



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0068IL-1 for East St. Louis School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 clearly articulates a comprehensive reform model that encompasses the four core academic areas. The district proposes to integrate *Achieving Academic Gold*, a comprehensive set of reforms within a larger set of reforms designed to improve one of the lowest performing school districts in the State of Illinois. The district created a five-year strategic plan that includes a new cohesive curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards and incorporating data driven decision making processes throughout the district. Additionally, ESLSD189 also adopted nine research-affirmed mathematics instructional practices, an updated science curriculum, the American Diploma Project Network that allows alignment of standards and assessments with postsecondary education and employers and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) in English and Mathematics. The PARCC assessment system will notify the district of postsecondary success, gaps, and solutions both prior to students attending college or the workforce. If implemented with fidelity, these standards and assessments will prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace in a global economy. This turnaround strategy builds on current research and on practices currently underway in the district from other grant sources. If implemented appropriately and consistently, the strategies should be highly effective in the district because the focus is on professional development, technology practices and improved teaching strategies in the classroom.

ESLSD189 is developing the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), a data system designed to measure student success. ISLE supports the Pre-K through career personalized learning environment by providing an online platform that integrates student data with instructional learning resources for teachers aligned with the CCSS. The district will utilize an integration model with its data using data dashboards and learning maps that will allow educators to better connect with its students individually.

Additionally, a local plan provides schools with technology, training, and support for integrated student data collection, reporting, and analysis systems. As a result of this data system, teachers and principals will be informed about ways that they can improve instruction and on student growth and success.

The district has adopted the CCSS aligned Charlotte Danielson evaluation model for principals and teachers. This model includes student growth as a focus and will be used to evaluate teachers in planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Likewise, ESLSD189's hiring plan identifies and hires highly qualified and competent teachers and administrators including those participating in a *Grow Your Own, Transition to Teaching program, and DOE School Leadership Grant*. Hence, because the district strategically targets a plan to hire and train the best teachers over a period of time, utilizing the proposed evaluation model and recruitment plan, this clearly show its commitment to recruiting and retaining effective teachers where the need is the greatest.

Furthermore, since *Achieving Academic Gold's* focus will be on professional development, instructional coaching, transforming school culture and climate, improving literacy, integrating a STEM focus throughout the grades, and incorporating instructional technology to personalize learning, the district provides sufficient evidence of its record of low performance and a focus on turning around lowest-achieving schools.

ESLSD189 proposes a vision to accelerate student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity through a personalized learning environment that vertically aligns other reform measures by focusing on culture and climate, teacher and leader professional learning capacity building, technology driven instruction, STEM learning, literacy enrichment, and community support. The district proposes a feasible approach to increase equity through personalized student support by vertically integrating and demonstrating reforms such as those listed above. If the reform activities are implemented with fidelity, the impact of such practices should result in deepening student learning.

Finally, through the *Achieving Academic Gold* initiative teachers will have the preparation and self-efficacy to teach a CCSS based curriculum, to use new instructional technologies, and to incorporate literacy reforms and inquiry-based STEM

learning into the classroom. As a result, students will receive hands-on inquiry based technology rich instruction as part of their classroom experiences, thus increasing the likelihood of college and career ready success. Therefore, based on the information above, the district's focus on the four educational core areas appear feasible because it includes a comprehensive approach to addressing standards and assessments, data systems that measure growth, recruitment and retention of staff, and turning around lowest-achieving schools.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189's innovative approach to implementation includes all schools in the district serving high-need students in grades kindergarten through high school. No further explanation is provided or needed on a specific process for selection of schools since the district proposes to target all schools. A list of all participating schools is included along with the number of participating students from low-income families at 5,804, the number of participating students who are high-need students at 5,971, and the number of participating educators at 348. Therefore, this list clearly identifies specific student groups by high needs and low-income populations as well as the number of participating students.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189's reform proposal targets personalized learning for all students in the district with the goal of creating meaningful reform district wide. Through the logic model *Achieving Academic Gold*, activities are clearly identified as project outputs and deliverables are included in theory of change. The timeline for all schools, students, teachers, and leaders will be for one year. This vague description clearly confirms that details of a specific timeline are not provided in this proposal. If the district proposes to include all of its schools in the grant program, it does not have to include evidence of how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaning reform to support district wide change beyond participating schools. Therefore, with the entire district participating, it appears somewhat likely that this plan will result in district wide reform and improve learning outcomes for most students who participate in the strategic activities outlined in this proposal.

The district provides a high quality plan that relates to district wide reform including rationale for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to support a personalized learning environment that should result in improved academic achievement for all students in the district. However, the timeline is limited to service during year one and is therefore not sufficient for LEA reform.

Overall, this places ESLSD189 in the upper middle range.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 notes goals that are ambitious by building capacity in leaders and educators, updating the curriculum, instituting new assessments and improved data collection and analysis. Additionally, the goals included as appropriate are based on state identified targets. Likewise, the district's ambitious goal to increase equity among some high-need students, particularly males, females and IEP students, results in targeting improved student learning through incremental growth on assessments. For example, ESLSD189 proposes growth on end of course assessments (NWEA) and locally created benchmark assessments from at least 15 % to 85 % by the end of the grant period. Although this may be achievable in some cases, it is unlikely that growth will occur at the proposed rate for all students at all schools. Likewise, the district expects to narrow student achievement gaps in annual increments from 79% to 0% until the end of the grant period. Again, this may be achievable in some cases and at some schools, however it is unlikely that this growth will occur at the proposed rate for all students. Similarly, goals for increasing the graduation rate are from 42% to 92% after the grant period ends. This goal may be achievable in limited cases but it is unlikely that this growth will occur at the anticipated rate for all students. The district proposes to increase college enrollment rates from 59% to 80%. Similarly, this may be achievable in some cases for some students, however it is unlikely that this goal will be achieved for all students. Since ESLSD189 has undergone several reform measures including new executive level staff in the past two years, with the full implementation of the *Achieving Academic Gold*, initiative, these goals should result in improved student learning and performance as well as increase equity in the district. However, it is questionable if the goals can be achieved

by all students at all schools based on the district's track record of low performance and large margin of increases needed by the end of the grant period.

Overall, this places ESLSD189 in the mid middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 strongly anticipates a record of success in the next four years with the hiring of a turnaround Superintendent, but reports limited evidence of success over only the past two years. For example, ESLSD189 details that academic reforms have focused on professional development for teachers and principals in content and rigorous instruction that resulted in the district receiving a ranking of *Strong* in this area on the evidence-based 5essential instrument. During his limited tenure, the Superintendent has implemented numerous changes designed to improve student achievement such as hiring highly qualified teachers, restructured the pre-K and summer school programs, implemented a comprehensive professional development program, designed a teacher evaluation process that measures student growth and increased Advanced Placement (AP) offerings.

Likewise, the new superintendent has had success in a previous district in closing achievement gaps, including raising student achievement, increasing high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates, but little evidence is provided to support these results at ESLSD189.

Although the upper management team has had success in previous districts in achieving ambitious and significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving schools and have implemented reforms such as a freshman transition program, parental and community involvement programs, a Comprehensive Community and Parental Engagement Plan and academic development, it is likely that these practices will result in success but the evidence is not available in this district at this time.

Furthermore, under the new management team, NWEA, was used as a new data collection system along with the hiring of a district Assessment Specialist to ensure access to performance data. Educators, Family and students were provided access to data through the district's website. Thus, demonstrating that the district took a proactive approach to making student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. However, it is not clear how the district makes data available for all parents in the district including parents without internet access.

Finally, based on the information in this proposal, the district presents a limited record of success and only in the past two years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.

Overall, this places ESLSD189 in the mid middle range.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 claims to provide a high level of transparency in processes, practices and investments. For example, the district reports administrator and teacher salaries and benefits to the Illinois State Board of Education and participates in a weekly conference call with the State Superintendent. Likewise, as a result of a Consent Decree, the district also practices transparency in external and internal communication. For instance, redesigning the district's web site, electronically posting of employee salaries and benefits, electronically posting competitive grants, linking student data to the district's website, emailing and scheduling quarterly school representative meetings are all ways used by the district to enhance communication.

Although the district provided evidence of its transparency processes, it did not clearly provide a detail description of 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, actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only and actual non-personnel expenditures in this proposal but only a reference to a website that reports administrator and teacher salaries and benefits not K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration per school. Therefore, based on the limited information available regarding transparency practices in the district, it is unclear if the district actually practices a high level of transparency in all areas.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the lower middle range.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 demonstrates evidence of shared autonomy under state guidelines to implement its approved grant proposal. For example, according to the proposal, the district has the autonomy in collaboration with the State Superintendent of Education to implement the personalized learning environment proposed in this application as long as it is consistent with the Consent Decree. Similarly, the district's proposal includes procedures for creating personalized learning environments and implementing technology enriched classrooms through local school board policies and its *Digital Learning Task Force*. The Digital Learning Task Force recommends ways to improve student achievement through the creation of robust digital learning environments.

There is no evidence of complete autonomy granted from a state agency noted in the proposal. However, if the district operates according to the consent decree, with the new management team and sufficient autonomy available, and the ability to make adjustments to programs, based on useful data, it is likely that the implementation of this proposal could be successful.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper middle range.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 reports evidence of some stakeholder involvement in the proposed plan development. For example, the district developed the reform model based on internal and external stakeholder involvement in a needs assessment including staff, parents, administrators, students and the community. In addition, participating schools were involved in the development of the plan through focus groups and the Key communicator meetings with the Superintendent three times per year. However, it is unclear if parents from all schools participated since there is evidence of only one sign in sheet from one participating school. Similarly, it is not clear how feedback from stakeholders were used in the revision and development process of the proposal.

The proposal was revised based on feedback from the schools with additional components including digital resources and positive behavior support resources added to the plan.

Letters of support were included from some external stakeholders such as business owners, student organizations, local civic and community based organizations, parent organizations and one principal. Since the district included a large number of support letters, it is clear that an adequate number of letters of support are included. Likewise, since the district has a collective bargaining agreement, a letter of support was also included from the member representative.

Finally, it is questionable if the district obtained meaningful stakeholder engagement other than from the school stakeholders throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal since limited evidence is provided in some cases.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 proposes an exhaustive high quality plan designed to promote personalized learning

through its multipronged approach that will engage high-need learners through the *Achieving Academic Gold* initiative. According to the application, students will have an understanding of how learning impacts success beginning in grade 6 with a plan to assist them in defining goals, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, mapping out a plan of action to identify interests, addressing their weaknesses, and taking action to become college and career ready. In addition, 9-12 graders, and some 6-8 graders will prepare a Personalized Learning Plan that will be formally implemented in high school as part of *Achieving Academic Gold*.

ESLSD189's students will identify and pursue learning and development goals by having access to reading content that exposes them to a wide variety of experiences and opportunities and nurtures their interest in academic goals. Likewise, students in 6-12 grades will have access to college, workforce, and career readiness materials that will assist them in identifying traits consistent with appropriate career and college goals. Furthermore, continued progress toward meeting goals will be measured by the results of the ACT Plan and ACT exam.

Students attending ESLSD189's district will engage in deep learning experiences through rigorous coursework, access to new instructional media in areas of academic interest, inquiry-based learning, STEM-focused instruction throughout the curriculum, off-campus field studies, and selected reading materials including those of high-interest, age-appropriate, and relevant to students' lives. In addition, *Achieving Academic Gold* further supports these deeper learning experiences by providing comprehensive professional development, new technologies, software and media, internships or dual enrollment at a community college.

Likewise, diversity in learning will be accomplished by exposing students of diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives through digital books, nonfiction STEM materials and increased access to the Internet for research. Although, there are certainly other mechanisms that can be employed to expose students to diverse cultures, however the one proposed by the district can be effective if implemented appropriately.

*The Achieving Academic Gold* initiative includes multiple components such as student dashboards and other progress monitoring that enable students to take ownership of their learning, set goals, and track their progress. Additionally, the plan offers multiple opportunities for students to engage in inquiry, problem-based and collaborative learning techniques designed to ensure that all students master critical academic content and develop appropriate skills for future success.

The district will use vertical integration of instruction to facilitate transitions between grade and coursework level and horizontal integration activities to address cross-curricular integration of core subjects to enable students to achieve their individual learning goals and graduate on time and college- and career ready as part of educator support, however it is unclear if and how parents will support this effort.

The district proposes high quality instructional practices and content such as instruction by teacher, differentiated presentations, small groups, one-on-one, technology instruction, laptops, tablet computers, and software. However, there is little or no evidence of a variety of high quality practices nor is there evidence of how the digital content will align with college and career standards included in the proposal.

ESLSD189 notes that it will provide ongoing and regular feedback by assessing during the first eight weeks of school and at the midyear with performance data being gathered from several sources. Additionally, once data is assessed, teachers will establish growth goals in each area of the personalized learning plan. In addition, ACT's Explore and Plan data will be used to determine progress towards college- and career-ready standards.

Accommodations and high-quality strategies include tailored instruction, an enrichment teacher, and literacy software for all students in the district since all students are high-need students. These strategies were developed to ensure that students are on track for college and/or are career-ready.

Furthermore, the district will provide professional development to teachers on all new instructional technology. Teachers and coaches in the classroom will be responsible for training the students on how to appropriately use the technology. Therefore, the district does have a mechanism in place to provide training to and support to students. However, it is unclear how students will track and manage their learning.

Finally, ESLSD189 provides a high quality plan that relates to improving learning and teaching including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goals are reasonable to support a personalized learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college-and career-ready.

Therefore, the district scores in the upper high range for this area.

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

**20**

**17**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 identifies a clear plan with significant teaching and leading components that include professional development structured to enable reforms in culture and climate, implement data-driven instruction aligned to CCSS and NGSS, personalize learning environments with technology, and enhance inquiry-based learning that will help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity to support high-need learners students.

The district will support the effective implementation of a personalized learning environment with a literacy, inquiry-based STEM education and an integration of STEM through the curriculum focus. For example, ESLSD189 reports that small interest and ability groups and individuals will benefit from teacher training on vertically-integrating the literacy curriculum. This training helps to ensure that students can become independent readers thus increasing the likelihood that they will graduate college-and career-ready.

Additionally, teachers will receive training in adapting both content and instruction to meet the needs of individual students, through reading and hands-on inquiry based activities. Thus, allowing multiple opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their interests and ability.

Also, by participating in additional professional development and with the support of instructional coaches, teachers will become experts on examining student data, implementing and monitoring interventions, and building data-based action plans for each student. If teachers can determine student proficiency in academic content areas, secure resources to address areas of need, and use performance-based, progress monitoring tools, there is a greater chance that their students will make significant progress towards meeting college and career ready standards and that collectively and individually teacher practices will improve.

The district will use a proven teacher and administrator evaluation systems to determine educator effectiveness. Teachers will use the research based Danielson Framework and Leaders will use the Haberman Star Principal Assessment already in use by the district. The Danielson Framework measures several components such as teacher readiness, the classroom climate, instruction, and the teacher as a professional. Similarly, the Star Principal examines 13 dimensions of effective school leadership. When implemented effectively, both systems will provide recommendations and interventions as needed for improvement and can result in effective educators.

The district proposes the collection of multiple sources of data to help educators identify optimal learning approaches for its students. Data such as the personalized learning plan, classroom observations, assessment results, coaching, team meetings and principal walkthroughs will assist school staff with identifying student academic needs and interests.

High-quality learning resources for teachers are limited to digital books and videos. Likewise, it is unclear if participating educators will have access to tools for creating and sharing new resources. In the absence of clarity for both, it is questionable if these resources are aligned with college and career standards.

Furthermore, in Achieving Academic Gold, the district will utilize data driven decision making with its diagnostic assessment. The assessments will identify students in need of foundational reading including their level of need and teachers will provide frequent progress monitoring in an effort to continuously improve the effectiveness of student resources.

Finally, the district credits a current leadership grant component for targeted professional development that will allow leaders to assist in staff capacity development, professional support networks, school and classroom climate development, effective use of data, and curriculum alignment all designed to ensure that teachers monitor student performance and adjust instruction accordingly. These steps when implemented collectively can result in continuous school improvement. However, it is not clear how the training systems will close achievement gaps for students. Likewise, the proposed plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from high quality teachers is limited to coaching by grant staff. Since 100% of the teachers are currently classified as *not effective*, it would appear appropriate to include a more comprehensive plan for increasing the pool of high quality teachers.

The district provides a high quality plan that relates to teaching and leading practices including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goals are reasonable to support improving teaching and learning that will prepare students for college and career ready success.

Therefore, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>East St. Louis School District 189's infrastructure and policy are aligned to support continuous implementation of this project. The district office cabinet makeup provides the necessary structure to adequately support its schools. For instance, staff members represent all areas from curriculum, technology, operations, human resources, professional development, student services, career tech, risk management, public relations, governmental, and finances. Additionally, school leadership teams at the high school level, as a SIG recipient, have the autonomy to plan for improved student achievement. This school is given the flexibility to develop calendars and schedules, hire personnel, prepare budgets and organize instruction. On the other hand, it is unclear if other schools have this autonomy especially since the district is currently under state intervention.</p> <p>Likewise, students benefit from similar flexible options such as mastery of standards by completing a computer based course, dual credit courses, and Advanced Placement (AP). However, it is not clear how all students at all levels will have this flexibility. Also, the district asserts that students will have opportunities to demonstrate mastery and earn credits in multiple ways through the integration of CCSS in multiple content areas. Finally, ESLSD189 refers to a completed personalized learning plan and Student Support Team as resources that will ensure learning resources and instructional practices are accessible for all students including students with disabilities. However, it is unclear what additional support will be provided to students who are limited English proficient, upon enrollment. Therefore, based on the practices, policies and rules presented in the proposal, it is somewhat uncertain if these measures will be effective as stated.</p> <p>Finally, the applicant provides a high quality plan that relates to practices, policies, and rules including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to support a personalized learning environment that should result in improved academic achievement for all students in the district.</p> <p>Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper middle range.</p>		

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>East St. Louis School District 189 states that all students will have access to content, tools, and learning resources including online library resources and classrooms resources based on teacher preference. However, there is no information provided to suggest that all participating students, parents, and other stakeholders regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school. Likewise, for some parents, without internet access at home, it is unclear how these parents will receive necessary content, tools, and other learning resources.</p> <p>ESLSD189 proposes to provide technical support to all stakeholders including IT technicians, a district assessment specialist, online support, and student volunteer peer support all in an effort to assure stakeholder access to some level of technical support. If implemented appropriately, the technology support proposed should be extremely effective. In addition, open data formats are accomplished through collaboration with the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE). The ISLE, student files are exported in an open format, and data ingestion procedures are scheduled for a Spring 2014 completion. Likewise, the district offers a student/parent portal through its information technology system that allows parents to export their information in an open data format. Thus, this process results in parents having access to an interoperable data system that effectively provides data on student demographics including grades, attendance history, homework assignments and discipline information.</p> <p>In addition, ESLSD189 has an internal system that either currently integrates multiple data sources or will in the future integrate multiple data sources for district use such as student data, human resource data, and payroll/finance data. Thus, this process will ultimately result in the schools and district use of an expanded interoperable data system.</p> <p>Finally, the district proposes a high quality school infrastructure plan that includes rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to support technology needs that should provide every student and educator with support and needed resources that will result in improved academic achievement for all students in the district.</p> <p>Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.</p>		

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>East St. Louis School District 189 utilizes a proven phase by phase process known as the Oxley model as a framework for continuous improvement. For example, the improvement model used by the district is a seven phase process that ensures a feedback loop for continuous improvement toward achieving outcomes including taking stock of existing practice, identifying gaps, generating and studying strategies, developing consensus for strategies, devising implementation plans, and developing a monitoring plan, and implementation.</p> <p>The district’s evaluation team will be responsible for monitoring and data collection. In addition, a district dashboard and individual school dashboards will be used to publicly share information on the effectiveness of the plan with the <i>Achieving Academic Gold Advisory</i> Team making recommendations for improvement as necessary. The fact that the improvement process can be modified as necessary suggests that if utilized appropriately, this method can be effective. Finally, the plan includes goals, rationales, and timelines as well as outcomes and responsible parties in all areas.</p> <p>ESLSD189 indicates that it will report the results of student and teacher data to other public at least monthly on the website, in parent connection reports, and during Key Communicator meetings. However, it is unclear how the district plans to publicly share information specifically on the quality of professional development and technology under the grant nor how it plans to provide feedback after the grant period ends.</p> <p>Finally, a high quality plan that relates to implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process including rationale for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period is included. However, in some cases it may not be reasonable that the district will reach all of its performance goals each year for all students as part of the proposed continuous improvement process to ensure improved academic achievement for all students in the district.</p> <p>Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the low high range.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>East St. Louis School District 189 offers an ongoing approach to providing meaningful communication to its internal and external stakeholders including written reports, technology reports, parent connection reports, monthly newsletters, and internal e-newsletters. Likewise, the district clearly identifies a timeline, rationale, activities, goals and responsible parties as part of its high quality plan. For example, teachers and administrators will use the written reports, technology reports, and parent connection reports as a basis for discussing technology implementation, curriculum changes, student successes, and student struggles during parent, teacher and student conferences and meetings. Likewise, principals will use the technology reports to discuss technology usage and professional development development during staff meetings. The district clearly has a plan for ongoing communication and engagement, including electronic platforms such as a weekly internal e-newsletters. Therefore, ESLSD189 thoroughly engages internal and external stakeholders with an effective communication and engagement plan that provides multiple opportunities and communication modes regardless of stakeholder resources all with the focus on continuous improvement.</p> <p>The district provides a high quality plan that relates to ongoing communication and engagement including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to support continuous stakeholder communications of all program activities that should result in informed stakeholders to assist in improving academic achievement for all students in the district.</p> <p>Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper middle range.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>East St. Louis School District 189 shows a commitment to implementing a personalized learning environment with 12 ambitious and achievable performance measures organized by subgroup. The district ensures that all students will have a highly effective teacher and principal and meet student specific checkups. For instance, all teachers and principals must participate in the Charlotte Danielson Framework or Harberman Star Principal Assessment evaluation system with an</p>		

overall target of effective or star by the end of the grant period. If the district implements the rigorous recruitment and hiring plan with fidelity, and is able to obtain 100% effective or star teachers in this limited time, by the end of the grant project, this would suggest ambitious goals that will result in achievable student outcomes.

Likewise, if students demonstrate growth and/or proficiency on the NWEA MAP, ISAT and PSAE in grades K through 8, pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade English, pass a Career and Technical Education class, have limited absences, participates in at least two career awareness lessons, have adequate financial resources for college, and on track for college and career readiness, they have a greater likelihood of successfully becoming college and career ready by the end of the high school years. Thus, if the district can consistently implement all of the reform activities, the performance measures above are effective based on research and practices and should be achievable if students can demonstrate sufficient growth in included areas.

Furthermore, the consortium addresses specifically how each measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding implementation success or areas of concern for each performance measure. For example, from the PSAE data, schools and teachers can see strengths and weaknesses of groups of students and/or the curriculum, analyze the data, and set targets for the following school year.

ESLSD189 provides a clear rationale for selecting each of its performance measures and a detailed description of how it will review and improve the measure over time. For example, the district proposes the use of the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) as a state standard to determine how well the district performs compared to its peer districts in Illinois. From the data, schools and teachers can determine strengths and weaknesses of groups of students and/or the curriculum thus allowing rigorous, timely, and formative information regarding success or areas of concern. In addition, the district will review and improve the measure by analyzing the data and targeting the direction for the following school year. Similarly, all performance measures when implemented properly are effective measures to ensure success towards continuous improvement.

Overall, ESLSD189 scores in the upper high range.

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

**5**

**4**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 proposes a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the *Achieving Academic Gold* investment. For example, the district will utilize an external evaluation consultant to conduct a comprehensive evaluation using a mixed-methods approach on school culture transformation, coaching quality and impacts, professional development quality, and data teams quality. Additionally, an evaluation team will develop instruments as needed, provide feedback to assure quality, prepare and disseminate findings, report to staff and other stakeholders based on the timeline provided in the proposal. However, it is unclear how the effectiveness of activities that employ technology will be determined since it is not mentioned in the proposal.

The district does include a high quality plan that relates to evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed program including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed program towards goal attainment that will help improve academic achievement for all students in the district.

Overall, ESLSD189 scores in the lower high range.

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 clearly articulates in a narrative format, all funds that are available to support the grant project and are sufficient to implement the grant such as the RTTD, local, state, and federal sources. Similarly, the district has been awarded several grant funded projects such as Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Smaller Learning Communities, Transition to Teaching, School Leadership Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and a

School Improvement Grant (high school only). In addition, numerous partnerships provide in-kind support and medical services are also offered in-kind through the Remote Area Medical (RAM) program. The district notes that at least 20-25% of additional funding will be provided through the sources above. However, it is unclear of the total revenue from each of these additional sources in all cases. This column is completed on the budget grid in some columns but omitted for other columns.

ESLSD189 notes by incorporating all components of the *Achieving Academic Gold* initiative such as improved culture and climate, extensive professional development, teacher and technology-driven personalized instruction, content-rich STEM infusion, literacy enrichment, and community support it provides a clear and thoughtful rationale for its investments and priorities by providing support for the district wide transformation that aligns with STEM and literacy rich individualized learning for all students that will help them to become college and career ready.

Likewise, the approximate per pupil expenditure per year appears reasonable and sufficient to support the grant, based on the amount of funds requested and the number of students expected to be served by the proposal.

Finally, funds that may be needed for ongoing operational cost versus funds for one time investments after the grant period ends are clearly identified in the proposal. For example, professional development, personalized learning environment creation, and most technology hardware such as ipads, laptops, response systems, headsets, and promethean boards are all identified and described as one time investments. Likewise, with the district's focus on strategies such as development of grade-specific specialty units, it is expected that these practices will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environment.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

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

**10**

**8**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 shares a commitment for sustainability beyond the grant period. The district currently receives other local, state, federal entitlement funds Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Smaller Learning Communities, Transition to Teaching, School Leadership Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, School Improvement Grant (high school only), and numerous partnerships with in-kind support. In addition, medical services are also offered in-kind through the Remote Area Medical (RAM) program that will be used as financial support for the project and will continue the support beyond the grant period.

However, it is unclear of the total revenue from each of these additional sources other than an earlier reference to 20-25% additional funds that will be used for sustainability. Likewise, entities such as collaborative partners, local businesses, state agencies through a revised funding formula will provide financial resources in the future. Although the district identified several potential supporters, there is no evidence of a specific dollar value support per individual or entity beyond the grant period.

Furthermore, the proposal asserts that the district will use a strong evaluation component for each current program to evaluate improvements in productivity. For instance, the district will review implementation challenges and lessons learned as a mechanism to improve future efforts. Additionally, reforms will be expanded district-wide through *Achieving Academic Gold*. Challenges that are identified in existing grant programs will also be used to inform the design of *Achieving Academic Gold* as well as to develop the estimated three year budget beyond the grant period including assumptions, potential sources, and funding uses. Therefore, based on this approach, the district proposes an effective plan for evaluating productivity improvements.

The district provides an estimated post grant budget based on the assumption of increased state funding and award of public and private grant funding in a narrative and chart format. However, it is not clear if the budget is sustainable since no fund sources are listed with the specific dollar amounts included for sustaining the project beyond the grant cycle.

Finally, based on the information above, ESLSD189 has included a high-quality plan that relates to sustainability including rationales for activities that are feasible, appropriate responsible parties, with some appropriate deliverables and timelines projected for the duration of the grant period. Similarly, the goal is reasonable to support a possible post grant budget that should result in continued services to improve academic achievement for all students in the district.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the lower high range.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

Available	Score
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**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)****10****9****Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

East St. Louis School District 189 is committed to providing comprehensive schoolwide experiences for its students in the area of academics, health and emotions. This is evident in the partnership that it has formed with several organizations to provide educational, social and health services for its students. For example, *Remote Area Medical (RAM)* provides a free community medical, dental, and vision health clinic for low-income children and adults in school and at home; *Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP)* and *Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House* provides a healthy behaviors program for middle school students including mentoring teachers; and *Touchette Regional Hospital's Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)* provides counseling, individual therapy, group therapy, and medication maintenance, and addresses community problems.

ESLSD189's focus on establishing partnerships with the goal of targeted student outcomes such as students receiving health and dental care, vision care, healthy behavior choices by middle schoolers, fewer number of trancies, suspensions, and expulsions should result in successful education results, education outcomes and family and community supports for all students since all students in the district are high needs. If non academic needs are addressed, this allows an opportunity for students to focus only on academic needs thus increasing the likelihood of their success in the classroom.

Additionally, the district ESTL will track both aggregate and individual student indicators such as attendance rate, truancy rate, disciplinary actions, and number of drop outs and academic performance. However, it is not clear specifically how the district will use the data from indicators above to improve results for participating students?

Likewise, since all students in the district are high needs, the district generally focuses its resources on all students thus improving results for all participating students.

ESLSD189's RAM model is currently serving other communities beyond the local school district, and plans have been implemented to expand the TOP program to all middle school students by year 3. Also, the district's Adolescent IOP program has will increase outreach and referrals in an effort to serve all eligible students in the district.

The district describes its *Achieving Academic Gold* formative evaluation process as mechanism to improve results. Furthermore, feedback from the continuous improvement Oxley model and Adolescent IOP Advisory Teams will ensure strategies are employed for improved results over time. The *Achieving Acadmic Gold* initiative focuses on assessments, data driven decision making, feedback looping, evaluation and monitoring in a continuous manner that provides for ongoing improvement throughout the school year. Based on the continuous nature of this process, and the ability of the district to make revisions as needed, it is considered an effective approach.

The district addresses its intent to integrate education and other sources by hosting in conjunction with the Mayor's and Governor's Offices, Salvation Army and Red Cross, a community RAM clinic during the summer months that will address the connection between wellness and achievement in schools.

Since the RAM organization provides specialized services that require specialized training and have experience in community services, there is no need to build capacity in district staff. According to the district, the Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP), Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, and Touchette Regional Hospital's Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program will work with the district to ascertain the needs of the students as well as inventory the needs and assets of the school, however, there is no evidence of specific tools and support to staff that will help them identify the needs of students nor inventory the needs and assets of the school.

Parents and families of ESLSD189 have an opportunity to become engaged in decision making and addressing needs through representation on the CSAC, attendance at community open meetings each semester and visitation of informational booths during parent conferences. Frequent parent participation in these events will result in solutions to improve results over time.

Partners of ESLSD189 will work collaboratively to assess progress toward implementation of the plan. For example, monthly reviews data collection and monitoring, regular partner meetings, and quarterly "learning" meetings if scheduled and held routinely can result in maximizing impact and resolving problems as they occur.

Furthermore, health and dental care help prevent and treat problems that interfere with concentration and learning, vision care enable reading and literacy gains, healthy behaviors support results in fewer behavior problems at school, improved emotional and behavioral self-regulatory behaviors and increased coping skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making, and communication skills, and decreased truancy, suspensions, and expulsions results in increase student attendance. Therefore, these performance measures are ambitious and achievable because they should result in successful education results, education outcomes and family and community supports for most high need students in the district.

Finally, the district provides a thorough integration of public and private resources in multiple partnerships designed to

augment local district support to improve academic conditions for students.

Overall, this Places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

East St. Louis School District 189 clearly articulates a comprehensive reform model that encompasses the four core academic areas. The district proposes to integrate Achieving Academic Gold, a comprehensive set of reforms within a larger set of reforms designed to improve one of the lowest performing school districts in the State of Illinois. The district created a five-year strategic plan that includes a new cohesive curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards and data driven decision making processes throughout the district. Additionally, the district also adopted nine research-affirmed mathematics instructional practices, an updated science curriculum, the American Diploma Project Network that allows alignment of standards and assessments with postsecondary education and employers and the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments in English and Mathematics. The PARCC assessment system will notify the district of postsecondary success, gaps, and solutions to both prior to students attending college. If implemented with fidelity, these standards and assessments will prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace in a global economy.

ESLSD189 is developing the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), a data system designed to measure student success. ISLE supports the Pre-K through career personalized learning environment by providing an online platform that integrates student data with instructional learning resources for teachers aligned with the CCSS.

Additionally, a local plan provides schools with technology, training, and support for integrated student data collection, reporting, and analysis systems. As a result of this data system, teachers and principals will be informed about ways that they can improve instruction and on student growth and success.

The district has adopted the CCSS aligned Charlotte Danielson evaluation model for principals and teachers. This model includes student growth as a focus and will be used to evaluate teachers in planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Likewise, ESLSD189's hiring plan identifies and hires highly qualified and competent teachers and administrators including those participating in a Grow Your Own, Transition to Teaching program, and DOE School Leadership Grant. Hence, the evaluation model and recruitment plan demonstrates the district's commitment to recruiting where the need is greatest.

Furthermore, since Achieving Academic Gold's focus will be on professional development, instructional coaching, transforming school culture and climate, improving literacy, integrating a STEM focus throughout the grades, and incorporating instructional technology to personalize learning, the district provides sufficient evidence of its record of low performance and a focus on turning around lowest-achieving schools.

ESLSD189 proposes a vision to accelerate student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity through a personalized learning environment that vertically aligns other reform measures by focusing on culture and climate, teacher and leader professional learning capacity building, technology driven instruction, STEM learning, literacy enrichment, and community support.

Through the Achieving Academic Gold initiative teachers will have the preparation and self-efficacy to teach a CCSS based curriculum, to use new instructional technologies, and to incorporate literacy reforms and inquiry-based STEM learning into the classroom. As a result, student will receive hands-on inquiry based technology rich instruction thus increasing the likelihood of college and career ready success. Therefore, based on the information above, the district's focus will be on the four educational core areas.

Likewise, the proposed plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from high quality teachers is limited to coaching by grant staff. Since 100% of the teachers are currently classified as *not effective*, it would appear appropriate to include a more comprehensive plan for increasing the pool of high quality teachers.

The district will use a proven teacher and administrator evaluation system to determine educator effectiveness. Teachers will use the research based Danielson Framework and Leaders will use the Haberman Star Principal Assessment already in use by the district. The Danielson Framework measures several components such as teacher readiness, the classroom

climate, instruction, and the teacher as a professional. Similarly, the Star Principal examines 13 dimensions of effective school leadership. When implemented effectively, both systems will provide recommendations and interventions as needed for improvement and can result in effective educators.

Therefore, this places ESLSD189 in the upper high range.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>161</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0068IL-2 for East St. Louis School District

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

#### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(1) The applicant articulates a comprehensive and coherent vision for reform.

#### Strengths:

(1) ESTL will adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. The applicant describes aspects of the educational assessment climate in the State of Illinois and its required standards-based approach. The applicant describes how ESTL is developing not only alignment to the standards, but an aligned use of assessments through a district assessment specialist, who will activate weekly assessments for on-going monitoring of student progress.

(2) The district is building data systems that measure student growth and success, and informs teachers and principals (with collected data) how they can improve instruction. Illinois is also reforming the data system at the state level, which ESTL will utilize as they focus on academic growth. ESTL is piloting a new data system (ISLE) for the state. It's designed to support personalized student learning and Pre-K-12 toward career success through an online platform that includes integrated data and tools that allow educators to better connect with individual students. In addition to the ISLE pilot for the state, the local effort includes providing schools with technology, training and support for integrated data collection, reporting, and analysis. Dashboards and learning maps provide a robust information source that is further strengthened by a student data system that is linked across instructional systems and appears effective in measuring student growth. Teachers will be able to utilize tools that align learning resources to CCSS, as well as shared libraries of additional resources aligned to CCSS.

(3) The district has robust plans for recruiting and developing effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. However, rewarding teachers and principals as well as plans for retaining them are less clear. A "grow-your-own" pipeline as well as proposed mentoring programs may provide enticement for recruiting and retaining good teachers, but there remains a lack of evidence of rewards and retention efforts. It remains unclear how the district will reward teachers (are there incentives, etc.) or how they will retain high-quality teachers they have invested in (it is unclear if there is a clear plan for retention). ESTL has aligned the state-mandated PERA teacher/principal evaluation system with Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching. Danielson's framework is currently being piloted at the high school and will be rolled out to all schools in the district in scale-up efforts outlined in this proposal. The Danielson framework has a significant research base and will provide a common vocabulary and model for teachers as they scale-up efforts to increase instructional competencies, and principals as they evaluate efficacy of the model.

(4) ESTL has plans for turning around lowest-achieving schools. East St. Louis Senior High School has been persistently in the lowest performing 5% of Title I schools. Strategies are in place to incorporate the Danielson Framework, implement

CCSS, and adopt benchmark assessments and common unit assessments. The applicant identifies a school-wide assessment protocol, expanded curriculum, and multiple strategies to improve instruction, social and behavioral supports, and professional development goals.

(b) The applicant lists various micro goals to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase equity:

- Culture and climate-Student support teams, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and an Early Warning system
- Capacity-building through leader and teacher professional development and instructional coaching
- Teacher-and technology-driven personalized instruction
- Infusion of STEM Learning K-12
- Literacy enrichment and community support

These micro goals provide for increased equity due to evidence that currently, not all students have access to the tools they need for success. Bringing African-American students up to grade level and being responsive to their differentiated needs provides opportunities for equity and access to skills necessary for 21st century success. Personal Learning Plans through technology, materials adapted to student levels, and personalized education based on academic needs and interests ensures that each student receives differentiated instruction. Use of personalized learning environments based on academic interests is an effective component of the model. Research suggests that as student interests are incorporated into academic tasks, engagement increases. It would follow that as engagement increases, so will academic achievement. Evidence in support of instructional technology strategies was provided in the appendices, along with research supporting strategies.

(c) The narrative includes a curricular picture that is robust through the use of instructional technology, personalized instruction through assessment data, and purposeful grouping. Coaching will provide support for teachers as implementation of the model moves ahead. The use of hands-on, inquiry-based classroom activities should promote the stated goals of classrooms wherein creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills are enhanced for each student.

Weaknesses: A deduction was taken due to a lack of compelling evidence that there is work going on in the areas of rewarding and retaining teachers in the district. The applicant fails to make a compelling argument with evidence to support current or future efforts to reward and retain teachers.

The applicant's response to this section scores in the high range due to the detailed and robust vision for reform.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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<b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
In section (A)(2), the applicant details a realistic approach to implementation.		
Strengths: The district plans to implement high quality professional development, increasing capacities for STEM, literacy, and technology.		
<p>(a) The applicant describes that all district schools will be included in the proposed project due the fact that all participating schools meet the competition's eligibility requirements.</p> <p>(b) The list of schools is provided.</p> <p>(c) All schools meet the application requirements of being high-minority, low income, and high need. 5,971 students, 329 teachers, and 19 principals are participating in application goals and objectives.</p>		
No weaknesses are apparent and this section scores in the high range as all components are included.		

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
Section (A)(3) highlights the applicant's high quality plan for reform and change.		
Strengths:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant includes a logic model for how the plan will improve student learning outcomes. The logic model</li> </ul>		

included the current situation, project inputs, activities, theory of change, and project impact. Details under each of those headings provided five goals under each heading of the model. For example, under "Project Impacts" the details included: culture and climate transformation, new instructional technologies for personalized instruction, data-driven assessments for continuous adaptation and improvement, and partnerships for STEM Programs of Study.

**Weaknesses:**

- It was difficult to detect if the logic model was meant to align horizontally, and which elements equated to a "scale up" from current conditions.
- A formatted table, rather than lists, would have helped the reviewer determine if horizontal alignment was the goal, and a timeline column would have also been beneficial for the scale-up information.
- The logic model did not include a rationale for each component which would have provided more clarity.

This section scores in the medium range. While there is compelling evidence of reform and change, the plan cannot meet the standards of high quality as defined by RTTD due to the missing aspect of "deliverables" and "responsible party" categories as per the notice.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (A)(4) articulates the applicant's LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes.

**Strengths:**

(a) Performance data on summative assessments, including proficiency status and growth, are provided. Increased equity is addressed, however, it should be noted that the student population in the district is 99% African-American, therefore disaggregation for traditional subgroups is not a focus as much as providing equity and access of resources to all students and families. Methodology for determining growth (e.g., value-added, mean growth percentile, change in achievement levels) is provided. (It should be noted that some of the jumps in proficiency status and growth seemed excessively high, e.g., K-1 graders jumping 25% in one year.)

(b) Evidence of decreasing achievement gaps is present and is equal to State ESEA targets for the LEA. The targets seemed ambitious and achievable based on detailed methodology as well as consideration of the applicant's high-quality, five prong approach to closing the achievement gap.

(c) Graduation rates are listed, and seem both ambitious and achievable. Rationale is given concerning calculations and state formula changes in calculating graduation rates as defined in the notice.

**Weaknesses:**

(d) College enrollment rates are listed. (This seemed a little high due to a high poverty student population that may be challenged by costs of post-secondary enrollment.) It should also be noted that it is difficult to determine if the IEP subgroup rates should be figured equally with the other groups as their data is unavailable. Also important is the percentages for the graduation rate may seem somewhat biased in that females are beginning higher than the males, yet they are not expected to be able to increase at the same rates as males the first year.

This section scores in the high range, however, deductions were taken. While ambitious goals are important, some of the value-added growth targets seem somewhat high. For example, reading scores for 4-5 graders are expected to double in 4 years. If stakeholders are given targets that are incrementally too high, morale and other aspects of missed targets can slow growth. Also problematic was the low bar for increasing college enrollment rates for females from 2012-13 to 2013-14. A .06% change is dismally small in comparison to a full 7% from the males, particularly when each incremental change after that is equal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (B)(1) describes the applicant's track record of success.

**Strengths:**

(1) A new superintendent was hired in 2012 who brought a track record of reform. He has already made great gains in building a "...foundation framework and improving the quality of education." Equitable access to curriculum for all students in the ESTL district has been a benefit of district academic reforms. Teacher professional development in ELA and Math is starting to show results. ESTL was recently rated strong on measures of ELA and Math instruction according to a 2012 survey. Though the district is 99% African-American, a newly created bilingual program offers further evidence of steps towards equity. Students now have increased access to AP offerings as they have increased from one to seven courses. Other evidence of increasing equity is access for special education students through a shift from segregation to inclusion.

(a) Student learning outcome movement in this district was not made clear, However, in the superintendent's last district, Elementary Math scores for African-American students are up by 30% and Reading scores are up by 20%. Middle school scores are up 51% and 26% respectively. While this growth may or may not be applicable to the ESTL district, the applicant indicates that movement upward is already evident. That positive district outlook is somewhat tempered by the fact that implementation and measurement infrastructure is only two years old, and trends are difficult to measure with reliability this soon. Also problematic are graduation rates that came under a new measurement formula in 2010-2011. Therefore, baseline data is all that is available is being based on last year's data.

**Weaknesses:**

(a) While the superintendent's track record at his last post is admirable, it is information that is not necessarily applicable to this point in time and this district.

**Strengths:**

(b) Significant reforms in low-achieving schools include implementation of a freshman transition program, expanded parental and community involvement, online credit recovery, positive behavior facilitation, attendance incentives for teachers and students, and restructured partnerships with university partners.

(c) Student performance data is being made available through use of the NWEA, and a new assessment specialist is improving efficiency and accuracy of data entry. Student performance data is available through a family and student access portal on the website. There is an increased emphasis on accuracy and participation, with assessment communication going to all stakeholders (students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and other support staff). The Assessment Specialist provides training on how to review and use existing data to drive instructional improvement in the classroom. This process ensures teachers have the student performance data they need to improve instruction.

**Weaknesses:**

- It remains unclear how low-income families who may not have technology resources might access the information on student performance data. Making it available would require more than information on the website. If most of the families lack the resources to access technology, and the information would not be available to them.
- Also problematic is a lack of information on the district's track record for four years, as required by the notice. While efforts seem to be moving forward as of the last two years, it is too soon to establish that this is a "clear track record" of improvement that reflects the last four years.

This section scores in the medium range, with a deductions being taken for utilizing data (Superintendent qualifications and his former district's outcomes) that may not be pertinent to this application. His success as a district leader may not equate to the same growth in ESTL. The applicant did not provide compelling evidence of a clear track record of district success for the last four years. There also remains a lack of evidence concerning how low-income parents and students (in ESTL) who lack technology might get information about student performance data.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (B)(2) the applicant describes the extent to which increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments will occur.

Strengths: A Financial Oversight Committee is in place. The State Superintendent participates in weekly conference calls with the ESTL Superintendent and team to discuss areas monitored through a current Civil Rights Consent decree. Internal and External communication is occurring with goals of increasing transparency through communicating actual salaries of teachers and administrators (made available on a website portal).

**Weaknesses:**

It remains unclear if personnel or support staff salaries are made available (a-d). The reviewer was unable to locate this information. There is a lack of clarity of how the applicant fulfills sub sections a-d. It seems unclear when only a website is provided as evidence.

This section scores in the medium area, but points are deducted because it remains unclear if actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and non-personal expenditures at the school level are made available.

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

**10**

**7**

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (B)(3), the applicant describes state context for implementation.

**Strengths:**

- There appears to be close communication between ESTL and the state department through weekly conference calls. This circumstance is partly due to the ongoing consent decree for an Office of Civil Rights complaint, which contains specific goals and academic targets that the district must meet in order to go back to local control.

**Weaknesses:**

- Various areas of scrutiny will continue to be monitored by ESTL for the state requirements and compliance. Response to a consent decree is a district challenge as they work towards school reform in the aspects outlined in the proposal. It can be difficult for a district to respond to multiple initiatives (consent decree and RTT project) simultaneously.

**Strengths:**

- State level letters of support offer evidence that the state's legal, statutory and regulatory requirements are being met by the district.
- Detailed evidence of school board policy changes demonstrate response to and implementation of regulatory reforms.
- An example of autonomous decision-making would include an infrastructure to allow ESTL School Board to have approval over curriculum decisions based on recommendations of the superintendent.

This section scores in the middle range. Though, the section offers compelling evidence that the district has successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement the learning environments described herein, it is arguable that the district will be challenged to implement personalized learning environments as well as other initiatives (consent decree) simultaneously.

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

**15**

**10**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

In Section (B)(4) the applicant describes stakeholder engagement and support.

**Strengths:** (a) The applicant describes a two-year effort to increase communication with "...parents, students, and community stakeholders to include their participation in rebuilding a culture that values and expects excellence in education." The data-driven process included a district team selecting elements through ongoing contact with principals and teachers to identify needs. Several needs assessments went out to the ESTL schools and teacher input was solicited through focus groups. Key Communicator meetings between the superintendent, parents, and community stakeholders were used to obtain the concerns and priorities of families.

(i) NA

**Weaknesses:** (ii) It was not clear how the teachers participated in the revision of the proposal. It also remains unclear how students/families were engaged in the proposal development and revision.

**Strengths:** (b) Letters of support from key stakeholders offer evidence of application support. Letters of support came from a variety of stakeholders, including Touchette Regional Hospital (RAM Program), Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House (Adolescent social and emotional behavior), Remote Area Medical Volunteer Corps, Wyman Center Teen Outreach Program, and a principal.

Weaknesses: Letters of support did not reflect partners in advocacy or higher education.

The section scores in the medium range. While there is some evidence of stakeholder support, it lacks segments (parents, students, stakeholders) that would have presented a stronger case that all stakeholders were a part of proposal development and revision. Deductions were taken do to the lack of evidence of student and family involvement in proposal development and revision, and key partnerships (for example IHE's) were not included in the letters of support.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (C)(1) highlights the applicant's approach to learning to engage and empower all learners.

Strengths: (a)(i)The applicant provides a convincing, and research-based argument, that the LEA will provide a learning environment that will utilize, "personalized learning environments that facilitates the incorporation of students' previous knowledge into the curricula." Current infrastructure has foundational work towards a personalized sequence of content, however, systematic and uniform ramp-up seems feasible and is supported by a realistic logic model.

(ii) Students in ESTL will be put on a data-based pathway to college and career readiness from early elementary years. Because ESTL is such a high-need district, the district must provide a sequence of instructional content within the context of Personalized Learning Plans that is strategically personalized for ESTL demographics. The district plans to shape this strategic and personalized pathway for students with the help of the ACT Explore or Plan assessment data. A team of faculty, including counselors and teachers, will support students as they identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. As students are nurtured towards high school, "...students may choose one of the two selected STEM-based college and career pathways." Particularly unique and notable is a new partnership with a regional hospital, which allows for students to partake of a sequence of classes that will enable them to achieve Certified Nursing Assistant certification while still in high school.

(iii) The applicant provides evidence of deep learning experiences through, "...more rigorous coursework, increased access to new instructional media in areas of of academic interest, inquiry-based learning, STEM-focused instruction infused through K-12 curriculum, and off-campus field studies." As students are provided with numerous opportunities for deeper learning, principals and teachers are simultaneously participating in comprehensive professional development in order to provide increased opportunities for learning.

(iv) Technology will be the biggest boost for providing student exposure to more diverse learning opportunities. Of particular emphasis is an idea to utilize problem-based learning topics connected to real problems in the community. Emphasis on civic engagement will begin as early as 6th grade. This type of real-world learning inspires students to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they're studying. Research indicates that students are more likely to retain the knowledge gained through a real-world approach far more readily than through traditional textbook-centered learning.

(v) The applicant makes a compelling argument for mastering critical content with a focus on progress monitoring and student ownership of goals. Technology will be used to increase engagement, which should lead to increased academic achievement. K-12 opportunities for field-based learning includes partnerships with business and industry. A table included in this section offers rich data as to how research-based practices will support student achievement of academic goals.

(b)(i) This section offers a robust description of a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill redevelopment that includes nationally-normed CCSS-aligned instruments, classroom observations, and additional efforts that will include: formative assessments, principal walk-throughs, coaching, and team meetings. In middle and high schools, a research-based, rigorous college and career preparation curriculum will be provided and targeted to students with average or below average GPAs. These students will also receive college and career skills classes to gain an understanding of the required academic preparation for a variety of career choices and a foundation in how to research colleges and other post-secondary options.

(b)(ii-iii) The applicant highlights a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and learning environments, along with matching student needs with resources and approaches. Severe budget cuts had hampered progress on materials procurement and this section offers evidence of digital books, media, and instructional supports in all grades. Media specialists are a part of the scale-up, and future plans include media specialists' support of classroom teachers and students. Media specialists can provide support through augmented services in the media and resource centers. The reviewer found that the appendices included a robust literature review of the instructional approaches that were research-

based and high quality.

**Weaknesses:**

A weakness of this section (b) (ii-iii) is that it is unclear that high-quality content, including digital learning content is aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant mentions the attributes of self-pacing for the student demographics of ESTL district, a three-pronged approach to personalized instruction, hiring a PBIS coach, digital learning content, and the example of Khan Academy, but it is not clear how any of the aforementioned content is aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

(b)(iv) (A-B) (v) The applicant makes clear that ongoing and regular feedback, including frequently updated individual student data that can be use do determine progress toward mastery of college-and career-ready standards. Also included are personalized learning recommendations based on the students' current knowledge and skills, college-and career-ready standards or college-and career-ready graduation requirements. Evidence of activities that will feed into a loop of continuous improvement includes:

- Problem-based learning that is connected to real problems in the community.
- Student dashboards and other progress monitoring that allows students to take ownership of learning.
- Blended learning with a STEM focus that is aligned to CCSS and NGSS.
- K-12 field studies tailored to each grade level with engaging activities, and evaluation for continuous improvement.
- Multiple measures, including formative assessments and formal summative assessments such as NWEA and MAP, aligned to CCSS.
- Data assessment and re-assessment at benchmarks in a progressive, data-driven culture of teaching and learning.

Every student in the district is designated as a high-need student, and woven throughout the section are assurances of accommodations for struggling readers, students with disabilities, and an emphasis on differentiated instruction for all learners.

(C)(1)(c) The applicant details activities to provide capacity-building training and support to students through student support teams at all schools, "...in which administrators, faculty, and staff work together..." to provide training and support. This section offers a high-quality implementation plan that includes activities, responsibilities, and a timeline. Included in the activities list: Acquire technology in the classroom, Field Studies implemented, Formalize Programs of Study and add enrichment activities, revise STEM curriculum to include problem-based learning at all grade levels, acquire literacy software, acquire print and digital content, assess with NWEA three times/year, vertical and horizontal integration, institute culture and climate initiatives, Digital Learning Task Force created, and college/career preparatory class for middle and high school. The plan for capacity building appears effective in that the it offers a top-down and bottom-up plan, with the students gaining support from both sides. Teachers who receive professional development on using the technology will assist students, and the students also get the support of coaches in the classroom. This will allow for students to get two levels of support at all times.

**Weaknesses:** It is unclear in (c) what mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. For example, in (b)(iii) the applicant states that teachers will re-assess their students using NWEA MAP to determine if students are making progress. The instrument enables, "students and parents to measure individual grown over time," however, it remains unclear what mechanisms are in place to teach the students how to understand NWEA MAP data to track and manage their learning.

An examination of the applicant's plan in Table C3 provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline. However, some of the timeline elements would have been more clear with additional narrative. For example, it remains unclear why only one year is marked for instituting PBIS, and it would not be ongoing for all four years of the project. Similarly, it is unclear why enrichment activities wouldn't be carried out all four years, instead of just three. A narrative that explained the timeline or a more robust rationale would have provided clarity for the aforementioned issues.

This section scores in the high range due to a compelling argument and evidence for a high-quality plan according to RTT guidelines. However, the plan seems to have minor gaps that need more clarity with explanations, such as why some aspects of the plan lack attention in certain years. Two other weaknesses are highlighted above in bold. A one-point deduction was taken for the weaknesses above and one one point was deducted for the lack of clarity of the plan in Table C3.

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

**20**

**19**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (C)(2) includes the applicant's high-quality plan for teaching and learning. Teaching components include reforms in culture and climate, the effective implementation of data-driven instruction aligned to CCSS and NGSS, improved literacy instruction, the support of personalized learning environments, and the implementation of inquiry-based learning that teaches STEM content and 21st century skills.

#### Strengths:

In section (a) the applicant details how the district will train teachers to enact data-driven decision-making through professional development and coaching from instructional specialists. A coaching model seems to be an effective choice, as the model goes beyond individual teacher behavior to support the systemic improvement efforts of an entire school.

Section (i) offers evidence of actionable information use through the implementation of personalized learning environments with a focus on literacy and inquiry-based STEM education. A district RTI approach will allow for scale-up of literacy instruction particularly at tier 2 and tier 3 intervention levels. Experiential learning through project-based learning offers students opportunities to engage in real-world problems and field-based experiences.

The applicant describes the ways the district schools will (ii-iii) adapt content and instruction and measure progress. Multiple technologies and strategies will be used for student tasks that teachers have gained through professional development. Teachers will receive additional support through instructional technology coaches, improved literacy proficiencies, and ideas for infusing technology for teaching and assessment. An emphasis on choosing, implementing, and monitoring intervention strategies and assessment tools provide both students and their teachers with information for progress-monitoring and continuous improvement. Instructional coaches will help the teachers utilize student assessments to measure student progress towards meeting college- and career-ready standards. Assessment tools mentioned in Section A (PARCC computer-delivered assessments) have been developed and combined with the personalized learning plans will increase likelihood of informed instructional practices and targeted interventions for all students.

In section (iv) the applicant shares plans for feedback on teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness. The Danielson Framework will give administrators and teachers a common vocabulary for continuous improvement and efficacy. Evaluation tools have been developed and refined for teachers and principals. Professional learning communities will offer a framework for professional development, implementation dialog, and fidelity of implementation. An implementation timeline provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and project year implementation.

The applicant provides (b) and (i) narrative that includes plans for accessing knowledge and enabling use of resources through a data-driven approach. Each student's teachers will be trained to utilize personalized learning plans that include a roadmap for students to achieve their goals by graduation. Additional data for decision-making include formative assessments, principal walk-throughs, coaching, and team meetings.

(ii) High-quality learning resources will include a scale-up of multi-media and technology resources. New acquisitions will be CCSS-aligned resources matched to student needs

Weaknesses: The applicant does state that teachers at the upper level schools will receive training in academic preparation, however, there lacks a compelling argument with evidence that training or teacher resources are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements by RTT standards.

(iii). The applicant states that data-driven decision making will empower teachers to make differentiation possible as they utilize published lesson plans that are appropriate for each grade level. To meet the requirement of specific resources to provide feedback, the applicant lists the use of diagnostic screening assessments to determine reading levels, and will identify students in need of reading interventions. One approach that exemplifies what will be used to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs is inquiry-based learning practices using published lesson plans, coaching, an observation protocol, and reassignment of students to different team functions based on feedback.

(c), (i-ii) All school leaders and leadership teams have access to two district initiatives, a "School Leadership Grant", and "The Illinois RtT Induction and Mentoring Grant" as foundational activities for leadership growth. School leaders will utilize the Danielson framework for professional development, and teacher evaluation (via walk-throughs) attend leadership academies, and utilize multiple data sources to drive supervision and development activities. Administrators will use Student Support Teams to collaborate with teachers to minimize truancy, establish a more cohesive and supportive school climate and community, and establish a stronger school-family partnership. The aforementioned research-based strategies, explained in this section and supported by the literature in the appendices makes a compelling argument that training, systems, and practices will continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps.

(d) The applicant supports increasing students receiving instruction from high-quality teachers/principals through efforts of district leadership to ramp up teacher/principal development. A newly hired Director of Curriculum, a district-wide

Assessment Specialist, and two Content Specialists will design and develop curriculum maps, short-cycle formative assessments to inform instruction, and continuous professional development. Teacher and principal effectiveness will be enhanced by implementation of evaluations, walkthroughs, and feedback that includes student performance information. The Danielson framework for professional development and evaluation offers evidence of increasing the number of students who receive instruction from highly effective teachers and principals. A Transition to Teaching grant is allowing for a "grow your own" program to staff hard-to-fill STEM positions and specialty areas.

Table C6 offers evidence of an implementation timeline for students receiving instruction from effective/highly effective teachers and principals. The table offers activities, responsibilities, and rationale. Prior to the table is a narrative section that offers a detailed plan of implementation for increasing both effective and highly-effective teachers and principals. Examples of these efforts include: the district will be implementing a math and ELA curriculum K-12 that will be aligned to the CCSS, teachers will attend numerous opportunities for professional development on the Danielson Framework, and content-based professional development as well. The narrative serves as a guide to the table and provides detailed explanation for the table.

The section scores in the high range due to the detailed and high-quality plan as required by RTT standards. There was a deduction due to a lack of clarity on the processes and tools that will be used for continuous improvement.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

In Section D(1) the applicant offers project implementation evidence that supports comprehensive policies and an infrastructure that provides every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

Strengths:

(a) The district office has the capacities to provide support and services to all schools. Positions are listed and job descriptions defined. They include a superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, CFO, content specialists (ELA and Math) and various support positions that oversee technology, curriculum, grants, and various other district support personnel.

Weakness: One significant weakness of the plan in this section is the applicant's assumption that "Parents and families will have access to digital content and can download it for use at home." The high number of high-poverty students and families in the district would prevent the validity of such an assumption. Not all families (and perhaps a low number of families) would have access to technology in order to download digital content. This issue is problematic in that the applicant does not make a compelling argument, with evidence, that families without technology will have access to their information. What remains unclear is how ESTL will compensate for this issue and provide all students with some means of experiencing personalized learning during non-school hours.

Strengths:

(b) The applicant meets the requirement of district leadership having sufficient autonomy and flexibility in that the high school was the recipient of a SIG grant that requires that they are autonomous in building schedules, calendars, personnel, staffing models, staff responsibilities, and budgets. The applicant states that the flexible and autonomous practices/policies required of the high school will be a model for the district. Further, as part of the provided leadership training with the district's ongoing School Leadership grant, principals are encouraged to review and ratify their own school's mission statement, and create new ones if necessary. The administrators are empowered to lead all school stakeholders, encourage diversity of ideas, and ensure that school issues are widely accessible.

(c) Evidence of student opportunities to demonstrate mastery include benchmarks for content mastery, increases in the number of AP courses, dual credit courses, computer-based instruction courses, and opportunities for diverse learners to progress at their own pace. Evidence of a strong research base to address the aforementioned student opportunities to demonstrate mastery is included in the appendices and provides detailed support for efficacy. For example, self-pacing is an effective model as students report a significantly greater sense of achievement and a significantly greater sense of control over their learning as a result of their experience compared to whole group learning.

(d) Opportunities for student mastery of multiple items and comparables are highlighted in this section. Teachers will devote time to collaborate as they monitor small groups. A shifting model of progress-based, individualized instruction is feasible through personalized learning plans, a shift in instructional philosophy, and options that include computer-based learning. Feasibility is offered through the rich literature review offered in the project appendices. It is both reasonable and expected that teacher collaboration combined with progress-based, individualized instruction is an effective model to provide opportunities for student mastery. Through this combination, students will move on to a higher standard when mastery is demonstrated, "in all courses" according to the applicant.

(e) The applicant provides evidence of adaptable and fully accessible learning resources and instructional practices. All students, including students with disabilities and diverse learning styles will be provided opportunities for mastery of standards across content areas. A Personalized Learning Plan for each student will be developed. Student Support Teams will enhance current and future mechanisms to support students who need academic or social services assistance.

The superintendent has newly reorganized governance through the removal and reassignment of building principals. The governance structure has already achieved significant reform in two years. The superintendent and leadership team (superintendent, assistant superintendents, and other upper management) have spearheaded the fiscal regulation and restructuring of district resources, restructured human resources procedures and guidelines, and implemented sweeping curricular improvements--all in only two year's time. These administrative changes have resulted in a building leadership team focused on student achievement. ESTL seems positioned and organized as a support structure for schools through their communication channels, emphasis on student support through individualized learning plans, professional development framework, and community outreach efforts. The school to community efforts through the RAM make their district a full-service provider with both academic and social-emotional opportunities.

Examination of the plan finds that the timeline is reasonable for a project of this size and scope. At first glance, it seems unlikely that each activity would be a part of each year, but scrutiny of the rationale and goals for implementation, practices, policies and rules offers justification for the yearly activities towards each goal. The timeline is reasonable according to the stated goals. There was a question about the activity of "daily professional development", however, in the context of coaching and mentoring, it is within the realm of possibility. The goals for this section appear achievable.

This section scores in the high range due to an implementation plan that is high-quality according to the RTT requirements. The applicant provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for implementation of practices, policies, and rules. Several examples include Bi-monthly meetings to make RTI adjustments, which the literature would support. Another example would be the inclusion of both regular and special education teachers to meet together with a consultant on tier I fidelity of RTI. These types of activities have a strong rationale and provide evidence of a high quality and workable plan.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (D)(2) the applicant details how the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning.

**Strengths:**

The LEA offers assurances of stakeholder access to learning resources both in and out of school. (a). ESTL indicates that all students will have access to the content, tools, and learning resources outlined in the project. At school, STEM and literacy resources are provided through the school library or in the classroom. Portable mobile labs are available, and each school has a qualified media specialist and library. Teachers will receive technology infrastructure, resources, and supports to track student learning. Parents and families will have access to digital content and can download it for use at home. Content and features will also be available in platforms that sync for cell phone use. ESTL has IT technicians who provide technical support on computers and software platforms. Furthermore, the district assessment specialist is available to assist teachers with the use of computerized assessments, and a peer support model through PLC's and student learning communities is part of the proposal. Also included is an online support line to assist teachers, students, and their families with technology support.

(b) Open data formats are provided through a collaboration between the LEA, Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and other partners that have a unique online platforms. A digital format that allows educators and learners to be empowered through integrated data and tools, including an interoperable framework is a goal of the applicant. As an ISLE participant, ESTL is required to exchange data in an open format with the ISLE data servers (outlined in section (A)(1)). ESTL is utilizing a combination of tools to make this exchange possible, including XML, and a Student Interoperability Framework (SIF). Strengthening the aforementioned efforts, the district has a Digital Task Force for determining procedures for exporting student data in an open format to other electronic learning systems as required by future initiatives.

(c) Interoperable data systems will be carried out through the Director of Technology, who is developing tools to share data between internal systems. A sequential plan for integrating student and guardian access to student data, instructional improvement data, human resource data, and payroll data is on schedule.

A focus on technology in ESTL has already been started with a new media center at the high school and a portable computing cart available at each building. Planned expansion of the technology, along with media specialists will allow for teachers to have more robust instructional support. The fact that parents and families will have access to digital content and can download it for use at home will provide some families with tools they may have never had access to outside school. Smart phone access would allow students to experience additional personalized learning outside of school. However, it is important that the applicant does not assume that so many families in poverty have home technology and/or smartphones. It is not a valid assumption that the digital technology will be equitable and accessible for all students and families.

Scrutiny of the plan depicted in Table D2 provides evidence that attention was paid to yearly goals for particular aspects. For example, it is logical that the task of creating procedures for a computer technology checkout system would only be necessary in the first year, and analysis of Internet bandwidth would need to be ongoing throughout the project as different aspects of the technology systems are scaled up. The rationales appear reasonable. For example, one of the rationale's states, "To improve student and teacher accessibility to available resources," is given as a rationale to the activity of implementation of an online library resource tracking system. Most all aspects of the plan are activities that have never been a part of the district infrastructure at ESTL district, and it is evident that careful and thoughtful planning has gone into the creation of a reasonable and effective plan.

This section scores in the medium range due to the problematic nature of assuming that digital content will be accessible to all students and families in the district. The implementation plans for each section are high-quality according to the RTT requirements. The applicant provides a detailed chart of activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for the section for implementation of practices, policies, and infrastructure. However, a deduction was taken due to the fact that there was not compelling evidence that all families would have access to technology at home or that all parents have cell phones/smart phones.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's continuous improvement process is described in section (E)(1).

**Strengths:**

- The ESTL district has an identifiable process for data-driven decision making, "...data will be collected, stored, analyzed, and disseminated on all program elements and used in decision making."
- A continuous feedback loop relies on Oxley's model of seven phases, or cycles (graphic provided). The cyclical format seemed feasible as it provides a model that allows for sustainability through early facilitation and trainings, followed by coaching. There is strength in a district-wide, research-based, model to allow all participants to have a common vocabulary. Appendices provide evidence of the strength of the model through a significant literature review.
- Using Oxley's model of seven phases (see above), an evaluation team will provide tools that facilitate discussion required to review and move forward through the model (cycle phases include (1) take stock of existing practice (2) identify gaps between existing & desired practice (3) generate and study strategies to adapt (4) develop consensus for adopting strategies (5) devise implementation plan (6) develop plan to monitor implementation (7) implement plan. The model fits nicely with the plan in that it will offer a framework for decision-making and evaluation.
- The evaluation process will include early facilitation and trainings, followed by coaching, and ultimately, sustainable practice. The strength of the model is that it is capacity-building and offers a gradual release of responsibility of the coaches in time.
- Results of ongoing evaluation will be reported through a District Dashboard and individual School Dashboards that monitor progress of both programmatic goals and student achievement create opportunities for students to constantly know where they are in the context of their goals.
- An advisory team will be formed to examine data and make recommendations for improvement twice a semester. Qualifications of this team will be a key to effectiveness. Biannual review allows for both instructional and programmatic shifts to address data results. It's important to be able to provide intervention when students begin to

sink.

- Performance data will be shared with key stakeholders, teachers, parents, and students through the district website, parent connection reports, and at key communication meetings. Communication allows for a shared vision. Buy-in is more likely when all participants are united to celebrate even the smallest gains. Again, it is vital that all parents and stakeholders have access.
- Software and student assessment tools will generate reports that provide valuable feedback to teachers and administrators for instructional decision-making and monitoring instructional achievement against goals. Multiple measures can increase reliability of data and decision-making.
- Adjustment strategies have been identified such as additional resources, professional development, and identifying culture and climate factors that may impede learning. Data analysis is important for informing instruction as trends are noted. The most common adjustment strategies will involve providing additional resources, such as supplemental curriculum. This allows for gaps to be addressed within the scope and sequence of the curriculum.
- Various timelines, activities, responsibilities, and rationale are identified with the goal of the project meeting performance goals each year. The strength of this high-quality aspect of the section is that each stakeholder can be unified towards common goals. The timeline particular to this section did not have each box checked, offering evidence of targeted timeline completion and additional rationale.

Weaknesses:

- Qualifications of advisory team are unclear. The applicant does not make a compelling argument that assures that the advisory team has the background and experience needed to support continuous improvement.

This section scores in the high range due to a continuous improvement plan that is high-quality according to the RTT requirements. The applicant provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for implementation of the continuous improvement process.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Ongoing communications and engagement evidence is provided by the applicant in section (E)(2).

Strengths:

- The school leadership teams will purposefully engage with teachers, families, students, and community-based organizations to establish a positive and engaging school culture, under the guidance of the Advisory team. School leaders are well-positioned to become advocates for change. The dedication to district support within and among principals ensures that they can use each other's expertise for the best way to "sell" what is happening in their building to teachers, parents, students, and community stakeholders.
- Specified reports will be used for ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders. This offers a level of transparency that assists with buy-in from within and outside the district. It also allows for increased community support when progress is made and "group think" for problem solving.
- The Director of Public Information distributes a weekly internal e-newsletter and this established infrastructure will be used to provide updates, highlights, and celebrate accomplishments of school success. The intensity of such a large undertaking would require increased lines of communication.
- Parent connections reports and monthly newsletters will be used to communicate with parents.
- Key Communicator meetings are held three times a year and these meetings will be used to communicate with formal and informal leaders in the community.
- The section includes a timeline for ongoing communications that includes activities, responsibilities, rationale, and an articulated goal, "stakeholders are informed of all program activities." This infrastructure allows for opportunities to discuss technology, make changes in any aspect of the curriculum and instruction and recognize problems at building, staff, or student levels.

Weaknesses: In the rationale section of the timeline, there seems to be an assumption that all parents will be kept informed. It will be important to visit all aspects of data processes throughout the life of the project, particularly ongoing communication and engagement with parents who may not have access to technology. It still remains uncertain if there will be targeted efforts to overcome the families lack of access to technology. It remains uncertain how parents without technology will be part of the ongoing communication and engagement loop.

Strength: In the timeline portion of the plan, it is notable that the goal of informing stakeholders of all program activities is evident for every year of the plan. The plan calls for internal reports, external reports, as well as "Key Communicator" meetings with stakeholders. These meetings are held by the district's Director of Public Information, who will facilitate communications with all constituents. It is a strength of the project that three times a year, all constituents have the

opportunity to engage with district level support staff and can learn information about the grant. The Project Director, Director of Public Information, and Superintendent, are all a part of the ongoing communication out of the district.

This section scores in the high range due to an implementation plan that is high-quality according to the RTT requirements. The applicant provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for implementation of practices, policies, and rules. One point was deducted for a lack of clarity on how the district will communicate with parents who do not have access to technology.

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

**5**

**5**

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (E)(3) the applicant shows evidence of ambitious yet achievable performance measures.

Strengths:

- The applicant identifies 12 performance measures that will be used for college- and career-level mastery with accompanying rationale.
- Assessments to be used for college- and career-level mastery are described. In addition, ESTL plans to use measures related to school engagement, culture, and climate. Descriptions of assessment rigor are provided as well as how measures will be collected. A robust literature review in the appendices provide evidence of rigor for measuring school engagement, culture, and climate.
- Because almost all students tracked (98.4%) are in the African-American subgroup, differentiated subgroups include: males, females, and students with an IEP. This was important reminder in that considerations of performance measures must be viewed somewhat differently given the district demographics.
- Separate measures are provided for student engagement, culture, and climate such as the number of students receiving weekly social worker visits, attendance, truancy, and dropouts. Information on these metrics can provide community stakeholders with valuable data. For example, when truancy goes down, attendance goes up, and those numbers have an impact on juvenile crime rates.
- Theory of change includes professional development, coaching, incorporation of inquiry-based learning, improved literacy environment, and academic performance measures. Reference to the literature review provided in the appendices strengthen the argument that change can occur through this five prong approach.

A set of tables lists the student performance measures that will be used for monitoring success. Each measure has an accompanying rationale that effectively addresses ambitious yet achievable measures. While it is not necessary to repeat each performance measure, each was addressed effectively. Notable were ambitious yet achievable targets of the number of students receiving weekly social worker visits, grades K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. This number is expected to increase with increased implementation of Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral interventions and Support (PBIS). While other states and district may use PBIS only, the combination of social worker visits and RAM event participants can attack problems from not only a tiered intervention approach, but a social-emotional approach. Combining an academic and social-emotional approach offers a strong rationale of working with the whole child.

Weaknesses: This section of the application did not contain notable weaknesses.

This section scores in the high range due to the compelling evidence of ambitious yet achievable performance measures, efforts towards continuous improvement, and a theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. Further, the applicant indicates that, if necessary, the district will review the listed measures in relation to other observations--such as student progress toward meeting the goals in their Personalized Learning Plans. The District, School, and Student Dashboards offer yet another avenue of measuring continuous improvement. The section provides sufficient evidence of multiple measures and a willingness to make determinations of additional measures or modifications to the selected measures are needed.

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

**5**

**5**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (E)(4) highlights the applicant's goals and objectives for evaluating effectiveness of proposed investments.

Strengths:

- An external evaluator will be selected and an evaluation team will develop instruments as needed, provide feedback

to assure quality, and prepare and disseminate findings and reports. An evaluator will be selected with the depth and breadth of experience and qualifications to serve on the project. This position is very important to the evaluation process and all stakeholders need assurances that an individual/group with the right expertise is selected.

- An evaluation team will develop instruments as needed, provide feedback to assure quality, prepare and disseminate findings and reports to staff and other stakeholders. This offers the project a checks and balances scenario to ensure a quality evaluation cycle.
- A mixed-method approach will be used.(Research is provided as to the appropriateness of the approach.) It is important that triangulation can be relied upon to add rigor to the evaluation.
- Theory-driven evaluation measures will be employed. A theoretical framework will provide fidelity, particularly when the n is such a high number of students and there are multiple sites from which to collect data.
- Milestones and target dates will be determined based on successful award notification dates.
- Specific clusters of evaluation include, school culture transformation, coaching quality and impacts, instructional practices quality and impacts, training quality and impacts on professional learning, and professional learning communities as data teams. Each of the clusters will allow for distinct data sets and targeted analysis by those whose targeted efforts belong to a particular cluster.
- Data storage and analysis is described, providing assurances that revisiting questionable data sets is possible and that any discrepancies in data can be revisited or recalculated depending on high variability in results or other problematic situations.
- Timeline and accompanying charts indicate a rigorous program evaluation that addresses the implementation process, cultural change, implementation outcomes, and performance outcomes. Multiple levels and multiple measures ensure checks and balances of project implementation.

In order to meet the needed aspect of rigorously evaluating effectiveness such as professional development and activities that employ technology, the applicant offers evidence in this and other sections. For example, an evaluation team will develop instruments as needed, provide feedback to assure quality, prepare and disseminate findings that meet funder-requirements. In the section prior to this one, multiple data **sources** are provided to meet the multiple **collection methods** of this section.

Activities, responsibilities, and rationale seem to be accounted for. For example, a visit to each site by the evaluation team will ensure a more personalized approach to data collection (and the opportunity of direct feedback from site stakeholders), quarterly and ongoing. This example is typical of the table that offers evidence of a detailed program of evaluation activities and strong rationales.

Table E3 offers a picture of the key parties responsible for program evaluation. The timeline is feasible and demonstrates yearly as well as quarterly commitment to evaluation as well as timely collection of data to support all measures. Key parties responsible for various segments of program evaluation are identified and deliverables (data collection, descriptive statistics, protocols, and analysis).

This section scores in the high range due to a continuous improvement plan that is high-quality according to the RTT requirements.The applicant provides clearly presented activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for implementation of the continuous improvement process.Multiple measures can provide significant assurances to all key stakeholders that investments are being evaluated for efficacy.

## F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

### (F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Section (F)(1) gives some detail as to the funds that will support the project.

Strengths: (a) The applicant identifies 20-25% of additional funding through in-kind and donated amounts based on other state, federal, and regionally funded initiatives operated through ESTL in the past decade including Innovative Approaches to Literacy, Smaller Learning Communities, Transition to Teaching, School Leadership Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a School Improvement Grant, and numerous partnerships for in-kind support. The budget, which is yet to be determined in this section, will be broken into five sections.

Strengths: The applicant identifies partners such as vendors, consultants, cooperatives, and university partners who will help in publication of findings. The budget addresses the six components of the previous narrative.

Weaknesses: (b) it is unclear what the dollar amounts are in this section, or rationale for investments and priorities. Budget subparts were located elsewhere in the project, however, it was difficult to determine a narrative alignment and alignment to spending justification. Also problematic were the high charges of project consultants, particularly when the project site is so close to IHE's who might provide consultation personnel at a reduced rate.

Two other budget weaknesses are also apparent from the budget tables. First, if the technology will be in place for the initiative, it seems unusual that 475,669.80 is being spent on print books when new literacies are available through e-book content. Second, because of the ESTL district's proximity to IHE support, that the university professors might be utilized at a better rate than \$2,299 per day for an intervention coach.

Strengths:

(ii) Budget tables indicate which funds will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs incurred during and after the grant period, with a focus on strategies that will ensure long-term sustainability. The narrative provided budgets in narrative form, however, corresponding dollar amounts were difficult to locate. Avenues of potential university partnership were discussed, though viewed as in-kind and details are unknown at this time. In-kind support from educational cooperatives were included as well as positive connections to national and state organizations such as the Illinois Association of School Superintendents, the Illinois Association of School Administrators, and the Illinois Board of Education.

This section scores in the high range but deductions are taken due to the lack of rationale for several of the costs built into the budget as described above.

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

**10**

**9**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (F)(2) the applicant describes a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant.

Strengths:

- The applicant describes project initiatives that the district will fully maintain at the completion of the grant funded period, such as (1) improved culture and climate, (2) extensive professional development and coaching, (3) teacher and technology-driven personalized instruction, (4) content-rich STEM infusion including project-based learning, (5) literacy enrichment, and (6) ongoing support.
- Past investments include a description of current grants. The narrative described a negative tax scenario through low tax roles and a reliance on federal funding. District analysis of past investments indicates that less than 10% of ESTL's annual district revenue comes from local property taxes, even though East St. Louis has one of the highest tax rates in the state. The community's lack of property wealth has created almost a total reliance on state and federal funding. It is notable that the superintendent of ESTL district is working closely with the governor of the state to redesign the tax structure to offer a more favorable tax scenario to the district patrons.
- ESTL has had other grants funded and indicates that challenges that have been identified in those grants have been used to inform the design of the current application. This type of revision gives evidence of the type of on-going attention to continuous improvement that is characteristic of this district.
- Future funding comments also point to the collaboration with state personnel--the governor of Illinois in particular--in an effort to change the school funding formula at the legislative level.
- Private funds are being sought and various celebrities are being strategically targeted demonstrate a creative effort to seek resources for money. Strategic plans are underway to encourage targeted celebrities to financially support ESTL and invest in the students' futures.

The applicant does not make clear that current administration will evaluate past investments (two years prior to his taking over the district) and, given the condition of the district when his administration was put in place, it may not be possible. However, part of the superintendent's efforts include communication at the state level, to change the funding formula in Illinois. The last two years have seen enormous strides in fiscal reform (closing schools is a drastic example of those efforts) and improved productivity (The RAM event is valued well into the millions). However, lack of clarity of evidence to support improved productivity requires a deduction in points.

Tables were available that detailed both a high-quality implementation plan and a three year post-grant budget. The two budget tables were robust and included activities, budgets, per-student costs, responsibilities, rationale, and project/post-project year. Table F1., Implementation timeline for sustainability of project goals offers seven years of activities, responsibilities, and rationale. For example, the Project Director and Transformation Officer hold the responsibility of

forming a foundation for continuation of the culture/climate initiatives. The table indicates a sufficient commitment to sustainability and the required aspects of achievable project goals that include: Teachers participating in ongoing professional development, the district continuing to support project initiatives that include culture and climate, STEM learning, literacy, community support, and technology-driven personalized instruction. Following Table F1, is Table F2, which lists three years of a reasonable, estimated post-grant budget. The post-grant budget table offers categories, supported activities, and three years of post-grant expenditure estimates. The applicant pares the post-grant budget down to a "per student cost" of \$418 per student.

This section scores in the high range due to a continuous improvement plan that is high-quality according to RTT standards. The applicant provides activities, responsibilities, rationale, and a timeline for implementation of the continuous improvement process. The sustainability of project goals is aligned to an effective post-project funding plan.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

In this section, the applicant articulates a description of the competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

(1) The narrative includes a description of the partnership with the Mayor's Office, business leaders, Wyman's Teen Outreach Program, and the regional hospital to coordinate a "Remote Area Medical" or (RAM) event. This partnership allows coordination of a free community medical, dental, and vision health clinics for the community. This city-led effort allows community organizers to bring the RAM event to East St. Louis every year. Scale-up of this event will allow students in ESTL district to gain valuable services that they need to perform well in school.

(2) The applicant anticipates results that include, student health and dental care treated, students and families gaining literacy competencies, family and student vision care, middle and high school social and emotional health needs met. Truancy, suspensions, and expulsions will decrease and attendance will increase.

(3) The narrative describes assessment and scale-up through:

(a) Tracked indicators that include both aggregate and individual student indicators such as attendance and truancy, disciplinary actions, engagement in community service learning, participation in programming and progress of the student in programming, and academic performance. These student indicators indicate a strong plan to look at multiple measures of student progress academically and socio-emotionally.

(b) The target resources section describes a student population that is 99.5% minority and 97.2% low-income. High crime, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and gang violence combine with a lack of basic medical care to create bleak family outlooks. ESTL is targeting the majority of its community programming resources to the Teen Outreach Program, Touchette Regional Hospital to address significant social and emotional needs through a RAM event. This school-to-community approach is also reciprocal as the district targets efforts to provide training for future careers in the medical field. The reviewer finds this approach to be mutually beneficial for internal and external stakeholders.

(c) The narrative indicates that scale-up of a community event that will reach beyond the scope of the district students and into the community. ESTL is also requesting that current hospital adolescent outreach programs be scaled up to reach all district students. Notable is the aspect of the district, mayor's and governor's offices buy-in and collaboration on the event. It is difficult for students to learn if they face high rates of poverty, gang violence, drug addiction, and gambling. the RAM event incorporates nationally-recognized, evidence-based programs to reduce the risk of problem behavior, promotes healthy choices, and empowers students to lead successful lives and build strong communities. The Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program will serve students ages 12-17 who need intensive services. In addition, ESTL will evaluate the implementation of the RAM event and other social/medical services using Oxley's model for feedback and continuous improvement.

(d) ESTL eventually plans to include a focus on civic engagement and community service as part of social studies classes grades 6-12. This type of highly engaging effort will allow students to explore real-world problems and challenges, simultaneously developing cross-curriculum skills while working in small collaborative groups. This type of community engagement should allow students to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they're studying

(4) This section indicates the applicant's intent to integrate education and other services. The three program elements

targeted for health and emotional services will address community problems faced by ESTL families and students. (health, dental, vision, and healthy behaviors). Further, the ESTL district will collaborate with community stakeholders to bring a RAM clinic to East St. Louis. The applicant offers a list of activities/responsibilities for bringing this type of outreach to the community. Included in this outreach program will be "back to school" health services to make sure students have dental, vision care, and screenings to ensure students are healthy and ready to learn. Wyman's Teen Outreach Program will augment physical health services with mental, social, and emotional wellness curriculum and services.

(5) Capacity-building capabilities of community partners are provided in this section. (a) Key community partners and resources are listed as well as their capacities for improving services for students, families, and community members. Part of the current infrastructure includes the ability to assess student needs and match physical and emotional services to those needs. (b) This section describes how important the need is for a RAM clinic in East St. Louis. Surveys indicated such important need that the Governor of Illinois signed a law allowing healthcare providers from out of state to volunteer services without Illinois credentials. The district will work with the Wyman Center and the Leslie Bates Davis Neighborhood House to identify specific needs at ESTL middle schools and to implement a curriculum that addresses issues such as truancy, school-wide. (c) The narrative indicates that ESTL district and its partners will utilize a data system to make decisions based on collected information and participant feedback. (d) Parents and families will be represented in community meetings and outreach booths at parent/teacher conferences. (e) The stakeholders for this scaled up effort will work together to develop and implement a management system that requires, "...constant 'plan, do, learn, adjust' analysis." Examples are listed that support a continual focus on program quality and performance.

(6) A robust chart identifies annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level results. Results will be measured through monthly reviews of the program against fidelity standards, with adjusted course corrections as needed, data collection and monitoring, regular meetings with school partners to discuss program progress and quarterly "learning" meetings that examine what is working and what challenges remain. The implementation of the RAM event shows great detail in planning, preparation, stakeholder buy-in, and research-based programs, implementation, and assessment. It appears to have every ingredient necessary for success.

Chronic truancy reduction rates for middle school students seem to be somewhat higher than can be achievable, but are ambitious.

This section scores in the high range due to a compelling argument and evidence for a high-quality plan according to RTT guidelines. The applicant's attempt to integrate education and other services appears to be a highly effective approach to affect change. Addressing mental health issues that can be addressed through adolescent services can positively impact both the community and the school district. The applicant's ambitious yet achievable plan is high-quality according to RTT guidelines in that it includes key goals and activities to be undertaken. Many families in poverty will be able to access valuable services for health and well-being that will provide basic necessities for school readiness. The applicant also includes: a rationale for the activities, deliverables, a timeline, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant offers a coherent and comprehensive proposal to address and build on core assurance areas and create learning environments designed to improve instruction and learning.

With grant funding, the district will

(1) Adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace. The state has adopted the CCSS and ESTL developed a pre-K through grade 12 curriculum and supporting professional development that is aligned to the standards. ESTL will adopt the state-provided PARCC assessments, aligned to the CCSS in 2014-15. These new assessments build a pathway to college and career readiness by tracking student progress. The district goes beyond this annual assessment to provide local, formative assessments tied to technology initiatives that allow continuous checks for understanding and academic progress.

(2) Build data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction. In addition to participating in the ISLE (Illinois Shared Learning Environment) system that tracks individual student data and is displayed on dashboards and learning maps to provide personalized learning, the

district has implemented a local plan to provide schools with technology, training, and support for integrated student data collection, reporting, and analysis.

(3) Recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals especially where they are needed most. In January 2012, the Illinois General Assembly required all teacher and principal evaluation systems to include student growth. ESTL is the first district in the state to implement a teacher evaluation system using student performance data. Under this obligation, ESTL will implement a Charlotte Danielson Framework evaluation tool for all teachers and principals. A hiring plan and induction/teacher mentoring plan as well as a principal mentoring program is designed to hire, mentor, and retain high quality teachers and administrators.

(4) Turn around lowest-achieving schools. Since 2010, ESTL has targeted district transformation and the high school, in particular. Strategies include incorporation of the Charlotte Danielson Framework, implement CCSS, and adopt benchmark assessments and common unit assessments. ESTL desires to scale-up and expand current efforts targeted at improving school climate and culture, utilize data-driven decision making, aligning the curriculum and CCSS, improve instruction, provide student and family support services, and implement professional development through professional learning communities.

District leadership has been strengthened and administrators are empowered to address specific and differentiated needs in their buildings.

Teacher's professional development, coaching, and professional learning communities allow for continuous improvement of instruction. Multiple strategies for improving instruction are evident throughout the application. New instructional norms have been developed to align with Danielson's framework for teaching. Struggling students have multiple opportunities for formative assessment and data-driven interventions to increase engagement and academic achievement.

Student support teams will foster a climate of a community of learners. A student-centered approach offers technological supports that include students taking ownership of their learning goals and plans to reach those goals. ESTL has a comprehensive and coherent vision for reform that aligns with college-and career-ready standards and college-and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant outlines a strategic, and high-quality plan that addresses strategies for decreasing achievement gaps for all students, and to expand from school-based efforts to community health and emotional wellness projects.

Use of data-driven decision making for continuous improvement is prevalent in all aspects of the application. The application continually provides goals, activities, benchmarks, evidence, and timelines, to carry out an ambitious but achievable project.

Total	210	175
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0068IL-3 for East St. Louis School District

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

#### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

ESTL presents a very detailed narrative in presenting the scope of its economic, educational, and social challenges. The city and district have been subject, over a long period of time, to severe economic downturns, ongoing high poverty, a drastic reduction in population, extremely low student achievement, and alarming rates of violent crime. ESTL is currently under Illinois State Board control and operates under a Consent Decree, with a superintendent selected jointly by ISBE and ESTL in 2011. Despite the bleakness of its

past and current conditions, ESTL is able to provide a thorough description of its reform vision for the future of the district.

(a) The narrative describes its work in creating a five-year strategic plan, which addresses each of the four core educational assurance areas, as defined by the RTTT notice. (1) With regard to standards and assessments, ESTL is part of a RTTT state and will be an early user of the PARCC assessments. The application indicates that ESTL has aligned its own curriculum with the CCSS, and is developing Programs of Study, part of the IL P-20 Council, in two STEM areas. (2) In the assurance area of data systems used to measure and inform, ESTL is an early pilot district in the state-developed IL Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), which appears to be a comprehensive data gathering and resource integration system. The platform has the capacity to link student data in order to create learner profiles and supply information for the Personalized Learning Plans. The system has tools that align learning resources to CCSS, creates shared libraries for CCSS resources, and enables educator collaboration on instructional design. These are strong benefits for a small district to have at hand. (3) ESTL is also participating in the IL Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), a system of teacher and principal evaluations, and indicates that it is the first district in the state to implement a teacher evaluation system under PERA, piloting the Danielson evaluation model at the high school and one of the elementary schools in 2013-14. The district has developed a hiring plan to hire and retain competent teachers (not described), and makes use of a Grow Your Own/Transition to Teaching program to help local talent become certificated. It also is using a state RTTT mentoring model for both principal and teacher professional development, and as a strategy to retain and reward effective educators. The mentoring model makes use of the Danielson framework for teacher effectiveness, and thus provides additional support toward improving practice. (4) ESTL is in its sixth year of federal corrective action. One elementary school is in its second year of school improvement, while five others range from 5 to 12 years in School Improvement. East St. Louis High School received a federal SIG grant in 2013, and the narrative describes its early initiatives related to climate and culture, assessment, curriculum and instruction, student supports, and professional learning communities for teachers. At this early stage, none of the turnaround initiatives could be deemed successful, but the rate of intensity in reform has clearly accelerated in the last two years and appears to be gaining traction.

(b) ESTL's approach to reaching its application goals is called Achieving Academic Gold. This plan has chosen to address the challenges of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity by bringing together a set of elements based on best practices -- including improving culture and climate, teacher professional development and instructional coaching, a strong emphasis on technology-driven personalized instruction, linking STEM learning K-12, and literacy enrichment. Each of these appears to be clear and credible, although the narrative on personalized learning seems to lean heavily on RTI interventions and use of technology, rather than highlight deep changes in instructional practice. None of these strategies will increase equity on its own, but the integration of efforts show promise to vigorously reframe current mindsets and low expectations.

(c) The description of classroom experience relies heavily on technology-based materials, although it also includes brief descriptions on the role of the teacher and small groups. While the appendices carry a good deal of information about instructional strategies and Project-based Learning, the example given sounds like a Read 180 classroom. That example is not sufficient to show how creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills will be supported systemically if the students aren't actually working together regularly in classroom environments.

This section scores in the high range, due to the thoroughness of its response, and ESTL's clear collaboration with the IL RTTT grant initiatives. The applicant has provided a comprehensive thoughtful response to the section.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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<b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
ESTL will serve all of its schools and students, as the entire district is one of high-poverty as evidenced by its 100% F/R lunch status and long-term low student performance. Table A1 provided by the district gives stark evidence of the numbers of low-performing students in each school. Table A2 provides all the requested information in this section, including numbers of participating students, participating students from low-income families, high-need students, and participating educators.		
This section scores at the top end of the high range due to the completeness of its answer. There are no weaknesses noted.		

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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<b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
This section requires the inclusion of a high-quality plan describing the scale-up for districtwide change. A high-quality plan, as defined by the RTTT notice, includes key goals, activities, responsible parties, and timeline. ESTL does not provide such a plan, per se, since ESTL is already including all of its students in the grant.		
The application does provide a charted logic model for its theory of change in Figure 2. The figure describes the current situation, project inputs, activities, theory of change, and proposed project impact -- which addresses, for the most part, the goals and activities components of a high-quality plan. The logic model does not provide a timeline or responsible		

parties, but does offer a clear description of how the current situation will have changed through grant implementation. This provides an inference concerning scale-up, although not directly stated.

This section scores in the high range, because it provides a substantive answer without all the elements of a high-quality plan, and does include a thoughtful theory of action chart which gives the reviewer sufficient information to determine that the proposal will help the applicant reach its outcome goals.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The application provides all the requested charts on LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes.

(a) In the tables on student performance, it should be noted that the baseline data and target goals refer to the percentages of students who meet NWEA individually prescribed Growth Projections, not to percentages of students scoring proficient or above on the exam itself. Given the steep improvement trajectory that ESTL faces for its students (Table A1), it is understood that improvement defined as growth projections is acceptable and perhaps more feasible. However, even the jumps expected here are precipitous, especially in the first two years of the grant. For example, in NWEA Reading in grades 2-3, students are expected to move from a baseline of 26% meeting growth projections to 45% in the first year and then 65% in the second year. With so much resource and training being started in the first years, these targets do seem unrealistic. Early jumps are also found for other grades in Reading and also in math. No racial/ethnic subgroups are included in the tables because ESTL is 98% African American in student composition.

(b) For the tables on decreasing achievement gaps, ESTL is comparing its male, female, and IEP subgroups to IL state averages in scoring proficient on ISAT tests in reading and math. In this setting, it would seem appropriate to also compare the African American subgroup in ESTL to the African American subgroup in the state data, because male and female comparisons with state data will not show degree of African American improvement, which is key here. As the achievement gaps are written here, they are vast in the baseline year, ranging from a gap of 33% to over 70%. The way that the table is constructed does not show whether the gap decreases will be due to improvement in ESTL or stagnant rates in the state data.

(c) For the table on graduation rates, ESTL is seeking to exceed state target rates for graduation (currently 85%) to reach 90-92% graduation rate in 2017-18, in the post-grant year. This is both ambitious and commendable. Given the intense focus of the proposal on monitoring student progress from early grades toward graduation, it is probably also a realistic goal.

(d) ESTL wants to reach a post-grant college enrollment rate of 80% across its subgroups, but does not mention a statewide rate or target.

This section scores in the high range due to the appropriateness of its response, although the precipitously high leaps in the first years of implementation are of some concern.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) This was a very difficult section for ESTL to respond to, as they themselves admit in this section. The district has a long, unrelenting history of poor student performance, leading to its being taken over by ISBE in 2011 and now operating under a Consent Decree. This section highlights many promising changes in the district since the Consent Decree and the hiring of the current superintendent. For example, the application notes major changes in fiscal policies, marked changes in principal staffing, school closures, loss of teaching staff, and the beginnings of district-wide teacher professional development. As noted earlier, ESTL has been active in piloting and integrating the state's RTTT initiatives in the last two years, and should be commended for that initiative. ESTL's efforts in establishing a bilingual program and SpEd inclusion model are particularly noteworthy. However, the district still has a long way to go in improving student learning outcomes, closing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation and college enrollment rates.

(b) ESTL appears to have aggressively begun changes in East St. Louis High School, one of its persistently lowest-performing schools. For example, it has created pathways at the school, begun dual enrollment courses, and added monitoring of discipline and truancy. As noted in section A1, ESTL describes its early initiatives related to climate and

culture, assessment, curriculum and instruction, student supports, and professional learning communities for teachers. It is too early to declare success, but it seems that the changes have taken hold over the last two years and could lead to the desired results. The extent of these reform efforts in only two years is a strength for the district.

(c) It also appears that the new administration has updated and made more visible student performance data. The new Family and Student Access portal offers data on student performance to parents and students, although it appears that their access is their own responsibility. A new position of Assessment Specialist is now offering training to staff on the review and use of data to drive instructional improvement.

This section scores in the low part of the middle range, giving some credit to the yeoman efforts of the district as almost "starting over" in 2011-12 under its new management system. While much of the work looks to be promising, and some areas have been tackled aggressively, there has not been enough time to establish a clear record of success.

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

**5**

**1**

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL provides several examples of its journey toward increased transparency in communication, and is in a unique position of weekly oversight from ISBE. With regard to the posting of salaries and expenditures, ESTL indicates that it posts the salaries of all administrators and teachers in the district on its website. It does not indicate if these salaries are broken out as requested by (a), (b), and (c) in this section, nor does it indicate the posting of non-personnel expenditures. The response in this section would have been much clearer with a sample report, so that the subcategories could be easily seen.

This section scores low, due to lack of information about requested postings of salaries and non-personnel expenditures.

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

**10**

**10**

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL's time under the Consent Decree is only two years old, and has at least two more years to run, with possible extensions. The expectations of the Consent Decree (provided in the appendix) do appear to closely match the thrust of the district's own initiative, Achieving Academic Gold, which speaks to a sense of shared understandings. This congruence sets the table for the district to be able to make the changes necessary in this grant. Even within the constraints of the Consent Decree, ESTL has certainly moved quickly with authority on difficult fiscal, personnel, and site matters (including school closings and reduction in staff). The district indicates that it already has authority for implementing much of the reform effort through existing school board policies regarding literacy interventions, extensions of instructional time, high-quality learning materials, and emphasis on career-ready objectives, which are main categories in its plan, Achieving Academic Gold. The district has also shown evidence of its successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to integrate and put in place state RTTT initiatives, such as state standards and assessments, teacher evaluation systems, and data systems. This work could not have been done without a strong level of district empowerment, and the district should be commended for all it has begun in the last two years.

This section scores at the top end of the high range due to the many examples provided demonstrating the district's ability to move forward in a uniquely challenging educational governance setting. Although it seems antithetical that a district under Consent Decree could have sufficient authority and flexibility to implement its plan, the examples offered in this section (and throughout the application) provide evidence that ESTL has been able to move quickly and with authority. There are no weaknesses noted.

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

**15**

**8**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) ESTL describes its process of involving stakeholders in determining the elements of Achieving Academic Gold, based on needs assessments at all schools and grade levels. It provides sign-in sheets from one principal's meeting and one site meeting as examples. ESTL also used data from Title I needs assessments, culminating in the proposal emphasis on specific areas, such as implementing learning standards, pedagogical skills, PLCs, etc. The district also used its format of Key Communicator meetings to elicit concerns and priorities from parents and community members. The only reference to how stakeholder feedback was used to revise the proposal was related to feedback from principals. Teacher input was solicited through focus groups, but there was no indication of their degree of support, or how suggestions were used from the focus groups to modify the proposal. The proposal does carry the signature of the head of the teachers' bargaining unit. No information was provided on gathering or using student input.

(b) Letters of support from local government, community organizations, and a principal were provided in the appendix. No

letters of support were provided from business community, advocacy groups or higher education.

This section scores in the lower end of the middle range, because although it did solicit a great deal of input from stakeholders early in the process, there was only one example of use of that input in revision. No information was provided about student input. Letters of support from key stakeholders, such as business community, advocacy groups and higher education, were not provided in the appendices.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL addresses fully each point and subpoint of this question in its response and does provide a plan for improving learning and teaching that meets the RTTT definition for a high-quality plan. The plan includes goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines. Deliverables are not listed as a plan category, but are described sufficiently within the narrative. The major activities are assigned across a number of responsible parties, which leads to shared responsibility. The timeline is a mixture of activities that can be accomplished in one or two years, and those that will continue across the life of the grant.

(a) (i-ii) To link what they are learning to their own goals, all middle school and high school students will have a Personalized Learning Plan, that defines their own learning goals, their strengths and weaknesses, and sets out an individualized plan of action. Eighth and ninth grade students will also take the ACT Explore assessment, which aids them in exploring options for their future. Elementary students will have access to multi-area resource collections and be engaged in problem-based learning and field studies in order to link their learning to interests and goals. The opportunities and experiences cited above also serve to link student interests and goals to college and career-ready standards, according to the application. In order to accommodate increased student interest and specialization, ESTL will have enriched CTE classes and AP/pre-AP coursework. ESTL is also beginning to implement state-sponsored Programs of Study at the high school, offering at least two STEM-related career pathways.

(a-iii) With regard to involvement in deep learning, ESTL cites the use of rigorous coursework, instructional technology, inquiry-based learning, STEM-focused instruction, and field studies as its strategies to engage students. It appears that the district will develop parallel strands of instructional technology for students and instructional professional development for teachers so that students will eventually be engaged in deep learning both in computer and classroom contexts. This appears to be an effective approach.

(a-iv) As ESTL is a community of 98% African Americans, the district's approach to providing access/exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives seems to offer two tracks. It will combine an internal exploration of learning more deeply about its own community through community service and community-based problem solving, with an external exploration of diversity through instructional media, field studies, multicultural content in social studies and sciences, etc.

(a-v) ESTL proposes to develop skills through increased student participation into inquiry and problem solving and collaborative learning. In Table C1, ESTL summarizes the research-based practices it wants to integrate into student learning along with its Achieving Academic Gold implementation strategies. The chart is a strong summary presentation of the major components of the C1(a) segment, which is well-thought out and presented.

(b) The LEA's response to this segment about high-quality content and instructional opportunities, regular feedback, and accommodations for high needs students offers a comprehensive approach to major changes in the provision of instruction.

(b-i) The Personalized Learning Plan is directly related to the firm establishment of a personalized sequence of content and skill development. The application makes the case that both vertical and horizontal integration of instruction will help target the curriculum and instruction to the learner's needs.

(b-ii) ESTL appropriately explains that its instructional reforms will be sweeping into every classroom, and that it requires major support to do so. Examples of these changes include changes in curriculum related to CCSS, widespread professional development of teachers including grade-span and vertical teacher interchanges, and a three-pronged approach to personalized instruction. In the appendix, an annotated literature review is provided which documents the research base for each of the instructional reforms to be used (also summarized in Table C1).

(b-iii) ESTL recognizes its current shortcomings in this area in its application. It will purposefully seek assistance from

media specialists and a newly-formed Digital Learning Task Force in acquiring high-quality content related to CCSS from both commercial and free sources. Although the district does not currently have the content, it has identified what it needs in academic interests, inquiry-based learning, STEM-focused instruction, and off-campus field studies.

(b-iv) The personalized learning plans are intended to be a key vehicle in the visible monitoring of student growth and performance, its use of blended learning opportunities, as well as the use of regular monitoring of data through the district's expanded data systems. Examples are provided of interventions that can start up at certain trigger points of the data, such as modified lessons and instructional strategies, and initiation of tutoring services. ESTL's proposal includes a large investment in training and support for both teachers and students to be functional with the new instructional technology. While it is a massive effort, the approach seems reasonable and well-crafted.

(b-v) ESTL's acknowledgement of its high rates for suspension of Black males (25%), coupled with its high truancy rates, are critical factors in designing the approach that ESTL has taken, in order to be successful with high needs students. Most striking to this reviewer is Table C2, which summarizes the extent to which ESTL students require reading intervention in grades 2-10. At all grade levels listed, about 1/3 of the students scored below Basic in 2013, and another 1/3 to 1/2 of all students tested scored at the Basic level. The application cites a number of specialized intervention programs that will be included in the provision of instructional resources for students.

(c) The response indicates that a system of professional development, coaches, and technical staff will be in place for both teachers and students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources. Students will track their own progress through their Personalized Learning Plans and Parent Portal information. The Digital Learning Task Force described in this section is one example of the mechanisms to be used, and the sum of the efforts appears to be sufficient.

This section scores at the top end of the high range, due to the completeness of its answers, and the high degree of self-knowledge that the district demonstrates in designing its approach to teaching and learning. Given its thoughtful approach, the Teaching and Learning initiatives here have a great chance of success. No weaknesses are noted.

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

**20**

**20**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Again, ESTL's response to this segment fully addresses each point and subpoint of the segment, and does include a high-quality plan for addressing teaching and leading, according to the definitions in the RTTT guidance. The plan includes goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines. While the plan itself is brief, the extensive narrative in this section provides a more detailed description of the plan's intent. For the most part, activities are listed as ongoing over the life of the grant. Additional information relevant to C2 is found in the C1 and D sections.

(a-i) ESTL plans to use a school improvement consultant to identify the scope and sequence of the far-reaching professional development proposed, and a coaching model as the main lever of implementation. In the classrooms, the focus of the personalized learning environment will be an integration of culture and climate change, use of teacher and technology instructional methods, literacy instruction, and inquiry-based STEM instruction. The proposal anticipates three main venues in instruction -- classroom instruction, instructional technology, and small group work. Major professional development for teachers, as described here, is in Tier II and III RTI instructional intervention strategies, experiential learning, and small group work strategies. The response in this segment is both thorough and thoughtful.

(a-ii) Instructional coaches will work with classrooms on an individual basis and also facilitate PLCs for teachers at sites. Given the already-mentioned suspension and truancy rates, coaches will also work with teachers/schools on improving climate and culture within the schools. Ongoing PD in the area of the use of instructional technology has already been described. The investment in STEM and inquiry-based learning are intended to change the long-term and short-term instructional planning/delivery of classroom teachers.

(a-iii) ESTL proposes that it is building in regular monitoring of student progress, using the mentoring as the basis for student support and instructional improvement -- enhancing the coaches role to include data review and discussions on improvements based on data review. The five areas outlined in the narrative are both extensive and targeted -- determining student placements, understanding student motivation and participation, reviewing teaching strategies for diverse learners, evaluating the instructional environment, and identifying strengths/weaknesses/refinements.

(a-iv) ESTL is the first district in IL to implement the new teacher and principal evaluation system, using the Danielson Framework, and describes its preparation of coaches, teachers, and principals through professional development consultants. The district describes in detail its proposed venues and curriculum for teacher professional development, and includes a four-year implementation timeline for PD. Also, ESTL is in its second year of using the Haberman Star Principal process to identify strength and weaknesses of principals in the district, which is fully funded through another grant. ESTL's response to this segment is well-conceived and articulated. The appendices carry more detailed information on the teacher and principal assessment systems.

(b) Individual school site teams will lead the implementation of Achieving Academic Gold at their sites, in order to monitor the effective use of technology, data, instructional approaches, and access to/use of high-quality resources linked to CCSS.

This is particularly important since site media centers are being started over, almost from scratch, after deep budget cuts. Appropriate and effective use of these resources will be key to matching student needs to current and proposed resources. The multi-faceted approach described in this segment, if used in an integrated fashion, seems poised to provide information to help educators identify optimal learning approaches, including the use of formative assessments, principal-walk throughs, student response tools, and team meetings to review students' PLEPs. ESTL's response to this segment is well-conceived and articulated.

(c) The main components of the teacher and principal evaluation systems were described earlier, and this segment provides additional information about resources available to ESTL through the state's RTTT Induction and Mentoring grant and the federally-funded School Leadership grant. This segment correlates the major components of each system to each other, and describes appropriately how the two systems can work compatibly. This correlation is of great benefit to the district, as its continuous improvement measures across systems are closely matched. The strategies for school improvement come from Edmonds, Lezotte, and others in the form of Correlates of Effective Schools. These serve as a reminder to ESTL that movement forward comes from a successful blend of opportunities, not just from one intervention. In Table C5, ESTL offers a timeline for implementing its instructional strategies, including the implementation of the teacher and principal evaluation systems. The timeline is ambitious, given the scope of all that needs to be accomplished, but appropriate. ESTL's response to this segment is well-conceived and articulated.

(d) ESTL recognizes that it is starting with a system in which 0% of its teachers and principals were categorized as effective in 2012-13, according to NWEA, and therefore, that its investment in this area is enormous. ESTL describes the processes and personnel it has put in place since that time (and the personnel that it has removed), and how those processes and personnel can lead to increased numbers of effective principals and teachers. The district provides a plan for increasing the numbers of effective teachers and principals, although it is brief. The plan does contain goals, activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timeline. By itself, it is not very informative, but when coupled with information from the C1 and D sections, the plan is sufficient to demonstrate ESTL's intent to increase the numbers of students with effective teachers and principals. The combined thrusts of professional development for instruction and high-quality CCSS curriculum appear to be appropriate and achievable vehicles for this effort. The district's participation in the state's RTTT evaluation systems, as noted earlier, is a plus for them.

This section scores at the top end of the high range, due to the completeness and comprehensiveness of its answers, and the high degree of self-knowledge that the district demonstrates in recognizing the vastness of its task in designing systems of teaching and leading and increasing the numbers of effective personnel. There are no weaknesses noted.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL has responded fully to each of the components of this section and has provided a high-quality plan, as defined in the RTTT notice. Although there is not a column for deliverables, deliverables are mentioned within the narrative, making them obvious, such as the use of the Personalized Learning Plans and data on course enrollments. The timeline stays the same for all activities, but that appears to be appropriate -- all activities related to practices, policies, and rules do start in the first year and continue on throughout the life of the grant. The initiatives listed below are intended to be used fully in each of the district's schools.

(a) As part of the district's reorganization under the Consent Decree, the new superintendent already has made major changes in the organizational form and function of the central office, to increase the focus on academic improvement and school support. The positions changed and their new functions are described fully in the applicant's response.

(b) An earlier section discussed the composition and function of site leadership teams for the grant. This section provides an illustration of the flexibility and autonomy of such teams, using East St. Louis High School as an example. It cited the school's ability to increase instructional time via a change in schedule and to develop a summer program, marking flexibility in use of staffing and budget. Support from the district and IL law made it possible for the principal at the school to have increased authority over hiring and firing of teachers. The application does not directly state that all district schools have the same level of flexibility/authority in these same areas, which is a weakness.

(c) ESTL indicates that it will establish benchmarks for mastery as part of CCSS, not determined by seat time, and will

offer flexibility in progress toward standards through AP courses, dual credit courses, instructional technology and use of support personnel. As the benchmarks for mastery relate directly to the standards and problem-based learning, these could be very strong efforts to change the mindset of what demonstration of mastery can include. This appears to be appropriate and well-reasoned as evidenced in the appendices citing the literature reviews behind this work.

(d) In a similar fashion, ESTL addresses mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways using some of the same resources and strategies as in (c), but also through the use of mastery monitoring via the student's Personalized Learning Plan. For example the student's plan could indicate that s/he will demonstrate a math standard appropriately within a science class or CTE course. Earlier sections described how assessment projects in inquiry-based learning and problem-based learning could be used as demonstrations of mastery other than traditional methods.

(e) The district has no English Learner population, but does indicate that the Personalized Learning Plans and Student Support Teams, in addition to the resources and strategies listed in (c) and (d), will allow it to monitor the adaptability and accessibility of its offerings to all students. For example, the SSTs may suggest individualized strategies for a student, and may support the student with outside social services.

This section scores at the top end of the high range, because it was fully responsive to all components of the questions, and because it does have a high-quality plan for implementing practices, policies, and rules which appears to be reasonable and appropriate. The only weakness noted was the lack of information about all schools in the district enjoying the same breadth of authority/flexibility as the high school.

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

**10**

**8**

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL has responded fully and in detail to each of the components in this section, and has provided a high-quality plan for how it will implement and monitor district and school infrastructure. The plan includes project goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timeline. The timeline indicates differentiation between activities that can be accomplished in the first year, and those that will require multi-year implementation. The overall goal, supplying and maintaining school technology systems, is clearly appropriate, and is supported ably by the activities listed in the plan.

(a) ESTL appears to have sufficient and varied opportunities for students and teachers to have access to instructional tools both inside and outside of school buildings. ESTL indicates that it will provide in-school access to technology through school libraries, classrooms, and portable computing carts. Out-of-school access includes access to digital, downloadable content on smart phones or tablets (provided by the district.) The supports for teachers are particularly well-considered, with ample support systems built in. However, parents appear to only have access to digital content at home, whether on their own devices, or mobile devices that students will bring home. There is no mention of parents using school facilities or local community facilities.

(b) Again, the opportunities for support for students and teachers appear to be generous and well-reasoned. These include IT technical support, support from the district assessment specialist, and peer support for both teacher and student small learning communities. The response mentions an online support line available to parents to provide them with technical support, but little description is given as to how that might work.

(c) ESTL is participating in the IL Shared Learning Environment, a partnership between ISBE and several technology institutions, which provides them with an open data format for many uses, including those required in this section. For a small, high-poverty district, this participation provides them with a tremendous technological resource and future capacity for sharing information. The district is to be commended for taking advantage of such a resource. Access for parents in ISLE is not mentioned.

(d) In addition to the benefits of its participation in ISLE, ESTL is also developing tools to share data among its internal systems and become completely interoperational. Some of that interoperability has already occurred, with the last areas of human resource and finances to be integrated in the fall of 2013. This appears to be feasible, due to the efforts of the new position of Director of Technology and the partnership with the state in exactly this area.

This section scores in the lower end of the high range, due to the overall quality of its responses and the inclusion of specific detail in its plan for implementing district and school infrastructure. The only weakness in the response was the minimal opportunity for parents to have access to and technical support for instructional technology resources.

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score

<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ESTL has provided a response which addresses E1 fully, and has included a high-quality plan, as defined in this RTTT notice, for implementing a continuous improvement process. The plan includes goals, activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines. The only plan component missing is deliverables, but deliverables are discussed sufficiently in the narrative itself for them to be apparent to the reviewer. The timeline differentiates between activities that can be completed in the first year, and those which require continuing attention throughout the grant. The main goal, "Project meets performance goals each year" is somewhat general, but is adequately delineated in the specificity of the listed activities.</p> <p>The section narrative describes a model for continuous improvement which will be used in meeting the goals of Achieving Academic Gold. A description of the Oxley model is provided in Figure 3. ESTL intends to use the model in conjunction with an external evaluation team. The role of the external evaluator is described in this section, and has been delineated to work in tandem with the district's grant Advisory Team, not to lead the monitoring alone. The role of the Advisory Team has also been spelled out in some detail, which keeps a major portion of grant accountability with the district itself, not just its external evaluator. Missing from the narrative is the composition of the advisory team and information about selection process. At the site level, principals and data teams will also be part of the monitoring function, and in the loop for continuous improvement at regular intervals. The district indicates that it will make performance data available every month through the district's website, and will advertise the monthly reports via its parent newsletters and the Key Communicators meetings. For sharing evaluation results as they become available, dashboards will be used. The frequency and availability of dashboard information was not made clear.</p> <p>This section scores at the top end of the high range, because the continuous improvement process has been crafted to be a joint responsibility of district, evaluator, and site, with roles and responsibilities appropriately described. The timeline for implementing the continuous improvement process (Table E1) adds to the clarity of functions and to the sense of joint responsibility. The plan seems reasonable and feasible, as it is described here. There were no weaknesses noted.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ESTL has provided a response which addresses E2 fully, and has included a high-quality plan, as defined in this RTTT notice, for ongoing communication and engagement. The plan includes project goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines. As the plan is about ongoing communication and engagement, all activities begin in the first year and continue through the final year, which is appropriate.</p> <p>The applicant already has in place a regularized system of internal and external reports which will offer communication and engagement of stakeholders in the progress of the grant. These appear to be more effective than usual, because teachers and principals provide their own voices to the written communication. In addition, the Key Communicator meetings are a face-to-face opportunity for information and feedback, held three times a year with formal and informal community leaders. They are described more fully in the B2 section and in the appendices. This promises to be an effective strategy in that it offers a district-level view of the grant's progress, yet still maintains a chance for dialogue and discussion. At the site level, the school leadership teams will have the responsibility for primary communication with teachers, families, and students, described as using the guidance of the Advisory Team, to tailor the messages for each school. The plan for this section, although brief, carries the essential information about ongoing communication.</p> <p>This section scores at the top end of the high range, due to the completeness and appropriateness of its responses. There were no weaknesses noted.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ESTL provides all required tables for its performance measures, including 12-14 measures divided into subgroups where applicable. The narrative section describes its selection of each of the measures, the district's demarcation of proficiency on that measure, and the continued use or disuse of the measure in the future, (a) through (c) components. For example, the narrative describes the ISAT and the Prairie State exams, both state tests, discusses how the data will serve as comparison data with state student populations, describes briefly what ESTL will learn from the data, and recognizes when both will be replaced by PARCC in future years. These narratives about each performance measure make it clear that ESTL understands what it is aiming for appropriately.</p> <p>The tables on increasing the numbers of students having effective teachers and principals accurately reflects the district's starting point of currently having 0% of students in the district with effective teachers and principals. Tables (a) and (b)</p>		

move from this starting point of 0 to having 100% effective teachers and principals in 2017-18 in the post-grant year, and 50% having highly-effective teacher and principals in the same year. This measure is truly ambitious, but may be achievable if ESTL is able to put in place its equally ambitious professional development, mentoring, and monitoring functions.

The tables on student performance measures use NWEA individually prescribed Growth Projections, as do the tables in A3. The same comments apply here about early expectations about big jumps in performance in the first years of the grant.

The tables on non-academic performance measures include social worker visits, attendance, and truancy. Given the high rates of suspensions for Black males in this district (25%), it was surprising that the rate of suspensions was not used as a measure, while attendance is used, and does not appear to be much of an issue. However, the chronic truancy rates, given school by school in these tables, is clearly an appropriate performance measure for this district, ranging from 46% to 65%. It becomes clear why an emphasis on "belonging in school" is the focus on the Competitive Priority section of this application. The goal for reducing truancy rates is very ambitious, to be reduced to 8% in the post-grant year of 2017-18. Reduction in truancy can only be achieved as the end result of the changes in climate and culture, engaging students through the PLEP and major instructional reform, and provision of student and family supports, as identified in the Competitive Priority section.

The tables on student performance using the ISAT show percentages of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on that state test in reading and math. There are early big jumps expected, which are certainly ambitious but probably not achievable. For example in grades 4-6 math, students are expected to jump from the current 15% proficiency to 60% proficiency in 2013-14. However, the district will change over to PARCC examinations, as will the state, during the time of the grant, so the expectations will never be realized as listed here.

The tables on FAFSA applications appear to be appropriate, but the tables on percentage of students on track for college and career-readiness have troubling performance measures. In mathematics, the measure is listed as juniors who are passing (D or higher) in Algebra II, Statistics, or Pre-Calculus classes. This is troubling because it may not capture the full cohort of juniors in the district, and because a D grade cannot be considered to be on-track for college and/or career. A second measure in this area looks at the percentages of students who have passed a CTE class. Again, not all students may take CTE classes, and some take multiple classes, so the performance measure is not really indicative of career-readiness across the student population.

This section scores in the high range, due to the completeness of its answers, although the precipitous jumps in the early years and measures for college-and career readiness are a concern.

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

5

5

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

ESTL has provided a response which addresses E4 fully, and has included a high-quality plan, as defined in this RTTT notice, for evaluating the effectiveness of its investments. The plan includes goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines. The only component of a high-quality plan missing from the chart is deliverables, but they are discussed sufficiently within the narrative itself. All but one of the activities are ongoing throughout the grant, as would be expected in an evaluation setting.

ESTL provides an extensive description of the methodology and evaluation instruments that will be used by the external evaluator in this process. Again, the evaluator will work in tandem with the district's grant Advisory Council to determine the actual process for the evaluation. The district specifically calls out a review of certain practices as the thrust of evaluating its effectiveness -- school culture transformations, coaching quality and impacts, instructional practices quality and impacts, training quality and impacts on professional learning, and professional learning communities. This is an impressive set of rigorous evaluation foci which will serve the district well long-term -- and each is described in some detail. This goes over and above the requirements for evaluation of professional development and use of technology. The section also details plans for data storage and types of analyses.

This section scores at the top of the high range, as it is an extremely professional and well-conceived approach to gathering the most important information about the grant. The district is to be commended for the depth of its response to this question, and to the high quality plan provided in this section. ESTL makes a compelling argument here. No weaknesses were noted.

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
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<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The budget narrative and tables fully respond to the questions in this section. The narrative does a superior job of reframing the main tenets of the proposal as reflected in the budget, and sets up each of the project budgets with a full description. The narrative also identifies funds coming from other sources, and use of partners, university support, and cooperatives, such as the ISBE.

The overall budget summary divides the four years of funding into unequal parts, reflecting its focus on major professional development and instructional technology in the first years. The budget identifies a total of \$2,745,925 in funds from other sources used to support the project, all coming in the last three years of the grant. The budget summary narrative table describes each of the category costs, and identifies which are one-time expenses and which are ongoing. These all seem reasonable and sufficient, with the costs directly related to the budget goals. A concern arises in the contractual area, which describes coaching services coming from three consultants -- professional development, reading, and intervention coaching. Each consultant's daily rate is over \$2200 per day -- which seems excessive, given the proximity of universities and research institutions in IL and MO. The third consultant does not list the number of days to be spent on the grant.

Costs for the evaluation team are \$400,000 per year for each of four years, which seems appropriate and reasonable, given the extent to which the application intends to gather and make use of evaluation information..

The project level summaries provide breakdowns in each of the five main project areas and appear to appropriately tied to the goals of each project. Sustainability is addressed fully in F2, but this section does make reference to long-term sustainability as well.

This section scores in the high range, with the only concern being the cost of the three consultants. Other than that one item, the budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient because it accurately reflects its own main premises -- that investment in its own people, updating technology, and major refurbishments of instructional resources, will provide the key to turning this district around.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The application is fully responsive to F2, on sustainability. The response includes narratives about past investments, future funding, and an estimated post-grant budget provided in both narrative and table form (F2). The section does delineate the difference between funds needed for one-time investments and those requiring ongoing funding. The narrative references current state and federal funding sources, such as School Improvement funds, 21st Century Learning Community grants, and the IL RTTT grant. The applicant does provide a high-quality plan, according to RTTT criteria, related to the sustainability of the project's goals. The plan includes goals, key activities, responsible parties, rationale, and timelines that extend three years beyond the last project year. The only component missing is deliverables, but the narrative indicates that deliverables will be new and ongoing partnerships, continuing and new grants from a variety of sources, and an improved state funding formula.

The narrative is necessarily brief in the area of past investments, since the current administration only has two years time in the district. These investments (primarily grants) are mentioned as being in place and supported, but do not have final outcomes that can be used as lessons learned for new funding.

The application outlines sources for prospective future funds for sustainability, including public and private funding sources. Local financial support is not anticipated, due to the tight economy in the area, but state support was mentioned through the IL RTTT grant, and through possible reformulation of the IL school funding formula. The narrative includes a unique proposal on gathering private donations from noted ESTL alumni, including Jackie Joyner-Kersey and others. Future funding sources appear hopeful, but not at all secure. ESTL is to be commended for participating in the St. Louis Collective Impact, a cross-regional community effort of pooling resources.

The application does include an estimated three-year post-grant budget, indicating specifically which expenditures may be ongoing, which will no longer be needed, and which will be handled from different funding sources. The post-grant budget is heaviest in maintaining site-based personnel, as might be expected. This seems reasonable as a priority.

ESTL's plans to evaluate improvements in productivity, for use in the post-grant period, are articulated in the evaluation section and referred to briefly in this section. The six main areas of initiatives in this proposal will each be reviewed for their strengths/weaknesses/lessons learned. The application's use of overarching constructs as the basis for gathering/interpreting evaluation information will serve ESTL well in making meaning from its grant investments.

This section scores at the top end of the high range, due to the completeness of its response, and its thoughtful, reasonable approach to post-grant sustainability. No weaknesses were noted.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The Competitive Preference Priority response addresses each of the selection criteria in this section, point by point. In summary, ESTL has identified a very specific set of services in this section, all related to the health and social/emotional well-being of its students. The Competitive Preference Priority dovetails very well with the Achieving Academic Gold proposal in the main section. It intends to provide the social/emotional and health-related foundation necessary for students and families in severe need to be ready to improve academically.

(1) This section focuses on three specific partnerships -- the Remote Area Medical for a health clinic, a Teen Outreach Program for middle school students at the Lessie Battes Davis Neighborhood House, and a partnership with Touchette Regional Hospital for behavioral health services for adolescent students (ages 12-18). The narrative in this section provides detail about each of the three partnerships -- their current work, indicators of success, and proposed particular services. Given the description in this section of the overwhelming health and social/emotional needs of students in this community (and those described in other sections), the proposed partnership in the Competitive Preference category addresses a set of needs that are fundamental building blocks to the academic practices and resources outlined in the main body of this application.

(2, 6) Both educational and family/community support results are identified in this section. Tables are provided which identify performance measures and desired results related to the Competitive Preference category. In addition to the performance measures, these desired results include attendance, truancy, and high school dropout outcomes, which are antecedents to improved student performance. These appear to be reasonable and achievable for the population of students who take advantage of and remain in the services to be provided.

(3) The section describes the main characteristics of its process for assessing its progress and providing continuous improvement at the aggregate level. Data will be gathered and tracked by each of the partner agencies, as well as the district. In the aggregate, ESTL will track attendance, truancy, discipline, and dropouts. At the individual level, ESTL will track attendance and truancy, discipline, community service learning, programming status, and academic performance. Each of the three partners involved has its own trajectory for scale-up, intending to increase services to district students, but falling within the structures of its own organization/institution. As a method of improving results over time, ESTL will use the Oxley model for continuous improvement to conduct feedback loops, advisory teams, and document review. These methods appear to be appropriately demanding, yet still respectful of the independence of each of the three partners.

(4) Participating students and families are already identified as high-needs families. In order to integrate educational and social/emotional services, the City of East St. Louis is planning to act as a host for the three partner groups and the district. This will provide a convening body with some (limited) resources to bring together the partners in some larger scale events, such as providing a place for the RAM clinic within the city. ESTL and the TOP clinic have agreed that the TOP intervention will focus on civic engagement and community service, in concert with the social studies themes at the ESTL middle schools. The intervention will target "overage for grade" students in those two schools. Clearly a great deal of thought and planning has already gone into the preparation for the partnership, tailoring it to the needs of ESTL students.

(5) The thrust of the partnership desired outcomes is already based on inventories and needs assessments of students and families, and such collection of information will continue. To address decision-making processes and infrastructure, ESTL and the three partners will form a Community Support Advisory Committee, including multiple district and community stakeholders. Parents will be represented on this committee and part of the team sponsoring open community meetings in the larger area. Due to the medical/therapeutic nature of the services to be provided by the three agencies, there cannot be capacity-building in district staff to eventually take over such services themselves. A more reasonable expectation is that district staff may/should become more astute in identifying students and families for such services, and in following up with appropriate school environmental adaptations. The narrative also builds upon the communication and engagement processes already in place in the district, and extends those processes through specific engagement of families who would benefit from the services to be offered here. Discussion of the data and findings from the partnership process, leading to program modification and use, will take place in monthly review forums, feedback and observations, and quarterly "learning" meetings among the partners.

The Competitive Preference Priority section scores at the top end of the high range for the completeness of its response, its purposeful gathering of strategic partners to help in vital non-academic areas, and its well-developed plan for providing assistance to students and

their families in critical need. There were no weaknesses noted.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

This proposal shows high quality and great promise. It does an excellent job of coherently and comprehensively building a system of personalized learning environments, based on the four core education assurance areas. The district is to be commended for moving forward within Consent Decree status to taking charge of its own future, and laying out a vision and plan to improve every aspect of its instructional services. It is also to be commended for its alignment with state RTTT initiatives, which provide relevant resources to a small district.

Each section of the application was written with both clarity and description -- able to self-assess its meager starting points and yet provide examples of changes already underway and those to be taken under the auspices of the grant. Section C in this application is particularly strong, as it captures not only the needs to be met, but the resources and supports that will be necessary to turn around a district in such dire economic social, and educational straits. It is aggressively tackling the teacher and principal effectiveness challenge, particularly through the A and C sections.

The only sections in which the application was scored low were B3 (Track Record of Success) because the district is only two years into its transformation, and B2 (transparency in providing information about salaries and expenditures), in which the application just didn't provide the requested information.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>180</b>
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