PROGRESS REPORT: RACE TO THE TOP & PERSONALIZED ED.

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In 2012, the federal Race to the Top district competition awarded 16 school districts, educational cooperatives, and charter school districts with more than $350 million in total grant funding to support efforts to personalize learning and improve student achievement. A year and a half later, districts are beginning to see the outcomes from those efforts, ranging from upgraded professional-development programs to technological overhauls. *Education Week* contacted all the districts, listed here by the size of the grant awarded, for progress reports on how they have used the grant funding, and what their plans are for the road ahead.

Green River Regional and Ohio Valley Educational Cooperatives

Bowling Green, Ky., and Shelbyville, Ky.
Enrollment: **59,000** across **22 local districts**
Racial/ethnic profile: **No available average for combined districts**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **61 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: $41 MILLION

Personalized learning goals:
- Build relationships and collaborations with employees known as Preschool Pals and private child-care centers to promote kindergarten readiness through intentional literacy and math strategies.
- Ensure educators provide opportunities for students to develop socio-emotional skills and behaviors and noncognitive skills like critical thinking and problem solving that will prepare them for life after high school.
- Provide supports and structures, like cognitive coaches and systemwide collaboration, for professional learning among educators for a deeper learning and understanding of standards, assessments, and tasks.
- Support the development of teacher leaders, educators selected from each school who collaborate and share their knowledge with other teachers.
- Analyze annually summative-assessment data, noncognitive data, and a variety of other data to provide feedback on progress.

Technology-based approaches:
- The grant provided funding for software to be embedded as support for personalized learning and for digital-learning devices based on each district's need.
- Each district received some funding to help expand Wi-Fi outside of school walls.

Measuring success:
- Data was unavailable as of press time, but officials will consider the percentage of students who have effective teachers; enrollment in AP, dual credit, and college courses; and the amount of students meeting benchmarks in reading and math, among other data points.

Positive Outcomes:
- Provided training program for teachers and smaller groups of staff members who, in turn, then work with students to impact school culture and climate.
- Created a greater emphasis on student leadership.
- Schools are seeing improvements on some components of school climate.
- Every school has crafted its own personalized learning plan.

Challenges:
- A teacher professional development program was not included in the original plan, but evolved from the first year.

Future plans:
- Educational co-ops will have support structures in place after grant ends to support districts.
- Craft a plan to make the partnership with the co-ops and private preschools and child-care centers sustainable.

Puget Sound Educational Service District

The grant applies to seven of the districts.
Renton, Wash.
Enrollment: **390,000** across **35 local districts** and over **200 private schools**. (The seven grant districts have a combined enrollment of 147,000.)
Racial/ethnic profile: **33 percent white, 24 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 14 percent African-American, 3 percent Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, 1 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 8 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **35 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: $40 MILLION

Personalized learning goals:
- Build a strong, regionwide system to ensure that all students are kindergarten ready.
- Establish a high-functioning P-3 grade system.
- Advance teacher practice and principal leadership, with a focus on developing personalized learning environments in the areas of English/language arts, science, and math for high-needs students.
- Broaden college-level course selection and strengthen postsecondary success among students.
- Encourage partnerships between schools, community-based organizations and families in order to provide 24/7 support for learning both in school and out of school.

Technology-based approaches:
- The service district invested in adaptive digital tools, with a focus on personalizing STEM learning for high-needs, K-8 schools in the region.
- A regional data portal was built to allow for systemic interventions based on student-achievement data from benchmark assessments.
- This student data can be securely transferred among districts, which helps to address the high mobility rate of 21 percent within the region.

Measuring success:
- Several factors are evaluated, including performance on summative state assessments, achievement gaps in reading and math, kindergarten readiness, the percentage of 8th graders enrolled in algebra or a higher-level math class, the five-year high school graduation rate, college-enrollment rate, and postsecondary-degree attainment.

Positive outcomes:
- Data show increases in kindergarten readiness from fall 2013 to fall 2014.
- State Measurements of Student Progress showed especially high science performance for 5th graders in 2013.

Challenges:
- There is a need to build stronger progress-monitoring systems in order to use real-time data to make course corrections as the district learns what projects are working. In the first round of investment funding, not all projects had those systems in place to collect data throughout the year. New projects were funded before the impact of previous projects could be measured.
- The consortia of districts have struggled to implement multiple new initiatives simultaneously.

Future plans:
- Puget Sound will be actively planning to sustain the Race to the Top programs after the grant term ends. Planning for sustainability will happen over the coming two years, with prioritization given to strategies that are found to most effectively close opportunity gaps.

Guilford County Schools

The grant applies to middle schools only.
Greensboro, N.C.
Enrollment: **72,400**
Racial/ethnic profile: **41 percent African-American, 37 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Asian, 4 percent multi-racial**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **59 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: $35.2 MILLION

Personalized learning goals:
- 100 percent of middle school classrooms will implement personalized learning environments as measured by the district's Personalized Learning Environment Index, or PLEI, by the end of the four-year grant.
- Reduce the achievement gap by 50 percent for each subgroup compared to white students.
- Increase the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals in middle schools.
- Provide anytime, anywhere access to learning for all students regardless of socioeconomic background.
- Increase the number of middle school students taking high-school-level courses.

Technology-based approaches:
- Relaunching a 1-to-1 computing initiative in middle schools this year in a phased roll-out. All 17,000 middle school students will receive a tablet. The tablets have embedded content in them (instructional videos, textbooks, etc.) that can be used even without an Internet connection.
- The grant funded a math and ELA formative-assessment tool that populates a standards map for each student, which is continuously updated and shows students' mastery of the concepts.

Measuring success:
- The PLEI will measure progress.
- School leaders want to see tablets used on a daily basis in classrooms and plan to measure that with walk-throughs.

Positive outcomes:
- District officials say the way they have delivered professional development through PACE (Personalized-Achievement Curriculum Environment) was very effective. In spring 2013, each school created its own PACE team to take ownership of the initiative in their respective buildings. The teams were made up of district-level coaches, teachers, support staff, and administrators. When the leadership of a school (teachers and administrators) had more control over the decisionmaking process, it led to a smoother rollout of the initiative.

Challenges:
- The tablet rollout last year had to be put on hold because of concerns about the quality and safety of the devices. Last year, the tablets were deployed all at once. This year, it's a phased roll out that has gone much more smoothly.

Future plans:
- A team will be assembled to figure out what the district needs for these initiatives to continue in winter 2015. They need to consider cost, among other factors.

IDEA Public Schools

District is a network of state charter schools.
Based in Weslaco, Texas
Enrollment: **19,500**
Racial/ethnic profile: **91 percent Hispanic, 4 percent white, 2 percent African American, 1 percent Asian, 1 percent American Indian or Native Alaskan**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **87 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: $31 MILLION

Personalized learning goals:
- Close the achievement gap across grades K-12 in reading and math between the subgroups and the highest performers statewide.
- Bring 90 percent of K-5 students to or above grade level, and have 70 percent or more of 11th grade students score 21 or higher on the ACT college-entrance exam.
- Help 100 percent of graduates enter a four-year college and 85 percent of graduates attain a college degree within six years, through a summer program for high school juniors in which they stay on college campuses.

Technology-based approaches:
- Implemented a 2-to-1 computing program for grades 6-12, providing a laptop for every two students. Devices are not taken home, but are rotated throughout the building for different classes. Students work with laptops in small groups, on programs individualized to each student's level of progress.
- Put in place adaptive software, allowing students to work independently and teachers to see students' strengths and weaknesses.
- The district is rolling out a dashboard for teachers leveraging data and specific student profiles to make recommendations on instruction; it will include daily data updates on whether activities are working.
- In the elementary schools, students have an iLearning HotSpot and the Accelerated Reader Zone as two of their rotating electives, where they work independently on adaptive math software and read books independently. They practice the skills that reinforce and preview what they're getting in their core classrooms. Some of the districts' middle schools are also doing this, and they are out-performing the middle schools with traditional rotations.

Measuring success:
- Use of statewide test scores.
- District developed an algorithm that combines student-achievement measures and qualitative evidence, including responses from students, supervisors, colleagues, and parents, to create a career path for teachers that provides individualized supports, rewards, and recognition.
- The district's short-term goal is to have 85 percent of the teachers who reach a proficient level on that pathway — meaning they have demonstrated strong growth and are expected to continue to improve — to return to the district the following school year.

Positive outcomes:
- District officials see evidence they are delivering more targeted, individually tailored lessons to students.
- Data from last year's Texas state assessments show that hybrid middle schools (in which 6th and 7th graders go to the iLearning Hotspot and AR Zone rather than traditional electives) outperformed traditional middle schools districtwide in both reading and math by as many as 10 percentage points in terms of number of students passing and number of students with commended performance.

Challenges:

- District has not yet defined how to continue its personalized learning efforts once the grant period ends.
- District is confident in the programs, but is looking for data to confirm and establish a clear picture to make a case for sustainability.

Future plans:

- The school system's investments in the social and emotional health of students will be critical to the success of personalized learning.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Miami, Fla.
Enrollment: **353,000**
Racial/ethnic profile: **67 percent Hispanic, 23 percent African-American, 8 percent white, 2 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **81 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$30 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Strengthen algebra at the high school level by building a strong foundation of math at the middle school level.
- Focus on middle school mathematics so the lowest-performing students are algebra-ready by high school, and more-advanced students are ready to accelerate in high school.
- Use a blended learning model to teach math.
- Add laptops, interactive whiteboards, and furniture that encourages group collaboration and small-group work with teachers.
- Focus on professional development and add a three-week summer institute. Use math facilitators as support specialists to do job-embedded professional development at 49 schools.
- Increase the student-teacher ratio to 20-to-1 in targeted classrooms, with three adults and 60 students in a room.

Technology-based approaches:

- Lenovo laptops for every student, two interactive whiteboards in targeted classrooms.
- Students use Carnegie Learning's Mathia, a blended learning curriculum, which also contains an adaptive component aligned to the Common Core State Standards.
- Students may set up their own learning paths using the Mathia software and progress when they have demonstrated proficiency. Teachers use data collected by the program to provide personalized instruction the following day.

Measuring success:

- The budget includes funding for external evaluators to assess the program.
- Two Carnegie project managers are assigned to work with the 49 schools, to facilitate student-data analysis.
- Principals receive biweekly reports from Carnegie detailing student usage.
- The end-of-the-year summative report for 2013-14 found a positive correlation between more skills being mastered in math, assessments scores, and the use of technology.

Challenges:

- Changing longtime teacher practices and mindsets.
- Technology glitches, including login issues.
- Last year, they introduced a new set of standards but students were still being tested on old standards. This was difficult for teachers.

Future Plans:

- The district hopes to continue with the iPrep Math and expand into other subject areas. The results from next few years will be critical in determining what actions they take when the grant ends.

Harmony Public Schools

A district with charter schools across the state. Grant applies to middle and high schools only.

Based in Houston
Enrollment: **28,500** (Middle and high school enrollment is 14,600)
Racial/ethnic profile: **48 percent Hispanic, 19 percent African-American, 18 percent white, 14 percent Asian**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **59 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$30 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Boost individual student support to master essential skills and deepen content understanding.
- Increase proficiency in math and reading on summative assessments.
- Decrease achievement gap between minority and low-income students and whites.
- Maintain a 100 percent high school graduation rate.
- Increase college matriculation rates and the number of students interested in STEM majors and career choices.

Technology-based approaches:

- Provide students with 1-to-1 device environments using Chromebooks in grades 6-12. Allow schools to choose between a take-home or in-school model for their Google Chromebooks.
- Implement adaptive-learning software in math and English/language arts. Students can work on individual modules, and programs provide feedback to allow teachers to personalize instruction.
- Students can use Chromebooks to work online on student programs as well as access offline resources.
- Use digital learning tools that support mastery-based instruction progression.
- Use a project-based learning approach in STEM and other core subjects.
- Make use of data systems and dashboards to provide teachers, parents, and students with metrics and key performance indicators to customize education.

Measuring success:

- Formative and summative data are collected from assessments, learning software, students' project-based learning products, and other student-created work.
- Student progress is tracked using personalized learning plans, mastery reports, college- and career-readiness indicators.

Positive outcomes:

- Initial results from 2013-14 show all grade levels participating in Race to the Top programs have improved their performance in both math and reading assessments.
- Harmony has outperformed state averages for both reading and math at each participating grade level in middle and high school. Almost all high schools scored 90 percent or higher proficiency in biology end-of-course assessments and 100 percent on physics end-of-course assessments, attributed to a project-based learning approach.
- There is increasing student demand for Advanced Placement science courses, and more students are choosing to study STEM-related subjects in college.

Challenges:

- Identifying the best technology tools, getting teacher and principal buy-in on every decision, communicating strategies to stakeholders effectively, and recruiting talent for some projects were among the district's general challenges.
- It's been more difficult for some reading teachers to adapt since the technology effect is not as strong as in math, for example.

Future plans:

- Harmony's personalized education model is sustainable. The district is building the human capacity to carry out and sustain each of the projects beyond the grant years.
- District plans to pursue additional grants.

New Haven Unified School District

Union City, Calif.
Enrollment: **12,700**
Racial/ethnic profile: **37 percent Hispanic, 23 percent Asian, 20 percent Filipino, 8 percent African-American, 7 percent white, and 3 percent Pacific Islander**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **46 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$29.4 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Ensure that students acquire critical literacy and mathematics skills while emphasizing real world applications of those skills.
- Align instructional units with the Common Core State Standards, and provide extensive professional development in classroom practices that give students the skills to analyze texts, make key connections, build knowledge, and think and communicate about the reading and analytical process.
- Use data systems that will inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction and learning, and give teachers the tools and support to use these systems effectively
- Use 21st century hardware, software, and teaching methodologies to create an inquiry-based, student-centered learning environment

Technology-based approaches:

- Established a technology committee, with representatives across the district; the committee included students and parents.
- Selected Chromebooks for its personalized learning plans, but not as part of a 1-to-1 computing project; iPads were cost-prohibitive. Rollout of Chromebooks was intended to occur over three years; now in the second year, every student in grades 6-12 has a device.
- Teachers who received laptop carts in the first phase had to agree to undergo PD in the summer, collaborate throughout the process, and then help out with the second rollout of Chromebooks the following year.
- Two students per every computing device in grades 3–5.
- Asked library staff to become library media technicians; they take responsibility for all the technology integration at the individual sites.
- Allowed teachers to experiment with using a number of open-education resources, in addition to commercially produced lessons.
- Established after-school intervention using instruction/assessment e-learning software for students in need of extra help.

Measuring success:

- The district uses results from the California state test as well as adaptive benchmark assessments such as the Measures of Academic Success (MAP) test. The district also uses surveys to track teacher use of technology. No results from state testing are available because California did not administer tests last year.

Positive outcomes:

- Student and teacher use of technology for personalization has increased significantly from last fall to this past spring. High school teachers who never used technology in the classroom dropped from 22 to 0 percent; 40 percent of teachers reported using technology to personalize learning on a weekly basis.
- MAP test scores remained flat, but the school system considers this an accomplishment, given the burden of switching to the new common-core standards and the concern that scores would drop as a result.
- Last summer, more than 200 teachers participated in professional development, and more than 90 percent of them rated that training as effective or highly effective.
- Coaches have been helpful in making sure that the pedagogy teachers are learning is actually being implemented and in providing teachers with a highly skilled coach they can go to for support.

Challenges:

- Finding the time to implement changes. School structures are still rooted in the past, and change happens slowly.

- Overwhelming to the system, putting an additional burden on teachers to enact so much change so rapidly.

Future plans:

- The district plans to allocate funds to continue the work being done.
- Priority will be placed on keeping the coaches, who district officials believe are critical to sustaining progress.

Metropolitan School District of Warren Township

Indianapolis
Enrollment: **12,100**
Racial/ethnic profile: **48 percent African-American, 32 percent white, 12 percent Hispanic, 7 percent multiracial**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **72 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$28.6 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Institute more rigorous standards and make changes to the curriculum accordingly, with a focus on English/language arts and math.
- Integrate new instructional technologies and high-tech learning environments.
- Recognize that secondary students need alternative options for earning required graduation credits.
- Build a comprehensive online curriculum that takes advantage of instructional technologies.
- Professional-development efforts involved 80 P-12 teacher representatives, administrators, department chairs, and coaches.
- School-based training took place across the school year to support teachers' and coaches' implementation of instructional shifts anticipated through more rigorous standards, effective mathematics practices, and close-reading strategies.

Technology-based approaches:

- PIVOT, the district's newly acquired data dashboard provider, gives staff access to classroom and student data in a single, Web-based site to track and disaggregate student performance across time.
- All preK and kindergarten classrooms have access to iPads.
- Students in grades 1-12 have individual Chromebooks (9-12 can take them home), and iPads and Chromebooks are used in special education classrooms.
- Students have options when selecting their courses to be in a virtual course through Apex Learning Inc.
- Some teachers utilize the materials from the Apex curriculum for a more blended learning approach in their traditional classrooms.
- Dry erase walls and interactive projectors have been added to 74 high school classrooms, and all three middle school libraries, now called mediaplexes, have been renovated to provide high-tech learning environments and to accommodate highly-collaborative work among students and teachers.

Measuring success:

- The district uses the Indiana state tests as well as benchmark assessments aligned to the Indiana College and Career Ready Standards. These assessments are administered online every three weeks for English/language arts and mathematics.
- Teachers create summary forms that inform instruction by showing which students mastered or did not master certain standards. Unmet standards are recycled into future assessments, and teachers are aware they need to keep working on them.

Positive outcomes:

- Online testing has given the district the ability to gather performance data and act on it much more quickly than it could using paper-and-pencil assessments.
- Reports of higher student engagement in the new high-tech learning environments.

Challenges:

- Preliminary state test results show a dip in scores, which the district attributes to the transition to new standards.
- Many teachers were overwhelmed trying to juggle multiple initiatives.
- The first year, students in grades 7-12 had access to Chromebooks in school and at home. Because of the amount of damage at the middle-grade level, the program was scaled back for middle schoolers so that they only have access to the devices in school.

Future plans:

- District plans to continue to try to maintain all the initiatives that were written into the grant.

Iredell-Statesville Schools

Statesville, N.C.
Enrollment: **21,000**
Racial/ethnic profile: **69 percent white, 14 percent African-American, 11 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian, 3 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **44 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$20 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Individualize learning to improve education and teaching through personalization strategies, structures, and supports for students and educators.
- Improve student achievement and deepen learning while decreasing achievement gaps across student subgroups.
- Cultivate strong teaching practices and expand all students' access to high-quality instruction.
- Use data to inform decisions, boost instruction, and promote continuous improvement.
- Increase the percentage of students prepared for college and careers.

Technology-based approaches:

- Implement a 1-to-1 computing program with MacBook Airs; the program will be tailored to meet the specific needs of students with special needs and students in alternative schools.
- Personalize professional development for teachers; teachers completed self-reflections to gauge their comfort with technology.
- Using a state data portal that allows collaboration among teachers, students, and parents and contains students' academic records, as well as other tools and resources.
- Placed blended learning coaches in each school to help with coaching and support of teachers' implementation of personalized learning.

Measuring success:

- Weigh student-discipline data to look at engagement, preparation, and personal responsibility of students, among other data points.

Positive outcomes:

- Many teachers have embraced technology; an example is educators creating iBooks, iMovies.
- District officials say they've moved into personalized learning in a slow and deliberate way focused on students, not technology.

Challenges:

- Rollout of state system caused district to put its plans for implementing digital portal/environment on hold.

Future plans:

- Creation of "sustainability committee" to ensure efforts to implement plan continue.
- State's rollout of free portal will improve sustainability of project.

Middletown School District

Middletown, N.Y.
Enrollment: **7,300**
Racial/ethnic profile: **51 percent Hispanic, 27 percent African-American, 20 percent white, 2 percent Asian**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **75 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$20 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Build personalized learning environments for students through the use of technology, with a focus on grades K-5.
- Make sure students are proficient in fundamental skills before moving to the next grade. (Before the Race to the Top grant, 60 percent of students moving on to the next grade were not proficient in fundamental skills.)
- Avoid having students repeat grades, but rather have special classes for students of specific ability groupings where the teacher can personalize the intervention for each child based on his or her proficiency in either math or literacy.
- Implement a two-year kindergarten intervention program for pupils who are not academically ready for kindergarten. Students spend 2.5 years (first year, summer, second year) in a personalized, tightly targeted intervention program to develop proficiency in kindergarten readiness through foundational and developmentally appropriate math and literacy skills along with traditional social skills.
- Enable high school students to take college-level courses through Syracuse University.

Technology-based approaches:

- Harnessed the power of intelligent adaptive software, which adjusts the level of difficulty based on the skills of each student and captures how students are learning concepts.
- Collaboratively curated a catalog of digital content providers appropriate for each student.
- Partnered with ed-tech company Education Elements, which helps districts transition to new teaching and learning models such as blended learning.
- Vetted all the ed-tech products for quality to match them up with the specific needs of the district.
- Made blended learning mandatory in K-8; the grant focuses on K-5, which will be fully blended by 2016.
- Created a 1-to-1 computing environment in all blended learning classrooms with students using school-issued Chromebooks. Elementary students have access to the devices during the instructional day, and high schoolers can take them home.
- Designed intensive professional development around the use of the devices as well as the integration of them into academic environments.
- Established Technology Teachers on Assignment, a program in which district teachers act as mentors and coaches for technology initiatives.

Measuring success:

- The district uses interim local assessments that are adaptive to measure student success. With each examination, data is fed back to teachers, and grade-level meetings are held to talk about individual student performance and map out issues to devise the appropriate intervention. The district does not use New York state assessments in making decisions about student progress because it does not believe those assessments are reliable or valid.

Positive outcomes:

- Blended learning classrooms: Students in blended learning classrooms performed better than both the Northwest Evaluation Association projected growth as well as better than their peers. Students in K-5 blended reading classrooms on average exceeded their NWEA growth expectations by 50 percent (growing 1.5 years in a single year). Students in math blended classrooms on average exceeded the NWEA expected growth by 21 percent (growing 1.2 years in a single year). Students in blended classrooms outperformed students in nonblended classrooms by 57 percent in reading and 26 percent in math.
- Paying for students to take classes for credit at Syracuse University. In the first year (2012-13) 63 students took courses; this school year, 255 are enrolled. The proportion of students getting free and reduced-price meals taking these courses has been between 40 percent and 50 percent.

Challenges:

- Problems with the Apple iPad prompted the district to switch to Chromebooks.

Future plans:

- District leaders will evaluate each program next year and decide what should continue. Then they will begin to develop financial and other strategies for sustaining those programs past the grant. Superintendent Kenneth Eastwood believes all the initiatives from the Race to the Top grant will be continued.

Charleston County School District

Charleston, S.C.
Enrollment: **48,500**
Racial/ethnic profile: **45 percent white, 43 percent African-American, 8 percent Hispanic, 4 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **53 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$19.4 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Implement a competency-based system of instruction built on individualized learning plans.
- Put in place a robust system of data-driven instruction using frequent formative assessments to inform instruction.
- Build a climate and culture in which students own their learning.
- Foster student mastery of 21st-century skills necessary for college and career.
- Create a sustainable system built on a continuous improvement process.

Technology-based approaches:

- Implementing a 1-to-1 computing program with iPads; roughly half the 19 Race to the Top district schools were part of the project last year, and all of those schools will be 1-to-1 this fall.
- Students were provided with training and teachers with professional development on using iPads; coaches help teachers use and integrate digital technology in classrooms.
- Creation of digital citizenship curriculum, encouraging students to become responsible digital citizens.
- Establishment of digital learning platform with the aim of creating a system based on students' mastery of academic concepts; platform allows teachers and parents to monitor student performance. System allows for sharing across schools and is meant to encourage collaboration among teachers.

Measuring success:

- District has establshed a chart that grades progress on a 4-point scale; the goal is to be proficient with a 3 score by the end of the grant.
- District officials also use student-reported data about whether students set learning goals with teachers.

Positive outcomes:

- Students are developing their own vision as to why they're in the classroom, and about how to go about their work, instead of simply following teachers' direct instructions.
- Students rank themselves on behavior and on how they hope to make progress academically on specific lessons.
- Use of iPads has been embraced by students; some rules apply to their work, such as justifying why they downloaded certain apps. Teachers received devices before students to familiarize them with the product.

Challenges:

- Shift to competency-based learning has required a major change in instruction and support for teachers throughout the year.
- It took time to find the right vendor to provide a digital learning platform that worked to meet district needs.
- District's implementation of technology hit "bumps in road" in terms of the need for broadband to implement program.

Future plans:

- Considering piloting teacher-coaching model this year, but would need an outside grant to continue to fund a coach.
- Possible purchase of digital learning software.

St. Vrain Valley Schools

Longmont, Colo.
Enrollment: **30,000**
Racial/ethnic profile: **65 percent white, 28 percent Hispanic, 7 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **38 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$16.6 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Integration of STEM-related courses and project-based learning into the curriculum.
- Build out the curriculum from one STEM-focused school, Skyline High School, to the curriculum for elementary and middle school.
- Creation of individual career and academic plans for students in grades 5-12.
- Hiring of teachers to help with personalized learning and mentor at-risk students for at least four hours a week.
- School counselors hired at three secondary schools to train staff and monitor students' personalized graduation plans.

Technology-based approaches:

- The creation of an off-campus facility for Skyline students called the Innovation Center, which has technology labs with industry standard equipment and a classroom for multipurpose use.
- District came up with a five-year 1-to-1 computing initiative, being rolled out this year, meant to provide all students with iPad minis, in grades 5-12.
- STEM coordinators were trained to roll out the technology to staff.
- Technology was integrated with district's goals in STEM subjects: The district selected specific apps for science and math and wanted to use the devices in a way in which teachers allow students to work in team-based projects doing research and presentations.

Measuring success:

- The district measures success using Colorado statewide assessments and Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP.

Positive outcomes:

- English-language-learner students are tested on a national exam called ACCESS. The projected goal was about 5 percent improvement, and the actual improvement was 60 percent.
- Improvement on overall Colorado statewide assessments. Skyline hit its projected AYP performance levels for the first time; three other schools did as well.
- Increased support from community and industry partners, including improved engagement in a shared vision about innovation; partnerships within the district have increased to about 50 "major hitters" who provide resources, expertise, and mentorships.
- Increased leadership from STEM coordinators within schools in helping staff.
- Fifty percent increase in the number of students graduating from the district's STEM academy.

Challenges:

- Trying to integrate STEM into elementary and middle school core classes, when teachers are feeling pressure to improve test scores.

Future plans:

- District is seeking support from the community through a 2016 bond referendum to fund a stand-alone innovation center for students from across the school system.

Carson City School District

Carson City, Nev.
Enrollment: **7,500**
Racial/ethnic profile: **50 percent white, 42 percent Hispanic, 3 percent multiracial, 2 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2 percent Asian, 1 percent African-American**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **50 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$10 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Hire and train key staff members, such as implementation specialists who coach teachers and facilitate the development of curriculum, assessments, and instruction.
- Redesign the curriculum and develop learning targets.
- Develop common unit and semester assessments for each course, based on the learning target system.
- Use a student mastery data system (MasteryConnect) in a formative way to improve student performance.
- Shift classroom practices from delivery-centered to learner-centered.

Technology-based approaches:

- Using a data matrix, which puts each school's information on a spreadsheet and is updated weekly, school officials can identify students immediately who are not performing well, or if a teacher is struggling.
- A graduation tracker, which is updated quarterly, identifies if a student is credit-deficient, allowing school officials to intervene early.
- MasteryConnect, which is updated in real time as students take assessments, looks at mastery of student learning targets.
- 1-to-1 laptop computing program is funded by an outside donor. Already implemented in middle schools, and students can take the devices home.

Measuring success:

- Middle schools have already redesigned curriculum, and 50 percent of that work is done for high schools.
- Middle schools are operating on Mastery Connect now; still working on getting all the high schools operating on the system.

Positive outcomes:

- Seeing more creative approaches, and richer, deeper discussions about how students should learn.
- Teachers appear more passionate and energized now than before the initiative.

Challenges:

- The only timeline the district wasn't able to meet was the curriculum development and assessment for the high schools. It was too large a task to be completed in the first year.

Future plans:

- Determine the most cost-effective ways to keep the implementation specialists in place.
- Maintain the same levels of educational technology use.

Knowledge Is Power Program, or KIPP, DC

A charter school system.

District of Columbia
Enrollment: **4,500**
Racial/ethnic profile: **99 percent African-American, less than 1 percent white, Hispanic, or Asian/Pacific Islander**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **80 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$10 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Increase the use of adaptive software aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

- Build a new learning mnagement system designed to aggregate real-time student achievement data used for daily instructional decisions and personalized support.
- Personalized coaching and blended PD using video observation software and an LMS with individualized feedback for teachers.
- Build a framework to share and support best practices with local and national partners.
- Build out the Capital Teaching Residency, or CTR, program, a teacher-training program designed to increase the pipeline of highly effective educators in Washington, D.C. Increase sharing of best practices among teachers.
- Technology-based approaches: Use of Chromebooks and iPads in a blended learning format. In primary schools, the challenge is often centered on how to use blended learning to effectively facilitate small groups.

Measuring success:

- Student and teacher usage, as measured by time-on-task reports (rolled up and reported out biweekly).
- Quarterly school leader consultancies with the director of instructional technology, technology coaches, and school leaders.
- Lagging indicators linking to student performance.

Positive outcomes:

- Increased the number of resident teachers who complete the teaching residency program and who are placed and retained in schools over time.
- Teachers responded positively to new professional development and personalized coaching.
- In September 2013, KIPP DC began its first-ever technology action learning project with 12 teacher leaders. Each teacher piloted a new ed-tech product in his or her classroom, or developed and documented best practices for a product he or she was already using. Results were shared in May and informed the decisions of school leaders for this school year.

Challenges:

- Working with Accenture to construct a more formalized data-collection and -analysis system for measuring performance on a long-term basis.

Future plans:

- KIPP DC's use of Race to the Top grant funds was never meant to be a temporary expansion of KIPP DC's program. It plans to secure funding to maintain the school's current scale.

Lindsay Unified School District

Lindsay, Calif.
Enrollment: **4,100**
Racial/ethnic profile: **90 percent Hispanic, 10 percent other**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: between **75 percent** and **90 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$10 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Large encompassing goal is building, refining, and scaling up the district's performance-based education system, in which students progress at their own pace.
- Build out the digital learning platform Empower.
- Build out the curriculum, assessment, and resources.
- Assure that all the efforts are aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Technology-based approaches:

- The district's 1-to-1 computing initiative is called "1:World." (The bulk of those efforts—in improving hardware, bandwidth, and connectivity—was not funded by the RTT grant, but the professional development and the learner development of using the technology was funded by the grant.)
- 1-to-1 computing devices for students in grades 4-12 for use at school and at home.
- One computing device for every two students in grades K-3.
- Outside of Race to the Top, secured long-term funding so that the devices can be replaced every three years.

Measuring success:

- Track where learners are on the district's "progression of learning."
- Monitor how many learners are behind their age-appropriate grade level (this number has decreased significantly each year) and how many are above their age-appropriate grade level (this number is increasing).

Positive outcomes:

- Prior to starting its performance-based system, 20 percent of students qualified to go to a four-year college or university. Now, 32 percent qualify. The national average for high-poverty districts like Lindsay is 18 percent; national average for all districts combined is 37 percent.
- Learners are taking ownership, as opposed to the traditional "sit and get" learning mentality.
- Curriculum is more transparent, so students can just move forward upon mastering certain skills.

Challenges:

- Biggest frustration has been that some components of the Empower platform have been delayed in their development and rollout. This has caused frustration among teachers and students.
- Wanted to link success to California state tests, but that didn't occur last year.

Future plans:

- The district will continue to implement a performance-based system after the Race to the Top grant funds are exhausted.

Galt Joint Union Elementary School District

Galt, Calif.
Enrollment: **3,800**
Racial/ethnic profile: **58 percent Hispanic, 35 percent white, 7 percent multiple ethnicities or declined to state**
Students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals: **63 percent**

RACE TO THE TOP AWARD: **$10 MILLION**

Personalized learning goals:

- Develop and implement personalized learning plans for every learner.
- Ensure employees and learners know and apply strengths in personalized learning environments.
- Provide learners with blended learning opportunities supporting the Common Core State Standards.
- Help learners and families participate in Bright Future Learning Centers, school libraries transformed as safe year round and expanded learning engagement hubs with Internet access.
- Ensure that project-based service learning is experienced by learners during school and/or in expanded learning settings.

Technology-based approaches:

- Ubiquitous technology implementation, integrating seamlessly across the school system in varied learning spaces for various purposes.
- Customized blended learning based on each student's strengths, needs, and interests.
- Mobile-device usage for learning space flexibility. The district is using Chromebooks, and there's one for about every two students.
- Safe and supportive Internet connectivity locations at each school through 6 p.m. and during summers in Bright Future Learning Centers.
- Interoperable technology resources, such as computer-adaptive assessments and individual personalized learning plans, to support personalized learning and continuous improvement.

Measuring success:

- Main indicator for success would be that 100 percent of students meet or exceed their personalized learning plan goals for language arts, mathematics, and engagement. (Last school year was the first time they used those plans, so they are still analyzing performance data for common-core growth.)

- Last summer the district implemented a summer blended learning academy that served students needing catch-up academic growth in language arts or mathematics. The results demonstrate growth based on summer pretest and post-test information.

Positive outcomes:

- Within one school year, the district expanded wireless access and deployed mobile digital devices for increased technology access and learning opportunities for every school. The digital learning efforts support learning pathways courseware, virtual coursework, computer adaptive assessment, talent development, and project-based service learning.
- In the past 16 months, the district has purchased 2,940 Chromebooks and 214 teacher laptops. Each classroom has 10 to 15 mobile Chromebooks and Bright Future Learning Center have 80 Chromebooks. Every teacher has a laptop for flexible use during classroom instruction, live lesson production, or for mobile professional learning.
- The district designed personalized learning plans for K-8 students. The plans have educators and students blending digital learning resources with face-to-face instruction and opportunities with individual goal-setting.

Challenges:

- At the start of the 2013-14 school year, the entire district was challenged by low Internet speeds and uneven connectivity. These problems prevented teachers from effectively and efficiently using teaching resources, such as streaming video, and limited student ability to use online resources. The district now has a 1 gigabit per second connection to share with schools, and each K-12 site has its own 100 megabit per second connection. These increased broadband speeds allow collaborative learning projects among staff and students to access personalized courseware and blended learning programs more effectively.

Future plans:

- In California, all districts created new state-required multiyear plans with aligned funding called the Local Control Accountability Plan. District leaders develop the plan through a process involving parents, teachers, students, and the community, so the Race to the Top grant goals will be continued beyond the grant period for personalized learning and continuous improvement.

NEW RTT DEVELOPMENTS:
Stay abreast of the progress in the 16 Race to the Top school systems via updates in the *Digital Education* blog.

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