



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0111TX-2 for Edgewood Independent School District of San Antonio

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided evidence of a comprehensive and coherent vision, which was supported by a sound approach to address the four core educational assurances. The weaknesses were a lack of evidence of the consortium's ability to build on prior work in the core assurances. Additionally, there were limited details provided to demonstrate personalized learning addressed student interests and there was a lack of a clearly described classroom experience for all students and teachers. Furthermore, the application did not provide clear operationally defined information regarding the blended learning instructional practices mentioned in the reform vision.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided a well articulated and operationally defined process for selecting the schools to participate in the project. The selected schools collectively meet the eligibility requirements with 82% of the students classified as Economically Disadvantaged. The consortium also thoroughly provided a list of the schools and disaggregated demographic information for each school in the nine districts. Furthermore, the consortium thoroughly supported the details for the number of students, low income students, high need students, and educators who will be participating in the project. Based on the evidence presented in the narrative, this project has a strong chance for being highly successful. The project has a clearly defined outcome and a well thought out plan of implementation.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium included most of the components of a high quality plan and provided credible evidence to support their claim to scale up the project beyond the participating schools and meet their outcome goals. The project will utilize Kotter's 8 Stage model of reform and further described the opportunity to have greater influence.</p> <p>The weaknesses found in the plan were due to a vague timeline and the lack of identifying the responsible party for the implementation of the plan. The reform proposal did not clearly connect the data being collected to changes in instructional practices. Despite these weaknesses, the plan seems credible and seems to have some potential to be implemented.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided an extensive narrative detailing how the vision would improve student learning and performance. The project goals were clearly explained as well as student performance targets explicitly identified. The consortium's goals seem to be achievable and are ambitious. The goals are to out-perform the state average, which is certainly ambitious for the LEA's who have not reached that level of success in the past. The performance goals also justified the decrease in student achievement gaps between the highest performing subgroup and the low performing subgroup. Additionally, graduation rates and goals were clearly identified as well as college enrollment rates specifically identified. The consortium did not track post-secondary degree attainment but provided a reasonable plan to begin tracking this data point.</p> <p>The weaknesses found in the application concerned some of the achievement goals. While the goal was to outperform the</p>		

state averages, some of the achievement goals showed an increase of less than 10%, leading to a question regarding the ambitiousness of these goals. Additionally, the application did not clearly address students with disabilities and how the plan would specifically address the needs of the ESE students.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium failed to provide a clear record of success over the past four years. This was a significant omission in the application and would have resulted in a stronger body of evidence had four years of performance data been included instead of only two. Furthermore, the application did not provide any evidence of a crosswalk between older assessment data and the new assessment data provided. Additionally, the use of performance data by parents was not fully explained. This inadequate support was a weakness and the unclear way parents are involved in the system of support was another strong concern.</p> <p>The strengths found in this application were as follows. The data included the past two years in improving student performance, closing achievement gaps, increasing high school graduation rates in a community where meeting family needs sometimes takes priority over educational goals, as well as increasing college enrollment through partnerships with the local colleges. The success from the nine districts that make up the consortium influenced their ability to achieve success in turning around their low performing schools through the incorporation of Positive Behavior Support and funding through a TTIPS grant. Furthermore, student performance data is available to the students and educators to improve participation and inform instructional decisions.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided strong evidence of high levels of transparency and provided details in the narrative regarding the establishment of processes and practices to support the project. Furthermore, the application stated financial data is available on each district's website. The concern found in the application related to the uncertainty if the consortium was able to provide actual salaries disaggregated by each type of school personnel at the school level. The application stated salaries were available in aggregate form by district.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided overwhelming evidence of a clear authority and autonomy granted by the State of Texas Constitution, educational codes enacted by the Texas Legislature as well as specific legal codes and provisions which further supported the consortium's claims of autonomy. Some of the Texas Educational Codes and provisions to support the district's claims of sufficient autonomy included TEC Chapter 4, Chapter 11, and Title 2 Public Education, Subtitle C, Chapter 11, Subchapter A. Furthermore, the legal support for the individual LEA's to form a consortium was given by Texas Government Code, Chapter 791. The narrative provided convincing details that the consortium would be legally able to work together and have the support of local and state government to implement the project.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	13
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided strong evidence in the narrative regarding the process for engaging stakeholders throughout the development of the project. There was convincing evidence of support by students, families, teachers and administration at the schools. The consortium used open forums, Family Nights at the schools, and PTA meetings to engage students and parents. Principals and educators were engaged through faculty meetings, leadership meetings, school board meetings, and principals actively participated alongside district superintendents to develop the project. Furthermore, 90% of the teachers have given their support to the project. This information has been documented and the engagement process was operationally defined.</p>		

Despite the evidence of parental and stakeholder involvement in the development of the project, it was unclear how the project changed due to the feedback provided by the parents and other stakeholders. The lack of examples of any changes based on feedback was a concern.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium will be utilizing Common Core State Standards and articulated a plan that will allow students, teachers, and parents to understand how to create a plan to reach college. This plan will start in Kindergarten. Furthermore, the consortium will utilize project based learning (PBL) to provide an opportunity for all students, including those classified as high need, to think and learn deeply about the topic. Additionally, the selected strategies of using thinking maps, comprehension tool kits, vocabulary development, integrated blended learning, as well as incorporating PBL will enable all students to become empowered in their education. The research supporting these strategies has demonstrated that each of these strategies can improve student learning. Through the innovative use of the schools' media center after hours as a Homework Center as well as an effective feedback loop between educators, students and parents these stakeholders will have a strong system of support as the students strive to achieve academic success. Finally, the professional development and the utilization of instructional coaches are significant. The narrative provided strong evidence that the use of the strategies will allow for the personalization and skill development for all students.</p> <p>The application did not provide clear evidence of how instructional strategies would be connected to student data or devices. Furthermore, the application did not fully develop how high need students would gain access to technology. The application could have been strengthened by including the operational details regarding how the devices would be made available to high need students.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided a majority of the criteria necessary for a high quality plan. The consortium provided clear goals and a strong vision to improve instruction in all classes. Additionally, the consortium provided reasonable evidence that it could increase leadership capacity through a partnership with TASA and sending teacher leaders as well as other instructional leaders to the Academy for Transformational Leadership. Furthermore, by utilizing the key learning strategy of see one, try one, and do one, the consortium would be able to continuously improve school progress toward meeting student performance goals.</p> <p>The complete narratives providing evidence of data dashboards in an interoperable system was strong support that the consortium was data-drive in its decision making process. Some of the data available would be related to the newly re-evaluated teacher evaluation system. This system would be undergoing a pilot test approach with the state of Texas having four different evaluation systems available. The narrative provided a strong, operationally defined process for selecting the final teacher evaluation system.</p> <p>Additionally, the consortium provided a strong narrative detailing how educators would have access to resources to help accelerate student performance. The supports for teachers included instructional coaches, technology support, and exemplary lessons.</p> <p>The concern with the plan presented in the narrative was the lack of a clear timeline for developing a personalized learning environment. The information provided regarding the timeline was vague and would have been strengthened if the timeline had been explicitly clear. Additionally, the narrative did not provide a clear method of evaluating the exemplary lessons. This is a significant omission to ensure the quality of the lessons that would be accessed by every teacher in the consortium. Finally, while training for school leaders was evident, there was a lack of a high quality plan to address the training and policies to support high quality instruction. The consortium lacked a clear, operationally defined continuous improvement model to support teacher learning and did not fully address the plan to increase the number of students who have effective teachers. The consortium also did not provide evidence of how the evaluation system would change instruction and did not fully develop how administrators would have access to the tools to support personalized learning.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided thorough evidence of having policies in place that will support the project. District office staff are organized to support the project. The district office will have a project management team led by a program director, program manager, program specialist and district point of contact personnel. The evidence included the MOU for each district and specific information regarding the governance of the consortium as well as the common data system being interoperable among the districts. Additionally, school level leaders were involved in the planning of the project and have the autonomy to participate in the project through intentionally designed flexibility in decisions regarding scheduling, staffing, and personnel decisions. The project supports the demonstration of mastery at multiple times and the application concisely defines informal and formal assessments as well as the Universal Review System which monitors personal learning data for all students. Teachers implementing the project will have an "array of supplemental options" for students with disabilities, ELL students, and any other students who struggle meeting mastery goals.</p> <p>The application did not fully develop the process regarding how the array of supplemental options would be implemented for ELL and other high need students. Additionally, the LEA central office organization did not clearly address what support would be available for administrators at the school level.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided evidence that all students would have access to high quality instructional materials outside of the school day. One way this would be accomplished was through the establishment of Homework Centers. The Homework Centers could be utilized by anyone within the district and would be available to those students who did not have internet accessibility at home. Additionally, the Homework Centers would have technical support staff available to the community. Another technical support available for students and families was the Technology Boot Camps.</p> <p>The weakness described in the narrative was a limited explanation about how the districts were not able to share student data. The information presented regarding this was vague. The narrative also did not clearly provide operationally defined processes regarding how all students would have access to the electronic devices. Additionally, the fact that the systems are not currently interoperable is a concern. The consortium stated grant funds would be used to ensure the data systems would become interoperable. Finally, it was not clear if current technical support systems would be adequate to support the new technology being utilized as part of the project. It seems possible that the current technical support staff would be overwhelmed with the number of additional people who may need to be supported.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided strong evidence of a high quality plan with a well defined process to share feedback regarding the progress toward meeting the project's goals. The narrative provided evidence of monthly meetings by the project board, quarterly meetings the planning committee, and quarterly achievement reviews utilizing the SWOT method. By engaging in the Plan-Do-Check-Adjust continuous improvement model, the project can make corrections as needed to ensure quality implementation and successfully reaching the goals. Furthermore, the project management team will develop a communication plan to provide performance updates using electronic and traditional media formats to keep all stakeholders up to date in the project's successes and struggles.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The consortium did not address all of the components of a high quality plan. The narrative provided the activities and the deliverables but failed to mention a timeline or the persons responsible for ensuring the high levels of fidelity in the execution of the plan. The activities seem reasonable as they included the development of a newsletter, use of press releases, informational brochures, the use of a list-serv, a website dedicated to the project, an application for mobile devices, the use of an automated call or text system and board meetings. It was unclear when the newsletters would be published, how often the press releases would be sent out, how frequently the brochures would be updated, how often messages would go out on the list-serv, how often and what information would be available on the website, how often notifications would be sent via the mobile app, or how often the call system would be utilized. Without the details regarding the timeline, frequency, and people responsible for the various communication methods, this information was insufficient to meet the requirements of having a high quality communication plan. The lack of clear operationally defined elements of the communication plan did not allow the plan to be successfully evaluated. This resulted in questions regarding the consortium's ability to meet the communication goals listed in the application.

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

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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provided clearly ambitious and achievable goals as well as a strong rationale for the selected performance measures. The narrative also provided strong evidence of a collaborative effort as well as how the measure would provide meaningful data to inform implementation fidelity. Finally, the narrative also provided a clear explanation of how the consortium will review the project and make adjustments as needed.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium inadequately provided a plan to evaluate the project. The narrative provided details stating the program director and superintendents would "participate in all national evaluation initiatives" and the program would "contract with an experienced education evaluator" but it was missing the elements of a high quality plan. The narrative did not clearly identify the project's goals to be evaluated. The narrative had a vague reference to a timeline of creating annual summative reports but did not operationally define the elements evaluated in the generation of the report. Furthermore, the narrative had limited information regarding the deliverables and insufficiently developed activities. The narrative provided evidence of the evaluation plan deliverables in a previous section; however, the overall quality of the evaluation plan is low. The narrative did not fully develop the evaluation plan and seems to be only a yearly review.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium's budget provided in the application seems to meet all the requirements presented in this section. The budget narrative clearly identified and described the expense items funded by the grant. Each aspect of the project has clearly identified expenses for the funding required.</p> <p>The concern in the budget was found when examining technology costs. It appears the consortium may have underestimated the technology costs.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The sustainability budget seems to be missing some supportive details regarding the support offered for peer coaching. Additionally, the budget could have been strengthened by fully explaining how the consortium was going to redirect funds received by the state of Texas. The application could have been strengthened with the inclusion of specific details about the redirection of money.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provided strong evidence of partnerships with local organizations as well as an example of how the partnership with a health provider improved healthcare in the community. Additional evidence found in the narrative was the description of the Making Connections program which was designed to focus on four universal social factors for students and how educators can also help strengthen community relationships. The project also clearly identified no more than 10 desired results that included academic as well as non-academic results which were both ambitious and achievable. The narrative also provided clear support for the consortium's ability to track selected indicators over a period of years, use the data to inform instructional practices, and develop a strategy to scale the project to more than just the participating schools.

Weaknesses found were a lack of details supporting the partnership with the local post-secondary schools and the lack of operationally defining how to assess student engagement.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provided strong evidence that it has the ability to build on the core assurances to create a learning environment that is personalized and sustained from Kindergarten through grade 12. Through the Homework Centers, students, parents, and community members have access to tools, exemplary lessons, and high quality resources to enable the student to accelerate their achievement. The consortium has demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap and believes this grant award can further reduce the achievement gap as all students leave school better prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	156
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0111TX-3 for Edgewood Independent School District of San Antonio

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's reform vision is only comprehensive and coherent if the nine participating districts implement the reform vision in a comprehensive and coherent fashion. The applicant has granted significant freedom of choice to the nine districts. The applicant presents several strategies, blended learning, for example, that will personalize learning. However, the applicant presents only rough guidelines to the participating districts for blended learning "All participating schools will

shift to a blended learning model in at least two of four core subjects per grade...students must spend at least 25% of their time accessing digital content." The blended learning strategy has potential to personalize learning and give students access to high-quality content, but it has to be implemented in a strategic manner. The vision the applicant presents does not show one comprehensive and coherent path to reform for nine districts.

The does not address the four core assurance areas in a comprehensive way. The types of assessment are not specific; the applicant describes an ideal assessment but not specific method to measure college and career readiness at all levels (PSAT and SAT/ACT will be used at the high school level, but the predictors leading up to these tests are not clear, and it was not clear what the applicant would do with the data from these specific exams to help promote college and career readiness). The applicant presents WARooms with live active data for teachers and administrators as well as training for how to use data; however, the applicant was never specific about how the data would measure student growth and success and improve instruction. The applicant did not describe ways to attract and retain teachers. The applicant states that they would look at the teacher pay structure and rewards, but the plan was not specific. The lowest performing schools were not specifically targeted.

The applicant does make a compelling argument for the need for equity in learning across the nine districts. The applicant also presents a clear and credible way the superintendents in these nine districts will work together to increase equity. The applicant mentioned college and career readiness plan for all grades; however, the applicant did not fully develop personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interest.

The applicant did not fully describe the classroom experience. The applicant presents strategies that will be implemented in the classrooms, but the overall vision for the classroom experience is not clear.

For A1, the applicant received a mid-level score of 5. The applicant does not present enough specific information to constitute a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that spans nine school districts.

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

10

7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes nine school districts in the plan which includes 67 schools. The applicant does not prove that implementing in this many schools at one time will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation.

However, the applicant does describe a plan to implement one strategy a year per district in order to share best practices and determine the best approach for implementation. This shows that the applicant has thought through some of the challenges of implementing on such a large scale.

The applicant does not describe the process the applicant used to select all 67 schools. The applicant had a criteria for participation, but it is not clear who met or decided to select all nine districts and every school within each of those nine districts.

The applicant provided a list of all schools (67) that will participate.

The applicant provided all numbers for the participating schools. The numbers the applicant provided were compelling: rural, low income, low education.

For A2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 7. The applicant presents a compelling need within the nine districts working together in this consortium; however, the applicant does not provide evidence that implementing the plan in 67 schools, across nine districts, in all grade levels, will lead to high-quality implementation. The phased in implementation and sharing within the consortium begins to address this issue.

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

10

6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a plan to scale this project through the nine districts included. The plan includes districts selecting at least one of the interventions a year and implementing that strategy. The other districts will then learn from that district as they begin to implement the strategy. The applicant's plan is one way to phase in the reform vision, but it also seems a bit haphazard, as each district has a lot of autonomy and may not implement the strategies in a high-quality manner or progression.

The applicant mentions using Kotter's 8-stage model for change in order to work through some of the issues of implementing the vision throughout the nine districts included. The model has potential to engage stakeholders in the process.

The applicant makes a compelling argument that the consortium will work to scale beyond the nine included districts by

offering presentations and webinars to share their experiences.

For A3, the applicant received a mid-range score of 6. The applicant does not present a fully developed high-quality plan for scaling the reform efforts through nine districts and beyond.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that their goals exceed state ESEA targets; however, the ESEA targets were not provided so it is not clear to what extent their goals exceed targets.

The applicant does not have ambitious goals for performance on summative assessments. Overall, the applicant is projecting >10% growth over four years on summative assessments.

In the area decreasing achievement gaps, some big increases are projected. For example, Pearsall ISD, math 6, LEP difference goes from -85% to -18%. Another example is Poth ISD, reading 4, special education goes from -54% to -15%.

One of the things lacking in the applicant's plan was targeted interventions for special education students. The applicant only mentioned a couple interventions for LEP students. Without targeted interventions for these groups, these goals are not achievable.

The applicant's graduation rates were already high in most schools; where the rates were not already high, the applicant presented ambitious and achievable goals.

The applicant projects a 1-2% increase in college enrollment per year. This goal does not seem ambitious, especially if there is an increase in college and career readiness.

The applicant provides goals for postsecondary degree attainment. The applicant does not have any baseline data, so the numbers seems arbitrary. The goals are the same for all schools and subgroups--no differentiation based on population, location, etc.

For A4, the applicant received a mid-range score of 6. The applicant does not demonstrate that vision is likely to result in these goals.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not demonstrate a clear record of success in the past four years.

For evidence of improved student learning outcomes, the applicant includes two years worth of data (2011-12 and 2012-13) from the STAAR test. The STAAR test is new, and there was not four years of data to present. However, the data presented does not always show gains over that two year period. For example, reading 4, Cotulla ISD, went from 64% to 34% (30% loss) for Hispanic students, which is a large population in the district that the reform vision is trying to target.

Graduation rates show fluctuation, but overall, there are increases in the last four years, especially among the Hispanic population. The college enrollment data shows a decrease by a small %.

The applicant does not demonstrate ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools; the applicant states that there are no lowest achieving schools, but school climate has been addressed in two schools that are Title I schools.

Data is available to students, educators and parents, but the applicant did not provide evidence that the data is being used to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

For B1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 4. The applicant did not demonstrate a clear record of success in the past four years; there were some gains and some losses.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not provide evidence of a high level of transparency.

The applicant describes transparency that includes online access to expenditures at the school level, and the state makes the information available.

For B2, the applicant received a high-range score of 4. The applicant explains some transparency, but does not demonstrate a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments.

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

10

5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that state law is supportive and has commissioned equality for all students; however, the applicant does not address requirements such as mastery vs. seat time, credits for graduation, flexibility with online opportunities, etc.

The state is working on issues (such as teacher evaluation) that are in-line with the applicant's plan, but it is not clear if the State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements will allow successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement the applicant's reform vision. The applicant addresses some issues regarding legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements, but they do not address all issues related to personalized learning.

For B3, the applicant received a mid-range score of 5. The applicant does not fully demonstrate successful conditions and sufficient autonomy.

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

15

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described a variety of meetings with different groups; the applicant says feedback was collected and used to revise, but there is not evidence of this feedback loop.

The state does not allow collective bargaining, so the applicant demonstrated teacher support through a survey of teachers. The survey contained one yes/no questions regarding supporting the plan. 90% of teachers consortium-wide marked "yes" they would support the plan. It is not clear whether teachers had any voice in the creation of the reform vision beyond the yes/no survey.

The applicant includes 21 letters of support from mayors, community partners, educational organizations, etc. Some of the letters contain the same verbiage, which indicates that the applicant may have provided the stakeholders with a form letter to submit. There are not letters from teachers, students, or parents, all who are key stakeholders in the applicant's reform vision.

For B4, the applicant received a mid-range score of 8. The applicant does not fully demonstrate meaningful stakeholder engagement through the development of the proposal. The applicant shows some level of support for the proposal, and the applicant demonstrates an effort to elicit engagement from stakeholders.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's high-quality plan includes all of the elements of a high-quality plan, but the credibility of the plan is diminished by the approach to implementation. The plan is phased--districts have options of what strategies to implement at what time and even how they implement (some loose guidelines are provided). The applicant's approach does not insure a cohesive vision will be implemented that improves learning and teaching.

The applicant only partially provides an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students. The applicant includes an LEP strategy as one of the five strategies for implementation, but other high-needs students are not specifically discussed.

The applicant's roll out specifies that districts select one intervention for implementation each year--what the district decides and what they choose will depend on how personalized learning gets (i.e. the blended learning opportunity has potential to differentiation instruction, but only at the point that it's implemented in a high-quality way).

The applicant describes project-based learning and blended learning, which have potential to involve students in deep learning experiences of academic interest, but these strategies have to be applied in a high quality way, and the applicant is not specific about their application. The applicant also provides an example of a thinking map where a student is processing what they want to be when they grow up and the path they will need to take to get there, but the applicant does not show how a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development will help the student progress from creating the thinking map to enrolling in college ready to learn. The applicant does provide strategies for involving parents in the learning process and introducing college early to make it seem accessible to students.

The applicant says they will put high-quality content on a cloud for all nine districts to access, but they do not specifically name the content, nor do they explain fully how teachers will be engaged in using these resources.

The applicant states that data will be available, but the frequency of assessments is not always clear.

The applicant said that all students who choose to have a device (i.e. tablet) will have to go to Tech. boot camp to understand how to use and maintain the device. It was not clear how many students would have access to devices, or how many students would want a device if given the opportunity. It was also not clear how students would be chosen to receive the devices or how the devices would be implemented into the classroom when not everyone has a device.

The applicant makes some concessions for students without technology and/or internet at home by offering a Homework, Project and Technology Center. This center is open after school and on Saturdays, and it offers some tools and resources to help students track and manage their learning. However, it does not make technology and digital content fully accessible to all students.

For C1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 8. The applicant does not provide an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students. The applicant's approach may engage and empower some learners, but the needs of all learners are not addressed.

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

20

8

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not fully develop a high-quality plan to improve teaching and leading.

The applicant plans to utilize instructional coaches, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), technology coaches (to train to use data) and training for administrators. The professional development activities are not very detailed, and it is not clear how frequently teachers will be exposed to key goals and training to improve instruction.

It is not evident that teachers will be able to adapt content and instruction. One type of training the applicant describes is "see one, try one, do one," but it is not clear how pervasive this approach will be or how effective.

The applicant identifies some measures of student progress (PLAN, PSAT, TEKs); however, the frequency is not noted. The applicant notes some training in how to use the data, but the effectiveness is not established.

The applicant describes a few evaluation systems that the state is choosing, and administrators will be trained in the new system. The applicant says that each evaluation method will be tested and all districts will adopt the best one. This provides some evidence that teaching and learning may be impacted by the evaluation system.

The applicant's reform vision is so far-reaching (67) schools, that it is not clear that all participating educators will have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant does say that school leaders will receive some professional development, too.

The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The applicant commits to look at pay structure but there is no set plan.

For C2, the applicant receive a mid-range score of 8. The applicant does not fully develop a plan to improve teaching and leading, specific strategies and approaches are missing to indicate that the capacity of teachers and leaders will improve.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a sound organization for the consortium governance structure. All participating districts signed an MOU. Edgewood ISD is going to be the facilitator of the grant. It is clear that there is representation and participation for the superintendents of all participating districts. The applicant does not clearly delineate how each school in the district will be directly supported. The applicant says that implementation at the school level will be the principal's responsibility, but there is not a well-established support system directly for these principals.</p> <p>The applicant has granted too much autonomy to districts and school leadership teams; the autonomy grants allows for inconsistent implementation and results. The autonomy provided does not guarantee personalized learning for every student.</p> <p>The applicant describes a process that allows students to progress in daily lessons based on mastery; however, earning credit based on mastery is not fully developed. The applicant does not demonstrate a detailed plan to provide credit based on mastery.</p> <p>The applicant also does not fully develop the opportunity demonstrating mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The applicant includes blended learning and project-based learning, which have potential to meet this requirement, but they are not fully developed to demonstrate how the applicant will allow for different options.</p> <p>The applicant does not discuss specific resources that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students that will be utilized as part of the reform vision. The applicant provides two examples in two districts in the consortium, but it is not clear how all content will be accessible to all learners.</p> <p>For D1, the applicant received a low-range score of 3. The applicant does not present a complete high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. The applicant addresses each of the required topics in a superficial way.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not ensure that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders, regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources. The applicant states that students are able to opt into the devices (i.e. tablets). The applicant does not explain how wide-spread the devices will be available or how it will be determined who gets them. The budget includes a line item for 7,110 handheld devices, and 57 laptops. The applicant's plan includes 36,700 students. The applicant provides one Homework Center per district to also address access; these centers are open after school and on Saturdays. The centers do not fully solve the accessibility problem because students may have work or practice responsibilities after school and on weekends and need access at other times when the Centers are not available.</p> <p>The applicant includes some technology support in the form of Technology Boot Camp and Technology coaches. It is not clear that all students, parents, educators and other stakeholders will have access to the technical support they need through these resources.</p> <p>The applicant describes data that is available, but it is not clear if the data is available for export in an open data format.</p> <p>The applicant states that they are developing interoperable data systems with RTTD funds; it is not currently available.</p> <p>For D2, the applicant received a low mid-range score of 3. The applicant demonstrates that each of these criteria are emerging the district, but the applicant does not have a fully developed high-quality plan to bring these criteria to fully implementation.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. The applicant presents strategies that will address continuous improvement, but it is not a fully developed high-quality plan.</p>		

Two positive strategies for continuous improvement are that public comment will be invited and monthly grant expenditure reports will be posted.

One of the strategies the applicant plans to use is Baldrige's Education Criteria. The applicant does not explain how these will be implemented or how they fit with the consortium or the reform vision.

Another strategy the applicant will use is to have districts learn from one another and revise; this is one benefit to the staggered approach to implementation that the applicant presents.

The applicant does not address concrete strategies to review professional development, technology and staff, which are often areas that are hard to assess.

For E1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 7. The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for continuous improvement. Few strategies are offered to assess and improve throughout the life of the grant.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to address ongoing communication and engagement; however, the applicant presents several strategies that will reach people in the media they typically use. For example, the applicant plans to develop an app for handheld devices to communicate with stakeholders. Newsletters, brochures and video brief will be used.

For E2, the applicant received a 2. The applicant has useful strategies to communicate, but the applicant does not ensure engagement, or a two-way conversation, with stakeholders. It is not clear how the applicant will receive feedback from stakeholders and use it to continuously improve.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presented 14 performance measures. It is not always clear that these performance measures were achievable, based on the reform vision presented. For example, the applicant projects FAFSA to increase to 90% across the board; however, the applicant never addressed a strategy to increase FAFSA applications in the reform vision.

The applicant also has a performance measure for the number of students taking the ACT or SAT at least once that was not ambitious; the projections after four years hovered between 69-79%. The applicant plans to pay for each students to take one of these exams, so the projections do not seem ambitious.

The applicant provides rationales for selecting the measures and how the measure will provide information to support the reform vision. The applicant does not address how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For E3, the applicant received a mid-range score of 3. Most of the 14 performance measures were ambitious and achievable; however, not all of the performance measures were.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities. The applicant explains that they will monitor data, but this is not developed.

The applicant does state that an external evaluator will be hired for checks and balances; however, the role of the external evaluator is not fully developed. For example, the applicant did not include specific questions or aspects of the vision that the evaluator would assess.

For E4, the applicant received a low-range score of 2. The applicant did address this topic, but did not develop a high-quality plan or offer strong activities to support evaluation.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget is well-developed.</p> <p>The applicant identified all funds that will support the project. Most of the additional funds are re-allotments of district and state money. There was no evidence of grants or other community financial support. The applicant does identify \$1,000,000 in additional funds.</p> <p>The applicant's budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The cost of the technology component seems underestimated (Homework Centers and blended learning). For example, the applicant does not specifically list out the cost to maintain and replace the devices.</p> <p>The applicant clearly provides a thoughtful rationale for investments. The applicant's priorities in budgeting are not always clear.</p> <p>For F1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 6. The applicant presents a budget that contains all of the required elements. Additional funds, technology and priorities are not fully addressed.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for sustainability. The applicant does identify the on-going activities, the amount required for these activities, and other funding sources for these activities.</p> <p>The applicant identified other funds to support sustainability: Title 1a, Title 2a, local funds, state compensatory education, E-rate, state high school allotment funds, state career and technical education funds. The applicant does not prove that these funds will be available or sufficient to maintain the reform vision.</p> <p>For F2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 4. The applicant demonstrates that they have thought about sustainability and other resources that are available to them; however, they do not present a high-quality plan that ensures sustainability.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes a successful program at Edgewood and proves that the program would be beneficial elsewhere. However, there is no high-quality plan to scale the successful program at Edgewood.</p> <p>The applicant describes Making Connections, which is established currently in Edgewood ISD and is helping families with work and earnings, family assets, successful kids and resident leadership.</p> <p>Edgewood has coherent and sustainable partnerships, but the applicant is vague about partnerships in other districts "all have committed local partners willing to coordinate <i>what is available</i> on behalf of students" (italics theirs). The applicant does not provide a list of partners that would be agreeable to helping in other districts, nor does the applicant prove that other districts would have sufficient funds and support to sustain a program such as the one at Edgewood.</p> <p>The applicant identifies 7 population-level desired results for students.</p> <p>The applicant ties in a resource: Home, Project and Tech. Centers, which are part of their RTTD grant, that will be a hub in each district for this type of community involvement.</p> <p>For the Competitive Preference Priority, the applicant receive a mid-range score of 4. The applicant describes a partnership that is effective in one district. The applicant does not prove that this partnership can be scaled and sustained beyond Edgewood ISD. The applicant also does not prioritize high-need schools to connect to resources next.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

When all five strategies in the applicant's plan come together in all districts, the applicant meets Absolute Priority 1 for personalized learning environments through:

- thinking maps
- comprehension tool kits
- vocabulary development
- personalized learning/blended learning
- project-based learning
- Homework, Project and Technology Center
- building capacity of staff evaluation and training
- additional support staff (instructional coaches)
- improving data/tracking to help students understand how to better progress toward college- and career-ready standards

Total	210	95
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0111TX-1 for Edgewood Independent School District of San Antonio

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This proposal is by a consortium of nine districts. Eight of them are rural, one is in a city. The one in the city is the fiscal agent. The consortium refers to the project as "Nine: Investing in the Future of South Texas." The consortium is dedicated to improving the education for each student with success in college and the workplace the ultimate goal for each. The area is poor, 81.9% free/reduced lunch. Many teenagers drop out of school to work to help support their families.

The superintendents in the nine districts belong to an organization, "Texas Association of School Administrators", which has advised them in the preparation of their proposal. They will work together to restore schools as community-owned learning organizations, value different needs and capacities, developing various ways to meet goals, apply a rigorous self-improvement process and adopt consortium wide methods of greatest improvement. In doing so, they have identified four strong goals to be addressed by this project:

1. Enable each student to benefit from personalized learning strategies with the wider availability of technology and related digital tools.
2. Integrate learning standards to support academic achievement aligned with college and career readiness for every student. They will use the Texas College and Career Readiness standards which will be "intergrated and vertically aligned."
3. Use data to accelerate achievement, fully implement personalized learning and inform highly effective instructional

practices at all grade levels.

4. Use accountability to inspire student and educator achievement. Teachers will be given professional development to continually assess their students independent of annual standardized tests and use the data to personalize learning.

Community engagement is said to be a crucial part of this proposal and therefore the consortium superintendents have agreed to spend more time to engage every day with peers and neighbors to build relationships. Through these relationships, the superintendents plan to develop leadership cadres of community stakeholders, parents and students in each community, and will guide them through a process focused on local needs and efforts in order to realize the consortium's goals. This is a novel way to transform both schools and their communities.

The consortium plans to change the classroom experience such that students will have experiences designed to help them value learning. "Reading comprehension will be the backbone of all learning." There will be consortium-wide live broadcasts during which highly skilled literacy coaches teach comprehension strategies to all grade levels. It is not clear if this is for teachers or students. If it is for students, then it is not personalized instruction to have the same lesson delivered to all students in a grade level. If it is professional development for teachers, it misses the component of collaboration in which teachers can discuss what was learned. Coherts of teachers will discuss student literacy data and adopt those interventions with the most positive impact.

Elementary students will take reading comprehension assessments on their digital devices and monitor their progress towards mastery. Secondary students will "document thinking processes on their digital devices during literacy coaching activities to create electronic anchor charts for analyzing expository text." It does not say whether or not teachers have access to this information. Certainly they should at the elementary level. It is also not clear how recoring ones thoughts at the secondary level creates anchor charts or helps with analyzing written work.

Overall, the consortium has comprehensive goals for the grant project. They articulate a credible approach, although some information, as noted above, is missing. It is also not clear how the classroom experience will be personalized. The community stakeholder group is an interesting way to bring many people on board with the project. The first part of this section is also missing. It is not clear how the consortium schools are building on any previous work in the core educational assurance areas. Therefore, this section is scored in the mid range.

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

In the appendix of this proposal, the consortium has included all the schools from each district that will participate. The populations of each school are disaggregated into sub-groups with numbers and percentages for each as required for this section. The schools have a predominantly Hispanic, economically disadvantaged student population. They used only one criteria in selecting members for this project: the district had to have shown improvement in student achievement over the past four years.

The consortium then will include all schools and all students, 36,689, in their districts with the intent of "closing remaining achievement gaps." There is one overarching outcome expected: "students will outperform statewide averages in all grades and core subjects and will graduate from high school college and career ready based on the definition used by the Texas Success Initiative." All criteria for this section have been met, therefore the score is in the high range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium believes that their population, which traditionally has been included in under- performing subpopulations (Hispanic and economically disadvantaged) can and do achieve when given the opportunities and tools enjoyed by higher performing groups. Therefore, under the grant, students will indeed have access to the tools and opportunities to achieve as stated in (A)(2).

Their plan includes hiring a project director and management staff, establishing strategic planning and working teams, ordering the devices and materials as needed in the plan, arranging professional development, selecting and implementing evaluation systems, recruiting and hiring educational coaches, holding thinking maps training for all teachers in core areas, setting up WARooms, homework/project/technology centers, aligning curriculum to the CCRS, and a great deal of professional development. The logic plan addresses the various aspects explained in sections (A)(1) and (2) and in section (C) later in the proposal. The professional development addresses each of the strategies to be implemented: project based learning, blended learning, technology use, use of data, and literacy strategies. There is also inservicing for parents and students through "the Power of Ten Learning Academies." Some of the professional development is in the summer, some during the school year and some through coaching. They include some communication methods: quarterly meetings, newsletters, monthly Board meetings, superintendent presentations.

The plan has a reasonable timeline and most of the needs of the project will be addressed. It could be scaled up to include some schools not in the consortium by the professional development that the superintendents and teachers might do through their continuing education service centers. It is not clear how the professional development or any other actions will create the personalized learning that is a key part of the grant. The professional development is likely to improve instruction and having access to digital tools and resources will help with student learning. The evaluation tool has yet to be selected for teachers, principals and superintendents, but there is a plan for how it will be selected. There is not a clear connection yet between the use of data, the strategies and the personalized learning classroom which would be present in a high quality plan. Parts of the project will likely be scaled up to create LEA-wide reforms. Therefore the score for this section is in the medium range.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium goals stating they expect students to exceed the state average on the state assessment, and have students college and career ready is ambitious in light of the fact that eight of the nine school districts are currently labeled "Improvement Required" by the state. They hope to move to "Met Standard" by the end of the grant project. They reiterate the stated strategies and means they will use to reach this goal.

Although the consortium members have not tracked student progress post high school in the past, under the grant, they plan to do so. The assessment used in the data was the state assessment, in this case, STAAR, in Reading, English Language Arts, and Math. The schools appear to set a projected goal for achievement on this test anywhere from 5-40% improvement in the percent of students scoring proficient varying for individual sub groups and closing the achievement gap or at least narrowing it which is achievable and ambitious especially for some of the sub-groups.

The high school graduation rate already is at 60-100% depending on the sub-group. Those with limited English proficiency, or in special education have the lowest graduation rates. The projection after the grant, only raises it a few percentage points for most groups. Even though they stated in (A)(1) that 42% of adults in the communities had not graduated from high school, it appears that is not the case with most subgroups. College enrollment is another thing entirely. The baseline shows that in most schools about half or less of students actually enroll in college. This information is not disaggregated into subgroups. Their projection after the grant ranges from 50-75% of students enrolling in college. They do not have baseline data for postsecondary degree attainment, but they are projecting 45% for all but special education students.

The consortium shows baseline data for all of it's schools on the state assessment. They have projected an increase for all groups that will help to close achievement gaps. The graduation rate is not as low as expected, but varies for some groups as noted above. The college enrollment and attainment of degree data is incomplete, but the consortium plans to use a data system to track student activity post graduation under the grant. More data to explain the graduation rate goal would help to determine if it is achievable. Therefore, the score for this section is in the upper mid range.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium explains that the STAAR is still relatively new since it began in 2011-12. Even though trend data is not yet available, they show most of the consortium schools outpace the state in short-term gains by from 1-31% on the two year data presented. They do not indicate which tests were used before the STAAR system.

At the secondary level, when 6 school districts partnered with local and regional college and career readiness programs, the gains in their test scores increased between 0.3-33.9%. The schools that showed these gains paid for some of the PSAT, SAT, ACT and AP testing and offered in school test prep. Under the grant, these efforts will be scaled up to all 9 school districts in the consortium. Based on state college readiness indicators, 7 of the 9 districts have higher rates of college ready students than the state by 4-19%.

Some consortium schools developed Career and Technology Education programs for their students. These schools show 88% of their students graduating from recommended or distinguished high school programs as compared to 82.9% state wide. Of the 10 schools in this group, 5 have shown a slight decrease in graduation rate. Some schools also have dual enrollment programs in which 11-33% of their students have earned college credit prior to graduation. One of the schools,

Edgewood developed a program in which their LEP students graduated not only bi-lingual, but bi-literate. These students at the elementary level out performed their peers around the state.

Pre-school is also offered insome of the consortium schools to build readiness skills prior to school entry. The most disadvantaged students in these districts have shown the greatest improvements.

The consortium credits the improvements already made to the districts' rigorous use of data to show immediate indicators and to enable multi-year trend analysis. Since they are already familiar with using data to this extent, it will be an easy transition to use it in the grant project.

None of the schools in the consortium are persistently lowest achieving schools as defined in the grant notice. Two schools are Texas Priority 1 schools.and school improvement plans are in place. The grant that goes with this has allowed these schools to produce gains in terms of decreasing student discipline referrals and increases in particiaption in extra curricular activities from 249 students to 441 in two years. They have also shown slight gains in academic areas.

The data pages show Reading, Math and ELA data for two years for all schools even though their own criteria said they needed to show school improvement over 4 years. It is not clear which assessment if any was used previous to STAAR. Two years of data is not enough to show a trend of school improvement. Graduation rates at all schools and in most subgroups have shown improvements over the last four years. It is not a consistent improvement in all cases. The percent of students who have enrolled in a public university or college remains flat; 34-58% in any given year have enrolled. Some of the schools have shown a track record of improvement, although it is not a dramatic improvement. The consortium schools have shown some narrowing of achievement gaps based on the data in the appendix. They have implemented solid reforms that have produced results. These results have been reported to the communities through student report cards or progress reports, the districts' broadcasting systems, assessment results are mailed to parents and they can log in to the gradebook system to check their student's progress. The three criteria for this section have not been met, since they have not shown enough data to make a compelling case for school improvement so far. For all of the above reasons, this section is scored at the lower mid-range.

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

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium posts school level expenditures online and in written reports. They are reported by function including instruction, student support and school administration. The consortium schools also hold public forums, including annual budget hearings, monthly Board of Trustee meetings, to share this information and update revenue and expenditure targets for parents and stakeholders. Both online and live budget presentations include links or time for parent and community input.

The state Education Agency also has a website on which they post school district financial data to provide uniform and comparable revenue and expenditure data for all districts. This includes salaries and employee benefits for each district. They also include benchmarks, student counts and the amount of debt for each district at the beginning and end of each fiscal year.

The consortium addresses some of the criteria in this section; making their school budgets available to the public, allowing for input. The state also shares information about each school district. However, there is no indication that actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional and support staff are disclosed. They also do not seem to delineate between instructional staff only, teachers only and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. The disclosures are through annual meetings and online. The consortium has already said that addressing online availability for all was part of this grant so putting things online, or expecting parents to check the state website is not feasible for a large portion of the population in the consortium. Since this is not a high level of transparency, the score for this section is in the low range.

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

10

5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium cites a section of the Texas Education Code which gives them sufficient autonomy to implement the project they have described in this application. This lengthy citation assures that the districts have autonomy, in terms of governance, involving parents in their children's education, accreditation, responsibility, organization of the school. They also include the mission of the stat education agency which supports their project.

The consortium does not personalize this for each district by indicating the autonomy of each school within the district or discuss how local conditions support or not the project. Therefore the score for this section is in the average range since the consortium met the criteria, but not in depth.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	12
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>In order to gain public input on the project, all districts in the consortium provided public discussions through public forums where the project was presented; during school Health Advisory Council meetings, site-based decision making teams, faculty meetings, leadership team meetings, partner meetings, school board meetings, meetings of the Parent and Family Action Committee, and campus parental engagement activities. Information was shared about the responsibilities, possible benefits and results. Recommendations and input was shared back with the nine superintendents and project team and incorporated into the project design.</p> <p>Each district shared the project and vision with staff from every school campus. Principals and other school leaders were engaged along with superintendents in the development of the project.</p> <p>Between 70-100% of teachers in each district support the project as evidenced by a statement from each superintendent included in the appendix. Letters from the mayors of the districts' communities also show support for the project. In addition there are letters from the administrative group, TASA, the state Education Agency, a "Making Connections Partnership" which describes itself as "a collaborative community impact project," a Family Service Association, a junior college, the University of Texas at San Antonio, Afterschool All Stars, Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas, an Athletic Booster Club, and a Lions Club. While there are no specific parent letters, the booster club is generally made of parents. The letters show a wide area of support for this project.</p> <p>The consortium indicates the groups involved in the planning, and those with whom information was shared. The consortium does not indicate how input was used in the revision of the project plan, so the score is in the medium high range.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium's philosophy is "that personalized learning must empower all learners, encouraging them to take ownership of their own learning and enabling them to move at their own pace through a personalized scope and sequence". In this section, the consortium describes 5 strategies that they believe will fulfill this philosophy. Each strategy is named, methods, examples, rationales and grant investment are given. Then they describe how the strategy will look in a given situation. The strategies are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thinking maps 2. Comprehension Tool Kits 3. Vocabulary development 4. Integrated Blended Learning in all classes 5. Project based learning at all grade elvels. <p>The consortium includes a sample of a thinking map in the appendix. It is a simple visual of a general flow chart that could apply to any student in the project. Perhaps the details are filled in at the goal-setting conference with students and their parents. There would need to be a great deal more structure to this tool for it to produce all the results listed in the plan.</p> <p>The district briefly explains their RtI system and the various levels of intervention. For special education, they include two sentences. It seems they expect special needs students to listen to the whole group instruction and then have their individual needs met in small group intervention. No grade level was cited for this example. The strategies and explanations are explained for all students, but not enough information is given as to how this plan addresses students with high needs. They also do not make the connection between these strategies and how they will help students understand that what they are learning is key to accomplishing their goals. They include annual college and career readiness conferences that include parents, students and educators in revising the thinking maps, but the connection is not made further to include these strategies.</p> <p>Deep learning is likely to be addressed through the project based learning and through teacher led "application of new content." How the teacher led lessons will lead to deeper learning was not explained. Helping students develop skills such as teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity and problem-solving was not addressed either.</p>		

The consortium points to individual digital devices, thinking maps, and goal setting conferences involving parents as a means to personalize education. The training to use these devices to access their own progress monitoring, was briefly mentioned in connection with the Homework, Project and Technology Centers. The alignment of college and career standards, using the listed strategies and following up with assessments as described are high-quality instructional approaches, but it does not necessarily result in a personalized learning process. The homework center and teaching teachers to understand data are also good steps, but no clear connections were made to tie these together and show how they create the personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development needed for each student, particularly high needs students.

Overall, the consortium needs to make connections between their strategies and efforts, and how these will create a personalized learning environment, how they will address the needs of high needs students and how they will help students stay on track toward college and career ready goals. Much more information was needed to explain this, therefore the score is in the low-medium range.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium has an high-quality method that they will use in deciding on a particular evaluation method. They feel their state system does not address all the areas they expect, so they are looking at four others. Each school district will try one out in conjunction iwth the state system. They will compare notes to see which produced the most effective teachers and then all schools in the consortium will use that evaluation method. They thoroughly described each system as well as the state system. The consortium also believes that compensating teachers adequately is a key piece of attracting and retaining highly effective teachers. They plan to examine, in the first two years of the grant, how compensation influences teacher behavior and improves instruction, as well as to study compensation and pay structures in districts outside of the consortium. They will revise their teacher compensation based on what they learn.

The consortium will use Professional Learning Communities to enable all participating teachers to learn from one another and adopt personalized learning strategies that meet the needs of their students. They will also implement Learning Coaches who will guide teachers in learning to use the strategies stated in (C)(1). Teachers, coaches and leaders will also master new strategies through a "See One, Try One, Do One" coaching model. This begins with observation of an expert at work in a classroom, then co-teaching with the expert and then the learner takes over teaching the strategy while the expert observes. There are also discussions that take place after each step. This variety in job-embedded professional development strategies is useful for reaching the needs of various teacher learners and likely to result in teachers using the new strategies effectively.

Technology coaches will be hired to teach teachers and principals to use data to inform instruction. The grant funding will help the consortium schools to have a common infrastructure and information which will support an interoperable system. There will be WARooms on each campus to monitor student progress in comparison to college and career ready standards. Seeing this data will allow teachers to make adjustments of resources to help improve learning. Teacher strengths and needs, based on student achievement data, will be discussed monthly by district and campus leaders who will then provide the appropriate professional development. The use of all this data has the potential to improve instruction. More information is needed to understand how the adjustments or adaptations are made, and whether specific resources or learning approaches can be chosen by teachers to create the personalized learning for students. It is also not clear where the data is coming from: whether teachers will use data from standardized tests, end of course assessments, or on-going in classroom assessments.

The consortium outlines its approach to aligning their curriculum with college and career standards. They plan to have exemplary lessons available to teachers PK-12 and teachers will collaborate in discussions of skills, strategies, content and processes that influence success. The lessons, presumably, are based on the strageies mentioned in (C)(1) with CCRS interwoven, although that was not stated.

The school leaders will also have professional development in transformational leadership through TASA. Superintendents will gradually increase the number of principals and other leaders involved so that he reforms are not based on individuals. This alone is not likely to result in effective reforms. In conjunction with the teacher professional development and increased student achievement, it is more likely to become consortium-wide reform.

The strengths of this project as described in this section includes novel approaches to teacher evaluation and compensation, a variety of professional development for teachers, the aligning of their curriculum with CCRS and the use of data. The weakness is that assessments have not been clearly identified for use in the data analysis, the connection between the professional development, strategies and data with personalized learning has not been clearly made including adaptations to meet the needs of individual students, and the leadership professional development is not nearly as comprehensive as that of the teachers. Therefore this is not yet a high quality plan to provide highly effective teachers and

principals to all students and the score is in the mid range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	4

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium will create a project management team comprised of the nine superintendents and their designated representatives from each district. The program director will lead the group. The project director is a current employee of the district with the fiscal responsibility. They include an organization chart in the appendix. Each district will have equal shared roles and responsibilities for implementation of the grant project. Each district superintendent signed an MOU agreeing to participation in the project. All fiscal processes and methods will follow General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and the state's fiscal requirements. At the school level, each principal is responsible for supervising exemplary teachers and instructional coaches. The consortium does not explicitly state how these leaders will provide support to all schools other than to say they developed a work plan for the proposed project.

The project, they say, is designed to include sufficient autonomy for school and district level implementation. They have discretion over schedules, calendars, personnel decisions and staffing models needed to carry out the reforms in the way that is most effective for each school and district. Budget was not a listed item. Site-based leadership has been granted, but each superintendent must monitor the project in his/her district.

The professional development will provide teachers with the ability to assess their students and keep track of their progress. Some ways that students can demonstrate mastery include credit by exam at the secondary level and daily computerized vocabulary tests at the elementary level. They will also use blended learning strategies and in-class digital tools. While these methods may allow for daily assessments, they do not allow for demonstrating mastery of standards in multiple comparable ways. Time on topic alternatives were not mentioned.

To address the needs of English Language learners, the district mentions a dual language program in one district that allows students to be fluent in both Spanish and English. They say effective programs such as this may be shared with other members of the consortium. Special education students are mentioned only by saying, "Special education students with writing difficulties may have the manual dexterity to participate in robotics; when this occurs, their inclusion often sparks a new love of learning across all subjects." This does not address the needs of special education students at all.

The district addresses the formation of leadership teams and explains some flexibility and autonomy for schools in the consortium. They do not address multiple times and ways for students to show mastery of a topic, nor do they indicate how a student can progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than typical time spent on a topic. Finally, they do not address the needs of students with disabilities or English Language Learners except to mention a dual language program in one school. Since only two of the five criteria are met, this score is in the low range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This project will enable the consortium to develop a plan to make technology, including content, tools and learning resources both in and out of school, available to all participating students, their parents educators and other stakeholders. They say that previous economic inequities will be eliminated, but they do not say how any of this will happen. They also plan to develop methods of sustaining any new assets for after the grant.

One strength of the grant project includes technical assistance resources to help all participating students, their parents educators and other stakeholders take full advantage of these digital tools. They will hold technology "boot camps" to teach students and their families how to use the devices to build proficiency, demonstrate mastery and extend learning beyond the school day. Homework, Technology and Project Centers will be open and staffed after school and on weekends to provide wi-fi access and learning supports. Currently, student progress report information is available to students, parents and educators using secure on-line portals. Districts provide training in use of the portal and interpreting the data it contains. While not everyone has access yet, the consortium plans to address this in the future under the grant.

The project will include integrated data systems to allow staff, parents, and students export demographics, course

enrollment, grades, test results and learning plans into formats that allow comparison. They also will develop a plan for an interoperable data system with the capacity to move data between systems and into a common management framework. They will also integrate a state data system into this framework.

The consortium claims they will provide digital tools and access in this section. The actual plan has yet to be developed and their budget does not allow for enough devices and funding to provide for every participating student. The strength of the consortium project in this section is the technical support provided to all internal and external stakeholders, although that is of little use if the access and devices are not available. Therefore, this score is in the low range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium states that the nine superintendents will have primary responsibility for a rigorous, objective review of the project outcomes and will make adjustments as needed. They have a work plan that includes monthly data inspection, analysis and evaluation by the project management team. The fiscal district will ensure project deliverables are timely and within budget. They will also fulfill administrative and coordinating functions required for implementation of the project. The superintendents will delegate work, hear progress reports and problem-solve issues brought to them by principals, teachers and central office staff.

There will also be a Strategic Planning Committee made up of parents and stakeholders from the nine counties covered in this proposal. The committee will meet at least quarterly to receive updates about project implementation and progress data. They will provide feedback to the project management team. They will also disseminate information although the proposal does not say how.

Project staff will complete monthly reports that will be posted on a dashboard for superintendents. They will use a process, "Plan-Do-Check-Adjust" to make the necessary adjustments and restore performance levels or resolve issues. This process was described briefly.

In order to provide transparency and communicate with all stakeholders, the project team will develop a communication plan. It is not yet in place, but they expect there will be frequent performance updates on districts' websites, in traditional print and electronic media. The topics to be shared include the professional development, personalized learning strategies, and student achievement. All superintendents meetings will be open to the public and an annual meeting schedule will also be posted on districts' websites as will a monthly grant expenditure report. They say public comment and input will be "invited and encouraged", but no details are included on this.

Finally, the consortium plans to use a continuous improvement system called the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. This has been used by the fiscal agent district as a means to improve schools through systemic change. The system is described in some detail in this section and appears to be a rigorous method to evaluate reform progress. It includes 11 core values and 7 categories. However, they do not explain how it will be implemented.

The strengths of the proposal in this section are the rigorous evaluation method, and the continuous improvement plan. The communication plan for disseminating information has not been fully planned. There are pieces they hope to include, but it is not fully developed. They also have not explained fully how the Baldrige method will be implemented. Therefore this section is scored in the average range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Despite the fact that the consortium said they needed to develop a plan for communication in the last section, in this section they say they will have ongoing communication and engagement through newsletters (both hard copy and on websites), website information, the use of Wiki and embedded links on the websites of local churches, businesses and community organizations. Project leaders will issue press releases and informational brochures. They will hold community meetings and video briefs will be played in public locations. Parents, community members and other stakeholders will be invited to subscribe to a listserv dedicated to project initiatives including a data dashboard and a Wiki. An application will be developed and pushed out to all consortium hand-held devices which will link to information about project activities and

progress. Automated voice and text messages to parents will be sent and each district's Board of Trustees meetings will include a dedicated agenda item covering project fiscal updates. They mention student, parent and teacher exchanges to offer information, but do not explain how these might take place. Much of this is one-way information, so the exchanges may be one means to gain input from parents and students.

While all these ideas are not yet formalized into a cohesive plan, the scope of the ideas indicate that it may become a high quality plan. Therefore the score for this section is in the high-range.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium states that they are committed to closing the achievement gap between all participating students and the state "all student" averages, as well as narrowing the gap between Asian students, the highest performing sub group in the state and all participating students. All performance measures are based on state standards and benchmarks for student achievement levels. They are not targeting any particular student group or school, but are targeting all students in all schools in the consortium.

There are over 150 pages of measures in the appendix. Each measure is explained in terms of the expected results and why the consortium will use it. They use mainly state assessments since they are aligning to state college and career ready standards. The pre college assessments ACT, etc. have a reputation for being rigorous. The measures include:

- Texas Primary Reading Inventory PK-3rd grade (they will also use the Spanish equivalent if necessary)
- Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness for reading and math in grades 3-8, end of course assessments in Algebra I, II, Geometry, English I, II, III in grades 9-12.
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for grades PK-3 based on behavior and social status indicators
- STAAR assessments in both reading and math grades 3-8
- Monitor attendance and discipline referrals
- Students Engagement Instrument (SEI) at grades 4-12
- Credit accumulation toward graduation requirements will be monitored and assessed in grades 9-12
- STAAR end of course assessments grades 9-12
- ACT/PLAN/PSAT for all students beginning in their sophomore year
- The number of students enrolling in and earning college credit through AP courses and dual credit course

Especially in the early grade levels, the consortium also includes what will happen if students do not succeed on these measures, describing the intervention that teachers will do. They also include those students who achieve at higher levels and need further challenge. All information from the performance measures will be tracked on dashboards available to all districts including goals for student sub groups and individuals. There will be monthly reports from districts to the project leadership group and they will assess and monitor at least quarterly. The adjustments and monitoring may result in a change or addition of measures.

Also in the appendix is the number of students in each sub group who learn from highly qualified principals and teachers from each school in each participating district. Since most of their students are Hispanic and are economically disadvantaged, they are treating all the students as one sub-group with the state being the comparable group. They are proposing to narrow the achievement gap between these two groups.

The consortium has a well defined plan of assessments with measures that are rigorous and appropriate for the purposes listed in this proposal. This part of the plan is ambitious and achievable based on the information provided, therefore the score is in the high range.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the investments made for this project, the consortium plans to participate in all national evaluation initiatives related to the grant. They will also hire an experienced education evaluator who is not an employee of any of the districts in the consortium.

The evaluator will lead formal evaluation efforts including on-going analysis of project data, monthly reports, monthly superintendent board meetings, reports of quarterly in-depth reviews by the project management team, and all relevant information generated through project activities. The evaluator will monitor all formative data for continuous improvement, and write an annual summative report for each project year, and a final report at the end of the grant funding. As part of this reporting, the evaluator will review and analyze professional development; implementation of technology resources; productive use of time, staff, funding; results of work with community partners; service delivery; the effectiveness of project

leadership; and decision-making structures. Other instruments, such as surveys, may be used to gather data on project impact in communities including parent, teacher, principal and other administrators.

The external evaluator, who does not have a vested interest in the project, is likely to bring a fresh perspective and objectivity to the task thereby providing a check & balance structure to achieve the goals of the project. However, there are no articulated goals for this section to guide the evaluation, no timeline and no deliverables, therefore the score for this section is in the low range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium has identified those funds that will be used in future to sustain the work of the grant project. They identified some one-time costs as examples, but did not identify any more. The sustainability budget shows other funding including Title1, 1a, 1la, e-rate, state and local funds.</p> <p>The budget documents delineate each budget category, and in the sustainability budget, the funding source. The main budget document itself is very brief and not broken down by initiative, activity or district. In other documents, they break each section into projects and identify in a narrative with each page, the personnel, what each will do and the supplies, equipment, contracted services that will be bought. Where applicable, other funding sources were identified to be used during the grant years, some are the same as those after the grant in the sustainability budget. The rationale is clear, although somewhat optimistic. However, the technology seems underestimated if they plan to place digital devices and access within reach of all participating students. Their priorities as stated in the vision in section (A) are also not reflected in their budget. Therefore the score for this section is in the low range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium has a plan for sustainability and a budget for this that includes Title1, 1a, 1la, e-rate, state and local funds. They note that the superintendents and project management team members have begun planning for sustainability by identifying resources needed to continue the initiatives. They believe many of the transformations will become institutionalized such that they will become part of the way things are done; project based learning for example.</p> <p>The sustainability budget shows each activity to be sustained, a budget amount and the funding source. There is some optimism that a large amount of these costs can be funded from local budgets. They state that since the reforms replace some things and positions that were financed before, the cost savings will pay for the sustained reforms. Schools across the country seem to be dealing with shrinking budgets, so unless this state is unusual in the way they fund schools, the local budget may not stretch far enough.</p> <p>The evaluation plan in the grant proposal will identify for the consortium leaders those components that are most effective and those that are beneficial, but not critical to continued success. This too will impact the budget since not all of the initiatives of the grant project will be sustained. Some of the items are one-time costs and others will replace. For example the huge technology outlay is a one time cost; maintenance and replacement as needed is a smaller cost. The extensive professional development will be replaced by refresher courses and as teachers become more confident and effective in their abilities, they will become more able to try new strategies.</p> <p>The consortium has a high quality plan for sustainability after the grant. As with most school districts, there are several funding unknowns. However, the consortium participants are already considering new funding sources and which initiatives need to be continued and which do not. While they may be overly optimistic in some areas of their sustainability budget, overall, this section is scored in the high range.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The fiscal member of the consortium has started, with foundation support, a "Making Connections" Initiative which will serve as a model for the other eight school districts. The underlying believe is that "Children do better when their families do better, and families do better when communities are supportive."

The Making Connections initiative is place-based and organized around 4 factors: work & earnings, family assets, successful kids, and resident leadership. Social networks are central to this family centered work. It builds parents' confidence and empowers them to become more active in their children's education, and identifies and builds on a variety of assets. Each of the communities has partnerships willing to commit resources toward the development of this initiative. Two of these partners are identified, it is unclear if there are more.

The population level results that they plan to address and measure include:

- Children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school. Formative early literacy assessments are currently used at the primary level and can assess the skills students enter with.
- Children exit third grade reading at grade level. STAAR assessments are used to assess third grade reading across the state. The results are used for RtI purposes and guide the type of supports provided to students.
- Students graduate from high school college and career ready. The districts assess the rate of students earning college credit through AP courses, dual credit courses, average ACT and SAT scores and those graduating from recommended ordistinguished high school courses. Since AP course availability is limited in rural areas, the consortium will invest in digital coursework to make this more available to all students. Partnernships have been built with postsecondary providers and College and Career centers in each secondary school will be established.
- Students engaged in their education. Student engagement in extra curricular activities will be assessed to determine whether students feel their school environments are engaging. This is difficult to measure since engagement is difficult to quantify in any other way.

Project staff will complete monthly reports reflecting the status of the community -school networks including new partnerships and resources. These reports will go to the superintendents dashboard and be discussed at their monthly meetings. Quarterly reviews of achievement at school, district and project levels will also be presented in a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities format. The superintendents or designees will then conduct a Plan-Do-Check-Adjust process to resolve issues and remove barriers. Since these partnerships and processes are planned for all the districts in the consortium, the plan includes scaling up to all schools and students in the consortium.

The two identified partnerships who have committed resources to the project are Family Service Association and Catholic Charities. It is not clear whether the first is a health based organization or something else. The consortium plans to bring partners from many fields together including social service, health, safety, neighborhood, business and academic organizations. Other than the first two named, though, it is unclear whether others have signed on yet. The intent is to provide many solutions to issues that prevent families and students from being successful.

A major strength of this project is that parents are an integral part. Some parents are trained as "Promotoras" responsible for reaching out to their neighbors and connecting them to medical resources, health insurance and other intervention services. Parents are also involved in Parent Family Advisory Councils in each district. Through surveys and discussions with these councils the consortium receives feedback and suggestions from parents. One outgrowth from this is the Homework, Project and Technology Centers included in the grant proposal. The districts will also work with the partnerships to provide annual series of conferences on topics of interest. DAMAS (Daughters and Mothers Achieving Success) and a Parent Radmap to College are two examples.

The original district has a 21st Century Community Learning Center held after school that provides both remedial and accelerated instruction, and enrichment activites to students. This has supported the 21st century skills taught in the schools. It is hoped that something similar can be developed at the other districts.

Capacity will be built by having staff in each consortium district trained in the specific assessments listed in the appendix to be used to measure perfomance. The resulting data will be used to inform the selection of members for the community-school networks and to identify students and families in need of the networks resources. Parents and community members will have a voice in the slection of partners and resources. District staff will be trained in building and sustaining communication with external audiences to ensure the service is responsive and matches community expressed needs.

Overall, the project is well planned. It's greatest strengths are the parent involvement, the intended indicators and the performance measures. The weaknesses though include few partners who have been identified as offering support, and no clear plan as to how the 21st Century Learning Centers will be scaled up to the other 8 districts. Therefore, the score for this section is in the high average range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium of nine school districts has comprehensively explained how it will build on the four core assurance areas: college and career readiness, data systems that will monitor student growth and inform instruction, recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, and turning around the lowest achieving schools.</p> <p>While there were not many strategies to personalize learning, those that were explained will positively impact student achievement. Since most of their schools are currently low performing and economically disadvantaged, the consortium chose to use this achievement gap with the rest of the state as their target. The proposal includes supports for teachers and principals to help them become highly effective. It also has supports for students and their families to access the tools and information needed to be successful. The consortium districts are aligning their curriculum to the state's college and career ready standards, and while they have not addressed the depth or acceleration of learning, it is included in the plan. Overall, this high-quality, ambitious yet achievable plan will improve student achievement.</p>		

Total	210	123
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