

# Preliminary Review: CCSSO Strategic Initiatives Identified in State Phase 1 Race to the Top Applications

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## About The Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

## About Learning Point Associates

Learning Point Associates is a nonprofit educational consulting organization with 25 years of direct experience working with and for educators and policymakers across the country to transform education systems and student learning. Our vision is an education system that works for all learners, and our mission is to deliver the knowledge, strategies, and results so educators will make research-based decisions that produce sustained improvements throughout the education system. Learning Point Associates manages a diversified portfolio of work ranging from direct consulting assignments to major federal contracts and grants. Since 1984, Learning Point Associates has operated the regional educational laboratory serving the Midwest—initially known as the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory® (NCREL®) and now known as REL Midwest. Learning Point Associates also operates the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, National Charter School Resource Center, Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, and Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center.

## Acknowledgments

The planning, data collection, and data analysis of all 41 Phase 1 Race to the Top applications for this report took place between February 18, 2010, and March 18, 2010. CCSSO and Learning Point Associates would like to thank the following staff members and consultants for their contributions, insights, and editorial assistance to ensure that this analysis was available to CCSSO's members in time for the Legislative Conference in March 2010: Lois Adams-Rodgers, Monica Bhatt, Trish Brennan-Gac, Gina Burkhardt, Victoria Cirks, Adam Ezring, Jan Gahala, Christine Hulbert, Laura Johnson, Melissa Johnston, Liz Kershaw, Laura King, Sabrina Laine, Christopher Lohse, Peter McWalters, Cassandra Meyer, Hillary Michaels, Chris Minnich, Kathleen Paliokas, Elizabeth Partoyan, Amy Potemski, Beth Ratway, Chris Rausher, Lauren Stillman, Ted Stilwill, Asta Svedkauskaite, Cathy Townsend, Winsome Waite, Caroline Wentzel, Gene Wilhoit, and Sara Wraight.

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## Introduction

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) has targeted a significant amount of resources to state and local education systems, which presents historic opportunities as well as challenges for states. ARRA also created new funding streams, including the prominent and competitive Race to the Top grant.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and Learning Point Associates share a mutual interest in reviewing the Phase 1 Race to the Top applications from the initial 41 states. With the goal of gleaning information from the state narratives that might be of value in understanding and supporting emerging state education agency (SEA) strategy and direction, in late February 2010, the two organizations drafted a set of questions to be answered from a review of the applications. Four CCSSO strategic initiatives framed the responses: education workforce; information systems and research; next generation learners; and standards, assessment, and accountability. A summary of this analysis is presented in this report.

Prior to partnering on this work, CCSSO and Learning Point Associates have been active in supporting state ARRA efforts, including Race to the Top. CCSSO has conducted the following work to assist states in responding to the requirements of ARRA-funded programs.

- ❖ Provide a comprehensive transformational framework, *Transformative Change for America's Children: A Matter of Choice (A Framework for Race to the Top Proposals and Beyond)*.
- ❖ Create and maintain a relevant online clearinghouse ([www.ccsso.org/RTTclearinghouse](http://www.ccsso.org/RTTclearinghouse)) designed to assist states and link them to external resources and organizations.
- ❖ Identify natural, collaborative networks through state consortia development as well as partnerships between states and leading experts, organizations, and foundations, especially as they relate to Race to the Top funds.
- ❖ Share key ARRA knowledge and success stories.

With regard to Race to the Top, CCSSO employed a four-part strategy through which it conducted a focus group of SEA members, developed a full membership survey to identify needs and interests, hosted content-specific webinars, and established an online clearinghouse. In September 2009, CCSSO surveyed its members to determine the priority areas in which the organization could offer its support as states planned their applications for Race to the Top. Acting on the feedback, CCSSO offered seven webinars to its members during the months of October and November. In December, CCSSO launched a searchable, online clearinghouse that contains contact information for individuals, companies, and organizations that can provide assistance to states in completing Race to the Top applications and/or implementation of the plans described therein. In response to members' interest in collaboration, CCSSO began posting in this clearinghouse existing or future consortium models and designs that tie directly to Race to the Top.

Since the passage of ARRA, Learning Point Associates has tracked the development of the programs funded by this legislation, knowing the significant impact on the people and the organizations whose work it supports. Learning Point Associates launched an Education Recovery and Reinvestment Center website ([www.learningpt.org/recovery](http://www.learningpt.org/recovery)) to share this knowledge widely online and through its federally funded centers. For example, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (TQ Center) led the development of *Using ARRA Funds to Improve Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Distribution: An Interactive Mapping Tool* ([www.tqsource.org/arra](http://www.tqsource.org/arra)) to help states understand how to use multiple federal funds to address key teacher quality issues. The TQ Center held meetings in Denver, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., to provide SEA staff with access to information about and experts in teacher effectiveness and equitable distribution. In addition, the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center and Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, administered by Learning Point Associates, designed a series of Web conferences and convened a face-to-face meeting with states to enhance understanding of ARRA and help states build coherence across funded programs. The meeting was conducted in collaboration with another regional comprehensive center and two regional educational laboratories, and a total of 14 states were invited.

Building upon its ARRA work and existing relationships, Learning Point Associates was asked by two states to provide direct support for their Race to the Top application strategy development and application completion. In a more limited way, Learning Point Associates also was involved in three other states' application processes. This experience allowed Learning Point Associates to provide the content expertise required in each of the major areas of the application and to gain a perspective on the process in which states engaged to complete the application. Therefore, Learning Point Associates was well-positioned to work with CCSSO on this analysis.

CCSSO and Learning Point Associates are committed to providing state education stakeholders with the support needed to capitalize on ARRA funding to improve educational opportunities for all students. As the final ARRA funds are distributed and states begin the critical yet challenging work of implementation, this report strives to enhance the ability of CCSSO and Learning Point Associates to support states and tailor services and expertise to meet their needs.

## Process Overview

The analysis of the Phase 1 Race to the Top applications was conducted jointly by reviewers from CCSSO and Learning Point Associates. The review process included the following phases:

- ❖ **Planning.** During the planning phase, CCSSO and Learning Point Associates discussed and identified key questions related to CCSSO's strategic initiatives (education workforce; information systems and research; next generation learners; and standards, assessment, and accountability) that may be evidenced in the state applications. These key questions provided the framework for the data collection and included specific topics such as alternative certification, tiered licensure, educator evaluation and compensation, state data systems, standards and assessment, school improvement, and individualized instructional delivery systems.
- ❖ **Data Collection.** During the data collection phase, CCSSO and Learning Point Associates staff reviewed each of the 41 Phase 1 Race to the Top applications. The key questions identified in the planning phase provided the framework for data collection. The team of reviewers gathered the relevant information included in the state applications for each question. To ensure review consistency across all 41 applications, only information explicitly stated and provided in the applications was used for the review. Outside knowledge of state reform efforts or extant state documents not included in the application were excluded.
- ❖ **Data Analysis.** The data analysis phase was conducted in two rounds. The first round was conducted by Learning Point Associates reviewers and identified common observations and emerging trends across topic areas and applications. This information was compiled to inform the second round of data analysis, which was conducted in collaboration with staff from CCSSO. During this process, staff refined the analyses based on the four strategic initiatives of CCSSO.

The final summary of the data collected is presented in this report.

## Limitations

CCSSO and Learning Point Associates review team members realize that there is an understandably high level of interest in the first phase of Race to the Top applications. For that reason, it is especially important to fully list the limitations of this report. These limitations are as follows:

- ❖ The intention of this report is to capture information on state activities and directions with regard to CCSSO's four strategic initiatives. It is not intended to be a comprehensive summary of all state actions listed in the applications. It is not designed or intended to judge the quality of the content in the applications.
- ❖ This report is not a policy study; policy and practice are not documented through citations, surveys, or interviews.
- ❖ This report is a summary of statements made explicitly by states in an application for funding, and in some cases, the application required very narrow responses from states. As such, a complete picture of state activity may not be provided for the topics that were reviewed. The reviewers' ability to come to a conclusion as they answered particular questions was limited by the approach each state took in responding to the questions, the differences in states' interpretation of the requirements of the application, and the degree of detail that a state elected to include.
- ❖ The timing of the delivery of this report may raise inquiries in the field about the differences between the state finalists and nonfinalists in the competition. Although the reviewers considered including that information in the report, they found few differences and, given the noted limitations, decided that the information would be of limited value for the purpose of this report.

Even with these limitations, the applications provide some significant observations and trends that will be of interest to the Chief Committees for each of the strategic initiatives and to the CCSSO members generally. These observations provide a starting point for further conversations about emerging individual and collective state action.

## Phase 1 Application Review Through the Lens of CCSSO's Strategic Initiatives

### Overview

The U.S. Department of Education tailored the Race to the Top application to reflect key policies and education reform elements that it deems necessary to improve education systems in this country. However, the scope of this competition is limited and, as such, does not reflect the comprehensive elements of a broad education agenda. There are many instances in which the information that is missing from state applications is just as compelling as the information that states provided. This inconsistency raises questions that require ongoing dialogue with state education leaders. The review team hopes to begin these conversations through the information presented in this report and at the CCSSO 2010 Legislative Conference.

At the time this report was being drafted, the U.S. Department of Education (2010) released *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Blueprint for Reform)*. This document further clarifies the Obama administration's education reform agenda, which was first articulated through the passage and implementation of ARRA and created the Race to the Top competition. The vision and direction in this recent document will help state education leaders better contextualize the analysis presented in this report and enrich their conversation.

The information in this report is categorized by CCSSO's strategic initiatives pertaining to the following:

- ❖ Education Workforce
- ❖ Information Systems and Research
- ❖ Next Generation Learners
- ❖ Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

These sections of the report contain brief narratives and graphics that illustrate how Phase 1 Race to the Top applications addressed questions specifically of interest to CCSSO and Learning Point Associates. The conclusion provides general observations and trends that apply to each of these four areas.

The responses shown in the tables and figures in this report are categorized as follows:

- ❖ *Yes* – The application indicates that this item is in place and functional in the state.
- ❖ *No* – The application indicates that the state is not in the process of implementing this item and has no plans to do so.
- ❖ *In Progress* – The application indicates that the state has made progress in implementing this item.
- ❖ *Planned* – The application indicates that the state is in the planning stage for this item (applies to Table 7 and Figures 16–31).

## Education Workforce

Through the work of the Education Workforce strategic initiative, CCSSO seeks to identify the critical design elements of a high-quality educator development system and provide states with tools, approaches, and strategies to lead and/or support the necessary work to be conducted in each element. CCSSO has been working with the Education Workforce Chief Committee to articulate a design that focuses on individual educator development over the continuum of an educator's career to help states develop policy and provide support for improvement.

Historically, states have focused their efforts related to teachers and leaders on preparation and licensure, areas in which states have key policy levers for change. Through the Race to the Top competition, the U.S. Department of Education has created explicit state interests in teacher evaluation and compensation, which will require new partnerships with districts and schools. New theories of action and innovation regarding existing policy levers are needed to develop an integrated and comprehensive performance-based accountability and support system for the education workforce. The data presented in this section capture current state perspectives about some of these developing strategies.

Although the Race to the Top application focused on "great teachers and leaders," stronger emphasis was placed on teachers. Furthermore, the leadership portions of the application focused primarily on principals while superintendents were rarely mentioned. In fact, the application template issued by the U.S. Department of Education mentioned teachers 193 times, principals 128 times, and superintendents only seven times.

During the review of state applications, the CCSSO and Learning Point Associates review team examined whether or not states specifically mentioned programs and policies geared toward superintendents. The application process created no expectations that states would include information on superintendents, and only a few states did so, thus rendering meaningful observations impossible. Therefore, this report does not include data related to superintendents.

## **Alternative and Traditional Certification for Teachers**

Through the Race to the Top application, the U.S. Department of Education indicated that both traditional and alternative certification routes were acceptable means for preparing and certifying teachers. Through this grant, the U.S. Department of Education was clear in its expectation that states would support both options. In the recently released *Blueprint for Reform*, alternative certification is not given special attention. Instead, the document emphasizes holding both traditional and alternative certification programs accountable to the same standards—demonstrating the effectiveness of both types of graduates.

In the area of traditional certification, the Race to the Top application did not place requirements on states regarding tiered certification systems, but because this is a crucial area in the continuum of teacher quality, the review team was interested in how states addressed this issue.

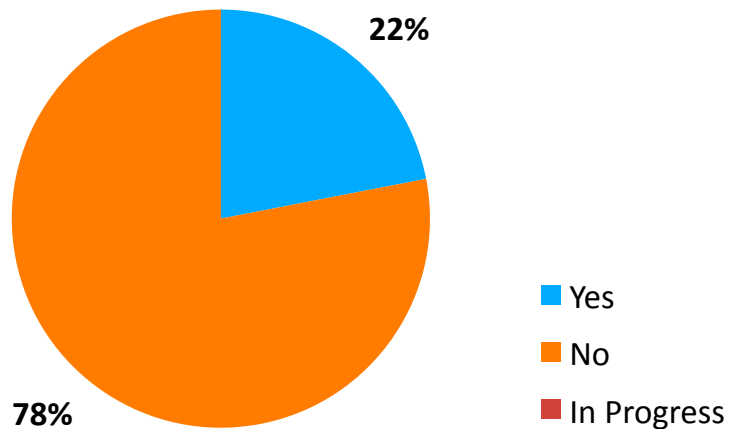
### **Alternative and Traditional Certification Observations for Teachers**

- ❖ All states reported having alternative certification programs with 80 percent of those states allowing programs not affiliated with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to offer programs (see Table 1).
- ❖ Only two states reported that they propose alternative certification programs that would not be based exclusively on credit hours.
- ❖ Of the applicants, 22 percent indicated that they propose district-based “grow your own” preparation programs for teachers (see Figure 1).
- ❖ Of the applicants, 15 states have tiered certification systems in place, and six more proposed doing so (see Figure 2).

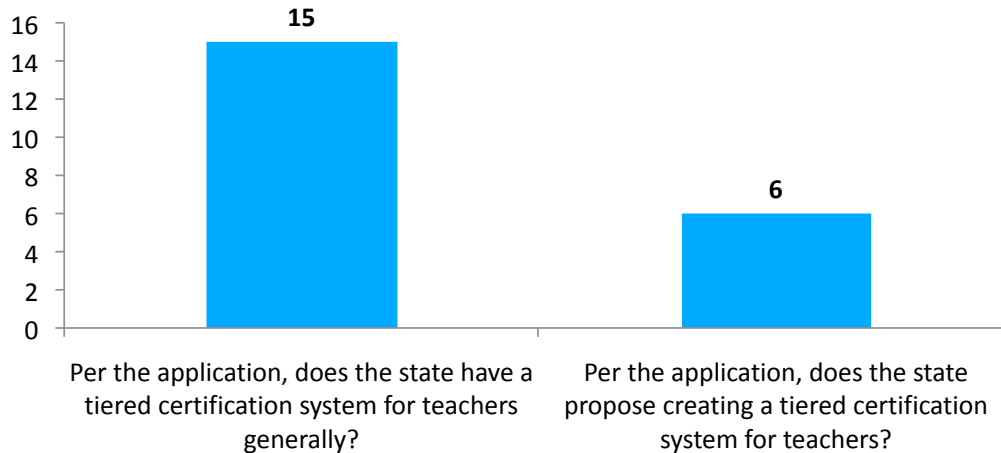
**Table 1. Alternative and Traditional Certification for Teachers**

Teacher Certification/Preparation Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
<b>Alternative Certification</b>						
Per the application, does the state authorize alternative routes to certification for teachers?	41	0	0	100%	0%	0%
Per the application, does the state permit alternative teacher preparation programs that are not affiliated with IHEs?	33	8	0	80%	20%	0%
Per the application, do local education agencies (LEAs) or intermediate districts operate alternative certification programs for teachers?	14	27	0	34%	66%	0%
Per the application, does the state (or some of its districts) propose creating district-based preparation programs ("grow your own") for teachers?	9	32	0	22%	78%	0%
Per the application, does the state propose creating alternative certification procedures or requirements (not just based on credit hours accumulated) for teachers?	2	39	0	5%	95%	0%
Per the application, does the state propose expanding its alternative certification programs for teachers?	21	20	0	51%	49%	0%
<b>Traditional Certification</b>						
Per the application, does the state have a tiered certification system for teachers generally?	15	26	0	37%	63%	0%
Per the application, does the state propose creating a tiered certification system for teachers?	6	35	0	15%	85%	0%
Per the application, does the state propose making changes to its existing certification system for teachers?	14	25	2	34%	61%	5%

**Figure 1. Per the application, does the state (or some of its districts) propose creating district-based preparation programs (“grow your own”) for teachers?**



**Figure 2. Number of States Answering “Yes” to Review Questions Relating to Tiered Certification Systems for Teachers**



### Teacher Evaluation

As noted previously, the Race to the Top application process recognizes the importance of teachers in improving student performance. The requirements also indicate a need for increased accountability for student performance among teachers and leaders. Consequently, the Race to the Top application placed a strong emphasis on the use of student performance data in the teacher and leader evaluation process, and states were expected to design an evaluation system that placed a “significant” emphasis on student growth (see Table 2). The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) further supports the federal emphasis on developing and implementing evaluation systems that differentiate effectiveness and provide meaningful feedback. The *Blueprint for Reform* emphasizes district-level evaluation systems, and it appears that the Obama administration intends for districts that have required systems to be granted more flexibility in the use of funds.

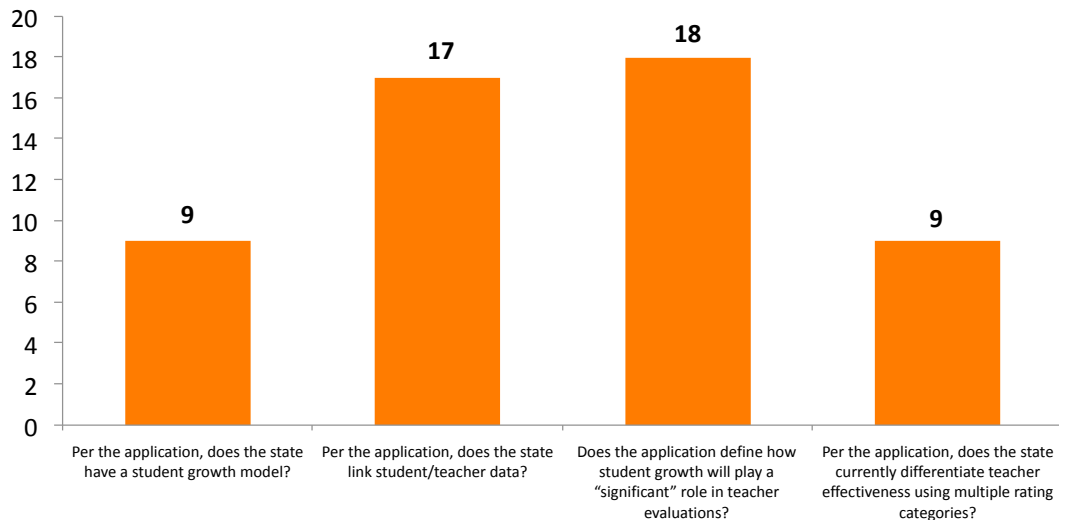
## Teacher Evaluation Observations

- ❖ All state applications on teacher evaluation described proposed teacher evaluation practices, but states differed significantly in their timelines and strategies for implementation. Some states indicated that they intend to develop a uniform system of teacher evaluation for all districts. Other states indicated that they would provide a model process or pilot a new approach that could then be adopted for use by all districts. Some states propose only to provide technical assistance to districts in improving evaluation processes.
- ❖ As indicated in Figure 3, states are at widely varying stages of readiness for the task of including evidence of student performance in teacher evaluations.

**Table 2. Teacher Evaluation**

Teacher Evaluation Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
Per the application, does the state have a student growth model?	9	20	12	22%	49%	29%
Per the application, does the state link student and teacher data?	17	8	16	41%	20%	39%
Does the application define how student growth will play a “significant” role in teacher evaluations?	18	23	0	44%	56%	0%
Per the application, does the state currently differentiate teacher effectiveness using multiple rating categories?	9	31	1	22%	76%	2%

**Figure 3. Number of States Answering “Yes” to Review Questions Relating to Teacher Evaluation Readiness**



## Teacher Compensation

The Race to the Top application did not focus on the design and implementation of compensation systems but emphasized the need for educator evaluations to inform compensation decisions. Despite its minimal presence in the Race to the Top application, compensation is a priority at the federal level as evidenced by The Teacher Incentive Fund, which focuses exclusively on educator compensation reform. The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) also addresses teacher compensation through the Teacher Leaders Innovation Fund, which is intended to offer grants to reform compensation systems and provide differentiated compensation and career advancement opportunities to educators. Thus, it is useful to track the state work in this area, the progress that has been made, and areas in which supports may be needed (see Table 3 and Figures 4–7).

### Teacher Compensation Observations

- ❖ Observations in this section of the report are somewhat limited. Although states noted some differences in approaches to compensation in their respective states, it is likely that they were referring to district-based compensation mechanisms rather than systemic implementation with state-level direction.
- ❖ Although a limited number of states reported current practices utilizing differentiated compensation strategies, when those responses were combined with the number of states that proposed work in this area, one sees a fourfold increase in state activity.

Table 3. Teacher Compensation

Teacher Compensation Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
Per the application, does the state <i>currently have</i> a compensation system for teachers based on the following?						
A. Professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)	6	33	2	15%	80%	5%
B. Filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs	6	33	2	15%	80%	5%
C. Student performance (multiple measures)	9	30	2	22%	73%	5%
D. Taking on leadership roles and responsibilities	7	32	2	17%	78%	5%
Per the application, does the state <i>propose</i> a compensation system for teachers based on the following?						
A. Professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)	24	17	0	59%	41%	0%
B. Filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs	26	15	0	63%	37%	0%
C. Student performance (multiple measures)	27	14	0	66%	34%	0%
D. Taking on leadership roles and responsibilities	26	15	0	63%	37%	0%

Figure 4. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for teachers based on professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)?

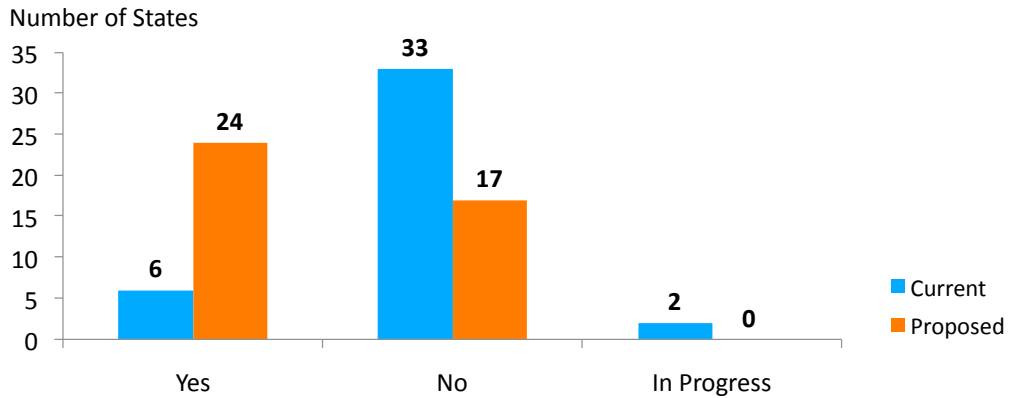


Figure 5. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for teachers based on filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs?

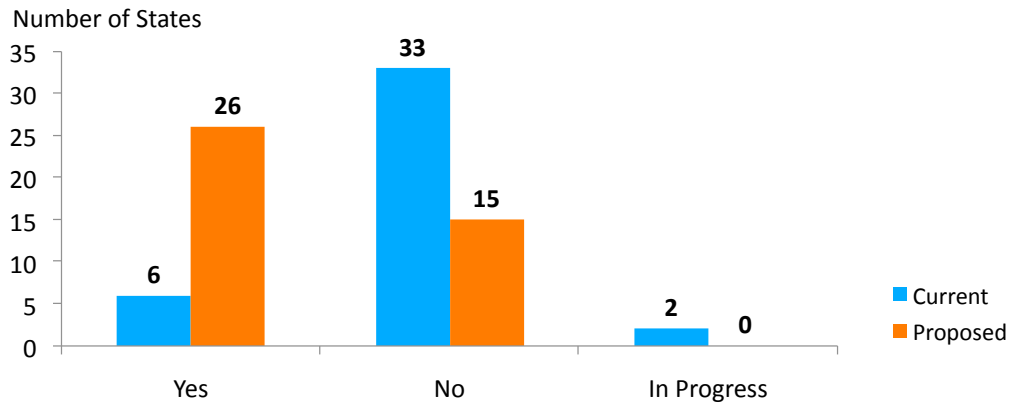


Figure 6. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for teachers based on student performance (multiple measures)?

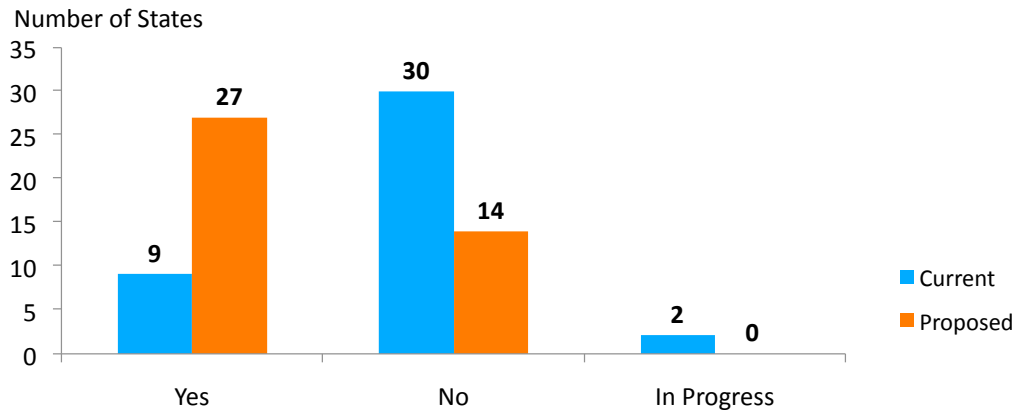
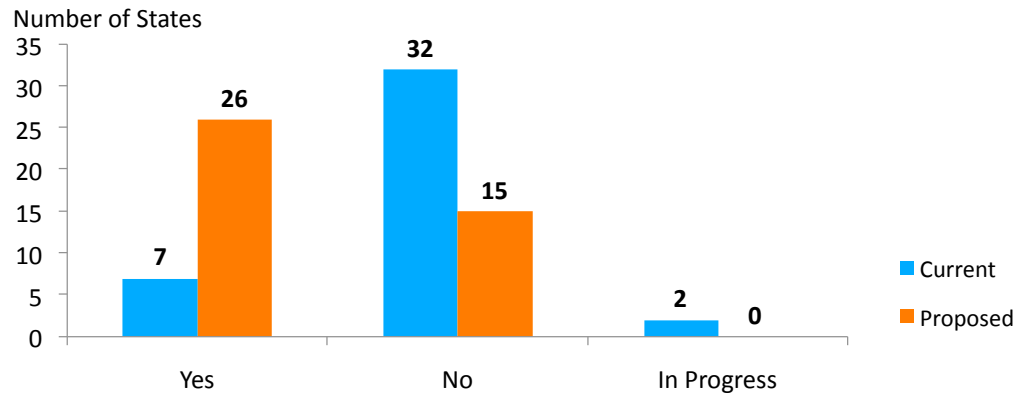


Figure 7. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for teachers based on taking on leadership roles and responsibilities?



### Alternative and Traditional Certification for Principals

Although the expectations for the creation of alternative routes to certification for principals may not be expressed as often in state Race to the Top applications as for teacher certification, the topic is still of significant interest to states (see Table 4).

#### *Alternative and Traditional Certification Observations for Principals*

- ❖ Of the applicants, 83 percent report having alternative certification programs for principals compared with 100 percent of states that allow it for teachers.
- ❖ The applications reflected that only 51 percent of states indicated that they allow organizations other than IHEs to recommend principals for certification, whereas 80 percent of states allow that practice for teachers.
- ❖ One state indicated that it proposes district-based “grow your own” preparation programming for principals (see Figure 8).
- ❖ Of the applicants, 15 percent reported that they propose alternative certification programs that would not be based exclusively on credit hours (see Figure 9).

**Table 4. Alternative and Traditional Certification for Principals**

Principal Certification Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
<b>Alternative Certification</b>						
Per the application, does the state authorize alternative routes to certification for principals?	34	7	0	83%	17%	0%
Per the application, does the state permit alternative principal preparation programs that are not affiliated with IHEs?	21	20	0	51%	49%	0%
Per the application, do LEAs or intermediate districts operate alternative certification programs for principals?	10	31	0	24%	76%	0%
Per the application, does the state (or some of its districts) propose creating district-based preparation programs ("grow your own") for principals?	1	40	0	2%	98%	0%
Per the application, does the state propose creating alternative certification procedures or requirements (not just based on credit hours accumulated) for principals?	6	35	0	15%	85%	0%
Does the state propose expanding its alternative certification programs for principals?	14	27	0	34%	66%	0%
<b>Traditional Certification</b>						
Per the application, does the state have a tiered certification system for principals generally?	10	30	1	24%	73%	3%
Per the application, does the state propose making changes to its existing certification system for principals?	19	21	1	46%	51%	3%

Figure 8. Per the application, does the state (or some of its districts) propose creating district-based preparation programs (“grow your own”) for principals?

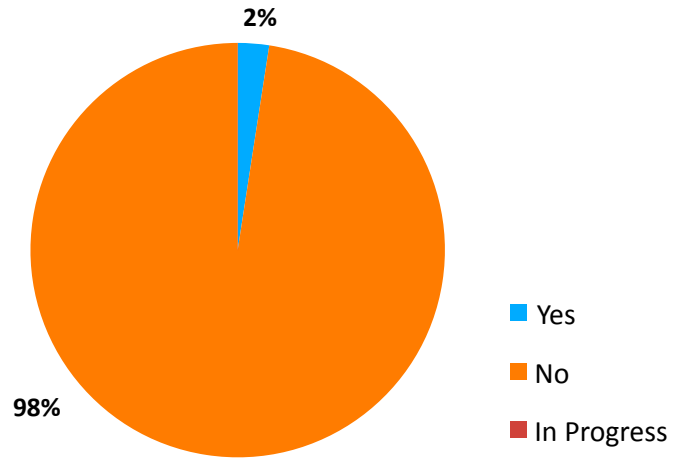
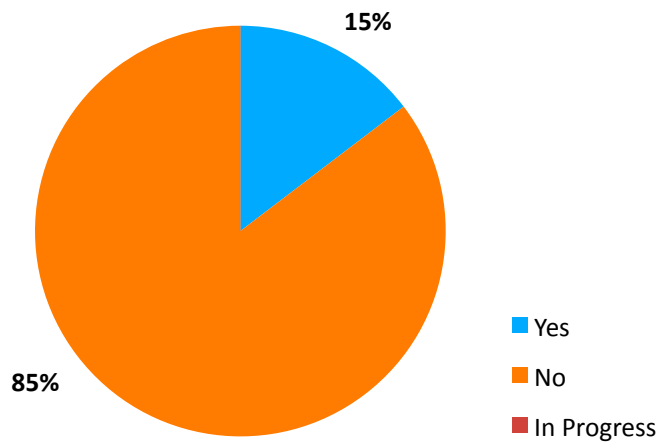


Figure 9. Per the application, does the state propose creating alternative certification procedures or requirements (not just based on credit hours accumulated) for principals?



## Principal Evaluation

As with teachers, the Race to the Top application did not focus on the design and implementation of compensation systems but emphasized the need for educator evaluations to inform compensation decisions. The Race to the Top requirements show an increased focus on the inclusion of student performance data in the evaluation of principals. The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) places equal emphasis on the development and implementation of principal and teacher evaluation systems.

### Principal Evaluation Observations

- ❖ Of the applicants, 41 percent described how student growth will play a “significant” role in principal evaluation (see Table 5 and Figure 10).
- ❖ Of the applicants, 20 percent currently differentiate principal effectiveness using multiple rating categories (see Figure 11).

Table 5. Principal Evaluation

Principal Evaluation Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
Does the application define how student growth will play a “significant” role in principal evaluations?	17	24	0	41%	59%	0%
Per the application, does the state currently differentiate principal effectiveness using multiple rating categories?	8	33	0	20%	80%	60%

Figure 10. Does the application define how student growth will play a “significant” role in principal evaluations?

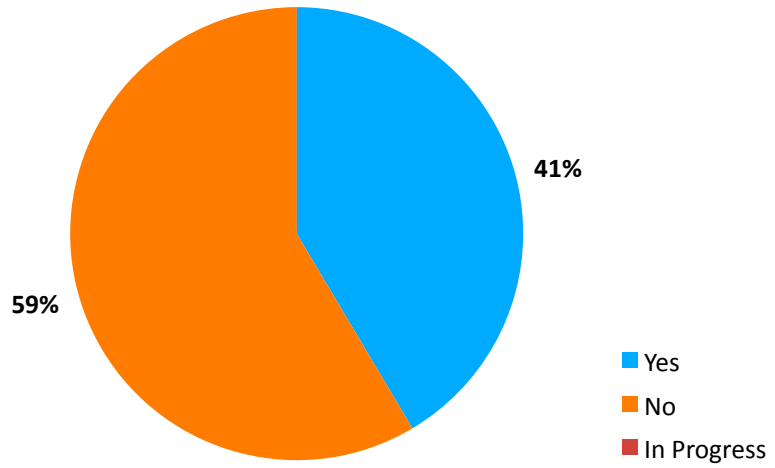
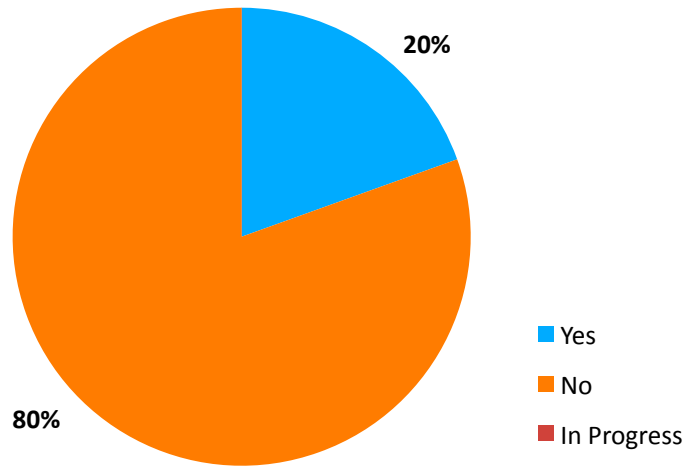


Figure 11. Per the application, does the state currently differentiate principal effectiveness using multiple rating categories?



## Principal Compensation

As with teachers, there is an increased expectation that principal compensation should reflect growth in student performance (see Table 6 and Figures 12–15).

### Principal Compensation Observations

- ❖ Although no states reported currently linking principal compensation to growth in student performance, 16 states indicated that they propose doing so (see Figure 14).

**Table 6. Principal Compensation**

Principal Compensation Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
Per the application, does the state <i>currently have</i> a compensation system for principals based on the following?						
A. Professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)	0	40	1	0%	98%	2%
B. Filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs	0	40	1	0%	98%	2%
C. Student performance (multiple measures)	0	40	1	0%	98%	2%
D. Taking on leadership roles and responsibilities	0	40	1	0%	98%	2%
Per the application, does the state <i>propose</i> a compensation system for principals based on the following?						
A. Professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)	16	25	0	39%	61%	0%
B. Filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs	12	29	0	29%	71%	0%
C. Student performance (multiple measures)	16	25	0	39%	61%	0%
D. Taking on leadership roles and responsibilities	13	28	0	32%	68%	0%

Figure 12. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for principals based on professional qualities (with respect to what educators know and can do)?

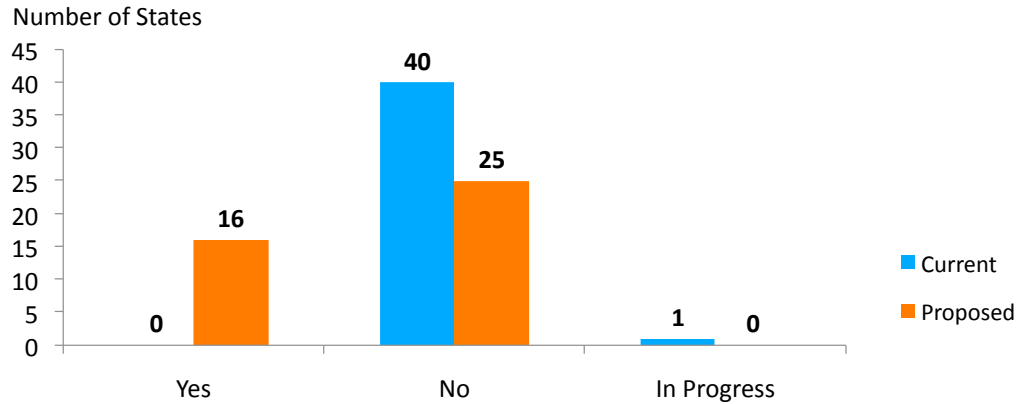


Figure 13. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for principals based on filling hard-to-fill positions based on location, subject matter, and students with special needs?

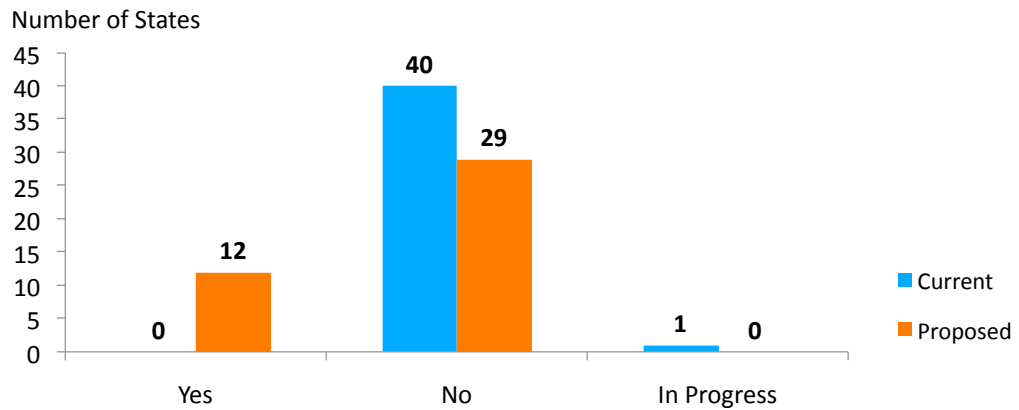
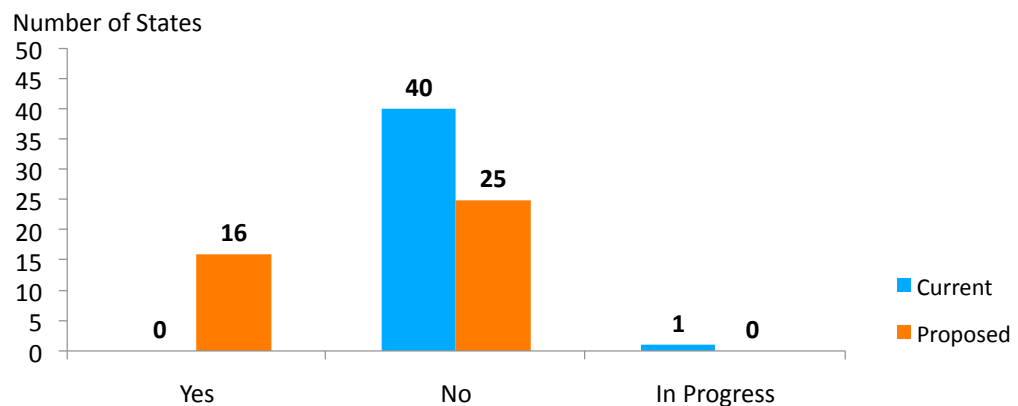
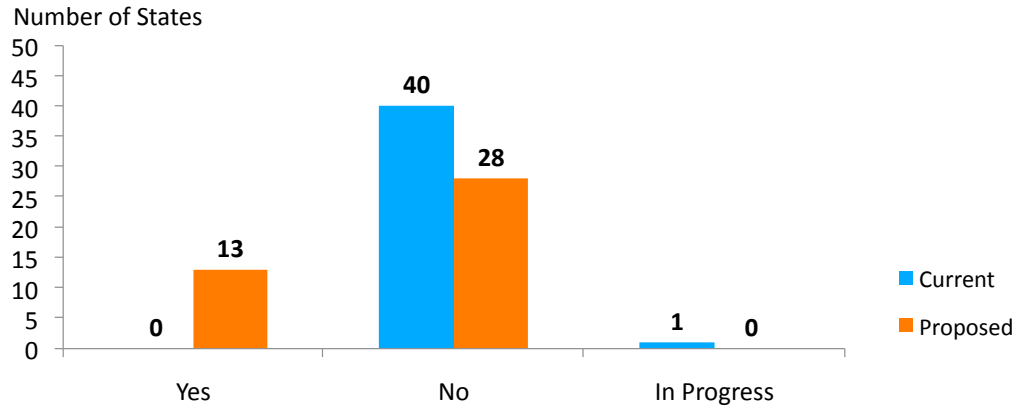


Figure 14. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for principals based on student performance (multiple measures)?



**Figure 15. Per the application, does the state **currently** have or **propose** a compensation system for principals based on taking on leadership roles and responsibilities?**



### **Mentoring, Induction, and Supports for Teachers and Principals**

As previously stated, CCSSO understands the critical importance of supports for the education workforce. The review team focused specifically on mentoring and induction supports.

The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) offers competitive grants that can be used for induction of promising teacher candidates for high-need schools, subjects, areas, and fields.

#### ***Mentoring, Induction, and Supports for Teachers and Principals Observations***

- ❖ Almost every state application mentioned the provision of supports for beginning teachers and principals, such as mentoring and induction. Some states have statewide systems in place for administering and overseeing these services. In other states, there are state requirements that are relegated to local levels to implement.
- ❖ The use of technology to support these programs was also frequently described.
- ❖ In some states, the manner in which this topic was addressed conveys a greater sense of commitment to provide these supports in a meaningful way. For example, several states indicated that they require successful completion of a formal mentoring and induction program in order for teachers and principals to obtain the next level of license.

## Information Systems and Research

Through its work on the Information Systems and Research strategic initiative, CCSSO seeks to serve states in the effective use of education information to improve education for all students. Understanding the connection between effective data use and thoughtful development of state data systems, the CCSSO Information Systems and Research review team has focused its Race to the Top analysis on the extent to which states claim to be engaged in the development of innovative and useful data system components and processes. Two specific priorities for the Information Systems and Research initiative are common data standards and the Learning Exchange and Resource Network (LEARN).

LEARN is an integrated information system and education technology platform meant to support students in their learning, educators in their professional development, and parents in supporting children's education. This secure system protects student privacy and security while allowing states to make data-based decisions that best support their public education students. To be more specific, LEARN—analogueous to an electrical grid for education information—is the set of information system design principles that flow from the attempt to ensure that information-based resources and learnings have access to every learner.

Both common data standards and LEARN are focused on the large-scale, meaningful data issues of data accuracy, comparability, periodicity, portability, and relevance. The topics of growth models and building teacher and student data links—for the potential of developing more effective judgments of student and teacher performance—also are of great interest to Information Systems and Research members of CCSSO.

A significant part of Learning Point Associates work centers on assisting states and school districts to transform data into powerful tools that help guide teaching and instruction. The administrators and teachers with whom Learning Point Associates staff work learn to read the stories that their data convey and then develop goals for student achievement. There is much to be learned about how states plan to help districts use data—whether it is state data available through their longitudinal data systems or other data gathered at the local level.

More resources likely will be directed to support these activities; the *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) recognizes that investments are needed in data analysis and evaluation at the federal, state, and local levels. Under this proposal, states will be permitted to reserve funds to support the more effective use of data to identify local needs and improve student outcomes.

## Information Systems and Research Innovation Priorities

CCSSO is particularly interested in states' responses to innovative priorities, such as common data standards and LEARN. State responses to key questions are shown in Figures 16–21.

Figure 16. Per the application, is the state committed to model data standards?

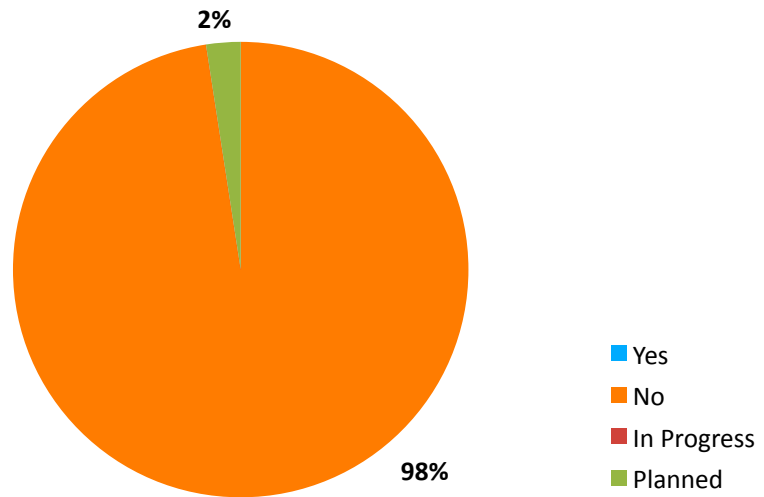


Figure 17. Per the application, is the state specifically implementing LEARN?

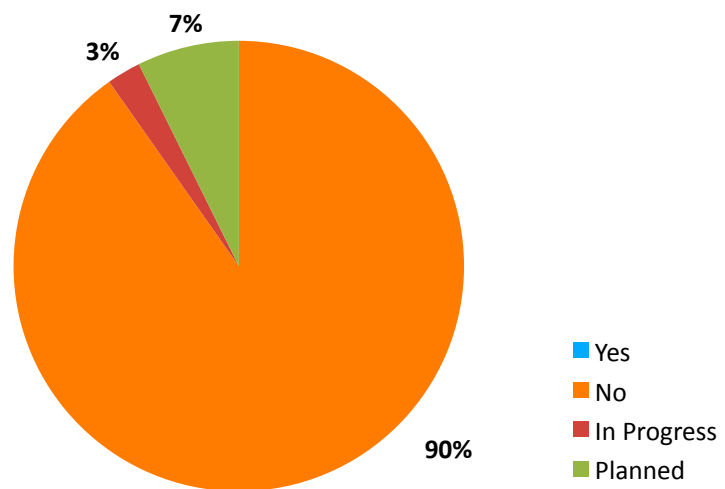


Figure 18. Per the application, is the state committed to LEARN concepts?

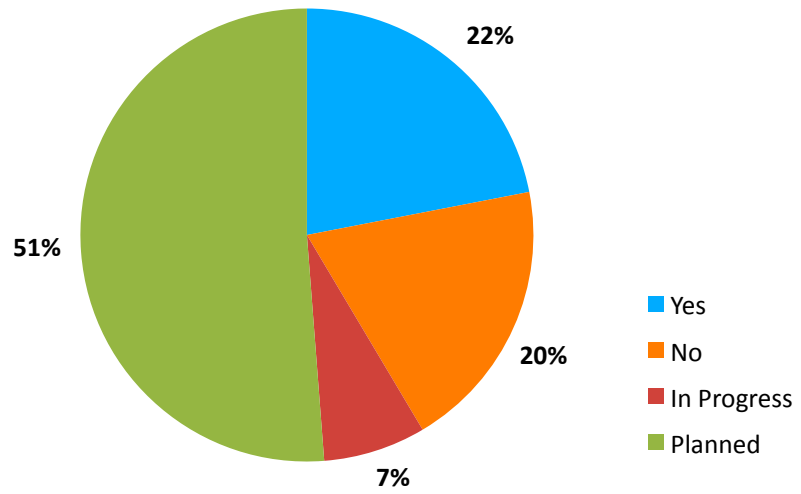


Figure 19. Per the application, is the state implementing data for classroom use?

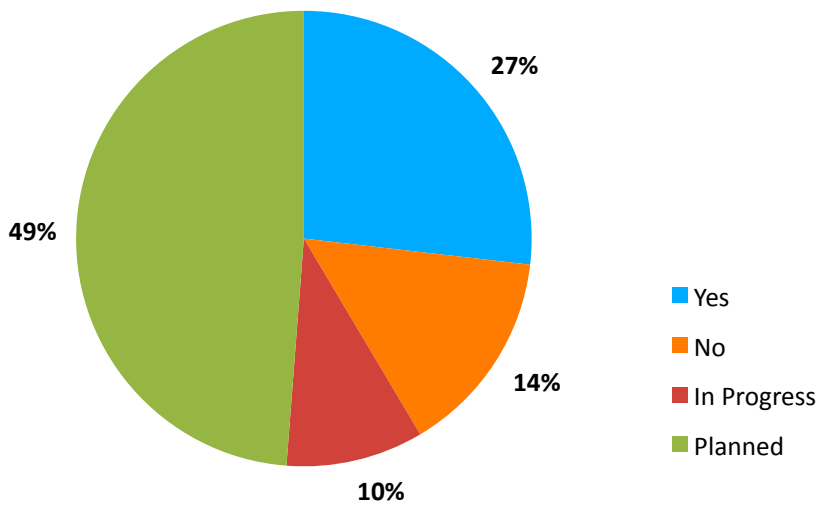


Figure 20. Per the application, is the state linking data repositories on children?

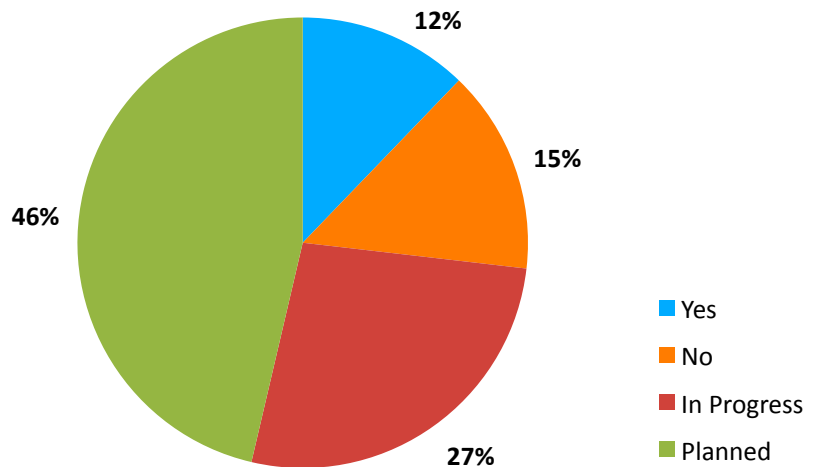
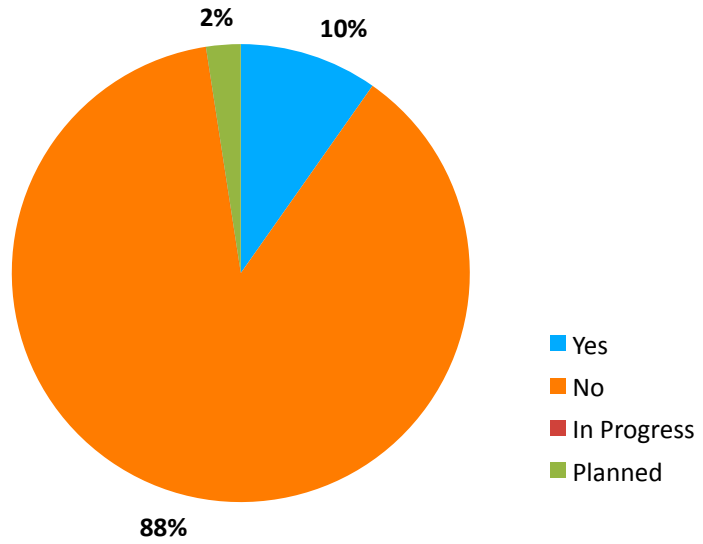


Figure 21. Per the application, does the state have a platform for data entry and reception (data visualizations)?



### General Information System Status

CCSSO examined the status of implementation of the more typical aspects of state education information systems. The past few years have seen dramatic growth in expectations for information systems in education, but resources and capacity to keep up with those demands do not always exist. Figures 22–26 provide information for conversation on the progress toward meeting those expectations and the support that still may be needed.

Figure 22. Per the application, is the state linking to workforce data?

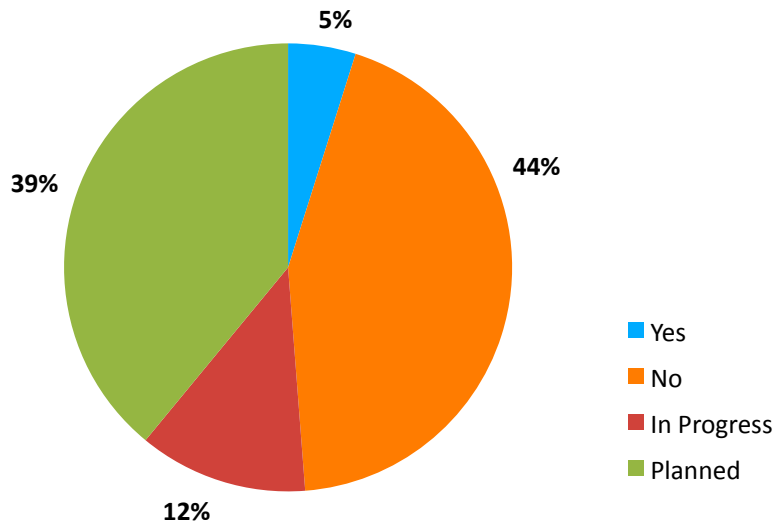


Figure 23. Per the application, is the state linking to early childhood data?

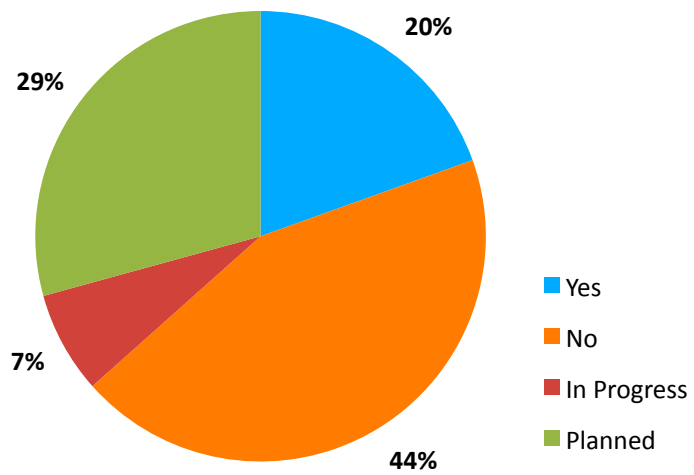


Figure 24. Per the application, is the state using data to build networks or alliances with research partners?

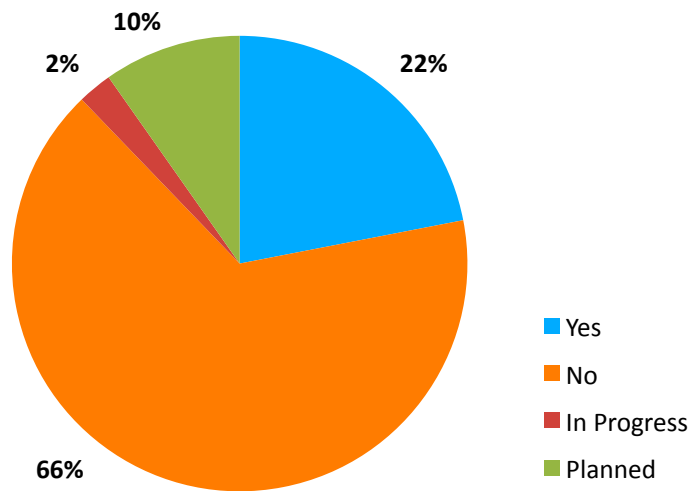


Figure 25. Per the application, is the state building teacher-student data links?

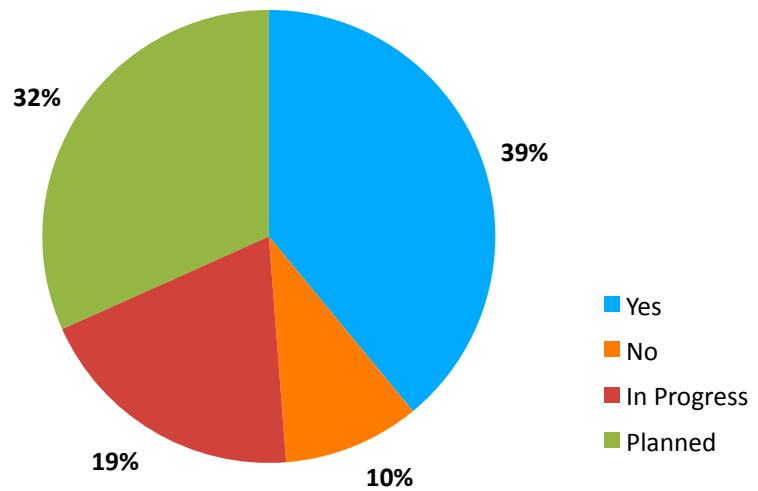
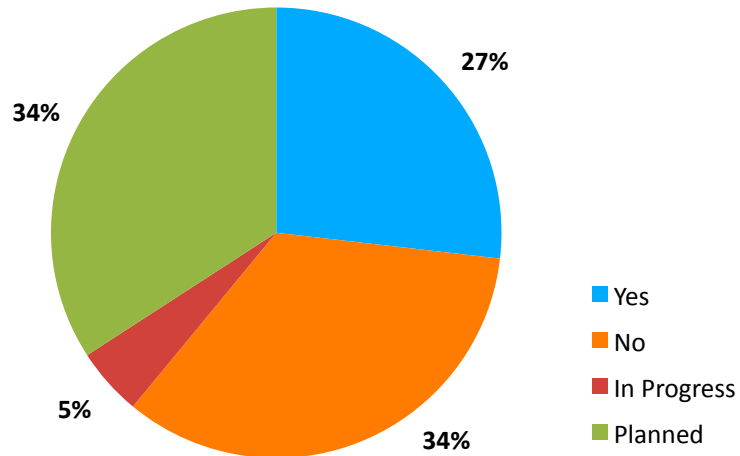


Figure 26. Per the application, is the state using growth modeling?



### Information System Support for Local School Districts and State-Level Use

SEAs are increasingly expected to provide more direct support for practice at the local level. Just as states contemplate more direct support for curriculum frameworks or local assessment tools, there is a growing expectation that states will provide increased support for local information systems. Indeed, such data systems may offer critical support for instruction, assessment, and professional development. There is also sharply increased interest in gauging the effectiveness of the education system beyond Grades K–12, and the ability to follow student success through education levels is now much closer to reality. Education stakeholders also have begun to learn the importance of system-level data and indicators that have the potential to create shared accountability among practitioners and policymakers who both accept responsibility for improving student performance through systemic change. Whether data are used for accountability, advocacy, or continuous improvement, the integrity of the data is critical, and data audits are the chief means to quality assurance (see Figures 27–31).

Figure 27. Does the application address whether the state will help LEAs use state-gathered data?

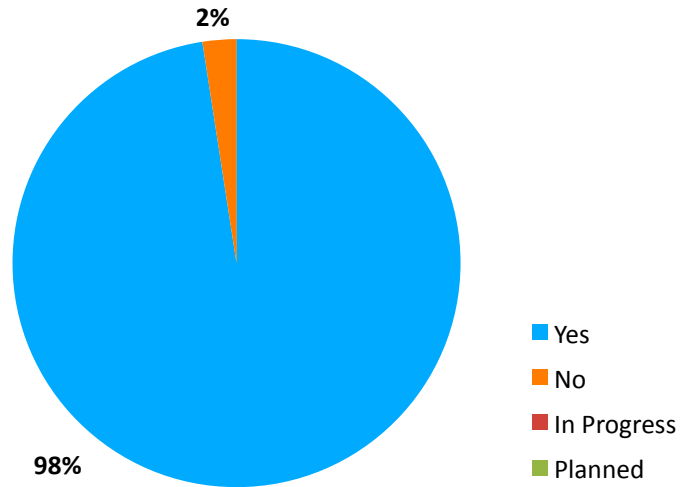


Figure 28. Does the application address whether the state will help LEAs use LEA-gathered data?

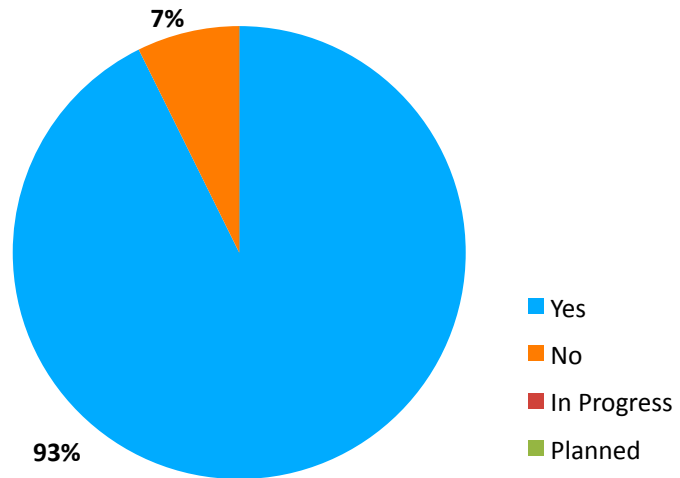


Figure 29. Does the application indicate that the state will link its data systems with postsecondary educational institutions?

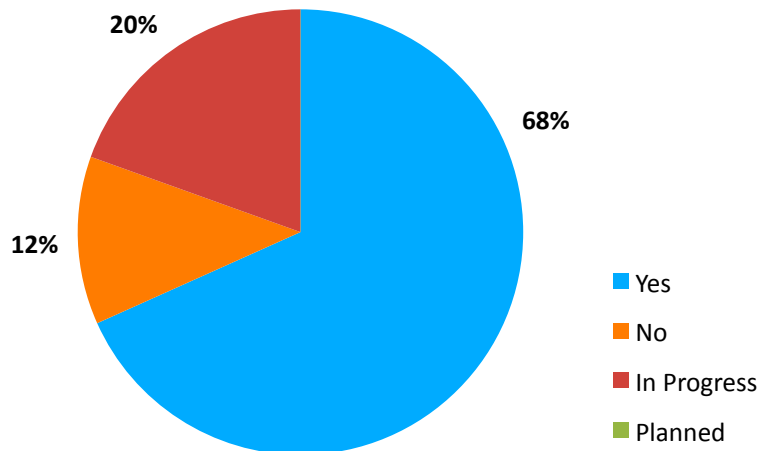


Figure 30. Does the application discuss how policymakers will have access to data or how policymakers will be provided with data?

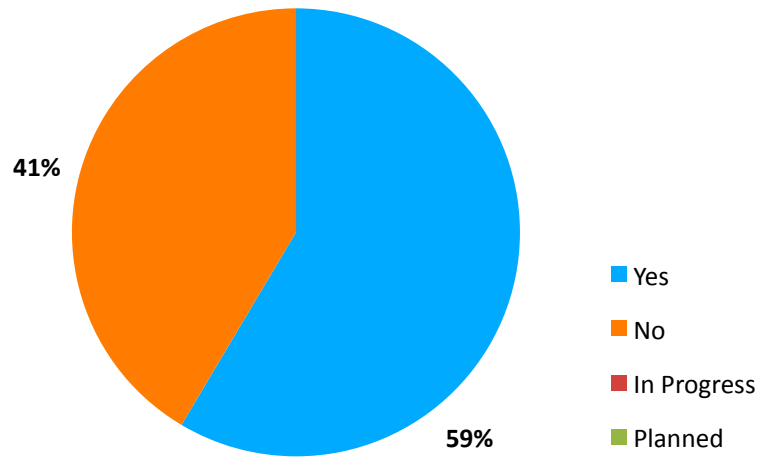
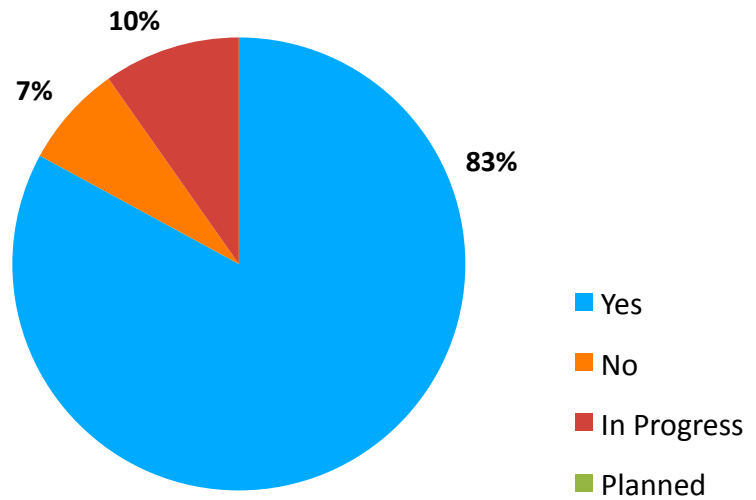


Figure 31. Does the application indicate that the state is conducting data audits?



## Next Generation Learners

CCSSO's Next Generation Learners strategic initiative concentrates on the elements of education that have direct bearing on students and their learning experiences. The Next Generation Learners work with states focuses on learners and learning, rather than on schools and schooling. This bold approach to improving education is a fundamental departure from past education reforms in that it puts the needs and interests of children—from birth through adolescence—front and center, rather than on adults or the system.

### Innovative Strategies to Meet Student Needs

CCSSO's goal is to create and support a personalized system of education that engages and motivates each student—regardless of his or her circumstance—to be prepared for life, meaningful work, and citizenship. CCSSO and SEAs are taking on this ambitious collective work for three compelling reasons:

- ❖ The current education system was designed for a different purpose than what is needed today and is inadequate for preparing each and every child for the global society.
- ❖ Enough knowledge exists from the science of learning about how people learn and the teaching strategies that are effective in supporting them, and it is time to take this knowledge to scale.
- ❖ Powerful diagnostic tools now can inform educators about how to reach each student and make the most of every learning moment across a wide range of content and contexts.

Table 7 shows how state applicants addressed one of the most critical attributes of Next Generation Learners: personalized learning. Because the Race to the Top application process asked states to address innovation only in specific areas, such as teacher evaluation or student assessment strategies, there was no opportunity to view broader innovative directions that states might be considering, such as new approaches to technology for instruction or different approaches to the use of time. These broader innovation concepts must be addressed and approached differently if more promising results are to be attained for all students.

The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) also does not prioritize strategies that support individualized instruction as a broader agenda item; thus, it is an emerging area in which states are beginning to make progress. CCSSO and Learning Point Associates are well poised to provide support and assistance in this area.

### ***Innovative Strategies to Meet Student Needs Observations***

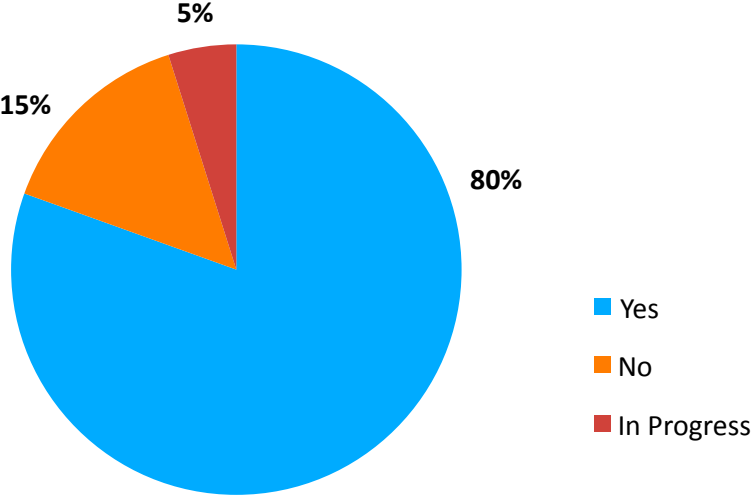
- ❖ Generally, the responses to the various strategies were mixed with no particular patterns in individual states.
- ❖ A majority of states indicated positive responses to using formative assessment, dual credit and early college, and project-based learning as strategies to help meet individual student needs.
- ❖ Only a minority of states indicated positive responses to using response to intervention (RTI), universal design for learning (UDL), individual learning plans, or credit flexibility as strategies that would help meet individual student needs.
- ❖ Overall, it was not clear whether states demonstrated a broad set of strategies for innovation. Admittedly, this observation should be tempered by the limiting scope of the application and the scope of this initial review and data collection.

**Table 7. Next Generation Learners**

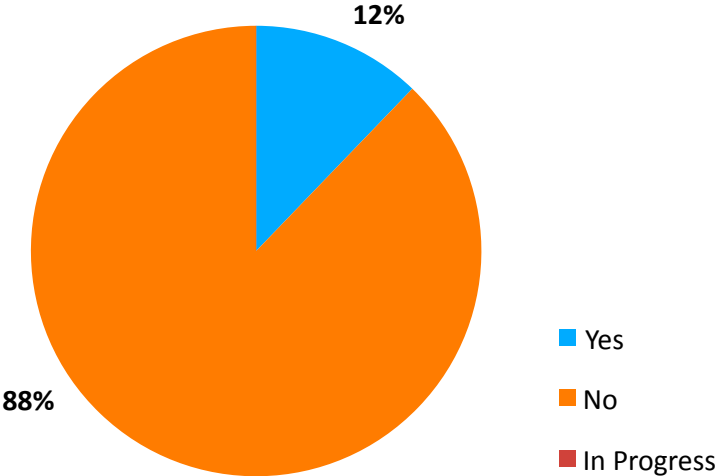
Personalized/Individualized Learning Questions	Number of Applicants				Percentage of Applicants			
	Yes	No	In Progress	Planned	Yes	No	In Progress	Planned
Per the application, does the state use virtual/blended learning in moving toward individualized instruction?	17	11	0	13	41%	27%	0%	32%
Per the application, does the state use RTI in moving toward individualized instruction?	13	23	3	2	32%	56%	7%	5%
Per the application, does the state use statewide formative assessments in moving toward individualized instruction?	1	8	5	27	2%	20%	12%	66%
Per the application, does the state use dual credit/early college in moving toward individualized instruction?	8	7	20	6	19%	17%	49%	15%
Per the application, does the state use individual learning or development plans in moving toward individualized instruction?	5	27	2	7	12%	66%	5%	17%
Per the application, does the state use extended, expanded, or restructured learning time (school day or calendar) in moving toward individualized instruction?	9	12	2	18	22%	29%	5%	44%
Per the application, does the state use credit flexibility in moving toward individualized instruction?	11	21	1	8	27%	51%	2%	20%
Per the application, does the state use performance project-based demonstration of mastery in moving toward individualized instruction?	12	16	4	9	29%	39%	10%	22%
Per the application, does the state use service learning in moving toward individualized instruction?	3	31	2	5	7%	76%	5%	12%
Per the application, does the state use UDL in moving toward individualized instruction?	1	22	3	15	2%	54%	7%	37%

Figure 32 provides information on the states' use of innovative schools. Figure 33 provides information on the states' use of student feedback to inform the redesign of schools.

**Figure 32. Per the application, does the state have or permit innovative schools?**



**Figure 33. Per the application, does the state indicate that it will bring student voices to help inform its reform or redesign?**



## Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

In launching its transformational education agenda, CCSSO focused a great deal of energy and attention in developing its Standards, Assessment, and Accountability strategic initiative. This foundational work has led to many positive and innovative developments, most notably the Common Core State Standards.

The current Common Core State Standards Initiative, coordinated by CCSSO and the National Governors Association, is an unprecedented state-led initiative to develop a common set of state standards focused on what students need to know and be able to do in order to be prepared for college and career success. To date, 48 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories have joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, and the College and Career Readiness Standards and K–12 Mathematics and English Language Arts Standards have been released for public comment.

The U.S. Department of Education has signaled its support for the work of the Common Core State Standards Initiative by assigning points in the Race to the Top application for states that commit to the development and adoption of common standards and to joining assessment consortia. Although more emphasis was placed on state commitment to the adoption of the Common Core Standards, the application also required states to demonstrate their commitment to improving their corresponding assessment systems by reporting participation in specific state assessment consortia.

The *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) reiterates the Obama administration's commitment to the adoption of state-developed college- and career-ready standards and provides additional supports to more accurately measure what students are learning through better assessments.

The review of all Phase 1 Race to the Top applications illustrated a high level of commitment to the development and adoption of high-quality standards and assessments. In addition, the review provided a clear picture of how states perceive the implementation of these new standards and assessments at the local level.

### Standards and State Support for Implementation

The Race to the Top application clearly indicated that states must provide assurances of a high level of commitment to the adoption of the Common Core Standards. The application also required states to indicate whether the standards work in which they were involved through the Common Core State Standards Initiative would be further developed to incorporate other subject areas, such as science and social studies. For the new standards to be effective, states also needed to consider how they would provide support to districts and schools as

they begin to implement the Common Core Standards on a local level. A number of local implications emerge from the adoption of the Common Core Standards including areas such as curricular frameworks and instructional delivery systems.

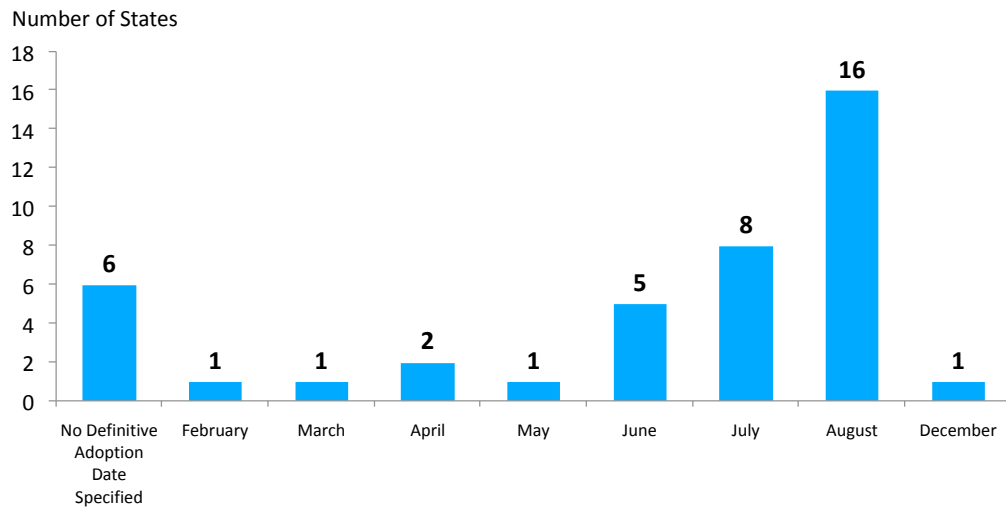
### ***Standards and State Support for Implementation Observations***

- ❖ Of the applicants, 40 states reported having a specific adoption plan for the Common Core State Standards Initiative, and one state reported that a plan was in progress (see Table 8).
- ❖ Of the applicants, 68 percent reported no plans to develop other areas of standards, such as science or social studies (see Table 8).
- ❖ All states reported some kind of state-level support for the implementation of the new standards and assessments related to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The majority of reported state-level supports were focused on providing curricular, instructional, and assessment support; however, some states reported providing supports related to policy alignment, stakeholder outreach, and technology.
- ❖ Several states clearly intend to provide increased support to school districts in more explicit curricular guidance, such as curriculum frameworks or pacing guides to assist in the implementation of the Common Core Standards.
- ❖ Many states indicated that they would develop more assessment tools beyond the state test. Typically, these included benchmark or formative assessments to be used in regular classroom practice.
- ❖ A number of states mentioned that they would sponsor, directly or indirectly, extensive professional development that might even identify specific instructional strategies consistent with the explicit curriculum guidance and the district-level assessment tools.
- ❖ Some states clearly indicated that they would design and develop a uniform instructional support system for all districts that would package the curriculum guidance, assessment tools, and comprehensive professional development.
- ❖ All but six states identified a definitive adoption date for the Common Core Standards (see Figure 34).

**Table 8. Standards and State Support for Implementation**

Standards Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
<b>Common Core</b>						
Per the application, did the state commit to a specific adoption plan for the common core standards?	40	0	1	98%	0%	2%
<b>Additional Standards</b>						
Per the application, did the state express plans to go into developing other areas of standards (science, social studies, others)?	11	28	2	27%	68%	5%
<b>SEA Support</b>						
Does the application describe state-level systems to support LEAs with implementation efforts?	41	0	0	100%	0%	0%

**Figure 34. Common Core Standards Adoption Dates**



## Assessment Consortia

Essential to the development and adoption of common state standards is the corresponding development of high-quality assessment systems to measure students' learning of those standards. The Race to the Top application set explicit expectations for states to work together to develop large-scale assessment systems; however, states also reported state-level supports to assist in the local implementation and transition to the new standards and assessment systems at the local level, such as formative assessment items banks and interim assessments.

### Assessment Consortia Observations

Many states reported that they joined more than one assessment consortium. In fact, on average, each applicant reported signing on to 2.63 consortia (see Table 9).

Table 9. Assessment Consortia

Assessment Consortia Questions	Number of Applicants			Percentage of Applicants		
	Yes	No	In Progress	Yes	No	In Progress
Does the application reference the <b>SMARTER</b> consortium?	21	20	0	51%	49%	0%
Does the application reference the <b>MOSAIC</b> consortium?	20	21	0	49%	51%	0%
Does the application reference the <b>NCEE</b> consortium?	2	39	0	5%	95%	0%
Does the application reference the <b>FLORIDA</b> consortium?	13	28	0	32%	68%	0%
Does the application reference the <b>ACHIEVE</b> consortium?	23	18	0	56%	44%	0%
Does the application reference the <b>BALANCED</b> consortium?	29	12	0	71%	29%	0%

## Conclusion: Observations and Trends Across All Strategic Initiatives

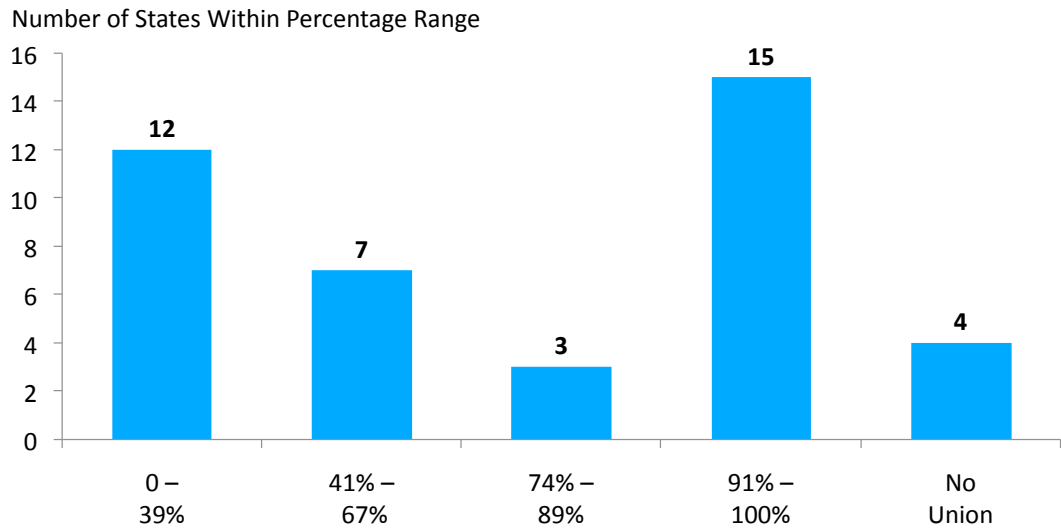
In the data analysis, the CCSSO and Learning Point Associates review team made several broad observations and identified issues and possible emerging trends cutting across the four CCSSO strategic initiatives that will be of interest to state and local education leaders. These observations may signal emerging trends or issues either by what states presented or omitted in their applications. As with the observations in each of the sections, CCSSO and Learning Point Associates see the value of these observations in generating and informing further discussion rather than in drawing firm conclusions.

### **The observations and trends across all Strategic Initiatives are as follows:**

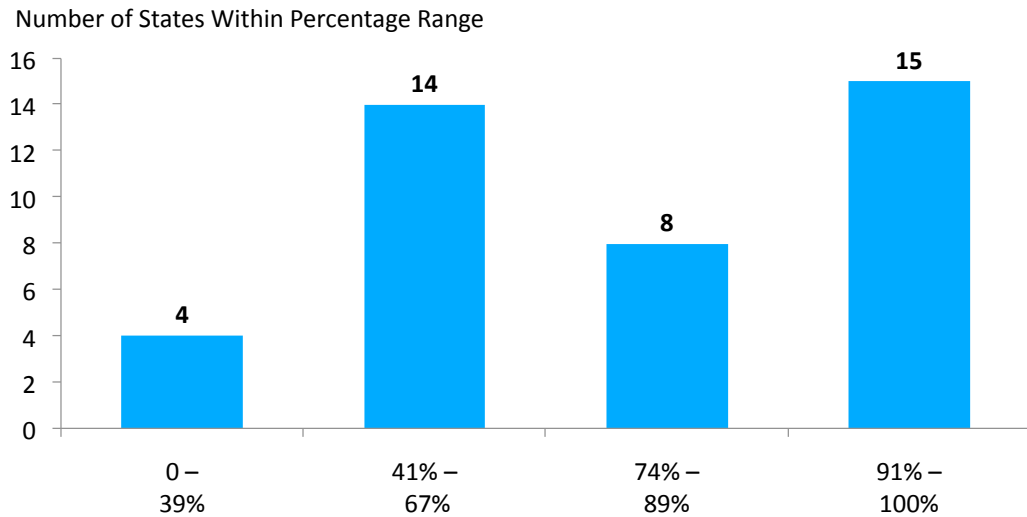
- ❖ There is a trend among states to move in directions that seem to significantly challenge existing capacity, at least the capacity of a single state. Examples include the following:
  - ◆ Several states clearly intend to provide increased support to school districts in more explicit curricular guidance, such as curriculum frameworks or pacing guides to assist in the implementation of the Common Core Standards.
  - ◆ Many states indicated that they would develop more assessment tools beyond the state test. Typically, these were benchmark or formative assessments that included those to be used in regular classroom practice.
  - ◆ A number of states mentioned that they would sponsor, directly or indirectly, extensive professional development that might even identify specific instructional strategies consistent with the explicit curriculum guidance and the district-level assessment tools.
  - ◆ Many states have articulated a need or considered implementing strong systems of support in the education workforce. Such a system would allow states to come together to identify and implement specific strategies and solutions.
  - ◆ Some states clearly indicated that they would design and develop a uniform instructional support system for all districts that would package the curriculum guidance, assessment tools, and comprehensive professional development.
- ❖ There may be an issue in determining the SEA's direct role with respect to low-performing schools within a district. In some cases, questions of practical implementation and legal authority exist.
- ❖ States seem to be proposing more uniform support systems. Will this be accepted by large urban districts or will the support systems be appropriate?
- ❖ Although state responses on the application were admittedly prescribed, there seemed to be little mention of innovative practice or policy beyond what was expected in the application.

- ❖ Although the application emphasized teachers and principals, there were a few states that mentioned district superintendents and their leadership role.
- ❖ Stakeholder involvement and support was a priority in the Race to the Top applications and remains a priority in the recent *Blueprint for Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The review team also captured the degree to which states obtained signatures of local district officials and of those, the percentage that obtained signatures from union officials (see Figures 35–36).
- ❖ Although the reviewers considered including information about the differences between state finalists and nonfinalists in the report, they found few differences and, given the noted limitations, decided that the information would be of limited value for the purpose of this report.

**Figure 35. Statewide Percentages of Participating LEAs**



**Figure 36. Percentages of Applicable Union Signatures From Participating LEAs**



## Next Steps

CCSSO and Learning Point Associates embarked on the preliminary review of the Phase 1 Race to the Top applications to better understand and support emerging SEA strategy and direction. This historic and unprecedented funding opportunity enables states, districts, and schools to identify and challenge current system conditions, but it is not an end unto itself.

The review team is hopeful that data gleaned will help to inform stakeholders so that they might think about how CCSSO and Learning Point Associates can collaboratively identify strategies and solutions to pressing problems in the current system.

CCSSO and Learning Point Associates are committed to support innovative and new approaches that are currently under consideration in the states, and this report provides a snapshot into current state thinking. The report is intended to generate further discussion. CCSSO and Learning Point Associates hope to continue to assist states as they pursue innovative practices and proposed activities that are being contemplated through Race to the Top and other ARRA funding pools.

The observations and trends collected over the last month have certainly reinforced the idea that successful system redesign requires collaboration in purposeful and meaningful ways. The review team hopes that this report is just the beginning of the conversation about such collaboration under CCSSO's strategic initiatives and encourages states to reach out to CCSSO and Learning Point Associates staff and consider how those stakeholders might work together with respect to future state plans.

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