



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0064NC-1 for Duplin County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant mentions how the proposed plan would build on the four core educational assurance areas. Regarding adopting standards and assessments, the DCS implemented the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and adheres to the North Carolina Essential Standards in all other curriculum. As it relates to the data systems, DCS will take full advantage of Home Base, a statewide, instructional improvement (IIS) and student information system (IIS) for teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Regarding recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining, effective teachers and principals, the DCS will implement practices to grow and attract the best professionals for our students. As it relates to turning around low achieving schools, the applicant has identified 3 schools that fit this category.</p> <p>Table 1 provides a crosswalk showing the RTT-D assurances and corresponding project strategies but it is unclear how the project strategies directly build on the core assurance areas. More details are needed in this area.</p> <p>The applicant describes Duplin Promise, the vision for the plan. In the Appendix the applicant describes in great detail the nine strategies along with the names of individuals leading the strategy; the objectives; best practices associated with the strategy; and major events/activities. These appendices serve as supporting documents and help the reader see the approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.</p> <p>The applicant did not describe in sufficient detail what the classroom experience would be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments. More evidence and supporting details are needed for this area to strengthen the applicant's claims; therefore, a score of 5 is assigned.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant notes that reasons for including all schools and all students include the recognition and the understanding of the importance of vertically aligning projects across the Pre-K-13 curriculum to provide coordinated services for all staff, students and families, creating a seamless progression of career- and college-ready projects, and the necessity to develop personalized learning environments for all students. The applicant does not elaborate on this claim; therefore, does not clearly articulate the <u>process</u> in which all DCS schools will participate.</p> <p>The applicant notes that students in Pre-K -grade 13 in all 16 DCS schools will participate in the grant. The schools include BF Grady Elementary School, Beulaville Elementary School, Charity Middle School, Chinquapin Elementary School, Duplin Early College High School, East Duplin High School, EE Smith Middle School, James Kenan High School, Kenansville Elementary School, North Duplin Elementary School, North Duplin Jr. Sr. High School, Rose Hill-Magnolia Elementary School, Wallace Elementary School, Wallace-Rose Hill High School, Warsaw Elementary School, and Warsaw Middle School.</p> <p>The applicant provides Table A2: Applicant's Approach to Implementation to provide the total number of participating students per school (9416), the # of student from low income families (6792), the number of students who are categorized as high needs (3034), and the number of participating educators (632). The table provides sufficient evidence for element c.</p>		

Considering the applicant included sufficient and supporting evidence for elements b and c but partial evidence for a, a score of 7 is rendered. Supporting details are necessary to clearly articulate the process in which all DCS schools will participate.

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

10

6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes its theory of change and how it will improve student learning outcomes by using a diagram. The diagram depicts seven domains under which varied factors can be collected and complementary project strategies can be devised. The domains are organized as to depict a hierarchical, but not necessarily causal, relationship among the domains.

The seven domains identified include collaboration for capacity building; leadership, institutional policies and practices; principal, teacher, and staff engagement; family, community engagement; student engagement; communications, accountability, and continuous improvement; and data systems to guide learning and teaching. When placed in a logic model, the personalized administrator, teacher and student learning environments are outputs and improving student outcomes are outcomes.

Table 1 provides a crosswalk, showing how the varied project strategies align with the four core educational assurances as well as our Theory of Change. The nine strategies introduced in this section include District-Wide STEM Early College; Personalized Learning Environment for Students; Critical Care System for Student Success; Global Awareness; Birth To 4; Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Highly Effective Staff Members; Technology and Data Infrastructures; and Communications, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement.

In the Appendix the applicant describes in great detail the nine strategies along with the names of individuals leading the strategy; the objectives; best practices associated with the strategy; and major events/activities.

The applicant notes that the nine Duplin Promise project strategies will build and support learning environments that motivate and enable learners to be influential in achieving their personal goals in a continuously changing world but do not go in specific details to support this claim. More details are needed; therefore, a score of 6 is given.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes that all summative assessments are to reduce the number of non-proficient students by 50 percent over the next five years. The NC End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Tests will be employed for the summative assessment. The table shows the goal area for grades 4,8, and Algebra EOC; the subgroups; baseline data for 2011-12/2012-12; goals for SY 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017; and post grant (2017-2018).

As it relates to decreasing the achievement gap, the Appendix shows the difference in proficiency for 2011-12 between white students and subgroup populations. The evidence presented clearly shows goals designed at decreasing the achievement gap. The applicant's goal is to decrease the gap for each subgroup by 50% from the baseline year over a five year period.

DCS used 2012-13 as the baseline year for high school graduation rates. The goal of the applicant is to increase the graduation rate by reducing the number of non-graduates in each subgroup by 50 percent in the next five years. The goals for high school rates are ambitious yet achievable.

The applicant's goal is to increase the number of students enrolling in college by reducing the number of students who do not enroll by 50 percent in the next five years. DCS used only 2012-13 as the baseline for college enrollment data. Data from 2011-2012 would have been helpful in determining if the goals proposed are ambitious and achievable for the subgroups. Only three subgroups were identified.

Based on the evidence provided, the applicant addressed each of the elements. Having the data for the EDS, LEP, and SWD subgroups would have been helpful in determining if the applicant's vision is likely to improve all students' learning as it relates to college enrollment. Supporting details for this element would have strengthened the applicant's claims; therefore, a score of 7 was assigned.

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	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant highlights its success in developing and maintaining partnerships with various businesses and community organizations. DCS and James Sprunt Community College offer students the opportunity to pursue advanced credits through several different avenues, including Career and College Promise, Career and Technical Education Career Academies, and Duplin Early College High School.</p> <p>To address persistently low student achievement at James Kenan High School, DCS embarked upon a transformation process in 2007-08 that included hiring highly effective administrators with a proven record, recruitment incentives for newly-hired teachers, and a laser-like focus on teaching and learning at that school. Within 3 years, student proficiency rates increased from 38.5% to 75.1%. James Kenan High School and Wallace-Rose Hill High School were recognized by U.S. News & World Report as two of the best high schools in the nation for 2012.</p> <p>In the 2011-12 year, the DCS achieved its highest graduation rate since the state began tracking cohort rates in 2005. The applicant contributes this success to the hiring of a Dropout Prevention Coordinator; the hiring of Achievement Coaches to build instructional capacity of administrators and teachers; and increased course offerings for both struggling students and students who are ready for acceleration.</p> <p>As it relates to meeting state standards for expected growth, for the 2011-12 year DCS has reached the status of "Met Expected Growth" according to the State's ABCs of Public Education Accountability Results. Individually, 11 of the 16 schools met "expected growth" with three of those earning "high growth."</p> <p>DCS is taking an aggressive, district-wide approach to preparing all students for college and careers. Strategies include college adoptions by grade level, by classroom, or by school; college-themed field trips; posting of college credentials for all school employees; career fair for eighth graders; and college fair for high school students.</p> <p>As it relates to the achievement gap, DCS is making progress in reducing them. The applicant provided supporting details to show their progress over the years. The data presented extends beyond the last four years (ex. 2007-2008; 2005-2006; 2006-2007). The data do not clearly show a clear record of success in the past four years in the area closing the achievement gap.</p> <p>Collectively, the applicant provides some evidence to show the success of the LEA within the past four years. The LEA has established some district wide goals to address college enrollment but the evidence provided does not clearly show any successes within the past four years. While data are provided, the applicant does not show clear evidence of success in the area of student performance data being available to students, educators, and parents. As a result, a score of 7 is given.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As it relates to transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, the applicant noted that the DCS makes information on salaries available to the public to include, but not limited to: custodial and clerical staff, teachers, and school- and district-level administration. The DCS Board of Education's expectation is that all requests for information—including salary and budget—are to be filled within 24 hours of a written receipt of the request.</p> <p>The applicant also mentions that while the DCS has not heretofore developed the media outlets for publishing these data, it will do so consistent with expectations for 2013 RTTT-D funding. The data will be published on the website for each DCS school, will be made available in hard copy for school-based administrators to have ready to share with school and community members, and will be disseminated through other means such as at DCS Board of Education meetings, meetings of the aforementioned school district Advisory Committees, and in the district's annual financial reports.</p> <p>Collectively, the evidence presented is not clear and does not justify the claims. It would have been helpful to see the actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff; actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. The applicant does not provide any supporting evidence that shows a <u>high</u> level of transparency in the LEA, thus a score of 2 is given.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identifies three entities the LEA had to answer to: the State, the Federal government, and the County Commissioners.</p>		

The DCS Board of Education policy manual establishes policies in the following areas: Board Operations, Educational Programs, Students, Community Relationships, Support Services, Personnel, Fiscal Management, and Facilities.

The DCS Board of Education responsibilities include electing the Superintendent and supporting him in the discharge of his duties; electing school personnel upon the recommendation of the Superintendent; establishing policies affecting the school program; establishing school attendance areas; considering and acting on appeals from administrative decisions; considering and acting on recommendations from the Superintendent in regard to the building needs of the school system; considering and adopting an annual budget upon the recommendation of the administrative staff; considering and acting on recommendations from the Superintendent concerning all other needs of the system and assist in interpreting these needs to the community; and exerting leadership and direction in reaching the highest educational goals.

Supporting details note that the State has provided guidance to the overall curriculum design through its adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the NC Essential Standards, but each school district, each principal, and each teacher "interprets" this curriculum. The State provides standards and summative assessments for student performance beginning with 3rd grade and through high school, and the school district adopts and adapts curricula toward these ends.

Regarding Students and Support Services, the school district provides support services for students, determines the assignment of students to specific schools (or creates choice), and establishes discipline policies, among many other program options. The school district has the authority to determine its grading policy for students and school principals have the authority to promote or retain students.

In the area of community relations and personnel, DCS exercises much autonomy, creating various Advisory Committees and developing various partnerships and the authority to hire, fire, evaluate, and assign staff, respectively. The applicant provides sufficient and appropriate details to support its claim.

In the area of Fiscal Management, DCS annually creates a budget proposal for the County Commissioners' consideration. It also determines the size and infrastructure of its schools, identifies sites for the location of its schools.

Based on the evidence provided by the applicant, the LEA has clearly shown successful conditions and the extent to which it has autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments. In totality, the evidence provided a clear connection between the proposal and the State requirements. The above evidence is appropriate and justifiable; therefore, a score of 10 is given.

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

15

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

To demonstrate the LEA's commitment to meaningful stakeholder engagement, several activities were implemented. Attendance at the very first meeting when DCS staff considered preparing an RTTT-D proposal for 2012 included the DCS representative for the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) along with a representative from James Sprunt Community College.

DCS principals held meetings with their school staff, and meetings were conducted with the superintendent's advisory committees: Leadership Advisory Committee; Faith-Based Advisory Committee; Parent Advisory Committee; Teacher Advisory Committee; and Student Advisory Committee.

The applicant provides a table that summarizes the various stakeholder meetings held during the proposal development process. These meetings included participation from school and community officials; educators, staff officials, state officials, and pastors and church leaders. The table provided meaningful and descriptive data that helped to justify the applicant's claims.

As it relates to collective bargaining, the evidence provided implies that the LEA does not participate in this form of representation. The applicant notes that principals at all DCS schools shared information about the development of the proposal with their staff in school-based meetings, and gathered information and ideas from the staff that informed the proposal. The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence to support that at least 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal. This evidence would have strengthened the applicant's claims.

Letters of support for Duplin Promise were collected from many institutions, agencies, organizations and businesses, including the Duplin County Board of Education, the Duplin County Board of Commissioners, Vidant Duplin Hospital, Wendell Murphy, founder and CEO of Murphy Family Farms, the Mayor of Beulaville, the Mayor of Kenansville, the Mayor of Magnolia, and the Mayor of Warsaw. Additional letters included Mike McIntyre, Member of Congress; Murphy-Brown, LLC; Jobs of the Future; and Tim Smith. Letter of support from parents and parent organizations; student organizations; early learning programs; civil rights organizations were not present.

Collectively, the applicant addressed and provided some evidence of stakeholder engagement and support. Based on the evidence provided, proposal support was not clearly demonstrated from at least 70% of teachers from participating schools. In addition, additional letters of support (ex. parents, parent organization, student organizations, etc.) would have strengthened the applicant's claims; therefore a score of 6 is given.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a table in the form of a matrix for the nine project strategies' principle impact (P) and secondary impact (S). The project strategies were created to engage and empower all learners, including high need students, in an age-appropriate manner. These include District Wide STEM Early College (Early College), Personalized Learning Environment for Students (Personalized Learning), Critical Care System for Students (Critical Care System), Creating a College-Going Culture (College Culture), Global Awareness, Birth to 4. The applicant illustrated how the strategies complemented items under C1a (i-v). Supporting details are not adequate.

The applicant also provides a table that identifies the major objectives that are associated with each of the six project strategies. For example, objectives for District-Wide STEM Early College included: Provide access for all students to post-secondary educational opportunities, aligned with their individual career goals and academic interests, prior to high school graduation; Provide students with the tools, methods and frameworks to learn how to use higher order thinking skills in collaboration to problem solve, make decisions, and evaluate results; Provide students with customized preparation towards individual career goals, with special emphasis in STEM fields. The applicant provided evidence for each strategy but does not show a clear connection how these strategies engage and empower all learners.

The goal for the District-Wide STEM Early College (Early College) project strategy is to motivate and prepare DCS students to graduate with mastery of critical academic content and develop soft skills valued by global business such as good decision making, problem solving, and teamwork skills. The STEM Early College project strategy will be implemented throughout DCS for students in high schools, middle schools, elementary schools and preschools.

The Personalized Learning Environment for Students (Personalized Learning) project strategy's long-term goal is for all students to be provided with the tools and strategies to access and experience success in a variety of learning environments. The Critical Care System for Students (Critical Care System) project strategy includes activities to build the learner's social, emotional and behavioral orientation to aspire to be a successful learner through supporting the whole person. The long-term goal for this project strategy is to build a network of needed support for learners at school, home and in the community to allow them to become self-directed learners who can use learning to manage their lives.

The Creating a College Going Culture (College Culture) project strategy goal is for all students in Duplin County to be prepared for success in a full range of postsecondary career and college options and to understand learning is key to their success in accomplishing their personalized goals. The Global Awareness project strategy is for students to have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen learning, increasing their knowledge and understanding of the impact our personal decisions have on the world.

The long-term goal for the Birth To 4 project strategy is to develop the infrastructure of community resources serving the educational, social, emotional and behavioral needs of children in the age range birth to four such that children will enter Kindergarten prepared to be successful with increased parent involvement and accountability.

According to the mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students, students will use Futures for Kids Program to initiate and update goals, goal progress and attainment of goals. Students will be offered training in a data notebook system with graphs to plot progress in reaching a goal including baseline, dates and a description of the goal. Educators will provide the practice exercises for students and parents to manage their goals over time – in notebook or digital- form as part of the academic instruction. The applicant introduces the reader of the mechanism that will train and support students understanding of tools and resources but does not provide sufficient details. More information is needed to grasp a clearer understanding of what is claimed; for example, describe the Futures for Kids Program.

Collectively, the applicant addressed each element in a general and provided some evidence but supporting details are needed to justify the claims for each component. For example, the strategies were presented and described by highlighting the strategy's objectives. The applicant provided a table to indicate how the strategy matched the elements in the question (ex. C1a i-v and C1b 1-iv) but the text to support the table did not align in some cases. Based on the evidence provided, the connection was not clear; therefore, a score of 10 is given.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>For this question, the applicant references the previous table used in C1. The table is presented as a matrix for the nine project strategies' principle impact (P) and secondary impact (S). The table illustrates how the strategies align to the Teaching and Leading bullets (i-iv).</p> <p>The applicant notes that the three project strategies described address the five domains in the Theory of Change which constitute the surrounding support environment: Collaboration, Leadership, Staff Engagement, Data Systems, and Continuous Improvement. A table describing the objectives for recruiting, retaining, and developing high effective staff members; technology and data infrastructures; and communications, accountability, and continuous improvement was included.</p> <p>The applicant mentions that Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Highly Effective Staff Members (Highly Effective Staff) project strategy principally addresses improving, individual and collective, educator effectiveness and school culture and climate through the expansion and addition of strategies proven to be successful for recruiting, retaining and developing rural district educators. The applicant also notes that DCS has developed a Curriculum Resource website specific to educators' LiveBinders, and all educators participate in professional learning communities at least once weekly. Although the evidence provided is appropriate, the applicant does not provide sufficient evidence to support these claims.</p> <p>As it relates to educators having access to and knowing how to use tools, data, and resources, the applicant describes a web-based software that will give DCS access to data that pulls together the many data sources within the district and consolidates and reports the most common and critical data elements of running a school system. Additional or supporting details were not provided to strengthen the statement.</p> <p>The applicant states that the structures are in place for DCS staff to individualize the learning environment for every student and to support students needing assistance. School-based student support teams, curriculum teams, and professional learning communities (whose effectiveness and fidelity are monitored at the superintendent level) are examples of structural practices that help DCS staff respond to the needs of every student.</p> <p>Collectively, the applicant did not provide clear and convincing evidence for several elements in this question; therefore, not providing a high quality plan as defined in the notice. The applicant provides tables, Appendix items, as support but did not clearly and adequately show the connection between the information presented in the text and the information presented in each table. There were several gaps that were not filled. As it relates to d) a plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers and principals, evidence that focuses hard to staff areas was insufficient. Overall, the response warrants a middle ranged score of 8.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As it relates to organizing the central office, the applicant plans to designate project leaders. For instance, the superintendent will function as the project lead for the overarching Communications, Accountability & Continuous Improvement project strategy. A full-time executive director will be employed on the grant who will report directly to the superintendent. Supporting the superintendent, other DCS staff serving as project leads will provide supervision to grant-funded personnel overseeing the other eight project strategies.</p> <p>The applicant provides a table illustrating the alignment of DCS staff with Duplin Promise project strategies. The reader is referred to the Appendix for an organizational chart for DCS and resumes of the identified individuals.</p> <p>All DCS schools have school improvement (leadership) teams with parent representation; all DCS schools also have student success teams. School improvement teams provide support for the school-level administration and guidance to the overall governance and operations at the school-level, and student success teams provide case management for students evidencing academic and/or social-emotional difficulties. The school principal and</p> <p>school improvement teams have authority to design the day-to-day curriculum at the school, including decisions such as how much instructional time to give reading versus math, class period lengths, start and stop times for the school day, the provision of enrichment and remediation programs, and the allocation of staffing to serve different needs at the school level.</p>		

DCS has a variety of means permitting students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than simple time in seat. Traditional scheduling, A/B scheduling, and Block scheduling in the high schools allow students to individualize their course load, creating further opportunities to take additional courses such as available at James Sprunt Community College or the nearby East Carolina University. Occupational Course of Study students take advantage of blended learning opportunities, and middle school students have gone to the high school to take classes

When it comes to giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways multiple times, the applicant cites the Common Core initiative and its three major principles: 1) Teachers present material in multiple ways so every student can learn, 2) Students have multiple ways to express learning, and 3) There are various ways for teachers to develop student engagement.

DCS produces print instructional and administrative materials in Spanish for its largest English second language (ESL) population, and communications that are sent home are sent in the native language. School district handbooks are available online and in hard copy in both English and Spanish, and the district is currently engaged in translating its board of education policies into Spanish. The district has classes specially designed for ESL students, and Spanish-speaking ESL teachers are employed in the district. SIOP professional development is provided to teachers in schools with high ESL populations. Translators/ Interpreters serve all schools to provide communication for parents and community members whose only language is Spanish or for whom their English is limited. The applicant provides sufficient evidence for this element.

Overall, the applicant provided some evidence of a quality plan and demonstrated some evidence of the practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Evidence was provided for each element. Evidence was weak as it relates to students demonstrating mastery of standards multiple ways and times. Supporting details for this area would have strengthened the claims; therefore, the score assigned was a 12.

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

10

4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DCS provides bus transportation to schools for parent workshops. The Faith-Based community sponsored Backpack Buddies program provides supplemental food for high need families. Technology available in the schools is available to all students, and parents have opportunities to make use of this technology as well. Laptops are available for checkout. ESL students have laptops and iPads available for checkout. DCS media centers provide online resources for students, teachers, and the community.

As it relates to ensuring appropriate levels of technical support, the applicant notes that professional development will be provided through the Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Highly Effective Staff Members project strategy. ESL teachers will conduct technology workshops with parents. Generally, DCS provides technical support to all schools, including college night, completing the FAFSA (workshops starting in the junior year), partnering with James Sprunt Community College and representatives from the College Fund of North Carolina.

The applicant mentions the system Home Base that will provide teachers with tools to differentiate instruction. Along with teachers, school administrators, students and parents will also have access as needed to Home Base. Another mechanism described was CEDARS is composed of various NCDPI source data collection systems, a student and staff statewide unique identification system, a centralized data repository, and associated reporting and analysis "business intelligence" tools. SAS® EVAAS™ for K-12 is a customized software system available to all NC school districts. EVAAS provides diagnostic reports quickly to district and school staff which address the question of how effective a schooling experience is. PowerSchool is a part of Home Base which is a web-based student information system, enabling school administrators and teachers to make timely decisions that impact student performance while creating a collaborative environment for parents, teachers and students to work together.

The applicant notes that DCS and no school district in the state have fully interoperable data systems. Without interoperable data systems in place, it makes it difficult to see how personalized learning would be supported.

Overall, the applicant did not provide a coherent or clear picture of how the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning. The applicant focused majority of its efforts for parents and students but provided limited evidence for how educators would be impacted. In the area of technical support, the evidence provided was inadequate. Discussing more about technical supports for parents, students, educators and stakeholders would have strengthened this section. Evidence about interoperable data systems is lacking; therefore, a score of 4 is given.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As it relates to continuous improvement process, the applicant cites and describes the six key steps of Transforming Schools: Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement, by Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004). DCS has identified and aligned itself with the core beliefs that define the culture of all of its schools. These core beliefs include the following: Equity, Teacher Excellence, Transparency as well as Creating a College Going Culture. The Theory of Change, nine project strategies and associated long-term goals and objectives described for Duplin Promise incorporate these core beliefs.</p> <p>Equity – DCS believes that every child has the right to equitable access to both high quality education as well as high quality educational resources. Teacher Excellence– DCS strives to ensure that all educators are competent, professional, of the highest quality, and empowered to lead in a way that supports the overall goal of educational transformation. Transparency– DCS is committed to ensuring that there are no hidden agendas within the goal of educational transformation or how this is achieved through the continuous improvement process. Creating a College Going Culture – DCS seeks to liaise with everyone in the community (households, businesses, community, and social institutions) to prepare children from birth to be life-long learners and to think of graduation from high school as a milestone and not a stopping point. Although evidence was provided for each of these beliefs, supporting details are needed to demonstrate a clear alignment to the proposed plans. Justification is needed in this area.</p> <p>DCS aims to continue to increase salary ranges through a combination of securing additional local funding to increase staff supplements, and instituting targeted incentives for educators. DCS prioritizes the empowerment of their teachers, encouraging them to not only provide high quality education but to be leaders and culture-shapers at the school and classroom level. DCS will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the 2013 RTTT-D program by using both formative and summative evaluation procedures. Some of the instrumentation that DCS will use within the formative evaluation will include the use of focus groups, qualitative observations, interviews and qualitative surveys.</p> <p>Collectively, the evidence provided in this section is minimal. The applicant provides evidence that needs to be justified with supporting information. The evidence lacks clarity and does not indicate who is responsible for each individual task. The goals for continuous improvement do not appear to clear or measureable. Supporting details would strengthen this element. In addition, it is not clear how, who, or when the plan will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments; therefore a score of 6 is given.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCS will utilize its public relations specialists to educate and keep stakeholders up-to-date with the progress of the 2013 RTTT-D program, and will develop all traditional methods of communication with stakeholders, including: (a) Town Hall meetings, (b) Conference presentations, (c) Webinars, (d) Websites, (e) Resources to support local presentations, as well as (f) Public service announcements.</p> <p>The advent of social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to name a few, are allowing people and organizations to communicate and engage with others more effectively and efficiently than ever before.</p> <p>Based on the evidence provided, this question is scored a 2. The applicant did not discuss in adequate details how ongoing communication and engagement would look for external and internal stakeholders. The support is minimal and does not support a high quality plan. Elements of a high quality plan are clear. More details as to how these communications would result in engagement would have been helpful and provided justification to the applicant's claims.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant notes that DCS will monitor all 12 variables identified above in the selection criteria for this Section. Examples of variables include: Grade 4 Reading End of Grade Test Proficiency, Grade 4 Mathematics End of Grade Test Proficiency, Grade 8 Reading End of Grade Test Proficiency, Grade 8 Mathematics End of Grade Test Proficiency, Algebra I End of Course Test Proficiency, High School Graduation Rate, College Enrollment Rate, Post-Secondary Degree Attainment, Number of students with Highly Effective Teachers and Principals, Developmental (Cognitive) Assessment in Pre-K, Developmental (Social/Emotional) Assessment in Pre-K, and Fitness Gram Physical Assessment for Grade 3. The guiding rationale for choosing the performance measures was based on a strategic look at key variables which can</p>		

function as leading indicators of the LEA's performance as a school district.

The applicant referred the reader to the data tables associated with the performance measures in the Appendix. Some of the data were not present (ex. performance measure (all applicants-a)). Data table 4-8 is inclusive of grades preK-13. These data were not provided by individual grade level. Attendance data for EDS, LEP, and SWD subgroups has not been traditionally tracked. Performance measure 9-12 a: the applicant noted that FAFSA data is not currently reported by subgroup.

The applicant reports that the DCS Superintendent and RTTT-D Executive Director will review the latest information available on the performance measures at quarterly intervals with the Advisory Committee and all project leads.

Based on the limited data, it was unclear if the performance measures were indeed ambitious and/or achievable. The evidence provided lacks clarity and supporting details to justify the applicant's claims. Based on the evidence provided a score of 2 is given.

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

5

0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's evidence did not clearly address the question. The applicant noted that the effectiveness of the 2013 RTTT-D program and its contribution towards the long-term livability of Duplin County citizens will become evident in the following areas: (1) Improved recruitment and retention rates of high quality, professional educators as a result of district transformation initiatives, including increasing the variety of financial incentives through supplements and other means. Reduced costs due to staff turnover; (2) A continuation of the growth recently seen in the high school graduation rate which will translate as a "return on investment;" and (3) Duplin County will liaise with institutions to monitor the migration into and out of Duplin County over the course of, and beyond the 2013 RTTT-D program implementation. It is not clear how this evidence directly addresses the question.

Based on the evidence, the applicant did not show a high quality plan or provided adequate evidence for this question. The evidence provided does not clearly align to evaluating the effectiveness of investments; therefore, a score of 0 is provided.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In table 1-1, the applicant is requesting \$5,234,8822; \$6,902,603; \$6,793,067; \$6,372,677 for years 1-4 respectively. The total requested \$25,303,229.84. This table shows the following budget categories: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, etc. The applicant did not request any support for equipment or training supplies.

In table 2-1, the applicant identifies the nine projects associated with the grant along with its budget. For example, Global Awareness is budgeted at 314,067.09 while Technology and Data Infrastructures (Infrastructures) will cost 257,508.59. The total requested for all nine projects was 19,997,155.31.

Table 3-1 shows costs associated with personnel, fringe benefits, travel equipment, for Project 1. Year 1 costs include supplies (753,700.00) and contractual (330,000.00). In years 2-4, contractual costs are a steady \$30,000. The applicant supplies a similar table for each of the projects.

The applicant also provides tables for each project depicted the budget categories (personnel, fringe, equipment, etc.) and the cost description and assumption. For example, supplies associated with the Early College project include STEM Instructional Supplies to be used during instruction (e.g. robotics, scaled acceleration vehicles, data analytics software, digital video cameras, etc.). On the tables, the applicant identifies other funding sources (state and/or local). The Birth-4; Technology and Data Infrastructures (Infrastructures); and Communications, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement (Continuous Improvement) projects did not identify any other funding sources.

Overall, the applicant did not provide sufficient or convincing evidence to support the budget proposed. Although some state and local funds were identified, several areas did not provide additional sources or a rational for it. It was not clear which funds would be one time investments or ongoing costs. A budget narrative was not provided therefore, the reader was unable to determine if the support for development was sufficient and reasonable. Therefore, a score of 4 is given.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As it relates to sustainability, the applicant notes that it will not be possible to sustain the same level of funding as was possible during the performance period of the grant due to state level budget strains. The applicant cites four components critical to sustainability: 1) Developing and implementing a sustainability plan, 2) Gathering data and making the case for support, 3) Building and sustaining stakeholder relations and partnerships, and 4) Promoting the project.</p> <p>The applicant refers to the Communications, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement project strategy which is specifically designed with sustainability in mind. Regarding promoting the project, the Communications, Accountability, and Continuous Improvement project strategy is charged with this responsibility, along with all DCS structures and staff.</p> <p>The applicant also notes that DCS will charge its unrestricted Indirect Cost rate to the grant (13.685% in 2013-14) and, if permissible by USED, we will bank half of these funds for the purpose of sustaining Duplin Promise initiatives after the grant. After four years of the grant, approximately \$900,000 in funds would be available for sustainability. This does not appear to be an ethical or allowable use of grant funds. After reviewing the FAQs, indirect costs represent the expenses related to doing business and are subject to verification of a valid indirect cost agreement.</p> <p>The applicant provides a table identifying the project, its long term goal, and the anticipated funding level for 2018-2020. The table does not identify all aspects identified on the budget table for each project. For example the Birth-4 project, the applicant notes that \$740,000 per year for staffing to operate the Early Scholars Child Development Center and \$75,000 per year needed to continue to develop collaboration relations with community and county partners. The table does not show how these will be sustained but does note an anticipated cost for three years following the grant (\$5,790,000).</p> <p>The evidence provided does not clearly or justifiably show a high quality plan of sustainability. The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence highlighting state and or local support; potential sources; how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments or use data to inform future investments. The evidence provided does not show a high quality plan as defined in the notice. Therefore, a score of 3 is given.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant notes that DCS will utilize the alliances it has formed in recent years, expanding upon them to build an overarching infrastructure that will support students from birth to college (Duplin Early College High School).</p> <p>Educational partners include the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Duplin County Head Start, and Campbell University. Other partners extend the reach of the project with career, public health, and economic resources, including Vidant Duplin Hospital, Down East Initiative, and various Duplin County agencies.</p> <p>The applicant mentions building the capacity of daycare agencies. Partners that help serve children outside the school setting with nutrition, fitness, and health services (Duplin County Health Department) will help improve outcomes for students in school; better health leads to fewer absences and fewer distractions to learning. Partners that serve students working toward graduation (e.g., business partners who provide job shadowing opportunities) will help achieve the aim that every child goes on to a postsecondary learning environment. Partners who focus on family and community supports will facilitate parents who receive a GED.</p> <p>DCS will work with its entire student body for this project—all preK-13 students enrolled in the school district. DCS will offer appropriate educational resources and materials to help centers improve education- and child development appropriate services that prepare children for Kindergarten.</p> <p>A county-wide data system will be organized to track progress toward achieving desired population results, and a school community “dashboard” will document population-level performance measures and other project results, tracking community progress toward project aims. DCS will utilize both an internal and an external evaluator. An ongoing formative evaluation will monitor project implementation and activities.</p> <p>As it relates to integration of education and other services, the applicant notes that the DCS will utilize both an internal and an external evaluator. An ongoing formative evaluation will monitor project implementation and activities. DCS will create a committee, the Duplin Promise Community Committee designed to monitor teams, services, coordination, and results.</p>		
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Overall, the applicant did not provide convincing evidence or supporting details to justify its claims. The population level desired results for students in the LEA were not supported with sufficient details. In addition, it was not evident as to how the partnership would monitor selected indicators that measure each result. The applicant addresses each component but at a minimal. Therefore, a score of 5 was given.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning; and increase the rates at which students graduate high school prepared for college.

As it relates to the data systems, DCS will take full advantage of Home Base, a statewide, instructional improvement (IIS) and student information system (IIS) for teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Regarding recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining, effective teachers and principals, the DCS will implement practices to grow and attract the best professionals for our students. As it relates to turning around low achieving schools, the applicant has identified 3 schools that fit this category. Table 1 provides a crosswalk showing the RTT-D assurances and corresponding project strategies but it is unclear how the project strategies directly build on the core assurance areas. More details are needed in this area.

The applicant describes Duplin Promise, the vision for the plan. In the Appendix the applicant describes in great detail the nine strategies along with the names of individuals leading the strategy; the objectives; best practices associated with the strategy; and major events/activities. These appendices serve as supporting documents and help the reader see the approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.

The applicant identifies and describes the major strategies guiding the project. These include a District Wide STEM Early College (Early College), Personalized Learning Environment for Students (Personalized Learning), Critical Care System for Students (Critical Care System), Creating a College-Going Culture (College Culture), Global Awareness, Birth to 4. Some evidence was provided to demonstrate how the strategies and objectives support students and educators; aligned to the college and career ready standards; accelerated student achievement; and expanded student access to highly effective teachers.

Collectively, the applicant addresses how it will build on the core assurances, support students and educators, decrease achievement gaps, increase the rates at which students graduate from high school. Although the evidence provided was minimal, it was enough to warrant a score of met for Absolute priority 1.

Total	210	106
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Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

Application #0064NC-2 for Duplin County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant briefly discusses the four major strategies that are part of its comprehensive and coherent, strategic reform that builds on the core educational assurances. However, the applicant does not describe in clarity a credible and comprehensive approach in deepening personalized learning based on common and individualized tasks. The strategies themselves are described in generalities and do not fully articulate what the approach the district plans to take in personalizing the student experience at the school level, at the grade level, or at the classroom level, and the individual level. Even though the personalized learning environment is diagrammed in the appendix, it is not specific to school or student populations at each of the participating schools, classrooms, or student population.</p> <p>The applicant insufficiently describes how the use of Instructional Rounds would be used to promote a personalized learning environment for students. That is, it is not clear how the district is organizing itself, its schools, and its teachers in actualizing Instructional Rounds nor how this specific strategy is used to advance their agenda on personalized learning. Overall for this section, the applicant inadequately described what its vision will be in supporting a personalized learning environment for its student population.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant plans to implement the reform approach for all schools in the district and includes the necessary tables that provide actual and percentage demographic data for each participant school (as found in the appendix). While the rationale to include all schools is clear, the applicant does not provide greater clarity in regards to how the personalized learning environment would be differentiated across various schools, various grades, and various student populations. For example, the applicant discusses low-performances at Warsaw Elementary School, Rose-Hill-Magnolia Elementary School, and Warsaw Middle School. It's not clear how these higher-need schools would have a differentiated approach that has been proposed by the applicant in relationship to schools that have not been identified as high-need.</p> <p>The work at grade 13 is ambitious as it considers the needs of high school students who can achieve associate degrees as part of the K-12 educational span. The approach of thinking beyond grade 12 provides a comprehensive approach targeting college and career success for students in this district considering that these students are still part of the K-12 system. That is, they are in the high school system and have the option to earn community college credit toward higher educational degree programs prior to high school graduation.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides a limited plan in describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform. The plan itself lacks clearly defined and measureable goals, a clear timeline of activities that support the seven domains of the theory of action, persons responsible for implementing each part of the seven domains of strategies and well as relationship management among each of these seven domains, and lacks a clear outline of deliverables or outcomes that would be generated over the course of the grant period. All of these parts are critical components that are needed as part of a high-quality plan in reaching the proposed student outcomes.</p> <p>The applicant does describe the strategies and rationale behind each of the seven domains that build up their theory of action. However, it is not clear how the strategies and actions specified within each domain works in supporting the other domains in ways of improving student outcomes.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>It is unclear how the district came to consensus on the targets set on each outcome. That is, the applicant has stated that</p>		

the targets proposed match that of the state requirements. It is less clear if those targets are reasonable based on historical performance and projected performance if the proposal is funded. The applicant does not provide the process of how these targets were set. Additionally, it is unclear whether these targets are reasonable because there is not enough evidence provided that the district has historically been able to meet these types of targets.

The applicant states within the application that North Carolina is both a Race to the Top state and as a state, adopted the Common Core State Standards and its associated assessments. However, the applicant does not discuss the role of Common Core State Standards and the associated assessments that may impact how the performance on summative assessments will be used over the course of the grant period. That is, the applicant does not fully describe how it plans to transition from the current system of end of course assessment to assessments that are Common Core aligned. It would be helpful to understand whether these end-of-course assessments are currently Common Core aligned or if the transition toward Common Core aligned assessments will happen during the grant period.

Even though the applicant details within the appendix tables each of the four areas as defined by the selection criteria regarding student outcomes, there is insufficient connections and relationships between how the vision and strategies of the proposal will directly result in the outcome detailed within the appendix tables.

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	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant clearly details its accomplishments and results at one turnaround high school with demonstrated student proficiency rates increasing from 38.5% to 75.1%. The applicant provides additional supporting evidence that demonstrates that it has a record of success for advancing student learning and achievement.

The applicant also highlights the growth in graduation rates between the academic years of 2010-2011 to 2011-2012. While the rate of growth is not progressive over the course of five years, the district has identified key factors that may have contributed to the large growth in graduate rates in the recent two years. These key factors identified have promising correlation to the district's identified outcomes. The factors identified are attributed to specific capacity and personnel related issues and the influx of funding from their Turnaround efforts at the school level. Many of these same factors are then used as their larger Duplin Promise proposal in scaling up these factors across all of the district's schools.

While the applicant discussed some of its notable achievements for specific subgroups in reading, math, and algebra in years of 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008, more historical data from the past four years could have been included to understand the trends across these years to date so that the notable cases mentioned are not isolated incidents in that particular year. The cases presented do not present a full picture of a clear record of success across the district over the past four years.

It is not clear whether the applicant has made student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services as described in selection criteria B1(c).

The applicant received a score of 7/15 for this selection criterion because it provided specific cases that highlighted its record of success. However, the applicant does not provide enough evidence trends that fully articulate how the district has a clear record of success over the course of four years.

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

The applicant does state that it has the capacity to provide the four categories of funding as defined by selection criterion B2. The evidence presented within the proposal provides the minimum level of transparency for each of the four categories listed. That is, the levels of expenditures are available to the public. However, the level of access for this information is more difficult for the public to access nor is there a strategic process organized to educate and engage stakeholders how and where to access this information over the course of the grant period.

The applicant states that it is "relatively easy" to produce this level of data. It is unclear what this means. The applicant

does not provide a clear and robust strategy in making this information easily accessible to the larger public.

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

10

7

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a number of conditions that enables it to act with sufficient autonomy from the state in achieving its student learning outcomes. In regards to the area of educational programs, it is not clear how the district and the state is monitoring the rigor of how each teacher "interprets" the recommended curriculum. It is not clear what additional supports the district provides to its teachers in resources such as interim benchmark assessments, how student achievement is monitored, or how interventions are designed, selected and implemented for specific student populations such as English language learners and/or students with disabilities.

While the context for the other policies regarding the tenure of principals and central office program directors give districts great autonomy in hiring and firing of district and school level personally, there needs to be greater clarity in whether this type of tenure system ultimately shows improvement in student level outcomes.

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

15

11

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant strongly details and provides evidence as to how various stakeholders were engaged in the development of this proposal. The table that detailed the description of selected meetings provided strong and clear evidence as to the range of participants involved, when the engagement took place as well as the purpose and outcomes of the engagement. Other pieces of strong evidence included the percentage of teaching staff in support of this proposal.

Even though the proposal team led by the superintendent did convene a number of advisory committees that span leadership, faith-based, parents, teachers, and student communities, it is unclear what the outcomes were in the parent and student advisory committees.

There is also a gap in the engagement timeline regarding the work that took place in 2012 and the resubmission of the intent to apply in September 2013. Nearly a year had passed since the last submission and it is not clear whether the district made significant changes to the proposal over the course of that period and if modifications were made based on changes on this year's 2013 RTTT-D criteria.

It is unclear whether the applicant has demonstrated evidence of 70% support from teachers at their participating schools as evidence of signatures of support are not present within the proposal or appendices. Additionally, it is unclear whether this district includes collective bargaining agreements with its teachers. In either case (with or without collective bargaining), the applicant has not demonstrated adequate evidence that it has evidence of direct engagement and support from this proposal from teachers.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

It is unclear what the applicant means by individualized learning plans for all learners (birth through grade 13). For example, the applicant discusses that it would provide students tools, methods and frameworks in promoting higher thinking skills but the applicant does not provide examples of what these tools, methods, and frameworks look like at the various grade levels, how these tools and resources have been developed or chosen, nor evidence of these tools to have success in similar contexts. The ideas are present, but the clarity around how the tool will be actualized in classrooms are limited and not evidenced in the proposal.

The applicant has not detailed a high-quality plan that fully clarifies key goals with measurable objectives and key deliverables that are outcomes of these activities. The objectives listed within each of the major strategies are not fully measurable. As a result, it is difficult to assess the quality of the implementation over time and enact course corrections as interim outcomes become available.

Many of the activities are proposed in unclear terms. For example, the applicant states the use of Cultural Arts performances in broadening learners' interests in other countries but does not detail the specific programs or engagements that each of the grades spans, schools, or student populations that will take part in these engagements. A secondary example in the generalities of the objectives is seen in the objective for global awareness. It is unclear what strategy the applicant will undertake in achieving this global awareness objective.

The actual instructional inputs that the applicant intends to take on are also described unclearly. For example, the applicant states a number of research-based methods that include virtual classroom opportunities, scaffolding, Common Instructional Framework integrated units, reading and writing across the curriculum, effective questioning, co-teaching and science inquiry. The strategies that are detailed within the appendix provide more thorough descriptions and best practices of the objectives, but the best practices vary in the level of clarity of descriptions. For example, the best practices as detailed in the personalized learning section of the appendix does not detail which students will receive specific services such as Future for Kids online and which staff members would be routinely monitoring data for a tiered approach to interventions.

It is not clear how each of the activities shown as part of the project strategies are connected and interrelate to one another as a comprehensive theory of action. It is not clear how all of these activities work together in creating a personalized sequence of instructional content designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals at each of the grade levels across the various school and classroom settings.

The role of parents in supporting students' access to a personalized learning environment is not fully detailed across the PreK-13 spectrum. The most promising connection related to parent involvement is well described in the Birth to 4 project strategy. Within this descriptor, the applicant provides details and evidence of how community partnerships who will work closely with families in providing early childhood needs so that students are ready when they enter PreK.

The applicant has provided a general strategy centered around a program called Future for Kids that is one of the key mechanisms in supporting students use of the tools provided for personalized learning. It's not clear how this program was chosen and whether there has been evidence of promising success with similar populations using this program. Also, it is not clear whether Future for Kids supports the work across PreK-12, or only within a specific grade span.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

It is unclear how the applicant plans to support individualized training for their educators around their three project strategies focused on supporting teaching and leading. For example, the applicant mentions the extensive professional development for teachers and administrators but does not detail out the specificities of the professional development or coaching for all teachers that would meet their needs, while at the same time, support the overall personalized learning experiences for their students. Some general details are provided within the appendix but it is not clear how the supports would differ among content area teachers, various grade spans, and teachers who work with special populations such as students with disabilities, English language learners, and other sub-populations.

The plan proposed for this selection criterion is not fully developed. For example, there's a lack of alignment between what is listed in the major activities and diagram within the strategy of recruiting, retaining, and developing highly effective staff members with associate timetable listed in the same section. Additionally, it is not clear how this strategy is fully differentiated across the PreK-12 levels across each of the school sites nor how the activities detailed within the proposal has a direct impact on students' personalized learning as defined by the applicant. The activities detailed also do not provide adequate measure of student progress toward meeting college and career-ready graduation requirements.

The applicant does not adequately provide clear evidence in meeting selection criterion C2b. The data system that is described is not clear. The applicant has not fully identified what the on-track indicators are such as grade spans and content area and it is not clear how this system interacts with the student level tools and resources that are detailed within the student learning section of the narrative and appendices. The applicant does not describe the specific types of student data this system can provide as well as how educators in the system will interact with this system over the duration of the project period to produce their desired student outcomes.

The applicant has clearly defined a teacher and school leadership evaluation criteria that has potential in creating effective learning environments for their students. Additional details in regards to how the evaluation process is directly connected to student learning outcomes would be helpful in building a clearer understanding between the process and outcomes of these evaluations to accelerating personalized learning outcomes for students.

The applicant does not explicitly detail in a high-quality plan how it plans to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. A high-quality plan would need to include specific key

goals, activities that the system would undertake and the rationale of the actions used to meet those key goals, a timetable of activities with persons responsible, and measurable outcomes. The narrative does not fully address selection criterion C2d in this regard.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The LEA central office structure is adequately detailed by the applicant in how it intends to provide support and services to participating schools. It is less clear how this team will work together over the course of the project period in a coherent and cohesive way as the project as currently organized into autonomous projects under the guidance and leadership of the superintendent. It would be helpful to understand the processes and structures that will allow these project teams to work together, communicate, and support each other as they cycle through the continuous improvement processes. Additionally, it is unclear who would serve on the advisory committee that is charged for developing the recommendations for implementing continuous improvement processes to this work.</p> <p>The applicant strongly details how the school leadership team functions and the types of flexibility it has in practices such as scheduling, course content, and school personal decisions. The applicant provides additional evidence that demonstrates that the district's school leadership teams have significant flexibility and autonomy at each of the school sites.</p> <p>The applicant details various options it has created for students to earn credit based on mastery versus seat time. However, for their example virtual programs that are listed, it is not clear whether there is full quality control for these programs. It would be helpful for the applicant to cite evidence of success in both the in-person community college or nearby East Carolina University and the virtual coursework for students who complete these programs.</p> <p>The applicant does not fully address selection criterion D1d as it did not include a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies that facilitate personalized learning. It is unclear how teachers will be presenting materials in multiple ways or how students will learn in multiple ways. It is not clear how teachers will differentiate their teaching across the various student populations with diverse needs. Additionally, the role of the NC New Schools is not clear. While the applicant lists a number of strategies that are promoted by this support provider, the strategies are not well defined and not delineated to the level of school or classroom needs.</p> <p>The applicant provides adequate learning resources accessible to all students. The strategies and activities that are detailed in this section are not exemplary strategies tailored to the personalized needs for students with disabilities and English learners. The accommodations listed are fairly standards and meet most minimal requirements required by state and federal law and do not necessary accelerate learning for students in this subpopulation in a personalized manner.</p> <p>The applicant mostly focused on the activities and rationale, which are components of a high-quality plan. However, other major components were not well evidenced in the proposal. These components include key measurable goals, timeline of work for each activity, responsible parties for each line of work, and key deliverables generated through the activities.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Some of the strategies listed by the applicant for selection criterion D2a support all students to have access to the tools for personalized learning as defined by the applicant. These examples include technology tools that are available for checkout by students and parent resources centers that are available for use by families. It would be helpful to understand if these strategies have been effective in their implementation to date and how the district is going about improving the access rates so that 100% of students have the resources they need in achieving the district's student outcomes.

A number of activities are listed in supporting selection criterion D2b. It is unclear how comprehensive these activities are across the district's schools at the various grade spans. The engagement, support, and needs may vary and the applicant does not fully address how these activities meet identified needs across the district's school populations.

A number of information technology systems are listed in supporting selection criterion D2c. It is unclear what the usage of

these systems has been by various uses as well as evidence of its effectiveness for users. It is unclear how all of these systems will work together in allowing parents and students to export their information and what the timeline of work will be for the state in pulling all of these facets together in a comprehensive and comprehensible system for students and families.

The applicant mostly focused on the activities and rationale, which are components of a high-quality plan. However, other major components were not well evidenced in the proposal. These components include key measurable goals, timeline of work for each activity, responsible parties for each line of work, and key deliverables generated through the activities.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant does not detail a high-quality plan in implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. Even though the applicant describes the theory behind their approach to continuous improvement, the plan lacks details that are necessary as part of a comprehensive plan for improvement. That is, the goals listed are not clear as they are listed as core beliefs and vision statements. While these beliefs and vision statements provide guidance for goal development, they are not measurable goals in themselves. The activities that are listed are provided in isolation and are not well connected to the core values and the activities are not part of any timeline of work that allows team members to work within the cycles of continuous improvement. There is an overall lack of clarity as to how this plan will monitor, measure, and publicly share information regarding the quality of its investments and progress toward student outcomes. It is also unclear who will be responsible for each of this work as there are a number of activities that are listed in supporting its continuous improvement processes.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides a weak plan in how it plans to provide ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Much of the activities listed are more broadcast outlets that provide dissemination efforts by the one public relations (PR) specialist. It would be helpful to understand how this PR specialist interacts with the rest of the RTTT-D implementation team and how the members of the RTTT-D Duplin Promise team works together in a coherent way in communicating and engaging with relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the applicant needs to provide a clear timeline of work with specific deliverables as applicable as part of a comprehensive plan for communications and engagement.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant does not provide clear rationale as to how and why the specific performance measure have been selected as part of its larger theory of action toward personalized learning for all students. The plans for selecting and revising measures are vague for measures of social-emotional well-being. The progress monitoring for these measures should be focused at the activity level, rather than investigating the measure itself. That is, the applicant is basing the continuous improvement progress on the sensitivity of the measure, rather than the underlying factors that are contributing the outcomes of the measure.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities. A</p>		

high-quality plan needs to include key goals, activities aligned to these key goals, rationale behind the selection and design of activities, key deliverables, timeline of work for activities, and persons responsible for each of these activities.

The applicant provides three specific activities that it will undertake and short rationale for each of these activities. As a result, the applicant received a low score of 1/5 for this selection criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>In addition to providing the budget tables found mostly in the appendix, the applicant doesn't provide a full narrative in how the funds are to be used across the various priority areas in supporting personalized learning. Even though the applicant identifies all the funds that will support the project, the cost descriptions and assumptions listed within the project budget tables do not provide adequate rationale as to many of the contractual costs associated with the project. For example, within the District-Wide STEM Early College project and Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Highly Effective Staff Members project, the applicant has not identified the process by which learning vendor contracts that it plans to use. Consequently, it is unclear how the team will evaluate the effectiveness and quality of service providers and assess the contractors' impact over the course of the project period. In another case under the project of Global Awareness, only 24 students will be able to participate in the student study trips. It is unclear how these 24 students will be selected and what the outcomes of the trips would be.</p> <p>It is not clear how the applicant plans to address selection criterion F1c(ii). It is unclear how the funds are allocated for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. The applicant also does not detail strategies in ensuring long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments for its students.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The stated plan of utilizing half of the proposed indirect costs to be invested in the sustainability efforts beyond the project period is unreasonable. This is not an allowable use of federal funds. The applicant does not have a high-quality plan that can ensure that it can support its work beyond the project period. The estimated budget for three years following the grant is well detailed and provides adequate cost projections into the future. There are not systems or structures that are detailed that will allow the applicant to evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes.</p> <p>The applicant only states the activities and the key goal of raising specific funds it plans to undertake to sustain the viability of the project activities three years beyond the grant. It does not include a timeline of work, persons responsible, key deliverables or major milestones in fundraising efforts that are all key components of a high-quality plan.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The applicant provides a number of stable and ongoing partnerships that support its overall plan for personalized learning for its student populations. These partnerships include the local community college, a STEM Affinity Network, and other local universities. Each of the organizations mentioned are connected to an area of work that has been described as one of the project components in the applicant's theory of action. 2. The population-level desired results are clearly detailed in the tables attached and are well described in the narrative 		

regarding the metrics and rationale for their selection.

3. The applicant has not addressed selection criterion 3a-d. Information regarding how each of the identified partnerships plans to track selected indicators (part a), use data to target its resources (part b), develop a strategy to scale the model beyond participating students (part c), and improve results over time (part d) have not be explicitly addressed within the narrative pertaining the partnership arrangements that are listed.

4. It is unclear how the partnerships as identified in section 1 of competitive priority section criterion relates to the CDS Child Family Services Teams that are working to integrate education and other services for students across the district's schools.

5. The applicant discusses two key partnerships, the Health Department and Youth Truth in how it collects data and assesses needs within their domain of work. However, the applicant does not fully address the other sub-criteria (C, D, and E) listed within part 5 of this competitive preference priority. That is, it is not clear what the decision-making process and infrastructure will be for the supports provided (part c), how parents and families of participating students would be engaged through the collaborative nature of the partnership (part d) and how it plans to routinely assess the partnership's progress toward maximum impact (part e).

6. While the applicant identifies and describes briefly the desired results for students, it is not clear how these annual outcomes have been set and whether they are achievable based on both historical performance and activities proposed by the applicant.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Based on the full proposal and all supplementary documents submitted by the applicant, the applicant has not met this absolute priority. The presentation of the personalized learning environment was not coherent nor comprehensive in the strategies presented. It is unclear how each of the schools and various grade spans would actualize a personalized learning environment so that it meets the academic needs of each student and builds the capacity of the system of educators to support that type of personalized learning. The strategies provided are described in generalities and doesn't clarify how the work is differentiated at the grade level, the school level, and/or the content area level for students. The use of technology and the technological tools to support student learning is not comprehensive across all schools, all grades, and across the content areas. As a result, it is unclear how the proposed work would accelerate student achievement and deepening student learning system-wide in meeting the academic needs of each student, increase the effectiveness of educations, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	93
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0064NC-3 for Duplin County 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 District sets forth a moderately strong coherent and comprehensive vision for reform. The District's description of its reform program includes compelling language, but little substance as to how these reforms will materialize. Though the District addresses the core educational assurance areas, by agreeing to adopt State Standards, using a data systems, and recruiting and retaining effective educators, the individualized, personalized student support is lacking. And the goals described as clear and credible are merely a restating of the States goals, showing very little District specificity. Additionally, within the question, the District does not describe the classroom experience other than stating students are "expected to read, write, think and talk in every classroom every day." This is a low bar to set and not specifically personalized. Additionally, the Districts offers that "teachers are facilitators as students create products of learning utilizing personal learning devices," yet never articulates actual individualize learning environments taking into account student need, interest, or ability. Though the District should be rewarded for implementing district-wide Early College programs, adopting mandated state standards and having students "think" everyday is not a high-quality reform vision.

5

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District has decided to include all of its schools in the program and thus meets the criteria fully for this section.

a) The District has decided to include all students. This dovetails nicely with both an argument of access and equity, but also for the project as a whole because the programs included in the plan include birth-4, early college, and many other programs supporting the inclusion of all students. Since the program is to reach all students of all ages, the Districts decision to include all schools make sense and thus their "selection process" of including all the District schools is consistent with their plan.

b) The list is provided

c) The total number of students is provided.

10

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

10

4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The District presents a well thought out plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up. However, if this plan will lead toward meaningful reform is less clear. The theory of change advocated by the District for the proposal's idea to be disseminated is centered on the idea that "collaboration among school and community agencies is essential." Within this collaboration are all the parts of the school community, from families, to students, to educators. However, how these groups will work together is not described, nor is the theory of change fleshed out in any meaningful way. The assumption that these areas of collaboration will lead toward improving student outcomes via personalized student learning environments is not supported by actual programs or policies, but merely a belief that they will.

However, the District's outcome goals are clear and cogent, but how the District plans on achieving them is empty. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace is to be supported by the District's project for a district-wide early college program, (a high quality, clear ideal) personalized learning environment for students (not supported by explanation) creating a college-going culture (not explained). Even worse is the Districts response to "building data systems that measure student growth" is "Technology and Data Infrastructures." This is not a "project strategy" and though the District emphasizes that the theory of change component of creating "data systems to guide learning and teaching" will lead toward this goal, how that happens is left to the readers imagination.

This not emblematic of a high-quality answer.

4

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Because the District fails to present a full, robust, and high-quality vision, results in improves student learning and performance are suspect. However, the goals for improved student outcomes articulated in the proposal seem ambitious

yet achievable if the plan works as intended.

Some of the data presented is concerning and draws into question the Districts adherence to the rubric. For instance, this District chose to use proficiency outcomes rather than growth measures for determining growth. Additionally, the comparisons between the gap between Black students and White students in all of the metrics provided is the highest for any race subgroup, and usually more than 20 points difference, yet the Black graduation rate is 12 points higher than Hispanic and almost 5 points higher than ED, and only 1.5 points lower than White students. These numbers seem to tell very divergent stories.

Furthermore the college enrollment data seems to not make any sense. The District stipulates that the overall college enrollment rate is 14.2%, yet its racial subcategories are 6.6%, 0.2%, and 5.9% respectively. It is but worrying that the District has a 0.2% college enrollment rate for their Hispanic population and unbelievable that the District's goal of increasing it by 50X is achievable.

There are serious questions about the data as well as the achievability of some of the goals.

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	4
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District is able to highlight some impressive evidence of success in moving student learning such as increasing the graduation rate and in closing the achievement gap. But a closer look at the proposal shows much of the "success" is not as defined by the question, but as defined by the District.</p> <p>For instance, the District touts developing and strengthening partnership as a success, but does not link these success to student achievement. The student data presented, in the "School turn-around" section of the District's response highlights the vivid success of one high school which increased the proficiency rates from 38.5% to 75.1% A laudable action. However, that is where the student improvement data ends. The rest of the section speak to using the lessons learned at this one school to translate into success at others, but no track record of success at any other school is mentioned.</p> <p>The one shining light of student success trumped by the District is the increase of the graduation rate from "around 70%" to 80.7% in one year. However, this is not a "track record" of success but one year increase. The graduation rate had decreased the last two years before.</p> <p>Additionally, the District makes very little mention of specific reforms in persistently low performing schools and makes no mention of making student performance data available to any stakeholder.</p> <p>Having failed to address two of the three subsections in any through way, this response is low-quality.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District states that it will be able to produce the data requested in B(2) quickly and publicly, however it says the District "has not heretofore developed the media outlets for publishing these data." Thus, there is little evidence to show that the District has in fact created a high level of transparency. What they have done is made it accessible to others. In fact, through a request, the local newspaper has created a searchable database for salaries of teachers. However, this is not the District, but the newspaper making it transparent.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District seems to follow standard school district policies and protocols. According to the proposal, "DCS has three entities to answer to . . . the State, the Federal government, and the County Commissioners." The District can devise, "the day-today curriculum and sets the pace for achievement." The District stipulates that it has "much autonomy" when it comes to community relations. However, in all the cases of articulated autonomy, there does not seem to be any special autonomy, but the District seems to have the ability to implement the District's plan. Since the District's plan does not fully create a personalized learning environment the lack of autonomy or successful conditions are relatively mute.</p>		

Thus the District receives a score in the middle range, for having the conditions to a plan that will not sufficiently produce personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The District has attempted to create meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

Students, families, teachers and principals were engaged by attending meetings where the proposal was discussed. However, many of these meetings seemed to be unidirectional, with information about the program being disseminated but no real engagement throughout the development. An example would be at the school level, principals played a podcast describing the proposal and then staff was asked to vote to support or not. This is not meaningful engagement. At no time was there a description of how the staff members were able to offer suggestions and how those suggestions would be taken into account.

Additionally, another example of engagement of different stakeholders is the superintendent's advisory committee which had representatives from business leaders, faith-based organizations, parents, teachers, and students. But at no point does the proposal suggest that this group helped to shape the proposal nor incorporate the ideas of their representative constituencies.

Lastly, the District submits a list of meetings held with different parts of the District and different stakeholders, but yet again, the meetings held were to "hear a presentation about RTTT-D" or people "listened to a presentation describing the RTTT-D grant" and asked how they could help it succeed.

Meaningful support of the proposal seems to exist, but engagement of stakeholders does not seem to have occurred in the district.

The District does present a series of letters of support from a wide-range of stakeholders. This is again an indication of meaningful support of the proposal.

Since the District does not have collective bargaining, the 70% support from teachers threshold, as stipulated by the grant, must be met. The District states, "there was an overwhelming show of support, with more than 70% of educators across the district being supportive." The District's evidence is a "Staff Approval Summary" sheet that states out of 710 voting staff, 646 or 91% voted in support. There is not much explanation to the "Staff Approval Summary" but there is some recognition of the over 70% margin of support.

Because of the great support of the program, but little evidence of meaningful engagement, this answer scores in the middle range.

8

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The District attempts to create a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support they need to graduate college and career ready. The District attempts to do this by creating nine project strategies which "collectively provide for a high quality and comprehensive plan for improving learning, teaching, and leading." However, many of the projects do not address individualize or personalize learning, but merely the access to better and deeper instruction. Though the District should be lauded for its focus on increasing the rigor of instruction, most of the projects suggested do not address the definition of high-quality as per this question.

For instance, the District has created a district-wide early college model, where students will have access to college classes. This is commendable and rigorous, but does not mean that the instruction is individualized or that the work required is personalized in any way. In fact, a college class is typically emblematic of the most impersonalized education.

Another project described is "Personalized Learning Environments for Students." Now granted, this is supposed to be the underlying premise for all projects as per the question, yet the District has it as one of nine different projects. Additionally, this project is described in terms of what will happen, that the District will "continue to work toward implementation." There is no description of personalized lessons, pedagogy, instruction or the like. The District talks about technology and "exploring a plan" to increase connectivity, but the instruction is described as using "Future for Kids" to monitor their own learning. This project is not focused on actually creating a personalized learning environment for students. Though the District states that it has "identified successful learning environments for at-risk students" it hasn't described them or shown how the teaching is individualized.

The "Critical Care System for Students" is a commendable effort to take into account the social and emotional needs of the students. While the "Global Awareness" project "embeds activities" for students to have "access and exposure to diverse cultures." The "Birth to 4" project seems like a program to support the growth of the youngest members of the District, yet the strategy seems to be to "collecting and updating" data from different county agencies. The District talks about early intervention as a way to serve the young population. The examples given is to expand "professional development with daycare and family home care providers" as well as coordinating with the College Culture project through "emphasizing STEM content." Additionally, the "Parent University" which is part of the College Culture project will provide health and wellness education programs.

As part of the proposal, the District does have a software system where students will be able track and manage their learning. The District also plans to allow for students who are not comfortable in the digital space to have a data notebook. The District also describes that it will "provide the practice exercises for students and parents to manage their goals over time."

The District's response to his question is of middle-quality. It mentions many programs, some of which lead directly to the subcategories of the prompt, such as access and exposure to diverse cultures. There are also programs such as the "Twilight School" which allow students to go to school at night and work during the day. But there is lacking a true conversation about the instructional approaches, environments, methods that are a crucial part of the needed response of a high-quality answer.

12

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District's response to the Teaching and Learning attempts to address all aspects of the question by describing lofty ideals but little substantive blueprints as to how the District will reach these ideals.

For instance, in responding to how educators are engaged in training and in professional teams or communities that support their individual and collective capacity, the District states that it has three main strategies: "Recruiting, retaining, and Developing Highly Effective Staff Members" Technology and Data Infrastructures, and Communications, Accountability and Continuous Improvement." However in the explanation of these programs, there is not much substance. The District states that it "has provided extensive professional development for teachers and administrators." What that professional development consists of is not described. The only substantive explanation is that the District "plans to seek ways to provide extended employment for teachers and assistant principals at all schools." And that the District has created curriculum and pacing guides for the new state standards.

The subsections of supporting the effective implementation of personalized learning environments, adapting content and instruction to engage in common and individual tasks in response to students academic needs, academic interest and optimal learning approaches, frequent measurements of student progress, and improving teachers and principals practice and effectiveness all seem to be glossed over and left completely unaddressed.

For section C(2)b, asking for all participating educators to have access to and know how to use tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress, the District's response explores the use of "Home Base" a web-based software that gives the District "access to data" Though the District states that with this system, district personnel can "easily view trends and outliers" to "pinpoint problems," it is unclear as to how teachers are and can use this system. Additionally, high-quality learning resources nor matching student needs are discussed in any real manner.

For section C(2)c, asking for all participating school leaders to have training, policies, tools, data, and resources, that enable them to structure an effective learning environment, the story is similar. The District's response says that there are "structures in place" to individualize the learning environment, such as school-based support teams, curriculum teams, and PLCs, but does not mention what they do, how they interact, or how these lead toward effective learning environments. The District does mention that it differentiates learning and provides "enrichment and intervention for each student regardless of need." The District does seem to have a robust teacher evaluation system that will help.

The District's answer to C(2)d seems to discuss many ideas not pertinent to the question. The section asks the District to speak about increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers. Yet, the District's answer explores communication plans about the project and using data driven decision making. Teacher effectiveness is not mentioned once in the entire section.

The District fails to make a compelling argument for a high-quality plan in this sections. Major areas are left unexplored or given cursory responses.

8

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	8
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The District does a commendable job in structuring its resources and rules to meet the needs of students. The District has multiple project leaders for their nine projects all seemingly with authority to make structural changes if need be. Additionally, all schools in the district have a mechanism to allow for a significant amount of autonomy and flexibility on the school level. For instance the school principal and school improvement teams (comprised of teachers and parents) can "design the day-to-day curriculum" including "instructional time" per subject, "start and stop times for the school day, the provisions of enrichment and remediation program, and the allocation of staffing to serve different needs at the school level."</p> <p>However, in the response to D(1)c, the District fails to fully answer the question. The topic asks for "giving students the opportunity to progress" based on mastery and not seat time. The most of the examples the District gives to answer this question: block scheduling, AP classes, and taking college classes, all are still based on seat-time and completing the work. The example of of online learning (which still might be seat time based) is for "extra credit" not part of the school day. Even the idea of promoting students early, if they have mastered the content, still leads the student to another grade where seat time controls the program.</p> <p>The District does respond to D(1)d with strong rhetoric for giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The District states that "teachers present material in multiple ways," that "students have multiple ways to express learning", and "there are various ways for teachers to develop student engagement." However, the only examples of these three very important ideals is that the District has "developed curriculum guides aligned to new standards" and that the District has offered professional development in the area of differentiation, authentic assessment, multiple intelligences, and other important pedagogical strategies. But again, there is no explanation or examples of how this is happening in the classrooms or schools.</p> <p>For D(1)e the District states that it prints instructional and administrative materials in Spanish and communications are sent home in native language. District handbooks are available online. The District also has classes specially designed fro ESL students. The Districts response to this question seems to be its ability to follow education law by providing services for students with disabilities or ELLs.</p> <p>The District's response to this question is of middle quality because it does not address the heart of the questions concerning personalize learning that is individualize for the student, but it does have structures and protocols in place to move the District forward.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

- a) The District buses parents to workshops. Food is provided for high needs families. Technology is available to all students and can be used by parents as well, including checking out laptops. The District has two parent resource centers and a mobile parent center. These are wonderful examples of supporting the community but does not truly address the question of leading toward a high-quality plan for individualized student learning
- b) ESL teachers conduct technology workshops for parents. The District provides technical support to all schools. The District's middle schools provide parents with information about options for their children. Again, this answer is commendable for the support of the stakeholders but does not address how this will lead toward the high-quality plan.
- c) The District has access to an incredibly amount of data from Home Base, CEDARS, EVAAS, PowerSchool, and NCEdCloud. These programs are of high quality and allow for stakeholders to support the learning needs of the students.
- d) The District "does not currently have fully interoperable data systems."

The District seems to have in place many good programs and systems, but the explanation of how these will lead toward student success is vague. The District also does not describe a full articulation of how it will support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need. The District has strategies and ideas but do not tie them together in a comprehensive way, nor address all aspects of a "high-quality" plan. Thus the response receives a middle score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The District has implemented a "rigorous continuous improvement process" This process includes "ensuring that there is a shared vision and building readiness to achieve that vision." The District then cites research on best practice for continuous improvement including a six step model for continuous improvement. These six steps serve as a strong guideline for the District to move forward. Additionally, the District will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the RTTT-D program by "using formative and summative evaluation procedures." These will include "focus groups, qualitative observations, interviews and quality surveys." The instruments used for the summative evaluation will include "performance objectives, population-level variables, and on-track indicators." The District will also "publicly share" the information.</p> <p>The weakness of this section lies in the details. It is not explored how the information will be publicly shared, nor how the actual feedback loop will work. However, the theory of action for continuous improvement as well as the actions which undergird the theory of action are strong and should lead toward a continuous improvement process.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <p>District will use its public relations specialist to educate and keep stakeholders up-to-date. The District will use: Town Hall meetings, conference presentations, webinars, websites, resources to support local presentations and public service announcements.</p> <p>The District has a robust plan to communicate to, but not necessarily with the community. There is little discussion about actual engagement or any kind of feedback loop. Thus the plan is strong on communication, weak on engagement and thus is in the middle range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Performance measures</p> <p>The District does a strong job in creating ambitious yet attainable performance measures which give a wide-range of data</p>		

points. However, some of these performance measures do not have baseline data or could not be "disaggregate by subpopulation" and thus cause the ability for the District to track this data over time into question.

- a) The rationale for picking these measures, because they are "leading indicators of our performance," is an acceptable answer.
- b) The measures dovetail with the over-all structure of the proposal.
- c) Review and improvement will be done quarterly with the Superintendent, Ex Director of RTTT-D, and the Advisory Committee.

The biggest and most worrying issue is that data for the performance measure looking at the District as a whole: The number and percentage of participating students (as defined in this notice), by subgroup (as defined in this notice), whose teacher of record (as defined in this notice) and principal are a highly effective teacher (as defined in this notice) and a highly effective principal (as defined in this notice); and the number and percentage of participating students (as defined in this notice), by subgroup (as defined in this notice), whose teacher of record (as defined in this notice) and principal are an effective teacher (as defined in this notice) and an effective principal (as defined in this notice) is completely blank.

Though the measures are good and the rationale for picking them is sufficient, the lack of baseline data for the teacher effectiveness piece draws the entire section and to some extent the entire proposal into question.

2

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The District's attempts to articulate its approach to continuously improve its plans to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of RTTT-D funded activities such as professional development and activities that employ technology. Their description of this approach is to "show an overall increase in the livability and the quality of education for citizens" over the long-term. This will "become evident" with "improved recruitment and retention rates of high quality educators. The District also answers about evaluating the effectiveness of the activities by seeing a "continuation of the growth" in high school graduation rates. And lastly, the District states that it will "liaise with institutions to monitor migration into and out of" the District. The District's explanation does not seem to actually address the question. This is not a plan to evaluate. It is a list of hoped for outcomes. Thus this is a low quality answer.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a) The District identifies all funds that will support the project. The budget is broken down into component parts with each separate project having a published proposed budget. Additionally, the District shows which projects receive moneies from outside the grant and where they come from.

b) The budgets are reasonable and sufficient to support the different projects which are part of the proposal

c) Throughout the proposal the District has provided its rationale for why these projects are important and will lead toward student success. However, the budget section does not include a rationale for the specific investments. Additionally, the differentiation of one-time vs ongoing operational costs can be infered from the detailed budget but are not clearly stated.

With a strong and compelling budget, but submitted without a rationale focusing on the actual fiscal decision, the score of this section is in the middle.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District is aware that without the RTTT-D funding it will be difficult to sustain all of the programs that the District proposes. However, the District believes that it can "sustain" the program "beyond the grant's 4-year" period.

The District describes the cost and needs of each of the projects and how it will sustain them after the RTTT-D funds are gone. The District's explanation is compelling and strong, but not allowable under the RTTT-D guidelines. The District's idea is to charge an indirect rate of 13.685% for the grant and then "bank" this money. The approximately \$900,000 the District will "earn" will then be spent after the grant is over. Though this is not sustainable for the long run, this will help. The District also offers that they will create "new revenue streams" and reallocate existing funds. How that will be accomplished is not discussed other than by writing new grants.

The concern of the section is that the answer for sustainability rests on raising more money when the grant is over, rather than on creating projects that can be self-sustaining or ways in which the District can support it under the current budget.

Because of these faults, it is unclear if the projects are truly sustainable after the grant. Giving the District the benefit of the doubt that they can raise the money through other grants is acceptable, but not high-quality and thus the section receives a middle score.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1) The District articulates a strong description of the coherent and sustainable partnership it has created to support the plan described. The District has partnered with the local Community College to support its Early College program. It has partnered with the local hospital to support the Critical Care System for Student Success. Almost every one of the nine projects is supported by a robust partnership. These partnerships have allowed for the District to actually expand its reach from birth to 21 year olds.

2) The District has created nine population-level desired results. The District interprets population-level as everyone in the district. It is unclear if that is the meaning of the question, but the District should be commended for being inclusive. These nine desired results however are very vague and not high-quality. For instance one of the groups is ages 5-18 and the desired result is "improved behavior" The definition or the tangible goals of this is not explained. Grade 12 "increased access to college," though a laudable goal, there is no clarity of meaning. No data point, no goal, no real results.

3) The Data accumulation, analysis, use, and growth by the partnerships is mainly rolled into how the District will use the data. The explanation of "we monitor" results focuses on what the District will do and not the partners or even the partnerships collectively. Though the creation of the county-wide data system is laudable and could be used to "track progress toward achieving desired population results," the District does not really show how the partnership would do this.

4) The partnerships described by this section of the answer seem to be District employees, which goes against the perceived meaning of the question. District "Child Family Service Teams, consisting of full-time nurse and social worker, assure that students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs" are addressed. These team members are District employees and not part of the larger partnership as described throughout the proposal. Though the answer given by the District does not seem to fulfill the question, previous indications of partnership would and could be strong answers to this question.

5) The District uses a series of avenues to build the capacity of staff. For example the District uses surveys designed to "ensure that classrooms have the supportive environment" needed to lead to student success. The County Health Department "conducts periodic analysis of community assets. The District also will host Town Hall meetings to engage parents.

6) The District answers this section by stating that the data for population-level measures are readily available as are the goals. The District then lists a series of web-sites where the data can be found.

This is a middle-quality answer based on the strength of the actual partnership and the work they do. This is not a high-quality response because the description of the programs and the answers to the questions posed are vague and poorly supported.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
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Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District meets the absolute priority. The nine projects illuminated and explored throughout the proposal will lead the District toward improving learning and teaching. Early College programs are a strong way to increase college readiness. The Global Awareness project is a good way to increase understanding and acceptance. The strong recruiting, retaining, and developing staff programs described in the proposal will lead toward a more effective teacher pool.</p> <p>The concern with this proposal is the lack of deep insight into curriculum and pedagogy. The District says that it will personalize the education of each student, but the examples of that, such as AP classes, or different bell schedules are not considered high-quality way to achieve that personalization.</p>		

Total	210	105
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