learning Specialist – who will develop and implement plan to deliver services to the schools.
- Created and approved auditing tool for student services
- Worked with LEAs to pass and adopt policy-changing conditions that will grant access to monetary and human supports, teachers specially trained and skilled to work in low-achieving schools, and specially trained teachers and/or experienced principals.
- Created a pathway for teachers (the Teach for Maryland Consortium) and leaders (e.g. NLNS) to excel in low-achieving schools.
- Compiled the results of the second monitoring visit for the Tier I and II SIG schools in BCPS and PGCPs and developed a plan for dissemination of findings.
- Met with individuals from Sheppard-Pratt and Johns Hopkins University to identify, implement, and assess a school culture assessment tool.
- Supported the development of a vision and short and long-term plan for turning around the four Tier II middle schools in PGCPs.
- Hired 50% of the education specialist positions for teacher professional development in the lowest-achieving schools. The additional 50% will be hired as qualified candidates are identified and interviewed.
- Completed and shared fact sheet on Primary Talent Development that was distributed to feeder schools in PGCPs.
- Completed and shared fact sheet on Breakthrough Center’s RTTT services to BCPS and PGCPs.
- Provided professional development for elementary and middle school teachers in the four lowest-achieving middle schools and seven feeder schools.
- Trained physical education department chairs/team leaders in PGCPs on the Fitnessgram assessment protocols.

3. What is the State's assessment of the quality of implementation to date?

At this point, we believe that the quality of implementation is adequate to strong in large measure due to the level of collaboration among and between project managers and other resource personnel..

4. If the State is not on track with the goals, timelines and quality of implementation outlined in the scope of work, why not, and what strategies is the State employing in order to meet its goals?

Yes, we are on track. However, there are some issues that will cause us to amend our timeline. The issues are currently being resolved:

- The development of a written partnership agreement with Baltimore City Public Schools and MSDE's Breakthrough Center has been delayed due to the re-organization of their central office, including the structure and functions of the school turnaround office. BCPS has been unable to hire two staff members for the turnaround office, one of which would serve as the liaison to the Breakthrough Center.
- Due to the Maryland State Assessments (MSA) testing in March, the administration of the RITA assessment originally scheduled for February and March 2011 has been re-scheduled for late April and May 2011. The results of the RITA assessment identify areas for school improvement. Targeted services from MSDE will support school improvement efforts in those schools. School improvement plans developed for the 2011-12 school year will address the needs identified from the RITA assessments.
- Hiring qualified educational specialists, especially in the areas of science and math, to provide professional development in the lowest-achieving schools has been challenging. The positions have been re-advertised and we anticipate being able to hire qualified specialists this spring.

5. What are the potential obstacles and/or risks that could impact the State's ability to achieve its goals?

At this time, we do not see any obstacles and/or risks that will prohibit us from achieving our goals.

-Evaluation: Performance and progress to date (choose one)

Problematic (1) Weak (2) Adequate (3) ***Strong (4) Advanced (5)