



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0193TN-3 for Knox County School

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant thoroughly describes its vision for a comprehensive and coherent reform. It discusses its successes that were based on its previous assumptions and provides updated goals to reach all students. The applicant's reform vision contains sound and innovative details that are indicative of student success. Adding to the credibility of the reform vision is the applicant's current successful implementation of a pilot program that is a smaller-scale version of the proposed reform.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that the proposed reform is built on its current work in the four core educational areas. This is supported through the applicant's detailed goals for each of the core educational areas. The stated goals are sound and reasonable and are supported by the applicant's ambitious vision for reform. The applicant's theory of action model clearly describes and defines the components that make up the reform vision. Especially detailed is the applicant's proposed philosophical emphasis on providing equity through a high-quality education for each student individually rather than for all students collectively.</p> <p>The applicant provides details on how it will consider each student's unique learning needs but does not provide supporting evidence on how students' academic interests will be considered.</p> <p>The applicant describes the classroom experience for students and teachers in personalized learning environments with detail and in alignment with its vision and informed by its customized learning planning tool.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation as the applicant proposes to include the entire LEA including all students and all staff. A system-wide implementation with all stakeholders participating, supports a high-quality implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>The applicant clearly describes the rationale for including all of its students in the proposed reform and the eligibility requirements are specified. In addition, the applicant explains that all of its school will participate in the reform from the very beginning. This is an ambitious but achievable goal particularly since the applicant is already successfully piloting the reform in many of its schools.</p> <p>A complete list of schools along with detailed numbers of students in the various demographic subgroups is appropriately included in the application.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant presents three sound overarching goals that will guide the proposed reform implementation. These goals are supported by a comprehensive theory of action plan that contain all elements of a high-quality plan. The plan's timelines are described in quarterly increments which allow for a focused implementation.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents ambitious yet achievable goals that will reduce the percentage of students who are not proficient or advanced on summative assessments by half. The methodology for determining the projected annual growth as a result of this goal is logical and appropriate. The applicant presents evidence of specific goal areas that include the subject area, the grade level, and the population subgroups along with the anticipated increases. This practice will ensure that the overall goal will be met. The goal is appropriately assessed through the SEA's and LEA's summative assessment tools.

The applicant thoroughly defines achievement gap and applies the same appropriate formula to closing the achievement as it did to increase achievement on summative assessments. Unique in this proposed reform is the description of comparison groups against which the results are compared to determine if the goal was reached. Also adding to the proposed reform's credibility is the alignment between effective LEA and effective SEA practices as evident in the use of assessment tools.

The applicant presents a clear description of what the desired outcomes for high school graduation are and describes the formula that was used to determine the increases.

The applicant describes the extensive efforts it undertook to determine a baseline for how many of its graduating students are enrolled in college. The projected increase in college enrollment is ambitious but achievable due to the applicant's detailed vision and the comprehensive theory of action work plan.

The applicant provides a sound rationale for how goals to increase postsecondary degree attainment were determined.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant provides strong evidence of success over the past four years and presents this success in relation to elementary-, middle-, and high school successes. At the high school level, the applicant provides convincing examples of success in advancing student learning and achievement. The applicant documents several innovative achievements with large-scale projects such as the opening of a STEM academy, and International Baccalaureate Program, and the Volunteer academy, successfully demonstrating equity by making available college and career paths that are accessible to students of all backgrounds. Sound examples of programs in middle schools include the expansion of the honors initiative to all core subject areas to increase academic rigor. Strong evidence of success in the applicant's elementary grades is provided by a description of its Birth to Kindergarten Initiative and its Early Literacy Initiative.</p> <p>All of the initiatives listed by applicant contain sound supporting evidence of student success. Extensive program evaluations provide strong evidence that support the applicant's success in advancing student learning and achievement. Additional evidence of success is evident by several of the applicant's schools having been recognized for being among the top schools in the applicant's state. The applicant provides additional convincing evidence of success by listing a number of grants and funds that it has received for its innovation.</p> <p>A clear track record of improved student learning outcomes is convincingly illustrated through numerous examples of assessments. The applicant provides supporting data in all categories including in improving student learning outcomes, closing the achievement gap, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment.</p> <p>The applicant provides a comprehensive model of how it successfully restructured its lowest performing schools. The applicant specifies a thorough restructuring of its lowest performing schools and the successes that were achieved.</p> <p>The applicant describes its extensive set of data tools that are available to parents, students and educators. These tools are specifically described in regard to what type of data they provide and who the intended users are. The applicant provides comprehensive evidence of additional ways it makes data available to all stakeholders in a person-to-person format.</p>		

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant comprehensively describes its level of transparency. The applicant addresses that its processes such as budgets are accessible to the public via board meetings and further specifies the transparency regarding its investments as well as other processes. An extensive explanation about the applicant's data system and how the information is made available to the public is provided. The applicant provides detailed examples of how it makes actual personnel and non-personnel salaries and expenditures available to the public. The applicant supports its descriptions with actual samples publications, websites, invitations, and numerous other pieces of communication with the public to ensure high levels of transparency.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides specific examples of changes in state law that provides the conditions and autonomy to implement the applicant's proposed reform. The applicant clearly demonstrates that school districts have the autonomy to increase academic rigor. The additional credits that the applicant is able to require for graduation that exceed state requirements are an example of this autonomy. Another example is state law that requires stricter laws in the frequency of teacher evaluation. The examples the applicant provides are directly relevant to the proposed reform.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of a comprehensive and systematic approach that was used to engage stakeholders and that demonstrates support of stakeholders. For example, a steering committee was assembled to evaluate the alignment of the proposed reform to the existing efforts. The applicant describes the deliberate effort of an authentic approach to engage stakeholders in the devilment of this proposed reform. The stakeholders participating in the development of the proposal come from a wide range of backgrounds including community organizations, parent organizations, student focus groups, business groups and educators from all levels within the organization. Teacher support is appropriately documented, and the support exceeds the required commitment. Letters of support are included and detail a wide range of stakeholders.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a high-quality plan that consists of proven and innovative strategies that will personalize the learning environment and as a result improve learning and teaching. The applicant appropriately combines several strategies such as problem-based learning, collaborative inquiry, differentiated instruction and others. The integration of digital tools will effectively enhance students' control to access content that is of high interest. The applicant successfully details how its instructional approaches support a personalized learning environment that leads to students mastering college- and career-ready standards. The applicant describes how its change in approaches from a teacher-centered to a student-centered learning model will empower students to take control of their own learning. Empowering students to be active and engaged participants will increase deep learning. (a):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The applicant successfully explains that students will be cultivated and guided in creating a vision for themselves that helps them to understand the connection and value between what they are learning and their individual successes.</li> <li>ii. The applicant provides an extensive list of innovative strategies that will help students identify the goals they need to master to achieve their goals. In addition to helping students identify these goals, the applicant also incorporates an approach that allows students to practice these goals which will add to the likelihood of students reaching college- and career-ready levels.</li> </ol>		

- iii. The applicant demonstrates its thorough understanding of deep learning as it demonstrates the outcomes of deep learning experiences. The applicant states that deep learning occurs when students make connections between pieces of information and apply knowledge in a variety of context; thus justifying its approach of constructivist learning theory. Further demonstrated is the way through which students will build their learning goals around their own academic interests.
- iv. The applicant appropriately identifies its cultural limitations based on its location and provides sound strategies and methodologies through which students will have access to diverse cultures. The connectivism theory along with appropriate digital tools and teacher and parent supports, students are able to be exposed to diverse perspectives that will in turn motivate them and deepen their learning.
- v. The applicant convincingly states that students will master critical academic content through its application of Common Core Standards along with real life applications that lead to the development of such traits as critical thinking. Additionally, students are expected to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize which supports the development of problem-solving skills.

b),

- i. The applicant appropriately documents that a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development is going to be achieved through scaffolding and the provision of individualized and differentiated instruction. Students' abilities, learning styles, and interests will be considered in providing these personalized strategies. An innovative student focused plan of study provides the infrastructure that supports personalized learning.
- ii. The applicant presents the use of a blended instructional model that documents a variety of high-quality approaches and environments. Partnerships formed with instructional organizations are one approach listed by the applicant that supports high quality instruction approaches and environments.
- iii. The applicant lists several digital learning content providers that provide sound digital content such as, Discovery Education, Compass Learning's Odyssey, Apangea, Rosetta Stone and Voyager Passport and Language.
- iv. A) The applicant provides convincing evidence of why it engages in on-going and regular feedback as it informs instruction and supports good educational decision-making. Student progress is monitored toward credit achievement and the attainment of college- and career-readiness. The applicant discusses the use of summative and formative data that is updated nightly to provide sound feedback. The detailed description includes various forms of data management tools, what type of feedback they provide, and how they contribute to the applicant's proposed goals.

B) The applicant demonstrates the use of the feedback to provide personalized learning for each of its students.

- v. The applicant presents evidence of an early warning system that is part of its data management system that generates red flags when a student needs interventions. Extended learning time, small group instruction, advisories, interventions, mentoring, and academic and behavioral supports are part of an exhaustive interventions the applicant will employ to ensure that high-need students on track to meet college- and career-ready standards.

c) The applicant provides a unique plan as part of its theory of action plan that contains formally addressed components for student and parent training on tools and resources provided to them.

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

**20**

**20**

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

The applicant provides a complete and comprehensive staff training and development model that supports all of the instructional strategies and approaches that are proposed to be implemented for learning. This high-quality plan includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables and the parties responsible. The applicant demonstrates a sound approach to connecting staff training and development with the goals for learning and appropriately aligns them in a way that is timely. The professional development plan that was developed for the pilot implementation of this proposed reform underscore the feasible success of this proposed reform.

a)i) The applicant details strategies to teacher training with multiple approaches. The applicant describes extensive training in all aspects of teaching and leading. For example, literacy and numeracy coaches are utilized to train teachers, teacher mentors are engaged, teacher development is systemic and ongoing, effective implementation is not only taught to teachers, but modeled by instructional coaches to support personalized learning environments that will ensure college- and career ready student success.

a)ii) The applicant provides a model of instruction where technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge are merged for optimal learning environments. This model allows for the adaptation of instruction, and teachers are trained to differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs.

a)iii) The applicant convincingly demonstrates that the program Discovery Education provides a targeted and systemic approach to obtaining formative data regarding college- and career-readiness three times per year. Additional assessments include benchmark testing, Response to Intervention data, teacher-developed probes. This data is analyzed with the help of coaches and teachers determine what students need to know based on what the data shows they already do know. Supporting evidence of what these reports entail is provided by applicant.

a)iv)The applicant provides extensive evidence about its rigors and comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation systems. In addition to four formal teacher observations per year, teachers receive feedback from their professional learning communities that is intended to inform and improve instruction. Unique in its approach is the applicant's consideration of incorporating student feedback for teachers to improve instruction.

b)i) The applicant effectively demonstrates that systems are in place to provide teachers with the training needed to transform and apply data into actionable strategic interventions. For example, the applicant explains that the Office of Accountability produces high-yield strategies that are based on current formative student data. In addition, the technology that will be used in this proposed reform will generate feedback to teachers based on student learning.

b)ii) The applicant lists several programs that have yielded increased student learning. These include Discovery Education, Compass Learning's Odyssey, Voyager Passport, Reading Plus and Language and enVision MATH. Unique to this proposed reform is the applicant's strategy to catalog and make available to all of its educators, a library of on-line resources that are of high-quality and align with college- and career-ready standards.

b)iii) The applicant describes effective tools that are currently used which include the CLASP process that helps to identify each student's learning needs and frequently monitors these needs. In addition, the Canvas LMS system will help teachers to customize learning resources and strategies to meet the students' needs. Teachers will monitor students' progress weekly through professional learning communities and will determine which instructional strategies were effective in meeting students' needs. Response to Intervention leadership teams are another evidence of sound practices as they monitor student progress and make necessary adjustment to maximize learning.

c)i) The applicant provides extensive examples of sources of data that are available to school leaders and school leadership teams. Administrators can access data about the effectiveness of individual teachers and other important data. The applicant details how these data are used to make adjustments to current practices. A unique data system in place generates surveys that capture family engagement, parent responses and other data that contributes to administrators' ability to make decisions that lead to continuous school improvement.

c)ii) The applicant thoroughly demonstrates that it has multiple training systems in place. Evidence of such training systems and also just-in-time training opportunities are provided.

d) The applicant has a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students receiving instruction for highly qualified teachers.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

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

The applicant provides all aspects of a high-quality plan as defined in this notice and required by this selection criterion to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

a) The applicant provides an organizational chart that depicts the current structure of departments and personnel that provides the support and services to all schools. The applicant describes the appropriate alignment between the proposed goals and the various responsible departments that will provide the support and services. The applicant is proposing to add another division within the curriculum and instruction program that will be responsible for innovation and school

reform. Also added will be a new instructional technology department with eight technology trainers to support the implementation of this proposed reform. In addition, the applicant justifies the addition of a TPaCK coach at each of the pilot schools to support the implementation of the pilot reform.

b) The applicant comprehensively describes the autonomy and flexibility it provides its school leadership teams. The applicant explains for example that schools have different objectives and as such have discretion to extend their school days as well as their school calendars. Funding for extended learning activities beyond the regular school day can be used for their schools' unique needs. School personnel decisions are made at the campus level. Title I funds are made available to campus principals to spend on specific student needs.

c) The applicant describes many effective approaches that allow students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. One such example is the "move on when ready" program that allows students to test out of a course without having to attend class.

d) The applicant describes a credible approach to personalized learning where students can demonstrate mastery of content through project-based learning and problem-based learning approaches. Canvas is another example where students can demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways until mastery is accomplished.

e) The applicant provides specific examples of how individualized and prescriptive interventions will assist students with disabilities and English learners in addition to having access to many learning resources. For example, a co-teaching model is used to include special education students in the general education classroom. To accomplish the co-teaching model of instruction, special education teachers receive special training in content and pedagogy and have to hold the appropriate endorsement specialization in the area they are co-teaching. The applicant describes that instruction for English Language Learners is enhanced through the use of a system-wide coach. Instruction for English Language Learners is tiered and materials are modified based on their English language proficiency.

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

The applicant provides sufficient evidence that its LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning.

a)The applicant describes that its students and educators have a wide range of curricular content and learning available to support effective instruction that include textbooks, ancillary instructional materials, adaptive technologies, and online subscriptions. Students and parents have access to a number of web-based resources outside of school such as online textbooks, tutorials, databases and search engines. The Community Schools initiative and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program provide high quality instruction after school. The LEA's Parent Portal allows students and parents access and retrieve individual student progress. Canvas learning management system is accessed by parents, teachers and students. In its pilot schools, students and parents have access to high-quality learning resources in and out-of school through technology devices.

b) The applicant describes an exhaustive and appropriate tiered level of technical support. This is supported by the following examples: A help desk is in place where parents and schools can get technical issues resolved. After hour support is available online. Technical support hubs are providing assistance that cannot be provided through the help desk. Building-level technology coordinators and instructional technology specialists assist students and teachers in schools. Students are being trained in secondary schools to provide technical assistance to both teachers and their peers.

c) The applicant effectively demonstrates its use of information technology systems as it states that data from its student information system populates learning software programs that manage individual student progress. Data collected from the learning software programs in turn provide the student information system with data from each individual student's learning experiences.

d) The applicant appropriately describes its data-management system and lists several features such as its inter operable functions and the type of data that can be retrieved in multiple formats and for multiple purposes.

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

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

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

The applicant provides a high quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. The applicant appropriately identified the need to hire a director of continuous improvement as well as a data analyst and a program specialist to manage the coordination and data associated with the proposed reform. The applicant effectively described its cycle of inquiry which it uses as a guide to implement a thorough continuous improvement model. The applicant convincingly demonstrates that an application of its cycle of inquiry at all of its organizational levels to include this proposed reform's task force, its LEA administration and all of its campuses. The applicant provides specific responsibilities at each level to ensure an effective cycle of inquiry. In addition, the applicant effectively demonstrates that its strategic planning process will oversee the execution of a formal program evaluation. The applicant clearly describes the system it has in place that allows for feedback regarding progress toward project goals that are reviewed monthly. Similar to the task force, building principals have formed task force systems that reflect on progress toward the proposed reform. The task force teams have monitoring plans that include school-specific goals that they use to continuously improve their efforts to meet the proposed goals.

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

**5**

**5**

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not provide sufficient data that would support a high-quality plan. While the applicant identifies key goals, activities to be undertaken, and the rationales for implementing them, timelines are not provided for the implementation of these activities. The timelines provided in the theory of action plan correspond to the activity of developing a communications plan. The applicant appropriately identifies two of its offices that will provide information to stakeholders, namely the Office of Public Affairs and the Office of Family and Community Engagement. A model to increase communication is provided that shows the focus areas to be involve, inquire, inform, and inspire. Each of these components is thoroughly discussed in relative to ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. A communications plan is going to be developed which will be based on the Smarter School Spending model.

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

**5**

**4**

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

The applicant appropriately provides ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures.

a) The applicant provides extensive rationales for selecting the performance measures. For example, the applicant states that it aims to reduce the percentage of students with at least one out of school suspension by half over an eight-year period. It also addresses how it will accelerate this performance measure to close its gap between students of sub-groups who are referred for behavioral concerns more often than their peers who are not identified in any of the high-need subgroups.

b) Effectively addressed is how this particular performance measure provides an appropriate health/social leading indicator of successful implementation of the applicant's theory of action plan. The applicant further effectively indicates that this performance measure is evaluated daily and captured by its data-system nightly. It provides rigorous and formative feedback in that it provides educators with an indicator that appropriately prompts follow-up and investigation of other possible students concerns by a staff member.

c) The applicant appropriately refers to its cycle of inquiry practice to review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The applicant provides an exemplary approach and high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the Race to the Top-District funded activities. It proposes a well-designed research design that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The applicant appropriately lists several questions that guide the evaluation. These questions are effectively linked to the goals of the proposed reform and appropriately evaluate the effectiveness of the Race to the Top-District funded activities. An example of a guiding question asks: Do students experience stronger engagement and motivation as a result of technology-enabled PLEs? An example of the rigor with which the applicant evaluates program effectiveness is through the description of its current use of control groups. Control groups will be used to conduct hypothesis testing to compare student results of the pilot schools with those of control schools. Adding to the rigor is the applicant's use of a consortium of evaluators from various partnering organizations, such as Vanderbilt University will evaluate key reform

efforts, including Educator Evaluation, Achievement School District, Compensation Reform, STEM, Workforce Trends as well as others.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's budget, including the budget narrative and tables exceed the requirements for this selection criteria.</p> <p>a) The applicant thoroughly identifies all funds that will support the project. All of the funds that support the project are clearly identified and appropriately allocated for each of the four project years. The funds from other sources are much greater than the funds requested through this grant which speaks to the applicant's serious commitment to this proposed reform.</p> <p>b) The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant described several ways that allow keeping the budget reasonable. For example, the applicant considered the benefits of purchasing technology devices for its students, but instead decided to lease as it provided a better option to provide students with the latest technology for less money. The budget is sufficient in that it provides for a full scale-up of the applicant's current pilot program.</p> <p>c) The applicant provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities.</p> <p>i) The applicant thoughtfully organized the budget into three broad categories that are aligned with its proposed reform goals. The category of professional development, for example, includes an exhaustive list of other fund sources that will support the project. Some of these funds are from the Great Schools Partnerships, Federal Funds, and Pre-K Community donations. The funds that are going to be used are described in direct relation to the proposed reform and careful consideration was made that the applicant's current infrastructure will support the technology that is going to be leased, for example.</p> <p>ii) The applicant appropriately identifies fund that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. The applicant effectively describes the contract with the Canvas vendor as a \$200,000 cost per year. This cost is not on-going as the applicant intends to build internal capacity so that this expense becomes obsolete by year three of the grant.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that it has a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant effectively demonstrates that it has planned for sustainability after the term of the grant by including in its performance measures, outcomes that are to be achieved past the term of the grant. In addition, the applicant effectively demonstrates that its community soundly supports its current initiatives that are closely aligned with the propose reform and will continue to do so after the term of the grant. In its estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant, the applicant provides a thorough and clear description of anticipated funds that are needed to implement the program past the term of the grant. The applicant appropriately identifies the need for fewer resources at the secondary level once students are experiencing higher levels of achievement due to the proposed reform. Fewer resources are also appropriately identified for professional development. As staff becomes sufficiently trained to implement the proposed reform, fewer funds will need to be allocated for outside consultants and trainers.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
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<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant effectively demonstrates its prior success in integrating public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students in some of its high need schools. The applicant appropriately proposed to scale up its community schools initiative that meets the requirement of this criterion.</p> <p>1) The applicant describes its coherent and sustainable partnership that is currently supporting the community schools effort and that is proposed to be scaled-up as part of this proposed reform. The applicant clearly demonstrates that the partnership is comprised of several credible entities that have a history of successfully working together to provide services to students and their families in high need locations. Some of these organizations forming the partnership are the United Way, the Urban League, and the City of Knoxville.</p> <p>2)The applicant provides a list of education outcomes that are anticipated as a result of the partnership as well as a comprehensive description of family- and community supports that are are anticipated to result from the partnership. Educational outcomes are expected to affect an increase in reading and math scores as well as increase attendance and decrease tardies. The applicant comprehensively describes the family-and community supports.</p> <p>3)a) The applicant appropriately responds that it will track the selected indicators through its EMIS data system. A system to track non-educational outcomes as a result of the partnership are currently not in place. The applicant states that it will partner with the community service providers to establish a data collection mechanism.</p> <p>3)b) The applicant states that a new Chief Operating Officer for the proposed reform will develop an accountability matrix to capture parent engagement, for example. The applicant describes other measures that it will use to collect data.</p> <p>3)c) The applicant states that its current Community Schools initiative will be scaled up to include all of its elementary schools over the next six years. The applicant appropriately describes that same strategy that was used to implement the Community Schools pilot program will be used to scale up the initiative.</p> <p>3)d) The applicant appropriately states that the goals of the proposed project align with the goals of the proposed partnership and that students' progress will be monitored with the same integrity.</p> <p>4) The applicant effectively states that the site directors at each Community School will develop strategies to integrate services based on its existing model of integrating services to all students served by the partnership.</p> <p>5) The applicant effectively describes how the partnership and LEA will build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with the tools and supports to assess the needs and assets of participating students, identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community, create decision-making process and infrastructure, engage parents and families of participating students, and routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan.</p> <p>6) The applicant clearly identifies its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and clearly describes the results for students. A table is provided that efficiently depicts the growth that is expected by school and by performance measures for each year of the grant.</p>		

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant addresses coherently and comprehensively how it will create learning environments that significantly improve learning and teaching through building on the core educational areas. The applicant clearly demonstrates that these learning environments contain personalized strategies, tools and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college-and career-ready standards; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the</p>		

academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	202
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

#### Application #0193TN-2 for Knox County School

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

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

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

The applicant clearly lays the groundwork for this proposal by stating at the start of the proposal that they were in contention for a RTTT-D grant in the first round of awards, but were not funded at that time. Perseverance seems to be the key word for this district; as they implemented their proposal from the first round, but are doing it in the form of a pilot program, with a personalized learning environment (PLE) for 12 out of their 89 schools in the Knox County School District. They articulately describe how the first proposal, and the experiences gained from the implementation of their pilot program, has made a stronger program and proposal for all of their 56, 000 students in their district.

The title of the next five year strategic plan-*Excellence for Every Child*, or X4EC, will require the school system to make fundamental changes in how students learn in the classroom, shifting how they implement instruction, professional development, technology, proficiency, student engagement, and physical space. The applicant goes on to describe in detail what the classroom and personal development will look like for students and teachers in these PLEs, moving the model from the traditional lecturing, to an engaging, active learning environment. The applicant describes clearly the facets of what will make these PLEs effective for accelerating student learning, but also speaks to the high level of professional development that will support their teachers and leaders. Many programs, which in part have been used in the pilot program, will be utilized in this next stage of implementation.

The applicant articulates a clear approach of how they will propose to accelerate student achievement, and particularly speaks to how this program will give personalized student support through student interests, grounded in data, and most importantly, the teacher/student connection. Data should drive instruction and how you progress monitor it, but it was admirable to see that the applicant has not forgotten that at "the heart of a PLE is the notion that students are known". They articulate this clearly through their description of their "Theory of Action".

The applicant clearly outlines the work that is and will be done in the four core educational assurance areas; going through each area with their plan, and how it will impact the learner. In High Standards for all, the applicant gives a very general statement that stronger and higher expectations will lead to higher student achievement. They give a much richer picture of how various data systems that will be employed in this grant will aid in data to inform decision making, collect human resource data, and budgets. They give an especially strong description of how they will build great teachers and leaders, and how they will turn around low-performing schools.

Overall, the applicant does an excellent job of articulating the criteria that is the foundation of this section of the grant. Although one section was a bit vague (In the High Standards for all) the applicant gives a well-thought out vision to the reader, and gives supporting documentation the appendix of some of the programs they spoke to in this section. This gives the applicant a score of 9.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant plans to implement their proposal in all of the Knox County's 89 schools, where nearly half of their students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. They insert a list of all 89 schools that will be participating, along with the total number of participating students, students that are from low-income and high-need students, and participating educators.

The applicant has ambitious but achievable goals for this section. They have a sound rationale for how they will decrease the learning gaps, and they use a scientific approach to demonstrate why this is the case. There is appropriate alignment between state and district goals and vision; they thoroughly define achievement gaps; and it is impressive how they describe subpopulations (such as Students with Disabilities) and compare it to other subpopulations. Their rationales are sound, and well thought out in terms of detail and implementation.

The applicant failed to describe how this project will be implemented; there was not a process in place that showed the different stages needed for implementation. With a large school district with grade levels from K-12, there was not differentiation of how they would roll it out from the developmental standpoints of different grade levels. This is an important factor, for different grades have different needs and priorities.

Overall, The applicant gives the factors of a high-quality plan of implementation, with further details needed in terms of staging this project, and differentiation for grade levels. The applicant was given a score of 8.

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

Due to the large size of their district, the applicant has in place a "work plan", based on their Theory of Action, to achieve their reform proposal. They have organized it into three projects; technology, professional development, and management and accountability. They give a brief description of programs or initiatives that fall under each category; and in the appendix. They go into explicit detail, inserting tables that describe the activity for each of the three projects, the "owners" or who is responsible for this activity, who the participants or audience will be, and then break the years of the grant into quarters, outlining when and who the specific schools are for this plan.

The applicant plans an implementation timeline that will stage about 1/3 of the remaining students and schools (not including those schools already taking part in the pilot program) each of the first three years of the grant. They believe that this delivery model will enable a high level of fidelity, and use of limited district resources.

The applicant has done a commendable job in describing how their proposal will be implemented through this plan through their explicit "Work Plan". The delivery model also gives evidence that the applicant has put thoughtful time into ensuring this proposal will be implemented with fidelity. This great attention to detail gives the applicant a score of 10.

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

The state of Tennessee, of which this district is a part, has the performance goal on summative assessments for the percentage **NOT** proficient or advanced to be reduced by half over a eight year period. So the goals that this applicant has for the summative vary on the subpopulation. It looks when reviewing this section that the applicant has goals for a 3% increase for American Indian, Native American, Black, Hispanic, and Hawaiian. Overall, the goal goes up between 2-3% a year for most subjects and subgroups.

In decreasing achievement gaps., the same formula holds true as above. Overall, in most subgroups and content area, it is evident that they plan for a 2% decrease per year.

In graduation rates, the state still has the same goal to decrease the percentage of those who do not graduate by half in 8 years. Their beginning baseline for this section is quite high overall (92.7%), so it seems reasonable with such a high baseline goal, the goal for the succeeding years would be small gains. (Up to 93.3% post-grant).

For college enrollment, the applicant set ambitious goals for their students. with percentages ranging between 7 and 8%.

Postsecondary degree attainment was also addressed, with 36.4% of the students for the SY 2012-13, and a post grant goal of 52.5%.

The applicant stated the targets that their state sought, (even though the formula seems quite complicated) and set

ambitious yet achievable goals for all areas of this section, addressing each one through the use of a table, with a brief descriptor of their reasoning behind it. This gives them a score of 8.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant discusses how they pursued funding from the Tennessee RTT grant to open up a STEM High School, which has private funding, supporting a 1:1 technology initiative for its students. They state that this school is referenced as a model for the state, and goes on to demonstrate how the KCS district now hosts the regional hub for the eastern part of the state, working in tandem with 100 higher education partnerships, and being recognized as a Tennessee Reward school, due to academic achievement in the 5% of high schools in the state. This was accomplished in only two years.</p> <p>This pursuit of new methods to support innovative students success and outcomes is impressive, especially when you consider that the school is now recognized as for student achievement in the state.</p> <p>The applicant mentions a high school that is in the planning stages that will meet alternative student needs. They do have in place an Alternative school, in which they graduated 185 students since 2010, but doesn't mention how many total have gone there in those years; so it's unclear if that's successful or not.</p> <p>A Summer bridge program, which is an intensive, eight-week instructional period for their eighth graders who have not demonstrated mastery of skills that they will need for success in high school, is a program that the applicant says is successful. 91% of the students in the first year were able to go on to high school, with 71% successfully completing their first year of high school.</p> <p>Although it seems as if the program works to get students to high school, a 20 percent drop in those identified student's first high school year indicates that those skills don't transfer over as successfully.</p> <p>They mention an early literacy initiative that was started at five of their high poverty schools, which features literacy coaches who work with first grade teachers and students to develop proficient readers, which has expanded to 10 additional high poverty schools in the district. No hard evidence is given for the success of this initiative, except to mention that it has "promising results". Hard data would have been useful in proving the contention that it is successful.</p> <p>The district does demonstrate that they are truly effective in seeking out additional monies from grants, and competitively being awarded them. Some examples of this are Teacher Incentive funds, Innovation Acceleration Grants, which gives a scorecard that rewards teachers, based on effective instruction and outcomes. Not only are they aggressive in seeking and receiving grants, but the results from the grants also demonstrate that positive growth (such as the percentage of teachers moving up levels, and improved student outcomes).</p> <p>The candidate goes on to demonstrate in this section how they have a consistent track record in improving student learning outcomes, and that they outperform all of its comparison districts with similar demographics. They demonstrate steady gains in student achievement since moving to higher standards in 2010; they give the specific results in the appendix. They go on and give evidence of achievement gap, proficiency growth, and graduation rates for 2013; with a graduation rate of 90.3% in 2012; and specific examples of subgroups that closed achievement gaps (in 7 of 16 subpopulations) as well.</p> <p>They address college enrollment, with an increase of 65.3% in 2012, to 69.1% in 2013.</p> <p>The applicant's implementation of their district strategic plan has a goal of "Engaged Parents and Community" embedded into it. The applicant gives evidence of this focus with listing how they have significantly improved this goal with many new programs, such as The KCS Parent Portal and Canvas (which gives parents access to student data and assignments 24/7). The district also gives out student parents on summative assessments that help families interpret the information support their children. They publish all information on their website for public viewing as well. The parent portal and the use of the Canvas LMS seem to be ways that pertinent information gets to parents so they can monitor assignments, grades, and support their children.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant demonstrates that they have demonstrated a steady and consistent growth of student success in all grade levels, subjects, and on multiple assessment indicators. The candidate shows their drive to seek out funding that also demonstrates student growth in specific areas. In some areas, the applicant gives a broad indicator of what they define as "success"; more specific information about these areas would give a clearer picture of the criteria is asking for in this section, such as improvement in their lowest performing schools. The applicant is given a score of 11.</p>		

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

The applicant gives a detailed picture of how they demonstrate a high level of transparency in their district by showing the ways that they make information available to the public. Through the use of the appendix, the applicant shows examples of Board agendas. They make the salaries of all employees available annually through a partnership with Knox News Sentinel (knoxnews.com) in which you can type the name of an employee in the district, and information will be displayed that shows their contract days, salary, any paid supplement, and career ladder differential. They give evidence of their data warehouse system, which breaks down expenditures at the school level, and district level, with actual personnel salaries for teachers, instructional level, and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level as well. This data base also demonstrates facility square footage, personnel FTEs, and utility consumption. They also have a school level per pupil cost summary, in which expenditures are reported categorically.

Overall, the applicant does an excellent and very through job in ensuring that processes, practices, and investments are transparent to the community. The way in which they involve the community through Board meetings and through news and district websites is done frequently, and the public has many visible ways to access information in respect to salaries and school and district expenditures. It is evident that this district wants to keep their stakeholders involved through the multiple means that they give to access this information, giving the applicant a score of 5.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant demonstrates in this section of the proposal that they have successful condition and sufficient autonomy under Tennessee's requirements to implement their initiatives. This is evidenced by many factors:

1. The Tennessee Diploma project was launched, increasing the level of rigor even before the CCSS state standards were implemented. The district had raised graduation credits up to 28, even before this state project increased them to 22.
2. The state's "First to the Top Act of 2011" changed the way that Tennessee's teachers would be evaluated. They moved from evaluating a teacher twice every 10 years, to once a year, and that half of the evaluation was based on student academic outcomes. This one move of evaluating annually guarantees that teacher expectations for instruction will improve.
3. The "First to the Top Act" also gives the district ways to implement alternative salary models, although they do not specify what this will be.
4. The state also made critical changes in tenure and collective bargaining; with tenure dependent on five years of experience (instead of the typical model of 3) and most importantly, two consecutive years of "above expectations" performance. This second fact will give the district flexibility and autonomy to ensure that tenure is only granted to those teachers that demonstrate they can actually teach proficiency, and not just routinely given because they have taught 3 years.
5. The state also received a waiver from the US DOE to allow some flexibility from NCLB. The state then moved to higher academic standards that are not penalized by the mandates of NCLB. The district is now able to have the autonomy to differentiate goals for schools based on the needs of their students, while still aligned with district goals. This autonomy seems to be a huge plus in targeting specific needs for each school campus, as compared to a "cookie cutter" mentality that is required of most school districts.

It is impressive, given the above evidence, that the initiative that the state of Tennessee has shown in their broad reforms for the teaching profession and higher standards for students has paid off for the KCS as well. They have taken these changes, and modified them for their own schools and populations. These rigorous and successful conditions that allow the applicant to have the environment to implement their personalized learning environment gives the applicant a score of 9.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

It was interesting to note that the KCS district convened a committee even before they applied for the RTT-D grant, to ensure that their strategic plan aligned with the absolute priority for the RTT-D grant. The steering committee then sought input from schools to inform the development of the proposal, with teacher, principal, and student groups giving their perspective, feedback, and concerns that the team should consider in their plan. Community organizations also provided

input on this proposal; with the Chamber of Commerce Workforce department serving on the leadership team. The local education foundation helped with the Competitive Preference Priority project.

The district then selected the 12 PLE pilot schools to test out their vision of the grant before submitting the RTT-D grant. They plan (if selected) to give all schools the autonomy to define its implementation process in support of the district vision, with the 12 pilot schools serving as examples to identify best practices to achieve the goals of this initiative.

For teacher support, the district uses a collaborative conferencing model, which has replaced collective bargaining in their district. Since they are not using collective bargaining, they got support for all 28 schools that applied to be in the pilot , with 90% support .The applicant believes that this fact will translate into district wide support in excess of 70%, as evidenced in the PLE pilot teacher pledge forms. The applicant places in the appendix the pledge forms from every school in the district.

The applicant gives in the appendix letters and support and commitment from community agencies, state legislators, city organizations, Higher education agencies, and other school and community stakeholders.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates in this section of the application how they involved all stakeholders in the process of writing this grant, getting feedback and concerns from all. The leadership committee then went back after this feedback and revised their plan. The systematic way in which they involved all stakeholders (teachers, community, students) is detailed, especially when ensuring that this grant would align with their vision of their district. It does seem that student engagement in this plan was only at the beginning levels; it would be more effective to have them as a part of the on-going plan as well. This detailed stakeholder engagement gives the applicant a score of 13.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

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

In part C(1) ai, the applicant says that the students will understand what they are learning and connect it to their lives through quality instruction, based on CCSS standards. The 1:1 technology that will be used in this initiative does help students tailor their learning to meet their own interests and needs, and helps parents monitor and support their learning at home. It also says that the "Canvas" LMS will help all students, parents, and teachers in setting individual goals, with seeing in real time reward of advancing to mastery of a skill or standard. They also mention a carefully thought out advisory program will help all stakeholders are engaged in their goals for success, and that students can make choices that connect to their learning and success.

*Although these goals seem lofty, the applicant does not seem to go into detail of how they will learn, except to mention CCSS standards. The use of technology as mentioned in this section seems to be an excellent way for all stakeholders that are involved in the student's education to plan, monitor, and work together as the student advances through school.*

In part C(1) aii, the applicant references the KCS strategies to as the means that students will identify and pursue learning goals. A big piece of this is done by school scheduling, which has advisory, intervention, and enrichment periods built into a student's day, according to their needs. The specialized academies also help to support and tailor student needs. They once again link the CCSS standards to a more rigorous curriculum, with higher credits required to graduate from high school; and a STEM elective focus option, which further helps to identify and pursue goals.

*The candidate outlines strategies and CCSS standards that will help students with their goals towards college and careers, but details are not in place for how this will be done with fidelity. The school scheduling that is in place to help with differentiation is only as good as the instructor who facilitates this. This seems to be a missing piece of this section.*

In part C(1) aiii, the applicant states that the student can only be involved in deep levels of learning through effective instruction; so they are providing professional growth opportunities for their staff, as well as project and problem based learning.

*The professional development is very important in supporting teachers to more to more effective levels, however, the applicant does not mention how this will happen. It would also be important to identify the facets of the models for project and problem based learning as well.*

In part C(1) aiv, the applicant address the issue of diversity by using the X4EC model for students to connect, learn, and work with others. They also plan to stream content, and use the blended classroom model to give students exposure to other cultures.

*The focus for the above section seems to be based on more exposure to other cultures through their model, and to use technology to make it more apparent.*

In part C(1) av, the applicant references the CCSS standards and their own Theory of Action as the way to learn critical skills. While this is true that CCSS standards do speak to higher levels of thinking, there does not seem to be a specific means by which they plan to address this criteria. They plan to implement the CLASP protocol, which is designed to help students master academic content and demonstrate skills.

In part C(1) bi, the applicant alludes to their Theory of Action as the means that each student will have a sequence of content that will ensure that their goals are met to be college and career ready. The applicant gives an example of this with the eighth graders in their district beginning a four year plan of study which they review and revise annually, with the Canvas LMS and digital content that is modified to meet learning needs, with data from assessments to help monitor progress.

Although a four year plan of study is helpful, it doesn't seem to be any different in nature than your typical high school student plan of study. The Canvas LMS and digital information does seem to be a more effective way to target and meet specific needs.

In part C(1) b ii, the applicant alludes to past initiatives in their district that have given students different pathways to have high quality instruction, such as their STEM high school. They use Robert Marzano's research as the basis of how they improve student instruction with teachers, with a rubric that is used as a measurement. They have partnered with New Leaders, McRel, and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, as resources to ensure teachers have successful student outcomes.

In giving feedback to students, they use a management system (EMIS), which gives teachers and administrators access to summative and formative assessment data, a parent portal that allows parents and students to monitor progress and access instructional resources; as well as the Canvas system, which allows access from all stakeholders to real-time data. All of these tools also collectively help support PLCs, coaching, and coaches help to monitor student progress and move toward mastery.

For high need students, there is an Early Warning Data System, that helps to recognize struggling students. They have your typical structures in place that help support differentiated learning; but coaches are in high schools that further help support struggling populations. They also reference the Community School initiative as how they will support high needs students.

The applicant has in their X4EC plan age-appropriate student training, so the students can effectively use the tools to manage their own learning. Classroom teachers and parents receive support as well.

Overall, the applicant gives a mixed picture of their approach to learning. The applicant gives lofty and broad goals (such as CCSS standards), but they do not go into detail of how they will learn these standards, except by tying them to technology. There are missing components of how the strategies will be implemented to ensure the students are successful, and professional development that is missing the "how" piece of development.

The technology piece of this section does seem to be a strong part of the proposal; they have a strong data management system that assists teachers and administrators, and the Canvas system helps parents and students monitor progress, along with a Early Warning Data system, that helps to support struggling students. The applicant used research based strategies and program, and combined several learning styles (project base), using digital tools, and strong instructional approaches. A more detailed learning plan would have helped to give a clearer picture of implementation, giving the applicant a score of 13.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant states that they have aggressively developed a professional growth plan to ensure their teachers can give the best instruction possible, to meet heightened demands. They have array of institutes and conferences for their teachers, aligned with professional development that supports CCSS standards and new initiatives. They are using Professional Learning Communities as the mechanism for job imbedded professional development, and using a coaching plan to support teachers in how to use student data for planning, and to share best practices to help improve both instruction and student progress. They are expanding their 12 pilot school professional development plan to all 89 schools in the district. They demonstrate their pilot plan in the appendix, which has a program that lists essential questions (How do we structure the classroom for personalization? How do I create a 1:1 /Blended Environment?) and then provided sessions that supported those essential questions. This form of professional development for teachers seems to be an ideal way of getting the information that is needed to be successful to teachers through a delivery system that differentiates for

levels of instruction.

The "TRaCK" framework is the delivery system in which the district plans to support teachers with technological solutions to pedagogical knowledge, and also to give training in problem and project based learning strategies. This will be primarily done through the work of the PLCs. Although the applicant gives a broad picture of this professional development, the details of who will give this training, and how it will be monitored to ensure it is done effectively are absent.

The applicant plans to use Richard DeFour's four essential questions of effective PLCs, backed by data to identify learning needs, and multiple measures to monitor student progress,, though assessments. The teachers involved in PLCs will be able to obtain data from their data warehouse, but details of how it is going to be used to accelerate student progress are unclear.

In terms of improving teacher and administrator's effectiveness, the district uses the TEAM model, which uses multiple measures on a yearly basis. This information is accessible by teachers and administrators to inform them on how to grow effectively. They also use a "Monthly-focus" protocol which gives administrators feedback on individual and school effectiveness. It seems as this step up from the previous Tennessee evaluation model (in which the teacher were evaluated twice in a 10 year period) and the "Monthly-Focus" protocol both give the intended parties more relevant information in which to receive feedback , so that they can improve in the desired areas.

The applicant mentions that although there are multiple sources of data, sometimes managing it can be overwhelming, making the effectiveness of the data less powerful. The district creates user-friendly reports, making recommendations to narrow the focus and identify high-yield strategies. PLCs also provide support with assessments, and discussions on effective practices. The Canvas LMS is also the conduct that will help educators make the transition from static learning to a more flexible model. They also plan to give teachers 24/7 access to to learning modules, and an array of professional development, with 7 schools participating in a PD 360 model, which gives on-demand video trainings. These varied ways that the applicant is differentiating for the varied ways their teachers learn seem an effective way to give information and training. However, it is not evident how this will be monitored for effectiveness.

The applicant lists digital and print learning resources that they will use in their district; and contends that the Canvas digital learning system will be the answer for integrating instructional tools and assessments, tracking progress. This platform will allow teachers to customize tasks for each learner; although this is in the formative stages. The applicant did not give a clear road map of how this will look.

The applicant states the CLASP process will be the approach that will identify specific student needs, which the review happening during PLC team time. Through the PLC cycle of improvement, the applicant plans to identify what approaches help students, making the process more transparency. It is interesting to note that there is not a means in place of how subjectivity of teachers will be addressed.

In terms of teacher and administrator effectiveness and improvement, the TEAM evaluation system has given the district a wealth of teacher and principal performance data, which they claim will be used for instructional planning and professional development activities. Administrators will also look at various surveys that will give insights on how the stakeholders are perceiving them. Although there seems to be a lot of data, there is a lack of a direction in which this data can be utilized effectively.

A multitude of PD opportunities are offered; with gap closure PD designed especially for principals. There are partnerships with outside organizations, such as the Tennessee Center for Educational Leadership, and three school leadership teams that are in a partnership with Vanderbilt University, focusing on instructional leadership to help implement teacher practices. These outside agencies seem to be a good, and un-biased partnership for the applicant to get current best practices on how to support leaders, which effects teaching as well.

The applicant also has a plan in place to help develop more effective teachers; demonstrated by the rigorousness of the new TEAM evaluation model, which has shown a decline (although they do not indicate how much)of teachers who are producing less than one student learning gains, along with an incentive pay structure, and leadership academies for up-coming principals.

Overall, the applicant gives a broad outline of their teaching and leading section of this plan. Their PD model of what they offered in terms of essential questions and course offerings from the original 12 pilot schools seems to be an effective way to begin the needed PD. Some of the framework done in the school settings seems to be less targeted; they give the name of the program, but do not mention how they will monitor these programs for their effectiveness. The PD work done with partnerships to support leaders in implementing their initiatives gives the district an un-biased and researched based view of their implementation and best practices. It would be more effective if the data that was given to teachers and principals to improve their practices had more of a direction. The applicant receives a score of 14.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant aligns it's organizational structure to support their four goals in their strategic plan, which seems to be a high quality way to ensure that they are utilizing their personnel in an effective and accountable way, tied into their goals. They added two new divisions (Office of Innovation and Reform, and an Instructional Technology Department), which is helping with best practices for focus/priority schools, which the Technology section is supporting their PLE pilot. Coaches that support the pilot schools are a good way to support new initiatives, and they mention a district team that is supposed to oversee all of the PLE pilot programs.</p> <p>KCS gives their schools the flexibility and autonomy to create schedules that match student needs, such as freshman academies. They can also modify school start and end times, and to utilize early release time for professional development. They also give every school an allocation for extended learning activities beyond the school day, with it being a site based decision. All school personnel decisions are site based, school positions allocated on enrollment, as well as the percent of students on free and reduced lunch. This seems a very effective way to support those schools that need additional support in terms of poverty.</p> <p>KCS says that they have multiple processes in place that give students the opportunities to progress and earn credit on demonstrated mastery; such as enrollment in college courses, cooperative programs, "Move On When Ready", and more that are in the appendix. The high school students can also earn credit outside of high school with correspondence course, e-learning, etc. They also have non-traditional high schools in which students can progress through mastery, not "seat time". They also can accelerate through advanced academies. These varied ways to progress seem to fit student needs and respect their ways of learning.</p> <p>The applicant contents that CCSS give students a way to demonstrate knowledge in a multiple of ways, and that learning through their PLE pilot gives students decision making authority of how they will demonstrate their learning. Other summer programs help in this area as well.</p> <p>The applicant a catalog of learning resources, which helps the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and ELL learners. They believe that learning for these specific subgroup will be handled by providing differentiated, interactive opportunities, although the details of this model is sketchy. It is how every student should learn.</p> <p>With the reorganization of the district office to match personnel to goals, the flexibility that individual schools have to design schedules and times,multiple measures in place to give students the chance to progress and demonstrate mastery, the applicant gives detailed examples of most of the criteria in this section. The section of providing strategies and instruction to all learners, could be strengthened with more specific, targeted ways to assist the SWD and ELL populations. Although the applicant has in place some of the components of a high-quality plan, the timeline of when the applicant plans to implement these initiatives are not defined in this section, giving the applicant a score of 11.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has a high-quality plan in place, as demonstrated by evidence in this section, to support personalized learning. They give evidence of this when they speak the supports that are in place. One of the most impressive factors in this section is their commitment to ensuring that all students and families have access, regardless of income, to resources. Their weighted formula that provides instructional materials to students on a per pupil basis, is weighted on poverty levels, giving those students and schools more monies in which to support their needs. The movement from paper bound textbooks to web resources is a good one that only one saves the district money, but gives the student access to their resources. The only issue would be in those homes that do not have the means for internet service. This is a factor that could be considered, especially in looking at the number of high poverty schools in the KCS district.</p> <p>The Canvas LMS is an information technology system that gives all stakeholders in this initiative; giving all parties real time access to information in the form of data, assignments, and other learning supports. This is a user friendly system. The applicant also addresses the technology support needed for students and families with a technology based help desk, in which they can receive on-going support with technical issues, especially with the 1:1 technology that is available in the</p>		

PLE pilot schools, and slated to be implemented across the district. Coaches are also assigned to schools to specifically help with technology needs, making the support more accessible and with less wait time. Training will also be available to both students and families to help them acclimate to new technology demands.

The EMIS platform that the applicant uses provides a query tool, data, and a "Homeroom" program that gives all aspects of student progress, as well as identified areas of concern (such as attendance, discipline, and enrollment data). This system also contains human resources and budget data, as well as teacher performance data, and longitudinal data. This resource is accessible by all district personnel.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates the factors of a high-quality plan in how they have resources available to all stakeholders, especially in the realm of technology, and electronic learning systems. The factor that is missing is how the applicant will address the lack of technology in those homes who are not able to afford this service. They addressed the criterion that was needed in this section. The applicant receives a score of 8.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

### (E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Chief Accountability Officer is the responsible party for the oversight and monitoring of investments for the grant. If the grant is funded, they will add the position of Director of Continuous Improvement Strategy, still being under the direction of the CAO. There is also a 27 member task force that will monitor the investments. They will meet at each stage of implementation to reflect and make improvements. It seems as they need to meet more often than at the beginning of each stage to effectively monitor the investments.

As part as being chosen as a demonstration site for the Gates Foundation, and are part of a "Smarter School Spending" proposal, which will help them to further examine and align not only the funds from the RTT-D grant, but other monies are well. The district has created a logic model with measurements for new investments, starting with the 2012-13 school year, and this model will be used for the RTT-D as well.

The schools will also annually look at their data at the start of the school year, which will inform school plans for the year. This is a helpful practice, but not tied to the RTT-D in terms of the project itself. Each of the individual schools will also have a team that are responsible for the implementation of PLE aspects within their school, submitting a plan that goes to the Director. These specific school goals are the work of the PLCs in the school, which lead to SMART goals, that are monitored by administrators. Although this is a good plan for systematic change, it is not clear how this plan aligns to their technology initiatives in the grant. Some description of how the proposal for 1:1 technology would be an added strength for this process.

The applicant does address the technology and personalized piece at the teacher/student levels, speaking how they will develop individual learning cycles to improve skills and new strategies needed to effectively teach this new way.

The applicant has a model of a cycle of inquiry which they use not only for their PLC model, but for the monitoring of their investments as well.

Although the applicant has a plan in place that will support effective student learning, it does not seem to align to their X4EC plan, and does not give information about how they will publicly share the information of their investments. If the applicant tied more specific details about how this criteria would further strengthen their X4EC plan, it could give more feedback toward project goals, rather than just teaching goals. This information gives the applicant a score of 7.

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

The communication plan that the applicant will use to give ongoing communication and engagement will be lead by the Office of Public Affairs, through four key goals. The applicant is involving both internal and external stakeholders in the plan as participants who will help with strategies; the district advisory council has parents who will help plan the annual parent conference. The applicant intends to include new and existing avenues to involve the public in this district reform.

The applicant has four tenets in this section that will accelerate ongoing communication and engagement: **Involve:**

(extending opportunities for stakeholders to participate in this initiative, such as involving parents in the steering committees), **Inquire:** (listening to stakeholders to ensure that information about new policies and programs are heard and understood, such as using focus groups, Insight sessions), **Inform:** (many diverse communication tools to provide information to stakeholders, such as a media campaign).

The applicant contends that they have a strong history of routinely and consistently informing stakeholders about progress, challenges, and plans. They demonstrate evidence of this through documents that they give in the appendix, such as their strategic plan Year 3 report, websites that give out plan information, and a messenger application that places phone calls, sends texts and e-mail messages to stakeholders. They also distribute two district wide newsletters on a monthly basis to all staff members.

Overall, the applicant has a high quality plan in place that gives on-going communication with specific targets and guidelines for the stakeholders in the district. Their goals are clear, ambitious, but realistic. This gives the applicant a score of 4.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The applicant inserts a table in this section of the proposal, which demonstrates the project goal, performance measure, RTT-D related measure, and the rationale behind the goal. The applicant then goes on and gives more specific measures for each of the criteria areas (such as behavioral data, in which they give different measurements for grade levels, the goal, and the rationale behind it. These specific goals give a clear and definitive picture of what the applicant intends to do with subpopulations and measures of academic improvement. They also indicate how they plan to gage implementation, such as ON-Track Indicator being a sufficient measure of how they will monitor this measure.

The submitted tables show the breakdown by sub-group for submitted measures, with ambitious goals (example: a reading/language Grade 3 gap from 35.5% down to 25.7% at the end of the grant period.

Overall, the applicant clearly demonstrates that they have clear and targeted goals, performance measures that are ambitious, and rationales. Some examples of these ambitious but achievable goals are attendance: They have goal of improvement in this area from 94.5% to 96% in all participating students; with a goal of 95% (from a baseline of 93.1%) for Economically Disadvantaged students. The applicant's target for career readiness goes from 11% for all participating students at the start of the grant, to a post grant percentage of 31%. Their goal for percentage of students that are on track to graduate with a regular diploma goes from 73.4% to 80.7% for all populations, with a goal from 57% to 68.8% for Special Education students. This above documentation gives the applicant a score of 5.

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

**5**

**4**

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

The applicant is developing a program evaluation protocol, in conjunction with the Gates Foundation Smarter School Spending initiative, using "quasi-experimental" research methods to find out if the X4EC plan is effective. The district research team will lead this evaluation, involving qualitative and quantitative student outcomes. The team will also collect information on classroom observation, designing rubrics to double check.

They plan to establish control groups to compare to the treatment group, which are the 12 pilot schools. They claim that they have used this methodology on existing initiatives. They also mention that they may employ an external research partner to conduct all of this analysis, which seems to be a more objective way to determine the program's effectiveness. However, they also mention that the co-authors of this reform will be evaluating this project as well, which seems to contradict itself, and it is not clear who is in charge of this evaluation process.

The applicant demonstrates that they have multiple measures and instruments in place; developing a high-quality plan that will look at the varied aspects of this grant. An outside evaluator would add more validity to this initiative, giving the applicant a score of 4.

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

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

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

The applicant gave a very explicit and strong rationale in this section; they identified very thoroughly the funds that are

needed to support this initiative, with detailed rationales for the investments and priorities of this plan. They have a staging plan in plan to support the infrastructure that is needed in the area of technology; with a lease model for devices that are more cost effective and have less risk. They did a needs assessment to determine their technology budget needs, so that all students would have the same opportunities with technology. The applicant did not address how they would support those students who lacked internet access at their homes.

The applicant gives a detailed plan for project-level itemized costs, such as Technology for Personalized Learning. They break it down into categories (such as supplies, personnel, training, etc) They continue to go into great detail about other aspects of their budget, such as professional development for the PLE budget, giving a through rationale for the "why" of this project, and continuing to explicitly outline the costs, breaking it down by year and by personnel or equipment needed.

The applicant breaks down and identifies those funds that are on-going, versus a one time cost, and speaks to the long term sustainability of the project. This well thought out plan, that provides detailed rationales for implementation and costs garners the applicant a score of 8.

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

**10**

**6**

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

The applicant gives a total cost of 9 million dollars that will require additional funding after the grant period is over, saying that this cost only represents 2% of their current 400 million budget for this district. They do give a detailed budget of what they will need in costs for the projects three years after the term of the grant.

They believe that because of the wide-spread support that they have from the city and their school board (this is from the PLE pilot roll out) ,more support will continue after the RTT-D grant is finished. The concept of budget reallocation also plays a big factor in the sustainability of this initiative, giving an example of their work with the Gates Foundation of "Smarter School Spending". This work has already looked at a shift from a block schedule at the high school level to a more traditional high school schedule, saving not only millions of dollars, but also better meeting the individual learning needs of their students. They link the use of technology with the fact that they will not have the investment costs of hard bound books, but it also seems that the replacement costs for technology have to be considered as well.

They also mention that if the implementation of their PLE initiative is successful, there will be less need for remediation in the upper grades, saving dollars as well. This cause and effect analysis makes sense on a broad level, but it seems unrealistic when looking at expenditures to leave that up to chance.allocation of resources.

The applicant makes assumptions in this section that would be more realistic if they were grounded in hard evidence. It's good to assume that the city and district will support a broader initiative based on success from a pilot program, but it's not prudent to count on it. The same is true with counting on programs to less the cost of remediation in the upper grades. This gives the applicant a score of 6.

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant targeted the concept of Community schools as their focus for the Competitive Preference Priority. Although the applicant presently has 7 identified high poverty schools that use this model, the applicant intends to roll this initiative out to all 50 of their elementary schools through the monies garnered from this grant; with 3 more schools being added for the 2013-14 school year.

The concept of this model is impressive at first glance, for they list partnerships with both public and private providers and businesses. However, the applicant failed to describe these partnerships, and how they would work with the new systems. They listed that the community schools would provide extended learning opportunities, and targeted social, emotional, and behavioral support services to both students and their families. The details of how the applicant would provide these extended activities were not described, however. They did reference a Framework that would be used in this initiative, but did not address how this framework would align with their plan. They do give the targets for this plan: increase scores in ELA and Math, and decrease the number of tardies, suspended students,while increase the percentage of students that attend school.

They mention using the EMIS system to track the data needed to implement and monitor this plan, and said that other

community organizations would be monitoring it as well, but a detailed plan of how this would happen was absent. The applicant did not list the 10 population level results for students that were required, nor did they give details of a comprehensive needs assessment.

Although the concept of Community Schools is an ambitious one that would potentially help targeted students across many areas, the applicant did not provide a coherent plan, giving details to the implementation and roll-out of this model. Data that was available (with rationales and results) from the seven schools that already have begun this process would have given a stronger credence to the "how" of this plan. Perhaps moving this plan into the 12 Pilot PLE schools, and coming up with a more coherent plan would have been a more logical next step. The applicant also failed to address some specific criteria for this section of the applicant as well. This lack of coherency gives the candidate a score of 5 in this section of the proposal.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant meets Absolute Priority 1. They have designed a comprehensive and coherent plan, addressing how they will build on the core educational assurance areas, using the 1:1 Technology with their X4EC plan to create and implement a personalized learning environment for their students in the district. They give great detail on how they will accelerate student learning, and provide support to students, parents, educators, to implement and sustain this initiative. The evaluation system put into place by the state of Tennessee and the district provides accountability, growth, and support to ensure that the students will have access to the most effective educators possible. They have partnerships with outside and research-based organizations that will help to provide research based strategies, and higher level support in terms of both personnel and ways to deepen and accelerate student learning.</p> <p>The applicant does an excellent job in demonstrating and providing evidence with the documentation that they give in the Appendix. The applicant has a well thought out, high quality plan, which will not only provide students with personalized learning environments, but will also increase the rates at which students are prepared for college and careers.</p>		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>158</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0193TN-4 for Knox County School

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant seeks to use RTT-D funds to implement a new five-year strategic plan whose goals align well with the RTT-D NIA. It describes an extensive planning and visioning process that it undertook on the basis of suggestions provided by reviewers in last year's RTT-D submission. The applicant proposes to create personalized learning environments (PLE) districtwide through a School Technology Challenge, using what it learned during the past year in a 12-school pilot program. This application seeks to scale up technology-based teaching and learning from the 12 pilot schools into all 89 of</p>		

the schools in the district.

The applicant demonstrates good awareness of the literature and possibilities for technology-based learning and the district's strategic goals align with the four core assurances required by RTT-D program.

While the applicant's ambitious vision is laudable, this section is weakened by the proposed planning which is not yet adequate to implement the vision. The application proposes a PLE system with numerous new components, but there are so many moving parts and program elements that the plan seems to lose track of all of them. As a start, it is not clear what the the proposed grant-funded project intends to achieve. Throughout the document the project is variously called PLE ("Performance Learning Environment") or X4EC (Excellence for Every Child) and by changing project names it also becomes unclear what the applicant intends to accomplish. The application proposes to extend a briefly piloted program system-wide, based on the 12-pilot initiative begun in 2013, but it is also not clear if the project is designed to serve students in the kindergarten through grade 12 or if it also includes newborns through 4 year olds (the BabyTalk program). Beyond promising "24/7" learning and teaching opportunities, the applicant does not make clear how personalized learning in the classroom is more than data entry and access to new data systems for both students or teachers. Descriptions provided do not offer a picture of how teaching and learning looks in the classroom and how it is adapted for different kinds of learners (e.g., SPED, EL, etc.).

The district proposes to implement an alphabet soup of options, among them: Canvas, CLASP, and Pack, TEAM, TAP, and APEX. Although the applicant tries to show that each of these program elements are designed to serve different purposes, the explanation of how they support one another in the service of students' learning is inadequate. In particular, it is not clear which of the technology systems will manage administrative data, assessment processes and data, and/or instruction.

Finally, the implementation rollout is unclear. The application is ambiguous about what subjects, grades, and/or types of schools will participate in the proposed program and in what phases of the roll-out different schools will come on board. Very different systems are needed for babies, preschoolers, and young people and for high schoolers than for middle schoolers. Transitioning a one-year 12-school pilot to 89 schools without far more detailed planning misses the mark regarding the requirement to create a comprehensive and coherent vision.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a list of schools that will participate in the grant activities and the total number of participating students in each school. The participation charts state the number and percentage of potential student participants from low-income families who are high-need students and it summarizes the number participating educators. However, the charts are incomplete, because no mention is made of the "Zero to 3" program that was described in the initial vision. The information provided in Table A-2, Approach to Implementation, suggests that only English/Language Arts and Mathematics programs will be involved in the grant implementation, but the subject matter focus is not explained in the narrative. Furthermore, the appendices suggest that STEM programs are also part of the implementation, but STEM goals, requirements, and plans are not described in any of the program goals.

The applicant provides the required raw numbers and percentages about each of the participating schools, but it does not explain its process for "stag[ing]" its implementation. A program as comprehensive as the vision implies will need to make very different accommodations for students and teachers at different grade levels, different types of schools, and different subject matters and it will need to think differently about how to serve widely varied families and their communities responsively.

Without these critical details, the applicant's approach to its reform across the district does not constitute a high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation plan.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The application includes a list of three-component parts of the proposed program. This chart confounds the confusions created above because the chart is labeled "Theory of Action Work Plan Overview," but the components are not parallel and no timelines, responsible agents, benchmarks, or deliverables are indicated. While this chart provides a view of the "big picture," critical implementation details are missing to indicate what schools, grades, special projects/subjects, activities, etc. will enter at what phases in the project. Thus, it is very difficult to assess how the many proposed moving parts in this system will be rolled out. Various logic models are presented in different places in the application. As a

result, the applicant has not proposed a central organizing model and has not indicate the what time periods and the schools each of the logic models apply.

The chart would be strengthened if it included a detailed implementation time lines and indicated who the beneficiaries of each component will be (e.g., teachers, students, families, leaders, etc.), and what grades and what subject matters each component will address. As written, it is not at all clear what schools and programs and grade levels or subject areas will be brought on board and in what sequence the programs will be implemented over the three-year grant period.

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

The applicant has set specific annual goals and defined performance measures that, if met, will iincreased achievement districtwide. The plan mirrors the State's assessment system, which practical approach which ensures that students are seeking to achieve both State and local goals and outcome expectations. The applicant will also measure post-secondary degree attainment as one of its performance goals, using the National Student Clearinghouse to track post-high schools higher education participation. Its methodology will set specific targets based on 2012-13 baselines which it explicitly spells out within this section of the application.

There are two critical missing pieces in these goals charts, however. First, the charts and targets do not differentiate the goals, outcomes, and measurement strategies for early elementary students, from those for kindergarten through grade three. Second, the goals are surprisingly low for the most highly at risk groups (those from low SES families, English learners, and Special Education students). The relatively low expectations for Black and Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged and English language learners, and special education populations suggest that these groups will not be the primary beneficiaries of this proposed program.

The applicant states that the methodology for gap closing and progress is based on the State's methodology for determining its goals. But example gains projections include only an overall achievement expectation for all students of 68 percent, 49 percent for Black students, and 57 percent for Hispanic students, which cannot be considered "ambitious" according to the grant criteria for these most highly disadvantaged groups. It would had been helpful if the applicant explained why the district is not expecting more aggressive improvement trajectories for students in the hardest to reach the demographic groups who are the targeted beneficiaries of this grant.

Based on these relatively unambitious outcomes projections the applicant's has not met the criteria for this element.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

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

The applicant's narrative explains achievement on its priority criteria and provides charts, graphs, and raw data to demonstrate substantial improvements in student learning outcomes and gap closings. The district has made solid gains in the percent of students graduating from high school and applying to post-secondary education programs.

The applicant describes the strategic planning process that it has implemented and examples of schools that have been reconstituted and begun implementing a national school turnaround process. The applicant indicates that these efforts have achieved some successes, but challenges remain. In schools where achievement standards have not kept pace with expectation, the district has changed leadership and, in some cases, closed school and instituted a structured turn-around process.

It is difficult to fully assess the criteria within this section because charts are distributed throughout the application in different sections and in the appendices. The presentation does not fully meet the criterion that evidence should be easily read and understandable. Various performance records are provided, but the summary narrative does not explain clearly the multiple criteria used in selecting schools districtwide. The appendix, which includes much of the validating information, is difficult to interpret because charts and their contents are not clearly labeled.

The applicant would have made a stronger case for its achievements if the narrative and charts were aligned to verify the claims made in the text. It does appear from the narrative that the district has effectively used the State's teacher and leader professional evaluation systems to initiate local leadership and teaching changes. Here again, the alignment of the narrative and the evidence is not as transparent as should be to convey its message.

The applicant includes screen shots of evidence in the Appendices. Looking closely at the screen shots, however, revealed vividly the problem created by technology which is not carefully trial tested. Many numbers are provided in columns and rows, but the charts provide an excess of numbers without providing meaningful information. The example of a student screen shot is busy with numbers and charts, but it is not clear what the information meant in terms of current learning assignments, achievements, or needs. In the student transcript, no interpretation key explained the meaning of the columns of numbers, and, in one case a 2010 course was listed with the 2011 courses.

This chart is a sharp warning signal for how challenging it is to provide just the right amount and type data so that it is truly transparent and can be easily understood by the end-user.

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

5

4

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

The applicant describes the district's long-held commitment to keeping the public informed about the student progress and budget matters. In the appendices of the application, there are examples of available information in four categories of school-level expenditure data and evidence of outcomes requested in this criterion.

While the applicant demonstrates these examples of publically available data, it also reveals the problem of presenting a great deal of data without using carefully-designed graphics. The examples in the appendices are difficult to see (because the text is so small), not always clearly labeled, and require considerable experience for a reviewer to understand how to interpret the evidence presented and its implications.

Finally, data are not truly transparent when they are difficult to read and understand. I Thus, instead of making a strong case for transparency, the evidence provided makes a strong case for the applicant's need to be more discerning about how much information it provides and how it displays and explains that information.

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

10

8

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

The applicant describes a strong State-encouraged context for reform, initiated by the TN 2010 legislation mandating annual teacher evaluation, which encourages districts to go beyond the State's minimum requirements in program and policy areas. The school district has already used the State-granted policy of local autonomy to adopt new teacher evaluation strategies in 18 schools, using a system of multiple local measures to align the teacher evaluation to the Strategic Plan (including unannounced classroom observations). The evaluation system for teachers alligns its program with the State's expectations for pre-teaching teaching, recruitment, and strategies for retaining high performing teachers. The State's teacher and principal evaluation requirements are reinforced by district's evaluation policies.

In addition, the applicant states that it sought advice/review by the SEA in completing this application and received the strong endorsement for its programs and its plans from the State Commissioner of Education, although it does not detail how SEA suggestions were incorporated into the final application.

Missing from this section are examples of ways in which the district expects to seek future flexibilities from legal, statutory, or reulatory requiriements to implement its proposed personalized learning program.

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

15

10

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

A widely varied group of community advisors and local stakeholders contributed to conceptualizing, developing, and

critiquing the proposal development. The grant writing team aligned feedback from these reviews of the draft application with the district's priority plans and with State goals and policies. A focus group process enabled the grant writing team to collect ideas from stakeholders and to continue a feedback loop to align the proposal with various constituent groups' goals, policies, plans, and priorities. Advisors to the grant writing process included representatives from the local education foundation, universities, and various LEA partners. The applicant describes how their interactions with community and school-based stakeholders helped clarify requirements the new systems needed to implement to achieve the goals of implementing problem-based and personalized learning through technology-based systems.

The applicant indicates that it uses a "collaborative conferencing model" rather than formal negotiations in its work with the KCEA (Knoxville County Educators Association). It states that rather than direct teacher input, this model will but used in the future to extend the plans for introducing personalized and student-centered teaching into schools that will participate in this RTT-D grant.

Ironically, the applicant does not give explicit examples how teachers contributed directly to the grant planning except to provide a list of teachers' signature indicating agreement with a standardized "pledge" to implement an abbreviated summary of the project goals. The pledge statements seem to be a mandate, which teachers had no way of declining. In a proposed system of "personalized" teaching and leading, teachers' acutal personal statements would be more powerful evidence of their true contributions, intents, and reactions regarding these proposed plans. The absence of teachers' voices throughout the application and in the appendices leave the impression that one of the most important stake holders in the future PLE program - its teachers - have had very little voice in the project's planning process.

Another problem in this section is that there appears to be some confusion regarding how many schools will be involved in the next State implementation, whether it is 12 or 28 schools. Significantly, it is also not clear how the applicant elicited and confirmed the support of teachers from the 28 schools that are reported to have endorsed the project. The signature pages in the appendix leaves the impressure of a top-down mandate rather than an interactive and educator-engaged process. A project as comprehensive and as reliant on teachers, such as the one proposed here, is much in need of active front-end contributions from the teachers who will participate in the future project. The evidence presented by the applicant does not make a convincing case of a high level of such teacher engagement.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>

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

The applicant articulates an extensive learning approach that intends to engage educators, parents and learners in designing a personalized learning structure. By focusing the program initially on 12 participating high-need pilot schools, the district implies that it will examine the complexity of implementation with a small group of schools before a districtwide expansion. The application describes numerous research-based programs it expects to put on the ground which, it hopes, will personalize learning and provide students with a college-career-ready focus. The applicant emphasizes its attention both to age-appropriateness and to unique learner needs, whether those needs result from disadvantage, learning limitations, or language deficiencies.

The applicant proposes to connect parents, educators, and stakeholders behind students with "systems of support" that helps develop responsibility amon students for their learning and teach them to track their own progress using numerous technology-based programs, tools, strategies, and assessment systems (e.g., CANVAS, CLASP, ACT, and EXPLORE are just a few of these different program). The often-stated goal is to give students more active learning opportunities, which will result in increased perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. Ironically, the logic model that illustrates how these systems will work together does not connect links among these systems.

The central problem with the narrative is that it espouses an inherently contradictory ideal: Students will be "in charge of their own learning" but that the district will impose a set of pre-defined and externally-mandated academic requirements and goals which are frequently tested and tracked throughout students' educational careers. The many newly proposed systems increase the reporting expectations and the feedback structure for monitoring student progress, but there is no discussion of how they will respond if students do not choose to align themselves with the system-stated goals.

Another challenge of the project's plan is that it proposes to add many new technology-based systems on top of a host of existing administrative management and student information systems. The applicant leaves unexplained how the

newly proposed systems are added value over the older systems. This section would be more persuasive if the applicant had provided a "gap analysis," explaining the how the existing systems are not serving students well and which new systems are filling those gaps.

A set of timelines, project activities, and responsible positions is provided in the appendix. Nevertheless, the list of activities and their time lines inadequately explain how the project will actually unfold, how different programs are brought on board on different timelines, and how program elements are trial tested to verify their effectiveness before implementation. It is not consistently clear what and who are the responsible departments and individuals that will be accountable to meet the key milestones or benchmarks.

Although a pilot version of this plan will occur in 12 high-needs school, the plan has not provided examples of specific implementation timelines or organizational and management strategies that differentiate the implementation of the 12 pilots from the proposed expansion to 89 schools. It is unclear how many schools are involved after the pilot phase, or what grades and subject matters are involved. This is a critical missing link, as each system's implementation will significantly differ by grades and subject matters.

In an educational community that has been inundated with innovation over the past two decades, it would be helpful to have more detail about lessons learned from each phase of previous reforms, with specific information about how new programs will overcome previous efforts. The applicant proposes so many program add-ons that the vision becomes difficult to follow. The applicant does not demonstrate how students, families, and teachers will be able to make sense of and put to good use so many new initiatives. A final and most serious concern of this section is that, with all the ambitious ideas about new resources, programs, and integrated systems, there is no evidence of how the highest risk students in the system will be singled out for especially aggressive and ambitious assistance in learning to use them.

Together, these many missing links keep the proposed plan from meeting the requirements of a high-quality plan, which serves the district's highest needs students as defined in this notice.

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

**20**

**10**

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

The vision is to prepare literacy and numeracy coaches and to cluster educators into Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to monitor professional development and student progress, with support from TPaCK coaches and application of the CLASP process. The plan expects assistance from numerous trainers and training organizations.

The plan seeks to support teachers as it would students, by "personalizing" teachers' training as they implement the many newly proposed systems. The expectation is that implementation will be expanded from 12 pilot schools to 89 schools districtwide, but no implementation plan convincingly describes how teachers in nearly 80 schools serving all grade levels can to implement simultaneously so many new systems, technologies, and teaching strategies, while they are teaching students to new more rigorous standards, learning these technologies, and contributing to collaborative "professional learning communities."

The ambitious variety of ongoing and inter-acting professional development cycles is hard to follow, and it is not clear where in that cyclical framework teachers are initiators of their own learning. The agendas and schedules provided in the appendix portray a rigid, top-down approach to implementing a mandate in the name of it being a "professional learning community," without demonstrating teachers' voices as leaders of those communities. Even the title of the program is hard to sort out. It is not clear if the program is called "TEAM," or TNCORE, or Coaching and Learning Cycles, or PLC Cycles. It is also not clear how "PLCCs" (Professional Learning Community Cycles) and "ILCs" (Individual Learning Cycles) complement each other or are coordinated.

While it is appropriate to introduce observation-based feedback and walk-throughs, the applicant does not map the many cycles of observation, time to learn, and to team teaching into a calendar that makes clear how teachers and leaders will have time to actually teach and find time for face-to-face

collaboration with so many new tools, feedbacks loops, new electronics, and collaborations. Finally, and most seriously, it is also not clear how educators will have the time within the school day to offer so many layers of "support."

As in other sections of this application, it is not clear how the plans for leading and teaching will increase the focus of supports for the teachers who serve the highest risk students. While serving the whole district, a grant of this magnitude should certainly have specific and enhanced plans to help hard working educators accomplish ambitious goals for the hardest to reach and historically least served students.

In short, the applicant has not demonstrated clearly the how the timelines, benchmarks, deliverables and responsible roles of several different professional teaching and leading innovations will work together to create a coherent system of supports to teachers, leaders, and families and students. As a result, this cannot be considered high-quality plan for teaching and leading.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>A strength of this section is that the applicant describes the project management structure, which envisions management by a cross-functional/partnership that was also involved in the district's strategic planning process. The cross-functional teams are organized with skills and management oversight that align to the project's goals. This planning group includes representatives from the Mayor's office and representatives of teaching, leading, and administering personnel in the school district.</p> <p>The applicant provides very general examples of how the district has already used innovative approaches that have served students well. But this statement fails to make clear how students in the highest risk groups are assisted in specific ways, from early in their academic careers and throughout their schooling. The applicant makes the mistake of assuming that technology will ensure that high-needs students remain on track for college and career readiness for graduation. The broad-based descriptions are a start at explaining how the many proposed technology-based options will support the improved management of learning. The application also does not detail specific, personal mechanisms that show how teachers will truly personalize their interactions with students, families, and collaborating educators. The evidence fails to demonstrate how students with the greatest needs are motivated to remain on track for on-time, grade-to-grade progress in elementary and middle schools, and, ultimately to high school graduation.</p> <p>The applicant's states that it is committed to creating adaptable learning resources and instructional practices. It cites a range of offerings and options for serving all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. These descriptions are so general, however, that it is not clear what systems and structures will change in real time so that specific students, within each grade configuration and within each course they take, will fully benefit from the proposed technology-based "personalized" system. Statements like "instruction is tiered and materials are modified" are too general to convey how, in each of 89 schools, the many technologies and learning systems will truly address students' persistent educational challenges. A reader cannot help but wonder what will actually happen when and if the systems do not, in fact, "fully engage" students. The professional literature is replete with evidence that the highest needs students are also the hardest to keep engaged by new systems, especially technology, at the deep learning level. This section has not demonstrated structures that overcome the potential pitfalls of this technology-heavy vision.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

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

This section largely repeats the listing of proposed innovations and systems that are provided earlier in the application without stating specific infrastructure changes and planning mechanisms that will ensure full support to all students, in 89 schools, in all K- 12<sup>th</sup> grades, including students with special education and English language learning needs. The applicant's citation of its many new tools and web-based resources, e.g., CANVAS, MIS, PLE, School Fusion platforms, etc., leave a reader spinning in a sea of terminology and hopeful visions of magic bullets. The applicant describes how it anticipates using these many critical tools with students and parents; it suggests teachers will be on duty "24/7" to use these many tools. The plan envisions a K- through grade 12 program, but, in no section, does the applicant distinguish the kinds of hard- and software components of technology that will serve students in different grades. It also does not address how the vision will be differentially implemented with families that are technologically well endowed and have 24/7 on-line access from the needs of families who have no experience with technology, do not speak the language, and/or have no resources to pay for tools that give them 25/7 web-based access.

The application is not sufficiently descriptive of the planning with teachers or families to make a convincing case of how resources will reach students, families, and teachers both in and outside of school. ,

The planned systems apparently are interoperable and potentially include a very large range of information resources. The applicant argues that they will bring into their schools some of the most advanced technologies and resources. The case would be stronger if the applicant had provided some concrete examples from their small pilot of how these systems have already served the targeted students, families, and educators more effectively. As it stands, the application is full of promises but it provides inadequate concrete examples of pilot implementation and planned mechanisms to roll out a truly people-focused, personalized learning and teaching system.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>

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

This section describes multiple activities and structures that will be created to monitor a continuous assessment and guide improvement. But the section does not meet the criteria of a high-quality assessment plan. Completely missing in the narrative are necessary details about the implementation structure planned, the timelines and required evidence of timely and specific feedback for each system and subsystem. The complex system proposed absolutely requires that contributors to this initiative continually assess and track their progress toward explicit short- and long-term implementation and outcome project goals, but such plans are not detailed.

The appendices provide matrices of activities with the broadest possible timelines that suggest a staged program implementation for various components. However, far more details are needed in the plan that points to key responsible agents, progress benchmarks with deliverables. Very specific statements are needed to make clear the activities, time lines and strategies the CAO will use to monitor, measure, analyze, and share information with in-house implementation managers and external stakeholders on the quality of each of subcomponent and of overall investments.

Considering that multiple technologies are envisioned as being introduced at multiple grade levels, in many varied school and community settings, the continuous improvement monitoring plans should address how varying contexts will be assessed and supported throughout implementation.

Also, the project has not demonstrated any plans to involve outside evaluators as members of the continuous improvement evaluation process. An independent point of view can offer a vitally needed point of view when so many complex and interacting systems with so many moving parts are being put in place.

Overall, this section would be strengthened significantly if it included flow charts, key activities, implementation targets and timelines, measurement processes, and performance expectations.

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

5

3

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

While the applicant provides adequate evidence of past community engagement and outreach, its description in this section does not meet the standards of a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement regarding this specific proposed new initiative. Because this initiative will involve storing and maintaining a great deal of personal information, there is a special obligation to inform the various constituencies how the privacy of this information will be protected. Thus, an engagement plan for this proposed system should include evidence of how the privacy of personal information is both used for educational purpose and scrupulously protected.

A high-quality plan for a proposed multi-tiered technology system should include, in addition a rationale, concrete examples of specific activities, timelines, designated staff responsible for managing system, and deliverables associated with each activity. Parties responsible for implementing the listed activities as they pertain to the implementation of the district's RTT-D grant should known at the outset of the proposed program. These critical features are missing elements from this plan.

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

5

2

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

The applicant presents in this section two types of tables. One is a table of goal-based statements indicating abbreviations for measures for its major project goals. This chart includes a column called "RRT-D related measure" and provides a brief rationale for each of the proposed measures. The second set of tables is apparently keyed to specific assessments, with baseline and demographic progress indicators

In the first table, the supplementary narrative under the column "Rationale" does not consistently explain the "performance measures" to be used. The goal statements are broad and general (e.g., the projects will "improve" or "increase" certain project features) statements, but they are not outcomes-specific. The applicant has not explained how specific measures will provide formative information tailored to the proposed plan or how these measures align with the project's theory of action. Moreover, measurement information provided is non-specific about the validity of the instruments to be used, what data will be obtained for each indicator, and the criteria for demonstrating implementation progress. Some "measures" appear to be general measurement categories (e.g. CTE Concentrators or Achievement Gap)

In a the second set of charts, the applicant provides more specific information about performance measures projected outcomes expected for students by grade levels and subgroups. However, these tables - which are extensive - are also inscrutable. It is not clear how they align with other project goals statements and with the performance measures in the first chart. The explanations include abbreviations that are not always clear (e.g., a reference is made to "ACT" as part of the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System for 4<sup>th</sup>- through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, but 4h through 8<sup>th</sup> graders do not typically take the American College Test, if that is the test referred to). Moreover so many measures and grade levels are used in these charts that a reader cannot fully see what is being measured or whether the performance expectations are reasonable. It is also not clear what subject matters are included in these performance measures. The application is fluid about whether the outcomes are limited to ELA/math improvement, or whether pre-kindergarten and STEM programs

are also to be held accountable in the new PLE.

The tables exceed the requirement of providing from 12-14 performance measures, without adding clarity for which performance measures the project is holding itself accountable. They also do not make clear how each of the project components relates to the specific performance measures, so it is uncertain how the technology, leaders, and management components will be accountable for outcomes.

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

**5**

**1**

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

The applicant indicates that it will develop a rigorous research design, which meets the What Works Clearing House standard for rigor, and that both qualitative and quantitative data collection will be undertaken and technical assistance will be provided by the Gates Foundation. The applicant lists five research questions, which add to the confusion in other parts of the grant about what the applicant is actually considering to be the range and breadth of the project.

In the five research questions indicated here, it appears that only the 12 "PLE Pilot Schools" will be included in the research design, at least in measuring the first two research questions. It is unclear from the research question statements as to whether those statements will be measuring only the 12 pilot schools or the districtwide implementation in 89 schools. There is not sufficient comparison evidence within the 12 PLE Pilot Schools to draw comparative conclusions or to "isolate characteristics that are valuable for scaling up" to the rest of the school district.

Moreover, the research design anticipates collecting qualitative data from several web portals. The discussion makes no mention of how the data elements across systems will be integrated and aligned, how permission to share data across systems evaluations will be appropriately obtained, and how the system will ensure that it is using measuring instruments that have been subjected to validity and reliability analyses.

In this section there continues to be confusion (as indicated in A1 above) about what the overall RTT-D initiative really is and what aspects of the project will be evaluated. The narrative indicates its plan to identify "data analysis methods to determine the impact of PLE," but the project itself is referred to in other places as X4EC (Excellence for Every Child). In the next paragraph, the applicant indicates its interest in determining "the impact on the X4EC plan," and the project seeks to measure project elements without an adequate evaluation design. A "return on investment analysis" (ROI) is also proposed, with suggested metrics that do not align with particular project components.

These and other limitations (absence of a systematic design, lack of specificity about how a lead evaluation team will be selected, year-to-year evaluation timelines, design strategies, measures and analysis strategies, and vague deliverables and deliverable timelines) of this section indicate that the applicant has not proposed a high-quality evaluation plan which will rigorously evaluate its proposed RTT-D investment.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

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

The budget section of the application is difficult to follow, because the three separate cost components are not aligned with clear annual expenditures. A four-year budget is provided,

but throughout the application, targeted outcome projections imply a five-year program. The budget indicates that the funding will scale-up the PLE Pilot to the remaining 50,000 students in the district. This section also explains that the one-year PLE pilot is "currently implementing our X4EC plan," although the pilot, as described in various other places, includes only some aspects of the program that serves only elementary students.

Also, while the proposal states that "significant technology investments" will occur over a three-year phase in, the application narrative implies a fast start-up of at least 28 schools in the first year with rapid implementation of the rest of the schools within the following year.

The narrative is difficult to follow and it is not self-evidently aligned to components of the project described in earlier sections. Earlier sections indicate integrated roll-outs of technology, professional development, and management and accountability (e.g., the Continuous Improvement Office, a new division that will oversee the implementation and evaluation of this grant). Staff positions are funded within the Continuous Improvement Office, but no funds are allocated to support an external evaluator for the project. Overall, the component elements would be more transparent if they aligned to the project implementation plan so that a reviewer can see side-by-side which aspects of budget for each component are paid for out of the requested RTT-D grant compared with general funds, e-rate funding, specific Federal Title funds, private or State grants, etc.

Each budget subsection refers to resource allocations from "other funds," but it is never clear exactly which funding streams in what specific amounts comprise these "other" amounts. Various "Other" sources may be listed, e.g., KCS General Purpose Fund, or "Federal funds," or "Great School Partnerships," but the applicant does not make the specifics clear, e.g., what specific general purposes funds will be used; the titles or specific federal funds allocated, who funds the "Great Schools Partnerships," on what terms and in what annual amounts. Also unclear is which funds are one-time investments and which are ongoing only during the life of the grant. Salaries projected for various positions do not include annual step or cost of living increases or anticipated changes in fringe benefits.

Finally, the total direct cost lines requested differ in the two different presentations of the budget (Budget Table 1-1 indicates a Total Grant line of \$30 million and Budget Table 2-1 indicates \$29.6 million). Similarly, the total amounts of grant funding plus "other sources" of funding yield slightly differing bottom lines.

Together these many confusions make it very difficult to assess the overall grant request for its reasonableness or sufficiency as it pertains to annual outlays, as required in this application criterion.

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

The applicant broadly describes two strategies for sustaining major project activities at the conclusion of a grant funding cycle, requiring \$9 million to support personnel, fringe benefits, travel, and contractual arrangements on "37,151 devices" (without including which devices, for how long, for what purposes). The planned strategy will reallocate initial one-time investment resources that the grant funds, which are presumed to no longer be needed (e.g., text books are projected as a "not be needed" category due to technology-based teaching). Another strategy listed is to seek continuing support from the initially supportive community. Both of these are unsubstantiated assumptions.

The applicant fails to include a high-quality plan to implement these sustainability goals, specifically failing to detail what support is expected to be forthcoming from State and local government sources, and failing to describe how the district will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and will use this data to inform future investments. A previous section of the application anticipates

studying the project's "return on investment," but the applicant does not provide a clear design for assessing this investment return.

The applicant's estimated three-year sustainability budget provides a limited narrative explanation of continuing costs and it does not identify potential funders for these costs. It also indicates support only for three office staff members in the Office of Continuous Improvement and five full-time teacher trainers, but it provides no further detail on how other aspects of the PLE/X4EC projects will be sustained.

This very limited description of the applicant's sustainability plans shows a poor understanding of the deeply complex and interlocking technology-based learning systems it proposes. It also does not address the very critical resources that it will need to deepen the teaching and leading structures that will sustain these systems. Significantly, the applicant also neglects to address how its sustainability planning ensures continuing post-grant access to technology, teaching, and college and career-oriented resources for the system's highest-need, special education, and EL learners.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to fund a Community Schools initiative to support its plan to achieve Absolute Priority 1. While the district clearly may have formed strong community partnerships with public and private organizations, and while it appears to have an effective working relationship with its lead partner, GSP, the proposed plan does not demonstrate how the GSP will accomplish its goals in alignment with the implementation of the district's PLE program. The applicant identifies "core components" of its proposed "Community Schools Initiative" but its plan is vague about whether these community schools will be implemented in the 12 pilot PLE schools or in the district's nearly 80 remaining schools.

According to the application, there are currently seven community schools, begun in the current 2013-14 academic year. However, it is not clear if these seven programs are the 10 already existing PLE pilots or if they are proposed as new components of future programs. Without information about the alignment of the future plan with the existing pilot plan, the applicant has not made clear how its programs will serve the targeted schools.

Another dilemma to establishing a competitive preference priority is the vision that 50 additional elementary schools might become Community Schools over the next six years (only four of which are RTT-D grant years). There is no clear alignment between the suggested six-year roll-out of the Community School plan and RTT-D funded PLEs, evaluation systems, MIS programs, and computer-based, problem-based, learning-initiated teaching and learning proposed for the RTT-D project.

The applicant fails to identify 10 population-level measureable desired results that align with the district's RTT-D program. The proposed measures do not include measureable outcomes that clearly align with project's PLE/X4EC programs. While the applicant has identified its annual performance measures for seven of the proposed participating schools, it does not project those performance expectations or measures to the 50 additional schools that it expects to bring on board during the life of the RTT-D grant.

It is not clear how the selected indicators would be tracked, aggregated for the target children in the district, or how the Community Schools plan would improve results for the PLE students and their families across the district.

The applicant's proposed Theory of Change for this component is adopted from the Ohio Community Collaborative Model, but this model is called only a "general framework" for how the components in the district will function. Here again there is misalignment between vision and proposed action. The model depicted in the Theory of Change figure does not obviously map to the proposed PLE/X4EC program proposed in this application.

In summary, the proposed Competitive Priority Plan is missing the following critical elements of a high-quality plan, including:

- No plan to align to the proposed PLE/4XEC programs with an inventory of the needs and assets of the schools and communities that will be served;
- No well-defined decision-making process or infrastructure for selecting, implementing, and evaluating the supports that will be provided to the Community Schools' students and families;
- No plan for selecting and bringing on board the schools which will be implementing the Community Schools component of this grant;
- No clear strategy for engaging parents of participating students and community members a manner that aligns with the larger goals, projects, and processes funded by this grant; and
- No plan for assessing the progress implementing its Community Schools efforts to maximize impact and address challenges and problems that emerge during implementation.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The application describes an ambitious vision to institute a complex and interlocking set of component parts that theoretically can personalize learning for students and educators. The application gets off to a strong start with its vision, based in a strategic planning process and many examples of trying out component parts within the school district to date. Apparently, a pilot demonstration of some elements of this project has been tried out this year. The applicant's states a clear intent to serve all of the district's schools, especially focusing on the high-needs students, to increase students' readiness to graduate career and college ready.

While the applicant has technically addressed the requirements of this criterion, as indicated above, the content elements do not meet the requirements of "high-quality" planning.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>101</b>
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