



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0224IL-1 for Chicago Public Schools #299

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) This is an extremely strong narrative. The applicant has focused on providing a personalized learning environment for all 8th grade classes in the City of Chicago. They have taken each of the core educational assurance areas and demonstrated how the high-quality plan they have developed will build on these areas. **(1) Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the work place and to compete in a global economy:** The proposal points to the fact that the Personalized Learning, Unifying Students (PLUS) Project will ensure that students are able to meet the requirements of the Common Core. The overarching plan of the PLUS Project is to connect students and teachers to meet individual student needs and goals through the personalization of instruction. Connecting students and teachers means that the future goals of the student can be realized by bringing together the tools and people needed to assure students are adequately prepared academically, emotionally and socially to transition to 9th grade. **(2) Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction:** The narrative has brought together some vital data systems that provide pivotal information regarding the student, his/her academic strengths and weaknesses, through an individual student profile. The major data systems include the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), a teacher and administrator facing tool that includes Educator Facing Dashboards, a Chicago Public Schools Information System (a search engine for Open Education Resources such as videos, online text and interactive sites), student learning maps providing a recommended course of study/sequence on selected learning standards. The development of e-portfolios by each student where they can showcase work of their own choosing, putting them in more control of what and how information about their competencies is displayed. This recognizes student skills and strengths that are likely to be much more relevant to that learner than simple test scores data provides. In short, the ISLE uses data from district sources to create a profile that includes student interests, learning styles and skill levels which the educator can access and use to create the special teacher/student relationship that is so important to this plan. **(3) Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals where they are needed most:** CPS has instituted a teacher evaluation plan aimed at actionable information to improve teacher growth. In addition, the development of a Personalized Learning Academy is designed specifically to support teachers as they develop personalized learning skills, classrooms and lessons. Participation in the PLUS Project has the ability to enable teachers to be more effective and achieve the competencies associated with a "distinguished" educator. **(4) Turning around lowest-achieving schools:** The district has taken a transformational approach in partnering with the Academy for Urban School Leadership. Action has been taken to improve low-achieving schools by providing professional development offerings, training, resources and support to teachers. This initiative is related to the Strategic School Support Service (OS4) which provides underserved neighborhood schools with the comprehensive and coherent support services to improve and sustain student achievement. Important to the reform illustrated by this proposal is the bottom up approach used by the district.

(b) Another strong area is the crafting of **Personalized Learning Academies (PLA)** developed to accomplish four major goals:

Goal 1: Invest in teacher training and tools to personalize learning.

Goal 2: Support students by providing the time and environment to investigate their interests and build a unique pathway for their academic futures.

Goal 3: Changing the classroom experience to provide content that is personalized and relevant to students' needs and experiences.

Goal 4: Connecting students with supportive relationships with adults to provide motivation and support.

As described earlier, the Academy seeks to develop the teacher's competency in developing a personalized learning classroom. The district will provide a 45 hour, interactive and rigorous Personalized Learning Academy for all 8th grade

teachers. From the evidence presented this means exposing teachers to what personalized learning actually is. This is described by the applicant as a "**rigorous academic content and skill-development** that is differentiated in the classroom based on each **student's learning needs, interests and preferred learning modalities.**" To achieve this, the PLA introduces teachers to the Universal Design for Learning principles to develop their lesson and unit plans. As part of this training, Homeroom PLUS is introduced to establish a relationship between teacher and student as together they create student learning maps--in reality a blueprint for the student's future. Both teachers and students receive Chromebooks to access data useful in the student's personalized learning. While support in the way of technology is important, just as important is the time provided for Homeroom PLUS (one hour twice a week) where students explore their interests, prepare a plan for success in high school and beyond through goal setting, receive personalized academic intervention and develop portfolios to house their best academic work to carry and share with teachers, parents and peers. The plan that is laid out for this project is both clear and credible and gives the appearance of meeting the expectations laid out in the PLA plan.

c. The classroom experience will change radically. Beginning in Year 1, 8th grade classroom teachers will transform their classrooms into Homeroom-PLUS. Each teacher will have a class period dedicated to helping students develop an individual learning plan and digital portfolio of work skill competencies. This will be a time for teachers to coordinate individual and group tasks related to competency and skill-building activities and check-in regularly with each student on their plan and progress towards goals. Technology in the classrooms will allow teachers and students to access student information, assessment results and additional learning resources through the student-facing portal. Within content-specific classes, participating teachers will begin incorporating personalized learning design in their Common Core lesson plans. Lessons will emphasize academic standards, access to assistive resources through technology and 21st century skills. Teachers will emphasize **mastery over memorization, recognizing effort, adjusting pace as needed and giving time for exploration and understanding**, as well as other strategies based on the needs of students.

The narrative has done an exceptional job of laying out a strong plan that will prepare students for high school and its demands. More important, this is a high quality plan to move them to a successful academic life, to graduate on time and be prepared for college or career.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant has selected schools which contain one or more 8th grade classes. The rationale behind this is to better prepare students academically, socially and emotionally for the transition to high school. The narrative explains that more students get off track academically between eighth and ninth grade than any other grade and that ninth grade failure is a key predictor for students not graduating from high school. In addition, eighth grade students are often not adequately prepared for high school in terms of academic expectations, requirements for self-direction and building connections between what they are learning and the competencies they will need for college and career. Eighth grade teachers stand at a gateway between elementary school and high school, and are uniquely positioned to provide essential and high impactful supports.

(b) The applicant has provided an extensive list of schools that will participate in grant activities. These number **394**. These include only schools with 8th grades. Charter schools have been excluded from this project.

(c) The following information has been presented by the applicant:

Total number of participating students=**23,329**

Participating students from low-income families=**19,791**

Participating students who are high-need students=**19,826**

Participating educators =**755**

This section identifies all participating 8th grade schools, educators and the number of participating students and those who come from low-income families or are high-needs students. The applicant has selected only schools with an 8th grade. 8th grades are pivotal point in a students educational life. Up until now little has been done in schools to assure high school success through a model that develops a personalized learning environment for students and redefines the student/teacher relationship. This model gives every indication that the reform envisioned here will support high-quality and school-level implementation of their proposal.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section continues the high-quality plan begun in (A) (1) and (A) (2). It provides more information regarding the plan started with the Personalized Learning Academies by developing five phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exposure--This phase starts with the 8th grade teachers and provides them with time to explore the models set up in PLA and gain exposure to new definitions of Personalized Learning. 2. Planning--The PLA provides teachers with exposure to successful models and guides them through design-thinking processes that allows them to design and innovate PL strategies that can meet their student's needs. 3. Implementation--In the second year of the grant, after their exposure to PL and the methods and strategies available to them, they will be asked to implement these practices in their content courses. 4. Assess--This phase allows them several opportunities to obtain support and check-ins with colleagues and coaches about how and what things are working or not working. 5. Improve--The PLA and ongoing support opportunities (e.g. Professional Learning Communities) provides coaches as well as training for principals and network staff to be able to help teachers continue to improve on the strategies being implemented. <p>Although the PLUS Project starts with the 8th grade, the intention is over time to extend this approach to all students in all grades to create meaningful, realistic district wide change. This effort includes the following key strategies to scale up PLUS Program: 1) ensuring that professional development is open to any interested teachers by year two of the project; 2) providing opportunities for participating eighth grade teachers to collaborate with ninth grade teachers so that there is continuity across the two grades; 3) identifying teacher leaders to train additional teachers, share best practices and foster excitement about the project; 4) developing a fundraising strategy to fund personal technology devices for additional grade groups; and 5) providing informational sessions, successes, lessons learned, and best practices related to the PLUS Project to a broad range of teachers, school leaders, parents, and community stakeholders throughout implementation so that people are aware of and want to participate in the project.</p> <p>This is a strong high-quality plan addressing all of the conditions found in (A) (3). Most impressive is the step-by-step approach used in moving forward and allowing them a period of grace before actual implementation of the plan. This is risky business for teachers who have followed an entirely different teaching path than is being described here and giving them time to digest this and implement in the second year is logical and shows a clear understanding of the concerns of teachers. The outcome goals found in (A) (4) are attainable following the PLUS Project plan. Given the training, support and technology that are described in this proposal it is difficult to see how this high-quality plan would fail to provide meaningful reform and provide districtwide change beyond the participating schools. What has been presented in this proposal is not an activity for a four year project, but a model for the future of education in Chicago.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
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<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has said: "It is important to note here that the data presented here is aligned to the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goals established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)." Several changes have significantly affected the average assessment levels. For instance, ISBE recently recalibrated the proficiency targets for the Illinois Standards Test (ISAT)--a state test for students in grades 3-8. With the rise in proficiency targets, the average score for schools has declined. Second, CPS is shifting from the current state assessment system to the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in 2014-2015. Therefore, CPS can not set proficiency targets for PARCC. Once baseline data is established for PARCC, the district will recalibrate these targets. Another problem noted here is that the ISBE'S accountability system is expected to change due to the state's recently declined ESEA flexibility waiver.</p> <p>The summative assessments being used include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for grades 3-8 • Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) for grade 11 • Illinois Alternative Assessment (IAA) for students requiring an alternative assessment in grades 3-8 and 11 • NWEA MAP Assessment in grades 3-8 		
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EPAS assessment series in grades 9-11 [Note: EPAS stands for Educational Planning and Assessment System. This assessment focuses on key transition points in high school. This is part of ACT which is a college readiness assessment.]

The reviewer notes that criterion (a) in this section requires summative assessments. Illinois does not have a growth model in place at this time. However, for the purpose of this section, the district has used Northwest Education Association norms and the EPAS assessment series from ACT. The NWEA data is based on data provided this school year. It should be observed that while performance on summative assessments (proficiency status) is provided, the subgroup by grade in reading and math is based upon the ISBE AYP targets.

The data provided in (a) shows substantial gains for African American and Hispanic students, Students with Disabilities, LEP and the economically disadvantaged. Given the fact that this is based on ISBE's AYP and changed from previous years, it should be viewed cautiously. These targets are set for this proposal alone and need to be reset once PARCC has provided a baseline.

(b) The applicants goals for closing the achievement gaps shows gains for all groups. The smallest gaps lie between Asian and White students. The largest gaps are found between African Americans, Hispanics and English Learners when compared to the achievement of Asian and White students. These groups show a substantial improvement over time and appear ambitious yet achievable given the emphasis on personalizing the learning environment described throughout the proposal.

(c) Graduation rates for African American and students with disabilities are somewhat low when compared against the rates for White, Asian and Pacific Islander students. A 21% targeted increase for students that rank low academically strains credibility. Yet, the design of the plan attacks many of the causes behind students failing to graduate. This may be possible.

(d) The figures supplied for the college enrollment rate may be attainable given the emphasis in the Plan. However, the number of high needs students and students from low-income families makes it highly unlikely that the goals set for this will be met. It would be helpful to receive more information as to how these targets were calculated.

The data that has been introduced in (a) is an inaccurate representation of future targets because of the anticipated assessment changes that will occur. This section has not been penalized for this. This section would benefit from a discussion surrounding why these targets are likely to result in the changes proposed for each of the criteria. If these are educated guesses, it would be helpful to understand what education these guesses are based upon. The narrative states that if CPS students were growing at the same pace as students nationally, CPS would have a national growth score of 50%. "By setting a goal of 60%, CPS is setting a more aggressive, yet reasonable target." This means that 6 in 10 students would be making gains on nationally-normed standardized tests. This suggests that CPS students would be growing 20% faster than the rest of the nation. Why this is reasonable is not explained. The table submitted for this indicates that all students will grow at 60%. Yet in the summative data, we see that academic improvement varies from subgroup to subgroup over time. This appears overly ambitious and needs to provide more information to see that it is clearly achievable.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(B) (1) (a) There is no doubt that the applicant has shown that a significant improvement is visible in the aggregate in the five years for which they have provided data. It would be more helpful if we could have apprised ISAT scores over this same period for high-need learners, students with disabilities and limited English learners although it is sufficient that this was presented in (A) (4). However, this would provide a more useful and comprehensive measure of this success. It would also be helpful to know how the cut scores were arrived at and what they actually reflect at this juncture.

The improvement of ISAT scores shows steady progress between 2008 and 2012. This is attributed by the district to rigorous core content curriculum development, professional development, coaching and school-based academic support. It is troubling to see that there is a demonstrated lack of alignment between elementary and high school assessments which reflects college-readiness as measured by ACT. This results in a dramatic drop between students meeting and exceeding standards on the 8th grade ISAT and students meeting and exceeding standards on the PSAE. The reliability and validity

of the data becomes suspect. In spite of this, there is evidence here that graduation rates for White and Hispanic students show an improvement of 11.6% and 14.5% respectively. African American students lag behind, improving at only 8.4%.

In terms of dropouts, the data presented is encouraging. We see a steady decline from 2009 to 2013. College enrollment shows increases across the board. Much of this is attributed to tackling high school suspension and expulsion rates for African American students. To address this, CPS revised its Student Code of Conduct to eliminate automatic multi-day suspensions, promote in-school suspensions and emphasize a restorative justice approach to respond to inappropriate behavior. This has resulted in a 10% reduction in suspensions.

A good deal of the success in increasing college enrollment rates and turning around schools has been the result of 1) providing of rigorous coursework, 2) increasing student study supports, 3) expanding Advanced Placement course access, 4) assisting in FAFSA completion, 5) building school counselor capacity and establishing partnerships with local universities.

(B) (1) (b) Turning around low-performing schools is an ongoing task. The recent teacher evaluation system leading to improving what teachers do in the classroom, the NWEA assessment tool, equitable resource allocation, targeting at-risk students and the increase in classroom teaching time all create an atmosphere where students can be successful. The Personalized Learning Program is a major step in helping students succeed and graduate on time ready for college or career. Other strategies aimed at the most at-risk students include providing supports for schools to re-engage and re-enroll students who are off track or dropped out, strengthening restorative justice and school climate supports and conflict prevention. SIG support has been a valuable fund to draw on for needy students and schools.

(B) (1) (c) Student performance data access has been provided through the student/parent portal. This is a student and teacher facing site for student information available in English and Spanish. Through this portal students and parents are able to track attendance data and grading detail (including assignment level detail) and offers an alert tool that allows both parents and students to designate attendance and grading thresholds that result in an e-mail or text alert. This portal also provides a means to send notes to teachers without setting up an individual e-mail account. Several other sources provide data access to students, parents and educators: 1) the CPS Report Card (providing data for families to use to make informed school choice decisions), 2) Curriculum Information System (a teacher facing portal for student information), and 3) a dashboard used to analyze school-, subject-, classroom- and student-level performance data on a myriad of key indicators.

This is a very complete section that covers all of the required content areas. The one question that arises is the reliability and validity of some of the data based upon the change in assessments and its application to the data provided.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section provides **the high level** of transparency required for this financial information. CPS provides interactive budget tools on its website to allow users to more easily review all spending in the district's budget, including individual school budgets, department budgets, salaries and positions. What differs from the usual budget detail found in most districts is that this contains an **interactive tool allowing users to see the difficult decisions and tradeoff that the district's situation presents**. The detailed CPS budget information is also published on the **Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) website**. This includes actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instruction and support staff by fund type, based on the U. S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey for local government finances. Additionally, each school level report provides a **comparison between the current year and last year's budget** and the initial budget and final approved budget.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

CPS lays out a comprehensive picture of the successful conditions and autonomy under state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments in the proposal. A list of the PLUS Project Elements and Statutory Regulations and Compliance are compiled below. PLUS Project Elements are placed in italics.

Professional Development for Teachers-CPS and its schools are empowered to develop and deliver professional development (both in person and online). Plans for professional development and training have been developed in conjunction with Chicago teachers and Chicago Teachers Union representatives and have been approved by CPS and CTU leadership.

Teacher evaluation--The district's teacher evaluation system is fully compliant with the performance evaluation Reform Act

signed into law in 2010, which requires all school districts to design and implement a performance evaluation system that assesses teacher's and principal's professional skills and include student growth. Key elements of the PLUS Project are designed to align with *distinguished teacher* competencies within the teacher evaluation system.

Re-design of eighth grade homeroom model (and dissemination to core classes)--there is a requirement that 300 instructional minutes be spent per day in the middle grades. CPS will honor this requirement while freeing school leaders to determine how those minutes are spent, per regulatory authority.

Technology--CPS and its schools are empowered to enhance educational technology under current state legal, statutory and regulatory rules.

System of Digital Badges--As with other technology platforms, CPS and its schools are empowered to introduce Digital Badges to recognize in- and out-of-school accomplishments under current state legal, statutory and regulatory rules.

Social-Emotional supports--CPS and its schools are empowered to develop and deliver social and emotional learning support (including services targeted to individual students) under current state legal, statutory and regulatory rules.

Data System--CPS is following the lead from the state and will pilot and adopt ISLE in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education. CPS and its school's are empowered to implement additional enhancements to its data systems (compliant with FERPA and ISSRA) under current state legal, statutory and regulatory rules. The ISLE system will act as a platform for digital learning tools and data collection from students e-portfolios, as part of the PLUS Project.

Current laws and regulations of the State of Illinois provide the proper conditions and autonomy to implement the personalized learning environment described in (C) (1) and (C) (2). Additionally, the State opted to adopt the Common Core State Standards in June 2010 that is being carried out through this project. The integration of ISLE into standard classroom practice including learning maps for data review, collaboration and accessing and sharing teaching and learning resources give further evidence of these conditions and the autonomy needed for this criteria.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) This section is very strong. CPS reached out to many stakeholders in participating and other district schools in the development of the PLUS Project. These people included parents, student, teachers, principals, Network Chiefs, community-based organizations and education-focused foundations. CPS involved the CTU in the planning process from the beginning and CTU representatives attended regular planning meetings, reviewed drafts and provided ongoing feedback on the projects development. The district reached out through two transmission belts 1) Local School Councils (LSCs) and 2) the Community Action Councils (CACs). It is through these transmission belts that the district was able to include parents, elected officials, faith-based institutions, health care and community-based organizations and a host of other stakeholders who were involved in the planning process and solicited for their feedback throughout the proposal's development and completion. CAC members, in particular, were surveyed about their pre-existing knowledge of College and Career Readiness Standards and personalized learning models. A majority of these members rated redesigning the middle grades favorably.

(i) This LEA has collective bargaining. A letter from the Chicago Teachers Union specifically provides support for the PLUS Project and speaks of the collaborative effort in producing this plan. The letter further states: *Please consider that we have worked with the district since the inception of this proposal....The district has been extremely responsive to our concerns about the role of technology and its isolating effect on our early adolescents who need positive group experiences that foster making good personal choices in addition to academic growth.*

(b) The Appendix has provided letters of support from the Mayor, Chicago Board of Education, Illinois State Board of Education, The University of Chicago, independent organizations and foundations as well as an 8th grade math teacher and 33 letters of support received from elementary, middle school and high school principals.

The involvement of the community and its support for the PLUS Project is evident as seen by these letters submitted in support of the proposal and CPS comments found in other sections of the proposal. While letters are common in grant proposals, it is letters that provide meaningful support that make a difference. The enclosure of a letter from the mayor and letters providing legislative support from both houses of the Illinois State Legislature is **meaningful support** and may be a critical form of financial support (although not guaranteed) when the grant program ends. Just as important is the support received from the 33 elementary, middle school and high school principals and Chicago Teacher's Union. It is important see that these are not form letters but appear to be honest expressions of their support for the PLUS Program. The scope and depth of this support provides the reader with an assurance that the political and educational community stands behind this proposal.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented a high quality plan throughout the proposal. It should be understood that the plan is not limited to one section alone but is contained and repeated several times within these narratives.

(C) (1) (i) **Students understand what they are learning is a key to their success in accomplishing their goals.** The entire personalized learning system focus is on getting students ready for college or career. With the help of the teacher and HR+, Learning Maps, Digital Badging, 9th grade counselor meetings, and e-portfolios students are planning daily for their success in accomplishing their goals.

(C) (1) (ii) **Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-read graduation, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals and measure progress toward those goals.** Through the support found in HR+ and the tools described above students' will set goals to achieve college and career graduation on time. This support entails the regular face-to-face meetings with their homeroom teacher and the accessibility to assessment data as a measure of the progress they have made toward those goals. Students will work with their homeroom PLUS teachers to set up learning and skill-building goals, plan and set milestones toward achievement, participate in individual and group tasks, and have regular checking to review and revise their learning goals.

(1) (iii) **Are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest.** One of the key goals of Personalized Learning is to discover a student's areas of interest and encourage him/her in the development of those interests. Content instruction, although thematic in nature, may touch on these areas. But the student is free to deeply explore these areas of interest by ensuring that 8th grade students have time and space for self-exploration. Both the e-portfolios and learning maps are valuable for creating the pathways to the goals 8th graders seek. Parents and teachers can help them stay on track this way. The Chromebooks allow them access to digital information to further explore their interests.

(1) (iv) **Have access and exposure to diverse cultures, context, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.** Online platforms like Edmodo allow teachers to use a social networking platform to spark conversations with students to poll their understanding and engage students around issues in a method familiar to students. Outside of the classroom, social networking will also allow teachers and students to talk one-on-one outside of traditional class time on any issues, questions, or concerns. Again, the goal of the strategies is to provide students with learning approaches and supports that are accessible and engaging to them, encouraging students to be drivers of their own learning and stay engaged and on track. CPS already invests significant resources in providing schools with learning content that reflects the breath of racial, ethnic and cultural groups in the student body, the city of Chicago and the world beyond.

(C) (1) (v) **Master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.** Through curriculum and instructional delivery changes as well as learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom, eighth grade students participating in the plus project will have a wealth of opportunities to master academic content and develop the skills necessary for college and career success. In addition to mastery of academic content, students will also master personal mindsets, planning for success, social awareness, verbal communication, collaboration and problem-solving. Complementing formal assessments of these skills with innovation in digital badging will allow students to demonstrate essential skills and experiences not currently recognized with grades or test scores and will allow these competencies to be accessible to future teachers, college recruiters, and even employers.

(C) (i) **Each student has access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals to ensure he or she can graduate on time in college and career ready.** The PLUS Project will ensure more students have access to a learning environment that provides academic rigor grounded in the CCSS, engages students in 21st century skill building and technologies allowing them to set and pursue personalized learning goals. All students participating in the project will develop learning goals associated with college and career readiness standards. In Year 2, this information will be housed in student learning maps that will integrate with district data systems and platforms through ISLE.

(C) (ii) **A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments.** The PLUS Project will change the learning environment for eighth-grade students by incorporating personalization strategies into existing curriculum and classroom design. In addition students will be presented with a variety of personalized learning approaches related to time

and pacing providing different approaches to content and different ways to demonstrate mastery of concepts.

(C) (iii) **High quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, along with college and career ready standards or college and career ready graduation requirements.** Through the student facing portal that will be developed as part of the PLUS Project, students will be able to access different personal interest surveys and college and career exploration resources. This platform will then link students to open education resources and adaptive learning resources that can help them address any deficiencies, develop new skills and work at their own pace. While the program will leverage digital learning content, teachers will still act as a guide for students in this process to assist them with tool selection and will support the learning process throughout. The goal is not to use digital learning content to supersede teacher-based content but to help enrich content and make it engaging and interactive to students.

(C) (iv) **On going in regular feedback, including at a minimum (A) frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college and career ready standards and college and career ready graduation requirements; (B) personalize learning recommendations based on the students current knowledge and skills, college and career ready standards or college and career graduation requirements and available content instructional approaches and supports.** Homeroom PLUS will dedicate a time for students to receive feedback and input from their teachers as they collaboratively review student learning goals, e-portfolios and digital badges. Through regular feedback to students in Homeroom PLUS as well as personalized feedback and content in specific classes, the program will encourage stronger relationships between teachers and students, more efficient and effective access to student information data, and use these data to inform learning so that it is more grounded in the real world, accessible and engaging.

(C) (v) **Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-needs students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college and career ready standards or college and career ready graduation requirements.**

Personalization acknowledges that all students start at different levels of accomplishment and accomplish mastery at different levels--each student has a different learning path. This universal approach values and makes use of the experiences and knowledge that diverse learners bring with them. Instruction is planned to leverage these strengths and provide learning opportunities that are relevant and accessible to all learners. The PLUS Project will be incorporated into all types of classrooms to ensure learners at all levels are engaged in academic rigor that is personalized and tailored to their needs. In addition, regular opportunities for check ins with teachers and counselors as part of the Homeroom PLUS will allow high needs students to access additional support and resources needed more immediately and proactively.

(C) (c) **Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.** Teachers will receive intensive training (through the PLA and through ongoing support in their schools throughout the years of the grant term) of the tools utilized within the plus project, and therefore the majority of training and support for students will come from teachers. Related to technology, students will also be supported by educational technology and the Education Technology Personalization Specialist and Coordinator that will be assigned to the project to oversee the large infusion of technology service platforms across the district.

While it is important to see that the applicant has addressed all of the components of the section, this section transcends simply filling in the blanks. Yes, it does present a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching and creating a personalized learning environment for **all** students. What they have provided here is a sequential process to initiate the personalized learning experience for BOTH teacher and student and provide the support and especially the time to accomplish this on a regular basis throughout the school year. This not a "one shot" approach to a new program--the new flavor of the month! It is a reform movement that has promise of reaching thousands of children with a promise of graduation and attendance at college or entrance into a career at the conclusion of their high school days.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment that provides support for students to graduate college or career ready. Much of what we see in this section was introduced earlier in Section A.

(a) All participating educators engage in training and in professional teams or communities, that support their individual and collective capacity.

(i) Support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time in college and career ready.

1) The personalized Learning Course: With Grant approval, CPS, in partnership with CTU's Quest Center and other local and national personalized learning experts, will begin developing a 45 hour personalized learning experience called the

Personalized Learning Academy. The immediate goal of creating the PLA is to expose teachers to new instructional strategies and empower them with the resources and ongoing support they need to implement the strategies in a safe place. The overarching goal of the PLA and the PLUS Project is to not only expose teachers to new instructional strategies and technology, but to engage teachers in meaningful conversation about their obstacles to delivering personalized instruction and engaging them in a design thinking process that will put them in the driver's seat to create and implement innovative strategies that can be the solutions to their classroom's and school's most pressing instructional challenges.

This is a very comprehensive plan designed to provide students with the tools and information to develop their own goals that move them toward graduation and becoming either college or career ready.

2) Personalized Learning Communities: To support the training that teachers will participate in related to the PLUS Project, CPS will coordinate ongoing opportunities for teachers to share their experiences, challenges and successes with other participating teachers. This will occur through professional learning communities, a mechanism that CPS already uses to bring teachers together. Teachers will have the opportunity to meet with other teachers working on the same personalization model to share their progress, make changes and get and give feedback. (Year 1 is for 8th grade teaches only with a scaling up in Year 2 and 3)

3) Training and Coaching at the Schools: To provide support to teachers as they begin to implement what they have learned in PLA into their classrooms, CPS content staff, CTU professional development coaches, and instructional support leads will visit participating schools throughout the year. Project coordinators will help teachers address challenges related to implementation in the classroom, technical support, use of UDL or 21st century skill learning and other topics

4) Additional Professional Development: PLUS Project staff and partners will complete a teacher needs assessment form and additional professional development training will be offered to participating teachers. The following year both through surveys and PLA information some 2 to 3 content related professional development courses will be offered each month for participating teachers. By year three of the project, participating teachers who have earned the PLUS Personalized Learning Credential will have the opportunity to train other teachers and their schools across their network on how to incorporate personalization into their classrooms. This will enable interested teachers to take a leadership role in the project that will enable the PLUS Project to be gradually disseminated to other grades across the district in a way that is realistic and sustainable.

(II) Adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks in response to their academic needs, academic interests and optimal learning approaches (e.g. discussion, collaborative work, project-based learning, videos, manipulatives. The entire PLA is dedicated to adapting content and instruction to the learner. This Academy exposes teachers to new instructional strategies while empowering them with the resources and ongoing support needed to implement these strategies in a safe space. Teachers follow five phases that support adaptation of content and instruction. These include:

1) Exposure to the foundations of what personalized learning is.

2) Teachers will be guided through a review of their current unit design and apply the design principles of UDL as well as other personalized learning strategies they were exposed to, to address different student needs, interests and experiences.

3) The implementation phase deals with teachers experimenting with new personalized learning strategies over three 90 days cycles.

4) The assessment phase provides teachers with meaningful data about the students they teach that is current and more comprehensive than academic scores. With this information, teachers will be able to better assess the impact their instructional changes have on their students.

5) After guided reflection on their strategies in PLA and at PLC meetings, teachers will be supported by their colleagues, PLUS Project staff and various instructional coaches available to them to refine and improve their strategies.

(iii) **Frequently measure student progress.** In their Homeroom Plus classrooms teachers will work with students to set learning goals and milestones to track their progress on this path. Digital badges and students e-portfolios will provide teachers with additional ways to access student progress and accomplishments, and measure achievement beyond traditional assessment methods. Teachers will be able to utilize these data, as well as feedback from participating students, counselors and mentors to better measure and understand student progress in a more comprehensive, holistic way.

(iv) **Improve teacher's and principal's practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation systems including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness, as well as by providing recommendations, support, and interventions as needed for improvement.** Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago (REACH) is the main tool for improvement. Evaluation centers around teacher planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities. This section spells out in detail what will be evaluated and what feedback they can expect.

(C) (2) (b) Educator access to tools, data and resources.

(i) Actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches. Participating teachers will have a single point of access to multiple sources of actionable data and tools to identify optimal learning resources to support students academic needs and interests. This will include a teacher-facing dashboard that will house the student's learning maps that will be developed simultaneously to the student-facing dashboard through ISLE. Social networking tools in the classroom as well as tech-based communication between students and teachers outside of class.

(ii) High-quality learning resources. Participating teachers will have a variety of resources, including instructional content, assessment and teacher supported digital tools that are aligned with standards and provide adaptive approaches to learning, all available in the district's online Knowledge Center.

(iii) Processes and tools to match student needs. The narrative points to such things as e-portfolios and learning maps and Google accounts as additional means of personalizing the learning environment.

(C) (2) (c) School leaders and leadership teams.

(i) Information to assess and improve teacher effectiveness/school culture. With districtwide student growth assessments tied to individual teachers, regular teacher evaluation observations, and ways to track teacher participation in professional development, CPS principals will be better able to assess teacher effectiveness and develop unique plans for their continuous improvement. These new strategies also allow school leadership to document the efficacy of specific professional development courses, improving teacher practice and increasing student achievement.

(ii) Training, systems and practices to continuous improvement. Schools and teachers have access to multiple sources of actionable data and information to facilitate their ability to identify optimal learning approaches to meet student academic needs and interests.

Section C is well-supported and the narrative provides very detailed information regarding the implementation of the Personal Learning Environment and the roles of teacher and student. This is an extremely high-quality plan. It would be helpful if more attention were given to the role of the principal in these schools. While we understand that this individual is in a supporting role, he/she is also the educational leader and much of the success in a school depends on this prime leadership role.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	15

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The Central Office plays a supporting role in this proposal. Although the CPS Chief Executive Office will provide oversight for these grant funded-activities together with the Office of Strategy Management and Project Director. The school-level decision making has been shifted out of the Central Office and into the hands of the school principals who have over sight for the implementation of personalized learning. The main job of the Project Director is to oversee the key work streams involved in the project: 1) professional development and coaching, 2) school and classroom structures and support, 3) learning tools and technology, 4) data integration and use and 5) evaluation. That is not to say that there is not strong support at the participating schools from the newly organized three School Support Centers. They have a central role in providing customer-centric services and training to address school-based requests for budget, procurement, finance and human resources assistance. The support team adds two office/coordinator positions to oversee scheduling and administrative concerns at satellite sites and six professional development facilitators/coaches that will provide ongoing outreach to students and parents as well as in-class coaching to teachers. This personal learning proposal is a massive undertaking over the project years and into the years beyond funding. This a well-organized Central Office that is up to the task.

(b) CPS recognizes that the key player in this undertaking is the principal and has redesigned their role. For this reason, the principal is given wide authority to do such things as providing for staffing, materials, technology and other resources as they see fit. The goal here is to move 90% of the CPS budget to principals. They have the flexibility to identify strategies their schools and teachers use to achieve results. As an illustration of this support, they are given the autonomy and flexibility to adjust the school day schedule and staffing to ensure the project is successfully implemented. School principals have the autonomy to choose how the school day is structured. For eighth grade, there are 100 minutes of flexible time that can be allocated to content and programming based on school preferences. In addition, they can offer teachers planning prep time during the school year.

(c) Digital badging and personalized learning approaches are a key strategy within the PLUS Project to enable students to demonstrate mastery in different ways. In this case, the student's exploration of new content is linked to mastery that is demonstrated through the digital badges that align with the milestones involved with mastery of a complex concept. In this way, students can use badges to demonstrate their mastery of a topic and the principles within, outside of traditional assessments and grades.

(d) Students are given multiple ways to demonstrate mastery. (1) their progress through NWEA; teacher generated performance tasks; diagnostic assessments; standardized state exams (ISAT and PARCC); digital badges; and impeded assessments in adaptive software, online social learning platforms, and internet-based content-tagging systems.

(e) CPS is committed to serving all students equally. To this end, the district supports development of Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and makes assistive technologies available for students who need them to learn. The district supports deployment of qualified special education teachers and aides to all specialized schools, other district schools and charter schools. PLUS Project teachers will use instructional practices and materials that are adaptable and fully assessable to all students. The PLUS Project provides accelerated and deep learning experiences for all learners.

This is a very high-quality plan and meets all of the conditions of (D) (1)

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Ensuring Access

Student & Families--Student data is accessible to students and parents online via the CPS portal from any location.

Once ISLE's student-facing dashboard becomes available in school year 2014-15, it will also be available online and PLUS project information/student e-portfolio will be included in ISLE's accessible platforms. Students and parents will be able to access individual student information and monitor progress at any time. Learning resources employed by PLUS Project teachers will include significant online resources, many of them free, which can be accessed by a computer or Smartphone with an Internet connection. The inclusion of the Smartphone is important in opening up access to those parents without access to a computer at home.

Teachers and Principals--Teachers will have access to the CPS dashboard at school and home to look up student data, lesson plans, assessments and their own evaluation data.

(b) Opportunities are provided for students to familiarize themselves with the new tools, equipment and environment they will be entering in the fall and meet with new teachers. Students will be trained by their teachers during class time to access, update and use their e-portfolio and related resources and tools. Students will become proactive in tracking their own progress. Parents will receive training through a series of events at each school. Students and families will have access to online training materials which are posted on the district's website. Teachers and staff will be provided with ongoing technical assistance from their school's technology coordinator, the PLUS Project Education Technology Personalization Specialist, PLUS Project EdTech coordinator and the district-wide technology support team.

(c) CPS currently uses information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their data in a hard copy format (e.g., report card/progress report) or in an open data format that students and parents can plug into other Electronic Data Systems.

(d) CPS schools and the district already use interoperable Data systems as part of the district's existing data infrastructure.

This section requires the applicant to show that all key stakeholders will have access to content, tools, and resources during out-of-school time. This is a questions of access by all key stakeholders but especially parents and students. The proposal has show in this section that access will be available through a student-facing dashboard. While this is important, it is also necessary to provide the training and support to students **and** parents in its use. This proposal would do this and provide access through **both** computer and Smartphone. In addition, they have not forgotten the 8% of families in their district that do not have home access to the internet and for this reason have provided access through Internet Essentials.

The applicants have taken extra steps to ensure that all key stakeholders (especially principals and teachers) are connected. The applicant has provided a high-quality plan that addresses this section completely.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
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(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>CPS recently established the Office of Strategy Management a Cabinet-level unit designed to drive and oversee the execution of cross-functional strategic initiatives through a rigorous, data-driven approach to planning, monitoring and problem-solving. Through extensive high quality professional development and strategic use of technology, teachers will be better able to respond to the needs and interests of individual students. This personalized support will accelerate student academic growth, develop critical non-cognitive competencies and ultimately increase student graduation rates. Feedback and progress toward Project goals are outlined below:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPS expects teacher professional development efforts to improve teacher effectiveness, increasing the number of students with effective teachers as measured through the new evaluation system. CPS will regularly gauge success along the way through early teacher self-assessment and independent observations of a teacher's skill in adopting personalization strategies. • CPS expects technology investments to support teacher personalization efforts and to provide students and parents increased access to information on student goals and progress. Accordingly CPS will observe teacher and student adoption of student e-portfolios and learning maps, digital badges and student and parent understanding of student progress towards college and career readiness through My Voice, My School surveys. • CPS expects professional development and technology investments to increase student engagement, accelerate student growth in literacy and language skills and help students get on track and stay on track for college and career. To gauge the districts success in improving these important student outcomes, CPS has identified a comprehensive set of student engagement, academic growth and attainment metrics. 		
<p>Implementation monitoring will include frequent collection, organization and review of cross-district stakeholder input whose contributions will support and sustain progress. Feedback from Central Office departments, Networks, principals, teacher teams, students and parents will be gathered by the Project Director through debriefings at regularly scheduled meetings while more formal data collection will be completed by the consortium in Chicago School Research (CCSR), the external evaluator of the PLUS Project. Data that has been gathered will be reviewed for progress toward the project goals and changes will be made.</p>		
<p>At participating schools, principals and teachers will be engaged in regular opportunities to reflect and make practice improvements. As part of the project design, teacher teams will meet weekly to present and share new approaches, model lessons, examine student data and reflect on practice. On a monthly basis, team leaders will gather for professional development, reflection and sharing what is working and what is not working. These meetings will be critical opportunities for teams to review progress and make adjustments as necessary.</p>		
<p>This is a high-quality plan and process that provides the district, participating schools, principals and teachers with information that is critical to the success of the project. This plan illustrates a rigorous plan to follow and continually improve the project. The criteria for this section calls for information on how this project will share information publicly regarding such investments as professional development, technology and staff. It does not provide this information.</p>		

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>CPS solicited meaningful family and community input to inform the development of the plus project. The project will continue to use these forums to provide regular updates to stakeholders on progress, gather feedback to inform continuous improvement and engage partners and supporting critical aspects of the initiative. The following means will be used to provide ongoing communication and engagement:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing PLUS Project events for students and parents; • Provide ongoing engagement and communication to teacher and principals; • Teachers will stay engaged through PLCs; • PLUS professional development coaches and Project Coordinators will work with teachers and principals to ensure they are aware and engaged in the project as it is implemented and continually improved; • Provide surveys to gauge the project's success in fostering student ownership of learning and teacher ability to personalize learning; • Incorporate key components of personalized learning in the family-focused school-quality trainings; and • Solicit significant stakeholder input on the development, use and review process related to student learning maps. 		
<p>This is another high-quality plan developed by the applicant.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

CPS has developed a series of short term, intermediate and long term performance measures specifically aligned to the PLUS Project outcomes. **The outcomes and performance measures are reasonable, ambitious and achievable.** The district offers a rationale for each indicated measure. These sixteen measures exceed the number required for this section of the proposal. This criteria requires information as to how it will review and improve the measure over time. Information concerning this is found in (E) (2). The overall aim of these outcomes is to provide the project team, CPS leadership and other stakeholders with a clear view of progress toward goals and with sufficient opportunity to course correct if necessary. The narration and metric supplied are of a high quality and provide evidence of successfully achieving the goals of the PLUS Program. Each of the performance measures described below provide a baseline and targets. These targets begin in SY 2013-14 and end by SY 2017-18. Targets are introduced for the aggregate and subgroups which include students that are White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, Multi-Racial, English Learner, Students with disabilities and Free and Reduced Lunch.

Short-Term Outcomes and Measures**Outcome 1: Improved Student Engagement**

- % of 8th grade students who have an e-portfolio, learning goals and learning map in place.
- % of participating students earning digital badges.

Outcome 2: Improved Instructional Approach

- % participating teachers whose personalization rating improves.
- % of teachers who report a better understanding of their student's interests and learning needs.

Intermediate Outcomes and Measures**Outcome 3: Eighth Grade Students are on Track for College and Career Readiness**

- % participating students making expected gains on NWEA MAP math and reading assessments.
- % participating students on track for college and career.
- % participating students indicating that their teachers connect learning to the real-world, including students' interests and goals.
- % participating students demonstrating feelings that their eighth grade experience has/is preparing them for high school, based on My Voice, My School survey results.

Outcome 4: Eighth Grade Students are Building the Social Emotional Competencies and 21st Century Skills for College and Career.

- % participating students demonstrating social emotional and 21st century competencies, based on My Voice, My School survey results.

Outcome 5: High School Students are on track for College and Career Readiness.

- % participating freshman on track for graduation.

Long-Term Outcomes and Measures**Outcome 6: CPS Students Graduate on time and Prepared for College- and Career-Success**

- % participating students making expected gains on EXPLORE in 9th grade.
- Decrease in the attendance gap between 8th and 9th grade.
- Decrease in the number of students lost to the district between 8th and 9th grade.
- Decrease in the number of students that dropout during 9th grade.

Outcome 7: Teacher Quality

- % students with teachers are rated "Proficient" or "Distinguished" on all four domains of the CPS Framework for Teaching.
- % students with effective teacher and principal.

The applicant has provided a rationale for each of the Performance Measures. Each of these tie directly to the goals of the

program. As an illustration, they say under their Long-Term Outcomes and Measures that they will **Decrease the attendance gap between 8th and 9th grade**. They go on to say that CPS has identified a significant persistent gap in attendance between eighth and ninth grade, meaning that the attendance rates decrease as students transition to high school. At the same time, the district sees decreasing student engagement and academic achievement during this period. As an additional indicator of student engagement, CPS will track this attendance during the implementation of the PLUS Project. Rationales such as this are found throughout this section. Information regarding how these Performance Measures will be reviewed and improved is found in the previous section (E2). Dividing the Performance Measures into short, medium and long goals helps the reader determine if they will be provide rigorous, timely and formative information. The Performance Measures that have been set are achievable and are tightly woven into the fabric of the design.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a strong high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the PLUS Project. Their partnership with the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) is especially important since the district and CCSR have worked together for a number of years gathering information on other projects. CCSR has an experienced team of professionals that have conducted school-based efficacy studies, including studies with short interrupted time series, cohort comparisons and qualitative methods. These are the same methods that will be applied to this evaluation.

The evaluation is guided by a logic model which answers four main questions:

- 1) To what extent are eighth grade students at schools participating in the PLUS Project on a trajectory to college and career readiness compared to other grade classes in their schools?
- 2) To what extent do eighth grade students at schools participating in the PLUS Project have a higher degree of personalization compared to other grade classes in their schools?
- 3) To what extent is eighth grade teacher instructional capacity different in PLUS Project classrooms? What does this look like in practice and how does it compare to non-participating grade classrooms?
- 4) To what extent do parents' knowledge of college- and career-readiness and involvement in supporting their student differ in the PLUS Project classrooms compared to ninth grade, non-participating classrooms?

The plan presents activities to be undertaken to implement these key goals and provides a clear understanding of what will be undertaken and how it fits the PLUS Project design. This is a very credible plan that will supply some useful information for measuring the success of program implementation. [Note: Other information for this contractual expense is contained in the budget narrative, including a timeline for each year of the project.]

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Identifies all funds that will support the project. The applicant breaks down the 30 million dollar budget into five project-level budget summaries for each year of the grant. This includes:

1. Professional Learning: A total of \$16,958,746 is requested to support intensive professional development, coaching, collaboration, and leadership opportunities for 755 participating middle grades teachers.
2. Education Technology: A total of \$9,475,086 is requested to make major investments in school-based learning technologies.
3. Community-Based Partnership: A total of \$1,143,408 is requested to support a partnership that would provide interventions to build social-cognitive skills in youth.
4. Project Management: \$1,422,760 is requested to support the salaries of management personnel for the Personalized Learning, Unifying Students PLUS Project.
5. Project Evaluation: \$1,000,000 is requested for the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the PLUS Project.

(b) Is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicants proposal. Each

of these budgets provides a narrative to describe how the funds are being used. While there are some questionable expenses (e.g. snacks, T-shirts and rent, utilities and insurance for the WOW and BAM programs and teacher gift cards worth \$5 and \$10 distributed to 80 teachers) the costs associated with budget items seem reasonable and are all directly related to the design and implementation of the proposal.

(c) Clearly provides a thoughtful rational for investments and priorities. (i) (ii) The budget does not address any outside funds being applied to this budget. Problematic is the sustainability of the program at the end of the grant period. This is dealt with in (F) (2). It is not clear how this can be sustained in future years given the scope of the project. The short term costs for the project occur in Years 1 and 2 and include Personnel and fringe benefits for the PLA training and collaboration as well as management personnel (e.g., Project Director and Project Coordinator. Equipment and supplies funds are exhausted in Year 1 of the grant. Ongoing costs to the grant program include Contractual expenses and Other expenses.

This budget is reasonable and sufficient for this project. The applicant asks for \$30,000,000 for the four years of the program. No funds are found from other sources. Personnel costs have been kept low and reflect only 19% of the grant. For example, 755 teachers will be employed using stipends for attending three modules of the Personalized Learning Academy in Years 1 and 2. Another 755 substitute teachers will be called upon to cover 9th grade classes as these teachers visit 8th grade classes and collaborate with 8th grade teachers. Such expenses as these are fully described within the proposal and are both necessary and reasonable for the preparation of teachers for the personalized learning academy and collaboration with their high school peers. Year 3 and 4 show no stipend expenses for personnel since the initial planning and preparation has been accomplished in Years 1 and 2. The equipment category will spend \$7,491,000 (mainly on computers for teachers and students) representing 26% of the grant. No purchases are projected after Year 1. These expenses are necessary given their use described within the PLUS Project.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section provides a plan for sustainability. The applicant has requested 30 million dollars for this four year program and has provided a solid rationale for the use of these funds. They have not identified any future funds to continue the program at the end of the grant period. While the proposal is a well thought out and needed plan, this is a major weakness. Their approach to this is limited to using teachers previously trained to become trainers of a new set of teachers as the project expands to other grades in future years. There is some talk about technology and the district's commitment to it in the past, but it is not clear how this will get into the hands of the teachers called upon to implement a personalized learning environment. From the district's point-of-view, future technology purchases are part of the technology plan for CPS. There is some reference to fund raising, but only in a limited and general way. There are no commitments they can count on in the description that has been provided. It would be helpful to know if the Personalized Learning Academy will be sustained or what direction the program will take. No thought has been given here to the continuance of the Youth Guidance association that addresses high-needs students. These are unanswered questions here.

In its favor, the letters from local and state government officials do support the grant effort. Letters have been received from the Mayor of Chicago, the Board of Education, Chicago Teachers Union, the President of the State of Illinois Senate, the Speaker of the House of the General Assembly, the Education Chair of the Chicago City Council, Chicago's 35th Ward Leader and the Chairperson of the Local School Council Advisory Board. Within these letters of support for the proposal, there is no commitment of future funds. It would be unreasonable to suggest that the support of both houses of the State Legislature, the Mayors Office and the Education Chair of the City Council would not vigorously push for additional funds and support for this program. Future support from these individuals may insure the continuation of the program well beyond the grant period.

It would have been helpful to have information here regarding how they will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. However, (C) (2) (c) (ii) does provide information about how the use of data will inform future investments.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The partnership described in this section is between CPS and the non-profit Youth Guidance organization. Two subsets of Youth Guidance are Becoming a Man (BAM) and Working on Womanhood (WOW). Youth Guidance in partnership with World Sport Chicago and the University of Chicago Crime Lab has developed and implemented a school-based counseling, mentoring, violence prevention and educational enrichment program that promotes social, emotional and behavioral competencies with at-risk youth.

This partnership, which will employ two youth guidance clinical counselors serving 120 students, will build upon the PLUS Project to connect at-risk students with opportunities for academic support, building social emotional skills and additional resources and enrichment for students and families. Each counselor will work with 60 of the highest need students.

(NOTE: the proposal identifies these students as "medium risk" within their school environment--those who demonstrate performance records consistent with the deficiencies of social-cognitive skills, but who are still likely to attend school enough to benefit from a school-based intervention.)

These students will work with mentors in 30 one-hour weekly small-group sessions per school year. During these sessions, the participants engage in developmentally-based lessons and challenges that promote their emotional literacy, impulse-control, social competence, positive peer relations and interpersonal problem-solving skills in relation to personal and academic success. Another aspect of this program is its focus on parent and family engagement services. Of particular importance is imbedding training on working with high-needs students within the PLA.

Youth Guidance has set out three major goals for their participation in the PLUS Program:

1. To enroll high-risk students participating in the PLUS Project in either WOW or BAM.
2. To supplement training to PLUS Project teachers on encouraging social-cognitive skills, conflict resolution, and visionary goal setting in participating classrooms.
3. To refer students, parents and families to additional supportive programming offered through Youth Guidance.

The applicant has offered five **performance measures**, all of which are aligned to the goals of the PLUS Project. These are:

- **Increase in student attendance record (number of days present).**
- **Increase in student grade point average.**
- **Increase in school persistence (end of year enrollment status).**
- **Reduction in crime involvement.**
- **Increase in positive student responses to My Voice, My School survey questions related to perseverance and emotional health (question related to conflict resolution and peer relationships).**

It is important to recognize that the youth that this organization is working with are high-risk students, many of whom are on the cusp of dropping out of school. A number of students may have been in trouble with the law or habitually truant. To reach these students and turn their attitude toward school around constitutes a major step forward. This is an ambitious, and from the past performance of the organization, an achievable goal.

Youth Guidance has experience in evaluating programs using rigorous and evidence-based methods. They will continually review student outcomes, performance data and survey results to gauge the impact of the program on PLUS Project students. They will be evaluated every 30 weeks and at the end of the school year.

Some weaknesses in this section include the lack of the ability to scale this up over time. One hundred and twenty students a year seems small given the enormous needs of CPS. Program expansion at the end of RTTT-D funding is not described nor is how funding would be made available for many of these activities. This is not work that can easily be assigned to teachers within CPS.

In spite of this, the program they have presented is strong and has a history of affecting students positively. For instance, Youth Guidance during clinical trials has worked with 2,500 adolescent boys in 18 Chicago schools. BAM was successful during that trial in reducing violent crime arrests by over 40% and increased graduation rates by 10% while reducing failing grades by 37%. The Performance goals of BAM, WOW and PLUS go hand-in-hand and Youth Guidance will be a valuable partner for this project. Especially strong in this section is the emphasis on the social, emotional and behavioral needs of these students.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score

Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This is a very strong program to meet and build on the four core educational assurance areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace. The entire proposal is aimed at helping students make the transition from 8th to 9th grade and preparing them for high school, graduation, work or college. This is done through training teachers in creating a personalized learning environment for each student they teach and then assessing and supporting students in designing their own environment together with plan for college or work. 2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction. In this instance, students are regularly assessed in multiple ways-- NWEA, ACT EPAS, EXPLORE plus ongoing evaluation through Homeroom PLUS to track their progress. 3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. CPS makes a strong point that 8th grade is a pivotal time for students. Teachers that can be effective here in developing personalized learning environments for students, provide those students with a clear opportunity to graduate on time and with the skills necessary for college or the workplace. Through this program, CPS is making a significant investment in teachers through interactive, rigorous training and by providing them with the tools to personalize training. In addition, ongoing evaluation of teacher effectiveness in the classroom is all designed to increase the number of competencies associated with a "distinguished" educator. 4. Turning around the lowest achieving schools. CPS is working from the "ground up" to redesign the classroom environment, this applies not only to low-achieving schools. It is a model for all schools. CPS and Schools throughout the country can follow this blueprint to seek an individualized education plan (IEP) for each student. The CPS strategy includes offering professional development offerings, teacher training, resources, support to teachers and using outside organizations to reach and retain students is just part of the critical mass gathered here. <p>The strength of the PLUS Project lies in its identification of the strengths and weaknesses of students and the use of this in the identification of their personal learning environment. The focus on decreasing achievement gaps across student groups, increasing student graduation rates, accelerating academic progress and preparing students for college or the workplace are important goals. This is truly an evolutionary, if not revolutionary approach to changing the classroom experience for all students. An excellent and worthwhile proposal.</p>		

Total	210	190
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0224IL-3 for Chicago Public Schools #299

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a comprehensive and coherent reform vision in its proposal to implement the PLUS project - Personalized Learning - Unifying Students. It references both its theory of change and its theory of action in its decision to focus the proposal on 8th grade teachers and students, and provides evidence to support the need. This an excellent response to the criteria. The applicant's vision is truly transformative and will help the entire LEA move toward and achieve personalized learning environments for all students.

The applicant builds upon the four core educational assurances areas.

- The transition to Common Core State Standards began in 2011 and will be fully implemented in literacy and math in the 2014-2015 school year. The Universal Design for Learning framework will be used to guide lessons and the classroom environment. UDL emphasizes different ways for students to demonstrate learning based on their needs, interests and motivations. 21st century skill standards will be incorporated in teacher training and in teaching. A new assessment, Human Achievement Quotient, will be piloted in selected schools to measure students' mastery of 21st century skills. A Multi-Tiered System of Support (also known as RTI) will be used to ensure that the academic and behavioral/social needs of all learners are identified and addressed.
- The proposal builds on a data system supported by the State RTTT grant, the Illinois Shared Learning Environment. Within ISLE, educators and administrators access Dashboards for RTI and IEP information connected to the district Student Information System, a search engine for Open Education Resources, Student Learning Maps application for recommending personal learning sequences. The proposal creates a student interface for student access to data and resources in conjunction with teachers. Digital badges will be used to recognize out-of-school learning. E-Portfolios will be used to house students' work over their school career.
- The district has implemented REACH Students, a system to evaluate teachers on multiple metrics and provide actionable information to improve teacher practice. 76% of teachers and 76% of principals believe the evaluation system promotes teacher growth and improves instruction.
- A new Office of Strategic School Support Service oversees a district-led process for improving high need schools. The district partners with the Academy for Urban School Leadership that provides teacher training, and a process to get schools back on track. Since 2006, turnarounds closed the gap between their test scores and the district average by over half in reading and by two-thirds in math after four years.

The applicant thoroughly articulates its approach to its goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity. The proposal includes four goals: invest in teacher training and tools to personalize learning; provide the time and environment for students to investigate their interests and build and unique pathway for their academic futures; change the classroom experience to provide personalized and relevant content and; connect students with supportive relationships with adults to provide motivation and support. Each of the goals includes a timeline of activities in years 1, 2 and 3.

The classroom experience is described in detail from both the student and teacher perspectives. The proposal outlines how Homeroom-PLUS will give teachers time to implement personalized learning for each student, leverage technology to support foundational skill development through adaptive software, tailor content for individual students and deepen connections with parents and families. For students, Homeroom-PLUS will be time to discover their interests, plan for college and career and understand the link between school work, out-of-school learning and their life goals. The proposal describes how students will use learning maps and e-portfolios, access digital content, use technology and demonstrate mastery of skills in various ways. The proposal includes participation of 9th grade teachers and counselors in Homeroom-PLUS to help students navigate the transition from 8th grade to high school.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant well and thoroughly describes the process of selecting schools. A group of content experts, teachers, educational technology staff and union representatives came to consensus that the only equitable way to achieve true reform is to include all schools with an 8th grade class. 8th grade classes are chosen because it is a critical time in a student's academic career for the development of competencies and skills needed to meet the demands of high school, post-secondary education and careers. In addition, feedback from teachers in participating schools supported the selection of the single grade band.

The approach is smart and innovative and will support high-quality implementation in schools and across the LEA. In comparison, 5.79% of the LEA's total student population are from low-income families while 85% of students participating in PLUS Project are from low-income families.

The applicant includes a list of all 394 participating schools with the total number of all students, students from low-income families, high need students and the number of participating educators. The applicant completely and accurately provided data as required in the criteria. Data is presented for all participating schools. 755 educators will participate, 23,329 students will participate. 19,826 high need student will participate; 19,791 low-income students will participate. There are 341,595 low-income students in the LEA. There is a total of 249,979 students in the participating schools. 10% of the total are participating 8th graders - all the 8th grade students will participate. 85% of participating students are from low-income families.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes its theory of change: invest in teachers to build a bottom-up approach to increasing personalized learning throughout the district. 8th grade teachers will go through five phases towards full implementation: exposure, planning, implementing, assessing and improving. The plan includes time for teachers to reflect on how strategies are working in their classrooms and improving student outcomes.</p> <p>The plan to scale up into district-wide change is a slow-paced, deliberate process. It includes offering Personal Learning Academy training, beginning in year 2, to any teacher in any grade, providing opportunities for 8th grade teachers to collaborate with 9th grade teachers, identifying teacher leaders to train additional teachers, develop a fundraising strategy to fund personal technology devices for additional grade groups and widely disseminate successes, lessons learned and best practices to increase awareness of the PLUS Project and encourage district-wide participation.</p> <p>The applicant presents a high-quality plan to scale the reform throughout the LEA over time. The district has a plan that may truly change the educational process for students and educators - improving teaching and learning in 8th grade classroom and then spreading up into high schools and down into lower middle school grades and elementary schools, all while authentically using the city and its communities as learning opportunities as well.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The response to this criteria is clear and complete.</p> <p>The applicant provides a detailed explanation of its summative assessment, methodology for determining status and growth and its rationale for using nationally-normed growth targets. While the proposal specifically targets 8th grade students and teachers, the application includes a description of the Next Generation: Chicago's Children 2013-2018 action plan to build on academic gains in every grade. Ambitious and achievable annual goals are presented for all students and subgroups.</p> <p>Baseline data and targets are included for 3-8 grades reading and math, and 11th grade reading and math. Targets exceed the national average for growth as measured by the NWEA MAP assessments in reading and math, and targets exceed the national average for growth as measured by 9th grade EXPLORE, 10th grade PLAN and 11th grade ACT assessments. The applicant present ambitious and achievable targets for reducing the achievement gaps in grades 3-8 reading and math, and 11th grade reading and math. Targets are provided for increasing the high school graduation rate for all students and subgroups, and for increasing college enrollment.</p> <p>The applicant provides an excellent description of the initiatives and reforms in place in the district and how the goals and activities of the PLUS project align with and support the long-term goals of the district for all students. The application describes the district's rationale for basing the growth goals on the two nationally-normed assessments that are used in elementary schools (NWEA MAP) and the EPAS from ACT (high school).</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant successfully provides a clear track record of success in improving student outcomes, closing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates and increasing college enrollment. There is a plan in place with reforms underway to achieve significant reforms in low-achieving/ low-performing schools. Student performance data is widely available and used for multiple purposes with parents, students and educators.</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of a four year record of success in improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps by providing data indicating growth for 3-8 graders as measured by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, growth on the 11th grade Prairie State Achievement Test, increases by subgroup in the graduation rate and decreases by subgroup in the 1-year and 5-year dropout rate. In addition, the district measures if 9th graders are on-track for on time graduation and the percentage of on-track freshmen in all subgroups has increased every year since 2009. The district began tracking college enrollment in 2005 and college-going rates have increased each year for all subgroups.</p> <p>The district's reform strategy for low performing schools is supported by a federal School Improvement grant as well as a</p>		

streamlined assessment system to increase classroom teaching time, a partnership with the Chicago Leadership Collaborative to recognize and reward effective school leaders, supports for schools to target their most at risk students and a switch away from punitive approaches to behavior problems toward restorative ones. Interventions are in the early stages. Initial improvements are seen in increases in class attendance and decreases in truancy.

Student performance data is available in English and Spanish through a student/parent portal allowing students and parents to track attendance data, grading detail and assignment level detail. In the portal, an alert tool sends a text message if attendance or grading thresholds are reached. A comprehensive annual report card is published in English, Spanish, Polish and Chinese to help parents make informed choices about their child's school.

Educators access a comprehensive instructional data system through the Curriculum Information System. Principals access a dashboard to analyze school-, subject-, classroom- and student-level performance measures. Included in the proposal is a plan to expand the dashboard to include teacher and student interfaces.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district couples public hearings and an online town meeting with interactive budget tools on its website that allow users to review all spending in the district. The budget tool includes access to actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff by fund type. Detailed budget information is also published on the Civil Rights Data Collection website. The district won the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for their transparent process. Individual school budgets including salaries and positions are accessible and transparent.

The level of transparency is very high and earns a high score.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The section includes a chart of each component of the PLUS Project and its associated statutory regulations and compliance. The format is very clear and it is easy to see how the district has successful conditions and autonomy to implement the proposal. The application delineates the PLUS Project elements and the associated State legal, statutory and regulatory rules associated with each element. The applicant provides evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement personalized learning environments. In addition, the State has committed to support two foundational reforms upon which the PLUS Project is based: Common Core State Standards and Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE).

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Extensive evidence is provided in the application that demonstrates meaningful stakeholder engagement and support. Clearly, the applicant has invested time to reach out to all partners and stakeholders early in the development of the application, ask for feedback and incorporate input into the proposal.

The applicant describes how the PLUS Project was developed with input from students, parents and community stakeholders and educators. Evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement is seen in endorsements for the project from the Local School Council Advisory Board and the Community Action Councils. Each of these entities include a broad cross section of stakeholders including students, parents, elected officials and community organizations.

Teachers in the participating schools were directly engaged in the development process through the Chicago Teachers Union **and** through a series of seven focus groups. The focus groups consisted of 8th and 9th grade teachers. The applicant describes how feedback from the Union and the teacher focus groups were incorporated into the proposal.

Meetings with 19 Network Chiefs and with each individual Chief resulted in support for the PLUS Project, evidenced by letters of support from 34 principals.

District staff met with numerous community-based organizations and local foundations to share the vision and draft plan. Input was also received from government/elected officials. The applicant describes the adjustments that were made to the proposal to reflect the stakeholder feedback.

The application includes 58 letters of support. None of the letters are based on a template, and each letter reflects the unique viewpoint of the writer.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents an excellent high quality plan to improve teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment. The proposal outlines the district's current Framework for Success strategies and how the PLUS Project strategies build upon and expand the Framework for individually-tailored content, personalized learning to support student engagement, changes to the classroom experience and connection to supportive relationships. The plan addresses each section of the criteria with compelling descriptions of how the implementation of the plan will improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment and provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.

Homeroom-PLUS is dedicated time for students to explore interests and develop goals. This will be accomplished through e-portfolios and a learning map. The applicant describes in detail outcomes for teachers and the tools to get there including the Personalized Learning Academy, support including Professional Learning Communities, Collaboration, Chromebooks, connection with digital badges associated with the City of Learning, ISLE student data system and multiple online resources. The applicant describes in detail student outcomes and associated tools that include Chromebooks, e-portfolios, learning maps, adaptive learning software, online courses, What's Next Illinois? for college readiness, City of Learning to earn digital badges for out-of-school learning, social networking such as Edmodo, one-on-one time with teachers and access to counselors.

The proposal provides evidence that students will understand the connection between what they are learning and future success through the learning map and the e-portfolio. Teachers, counselors and mentors will provide additional support.

The proposal describes how goal-setting is part of Homeroom-PLUS and students will be required to present their learning plan to parents once a semester.

Deep student learning is built into the district's 21st Century Skill Building Block Framework. As mentioned earlier, the PLUS Project builds on existing frameworks and expectations for students. City of Learning initiatives are also designed to deepen learning through real-world experiences.

Exposure to diversity is built into the district's plan by using the city as a learning resource, using digital tools to engage with diverse cultures and providing teachers access to opportunities through the district's Knowledge Center.

The proposal states that content mastery and development of key skills and characteristics will be accomplished by teachers using the Universal Design for Learning and the 21st Century Skills Framework with associated assessments, bolstered by students earning digital badges.

Learning maps, e-portfolios and digital badges will provide students with a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development.

Through the Personalized Learning Academy, teachers will learn how to provide students a variety of personalized learning approaches.

With the development of the student facing portal in partnership with the State and ISLE, students will have access to all kinds of online resources to address any deficiencies, explore college and careers, develop new skills and work at their own pace. The proposal is clear that the student-teacher relationship is the primary one, but that teacher-guided digital content will support student achievement.

Homeroom-PLUS is envisioned as a safe place for feedback as students and teachers use digital tools to review plans and progress and strengthen the relationship between students and teachers.

Throughout the proposal, attention is given to accommodations and strategies for high need students. The applicant describes how a personalized learning environment, by definition, offers opportunities for students with disabilities, English learners, high need students and gifted students learning paths to accomplish mastery. The applicant also describes how district online courses give anytime anywhere access.

Teachers will receive extensive training in digital tools of all kinds and will be the primary source of support for students and parents in the use of digital tools. An Educational Technology Personalization Specialist and Coordinator will support students as well.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant begins this section by describing how proposed strategies in the PLUS Project proposal are aligned with current strategies aligned with the district's Framework for Success. This alignment clarifies how PLUS Project activities are designed to build on existing district goals and initiatives and not be a program in a vacuum. The proposal presents an extensive and thorough description of professional development through the Personalized Learning Academy comprised of three, 15-hour learning modules. The courses are supported by teacher participation in Professional Learning Communities and ongoing coaching support.

The well-crafted response to this criteria is a high quality plan to achieve the goal of a personalized learning environment for all students to be college- and career-ready. Teachers and principals, as well as students and families, will all benefit as the plan is implemented. Teachers are provided a "risk-free" environment to practice the personalized learning strategies, which is an innovative practice and one reason the implementation will be successful. The focus of the proposal stays squarely on personalizing the learning environment and clearly aligns with other LEA initiatives.

The applicant describes a high quality plan that provides a safe environment for teachers to learn and experiment with personalized learning tools and strategies in their Homeroom-PLUS, and, as they gain advanced personalized learning competencies during year 2, to apply these strategies to higher stakes environments. The plan includes the use of the Universal Design for Learning for differentiated approaches to content and personalization techniques. The Personalized Learning Academy will teach teachers how to adapt content and instruction in a personalized learning environment. Teacher will move through five phases in the design process: expose, plan, implement, assess and improve.

Measuring student progress will be accomplished with the use of digital badges, student e-portfolios and working with students to set goals and milestones to track their progress, along with assessments already in place.

The applicant describes the REACH Students teacher evaluation system and how roles and responsibilities of a PLUS Project teacher are aligned with qualities of a highly effective teacher, defined by the district as "distinguished". The evaluation system assesses teachers in planning & preparation, classroom environment, instruction and professional responsibilities.

The applicant describes how teachers will have access to actionable information through a teacher-facing dashboard to access multiple sources of data and tools to support student academic needs and interests. High quality learning resources are housed in the district's Knowledge Center.

Student e-portfolios and learning maps are intended to record and showcase student work and to provide students with a guide to achieve their goals. Both tools help students see the connection between their school work and their goals for their futures.

Schools and teachers have a process to use data and with improvements to the data infrastructure will have access to student data points that reflect progress toward college and career ready standards. With the development and implementation of the student-level data dashboard, all student data will be available in one easy-to-use interface.

The professional development planned for teachers is expected to yield teachers demonstrating "distinguished" competencies, increasing the number of students who receive instruction from high qualified teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	15

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan is provided for LEA and school-based practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. One of the reasons the plan is so successful is a recent change in the organization of the central office where decision-making has shifted to the school level and units within the central office have been re-focus to serve schools and school leadership teams.

The applicant describes the organizational and policy changes made in the Central Office to empower principals and shift decision-making from the Central Office into the hands of school leaders. Staffing to support the project is in place: the district Chief Executive Officer in partnership with the Office of Strategy Management will provide general oversight. A

grant-funded Project Director will oversee key work streams: professional development and coaching, school and classroom structures and support, learning tools and technology, data integration and use and evaluation.

The district has empowered principals to have the flexibility and autonomy to do whatever it takes to make their schools successful. The proposal describes how the principal has authority in hiring, budget allocations, school day schedules and staffing.

The process of earning digital badges give students the opportunity to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, The use of Universal Design for Learning and the expanding range of digital tools allow teachers the flexibility to assess student mastery of standards at multiple time and way.

The district is already committed to serving all students equitably as evidenced by the operation of 382 programs in 302 schools for English Language Learners, IEPs and assistive technologies for students who need them and the deployment of special education teachers to all schools. The PLUS Project will use the Universal Design for Learning in conjunction with adaptable and accessible tools that personalize learning for all students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan for ensuring the LEA and school infrastructure will support personalized learning is presented in the application including strategies for students and families, teachers and principals, technical support and open data formats and interoperable data systems. **The LEA has clearly embraced technology, digital tools and resources and data systems and invests in support for educators, students and parents so that the power of digital resources of all kinds can be fully utilized anywhere, anytime.**

Students and parents have access to student data through the district portal from any location and, when the ISLE student-facing dashboard is available beginning in 2014, students and parents will be able to access individual student information, portfolios and learning resources. A partnership between Comcast and the City of Chicago created Internet Essentials, a program for low-income households that provides affordable internet access, computers and training.

Educators, teachers and principals, have access to the district dashboard from anywhere.

The project plan includes a PLUS Project Exploration Day during the summer before the school year begins. Students and parents will be encouraged to try out the new software, do some research and work in groups. Teachers will teach students how to access, update and use their e-portfolio and other digital tools and resources. Training suitable for parents and students will be posted on the district website.

Current information technology systems allow students and parents to export data into a hard-copy format or an open data format (XML) and parents will be reminded of this capacity during the PLUS Project Exploration Day.

The district's existing data infrastructure uses interoperable data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes a high quality plan for continuous improvement. It outlines the expectations the district has set for professional development efforts, technology investments and how these expectations will increase student engagement, accelerate learning and help students get and stay on track for college and careers. The proposal includes a set of metrics for short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes and measures.

- Short-term outcomes include increased student engagement and motivation, increased understanding of the link between student interests and future goals, teachers adapt instructional approaches and school teams fully understand the goals of the PLUS Project.
- Intermediate outcomes include successful transition from 8th to 9th grade, students are on-track for college- and career-readiness.
- Long-term outcomes include successful transitions from every grade to the next, elementary through high school, fewer dropouts, more students with high effective teachers.

Metrics will populate the applicant's data dashboard and will be used in frequently scheduled meetings at the school level as well as in meetings that will include the Project Director and many stakeholder representatives. In addition, more formal data collection will be collected by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, the group conducting the external evaluation.

Project information about investments and ongoing performance data will be posted on the district website.

The excellent plan provides multiple opportunities for principals and teachers to reflect and make practice improvements, and multiple opportunities for the Project Director to receive and provide feedback at the school level and with all other stakeholders. Another excellent point is the incorporation of the PLUS Project metrics and student data into the district's annual school-level planning and budgeting tool, the Continuous Improvement Work Plan.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a high quality plan that is notable for its authentic two-way communication and engagement. The plan includes many opportunities for information sharing and for listening to the many stakeholders including educators, parents and students. Especially in the development of student learning maps, the district is soliciting input from its stakeholders including an opportunity for user teams will work with the tool during the development process.

The district will use the Local School Councils and the Community Action Councils to provide updates, ask for feedback and input and engage partners in supporting aspects of the project.

School events will be planned for students, parents, teachers and principals to reflect on the past year's activities and look ahead to the next year.

Internal communication will be accomplished through Professional Learning Communities.

My Voice, My School survey will be used to gauge success in increasing student ownership in learning, the ability of teachers to personalize learning and social-emotional indicators for participating.

The district Office of Family and Community Engagement will add personalized learning to its array of trainings for parents and families.

Stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide input into the development of student learning maps and linkages to student e-portfolios.

The applicant's plan for ongoing communication and engagement is high quality and will reach both internal and external stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes performance measures that are required for the competition and performance measures that are closely tied with the goals and objectives of the project. The performance measures are ambitious and achievable and are directly linked with the strategies and activities in the proposal. This is an excellent plan that will support the evaluation process and the continuous improvement process. It receives a high score because

- short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes are linked with the performance measures
- tracking will happen several times during the year
- there is a rationale for each measure
- there is a discussion of reviewing measures to determine if they are sufficient to gauge successful implementation

The measures are provided for all students and for students by subgroup. Annual targets are provided for each of the proposed measures.

Performance measures include baseline data and targets for increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

The proposed Performance Measures all include baseline data and targets and a rationale for why the measure was chosen. Performance Measures are the district Freshman on Track Indicator, the 8th grade NWEA math assessment, the 8th grade NWEA reading assessment, the district 8th grade On Track Indicator, and the 9th grade EXPLORE exam.

Performance Measures also include 8th grade student responses to four specific questions in the district My Voice, My School survey. Performance Measures also include the percentage of students earning a digital badge, and the number of students with person learning goals in place (with a learning map in year 2) and an e-portfolio. Performance Measures are in place for reduction of the attendance gap between 8th and 9th grade attendance rates and a measure to decrease the number of students "lost" to the district between 8th and 9th grade. Finally, a Performance Measure is included to target a decrease in the number of students who dropout of school during their 9th grade year.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a high quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant activities. The Consortium on Chicago Research will conduct the rigorous evaluation. The evaluation will be guided by the project's Logic Model and will examine four main questions that get to the heart of the proposed project. A full description of the Evaluation of Effectiveness design is included in the Appendix. It outlines research design and methods, quantitative data sources, quantitative data sources and a list of survey measures to be used in the evaluation.

The applicant is clearly committed to evaluation as an opportunity to improve its plans. The formal evaluation will be enhanced by the continuous improvement process and the mechanisms for information sharing, reflections and data analysis. This is an excellent plan.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget is thoughtfully constructed to support the implementation of the reform proposal. To a great extent the budget is reasonable and sufficient.

The applicant requests funding for five strands of work. The largest percentage of the total project budget (56%) is projected for intense professional development for all 755 8th grade teachers. The next largest percentage of funds (31%) is for educational technology. These two categories support most of the goals and initiatives outlined in the narrative and are reasonable and sufficient to support implementation of the project. An investment of 4% of the budget will support a community partnership to provide interventions and build social-cognitive skills. Project management salaries encumber 5% of the budget and evaluation costs are 3% of the total budget.

RTTD funds will support the implementation of the project.

The budget narrative clearly and completely describes the cost of the reform proposal overall and each project within the proposal. There is a thoughtful rationale for each line item of each project-level budget. One-time investments are identified. These are investments in educational technology and a one-year contract for the development of the student-facing portal in partnership with the State.

Strategies to ensure long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments are based on teacher-led training and professional development communities that can perpetuate, expand and improve over time. The project jump starts personalized learning in 8th grade classrooms, but it is a part of the long-term goals of the district and the intent is to make personalized learning environments the norm for the entire district.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant views its PLUS Project and RTTD funding as a way to set up the structures needed to incorporate key elements of the project into the ongoing efforts of the district as a whole. In this view, the project will not need a sustainability plan because after the term of the grant, key components of the project will be "business as usual" throughout the district. In contradiction to that, the district plans to work with the Union and with local and national partners to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy to ensure long-term sustainability and funds to expand the PLUS Project to additional grades across the district.

The elements of a high-quality plan for sustainability are not included in the application. The goals is to extend

personalized learning training to other teachers outside of the eighth grade. There is not a timeline for accomplishing this. The Personalized Learning Academy will be taken over by expanding the Quest Center. The applicant did not provide an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds. Without this estimate, the plan is not as high quality as most other sections in the application.

The Continuous Improvement plan, the Evaluation of Effectiveness plan and the overall third-party evaluation all include measures to evaluate investments in terms of student achievement and teacher effectiveness in a personalized learning environment.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a solid partnership with a nonprofit agency that has a history of providing at-risk students with a proven model of supports. It compliments the overall proposal in its identification of individual students who will benefit from the program and in its component to train teachers and counselors in the challenges facing students and the community resources available to provide a solution.

The proposal describes a partnership with a community-based nonprofit organization to provide services to high risk youth. The partnership with Youth Guidance will provide a school-based counseling, mentoring, violence prevention and educational enrichment program that promotes social, emotional and behavioral competencies in at risk males called BAM (Becoming a Man) and in at risk young women called WOW (Working on Womanhood). Through direct services and through training for school-based teachers and counselors, students will have access to small group intensive intervention programs, mentors and counseling services. Youth Guidance will also provide Parent & Family Engagement Services to increase the connection between families and resources, to assist school teachers and counselors become more skilled in engaging parents and coaching services to assist teachers and counselors identify students and families who would benefit from Youth Guidance services.

There is not a strategy to scale the program over the course of the grant. This is reasonable as case-management is labor-intensive and 120 new 8th grade high risk youth will be served each year by BAM and WOW. Scaling may be achieved by training teachers and counselors to identify at risk youth and help make connections between youth, families and community-based resources.

Educational outcomes and Family/Community Supports outcomes are identified. Performance Measures include increases in student attendance, student grade point average and school persistence, reductions in crime involvement, and increases in positive responses to My Voice, My School survey questions related to perseverance, emotional health, conflict resolution and peer relationships.

Student data will be evaluated at the end of each 30-week session to gauge the impact on highest-risk students. The district is fully prepared to monitor the expected outcomes but does not anticipate the need to change a proven model.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents an outstanding proposal to create personalized learning environments for all 8th grade students in the district. The plan builds on existing district efforts and provides intensive professional development, a safe environment for experimenting with personalized learning strategies, digital tools for teachers and students to use to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning and tools, assessments and supports that are aligned with college and career ready standards. The professional development design is highly likely to increase the effectiveness of educators. Implementation of the district's plan to implement personalized learning environments is an exciting innovation in education and highly likely to meet the academic needs of individual students, decrease achievement gaps and increase the number of students who graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	206
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0224IL-4 for Chicago Public Schools #299

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Chicago Public Schools builds on its work in the four core educational assurance areas by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adopting and implementing the common core standards and aligning student learning to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model, which incorporates students' learning needs and motivations into academic lesson design, as well as 21st century skill strategies that help students master the skills needed for college and career. The District utilizes the NWEA Map assessments each year and the summative assessments ISAT and PSAE. 2-3) CPS consolidated disparate reporting systems and built a data warehouse that serves as the single source for student and school based information. CPS uses a shared data system for all districts called the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE); and implemented a new, comprehensive teacher evaluation system. 4) CPS provides support to turn around its lowest achieving schools by providing professional development offerings, training, resources and support to teachers. <p>Chicago Public Schools articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity by planning for High School and beyond through developing stronger student engagement with teachers, counselors and their peers. They also invest in teacher training and tools to personalize learning, support students with the time and meaningful engagement and connect students to supportive relationships with adults.</p> <p>CPS proposes an implementation approach that expands personalized instruction and creates a safe space for piloting strategies.</p> <p>CPS addresses the equity issue; however, there is a lack of supporting detail for how it will close the achievement gap for student sub-groups. For example the applicant identifies the inequalities of African American Students as unacceptable, and states that they are committed to addressing them in ways that engage students as the drivers of their own learning by setting high expectations for students and teachers, and ensuring that the academic and social-emotional needs of each student are met. However, the strategies they provide in the proposal are not differentiated and targeted in a way that would address specific gaps.</p> <p>CPS describes a strong vision for the classroom-experience. They articulate how students will develop skills in a more informal, personalized setting, and engage in career exploration opportunities. They will receive personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. They show this by developing the Personalized Learning, Unifying Students (PLUS) Project. The PLUS Project will also invest in teacher training and tools to personalize learning, support students with the time and environment to build a unique path for their academic future, change classroom experiences to make learning more personalized and meaningful, and connect students to supportive relationships with adults.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a strong approach to implementation which will support high quality LEA-level and school level change. This approach focuses on the need to reform the learning experience of students during the 8th and 9th grade years.

CPS states the eighth grade is a critical period when students will begin mapping their own path to their future career. The applicant goes on to express that eighth grade is the time when students need to see how academic knowledge is translated into real-world applications, deepen their skills related to critical thinking and complex issues, and begin building connections across disciplines. The applicant shares that these competencies and skills are what is needed to meet the rigorous demands of high school, post-secondary education, and career.

They selected a targeted strategy which is both feasible and innovative for a district as large as CPS. A diverse group comprised of content experts, teachers, educational technology staff, and CTU representatives discussed various options of how to select schools. The District chose to include all schools with an eighth grade (totaling 394 schools) excluding charter schools whose data system does not interface with the district's system; as well as different curriculum design models.

A list of the schools that will participate in the grant activities is included in A2c.

The total number of participating students is approximately 23,000 eight grade students. The participating number of students participating from low-income families is 19,791. The number of students who are high-need is 19,826. The number of participating educators is approximately 750.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

CPS will spark LEA-wide reform and change by addressing the transition from 8th to 9th grade. CPS describes how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. CPS provides evidence of piloting other personalized reform models and explains how that experience will help CPS create LEA-wide reform and change through the PLUS Project. Initially, this reform model focuses on moving 8th grade teachers through the following phases: exposure, planning, implementing, assessing and improving. Once these teachers fully implement the model, best practices learned from them will be brought to scale. This is all evidence of a high-quality plan.

Exposure phase - 8th grade teachers will have time to explore models and gain exposure to new definitions of personalized Learning (PL) in real classrooms across the country.

Implementing phase - Homeroom-Plus will provide flexibility in scheduling to provide an advisory period for all eighth graders. Learning goals and e-portfolio as well as curriculum focusing on personalization and 21st century skill building aligned to CCSS-aligned core subject classes.

Assessing phase- The Personalized Learning Academy (PLA) will provide teachers with exposure to successful models that are achieving results. There will be 3 distinct PLA modules for reflection and guided support on evaluating student data. Professional Learning Communities within the school, within their network will create unique opportunities to ensure their strategies will be preparing students for their successful transition.

Improving phase - The PLA will create three 90 day planning cycles for teachers to work with a model, assess and keep improving it with enough time to reflect on how that model fit or did not fit their students' needs. The next module of training will give them the next opportunity to write and plan for their next 90 day cycle.

The PLUS project will include the following key strategies to expand the reach of the project beyond the eighth grade to create real, meaningful district-wide change:

1. Ensuring that professional development is open to any interested teacher (regardless of grade) by year 2 of project.
2. Providing opportunities for participating eighth grade teachers to collaborate with ninth grade teachers, so that there is continuity across the two grades.
3. Identifying teacher leaders to train additional teachers, share best practices, and foster excitement about the project.
4. Developing a fundraising strategy to fund personal technology devices for additional grade groups.

5. Providing informational sessions, lessons-learned, and best practices related to the PLUS Project to a broad range of teachers, school leaders, parents, and community stakeholders throughout implementation.

The applicant provides for examples of LEA-wide reform and change. An area that is lacking in detail is the assessing phase. As teachers review the data to identify areas of weakness and gaps in achievement for individual students there is no discussion on a model of remediation, nor intervention toward closing the achievement gap.

Information is lacking on how the academic deficiencies related to the social issues, such as self-esteem, peer inter-relationships and motivation will be addressed by counselors and mentors. Instead a referral is made to PLCs and Networks, however, little information is provided on their role. To fully understand the applicant's overall vision of reform and change, it would have been helpful to have information about how these areas were being addressed

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides performance goals on summative assessments. Many of the performance targets presented are aligned to the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goal established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE); however ISBE recently recalibrated the proficiency targets for the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) which is the state test for grades 3-8. The proficiency target has been raised, so the average score for schools has declined. There will be a shift from the current system to the PARRC assessment in SY2014-2015. Because there is no mechanism to equate student performance on the current state system to PARRC, CPS cannot set proficiency targets for PARCC.

The summative assessments being used are Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for grades 3-8 and Prairie State Achievement Test (PSAE) for grade 11, the NWEA MAP assessment in grades 3-8 and EPAS assessment series in grades 9-11, Illinois Alternative Assessment (IAA) for students requiring alternative assessments in grades 3-8 and 11.

Goals are established by grade and by subgroup in reading and math, and are based on the ISBE AYP targets. For each subgroup, the proficiency goals are the Safe Harbor targets as defined in AYP. Safe Harbor is defined as reducing the percentage of students not meeting standards by 10%. CPS is meeting and exceeding the the nationally-normed growth target.

The applicant provides good growth in graduation rates since 2009 from 54.5% to 65.4% in 2013. An area that reflects a concern is the graduation rate of the two lowest sub-groups (African-American students and students with disabilities) both reflecting target growth goals of 75.1% in SY2017-18. The similarities in baseline data and target growth goals for these sub-groups is a concern.

College enrollment rates are provided with 57.8% overall and a target of 71.3% in 2017-18. No post secondary degree attainment rates are recorded by the District although a method of recording this information in the future is stated.

CPS provides LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes for performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment and degree attainment in the future. It is concerning that CPS does not provide more detail on how it is going to address the achievement gap for African Americans other than modify the suspension and expulsion procedures.

The strategies of the PLUS Project are designed to help students make the transition from 8th to 9th grade through teacher and student support, change the classroom experience to be personalized and relevant, as well as connect students with supportive adult staff. There is strong evidence that the PLUS Project supports a direct impact on success for college and career standards and high school graduation by helping students connect their interests and experiences.

The Chicago Public Schools provide strong evidence of overall sustained growth and ambitious yet achievable target goals. The plan to reach these goals is supported by a strong implementation plan that partners with several key stakeholders. The PLUS Project's focus on teacher professional development along with the research data that shows the significance of focusing on the 8th grade transition year is likely to result in improved student learning and performance.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides steady progress of success advancing student learning and achievement in the past four years. Between 2008 and 2013, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards increased by 11.4% in reading, 14.2% in math and 13.7% in science based on the new cut scores.

CPS posted its highest on-record ACT scores in 2012/13 and experienced the largest-ever growth on 11th grade Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). Student outcomes in high school have improved city-wide and across ethnic groups. Data shows graduation rates have risen steadily since 2008, while dropout rates have declined. The one year dropout rate for SY2012-2013 is the lowest on record at 58%. This is the fifth year of a decrease in dropout rates. For the most recently completed school year the dropout rate went down across the board among White, African-American and Hispanic students.

CPS has expanded access to and improved test scores on Advanced Placement (AP) Exams. Between 2008 and 2012, CPS students participation increased 15% generally and 14% among minority students. The percentage of traditionally underserved minority students earning a score of 3 or higher rose from 26% to 29% in 2012.

The rate for freshman on-track to graduate in SY2012-13 is the highest on record with 81.5% up 6.2% from SY2011-12. This is the sixth consecutive year of growth for the freshman on-track rate, for a total increase of 24.4% since 2007.

CPS claims to be the first urban district nationally to begin to track college enrollment since 2004. College enrollment rates have risen progressively over the past nine years, due in part to a city-wide postsecondary education initiative to promote rigorous coursework, provide student study supports, expand AP courses and provide FAFSA completion assistance, build school counselor capacity and partner with local universities to provide targeted content-based professional development for teachers to increase college readiness for students.

Although CPS is improving student outcomes across subgroups, significant achievement gaps remain between white students and students of color. The District has taken on several major initiatives to address these persistent gaps, including tackling the high suspension and expulsion rates of minority students. Schools participating in the PLUS Project will receive additional support for school staff to implement evidence based practices to constructively address student behaviors that can lead to suspension and expulsion.

CPS presents numerous strategies for how it has achieved significant and ambitious reforms in its persistently lowest achieving schools. CPS is currently working with a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) with the mandate to dramatically improve chronically low performing schools, schools characterized by concentrations of student poverty, truancy and mobility. In all, Illinois is expected to receive \$200 million to fund school improvement efforts by the end of the three-year federal grant. In addition, CPS has introduced student based budgeting in order to make the resource allocation process more transparent and equitable; therefore, low achieving school allocations are the same as high achieving schools. Additional support for persistently low achieving schools is provided to re-engage and re-enroll students who are off track or who have dropped out. Through the Office of Safety and Security, CPS has implemented several reforms to strengthen restorative justice and school climate support. These efforts include partnering with the Office of Positive Behavior Supports to build school capacity around conflict prevention, de-escalation, and resolution as well as restorative approaches, rather than punitive ones, and support a more positive school climate.

CPS is committed to providing students, parents, and educators with accurate, transparent and frequently updated data. The District has invested significant funding and staff time over the past decade to build the capacity to track, house, and analyze data both internally and with the public. In 2009 the District deployed a student/parent portal. This serves as the student- and teacher-facing site for student information. The portal is available in both English and Spanish and allows parents and students to track attendance data and grading detail, including assignment level detail. The portal also offers an alert tool that allows both parents and students to designate attendance and grading thresholds that result in an email or text messaging alert.

The applicant demonstrates a clear track record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing in the equity in learning and teaching. CPS has successfully implemented ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest achieving schools that has resulted in gains in overall student achievement. They also make student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. Therefore it has demonstrated a clear track record of success.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)

5

5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including making

public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

Over the last two years, The Mayor has made government transparency a priority across the City of Chicago. CPS has made significant efforts to make the budget process open, transparent, and interactive, including public hearings, opportunities for public comment on the budget, and an online town hall meeting.

CPS provides interactive budget tools on its website to allow users to more easily review all spending in the district's budget, including individual school budgets, department budgets, salaries, and positions. One interactive tool allows users to see the difficult decisions and tradeoffs that the district's budget situation presents.

The budget detail is also published by on the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) website, including actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instruction and support staff by fund type, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances.

Each school level report provides a comparison of the current year's budget and last year's budget for each category. The report also shows the initial proposed budget and the final approved budget for each school. The interactive budget tools are available to the public on the CPS website.

The information provided demonstrates to the reviewer that CPS is highly transparent.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates that it has successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in its reform proposal. CPS demonstrates exemplary practices working within the State context of implementation as described below.

CPS faces no legal, statutory, or regulatory obstacles to implementing the PLUS project. Chicago district and school leaders have the autonomy needed to implement personalized learning approaches, such as introducing technology into their classrooms, designing their school day, and creating learning pathways based on student interests and goals.

The State of Illinois has demonstrated a commitment to supporting two foundational reforms that the PLUS Project will build on and enhance:

Common Core State Standards: (CCSS) The State of Illinois opted to adopt the CCSS in June 2010. Communication and rollout of the CCSS is already underway around the state in anticipation of Illinois' move to the new statewide assessment aligned to the CCSS in 2014/15. CPS has worked closely with the State to demonstrate best practices in adopting these standards. Illinois is one of 11 states serving on the governing board of PARCC, a partnerships of 26 states that hves adopted the new K-12 CCSS in English and math. These states are collaborating to develop a new internationally-benchmarked assessment system.

The State of Illinois has demonstrated a commitment to supporting the foundation reform of Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE) the centerpiece of the State of Illinois' Race to the Top Phase 3 grant. The PLUS Project will integrate ISLE into standard classroom practice (including student learning maps for data review, collaboration, and accessing and sharing teaching and learning resources).

The State and Distrrict's context for implementaton through CCSS, ISLE, and PARRC provide strong evidence of State context for implementaiton. It is evident to the reviewer that these conditions will be conducive to implementing the reform effort.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)

15

15

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided evidence of genuine and meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and during the revision process. CPS reached out to parents, students, teachers, principals, network chiefs, community-based organizations, and education-focused foundations. CTU representatives attended regularly planning meetings, reviewed drafts, and gave ongoing feedback throughout the process as well as helped craft this proposal for the PLUS Project.

CPS identified two transmission belts for connecting to the wider education community. The first is the unique system of Local School Councils (LSCs) that govern individual schools in Chicago. Every Chicago public school has an LSC, which

consists of six parents, two community members, two teachers, two non-teaching staff, the principal of the school, and in the case of high schools a student representative. The councils are the site based management team for the schools.

The second transmission belt is the system of Community Action Councils (CACs) These councils consist of 25-30 voting members in each of eight regions across Chicago who are directly involved in developing a strategic plan for educational success within their communities.

In addition to these two transmission belts, CPS and Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) jointly conducted a Twitter Town Hall to present the PLUS Project.

Based on feedback from teachers during focus groups revisions were made from a 6-8 project to an 8th grade project and the addition of the Homeroom-Plus Classroom. Feedback from the City of Chicago led to a more detailed description of classroom experiences for teachers and students, as well as greater specificity regarding professional development and the use of technology.

Detailed letters of support that speak well of the CPS vision are provided from a variety of key, high-level stakeholders.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

CPS presents a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.

Learning—Engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students:

(a)

i. One of the overall goals of the PLUS Project is to help students make their own connections between the academic demands of high school and their college and career-aspirations. Another goal the PLUS project is to ensure all participating students are ready for college and/or career. Through the PLUS project, which focuses on providing Homeroom Plus, Digital Badging, Learning Maps and more to participating students, they will come to understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals.

ii. The applicant proposes to create a program called Homeroom-Plus to create a designated time for 8th grade students to identify and make plans to pursue their learning and development goals. In Homeroom-Plus students will have a class period dedicated to working independently, in groups, and with their homeroom teacher to explore their interests and college and career options; and develop academic goals and build a unique pathway for them to get through 8th grade, high school and beyond. Students will work with their Homeroom-Plus teachers to set learning and skill-building goals, plan and set milestones towards achievement, participate in individual and group tasks, and have regular check-ins to review their learning goals.

iii. Homeroom-Plus classrooms will use an e-portfolio to demonstrate their interests and accomplishments. A learning map will be provided to help plan an individualized pathway. In this way, students are able chart a course for being involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest.

iv. Students and teachers participating in the PLUS Project will use digital tools to further encounter diverse cultures and contexts. An example is students using web conferencing to interact with their peers on the others of the world or to collaborate with students at another CPS school on a project.

v. The shift toward 8th students partnering with adults to personalize their learning through the PLUS project also means students will develop key skills and traits such as goal-setting, critical thinking and communication.

(b)

i-ii. Participating students of CPS will have access to skill building and development goals outside of traditional learning modalities through the utilization of digital badges. Digital badges are earned as students participate in activities, develop suggested skills and participate in hands-on activities based on their interests. Building on the successes of the City of Chicago's Summer of Learning initiative (now City of Learning), CPS will leverage digital badging as a way for students

participating in the PLUS Project to demonstrate goal achievement and mastery through activities both in and out of the traditional school environment.

iii. While high-content is not a huge focus for the proposal, the applicant guarantees 8th grade teachers' access to a first-in-class Personalized Learning Academy, designed by local and national experts, the applicant ensures that they can implement recommended professional learning models in their classrooms and begin the design process around their own knowledge. Also the applicant plan ensures that starting in SY2015-16, 8th grade students will be taught by teachers who have advanced training in PL models and attend schools more receptive to and engaged in school design processes.

iv. The PLUS Project will also change how students learn within their content-specific courses through personalization, UDL Design and other 21st century skill strategies. The Homeroom-Plus period will be a dedicated time for students to receive feedback and input from their teachers as they collaboratively review student learning goals, e-portfolios and digital badges.

v. The applicant provides accommodations and strategies for high-need students. These strategies are presented as personalized learning. English Learners, high-need students, and gifted students are identified as needing additional accommodations and strategies. Additional resources are provided for high-need students, such as in technology. Adaptive learning for high-need students is an example that is provided through a virtual learning program that offers online learning.

(c) Teachers will receive intensive training (through the PLA and through ongoing support in their schools throughout the term of the grant) on the tools utilized within the PLUS Project, because the majority of training and support for students will come from teachers. Homeroom Plus is the time when 8th grade teachers will provide training and support to students to ensure that they are able use all of the aforementioned tools and resources to track and manage their learning.

The applicant provides an overall strong approach to learning. The PLUS-Project, Homeroom-Plus, Digital badging are excellent examples of learning reforms and personalized learning that are in place to provide support to students to meet college and career standards. Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students, and time and resources are provided to help students understand and use the tools provided. The applicant has provided sufficient detail to demonstrate that it has a high-quality plan for student learning.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	19
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

CPS presents a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career ready.

CPS's proposal includes an approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career- ready standards and graduation requirements by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all 8th grade students.

a. Engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity:

- (i) CPS plans to provide support to teachers as they implement these personalized learning environments. PLCs and other gatherings will ensure that teachers receive support from each other and get matched with coaches to further their development.
- (i- ii) CPS in partnership with CTU proposes the PLUS Project, a comprehensive strategy to change the eighth grade teaching, leading, and learning experience. The PLUS Project will better prepare students to make the transition from eighth to ninth grade, and graduate on time and college- and career- ready. They will make significant investments in teacher training and personalization tools to achieve this important goal. In doing so, they will provide students with the time and environment to build a unique path for their academic future. In these learning environments, CPS will provide students with content that is personalized, and they will ensure that students develop supportive relationships with adults.
- (i-ii) CPS, in partnership the CTU's Quest Center and other local national personalized learning experts, will develop a 45 hour personalized learning experience. The PLA will be comprised of three, fifteen hour learning modules. The first module will serve as the introductory course to the PLUS Project for teachers, and will be held over three days during summer 2014. The second and third modules of the personalized learning course will allow teachers to further develop and build upon strategies to be implemented in their Homeroom-Plus classroom to expand personalization. In the second intermediate course teachers will reflect on their own experiences, learn how to incorporate adaptive learning software and digital content into their classrooms, and visit classrooms within

Chicago and around the country (virtually) to observe successful models of personalization. During the third, advanced module, teachers will continue to develop their skills, learn from best practices, and prepare to be an ambassador of personalization who can train and support teachers in their schools in an effort to personalize learning for students.

- (iii) Through the Plus project, teachers will be exposed to new ways to measure student progress through professional development, collaboration and reflection. Teachers will be able to utilize data, as well as feedback from participating students, counselors, and mentors to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career ready graduation requirements.
- (iv) The district's teacher evaluation system Recognizing Educators Advancing Chicago (REACH) is the new framework used to measure teacher effectiveness. The new evaluation tool is comprised of three major areas, including teacher practice, student growth (as measured by state standardized tests) and student feedback.

b. All participating educators have access to and know how to use tools data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college and career ready graduation requirements:

- (i-iii) Chicago Public Schools has developed a Personalized Learning Academy (PLA) to ensure participating educators increase their capacity to use tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college and career ready graduation requirements.

c. All participating school leaders and school leadership teams have training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress:

- The applicant does not provide much detail about the training and resources that will be provided specifically for school leaders; however they provide a significant amount of information about how educators (more broadly) will receive and leverage training, data, and resources to structure the learning environment in ways that address the individual needs of students. The strategies described by the applicant (named above) will allow educators to improve their effectiveness, and they will create the appropriate culture and climate for personalized learning.

d. High-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas:

- The applicant has a high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including hard-to-staff schools, subjects and specialty areas. This area is met with all 8th grade teachers receiving training from the PLUS Project. The ultimate goal is to have teachers engaged in driving a design process that will result in innovative strategies to accelerate learning in their classrooms and schools. This is evidence of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers.

The plan for student personalizing learning, which is realized through rigorous development of teachers, is evidence of a model vision and reform effort which is both ambitious and achievable.

There is a lack of detail on how the new assessment data provided through the Plus project will be used to impact student academic growth and provide feedback to students, counselors and mentors, but overall the applicant has presented a high-quality plan that will have a significant impact on teaching and leading.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The CPS Chief Executive Office will provide oversight for grant-funded activities in partnership with the Office of Strategy Management. This office was established to build district capacity, drive, monitor, and support the implementation of cross-functional strategic initiatives, such as the PLUS Project. In addition a full time, grant funded Project Director, reporting to the CEO will be hired to oversee the key work streams involved in the project: (1) professional development and coaching (2) School and classroom support (3) learning tools and technology (4) data integration and use, and (5) evaluation.

The applicant has undergone recent organizational and policy changes to the environment that facilitates personalized learning and will support implementation of the PLUS Project. In 2013, CPS leaders reorganized the Central Office to re-focus units on serving principals and schools to create the conditions for schools success. These changes are a key strategy in the district's effort to fully empower principals and schools to create the conditions for school success.

The District provides the principal the sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school level budgets.

The applicant provides information on how they will align digital badges with the Common Core standards based on the Chicago City of Learning. PLUS Project Ed Tech staff will work with teachers and badging experts to develop badges that align with the milestones involved with the mastery of a complex concept, so that students can use badges to demonstrate mastery of a topic and the principles within it, outside of traditional assessments and grades. Through the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) students will be provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery and progress.

CPS states that they are committed to serving all students equitably, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (15.8% and 13.1% of all CPS students, respectively). CPS makes assistive technologies available for students who need them to learn. The district also supports the deployment of qualified special education teachers and aides in specialized schools, other district run schools and charter schools.

The applicant provides strong support for program implementation at the central office. Principals are provided flexibility and autonomy, but the proposal lacks detail about how school leadership teams play a role at the school site. A system to demonstrate mastery of standards is provided but little detail is provided about credit earned based on demonstrated mastery, although programs are in place to move in that direction. Learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students are provided, including those for students with disabilities and English Learners. The applicant provided several key components to a high quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provides participating stakeholders with the support and resources they need.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant assures that student data is accessible to students and parents online via the CPS portal from any location. Once ISLE's student-facing dashboard becomes available in 2014-2015, it will be available online, and PLUS project information/student e-portfolio will be included on ISLE's accessible platforms. In this way students and parents will be able to access individual student information and monitor progress at any time. Learning resources employed by PLUS Project teachers will include significant online resources, many of them free, which can be accessed via computer or smartphone with an internet connection.

Over 92% of CPS students have home access to internet. Low-income families who do not currently have an internet connection can gain access through Internet essentials, a broadband deployment program that provides affordable internet access, computer equipment, and digital literacy training.

The applicant states that during the summer before school begins in Year 1, all participating students and their families will be invited to a PLUS Project Exploration Day at their school. Students will be trained by their teachers during class time regarding how to access, update and use their e-portfolio and related resources and tools.

Teachers and staff will receive technical assistance from their school's technology coordinator, the PLUS Project Education Personalization Specialist, PLUS Project EdTech coordinator and the district-wide technology support team.

CPS currently uses information technology systems that allow parents and students to export data in a hard-copy format (e.g. report card/progress report in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file) or in an open data format (XML) that students and parents can plug into other electronic data systems. Parents and students will be reminded of this capacity through the summer

training.

CPS schools and the district already use Inter operable data systems as part of the district's data infrastructure.

The applicant provides for a high-quality plan in regards to LEA policy and Infrastructure. It is evident that the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning. Additional supporting detail for parental and student access as well levels of increased support for parents and students would have been beneficial.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant states that establishing a cycle of continuous improvement is critical to ensuring effective implementation. CPS will take a two-pronged approach to both ensuring District-level execution of the PLUS Project and supporting participating schools to continuously improve their practice.</p> <p>CPS recently established the Office of Strategy Management (OSM), a Cabinet level unit designed to drive and oversee the execution of cross-functional strategic initiatives through a rigorous, data-driven approach to planning, monitoring, and problem solving. The Project Director will work closely with OSM to refine and implement the continuous improvement process.</p> <p>CPS expects teacher professional development efforts to improve teacher effectiveness. CPS will regularly gauge its effectiveness through early teacher self-assessments and independent observations. They also expect technology investments to support teacher personalization efforts and provide students and parents increased access to information on student goals and progress. Both of these investments (professional development and technology) are expected to increase student engagement, accelerate student growth and help students get on track and stay on track for college and career. To gauge the district's success in improving these student outcomes, CPS has identified a comprehensive set of student engagement, academic growth and attainment metrics.</p> <p>As part of the project design, teacher teams will meet weekly to present and share new approaches, model lessons, examine student data and reflect on practice. On a monthly basis, team leaders will gather for professional development, reflection, and sharing of what is working and what is not. Teacher teams will review the metric dashboards and reflect on student data. Schools will also be given access to district -developed continuous improvement tools and resources to support their work.</p> <p>The project team will continue to use forums to provide regular updates to stakeholders on progress, gather feedback to inform continuous improvement, and engage partners to support critical aspects of the initiative.</p> <p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process, and making corrections and adjustments as needed. They specify how they will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of Race to the Top District funded investments. After the term of the grant, the applicant is expected to continue to focus on professional development and mentoring, and expand personalized learning to other grade levels. All of this is evidence of a high-quality continuous improvement plan.</p>		

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The project team will continue to use the forums to provide regular updates to stakeholders on progress, gather feedback to inform continuous improvement, and engage partners in supporting critical aspects for the initiative. Updates will be shared on the CPS website.</p> <p>In addition to school events that are held prior to the start of the PLUS Project in the 2014-2015 school year, PLUS Project staff, professional development coaches, and CPS Central Office content staff will provide ongoing events for students and parents at participating schools. At the end of the year there will be an overview of the past year's activities, plans for the</p>		

next year, and ways for students to stay engaged over the summer break.

Ongoing engagement and communication with teachers and principals related to PLUS Project will be supported by the ongoing participation of teachers in the network-wide Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), held throughout the year. In addition teachers will also stay engaged through PLCS at the school level. PLUS Project professional development coaches and project coordinators will continually work with teachers, principals and other school leadership.

CPS will use survey items to help in fostering student ownership of learning and teacher ability to personalize learning. CPS is in the process of eliciting significant stakeholder input on the development, use and review process related to the student learning maps that will be developed collaboratively with ISLE, as well as linkages to student e-portfolios.

It is evident that CPS provides a high-quality plan for continuous improvement as well as ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal is fully responsive to this selection criterion, as it provides multiple, high-quality performance measures. They present supporting documentation and a clear rationale for selecting each measure. Through this they demonstrate how each will provide essential information and help CPS gauge how well its PLUS project strategy is working. They have also developed a robust process to monitor each measure over time.

The applicant provides--

Short-Term Outcomes and Measures:

Improved student engagement.

- % of eighth grade students who have an e-portfolio, learning goals and learning map.
- % participating students earning digital badges
- % participating teachers whose personalization rating improves
- % of teachers who report a better understanding of their student's interests and learning need

Intermediate Outcomes and Measures:

- % participating students making expected gains on NWEA MAP math and reading assessments
- % participating students on track for college and career
- % participating students indicating that their teachers connect learning to the real-world including students interests and goals.
- %participating students demonstrating feelings that their 8th grade experience has/is preparing them for high school, based on survey results.
- % participating students demonstrating social emotional and 21st century competencies and 21st century skills for college and career readiness
- % participating freshman on track for graduation

Long-Term Outcomes and Measures

- % participating students making expected gains on EXPLORE exam in 9th grade
- Decrease in the attendance gap between eighth and ninth grade
- Decrease in the number of students lost to the district between 8th and 9th grade
- Decrease in the number of students that dropout during 9th grade
- % students with teachers are rated as proficient or distinguished on all four domains of the CPS Framework for Teaching.
- % students with effective teacher and principal required metric

The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable performance measurement targets overall and by student subgroup. Annual targets are set for each of the proposed measures. The measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative information tailored to the proposed plan and theory of action; and the applicant has sufficiently described how it will review and improve its plan. One example of the applicant's ambitious yet achievable targets is the reduction of the attendance gap between 8th and 9th grade. The goal is to significantly decrease the attendance gap for all participating students, moving from 4.6% in 2012-2013 to 2.3% in 2017-2018. The plan addresses multiple ways that the applicant will accomplish this by developing stronger relationships between teachers and students and personalizing the learning

environment. Each of these measures is thoughtfully aligned to the applicant's proposal.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium of Chicago School Research (CCSR) will conduct the independent evaluation for this grant. The evaluation will provide rigorous examination of the effectiveness of the intervention on improving student achievement, classroom instruction, and student support. It will also provide information on the factors that facilitate or prevent the implementation of personalized learning in the middle grades. CCSR's team includes personnel with extensive experience conducting school-based efficacy studies, including studies with short interrupted time-series, cohort comparisons, and qualitative methods, the methods to be used for this evaluation.

The evaluation will be guided by the logic model in the proposal answering four main questions.

(1) To what extent are eighth grade students at schools participating in the PLUS Project on a trajectory to college and career readiness compared to other grade classes in their schools?

(2) To what extent do eighth grade students at schools participating in the PLUS Project have a higher degree of personalization compared to other grade classes in their schools?

(3) To what extent do teachers in the PLUS Project classroom receive higher teacher ratings than other middle grade teachers in other classrooms in the control group of schools?

(4) To what extent do parents' knowledge of college and career readiness and involvement in supporting their student differ in PLUS Project classrooms compared to ninth grade, non-participating classrooms?

Data will come from CCSR's historical data-sharing arrangement with CPS that allows them to use specific CPS data for approved project work. Strong supporting detail is provided for evaluating effectiveness of investments.

Strong supporting details are provided to demonstrate that the applicant has a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its investments. The partnership with CCSR and the continuous feedback and high visible engagement shows evidence of a high-quality plan.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides budget expenditures for five strands of work.

Professional Learning: A total of \$16,958,746 is requested to support intensive professional development, coaching, collaboration, and leadership opportunities for 755 participating middle school teachers.

Education Technology: A total of \$9,475,086 is requested to make major investments in school-based learning technologies.

Community-Based Partnership (Competitive Preference Priority): A total of \$1,143,408 is requested to support a partnership that would provide interventions to build social-cognitive skills in youth.

Project Management: A total of \$1,422,760 is requested to support the salaries of management personnel for the Personalized Learning, Unifying Students (PLUS) Project.

Project Evaluation: A total of \$1,000,000 is requested for the the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Personalized Learning, Unifying Students (PLUS) Project.

The applicant's budget, narrative and tables identifies all funds that will support the project. The professional development plan, personnel costs, advisor support resource developers and additional teacher meetings are examples of project detail. The plan lays out clear plan of implementation and follow through with budget allocations. The allocations appear to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant clearly provide a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. The grant funds make up the total revenue sources.

The applicant clearly provides strategies that will ensure long-term sustainability in technology by committing another \$10,000,000 towards technology. They also see the professional development model continuing with a teacher trainer

model for other grade levels without incurring additional costs.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

8

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that based on the clear alignment between PLUS Project and the long-term goals and targeted investments across the district, CPS is committed to carrying out the initiatives proposed within this proposal. CPS and CTU will work with local and national partners to develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy to ensure long-term sustainability of the PLUS Project. CPS will aggressively pursue additional resources of funding to support and expand the PLUS Project to additional grades across the district.

The applicant commits another \$10,000,000 to technology infrastructure and maintains that the costs are an infusing into already occurring activities such as professional development and technology. No additional resources other than regularly budgeted and targeted resource development will be required.

This plan includes additional financial support from the District as well as support from supporting agencies. The expectation to utilized trained personnel to mentor other staff members and the continuation of personalized learning experiences in the upper grades is meant to scaffold the learning minimal resources.

An estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant, as well as the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities were lacking in the proposal. The lack of this information made it difficult to determine if the budget and sustainability plan was of the highest level.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students:

Chicago Public Schools states that its partnerships have been spurred by the prevalence of youth violence in Chicago and the growing body of research showing that social-cognitive skills such as impulse control, future orientation, and conflict resolution are predictive of a wide range of key life outcomes. The well-established Chicago based nonprofit Youth Guidance, in partnership with World Sport Chicago and the University of Chicago Crime Lab, has developed and implemented a school-based counseling, mentoring, violence prevention and educational enrichment program that promotes social, emotional, and behavioral competencies in at-risk male youth called Becoming a Man (BAM). The Crime Lab set up a randomized clinical trial - the largest ever conducted with an urban youth population of nearly 2,500 adolescent boys in 18 Chicago Schools - and found that BAM has proven to reduce violent crime arrests by over 40 percent, increase graduation rates by approximately 10 percent, and reduce failing grades by 37 percent.

CPS will augment school resources provided through the PLUS Project by partnering with BAM (and its counterpart for at risk young women called WOW or Working on Womanhood) through Youth Guidance.

Chicago Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all students are engaged in a rigorous, well-rounded education; however, efforts to ensure academic rigor and achievement cannot be successful if we are losing students in the transition between eighth and ninth grade.

Giving highest priority to students in participating schools with high-needs students:

Through BAM and WOW Youth Guidance will match the most high-need students with a mentor, and provide supportive prevention and enrichment programming. CPS will augment school resources provided through the PLUS Project by partnering with BAM (and its counterpart for at risk young women, called WOW or Working on Womanhood) through Youth Guidance. Through an existing partnership with CPS, Youth Guidance will ensure that the most at-risk students

participating in the PLUS Project are connected to programming and supports that address their social, emotional and behavioral needs.

Support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1

The partnerships named above will provide a powerful compliment to the other strategies that CPS will implement through its PLUS project. The strategies are connected in the way they help participating students (especially high-need students) to master the skills necessary for college and career readiness. The supports provided in this planned are outlined below and demonstrate how this strong partnership will ensure students are stay in school and are surrounded by positive adults to help them be successful in school and in life

(2) Not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA that align with and support the applicant's broader Race to the Top—District proposal.

Population desired results are identified.

- Improved school attendance by 10%
- Increased graduation rates by 10%
- Reduced school disciplinary reports by 50%
- Reduced suspensions and expulsions by 50%
- Increased social, emotional and behavioral competencies including integrity, accountability, self-determination, positive anger expression, visionary goal-setting and respect.
- Increased access to male role model via BAM counselor.
- Increased access to mentors and counseling via the WOW program.
- Increased access to Youth Guidance parent & family engagement services designed to equip parent leaders with specific skills that enhance their ability to support their children's educational experience and improve school outcomes.
- Increase referrals to individual, group, and family counseling services for high need students.

(3)

- (a) In order to evaluate the effectiveness of population-level desired results, CPS and Youth Guidance will track indicators for students who participate in BAM and WOW programming using the exiting early warning Indicators and Eight Grade/Freshman on Track System.
- (b) By using the data-driven approach to provide additional support services, CPS will be better equipped to target those students most in need of support and help them succeed academically.
- (c-d) The applicant plans to scaffold to other grade levels, continue to improve results over time through multiple formative assessments with multiple stakeholders.

(4)

- This approach will focus on building social-emotional skills students need for personal development, and ensuring they receive behavioral supports they need to overcome personal and academic challenges.

(5)

- (a-e) The partnerships the District has in the community help build the capacity of staff in participating schools. Professional development will be given to teachers to develop and build a greater understanding of student needs and will show them how to link those needs to resources such as counselors and mentors. This is a direct correlation to enhancing community resources. The communication flow between support personnel, (counselors, mentors) with teachers and community based organizations will assist teachers in meeting the needs of individualized students. The community resources are targeted to the highest need students, and the applicant will regularly assess the impact they are having on these students.

(6) Annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students.

- Ambitious yet achievable performance measures are provided: Attendance, Grade Point Average, enrollment persistence, reduction in crime, increase positive student survey results and conflict resolution and peer relationships.

The District has provided strong evidence and support for the competitive preference priority. Coherent and sustainable

partnerships are identified and described in detail. The plan above is robust and high-quality. Participating students, particularly those who are high-needs will benefit the most from this plan.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan that builds on the four core educational assurance areas by providing multiple levels of standards and assessments used in a variety of ways to prepare students to succeed in college and the work place. The applicant provides data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data that can be used to address the needs of students. A high-quality evaluation tool is used to retain effective teachers. The vision and goals of the applicant are directed towards preparing 8th graders for high school, with a focus in the lowest achieving schools.</p> <p>The applicant clearly addresses learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through personalization through the Learning, Unifying Students (PLUS) Project. Through this project it will invest in teacher training and tools for personalized learning.</p> <p>The PLUS Project will better prepare students to make the transition from eight to ninth grade and graduate on time and college and career ready. These strategies will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning. They will also increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators, decrease achievement gaps across student groups. CPS will personalize support and increase the rates which students graduate from High school prepared for college and careers.</p> <p>CPS does a nice job of meeting the absolute priority 1. The supporting documentation in this grant provides for a high level reform effort.</p>		

Total	210	195
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