



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0128OH-1 for Columbus City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) articulated a reform vision proposing to promote personalized learning by creating innovative laboratory school and establishing professional development satellites.

The CCS reform initiative demonstrates evidence of building a plan based on the following four core educational assurance areas.

- Curriculum aligns with College and Career Readiness/Common Core Standards
- Data systems measuring student growth and success
- Recruit and develop effective teachers
- Turn around lowest-achieving schools aka underserved gifted students

The CCS laboratory school plan will increase equity through personalized student support by the development of the community and acceptance of diversity, limitations and barriers will be eliminated since college coursework and career exposure will be brought to the students, and students outside the laboratory school can benefit through the professional development satellites.

The CCS plan provided an extensive detailed description of a day-to-day classroom experience for a laboratory school student and teacher. Students will experience atypical learning opportunities by utilizing online and blended learning, independent study, community experiences, and traditional school settings. Laboratory school teachers will implement innovative strategies with the gifted students creating personalized learning environments by adjusting instructional approaches, pace, and content to match student needs.

Overall, the Columbus City Schools has presented a research based school reform plan to promote personalize learning through the creation of the Laboratory School and Professional Development Satellites focused on serving students identified as gifted.

The CCS proposed four major approaches to the goal of accelerating student achievement and deepening learning opportunities to be achieved through the dedicated learning environment with accelerated curriculum; personalized learning; community outreach; and professional development satellites.

The CCS planned approach will focus on offering an environment uniquely designed for advancing the learning of secondary students identified as gifted. Yet, it is unclear from the provided information as to the evidence demonstrating that the plan clearly describes a credible approach to goals that will result in accelerating student achievement, deepen student learning, and increasing equity.

CCS plan proposes to utilize the professional development satellites to train and develop effective teachers. However, it is unclear from the evidence presented as to the specific details outlining which district secondary teachers beyond the laboratory school will be offered training on the strategies learned whether the targeted audience will be teachers of gifted students, regular education teachers or a combination.

CCS provided explanations of developing partnerships and creating motivate acronyms. However, the proposal lacks evidence as required and defined in the notice of demonstrating how the proposed plan is centered on the educational reform area of turning around lowest-achieving schools.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the middle of the medium range.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provides a description outlining the process to implement the Closing the Gap Initiative that will focus on those students identified as gifted.

Since the initiative will serve middle and high school students across the district, a building has been tentative secured to house the proposed laboratory school. The initial enrollment will be 100 middle and high school level students who are identified as gifted in the areas of superior cognitive ability or combination of reading and math. Each year an additional 100 secondary students will be selected for enrollment.

A list of schools that will participate in the grant activities is not available since the CCS initiative is essentially creating a new school facility and the professional development satellites program is still in the planning stage.

CCS provided an explanation and chart displaying an estimated number for the participating middle and high school gifted students and educators in the proposed initiative of the laboratory school and satellite programs.

- 2,420 participating students;
- 1,280 high-needs students;
- 1,258 low-income students;
- 51.98% from low-income families;
- 115 participating educators;
- impacting more than 4500 students during the grant period;
- impacting more than 17,250 additional students when fully implemented.

Overall, Columbus City Schools approach to implementing the proposed reform initiative is a district wide plan that will eventually impact middle and high schools across the district. The CCS proposed plan is an innovative opportunity to create a gifted student school site providing personalized learning to secondary students identified as gifted.

However, the information and estimated numbers in the narrative and on the School Demographics chart differ. It is unclear of which estimated numbers are intended to represent the participating students, the participating teachers, students and teachers who will be impacted through the satellite program.

It is unclear of the process in which CCS will use to select the 100 gifted secondary students each year to participate at the laboratory school whether it is a lottery for all MS and HS gifted students, selected upon the ranking of those gifted students from low-income families, those who are high-needs, or other criteria.

It is unclear of the criteria CCS used to determine and constitute the gifted students, as a high needs group.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the low of the medium range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) presents a bold initiative reform proposal of reversing a negative student growth trend for gifted students and better prepare these students for success in college- and career- readiness.

The CCS proposal identifies the short-term objectives as:

- opening a laboratory school – initial enrollment of 75 to 100 gifted students
- concurrent professional development activities at laboratory school
- professional development satellites – 115 teachers from district middle and high schools
- initial impact of the professional development satellite is estimated at 4,500 students

The CCS proposal identifies the long-term objectives as:

- full implementation of laboratory school – enrollment of 400 gifted students
- embedded professional development activities at laboratory school
- professional development satellites – reaching middle and high school teachers in district
- potential impact of the professional development satellite is estimated at 18,000 students

Overall, the Columbus City Schools proposal provides evidence of a plan of reform as it strives to boldly approach the implementation of the reform initiative in reversing a negative student growth trend for gifted students and provide educators with research based strategies for implementing innovative instruction. CCS will entertain the idea of expanding the laboratory school to a K-12 span of services.

The reform initiative will be achieved through personalized learning; increased rigor through the use of depth and complexity; college and career awareness and preparation; embedded project based and service learning; parent/guardian education programs and support; expanded business and community partnerships; and utilization of blended learning environments.

However, CCS identified the seven elements that will be incorporated in the implementation of the reform initiative yet it is unclear how the plans for these seven elements will improve student-learning outcomes for all students who are to be served through the laboratory school and the professional development satellites.

Other than a brief statement, it is unclear of a detailed plan of action in which to scale up the laboratory school and professional development satellite translating into a meaningful reform supporting district-wide change to improve student learning out comes for students.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the low of the medium range.

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

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided student data comparison and goals to demonstrate the initiative reform vision resulting in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

The CCS initiative reform goal is to reverse a negative student growth trend for gifted students, as identified in the district's annual state report card, and better prepare these students for success in college- and career- readiness. CCS defines the targeted gifted student as those students who have been identified by the state as gifted in superior cognitive ability, math, reading, or creative thinking ability.

CCS targets the student population who has been identified as gifted. Therefore, the goals and student data encompass all gifted secondary students district-wide.

The CCS used the following summative assessments to demonstrate the gifted student performance baselines and project goals for the grant years and post-grant year.

- OH Achievement Assessment – Mathematics for grades 6-8;
- OH Achievement Assessment – Reading for grades 6-8;
- Ohio Graduation Test – Mathematics for grades 10-12;
- Ohio Graduation Test – Reading for grades 10-12;
- ACT – measuring individual growth.

CCS noted that research findings indicate that positive effects of instructional interventions with gifted students typically are evident after two years of the intervention. Following the research findings, CCS set the baseline using the student data from SY 2012-13 since the data is not available for SY 2013-14.

Overall, the Columbus City Schools demonstrate a vision to improve student learning and performance and increase equity through the setting of high goals for the district-wide students identified as gifted.

However, the CCS presented goals for the MS and HS gifted student assessment results, graduation rates, and graduation enrollments lack the actual number of gifted students in order to demonstrate evidence and provide clarity to the representation of these statistics.

It is unclear of the impact of the described goals will have on the improvement of student learning, performance, and increase equity.

It is unclear if the use of the individual ACT results as a measurement of academic growth will be utilized as a tool only for the gifted students enrolled in the laboratory school or district-wide for those enrolled in other school sites.

It is unclear as to which area(s), as required and defined in the notice, that the CCS proposal bases the plan of increasing equity with the population of gifted students.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the high of the medium range.

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	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided an explanation and charts to demonstrate the district's record of success in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity.

CCS provided the following data:

- Four years of data demonstrating an increase in high school graduation – a 6.5% increase [2008-2012] yet 10.8% under the state's requirement of 90% level.
- Seven years of data demonstrating an increase of students enrolling in college – from 1,376 in 2004 to 1,698 in 2010.
- Lincoln Park Elementary – increased student achievement over a four-year period in low-performing school
- Champion Middle School – made gains in student achievement over a four-year period
- History of successfully implementing new and innovative school concepts – alternative, career technical, culture-base (Africentric), global language-based, art-focused, single-gender schools.

CCS provided an explanation demonstrating the use of software tools to make student performance data available to educators, parents/guardians, and students in an understandable format for the purpose of monitoring the progress of students in order to make better decisions to improve scholastic achievement and reach desire goals.

The software tools included;

- Student information management system – real-time access to information of assignments, attendance, grades, schedule, tests, teacher comments, upcoming events
- Academic early warning system – identify students at-risk, remediation application, monitor progress
- College and career planning – students develop meaningful goals and a personalized action plan in which to achieve the self-created goals
- Collection of short cycle formative assessment data

Overall, the Columbus City Schools provided supporting data and descriptions of success in advancing student learning by improving student learning outcomes, increase of graduation rates, increase of students enrolling in college and availability of performance data.

However, the CCS information is lacking actual raw student data in order to support and demonstrating evidence of success in the past four years of improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps, advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.

CCS provided a brief explanation of the implementation of new and innovative school concepts targeting particular student populations. However, CCS lacks the evidence to demonstrate a clear record of success, achievement, significant reforms for the selected students enrolled in the particular school concepts.

It is unclear of the justification of not including the statistics for 2012-13 graduation rate or the college enrollment statistics for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

It is unclear from the provided student data and statistics and lack of subgroup categories as to the numbers and percentages represented in each subgroup for those students targeted in the proposal.

CCS listed and described the software tools currently in place to provide information and monitor the progress of students. However, it is inconclusive from the lack of evidence as to the effectiveness and rate of success these software tools provide students, educators, parents information in order to improve participation, instruction, and services.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in low of the medium range.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided a minimal description of the extent of availability, a copy of the public information request form, and the location of a website in which to demonstrate the CCS transparency of individual teacher and administrator salary data and non-personnel expenditures.

However, the CCS failed to provide information as requested and defined in the notice to demonstrate evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the medium range.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provides an explanation and documents that describe the actions taken by the state and district to provide sufficient autonomy and the successful conditions in which to implement the proposed personalized learning environment.

The local autonomy has been supported by the State actions of laws providing districts the freedom to utilize educational

funds in flexible ways; the CCS superintendent has increased building level autonomy in designing and implementing educational programs, schedules, and assessments.

The provided information demonstrates evidence of State legal, statutory, and regulatory action that will support CCS in the implementation of personalized learning environments.

- State revised academic content standards – aligned with college and career readiness standards
- State graduation requirements – more rigorous ensuring adequate preparation for college
- State policy – students can accelerate past previously learned content and monitored by State DOE
- Flexible process to earn credit through non-traditional opportunities
- State mandates districts to evaluate, screen and identify K-12 students as gifted according to prescribed areas

CCS district selects to serve those students identified as gifted and has implemented a multi-facet service model.

- Cluster grouping structure - supported by licensed gifted coordinators at all elementary and middle schools
- 16 self-contained classrooms for 4th-5th graders
- high school – advanced placement courses and early college coursework

Overall, the Columbus City Schools has demonstrated the evidence of having sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning, environments. The CCS proposal provides evidence of evaluation, screening, and serving the district students identified as gifted

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the highest of the high range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	7
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) proposal described the stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal.

CCS established a Gifted Task Force of 14 parents and 15 school personnel and met over a 10-month period. The task force conducted surveys and data analysis that resulted in the following recommendations:

- increasing access to accelerated learning options with rigorous coursework;
- pre-advanced placement and pre-advanced opportunities;
- advanced placement opportunities;
- more service opportunities – MS and HS level;
- use of self-contained classrooms, school-within-a-school, self-contained school models;
- professional development related to needs and achievement of gifted students.

CCS development team has been in contact seeking guidance and support from other organizations that provide services for gifted students.

CCS provided a description of how the Columbus Education Association (CEA) has been involved as a full partner in previous initiatives and has sent a letter of support indicating CEA is in support of the development of the professional development laboratory school proposal.

Evidence of the actual letters of support were received from the following stakeholders – Ohio State University, Ohio Association for Gifted Children, Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted organization, Learning Forward Ohio organization, Columbus Education Association, and Institutional Research Consultants evaluation team.

Overall, the Columbus City Schools proposal provides evidence of stakeholder engagement in the concept development for the proposal and stakeholder support.

However, it is unclear from the presented descriptions and lack of evidence as to the actual level of support and engagement beyond the task force that the secondary level students, parents, teachers, principals, board of education have for the CCS proposed plans. A large portion of the success for the proposed Laboratory School and professional development program lies within the support, belief, desire, determination of stakeholders particularly the secondary students and teachers, parents, principals, and board of education.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the middle of the medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	9

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided a plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment through the creation of the laboratory school and establishment of professional development satellites replicating the practices in the laboratory school.

CCS proposes to provide students with opportunities to understand what they are learning, identify and pursue learning, develop goals, structure of learning to achieve goals, and measure progress.

A personalized learning plan will be developed for each student by a team consisting of the student, parent/guardian, counselor, and educators. The team will set individual student goals using the honors diploma graduation requirements, university entrance requirements, credit accumulation and content distribution. Each personalized learning plan will outline a year-by-year coursework and learning opportunities based on interest and aspirations. These will be revised according to progress accomplished and the review of the team.

The CCS laboratory school students will be involved in deep learning experiences using the instructional methodology incorporating the Kaplan’s Depth and Complexity Model, advanced placement approaches, and real world experiences in order to assist students in acquiring instructional content and skills through a variety of learning environments and experiences.

The CCS laboratory school plans include the use of the established digital learning program to earn the basic high school credits through the use of PLATO. The plan briefly mentioned the use of other technology tools of e-learning with OSU, blended learning with Khan Academy and other structured online courses.

The CCS proposed plan will utilize the following tools to provide monitoring student progress and provide feedback to the team including the student, parent, educators: Naviance Succeed; Infinite Campus; Online gradebook; Personalized Learning Plan; and ACT test for baseline and yearly as well as other required state assessments.

Based on research of first generation college-bound students, CCS identified strategies to be implemented in the support of high-need students and those struggling with the flexible nature of the laboratory school setting.

The CCS proposed a plan outlining the activities, outcome indicator or deliverable, those responsible, and the completion date of training and support for students, parents, teachers in order to ensure the understanding of how to use the tools and resources to track and manage their personalized learning.

Overall, Columbus City Schools proposed a plan for improving learning and teaching for the students identified as gifted in a personalized learning environment of the innovative laboratory school and the professional development satellites to replicate the laboratory school practices throughout the district.

- Personalized Learning Plan – designed, monitored, revised by a team approach
- Deep learning experiences – use of instructional methodology to acquire instructional content and skills
- Digital learning program – list of possible technology tools
- Tools to monitor student progress and provide feedback

· Training and Support Plan

The information provided by the CCS plan demonstrates the main intent of the reform initiative to reverse a negative student growth trend of those students identified as gifted.

However, the plan lacks the evidence to demonstrate the clarity of how CCS will provide 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. The plan outlines activities that will be undertaken yet, lacks the rationale to validate each of the activities.

It is unclear how these targeted gifted students will be ensured to have access and be exposed to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that will motivate and deepen individual student learning.

Although the plan describes the possible use of digital learning programs such as the PLATO system and other possible sources for students to earn high school credits is commendable. Yet it is ambiguous as to how these are considered of high-quality content, as required and defined in the notice. It is unclear as to the courses that will be made available beyond the basic secondary courses currently offered for instruction and learning opportunities.

It is unclear how the laboratory school will utilize the e-learning with OSU, Khan Academy, and other structure online courses and whether they are aligned with the college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements.

It is unclear how the CCS plan will accommodate and provide high-quality strategies beyond what is currently offered for the targeted high-need students who the proposal has identified as a targeted group of gifted students. The CCS proposal lacks the evidence to clearly define the targeted population of gifted students as high-needs. It is ambiguous as to whether the entire district population of gifted students is considered high-need or subgroups within the population of gifted students who are high-need.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the middle of the medium range.

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

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) outlined the district's current plan of providing training, professional communities and support mechanisms for teachers and school leaders in which the educators of the proposed laboratory school and professional development satellite will participate in order to improve learning and teaching through the implementation of personalized learning environments engaging and supporting the gifted students' journey to be college- and career- ready upon graduation.

CCS explained the following component to support the participating gifted students:

- small and large group learning communities - laboratory school educators to engage within the laboratory school and with educators across the district
- ongoing professional development – through job embedded and collaborative experiences
- PLC content – to include the nature and needs of gifted students, instructional and social-emotional support
- PLC webpage – teams will document each individual student's team meetings

Overall, Columbus City Schools plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment proposed an professional development initiative to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environment and strategies is to utilize the CCS developed Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Teacher Based Teams (TBT).

The proposed innovative secondary laboratory school for gifted students will serve as a professional development laboratory for educators. The school structure will emphasize student personalized learning, adapt content and instruction, and customize curriculum, pace of instruction and method of delivery.

The proposal presents an extensive explanation of the teacher and principal evaluation systems outlining in detail how the use of the evaluations will utilize equally both the rating of the teacher/principal performance and the student academic growth. The teacher and principal evaluations will provide frequent feedback, recommendations, support, and interventions as needed.

The CCS proposed a plan to develop a professional development laboratory for educators by outlining the activities, outcome indicator or deliverable, those responsible, the completion date and will be monitored by the RTTD Professional Development Coordinator. The plan outlines activities that will be undertaken yet, lacks the rationale to validate each of the activities.

However, the information and descriptions provided by CCS to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment is ambiguous about the specific plans to disseminate the laboratory school lessons learned through the satellite professional development component.

The satellite professional development is a major component of the CCS proposal yet it is unclear if the plan targets district secondary teachers of the gifted students or all teachers. It is unclear whether the support of the satellite professional development is focused on the needs of those students identified as gifted or for all students.

The CCS proposal provides a lengthy listing of strategies and potential resources yet it is unclear of the defined plan as to how these will be utilized to extend and enrich the learning of the participation students. It is unclear if these listed strategies and potential resources align with the college- and career- ready standards and graduation requirements.

The CCS proposal list potential processes and tools that teachers will learn more about yet, is it unclear of the plan for these resources and tools to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the middle of the medium range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided a detailed description of state and district practices, policies and rules related to the support of the proposed establishment of the laboratory school and professional development satellites.

The CCS comprehensive plan of district practices, policies and rules include:

- six-part Columbus Education Plan created by the Columbus Education Commission
- district-wide goals by the Columbus City Schools superintendent
- governance structure by the Columbus Board of Education

These identified practices, policies, and rules facilitate personalized learning, the alternative schools and meeting the workforce needs of the community while supporting the improvement of academic achievement in order for students to gain their maximum education potential.

The CCS central office is providing support and services to participating schools by implementing an organizational and operational flexibility plans of decentralizing district decision making and placing more resources in the school and classroom. The decentralization plan empowers school principals and leadership teams by allowing sufficient flexibility and autonomy in the implementation of personalized learning components.

CCS provided an explanation and documentation demonstrating the evidence of the Credit Flexibility Policy and Program. The credit flexibility policy allows high school level students to pursue credit for courses through alternative means in addition to a traditional classroom. The personalized learning approach allows students to progress, earn credits, and demonstrate content mastery through multiple comparable ways and over multiple times.

Overall, Columbus City Schools proposal described and documented the state and district level policies, practices, and rules in place that will facilitate personal learning opportunities supporting student success by demonstrating progress through mastery and the provision of learning tools, resources, and instruction.

However, the CCS proposal provided a general description that lacks the specific evidence to demonstrate elements of sufficient flexibility and autonomy such as school schedules, calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators and school-level budgets.

CCS proposal identified the Global Academy as serving English Language Learners and has a strong program for students with disabilities. However, it is not clear as to how the proposed plan of the laboratory school and professional development satellite will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adoptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the high of the medium range.

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

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided a description of the district infrastructure plan supporting personalize learning for students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.

The CCS accessible infrastructure of tools and resources include:

- Infinite Campus – portal for students and parents/guardians to access personal information in real-time
- Naviance Succeed – web-based student planning tool for students, parents, educators to monitor progress and allow the exporting of information in an open data format
- Learning Circle and SchoolNet – continuous improvement framework for educators
- EVAAS – state tool to report value-added data
- PLATO – delivery tool to access online courses

The CCS plan described the process and use of the information technology systems allowing educators, parents and students to export information in an open data format. The District Connection system is capable connecting with the Naviance Succeed to simplify data exchange and the Learning Circle and Infinite Campus tools are utilized to import assessment data.

The CCS plan will increase access to online resource tools by assigning tablets to the laboratory school students, providing computer labs and tablets for the professional development satellite teachers, and will partner with the local library system for additional source of support to students and families.

However, the accessibility to the provided resources and tools in order to monitor progress, create plans, complete coursework for the user whether a student, parent or educator depends on their availability to access the web off campus and/or travel to the local library. Therefore, the plan lacks the evidence to ensure all participating students, parents, education and other stakeholders, regardless of income, has access to the necessary content, tools, and other learning resources out of school.

The proposed laboratory school will staff a technology integration coach who will provide support and training for students, parents/guardians and educators as well as create a network of peer support.

However, the proposal lacks a plan to demonstrate evidence of how the technology integration coach will provide appropriate levels of technical support. It is unclear of the availability of support on campus as well as off campus for all stakeholders. It is unclear of the plan to create the network of peer support. It is unclear of the plan to provide training to all stakeholders.

CCS identified and described the multiple data systems that are in place to manage the operations of the district including the financial management, budget system, personnel management, instructional improvement, professional development data, student information data, and statewide value-added data.

However, the CCS proposal lacks the evidence to demonstrate that the identified multiple data systems are interoperable in which the data can easily flow from one system to another and are non-proprietary open format.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the low of the medium range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) presented a plan for implementing an improvement process to provide feedback on the progress of the project goals. CCS will obtain the services of a local evaluation firm to work with the school team in the development of the processes to ensure ongoing monitoring, modification of activities should the formative feedback indicate needed changes.

However, the CCS plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process lacks the evidence and clarity to demonstrate how it will provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the grant period.

It is unclear of the CCS strategies that will be implemented to monitor, measure and publicly share information on the quality of the investments of the RTTD funds for the proposed laboratory school and professional development satellites.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the highest of the low range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) addressed the communication on two of the nine particular outcomes in the student performance measure charts and in the evaluation plan chart.

The communication for two of the nine particular outcomes was stated in general terms - "...data [career mentorships] will be reported annually..." and "...feedback [teacher and principal evaluations] provided to professionals...".

The evaluation plan chart outlines the plan to "...share reform initiative progress information, upcoming deadlines, and changes with stakeholders..." through the following sources – employee emails and newsletters, CEA Legislative Assembly, website, and School Board.

However, the CCS plan identifies the plan to communicate updates, deadlines and changes of the reform initiative. It is unclear of a high quality plan for ongoing communication about the progress toward meeting the project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements.

It is unclear of a high quality plan for the engagement with the internal and/or external stakeholders as to the progress of the project goals and the opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the lowest of the low range.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided documentation and charts describing achievable performance measures for the overall middle and high school targeted students and subgroups, with annual targets for the required and applicant-proposed performance measures.</p> <p>Overall, CCS defined nine student performance measures based on meeting the personalized learning standards of the targeted middle and high school students. The proposed measures that align and support the proposed plan are identified; the rationale is stated describing the selection of the measure; the provision of timely information is reasonable according to the measure and availability of the data providing rigorous and formative information; and explanations of the plan of how the performance will be reviewed and measured for the effectiveness.</p> <p>However, the CCS identified nine performance measures where as the requirement and defined in the notice indicates should have a total of approximately 12 to 14 performance measures.</p> <p>It is unclear from the provided information for the plan of how the student performance measures will be revised and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.</p> <p>It is unclear which year was utilized as the Baseline due to the fact that provided charts lack the input of a defined year.</p> <p>It is unclear of the intent for the chart displaying performance outcomes of “Students whose Teacher/Principal are Highly Effective”. Both charts (a) and (b) have the same headings; same group of students grades 6-8; same numbers for students but different numbers for teachers and principals.</p> <p>It is unclear of the intent for the chart displaying performance outcomes of high school students “On Track to College- and Career- Readiness”. The grade band is stated differently on the same chart – “Grades 9-12” or “Grades 10-12”.</p> <p>Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the lowest of the medium range.</p>		

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District Team for the Columbus City Schools (CCS) has provided an explanation outlining the evaluation of the effectiveness of investments for the proposed RTTD plan. The district team has solicited the services of a local evaluation firm, whose director has over 25 years experience, to assist with the associated data collection, analysis and reporting.</p> <p>The evaluation plan is clearly described and outlined on a chart displaying the intended activities, outcome indicator or deliverables, those responsible, and completion timeframe. CCS, with the guidance of the evaluation, will engage in a rigorous school improvement process to evaluate the progress of meeting the proposed initiative goals of reversing a negative student growth trend for gifted students.</p> <p>The plan to evaluate the CCS proposed laboratory school and professional development satellite will include the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Informally review effectiveness · Share reform initiative progress · Design and administer surveys · Collect and analyze student performance data · Evaluate fiscal efficiency and compliance · Prepare written report · Summative evaluation of educational impact · Summative evaluation of teacher instructional practices and student learning 		
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Overall, Columbus City Schools proposed a quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the RTTD funded activities as presented in the proposed plan and lead by a reputable evaluation firm.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the highest of the high range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools project budget presented well-defined components:

- Funding sources – RTTD and general funds
- Budget appears to be reasonable and sufficiently detailed for the use of personnel positions, extended time and substitute costs, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual with OSU, contractual with evaluation group, training stipends, postage and printing
- Rationale for investments and priorities with a description of funding sources and use
- Identification of expenditures during the four-year grant, items to be a one-time investment and expenditures to be supported by general funds

Overall, the Columbus City Schools budget plan is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposed laboratory school and professional development satellite plan.

The identified investments for personnel, technology equipment, and contractual services align with the proposed RTTD approach to create an innovative laboratory school utilizing individualized, mastery learning models to accelerate academic achievements of gifted students and the establishment of professional development satellites to replicate the practices established in the proposed laboratory school.

CCS identified the one-time investments:

- webcams - to connect each of the satellite school sites to the laboratory school
- parent education resource supplies

The CCS budget proposal identified the RTTD funds and general funds that will be utilized during the four years of the grant and mentioned two positions that will be ongoing after the grant period.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the highest of the high range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) provided an explanation for the sustainability of the proposed reform initiative.

CCS described the following elements for the sustainability of the proposed plan due to the fact that it is built upon existing systems:

- Laboratory school will be housed in an existing building in the district;
- Primarily staffed by positions funded through district general funds;

- Four of six grant positions will eventually be funded by district based on the growth of the building population;
- Phased out position – technology integration coach;
- Consider district funding – parent and community outreach coordinator;
- Professional development satellite project content and structure will be incorporated into the existing PLC structure.

Overall, Columbus City Schools is proposing that the sustainability of the proposed reform initiative will be based on the fact that the district will house the laboratory school in an existing building, staff positions will either be supported by district funds or phased out, and the content and structure of the professional development satellite will be incorporated into the district PLC structure.

CCS provided a chart outlining activities, outcome indicators or deliverables, those responsible, and the anticipated completion dates. The activities included the following:

- Hire Project Coordinator – oversee operations and implementation;
- Evaluate fiscal efficiency and compliance for use of RTTD funds;
- Assemble sustainability team – preparation for sustainability beyond the grant period;
- Develop financial outlook – review local and state funding sources to support sustainability and expansion;
- Identify successful components – review data outcomes;
- Develop post-grant budget;
- Recruit community partners – additional resources.

However, the CCS proposed plan to ensure sustainability of the initiative reform goals after the grant term of the grant is ambiguous according to that which is required and defined in the notice. The CCS plans lack evidence to demonstrate sustainability of the project goals beyond the grant term.

It is unclear from the information presented as to the level of support CCS has from State and local government leaders to sustain the proposed reform initiative.

It is unclear of the plan CCS will implement and on which criteria will be used in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the past investments and utilize the data to inform the CCS future investments.

The presented description and chart lacks evidence to demonstrate an estimated budget for any timeframe after the term of the grant in order to support the sustainability of the proposed project goals of the personalized learning environment.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the lowest of the medium range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools has presented an proposal describing a bold approach in the implementation of a reform initiative aiming to reverse a negative student growth trend for gifted students and provide educators with research based strategies for implementing innovative instruction to students identified as gifted.

CCS identified a public and several national organizations to partner with in supporting student academic achievement. The following are the proposed partners and services that will be provided to support educators, students and

parents/guardians:

- public university – research and expertise support for professional development component;
- public university – access college coursework on campus and through e-learning tools;
- national organizations for gifted students – serve as resource for project development and professional development;
- three established schools/programs for gifted students - provide guidance for the establishment of the laboratory school, determine reasonable student growth outcomes, and practical guidance regarding organizing and executing a plan;
- local public library system - support students and families particularly those with limited technology access in the home;
- possible community and business partners - create mentorship, service learning programs, field-based learning experiences.

The CCS plan identified six desired results and align with the proposed RTTD desired results for student population identified as gifted.

- Achieve at least one year academic growth in a school year – educational;
- Graduate high school college- and career- ready – educational;
- Increase college entrance rates – educational;
- Increase the utilization of post-secondary educational options – educational;
- Experience career opportunities prior to graduation – educational;
- Increase access to college- and career- readiness tools and support – family and community support.

CCS plans to partner with the contracted local evaluation firm to review student and teacher performance data in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed reform; monitor student performance and staff needs; identify necessary improvements for family and student support services.

The proposed partnership will include two national organizations for gifted students to provide information and support to families and students concerning social and emotional development. The CCS support team composed of the school counselor, college and career counselor, parent and community outreach coordinator will support the families and students in the use of district and community resources.

CCS will build the capacity of the laboratory school staff through the utilization of the current PLC structures, learning management systems and the local university to provide necessary skills to implement personalized learning and assess the outcomes for the instructional approaches. The CCS teacher evaluation system will measure the effectiveness.

Overall, the CCS presented a proposal to partner with a public university, national organizations for gifted students, established schools/programs for gifted students and a public library to provide research, support, guidance and information.

However, the CCS plan to integrate public and private resources in a partnership was well intended to identify and provide necessary services to students identified as gifted and with high needs, yet lacked the clarity to define a coherent and integrated partnership plan resulting in the resource alignment and integrated services to provide additional student and family supports addressing the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the identified students.

The CCS partnership proposal was ambiguous lacking a defined plan to address:

- tracking the identified indicators that measure desired results;
- collection of data to target resources in order to improve results for the students identified as gifted;
- ensure services to the high-needs students within the gifted population;

- coherent strategy to scale the proposed reform model beyond the laboratory school serving gifted students;
- improve results over time.

It is unclear how the CCS partnership will build the capacity of the staff providing the necessary tools and support to assess, identify, inventory the needs to align with those goals for improving the education and family support.

It is unclear how the CCS partnership will engage the parents and families for decision-making about solutions to improve results and address the needs of the student, family, and school.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools (CCS) scored in the low of the medium range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools (CCS) articulated a bold reform vision aiming to reverse a negative student growth trend for gifted students by proposing to promote personalized learning for those students identified as gifted through the creation of an innovative laboratory school and establishing professional development satellites replicating the practices in the laboratory school.

The CCS plan builds on the educational assurance areas to increase student achievement preparing the gifted students to succeed in college and the workplace. The plan includes appropriate data systems to measure student growth, evaluate achievement levels and to personalize the learning for the individual student. Students, parents and educators are informed on student progress throughout the learning process. School teams receive training on the structure and use of professional learning communities in order to increase student achievement, graduation rates and prepare students for college and careers. The CCS plan documents the current system and process for teacher and principal effectiveness.

However, the CCS proposal is ambiguous in the presentation of a coherent and comprehensive plan. It is unclear how the plan will address the recruitment, rewarding and retaining of effective teachers and principals for the laboratory school project. It is unclear of the plan and timeframe that the professional development communities – professional development satellites will disseminate information, training, and strategies. It is unclear how the plan defines the targeted subgroups to be served – gifted students as a whole or subgroups of gifted students. It is unclear of the CCS plan to address turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Therefore, the Columbus City Schools proposed reform initiative met the basic Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	104
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0128OH-2 for Columbus City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The urban Columbus City Schools (CCS) response articulate a clear, coherent, and comprehensive vision. The project is population-scaled reform, aimed at only students who are gifted and is inclusive of professional development for the staff who will assist those students. As part of the vision this district seeks to create a lab school for gifted students only. Historically gifted students in this district have not made the academic gains that match their potential as identified gifted students. Despite their intelligence, talent, and aptitude, gifted students in this district as a whole are not performing well. The long term negative impact of this situation repeating itself year in and year out is what this project intends to address and remedy. This project's focus is novel and innovative.

Four thousand nine hundred students, roughly 10%, of the more than 49,000 enrolled will be the initial beneficiaries of a successful application. The staff who serve the students and the students' families will also reap the benefits of the \$7,986,920.00 being sought for the project. The obvious and lingering questions are does this sizable investment for such a small percentage of the enrolled students justify the fund outlay and does the selected group of students expressly meet the criteria of high needs students? What about students at the other end of the spectrum and those in between who are average learners?

The proposed lab school will utilize individualized, mastery learning models to accelerate academic achievement of gifted students in grades 6 -12. This project will also include intense professional development for staff---for the nucleus group dealing with the gifted population and then expanded through the satellites to all educators. The professional development satellites throughout the school district will replicate instructional practices the first 115 staff who will be a part of the proposed project at the lab school have learned. Teachers who are part of the project will transfer what they learn to colleagues with the expected result being additional positive academic impact and higher attainments for other subgroups of students and positive professional impact on their colleagues. What is learned to be contributing to student success in the lab school is intended to be transferred to other settings and then to be replicated for other students as the program grows and expands.

Economic disadvantage information, based on free reduced lunch data, indicates 79.1% of students fall into this category. The district is reported to have 16.7% of its populations who are students with disabilities and 12.2% who are English Language Learners. Recent results from a state report card reflected that though the gifted population is bright and should be achieving at higher levels they are, in fact, regressing and few students are taking and passing advanced placement courses. The district seeks to curb and end this trend.

CCS is thorough in conveying how it builds on prior work in the four core educational areas. It reports adoption of Common Core and implementation of new state learning standards that became effective in August 2013, discusses the use of IIS Gap Analysis and Formative Instructional Practices supported by the OH Department of Education and the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio. Methods for recruiting staff to work in the program are outlined but no mention of rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals is addressed in the response.

The intended approach is clear. It is uncertain how credible the approach will be because there is no prior evidence of any smaller scale effort having been tried that made any type of significant difference. There are multiple research citations presented that address what works with gifted students. Programming for gifted students who will be the focus of this grant is allowable under the auspices of the notice. For the specified population, a project with this focus could yield great benefit for gifted students so they can begin to accelerate achievement and engage in deepened learning experiences. The attainment of equity for this specific population seems to be a justifiable rationale for taking this approach.

Classroom experiences, varied and based on student needs and interests, are projected to include individual or a combination of traditional courses, AP courses, online coursework, blended learning environments, dual and postsecondary enrollment, field experiences, project based learning independent student and authentic research, and several other options. Allowing students to learn in the manner that they learn best is a reasonable approach to improving student achievement and performance. Likewise such opportunities are taken to mean that the skill set of the professionals who work with the students will be enhanced as a result of the approach.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

For Item (a) - Lacking from the response is any statement regarding a process used to select particular schools. The project proposed in the application focuses on selecting a target population of gifted students in the 6th - 12th grade span

along to be followed by identifying a building where a lab school can be created. The applicant has a tentative location. While they are opting to address the needs of a specific population and electing address their unique needs, the response falls short of giving a description of the process and any details that validate how the selected population clearly meets the competition's eligibility requirements.

For Item (b) - The fact that no particular school was selected to be part of the proposed project negates any possibility of Item b being documented as present in the response.

For Item (c) - The applicant reports participating students to be 100 students initially. This number of students, according to the response, will eventually grow to 400 during the grant cycle. Participating educators at the outset will be 115 teachers who will eventually impact a larger population of students beyond the gifted students. While some of the gifted students selected to be served may come from low income families, the applicant provides no numeric information regarding which portion of the target population is low income. The applicant designates the students as high need because the students are underachieving gifted students who have yielded very poor academic performance results as a group. This chosen population from a group that totals 4900 students district-wide provides limited details of how the district will actually implement high quality implementation of reform.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

3

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant introductory statement for (A) (3) is presented as "The goal of the proposed initiative is to reverse a negative student growth trend for gifted students, identified in the district's annual state report card, and better prepare participating students for success in college and careers". According to the notice, a high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

The reviewer's evaluation of the inclusion of each component is specified below:

#1 Goals - The applicant details a goal of reversing the negative trend for student growth within the gifted population through the development and implementation of a lab school, provision of professional development, and the implementation of a 7 step bulleted list of additional goals. Therefore this component is documented and in evidence.

#2 Activities/Rationale - Specific activities and a rationale for the activities are lacking in the given response.

#3 Timeline - No timeline is presented as part of the response. Therefore the required time line is undocumented and the response can not be credited as sufficient.

#4 Deliverables - No deliverables are included. This is insufficient information.

(5) Responsible parties - Parties responsible for implementing activities are not addressed. Without this information no credit for the presence of this component can be assigned.

Over time, the applicant reports an intent for the project to "scale up" from the starting number of 100 students to eventually include 400 students. The involved educators trained as part of professional development aspect of the plan are projected to impact as many as 4500 more students over the grant cycle. This reasonably represents some scaling up of the project to impact more students (but not nearly the 49,000 students who are enrolled). This small number and percentage of impacted students leave doubt about the likelihood of ensuring meaningful district-wide change.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The creation of a specialized lab school for the gifted population only is highly likely to result in improved learning and performance for the gifted students. However there is insufficient evidence to clearly support that this effort will transfer to the larger population of students and no evidence to validate that the satellites will make a definitive difference in educator performance. One would expect that increased performance of gifted students will occur but there is a lack of clarity regarding how equity for all students will be a definite byproduct of the project's effort and expense.

The desired ripple effect translating increases across the population of other students is more a possibility than an

approach that has already shown proven promise. The applicant is bold and ambitious in its plan and quest. However, it must be noted that the approach could also result in a widening of the achievement gap between subgroups. If the target population begins to achieve to their potential, begins to excel, and the other subgroups retain the status quo or make limited progress, the existing achievement gap would then widen.

If all parts of the proposal work as desired, then there is the possibility of achieving the desired outcomes. The charts provided as part of the response reflect the LEA goals for steady increases in performance and increases in proficiency status but there is no data in the response that speaks to the methodology(ies) for achieving the projected increases or of SEA targets for items a-d. The uncertainty leaves some questions about the likelihood of goal attainment for the student population beyond the gifted students.

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	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>CCS presents evidence that they have had four consecutive years of increases in 4-Year graduation rates, from 72.7% in 2008-2009 to 79.2% in 2011-2012; some years with increases in college enrollment. The applicant states that Lincoln Park Elementary, a School Improvement Grant school, had significant increases in reading and math achievement. Lincoln Park is also reported to have earned a Continuous Improvement rating which is support that there has been reform in a persistently low achieving school. Champion Middle School is presented as another example of a school matching this category's criteria that had gains in student achievement as a result of restructuring the day and the use of targeted reading and math intervention according to value-added criteria. These presented examples are a small and disproportionate number of examples of successes for a district of this size. One would expect more examples and evidence revealing there is significant success history and local professional knowledge of what works to reform low achieving/performing schools.</p> <p>CCS also specifies that it uses software packages such as Infinite Campus that affords students, parents, and educators real time access to information as it is entered into the package. They further report using an academic early warning system designed by Learning Cycle Education to identify at-risk students which gives educators the ability to routinely monitor student progress and provides information needed to gauger when remediation is necessary. The information about lowest-achieving schools and low performing schools while directly linked to item (B) (1) is inconsistent with the focus of the RTTT project's focus. Also historical data disaggregated by subgroup is not clearly evident in the response.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Public information requests are described as a mechanism available to the public to secure the information for items a-d. Public information requests can also be used to secure financial information including salaries and expenditures. The respondent details that individual teacher and administrator salary information is available through Buckeye Institute for Public Policy solution at http://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/teacher-salary. Appendix D shows the actual form and the steps interested parties should use to secure desired information.</p> <p>No specific data is provided detailing the transparency of LEA processes, practices, and investment nor is there any reference to availability of actual non-personnel expenditures in the response other than what might be secured by a party through a public information request.</p> <p>This section is assessed as moderately accessible because there is the possibility of data being made available, but not with immediate, at-your-fingertip, access).</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's response demonstrates clear and well-documented evidence that the state has positioned CCS well to carry out this project without excessive state influence. The applicant describes recent changes in state law to allow more district discretion. This supports that sufficient autonomy exists. An example is the description of state House Bill, HB 59, that allows more flexibility in how funds can be used. The delineation of changes in the mindset and thinking of the local leadership and the changes in CCS' approaches to school improvement have also resulted in greater autonomy and</p>		

flexibility. This is sufficient evidence that the state is erasing boundaries that previously limited LEA autonomy. The applicant addresses in Appendix B their documentation that the Columbus Education Commission is emphasizing greater school choice and more autonomy. This too is another example of autonomy and flexibility being made available. Examples of how the current superintendent is increasing building level autonomy by allowing buildings to design and implement educational programs, schedules, and assessments is further support. The large focus on personalized, digital learning is strong support for the existence of successful conditions for effecting changes through project implementation.

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

15

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant details the 2012-2013 formation of a Gifted Task Force comprised of 14 parents representing all regions of the city and 15 staff members including gifted specialists, department leadership, and the superintendent. This group held 10 monthly meetings over the period of a year holding discussions, analyzing surveys, and generating recommendations. Apparently, there was no involvement of students in the development of the proposal as their involvement is not mentioned. Neither was there information given about the active involvement of parents/families.

The LEA has collective bargaining representation according to the response and the local unit the Columbus Education Association is reported to have been a full partner in the district's previous RTT-D grant initiative. There is reported involvement of this unit in decision making and curriculum development, building design, contracts, etc.

Evidence of support is provided through the letters included in the appendix. Letters of support from gifted advocacy organizations, The Ohio State University, the Columbus Education Association, Learning Forward, and even a group committing to perform data analysis during the project are included. Yet no letters of support from individual parents, local parent organizations, local civic or community-based organizations or the business community are included as expected and specified in item B above. Further no information is provided to indicate how revisions to the proposal were made based on engagement and feedback.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

As indicated in earlier reviewer comments, a high quality plan requires that certain components be evident. Those components include: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

The required key goals are taken to mean the same ones addressed in earlier sections of the application----increase the achievement and performance of gifted students and improve professional development opportunities for staff so they can positively impact these and additional students. The activities include identifying and arranging an existing building's space in accordance with the special needs of the gifted population, preparing students, the classroom and school wide technology, recruiting and hiring faculty, identifying potential students in grades 5-11, recruiting the student body, coordinating transportation, establishing a daily schedule and course plan, purchasing appropriate curriculum materials, establishing Personalized Learning Plan procedures and eight other activities which are believed to be needed to aid these students achieve at higher levels than in the past. It is of concern that the applicant fails to address the issue of ensuring equity as a part of their project proposal. This is a district with 49,000 students. Yet only 10% of the population will be directly impacted by this proposal even if they reach the projected maximum number of participants (4900). The proposed project will be a sizable investment with more uncertainties than specific details provided.

For Item (a) (i) to (a) (v)- The applicant reports that a student-centered curriculum is at the heart of of premise for the lab school. The Personalized Learning Plans developed are presented as one of the ways that student and parent support will be fostered. The plans will tap into need and interests with a goal of equipping students to be think critically and problem solve equipping them for the future whether it includes college can/or career.

For Item (iv) (B) - A variety of personalized and online learning experiences (including gifted best practices, blended learning, online or in combination with traditional schooling, and others are identified as intended for use.

The initial implementation of the program, according to the response, will see its first **timeline** reached on February 28, 2014. Additional completion dates are listed for all specified activities up through the year 2016.

Ohio's adoption of Common Core and other higher standards are specified within the application as examples of increased rigor.

(A) The software packages planned for use are reported to have "real time" capability so that regular updates on mastery and progress are immediately available for students, teachers, parents, and school leaders.

(B) Data reviews by educators and information yielded from the software about students' progress and needs support how learning will become more personalized.

v. Accommodations and high quality strategies are not specifically addressed in the response. Insufficient information is given regarding which gifted students (by number or percentage) fall into the definition of a high needs student, a required component of this section.

c. No specific information is offered to address how students will be supported to ensure they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to track and manage their own learning other than through the assistance for the teachers and/or software providers.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. All components are evidenced in CCS' proposal.

The applicant reports that gifted students often have unique needs accompanying their higher abilities and potential. Fashioning the lab school to meet those needs is the nucleus of the proposed project. The rigor of the curriculum is addressed by the state and district's adoption of Common Core Standards. While CCS did not, nor does it appear possible for it to, create an exhaustive list of strategies for teaching the students who will be the focus of the project, the applicant has presented an innovative approach. They offer a myriad of strategies as option to be selected from and even some that can be proposed via the CCS Credit Flexibility prong (which allows individual proposals). This creates the possibility that the instructional strategies and the program for each students could differ just as easily as the program could have similar aspects.

Computers will be placed in each classroom in the lab school and at satellites that will connect teachers in the professional learning communities (PLCs). Hardware, digital devices, etc. and existing software packages reportedly will offer opportunities for blended learning as well as the option of faster and more in-depth data analysis. This access presents the possibility for accelerated student progress and more preparedness to be college and career ready. The availability and connectivity will also increase access for educators. What is lacking is sufficient detail for how all of this translates to cohesive, high quality plan that will ensure the specified goals will be consistently met or that the impact will be as far reaching as intended.

Some policies that would specific policy changes that must occur to ensure successful project implementation.

Training in the form of professional development began before earlier RTT funding, intensified as a result of the availability of RTT-D, and is proposed to become even more targeted if the proposed project is selected for funding. Internal and external reviews of teacher and administrator effectiveness will ensure that evaluation informs and effects training, systems and practice changes to generate the desired improvement. Additional detail and clarity is needed to reflect how the satellite professional learning communities and professional development will affect the four assurance areas and the goals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	5

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

CCS presents information regarding a comprehensive plan to improve and transform the Columbus City Schools so that the region where they are located attains improvements that will positively impact quality of life and living standards. To achieve that they assert that business and economic growth must be fostered. The plan connects a strong education system and the preparedness of students for college and careers as catalysts of the transformation. CCS addresses how planning has occurred with key stakeholders including the district leadership who has mapped out six key areas in an

overall plan for district improvement. While this information presents what the district is working to accomplish, the information appears irrelevant to the proposed project except in certain areas.

The presented plan speaks to school readiness and improved programming for all students. However the plan stops short of addressing the focus of this RTTT project for gifted students. The plan that is presented is therefore discrepant despite the district addressing how central office has been decentralized and is structured to offer support and services to all participating schools. There is no timeline or list of activities and rationales linked directly to the project for which funding is being requested.

The applicant presents how it affords flexibility and personalized learning opportunities that offer chances to show content mastery in multiple ways, including use of intervention, infusion of technology, direct and online school attendance which all extend beyond the traditional classroom setting. They specify that the district has a credit flexibility policy, included as Appendix H, that is in accordance with Ohio's rules which offers students the chance to earn credit by individual proposal or by examination and demonstration. These multiple methods of matching learning options to learner needs and preferences supports that CCS offers students opportunity to progress through having a variety of instructional options and flexibility.

The district's Global Academy is also presented as a venue offering services to ELL learners and students with disabilities. Insufficient detail is offered to describe how the academy meet the special populations' needs.

A high quality plan which supports project implementation must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. Information regarding deliverables and parties responsible for tasks associated with this project are not provided.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Here again an applicant must present a plan which must contain the following components for it to be deemed high quality: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. Therefore each component was looked for within the applicant's response.

CCS began its response by specifying an accessible infrastructure of tools and resources for stakeholders to support the proposed initiative existed. They presented the names of 5 software systems available in the district that offered easy to understand formats for stakeholder use. Each system was made available for stakeholder use without cost ensuring access. CCS detailed that students would be individually assigned tablets (computers) at the lab school proposed for the RTTT project and stated that teachers would have additional computers and tablets at the satellite sites where they received professional development. The response addressed that a technology integration coach would be on staff to support students, parents, and educators which should ensure appropriate levels of technical support are available for target groups of this size. The District Connection software, Learning Circle, Infinite Campus, and the Naviance Succeed programs are specifically mentioned as programs that provide the capability for interoperability and data exchange (export) for the stakeholders in Item B above. The district's MUNIS system is reported to address financial management and budget; Employee Self Service offers personnel management data, CiMS provides instructional improvement and professional development data, Infinite Campus offers student information system data, and EVAAS provides state-wide value added data.

The vast majority of the components of a HQ plan are addressed within the applicant's response. However, the response does not address timelines in any context which is a required component of a HQ plan.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Section (E) (1) also requires a high quality plan. To meet this requirement an applicant must include and address the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

CCS describes in a table included for this section the project activities, outcomes/deliverables, parties responsible, and completion date (timeline) for the items central to successful implementation. Though not reiterated in this section, the applicant has indicated in earlier sections the goals of the project. If there is any omission of a component of a high quality plan, it is a rationale for each listed activity.

CCS appropriately includes that they have requested Institutional Research Consultants, Ltd. (IRC), a local evaluation firm, to assist with data collection, analysis, and reporting. IRC is reported to be led by an experienced evaluator with years of experience as an external evaluator on grants. CCS will rely on this group to generate the surveys formative and summative evaluation reports necessitated to the funded project. CCS RTTD staff plans to work with IRC to develop processes to ensure ongoing monitoring as well as needed modifications as the need for such is identified. Additional detail would have provided the clarity needed to understand how shared decision making would occur and the process for the planned process for addressing differences of opinion if the evaluator and district personnel had vastly differing views or differences of opinion.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

The response for (E) (2) is combined with the applicant's response for (E) (1) and (E) (4). A close review of the response and the table provided to accompany the afore-mentioned sections does not yield any reference to a plan and process for ongoing communication. There is nothing addressing external stakeholders or any indication of a schedule of meetings for internal stakeholders to ensure ongoing communication and engagement.

Evidence of the existence of goals is credited as in (E) (1). The response and table are insufficient in this section to support the existence of a timeline, deliverables. There is also no delineation of responsible parties clearly identified and included to address communication/ engagement to ensure plans are continuously improved.

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

According to the notice an applicant is to specify approximately 12 - 14 performance measures. CCS meets that expectation. The applicant provides tables for (E) (3) that include performance measures and subgroups with expected levels of increase. Information included reflects that data is planned to be collected annually and for some areas throughout the year.

The project, as noted previously, focuses on gifted students, their increased achievement, academic progress, and readiness for college and careers. Grade spans to be covered range from the 4-8 grade span to the 9-12 grade span.

Focuses of the performance measures, as indicated by the tables, will be improved academic performance, number of students served by highly effective teachers and administrators, improved of social-emotional health among participants, attainment of proficiency on both standardized tests, number of students in career mentorships, number of students earning one or more postsecondary credits, and the number of students demonstrating progress on the ACT, including increases in the mean ACT score over the course of the grant, increases in the number and percentage of students who are on track for college, increases in the number and percentage of students who complete the FAFSA. Rationales for measures selected are provided. In several entries the applicant notes how adjustments will be made.

Examples include that if findings do not correlate, as in the case of graduation rate to college entrance rates, the tool selected for use can be reconsidered, statistics for students in career mentorships will be considered in light of feedback from mentors and students. which is taken to mean the applicant is prepped for necessary adjustments to ensure there are sufficient measures to gauge progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

As with (E) (1) and (E) (2), the applicant uses the same information and table to address this section. The external evaluator, IRC, will be heavily relied upon to aid in the evaluation of the effectiveness of investments. Two sections of the tables specifically point to what IRC will evaluate: (1) IRC will "evaluate the fiscal efficiency and compliance with use" of RTTT funds and (2) IRC will complete a "summative evaluation of teacher instructional practices and student learning activities utilizing technology resources purchase through this project".

Of concern is the fact that the external evaluator appears to be the only party who will do anything regarding evaluation. Left unsaid is how district staff and other stakeholders will have any involvement and input in evaluating effectiveness of investments. Other than these comments, all other required aspects of a high quality plan are included within the table.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

CCS requests a total of \$7,986, 920 in Race to the Top funding for its Closing the Gap projects according to the LEA Budget Requirement section listed at the beginning portion of the application. Upon reviewing the Budget in Table 2-1, the total budget is reflected as \$19,336,881 making roughly \$11,000,000 necessary to be provided from other sources.

For Items (a) & (c) (i) - The budget narrative begins by saying the program will utilize funding from the RTTD grant, from local, state, and federal funds. However the response fails to include any actual or estimated amounts for each additional funding source. This detail was important to the response for it to be considered a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. Table 3-1 specifies a total budget over the 4 years as \$13,271,781; this to is without specificity. There is some discrepant and inconsistent information among these listed amounts. However the budget information and line-item rationales the applicant describes still seem reasonable as far as total amount.

Budget Subpart 4 presents an annual cost of \$3,500,000 associated with the staffing and operation of the lab school specified to be paid from "other district sources". The applicant does not reflect any external foundation support.

The applicant reflects an intent to "seek additional sources of funding" for the continuation of the ongoing costs----student and school personnel and travel costs. This section, as well, lacks sufficient specifics to ensure that there is clarity regarding how long term sustainability will result.

For Item (c) (ii) - The amounts listed for equipment and contracted services are indicated as specific to this grant and the grant funding period. They will be the one time costs. Social worker costs, contracted social service agency contractual service, supply costs, printing and postage are reported as ongoing costs

The budget section provided more specific information about the projects, initially indicated early in the application as being comprised of two components but which, in actuality, will have four components according to the budget.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As with each section requiring a high quality plan, this section also requires the same components: 1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

No information is included to reference the support of state and local government leaders though prior sections of the application do indicate that there is LEA leadership support. Key goals of the grant have been repeated throughout the application and are again evaluated to be present for (F)(2). These areas are ambitious and are assessed as appropriate.

The external evaluator previously discussed in other sections will continue to the impetus for evaluating effectiveness of past investments. This individual will share results with district leaders and will use data to inform future investments.

Regarding sustainability the applicant addresses that the building to be used for the lab school is already a building the district owns so no additional costs will be incurred for the facility after the life of the grant. The district details a plan to absorb all personnel positions in the grant except two positions. After the grant, CCS specify an intent to phase out the Technology Integration Coach. This position is projected to be replaced by a train the trainer model using professional learning community participants. The Parent and Community Outreach Coordinator position is listed as planned to be "considered" for district funding. The response omits a post-grant estimated budget for the 3 year period following the

grant. Therefore, there is a lack of a definite plan for sustainability after the grant cycle ends.

A table following (F) (2) in the application lists the headings, activity, outcome indicator or deliverables, responsibility, and completion date. These listed areas match to the major components of a HQ plan.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

CCS' Closing the GAP project details an intent to pool the the LEA's human and financial resources with the resources of agencies supporting the effort. Among the other agencies are the Ohio State University, the Columbus Association of Educators, and others. This project, if funded, will pull gifted students from across the district into one laboratory school. The school would be staffed with educators possessing a special interest in gifted students who have both the skills and knowledge to help these students reach their potential and excel. The gifted students are a subset of students who demonstrate the unique needs and are not just students from specific schools in the district.

For Item 1 - Other than the information provided in the letters of support included in the appendices, the applicant provides no other mention of partnerships with civic groups, businesses, philanthropies, community-based programs, or early learning programs. Therefore the area of partnerships is lacking in sufficiency.

For Item 2 - CCS identifies 6 population-level results that are desired to yield an effective program. Five of the chosen items will yield educational results and one will yield family and community supports results. Specific methods for tracking the results are not listed within the provided response. In instances where increases are sought no specific numeric rate is established (e.g. "college entrance rates will increase" or "students will experience career opportunities prior to graduation in order to facilitate career readiness").

For Item 3 (a-d) - The district personnel members' level of involvement is unclear from the response. The response indicates the external evaluator's services will be the primary catalyst for identifying goal attainment, documenting attainment, and adjusting efforts that are not working, that need adjustment or further review and attention. This lack of detail about district personnel's involvement appears to point to an over reliance on the external evaluator and as a result calls into question whether district personnel will be involved enough.

For Item 4 - Integrated services through partnerships with the organizations Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) and the Ohio Association for Gifted Children (OAGC) demonstrate how the district will provide education and support to parents about their children's social and emotional development. Additional support will come from the school counselor college/career counselor and parent/community outreach coordinator.

For Item 5 (a-e) - CCS reports that "PLC structures and learning management systems along with the collaboration with Ohio State University are to serve as tools for equipping staff with the necessary tools" to implement personalized learning. Nothing is mentioned in the response regarding engaging parents and families of participating students in decision-making about improving results over time and addressing needs other than what is included about gifted students not achieving to the potential. There is also a lack of explicit detail regarding how and to what extent the organizations will collaborate.

For Item 6 - The performance measures included in the response for (E) (3) address students who are on track for college and career readiness, the number of students who will complete and submit a FAFSA, the number of students involved in mentorships, the number of students impacted by highly effective teachers and principals, etc. are appropriate, ambitious and achievable and are acceptable to meet the requirements of Item 6.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

CCS addresses the core educational assurance area by targeting a particular population. The project though limited in initial scope has broader implications for success that will impact others beyond the initial group of students and teachers. The gifted population selected can conceivably fit under the scope of a high needs group though the applicant does not provide patently clear detail regarding how or why they meet the definition of a high needs group.

The project focus on gifted students only is unique. It focuses on those students' improved performance and increased achievement and the overlapping improvements teachers will gain from intensive professional development. The teachers improved capacity is asserted to increase the likelihood that other students not in this category will achieve more based on the teachers' enhanced knowledge and instructional skill .

All assurance areas are addressed (with the focus on improving opportunities for gifted students). Plans to recruit teachers who desire to work with this population who have the ability to teach and challenge gifted students are outlined in various sections of the application. Blended learning, personalized learning environments, traditional instruction, service learning and independent study have been mentioned in prior responses as ways to deepen student learning.

Total	210	132
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Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

Application #0128OH-3 for Columbus City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Columbus City Schools has articulated a clear vision that can serve as the foundation for accelerating the learning of gifted students. The Applicant describes how there currently are limited opportunities for academic challenges for the brightest students, and how the performance of this group has regressed in recent years. The vision described is ambitious, though extremely limited in focus. The vision is not comprehensive since little detail is provided about how grant activities will lead to improved outcomes and increased equity for high needs students as defined by the the notice (e.g., students living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, who are English learners)--in low performing schools.

Inadequate evidence was provided that a lab school for gifted students has the potential to improve student performance of high needs students in low performing schools in the district. The Applicant's proposal to develop a lab school for gifted secondary students adequately addresses three of the four assurances (adopt college and career ready standards; data systems that measure student growth and success; recruiting, developing, reward, and retaining defective teachers and principals). However, the proposal inadequately addresses the fourth assurance (turning around the lowest achieving schools). The Applicant indicates that Professional Development Satellites will be utilized where the strategies learned at the Lab school will filter out to other secondary schools, but it is unclear whether the primary goal is for the strategies that are expected to filter out to change practices for the instruction of gifted students at the other schools or for all students at those schools. It is also unrealistic to expect that successful practices in a lab school for gifted students would necessarily be successful when scaled up for use with high needs students.

Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the top of of the low-range. The vision has the potential increase and deepen student learning for students who are identified as gifted; however, it is not clear that the described vision will increase equity across all students in the district.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools does not adequately describe how participating schools will meet the competition's eligibility requirements. The Applicant describes how there are two groups of students who will participate in grant-related activities—gifted students attending a lab school and other students whose instruction may be impacted by receiving instruction from a teacher who participates in satellite professional learning communities (PLCs). Columbus City Schools indicates that all middle and high school students in the district will be able to participate in some grant-related activities, and that "teachers with high concentrations of gifted students representing the demographic distribution of the district will be able to voluntarily participate in this reform initiative." The process described does not sufficiently involve low achieving schools with high needs students, as defined in the notice (e.g., students living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, who are English learners).</p> <p>The Applicant includes information about the total number of students who will participate—but does not include a list of schools or disaggregate the student counts by school. Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the high end of the low range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools included a plan for scaling up, but the presented plan had many limitations. The application does not adequately describe how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the lab school for gifted students. The Applicant describes how the short-term objective is to open a laboratory school with 75-100 gifted students, and how a long term objective is to have full implementation of the lab school (enrollment - 400) with professional development reaching all district middle and high school staff, including embedded professional development at the lab school on an ongoing basis; but little detail is provided about how the plan will be scaled out to teachers beyond gifted programs, and the plan lacked convincing evidence that the reform proposal has the potential to support district-wide change.</p> <p>The Applicant did not include a logic model or theory of change that shows how its plan will improve student learning outcomes for all students who were included in the application; and it was unclear how the proposed reform would be translated into meaningful reform across the district.</p> <p>Overall this places, Columbus City Schools at the high end of the low range.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City School's vision is unlikely to result in improved student learning and increased equity for student subgroups as defined under section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of ESEA (e.g., major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, English Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged). Columbus City Schools application provides data which indicates that many students in several of the subgroups are struggling. For example, for both math and reading only 33.3% of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students were proficient or above on the Ohio Graduation Test in the baseline year of 2012-13. Comparison data were not provided for the percentage of gifted students in the Columbus City Schools who were proficient and above on the Ohio Graduation Test. The Applicant provides data on graduation rates and college enrollment rates by subgroup but the data tables do not include for the population addressed in this application (gifted students). Additionally, the application does not provide any specific details about how it would address the needs of gifted students who also are ELs, students with disabilities, or members of other subgroups.</p> <p>Gifted is not one of the subgroups as defined by this notice. It is unclear how the vision described in this application will increase proficiency and growth of students in the relevant subgroups, and decrease achievement gaps.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools lists ambitious goals for the various subgroups defined by ESEA, but it is unlikely that these goals will be reached when the Application focuses on another population of students.</p> <p>Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the low end of the mid-range.</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	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools provides insufficient evidence to determine whether the district has a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement, and increasing equity in learning and teaching. The Applicant provides data which shows that the graduation rate for all students has increased over the past four years; however, the application does not disaggregate the data by subgroup (as defined in this notice). The application also does not include achievement data for the past four years disaggregated by subgroup. It is not clear whether the district has a demonstrated a track record of success and whether it has moved toward closing achievement gaps due to the data limitations.</p> <p>It was impossible to tell whether the district has achieved ambitious and significant reforms at its persistently lowest-achieving schools, since data were not presented by subgroup. Columbus City Schools provided limited data to demonstrate that it has turned around Lincoln Park Elementary and Champion Middle School. However, historic value added data for these schools are only presented for all students, gifted students, and the "lowest 20%."</p> <p>Columbus City Schools makes student performance data available to students and educators, but insufficient detail was provided about how the data are used to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The Applicant described a student information system that students, educators and parents can access. According to the application, the system includes information on attendance, grades, a student's schedule, teacher comments, and upcoming events like field trips, tests, and assignments. It is ambiguous whether individual student scores on state assessments are available through the system. Columbus City Schools also uses an early warning system that use metrics that calculate risk factors for students, and collects short-cycle formative assessment data (but the Applicant did not describe how the formative assessment data are used to inform instruction).</p> <p>Overall, this places the Columbus City Schools at the high end of the low range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools provides insufficient evidence that there is a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. The information provided by Columbus City Schools suggests that it is difficult for the public to access actual school-level expenditures data. The Applicant indicated that data for all of the areas specified in the notice are available upon request, and included directions for submitting such a request in one of the appendices. However, the Applicant provided no information about how the district disseminates information about the request process to parents and other stakeholders, which suggests that it may be difficult for some stakeholders to figure out how to navigate the request process.</p> <p>The Applicant also indicated that individual teacher and salary data were available on the website of the Buckeye Institute, but did not indicate whether this data are organized in a way that facilitates accessing at the school-level. Overall, this places the Columbus City Schools at the low end of the mid-range.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools provides adequate evidence that the state context provided many but not all of the conditions needed to implement the personalized learning environments described in the application. The Applicant described how House Bill 59 provided districts with the freedom to utilize educational funds in flexible ways. The Applicant also provided extensive information about state laws and rules that pertained to gifted education.</p> <p>To fully implement the plan described in the application for the laboratory school for gifted students, teachers will need sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. A limitation of the application is that it does not describe whether the state context provides sufficient flexibility for teachers to organize their work in new ways that will support personalized learning environments.</p> <p>Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the low end of the high range.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	6
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The main group of stakeholders engaged in the development of the proposal were members of the Gifted Task Force which was comprised of a group of just 14 parents and 15 staff members. Columbus City Schools does not adequately describe how students, families, teachers, and principals at the participating schools were engaged in a meaningful way in the development of the proposal. For example, there is no information provided about how students were engaged in the development of the proposal. There is also no information about whether parent groups that are representative of many of the families in the district (e.g., PTAs or other similar parent groups) were engaged and provided meaningful support for the proposal.

The Applicant does include a signed letter of support from the President of the Columbus Education Association which provides evidence of teacher support.

The application included several letters of support—however, none are from civil right organizations, local civic and community-based organizations, student organizations, or the business community.

Overall, this places Columbus City Schools towards the lower end of the mid-range, because the Applicant provided inadequate evidence that there is meaningful support from several key stakeholders.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The plan described by Columbus City Schools has some elements of a high quality plan, but it also has many limitations. The Applicant adequately describes how the content will be high-quality, and that the goals will be based on college- and career ready standards established by the Ohio Department of Education.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools describes how personalized learning environments (e.g., accelerated pacing, independent study, authentic research projects, etc.) will be created for the students who attend the lab school for gifted students, but it does not adequately describe how the approach will engage and empower all learners, in particular high-needs students as defined in the notice (students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners). The Applicant does not provide evidence to indicate that the students who will attend the Lab School will be high needs students.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools does not describe how accommodations will be provided for high-need students. For example, the Applicant does not indicate how gifted students with disabilities or gifted students who also are ELs will be accommodated at the lab school.</p> <p>The Applicant adequately describes the mechanisms that will be put in place to ensure that students attending the lab school understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them to track and understand their learning. However, there is insufficient evidence that other district students impacted by the educator professional development satellites described in this application will have the training and support needed to understand how to use tools and resources provided. The application merely indicates that this group of students will “get support for utilizing instructional tools, such as blended learning environments and research data bases, and it will be embedded into the day-to-day instruction of teachers participating in the professional development satellites” but no details are provided about how this will actually occur.</p> <p>Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the middle of the mid-range.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	6
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The plan described by Columbus City Schools has some elements of a high quality plan, but it also has many limitations. Columbus City Schools describes how Personalized Learning Plans at the lab school for gifted students will be developed that customize curriculum, pace of instruction, and instructional delivery method. The curriculum that will be used will be aligned to the state’s adopted standards. Upon mastery of content, each student will advance to subsequent instructional</p>		

levels regardless of traditionally assigned grade levels.

The Applicant indicates that a Summer Mastery Academy in best practices in gifted education and mastery learning will be held for teachers from the laboratory school and the professional development satellite locations. Experts in gifted education and mastery instruction, in cooperation with Ohio State University, will conduct sessions. It is ambiguous whether the Academy attendees from the satellite locations will only be instructors of gifted students or whether attendees will also include teachers who instruct high needs students.

It is ambiguous whether the processes and tools described in this application to match student needs with specific resources and approaches will provide sufficient feedback for participating students who do not attend the laboratory school to support continuous improvement. It is unclear whether the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) described in this application, will meet the needs of most teachers in the district. If PLCs fail to address issues and topics of importance to the teachers, there is likely to be little improvement in teachers' practice. As indicated by the literature reviewed in the application, well-organized PLCs that have active, engaged participants have the potential to bring about change. However, there is also literature which indicates that PLCs need to meet the needs of participants—or they will have little effect. The Applicant provides an appropriate description of how Columbus City Schools has a PLC structure (called TBTs) that involves all teachers in the district. The TBTs use the Ohio Five-Step Process. The Applicant is relying heavily upon the PLC structure to disseminate the successful practices at the lab school to other secondary schools in the district. However, it is unclear how teachers will be selected to participate in the new PLCs/TBTs developed as part of the grant activities and whether teachers, besides gifted teachers, at high needs secondary schools will become engaged in the work of developing and implementing personalized learning environments similar to the ones at the Lab School.

Columbus City Schools has principal and teacher evaluation systems in place that will provide feedback and support improved teacher and principal practice. For example, the teacher evaluation system includes a self evaluation/goal setting tool, and utilizes a rubric that is scored holistically.

The application does not include a 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, and subjects (such as math and science), and specialty areas (such as special education). Insufficient detail is provided. The applicant merely indicates that the plan includes "a preponderance of professional development strategies" and "all CCS [Columbus City Schools] are included in hard-to-staff categories."

Overall, this places Columbus City Schools towards the low end of the mid-range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	6

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Columbus City Schools has some elements of a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student and educator with the support and resources they need (for example, implementation of Columbus Education Plan and district-wide goals, organization of central office, etc.); however the application failed to adequately address several key elements that are needed to facilitate personalized learning by all students included in the application. The application included the district's policies for staffing alternative schools, and a policy for organizational plans for alternative schools which indicated that variations and philosophies, curriculum content or emphasis, instructional processes, or class arrangements shall be consistent with the comprehensive goals and objectives as stated in the Course of Study and adopted by the Board of Education. It is unclear if this will provide sufficient flexibility over school schedules and staffing models.

The Applicant provided sufficient information to adequately demonstrate that students will be given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. Columbus City Schools has a credit flexibility policy in place which gives students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery; and to demonstrate mastery multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

The Applicant indicates that the Columbus City Schools has programs for English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities, but did not describe how ELs and students with disabilities who are participating in the personalized learning environments described in this application will be provided with accessible instruction and learning resources.

Overall, this places Columbus City Schools toward the low end of the mid-range.

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

10

4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Columbus City Schools application describes several tools and resource , but the application lacks elements of a high quality plan.Columbus City Schools described the tools and other infrastructure that are currently available in the district (e.g., Campus Portal, Naviance Succeed web-based student planning tool, etc.), however, the Applicant does not describe how the district ensures that economically disadvantaged families who may not have access to technology will be able to access this information. In particular, there is insufficient information about whether the infrastructure will be sufficient to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students and their parents. The Applicant described how the use of a technology integration coach will ensure that students, parents, educators will have appropriate levels of technical support. However, no information was provided about how other stakeholders could get technical support.

Insufficient information was provided to evaluate whether Columbus City Schools have data systems in place which allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format or if the LEA uses interoperable data systems. The Applicant describes how it utilizes a web-based planning tool called Naviance Succeed that can deliver school forms, recommendations, transcripts and school profiles electronically to more than 1,000 colleges. However, the applicant provided no information about whether the main campus portal (Infinite Campus) that provides access to a broad array of student data allows parents and students to export their information in an open data format. Information was also lacking about whether the LEA and schools have interoperable data systems that use a common, established structure such can data can easily flow from one system to another, and in which data are in a non-proprietary, open format.

Overall, this places Columbus City Schools toward the low end of the mid-range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan described by Columbus City Schools contains some elements of a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process, but there were also some limitations. A strength is that the application includes a table that lists activities, outcome indicators/deliverables, responsibility, and completion dates. A limitation is that many of the listed activities in the table are very general (for example, one activity is to "informally review effectiveness of strategies based on reports from PLCs and student performance data) and do not closely align with the grant activities at the lab school described in the application. Another strength is that the Applicant indicates that Institutional Research Consultants will assist with data collection, analysis, and reporting functions A letter of support from the director of Institutional Research Consultants adequately describes how it is willing to serve in this role. A weakness of the application is that insufficient information is provided about how these activities and deliverables will be used in an coherent continuous iterative process to make ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. Overall this places Columbus City Schools towards the top of the mid-range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan described includes some elements of a high-quality plan, for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. A strength of the plan is that Columbus City Schools indicates that reform initiative progress will be shared with the district team, communications department and district administration on a monthly basis. Surveys will also be administered to students, parents, teachers and administrators once a year. It is not clear how the information shared and the surveys will facilitate meaningful engagement of internal stakeholders that can be used to make needed adjustments and revisions.. Insufficient information was also provided about how these activities will be organized into a high-quality plan that results in ongoing communication and engagement with external stakeholders.. Overall, this places Columbus City Schools at the high end of the mid-range.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Columbus City Schools includes 10 performance measures which is slightly below the recommended number. Overall the measures selected by the Applicant are sufficient and appropriate. Required elements are included, but there is insufficient rationale for some of the performance measures about their relationship to proposed grant activities. For example, one of the required performance measures is "the number and percentage of students (as defined in this notice) who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form." It is not clear how grant activities (i.e., lab school) would be expected to affect FAFSA application rates since the rationale merely states: "This measure reflects a student's intention to pursue post-secondary education and is an indirect measure of support provided to families.". The applicant adequately describes how the measures will provide rigorous, timely information. It also describes how the measures will be reviewed, and refined. Overall, this places the Columbus City Schools at the low end of the high range.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The plan contains many components of a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) funded activities. An example of a strength of the plan is that Columbus City Schools plans to conduct surveys and other evaluation activities to get data that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT-D activities. The Applicant did not adequately explain how the described activities will be used as to make adjustments and revisions to ensure a high-quality approach to continuously improving its plans. Overall this places the Columbus City Schools at the low end of the high range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget provided by Columbus City Schools is appropriate, but has insufficient focus on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments after the end of the grant period. Columbus City Schools provides a budget for each year, including narrative and tables that identifies all funds that will support the project. It also includes a thoughtful rationale that provides sufficient justification for the proposed activities. The budget closely reflects the activities described in the proposal, and is reasonable and sufficient. The budget identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. The budget and narrative places Columbus City Schools at the low end of the high range.

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

10

6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The sustainability plan that Columbus City Schools describes does not have all of the components of a high-quality plan because it has not yet been fully fleshed out by the Applicant. For example, the Applicant does not include an estimated post-grant budget. Columbus City Schools indicates that it plans to develop a post-grant budget in January, 2014.

The Applicant's plan indicates that most costs will be covered by the district's general funds after the end of the grant period. Two positions (technology integration coach, parent and community outreach coordinator) will either be phased out, covered in other ways, or utilize district funds allocated in the future. It is unclear whether the described sustainability plan will be adequate to sustain project goals after the term of the grant. There is a mismatch between grant and post-grant funding since the Applicant indicated that substantial non-district funds were needed to implement the activities described in the applications, but it also indicated that district funds would be sufficient to sustain most activities post-grant.

The Applicant also does not describe how it plans to evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget.

Overall this places Columbus City Schools toward the high end of the mid-range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
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Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Columbus City Schools describes a number of different organizations and people who will provide supports, but does not pull all of the pieces together into a coherent description of how the partnerships will work to integrate educational and other services in a way that will support the attainment of the desired results.</p> <p>For the competitive preference priority Columbus City Schools described a number of different organizations that support the application (e.g. Ohio State University, OCG-Ohio Association for Gifted Children, SENG—Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted, etc.) The Applicant also indicates that social workers and other supports for individual families will be provided by the district as needed. But the applicant does not include sufficient details to evaluate how these organizations will form a coherent, sustainable partnership with the district.</p> <p>The Applicant identifies 6 desired results. Some measure are closely related to grant activities. For example, several of the results align with the RTT-D proposal and are specific to students who are identified as gifted (e.g. students who are identified as gifted will make, at minimum, one year academic growth for one year's time; families of students who are gifted will have increased access to college and career readiness tools and support for navigating the transition through secondary and post-secondary education). Several of the other desired results are for the overall population of secondary students in Columbus City Schools (CCS students will experience career opportunities prior to graduation in order to facilitate career readiness, CCS students will experience career opportunities prior to graduation in order to facilitate career readiness) that are not very closely aligned to grant activities.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools does not describe how it plans to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs. The Applicant also does not describe how it plans to routinely assess the Applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.</p> <p>The Applicant indicates that the college and career readiness measures in (E)(3) should also be used as the competitive preference priority performance measures. These measures are appropriate to use for the competitive preference priority.</p> <p>The Applicant does not adequately describe the decision-making process and infrastructure that will be used to select, implement, an devaluate support improved results. The activities described in the competitive preference also do not adequately identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community to ensure that they are aligned with the goals. The Applicant merely states, "The PLC structures and learning management systems, such as School NET, EVAAS, and a collaborative effort with OSU, will serve as tools for equipping staff with the skills necessary to implement personalized learning and to assess the outcomes of those instructional approaches," but provides not details.</p> <p>Overall, this places Columbus City Schools toward the high end of the middle range, since there is not a clear description of how the partnerships will support desired results for the students in the LEA.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This application met Absolute Priorities 1 through 3: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace; building data systems that measure student growth and success; recruiting, developing rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals. Columbus City Schools provided detailed information about how each of these three priorities would be met. However, the Applicant only minimally met Absolute Priority 4: turning around lowest-achieving schools.</p> <p>Columbus City Schools minimally articulated a vision that would decrease achievement gaps across student subgroups as defined in this notice. The application also did not contain a theory of change or logic model that adequately showed how achievement gaps would be decreased across subgroups. The Applicant described how satellite professional development and professional learning communities (PLCs) would enable some of the lessons learned by the lab school for gifted students to filter down to low performing schools, but insufficient and unconvincing evidence was provided that this would turn around those schools and decrease achievement gaps across student subgroups.</p> <p>There are many limitations to this application, as described throughout these comments. Overall, the Columbus City</p>		

Schools application is a weak application, however when viewed holistically this application does marginally meet all absolute priorities.

Total	210	98
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