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Requirements for State Teacher Evaluation Policies Promoted by Race to the Top

Congress appropriated more than $5 billion for the Race to the Top (RTT) program between 2009 and 2012, making it the largest grant program ever administered by the U.S. Department of Education. The RTT initiative encouraged states to address education policies in six areas, including teacher evaluations.

ABOUT THE BRIEF
This brief examines the extent to which states that received RTT grants (RTT states) and states that did not (non-RTT states) reported requiring teacher evaluation policies aligned with RTT priorities as of spring 2012.

Teacher evaluations are an important strategy for improving teacher effectiveness, yet assessing teachers' skills can be challenging. Research suggests that the evaluation policies promoted by RTT, such as using multiple measures and multiple rating categories, can produce more valid and reliable estimates of teacher quality. The goal of these types of policies is to produce higher quality information to help improve teacher performance and thus student achievement.

Recently, policies about teacher evaluation have been the focus of a number of education initiatives. Documentation of individual states' policies on teacher evaluation exists, for example, through RTT Annual Performance Reports and other studies of state-level policies. However, information about whether state teacher evaluation policies are aligned with RTT priorities is lacking, particularly for groups of states that received (or did not receive) RTT grants. This brief examines the alignment of states' teacher evaluation policies as of spring 2012 with the criteria in the RTT application.
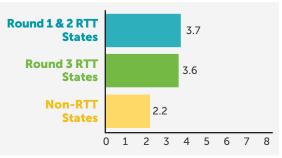
KEY FINDINGS FROM THE BRIEF INCLUDE:

- On average, states required fewer than half of eight teacher evaluation policies aligned with criteria in the RTT application. RTT states required more policies than non-RTT states (3.7 policies for Round 1 and 2 RTT states, 3.6 for Round 3 RTT states, and 2.2 for non-RTT states).

- States' policies were most aligned with RTT priorities to use multiple measures to evaluate teacher performance (30 states); use multiple rating categories to classify teacher performance (31 states); and conduct annual evaluations (25 states).

- States' policies were least aligned with RTT priorities to use evaluation results to inform decisions on career advancement (1 state) and compensation (6 states for annual salary increases, and 5 states for performance-based compensation).
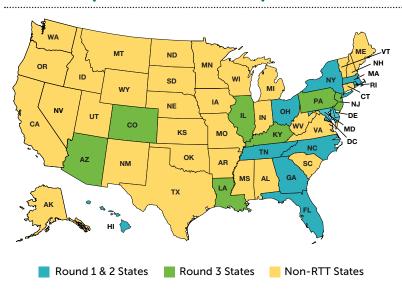
Average Number of Teacher Evaluation Policies Aligned with the RTT Application Criteria
Spring 2012

Round 1 & 2 RTT States	3.7
Round 3 RTT States	3.6
Non-RTT States	2.2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

State Participation in Race to the Top

Legend:
- Round 1 & 2 States
- Round 3 States
- Non-RTT States

The data come from interviews with administrators in 49 states and the District of Columbia (Texas did not participate in interviews). To account for differences in timing, levels of funding, and scope of the RTT awards, we created three groups of states: (1) states that received RTT grants in Round 1 or 2 of the RTT competition, (2) states that received RTT grants in Round 3 of the competition, and (3) non-RTT states. The table below shows eight teacher evaluation policies that aligned with RTT application criteria. Mathematica conducted this analysis as part of a large scale evaluation sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

Teacher Evaluation Policies Examined in the Brief

RTT Application Criteria	Policy Aligned with RTT Application Criteria
Design and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers.	State required multiple measures of performance to evaluate teachers in tested and nontested grades and subjects.
Differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take student achievement growth into account as a significant factor and are designed with teacher involvement.	State required a minimum number of rating levels (two) be used to classify teacher performance.
	State required districts to use student achievement growth to evaluate some or all teachers and specified the extent to which it must factor into teacher evaluations.
Conduct annual evaluations that include timely and constructive feedback and provide teachers with data on student achievement growth for their students, classes, and schools.	State required that evaluations of all teachers (probationary and nonprobationary) take place at least annually.
Use evaluations to inform decisions about staff development, compensation, promotion, tenure, certification, and removal of ineffective teachers.	State required that teacher evaluation results be used to guide decisions about professional development.
	State required that teacher evaluation results be used to guide decisions about dismissal.
	State required that teacher evaluation results be used to guide decisions about compensation (including annual salary increases or performance-based compensation).
	State required that teacher evaluation results be used to guide decisions about career advancement.

The full brief on which this summary is based is available at:
http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/redirect_pubsdb.asp?strSite=pdfs/
education/RTT_IES_brief.pdf.

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