

**DATE:** November 18, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Race to the Top Implementation Status

**ACTION RECOMMENDED:** Information

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the United States Department of Education’s Race to the Top grant competition. Race to the Top is a \$4.35 billion incentive program designed to make sweeping education reforms at the state level. Tennessee was one of two states awarded funding in the first round of Race to the Top and will be receiving \$501 million over the next four years. The state’s Race to the Top proposal focuses on the following key areas of improvement: Standards and Assessments, Data Systems to Support Instruction, Great Teachers and Leaders, Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Education.

Tennessee’s Race to the Top application designated the management and implementation of several projects to THEC with a combined fiscal impact of over \$20 million. Institutions of higher education and THEC will be instrumental in ensuring the success of the state’s First to the Top initiatives and will play a significant role in achieving the program’s overall goals. The following pages contain more detailed descriptions of each of the First to the Top projects that THEC is responsible for.

**Report Card on the Effectiveness of Teacher Preparation Programs**

- State statute currently requires the State Board of Education to report annually on the effectiveness of teacher training programs based on the following three indicators: placement and retention rates, PRAXIS scores, and teacher effect data as measured by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS).
- Advisory committees will be convened to help develop an enhanced report card that will not only enable institutions to use valuable feedback to make program improvements, but it will also be more user-friendly for the public.
- The committees will be comprised of representatives from the State Board of Education, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the Department of Education, the Tennessee Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (TACTE), and other stakeholders.

- As outlined in the state’s Race to the Top application, the committees will:
  - Examine the three variables currently included on the report card and determine what other measurements accurately reflect effectiveness
  - Study report card redesign options, if any, so the data are clear and easily understood
  - Discuss ways in which to use the report card (i.e. program improvement, renewal or non-renewal)
- The following committees will begin meeting in November:
  - *Data Collection*: this committee will examine the current metrics used on the report card and will determine what other variables should be included on future iterations of the report card, which will be an accurate reflection of the effectiveness of the program
  - *Methodology*: this committee will determine and analyze the processes and practices that will be a necessary component of the new report card
  - *Individual Institutional Reports*: this committee will be working specifically on the development of the individual institutional reports; some of this work will be informed by that of the other two committees
- The First to the Top Act, passed in the 2010 Special Session, includes language requiring that teacher preparation programs be given access to the aggregated TVAAS data of their graduates.
  - “The estimates of specific teacher effects may also be made available to the state board approved teacher preparation programs of individual teachers. The estimates made available to the preparation programs shall not be personally identifiable with a particular teacher”
- In addition to working on the statutorily required public report card, the committees will also help to develop individual institutional reports that will provide more specific feedback and data directly to the teacher preparation programs

### **School Leader Supply and Demand Study**

- In 2008, Tennessee commissioned a study to measure the supply and demand for teachers in the state. This study was a joint project between the University of Tennessee Center for Business and Economic Research, the Tennessee Department of Education, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. The findings, released in December 2009, revealed that the state will have a shortage of 31,431 teachers by 2014.

- Not only is it important for the state to have an understanding of its future teacher needs, but it is also important to consider the needs regarding school leaders across the state. As part of its First to the Top initiatives, the state has commissioned the School Leader Supply and Demand Study.
- The study will examine the existing employment conditions for principals and assistant principals in the state. In addition, the study will be used to research the anticipated new school leaders who are certified under the new licensure standards in order to better serve school districts as they project their human capital needs.
- Furthermore, surveys and interviews with key district leaders will be used to provide a qualitative portion of the study which will help improve training programs and professional development practices.

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### **Integrating Common Core Standards into Pre-Service Training**

#### *Standards:*

- In July 2010, the State Board of Education adopted Common Core Curriculum Standards. The Common Core is a joint effort between the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governor's Association.
- The purpose for the creation of the common core standards was to have fewer, higher, and clearer academic standards; alignment with college and work expectations; current educational research and evidence; benchmarking to high performing countries and states; and rigorous standards emphasizing skill and application of content.
- Over half of the states have adopted the Common Core Curriculum standards. This is a voluntary initiative that is seeing great success.
- These standards currently focus on Math and English/language arts. The goal of these common standards is to ensure all students across the nation are receiving the same high level of education. Science and other subjects have the possibility of being included in the future.

#### *Assessments:*

- Through the RTTT program, the US Department of Education awarded \$120MM to a state consortium for the development of common assessment aligned to the Common Core Standards. Tennessee is one of 26 states that have joined to form the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium.
- The PARCC consortium has developed 4 key initiatives:
  - Develop summative assessments in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through high school
  - Be computer-based, with all participating states moving to online testing by 2014-2015
  - Utilize high school assessments that will culminate in college-ready assessments that will certify whether students are prepared for credit-bearing, baccalaureate-level college courses

- Vertically align 3-8 assessments with secondary-level assessments to ensure coherence and a progression of learning

*Implementation:*

- The focus of the training will be teaching pre-service teachers these new standards. The training will coordinate with the training that is flowing through the Department of Education.
  - Collaboration has already begun between the State Department of Education and the Higher Education Commission. The planning and implementation/orientation periods are expected to be completed early Spring 2011. Implementation is expected to occur during 2012.
  - More information on the Common Core can be found at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).
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**Integrating Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) into Pre-Service Training**

- Tennessee has one of the most robust educational data and assessment systems in the country. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) has been in place since 1991. TVAAS collects data on students in tested subjects, third-eighth grade math, reading and language arts, science, and social studies. The data allow for statistical and predictive analyses on several indicators. This includes the ability to project a student's performance in future grades and an assessment of a teacher's effect on student performance.
  - The TVAAS data are currently available to all teachers in the state. However, only 14% of the state's K-12 teachers have created accounts to access the data and bring it to bear on the classroom.
  - In Tennessee's Race to the Top application, an emphasis was placed on training teachers in understanding and using TVAAS data. The best teachers will be able to use all resources available from day one in the classroom.
  - A training module will be developed to provide meaningful training on the TVAAS data system to all pre-service teachers. Teacher preparation programs will have an opportunity to integrate this training module into pre-service curricula to strengthen the quality of teacher education graduates.
  - The Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Department of Education, SAS Institute, and various stakeholders will collaborate to develop the module and train institutions on implementation.
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**STEM Professional Development:**

- The Tennessee STEM Innovation Network (TSIN) was established to promote and expand the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in K-12 public schools across Tennessee. TSIN will bring together existing, emerging, and new STEM education partners and stakeholders in a learning network intentionally designed to share best

practices, enhance critical start-up efforts and boost student achievement. Through this unique partnership and the sharing of STEM education practices throughout the state, Tennessee will not only expand educational opportunities and outcomes, but also create new STEM teaching and learning modules.

- As a network, STEM educators, advocates, and practitioners can work together in ways that go well beyond individual programs to lift the STEM education participation, practice and achievement Tennessee needs for a vital economic future.
- Professional development focused on improving the STEM content knowledge of K-12 STEM teachers is an integral part of the STEM Network. Higher education will serve as the provider for STEM professional development. The STEM Advisory Council and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) in Spring 2011 directed towards higher education institutions. This RFP will provide details regarding the content and scope of STEM professional development needed in the state.