



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0165NC-1 for Madison County Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant demonstrated how its proposed plan builds on its work in the four core educational assurance areas. This is evidenced as follows.

CCSS

- The State has adopted the CCSS and the district has provided training for the last two years
- The state has already implemented its new state assessment (in 2012)
- District adopted EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT- for grades 8, 10 and 11, as a first step to personalized learning.

Data Systems

- PowerSchool a student Information Management System was purchased with RTTT state funds.
- The state has a virtual cloud - Homebase
- EVAAS- a web-based software program projects student scores

Recruiting rewarding and retaining effective educators

- State developed evaluation instruments for teachers and principals (based on observations and student performance)
- State is studying ways to implement merit pay
- Pay supplement for NBCTs (Positive note - one district has the highest number of NBCT in the state)

As to turning around its lowest achieving schools, the applicant noted that only one high school in the consortium is classified as a lowest performing school. While the applicant noted the state office has a Division that specifically focuses on the lowest performing schools, though, again did not describe what the consortium has done or plans to do in this assurance area.

While there were notable strategies in the recruitment and retention assurance, the applicant did not specifically describe what it as a consortium has done or will do to recruit, develop, reward and retain its educators.

(b) The applicant has proposed a model of change that that has already been adopted in Early Colleges around the state by the North Carolina New Schools (NCNS). The principals of this model align well with the core areas of RTTT-D as evidenced below.

- Ready for College
- Powerful teaching and learning
- Personalization

- Redefined professionalism
- Purposeful design

As described in the proposal, this model is a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. This is more specifically evidenced in the applicant's three - part approach to implementing the model (instruction, planning and implementation). This approach focuses on principals, students and teachers. The chart in section A delineates the groups and the three part approach.

The three part approach chart and the professional development schedule appear to focus on training and coaching.

(c) The applicant articulately described the successful matriculation journey of a student who could benefit from the applicant's proposed goals and activities. Though, the applicant did not describe what the student's **personalized learning classroom experience** or specific supports would look like for both the student and teachers.

The applicant also provided a diagram to demonstrate the consortium organization, where the various districts and staff fit in and the flow of the work. Overall, the applicant has described much of what the state has done in its education reform efforts, though did little to describe the consortium's reform vision. As well, there was no theory of action or logic model. The applicant has scored in the medium range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Students in grades 3-12 from 22 schools from three neighboring districts will be served by this project.

- 9 in Yancy
- 6 in Madison
- 7 in Buncombe

The rationale for why the districts chose to collaborate on a RTTT-D grant was past successful collaborations on Math and Science grants, the districts share the same demographics for the most part and they are physically adjacent to each other. While the applicant checked "non-rural on the assurances page, the narrative notes that these are rural schools. per Table (A)(2) all participating schools individually and collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements.

Other than noting a high dropout rate and "significant achievement gaps", the applicant did not describe the process that it used to select which schools in each district would participate. Thus the selection criteria for participating schools is unclear.

(b)(c) The applicant clearly provided a list of all 22 participating schools- by school district, complete with numbers of participating students, demographics and grade bands (3-12) in Table (A)(2).

Overall, per the comments above, the applicant has scored in the medium - high range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

While the NCNS model has been implemented in high schools- it has only recently been applied at the K-8 level. Thus, the evidence of success at these levels is yet unclear. In addition, the applicant proposes the Regional Service Alliance as key to the implementation and scale-up of the NCNS model- as evidenced through the efforts of the NCNS and Regional Centers planned collaborative regional trainings.

The applicant has proposed that the regional service alliance will be the "hub to advance and deploy the NCNS model" via trained principals and instructional coaches though, there was no plan for how this would be accomplished other than "future trainings".

The applicant has not provided a high-quality plan describing specific goals, activities, rational for the activities, deliverables a timeline or the persons responsible. While the professional development plan provides a big picture schedule of professional development, there was no specific plan.

The project goals are unclear as is the ability of the applicant to reach its outcome goals. As such, the applicant has scored in the low- medium range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided performance measure for all its participating schools. This is evidenced as follows.

(a) The applicant notes that all measures are based state end of course and end of grade tests performance is measured by:

- Level 1 - not having sufficient mastery
- Level 2 - inconsistent mastery
- Level 3 - consistent mastery
- Level 4 - consistently performs in a superior manner

Table (A)(5) demonstrates status data for all participating schools, overall. Growth data is unclear. The goals appear to be achievable with yearly increases of 1.5%, though do not appear overly ambitious. There were no measures for several subgroups (i.e. Black, Hispanic or Special Education).

(b) Table (A)(4)(b) demonstrates the measures for decreasing the achievement gap which the applicant identifies as the proficiency level for each school's economically disadvantaged subgroup compared to the state proficiency level for all students on the identified assessment. The new state tests (2012) were used for this measure. The applicant has proposed to decrease the achievement gap with yearly increases in achievement that get middle and elementary school students to 100% by the end of the grant period, though not high school students.

(c) Graduation rates were provided for all participating high schools with yearly increases of 3%.

(d) Additionally, the college enrollment rates provided in Table (A)(4)(d) are those provided for the state RTTT grant. That alignment is both understood and necessary.

(e) The applicant included Table (A)(4)(c) in its application, along with district names, though, there was no data with regard to post secondary degree attainment.

The applicant did not indicate if its annual goals are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup for any of the participating schools and districts. As such it is unclear how or, if the measures meet the state ESEA targets.

The applicant noted several data sources and measures on the state website, though reviewers may only review and score what is provided in the actual application. Thus the value of that online information is unknown.

Overall, the applicant has scored in the low range.

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

	Available	Score
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(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)**15****5****(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(1) The applicant has provided a three year record of success for its high school End of Course tests for Algebra 1, Biology and English 1. This is evidenced by the following data.

- Buncombe indicates consistently strong EOC results with at least 90% of the students (All, and student in poverty) taking the State end of Course tests successful. Students in poverty (87.8) are performing very close to all (90.5%).
- Madison has more mixed results with increases and decreases over three years
- Maryland Community Early College has a small but steady increase
- Results were not provided for Yancy
- Comparisons between the state overall and overall for the districts in the consortium in the following areas:
 - Graduation rates
 - Black male graduation rates
 - EOC composite pass rate
 - Algebra I EOC pass rate
 - Percent taking Algebra
 - School >85% EOC proficiency.

In all cases the consortium districts outperformed the state.

It is unclear why results were not provided for Yancy and only provided a three year trend - not four as required by the criteria. Additionally, the applicant made a case that personalized learning and traditional high schools outperform non-early schools by providing non-early school data. Though, it was not trend data and more importantly there was insufficient evidence and no description of personalized learning and what the the early college schools did differently. Lastly, EOC test results only provide data on the students who took those courses. As such, this data is only for students who take those courses - which appear to be 9th grade courses. There is no overall achievement data for all students.

(a) The applicant provided overall and by the "economically disadvantaged " subgroup graduation rate data by district. The data clearly demonstrates an increase in graduation rates over the course of four years for both overall (school wide) and subgroup. While the applicant has definitely provided graduation success and college enrollment data there was no other data (i.e. achievement, growth, etc.) that demonstrated improved student learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap for students in grades 3-8, or even for the high schools.

(b) The applicant provided data to demonstrate increased graduation rates in one high school. Though, this was only one high school out of all the high schools in the districts. While a gap still exists, over the last 4 years the three districts have improved graduation rates for "economically disadvantaged" students as follows.

- Buncombe - almost 7%
- Madison close to 32%
- Yancy 7.5%

Again, this was only graduation data, no achievement data was provided for highschool students and or elementary and middle school students. There was no data that would support or demonstrate the achievement of ambitious and significant reforms in the districts' persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools.

The applicant has insufficiently provided a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching in the past four years. As such, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

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

The three districts in this consortium make available by request the following information.

- Annual fiscal reports
- Salary reports (Madison and Yancy)

Of the three consortium districts, Buncombe is the most transparent, per the applicant, having received an "A" rating on the state's transparency website rating (Though, reviewers are only allowed to score what is written in this proposal and are prohibited from reviewing external sources of information). Buncombe provides the entire system budget and one page summaries for overall expenditures and staffing charts (individual line item budgets show non-personnel expenditures) on its website.

The applicant notes that "all fiscal reports are public documents" and available upon request. The applicant did not specifically address the following.

- (a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff
- (b) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only
- (c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only
- d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level

Providing information by request takes away the requestors anonymity. As well, it does not provide a high level of transparency in the district processes, practices, and investments. While stated, the applicant provided no evidence that anyone can access any district fiscal document, school level budgets, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

The applicant has scored in the low range for transparency.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant stated that all three districts in the consortium have "the authority to operate within and advocate for changes to the state's current legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements" necessary to fully implement this proposal.

Other than the state Department of Education letter of support there was no evidence of such authority. The applicant also noted that the state "supports" RTTT initiatives and has instituted Homebase, PowerSchool and other RTTT state initiatives. While these examples of successful conditions are in fact supportive, support and *authority* are not the same.

Without stronger evidence of legal and statutory authority the applicant has insufficiently responded to this criteria.

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

(a) The applicant described the following process to demonstrate how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal and how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback.

- RTTT-D "discussions" originated in 2012 from STEM initiatives
- The three districts "discussed" the idea of the NCNS Model
- The 3 Superintendents and Associate superintendents approached school principals and "discussed in detail" the

RTTT-D grant

- Principal input was used to make adjustments
- Once principal go ahead was secured meetings with teachers and staff were conducted
- Staff concerns were noted and sent to the larger planning committee for ongoing project revisions
- Continued "face-to-face conversations and criticisms" with faculty and principals
- Used the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- Parents and families were engaged through "informal parent sharing sessions connected with previously planned school events" (Band Booster and PTA/PTO groups), and parent surveys
- "diverse student groups in informal discussions"
- Buncombe's STEM HS design committee shared input from its STEM HS design process.

While the applicant presented a generic process that at some level involved various categories of potential stakeholder constituents, there was no indication of *how* the "discussions" were facilitated, who was on the "larger planning committee", and the selection criteria for said individuals, how many "discussion" meetings took place or, how long they were, how the input was documented, and especially in the case of teachers, parents and students, how many individuals actually attended a meeting and provided input.

If only the Band boosters and PTA/PTO parents were involved that is a limited number of parents and does not typically represent all parents - especially hard to reach parents (i.e those who speak a language other than English or those who work, or those in impoverished households). As well, the parent meetings were "informal" and tacked onto other events.

This did not raise parent input to the same level as staff. Of concern was the use of data from the State teacher survey and STEM HS design committee which were two input gathering strategies for very different projects and purposes. The extent to which that data may be used as "input" for this grant proposal is unknown.

(i) While North Carolina is a non-union state, educators are represented through the NC Association of Educators and its local affiliates. TAS such the Union president from each district signed the assurances page and Memorandum of Understanding. The Buncombe president attended the principal meetings and shared information with school leaders. There was no evidence of direct engagement for the proposals from teachers in participating schools other than the signature pages.

(ii) Since the consortium has districts without collective bargaining representation, the applicant provided teacher signature pages that indicated various levels of support from what the applicant states is at least 70 percent of the teachers from participating schools.

(b) The applicant provided letters of support from several key stakeholders. These entities are noted below.

- AB Tech Community College
- Gear- Up NC
- Graham Children's Health Services
- Mountain Heritage High School Burnsville
- Madison County Dept. of Social Services
- Madison County Health Dept.
- Madison County Sheriff
- Mars Hill University
- North Carolina State University

- NC Science, Mathematics & Technology education Center
- University of NC -Asheville
- United Way
- Western Regional Education Service Alliance
- Senator Martin Nesbitt
- State Representative Nathan Ramsey

Absent from this impressive list of supporters were letters of support from parents and parent organizations, student organizations, and the business community. It is of concern that throughout the process there did not appear to be a strong outreach effort to engage ALL parents.

Overall, the applicant did not provide a clear and comprehensive process that ensured meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

The applicant has scored in the medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Learning:

(a) The applicant did describe how it would help students (i) Understand that what they are learning is key to their success and how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, measure progress toward those goals and (ii) identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready graduation requirements. This was basically described and evidenced as followed.

- Use computerized interest inventories
- Activities (School of Hard Knocks for middle schoolers)
- Career Cruisin.com for career interest surveys
- High school Planner
- North Carolina Pathways (CTE, college prep or a combination of both)
- Option of attending Middle college
- EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT assessments
- PowerSchool
- Work with a guidance counselor and classroom teacher

Each of these strategies does indeed provide opportunities for students to plan for their personalized learning with the support of their teachers. Though, the applicant did not describe how they would provide personalized learning. As well, they are isolated strategies and do not appear to be connected in any way. The applicant did not link these strategies to data on student growth and achievement and present them in a plan with goals, activities, rational for the activities, deliverables, a timeline and persons responsible for the activities.

Additionally, the applicant has not identified student academic data, assessment or processes that students would use for

goal setting in addition to their interests.

The applicant proposes that students "accept a greater role in their education". The following are a few of the proposed approaches to support more student ownership in their education.

- The Seven Habits of highly Effective Teens
- The Leader in Me - for "younger students" (it is unclear why the program "includes training for *adults* that focuses on their personal habits")
- Teachers will use differentiated instruction
- Increased use of technology (though there were no specifics provided)
- Online opportunities (again, there were no specifics)
- Remediation courses (during or outside of school hours)
- Face-to-face interactions (it is unclear what these interactions are for)
- Group projects
- Partnering opportunities (i.e. an AP course in one district may be accessed via technology by a student in another partner district - though, because of the current state Virtual High School, offerings would be limited to those not already offered)

While each of these strategies does have potential to personalize learning, the applicant did not describe *how* they would be used, for which students, and in what contexts and by what educators. Nor, is this list descriptive of any (iii) deep academic learning experiences, (iv) opportunities for access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning; and/or (i) a personalized **sequence** of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready.

The implementation of the CCSS could potentially (v) provide students with opportunities to master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving and real- world application of skills in the classroom.

Though, the applicant did not address (ii) a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments and/or (iii) high-quality content, including specific digital learning content.

(B) In response to personalized learning recommendations based on the student's "needs", the applicant proposes the following supports "until the student demonstrates that they no longer require the intervention". This suggests that personalized learning environments are for struggling students only, when in fact they are intended to accelerate learning for ALL students. As well, the applicant does not describe how each of these supports are different from current practice, what each of these supports look like or entail, and what data they will use to determine when a student no longer needs them.

- increased guidance access
- remediation through face-to face instruction
- virtual offerings
- blended options
- tutoring

The applicant provided "good intent" statements and cited research supporting many of the selection criteria, though, never described or provided evidence for *how* these criteria would be addressed in its efforts to personalize learning. The following criteria were insufficiently addressed or not addressed at all.

iv) Other than mentioning the implementation of the new Smarter balanced state assessment, the applicant did not at all address ongoing and regular feedback, progress monitoring or the use of data to inform instruction and student goals.

(A) Frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements - was not addressed.

(v) Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements - not at all addressed.

(c) Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning - not addressed.

The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. As well the applicant did not address many criteria and insufficiently addressed others. There was minimal mention of an approach and/or strategies for students in grades 3-6. Overall, the applicant did not describe a plan and an approach to personalized learning environments that engages and empowers all learners, *in particular high-need students*. The applicant has scored in the low medium range.

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

20

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Teaching and Leading:

(a) The applicant has described several training need areas and a yearly big picture schedule of professional development opportunities for the participating educators (both teachers and principals). As well, there is an extensive list of potential training topics as noted below.

The applicant did not address what these training opportunities would look like across the three partnering districts and how ALL participating teachers and principals would be able to access the training. As an example, it is unclear if ALL participating teachers will receive training together at one location or, in their districts, or individual schools, As well, the capacity for training teachers and principals across three districts is unknown as it was merely stated that the professional development would come from the "State and national experts", this was not specifically addressed except to note John Hattie and Marzano research based effectiveness strategies. It remains unclear what research based effective strategies will be provided and how they related to personalized learning environments.

(i) While some of the training topics could in fact support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure they can graduate on time college- and career-ready, the applicant did not describe these strategies, how they would be implemented so as to support students in their personalized learning. Rather, strategies appeared to just be a list of isolated and fairly standard classroom practices.

(ii) The applicant listed the use of Socratic seminar, questioning, classroom talk, working in groups, virtual options, flipped classrooms, though again did not describe *how* it would adapt content and instruction, so as to provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches.

The applicant did not address the following criteria.

(iii) How it would frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators.

(iv) While the applicant noted its implementation of the state teacher and principal evaluation system, it did not describe

with any specificity **how** it would improve teachers' and principals'; or how it would providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.

(i) The proposed use of EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT assessments did provide actionable information that helps the participating educators to identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests. Though that is only one source of information that was described by the applicant. It would have strengthened the proposal to provide examples of data and information that supports both student and teacher learning and growth.

(ii) The applicant has not addressed high - quality learning resources such as instructional content and assessments or, how any instructional resources align with college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Nor did the applicant specific the technology equipment or the tools to create and share new resources. As an example the budget notes \$1,000 allocated to each of the 11,481 students for "expanded technology resources" that run the range from computers and tablets, to assistive technology, etc. It is unclear what technology will be purchased, as such technology training was only described as "technology ". As such, the applicant then did not indicate what (iii) processes and tools it would use to match student needs (per Selection Criterion (C)(2)(b)(i)) with specific resources and approaches to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs.

(i) The applicant has proposed that it will use information, from the districts' teacher and principal evaluation systems to assist school leaders and school teachers to "understand their own strengths and weaknesses", assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement. Additionally, coaches would also assist in this reflective process.

Beyond noting a focus on leadership and stating that the teacher and principal evaluations *would* be used, the applicant did not explicitly state how these evaluations would be used to personalize student learning and improve outcome. As an example, there was no mention of ongoing observations, walkthroughs, and/or analysis of student growth as potential continuous improvement strategies.

(ii) Training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps (as defined in this notice).

The applicant has proposed teacher professional development in the following areas.

- Interpreting assessment results
- Data analysis
- PLC support
- Instructional practices
- CCSS
- Differentiation and group dynamics
- Socratic seminars with writing practices
- scaffolding
- "topics pertaining to technology usage"
- Specific training on technology devices"

Additionally, instructional coaches will receive training on how to facilitate whole staff professional development, conducting demonstration lessons and co-teaching instructional rounds, data analysis.

One proposed aspect of the professional development for teachers and principals is the use of coaches. For the teachers, the coaches would assist with data analysis, provide ongoing support and professional development. Still unclear is the number of coaches per school, their content expertise if any and how they would be selected. Selection and training for coaches is an important aspect to building staff capacity. While the applicant did note that coaches would receive training,

it did not address how often, or how much training they would receive. Additionally, the applicant has only budgeted for 9 coaches (Table 4-1 Project 1) It is unclear how 9 coaches will support 926 teachers in developing and maintaining personalized learning environments in 22 schools. As is currently written, it is unclear how these 9 coaches will be allocated across 3 districts. It appears to be a very inadequate number of coaches given their roles and responsibilities.

Of concern is the lack of clarity around which actual training programs will be used (both for students and teachers). As one example, the applicant notes that "the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People " (and for teens ,"the effective Habits of Highly Effective Teens) "could be" used. As another example , the professional development schedule in section A provides a big picture look at professional development over the grant picture. Though, there is no specific and explicit description of *how* it will be rolled out, scaled up to include all teachers, how new teachers will receive training, the length of training and specific follow-up (beyond the presence of coaches). The applicant notes "that trainings will begin in Spring 2014 and continue "at a rate that schools can address the topics, implement strategies, and assess effectiveness before implementing additional strategies". While this is actually sound practice, it would have strengthened the proposal to address, criteria, measures and any approach and strategies that would help the applicant determine when teachers were implementing the strategies with fidelity and ready for additional strategies. As currently written there is a pretty extensive list of professional development with no plan as to how that will get to all teachers. The applicant did not explicitly state which training programs will be used, the rationale for choosing them, *how* they they will be implemented, and the deliverables.

(d) The applicant has not adequately addressed policies, specific tools, data, and resources for its principals and teachers. The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Of concern is the absence of any mention of the recruitment and retention of hard-to-staff schools, and subjects such as mathematics, science, and specialty areas such as special education.

The applicant has not provided a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment. There was an inadequate description of an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that accelerated his or her learning through support of his or her needs.

Additionally, the applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated a professional development plan that would support teachers and principals in their efforts to personalize learning for all students.

Per the comments above, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Overall, the applicant has described a consortium governance structure that has the potential to provide support and services to all the participating schools. This is evidenced by the graphic in Figure 1. The Executive Council will meet quarterly. Its members are:

- District Superintendents
- District Finance Directors
- District Curriculum representatives
- Project Director
- District Grant Directors
- Regional Service Alliance Director

The Implementation Teams will meet monthly. Its members (below) are responsible for coordinating professional development, instructional coaches, working with the principals and outside evaluator among other duties.

- The Project Director
- LEA Grant Directors
- Instructional coaches
- Regional Service Alliance Director

The structure goes in this fashion, noting the various teams as they move down to the school level. The communication is intended to be two way sharing and input, though the graphic arrows suggest one way communication. This is a clear and well laid out governance structure with noted staff responsibilities. Of positive note the tasks of the State required School Improvement Team" are aligned to the tasks of the grant School based teams (professional development, technology, student activities and parent communication, budget issues). Additionally, the applicant states that (b) schools have flexibility within all three districts to pursue creative schedules and programs", and further that each district has a process for changes that any school may invoke. That said, the applicant did not describe sufficient flexibility and autonomy, if any, over other factors such as school school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets.

(c) The applicant states that "the adoption of Homebase and PowerSchool will significantly expand instructional opportunities for students to show classroom based competence, as no one will be limited to traditional paper pencil tests." While classroom based competency as illustrated with the world languages example of classroom recitation or dialog creation is an expansion of ways to demonstrate mastery, the applicant did not address giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of *time* spent on a topic.

(d) The applicant stated that the participating students "will be given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times" (Formative, interim and summative assessments) and in multiple comparable ways as evidenced by oral demonstration, written work, technology assisted evaluation and assessments and student discussions.

(e) The applicant has proposed that all three participating districts will "use the Response to Intervention (RTI) Model" as its best resource for ensuring adaptable practices and learning process. While Rtl is a great data driven progress monitoring process - it does not ensure adaptable practices. Rtl is the process that informs educators as to a student's learning progress. The educator then needs to provide appropriate instruction and adapt as necessary. It is these learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, that the applicant has not addressed.

Of positive note, the applicant has expanded its Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) in all three districts over the past three years. Though, other than expanding (SIOP) and mentioning that it would include students with disabilities and English learners in personalized learning opportunities, the applicant did not note any new, specific and or substantially different approaches than what it is currently being implemented for these students (Rtl, assistive technology devices, and scaffolded language for ELL and how these approaches improve personalized learning.. A statement of intent is insufficient demonstration of supporting these students. This is especially important because students with disabilities and English Language Learners have consistently **not** been addressed throughout the proposal.

The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) that demonstrated how it would support the proposed project implementation through comprehensive policies and an infrastructure that provides every participating student, classroom, school, and district with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. The applicant globally made well intentioned statements that mirrored the selection criteria, and sometimes listed a few strategies. The applicant did not describe the rationale for the approach and/or *how* the various strategies align with each other or, more importantly how they supported students' personalized learning. This was evidenced as noted above in the multiple learning opportunities statement. Nor, was there a specific timeline and deliverables.

The applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)**10****4****(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning by—

(a) Ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal

(b) Each participating district in this consortium has already addressed technology infrastructure needs through the state RTTT grant. As well, access to the state Homebase and PowerSchool student data information management system puts the applicant in a good position to focus on device and software needs. As such, the applicant has proposed that it will build on the state RTTT system by "by providing to each participating school *any* additional tutorial software, training and devices or tools necessary to effectively provide personalized learning for all students". As noted earlier, the applicant has budgeted \$1,000 per student for technology. While giving participating districts the autonomy to make any technology purchases is a way to budget the grant funds, it could easily result in vary different purchases and programs across the districts, which would mean different trainings and supports. As well, the applicant would not be scaling up a consistent plan - rather making isolated purchases and adjustments for individual districts.

In addition to the ability to purchase any additional software or devices, the applicant has proposed to continue exploring the following.

- expanded internet access through community centers
- downloading assignments and instructions
- extended school hours for student and family access
- discounted WiFi cards

The following strategies are demonstrative of the applicant's efforts to ensure that students, parents, educators have the necessary and appropriate levels of technical support.

- peer tutors
- community mentors
- support from the school technology coordinators and technicians
- classroom teachers
- online support

While these are good supports, the applicant did not describe *how* these supports would be provided, or specific trainings for students and parents, the amount of training, and other information such as how often, where and when these supports would be available.

(c) The applicant has stated that it "will expand on the LEA's existing information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems." Though, the applicant only made this statement and provided no evidence or description as to how it would do this.

(d) The applicant notes that North Carolina is in many respects ahead of most states in its adoption of inter-operable data systems. This is in part evidenced by the state mandate for each district to use an inter-operable data system. The applicant did not address if the systems included human resources data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data.

While Figure 1 describes the proposed infrastructure, and general roles and responsibilities were defined in Section D-1, the applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) that demonstrated how it would support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, classroom, school,

and district with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. There were no goals, activities, rationale, deliverable, specific timelines.

Overall, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a Governance structure that has its Executive Council meeting quarterly and the implementation Teams meeting monthly to review progress and make adjustments. Though other than meetings, the actual processes and activities that would guide these meetings is unclear. As is currently written there is no clear and coherent plan for systematically collection both progress on activities and student growth, and using that information to continuously improve instruction and the grant activities.</p> <p>Of additional concern, as noted earlier is the lack of impact data. Much of the data will be process data. Additionally, most of the student assessment information that will be collected is summative in nature (i.e. End of Grade tests, graduation rates, the percentage of 8th students who pass Math 1). It is unclear what formative assessments results, if any, will be used to continually inform instruction and or the progress of the grant activities.</p> <p>Overall, while there are some discrete evaluative activities, (observations, meetings) the continuous improvement process provided by the applicant is global in nature. The applicant has not provided a high quality plan with goals, activities, rationale and deliverables for those activities and a ongoing timeline that would allow for continuous improvement. As is currently written, it is unlikely to provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. As such the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has proposed a practical and reasonable process for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. This is in part evidenced by the governance structure in Figure 1. Additionally, the applicant proposes to post the grant objectives and goals and a timeline for activities on the districts' websites, as well as use the "the normal means of the schools and systems use such as text messages, websites, blogs, emails and phone alerts". Lastly, information will be provided upon request. There is a concern about so many internet dependent means of communication. As part of this proposal the applicant has indicated that internet access is limited in many areas, thus making it unclear how parents and students would be able to access any of this information or provide input outside of school hours.</p> <p>The monthly Implementation Team meetings and the work with the school based teams also has potential for maintaining ongoing communication. More specifically, the ground level work of the RTTT-D efforts being merged with the School Improvement Teams also has the potential to consistently communicate grant related activities to teachers and parents.</p> <p>Though, the applicant did not provide a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plans through engagement and ongoing communication. Without a high-quality plan for ongoing communication with goals and activities, deliverables, a timeline and the persons responsible for the activities the applicant's proposed activities for ongoing communication remain unclear. The applicant has scored in the medium range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided 5 of the approximately 12 to 14 required performance measures.

The applicant has provided some performance measures, overall (not by subgroup) with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. Though there are also some missing measures with no targets. As one example, there were no performance measures for the number and percentage of students whose teacher of record and principal are highly effective. This is due to the fact that the state received a waiver from the US DOE to "delay reporting teacher/administrator ratings until 2015-2016." The applicant might have provided these measures under the old system of reporting.

As another example, the applicant did not provide any third grade measures. While its does not have participating students in PreK- 2nd grade, it has identified participating third graders and would need to provide at least one academic growth performance measures and one one age-appropriate non-cognitive indicator of growth for these students.

Additionally, while the applicant did provide targets for students who are on track to college- and career-readiness based on its on-track indicator (ACT EXPLORE), it did not provide annual growth targets for a grade-appropriate academic leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan, or a grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan. As well, the Yancy ACT/EXPLORE data was missing.

For the 9-12 grade participating students, the applicant provided targets for (a)the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, (b) the number and percentage of participating students who are on track to college- and career-readiness based on the applicant's on-track indicator (PLAN), though the targets were not provided by subgroup.

The applicant provided the number and percent of students receiving the Gold, Platinum and Silver CTE certificates for CTE concentrators.

While the applicant submitted a chart that would potentially provide grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan, the chart was empty.

While the applicant will have the external evaluator "review" the professional development and student outcomes. There was no indication of what the evaluator was reviewing for and how the review results would be used for continuous improvement. The applicant did not provide (a) Its rationale for selecting that measure, (b) how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action, and/or (c) how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Overall, the applicant has insufficient responded to these criteria. Per the comments above, the applicant has scored in the low range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not provided a high-quality plan that will rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of its Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology.

This is evidenced in the following ways.

- Much of the proposed evaluation of professional development is process evaluation and little impact (student outcomes evaluation. That is evaluation that collects feedback on the training session, and student and parent feedback (surveys), Though the actual surveys were provided and its unclear what they are measuring. Additionally, it is unclear how the *North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey* relates to the grant activities, or how it will provide evaluative grant activity information relative to professional development or technology.
- The technology will be evaluated based on:
 - its functionality for in and out of classroom assignments via "verbal feedback" for adequate programs and applications

- as "hassle free tools for students"
- ease of use
- infrastructure requirements
- How it offers opportunities for remedial assistance
- Graduation rates and college enrollment

The applicant does proposes classroom observations by the external evaluator to note "differences in changes " though, what changes they are looking for and what they will do with the recorded notes is unclear.

While the applicant did provide some examples of viable evaluation activities, for the most part it was a listing of unconnected activities that did not lead to a clear and coherent plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its grant activities.

This was largely evidenced by the listing of what the external evaluator will "review". It is unclear what it will "review" for, how the information will be used to improve the grant activities. there was no timeline for how often observations would take place. The surveys and student outcomes data were largely summative in nature, so the formative on-going portion of the evaluation is unclear. As such, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)(c) The applicant has provided the rationale for each of the investments and priorities. This is evidenced in Table 4-1 and the project budget, where the applicant provided (i) a description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, including total revenue from these sources. In addition to RTTT-D funds other fund sources include:

- Investing in Innovation Grant funds - \$1,050,000
- Golden LEAF Foundation Grant - \$500,00
- Race to the Top North Carolina funds - \$100,000

(b) As provided in tables 1-1, 3-1 and 4-1, for the most part, the budget items seem reasonable and sufficient enough to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. Though, the applicant did not link budget items to the proposal selection criteria (Table 2-1).

There were also a few inconsistencies in the budget. One example is the reference to "technology equipment necessary to upgrade 850 classrooms"; and then in the same line "\$1,000 allocated to each of the 750 classrooms in the project" (Table 4-1 Project 1).

Additionally, the applicant did not line item many expenditures. As an example, much of the professional development is listed as a lump sum for the contractor or an amount per participant (i.e. \$300). The applicant does not specify the number of hours or days of the training, or, the *specific* content. (the actual deliverable). This is an important point as the sustainability plan is based on "developed capacity " as a result of the professional development. As currently written it is unclear how much professional development participating educators will receive.

(ii) The applicant very clearly identified the funds that will be used for one-time investments (largely technology and furniture) versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period.

While the applicant did list strategies for sustainability after the grant, these strategies did not focus or ensure the long-

term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. This is evidenced in the "capacity building" approach that the applicant has taken. The applicant proposes that the professional development during the grant period will build capacity in staff - so that after the grant period they are able to sustain their efforts. Thus, no follow-up support or training has been planned for after the grant. It is stated that various grant positions (i.e. Instructional coaches, Project Director, LEA Directors) will no longer be needed after the grant period. It is unclear how the applicant will provide continued support to its educators and ensure fidelity to implementation of personalized learning environments.

The applicant's budget did include a budget narrative and tables, though, as indicated earlier some were not detailed, and/or missing. While there is a "project budget" - it is the same as the overall budget Tables 1-1 and 3-1 Project 1). At a minimum, the applicant could have provided each LEA budget as a "project" budget". It is unclear if the the applicant has any "projects" as defined by this notice.

Overall, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

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

While the applicant did list strategies for sustainability after the grant, these strategies did not focus or ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments after the grant period. This is evidenced in the "capacity building" approach that the applicant has taken. The applicant proposes that the professional development during the grant period will build capacity in staff (which it likely will). The applicant intends that given increased staff capacity after the grant period they will be able to sustain their efforts. Thus, no follow-up support or training has been planned for. It is stated that various grant positions (Instructional coaches, the project Director, the LEA Directors) will no longer be needed after the grant period. While the applicant notes that these individuals will remain "with one of the LEAS", there is no mention of what they will do and the fund source for their salary.

Not having a plan to sustain educator and student support systems after the grant is an important point as the sustainability plan is based on "developed capacity " as a result of the professional development. As currently written, it is unclear how much professional development participating educators will receive (3 days plus per the budget projections).

The sustainability plan is based on the faulty assumption that one time professional development builds capacity. There is no plan for continuing job embedded follow-up and ongoing coaching and or assurance and accountability to fidelity implementation. Thus, the potential for continued implementation of the proposed grant activities after the grant appears to be relatively low.

While the applicant did note in a few cases, support from State and local government leaders, there was no specific fund source or amount for each of the activities. As one example, under category #5 Student Technology, the applicant provides "an eventual "Bring your own Device" (BYOD) plan and annual contributions from local government and school bonds as the sustainability effort. It is unclear, what the BYOD plan looks like, which local government fund sources will contribute and how much.

While the applicant has provided a rationale for each of the budget items and sustainability strategies, the applicant did not provide a high quality plan with goals, activities, deliverables , persons responsible and deliverables for sustaining its goals after the term of the grant.

Additionally, the applicant did not describe how it will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. As such and per the above comments, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described a number of strategies with potential to address the social-emotional needs of the participating students. These strategies include changes that are consistent with Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and RtI. More specifically, these strategies will be used for,

- Tier 1: programming for all students
- Tier 2: Supportive Interventions for high needs students
- Tier 3: Intensive Interventions for students requiring individualized and community-based interventions

The applicant outlined a number of potentially successful strategies for each tier. Though, this was merely a listing of potential strategies, The applicant did not describe how these strategies are new or different from its current practice, how they would align with current efforts and or the RTTT-D proposal. Overall, there was no clear and specific plan for how it would implement these strategies in partnership with its community based partners.

(1) The applicant noted that "schools in the WNC CLIPPERS consortium have a long history of collaboration with community mental health, public health, juvenile courts and child welfare agencies in the community." Though, the applicant did not specifically mention those agencies and or the specific collaborative efforts and specific nature of the partnerships. It is unclear if and how each district will partner with its local partners and or with larger county wide agencies. The applicant has not adequately described coherent and sustainable partnerships that it has formed with public or private organizations, that would support its plan described in Absolute Priority 1.

(2) The applicant has identified 4 population-level desired results for students in the participating districts. While addressing the whole child, the applicant did not explicitly state how these targets align with and support the its broader Race to the Top – District proposal.

The desired results addressed (b) family and community supports, there were not educational outcomes results.

The applicant did not address the following criteria.

(a) Track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium and at the student level for the participating students

(b) Use the data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students (as defined in this notice), with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by poverty (including highly mobile students), family instability, or other child welfare issues;

(c) Develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students (as defined in this notice) to at least other high-need students (as defined in this notice) and communities in the LEA or consortium over time; and

(d) Improve results over time;

(4) Describe how the partnership would, within participating schools integrate education and other services (e.g., services that address social-emotional, and behavioral needs, acculturation for immigrants and refugees) for participating students

(5) Describe how the partnership and LEA or consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools (as defined in this notice) by providing them with tools and supports to –

(a) Assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the partnership's goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the partnership

(b) Identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with those goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the applicant

(c) Create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results;

(d) Engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs

(e) Routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems

(6) While the applicant did provide desired results with measurable targets, it did not identify its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students. Per the chart in this section the targets are "TBD" and "may use performance measures from table (E)3 as appropriate", though, it is unclear which of those targets the applicant would deem appropriate.

Overall, the applicant has minimally addressed this Competitive Preference Priority for Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services. The applicant did not adequately demonstrate **how** it proposes to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources. Overall, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided an overall plan that appears will be further developed at the district level (i.e. determination of the technology devices to be purchased and subsequent training for said technology). Overall, the proposed activities are not presented in a coherent and well laid out plan with specific goals and activities and targets (deliverables) for those activities, rather they appear to be discrete activities. Additionally, the proposal,

- Did not consistently address and/or speak to how it would support its educators in the provision of personalized learning for ALL its participating students (the application predominately addressed grades 9-12)
- Did not consistently include strategies and approaches for students with disabilities and English Language Learners
- Consistently made global statements and did not *describe specifically how* it would implement personalized learning
- As currently written was missing many criteria, while others were partially addressed and/or insufficiently addressed.

Overall, the applicant has not demonstrated a clear, coherent and comprehensive approach to creating personalized learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready graduation requirements and that will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups. The applicant has not met Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	77
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0165NC-2 for Madison County Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant addresses the core educational assurance areas individually and provides a description of how the State of North Carolina is currently addressing these areas. For example, the applicant describes adhering to the adoption of the CCSS and also to EXPLORE, ACT, and PLAN which North Carolina has decided to administer; North Carolina purchased PowerSchool; "North Carolina has an entire division that focuses on addressing performance in the lowest performing schools." The plan of how the applicant intends to address these areas is not provided. The reform vision is unclear and it cannot be determined if the district is in need of a reform plan.
- The applicant does not address how they plan to recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers. The applicant did fully address the core educational assurance areas.
- The applicant mentions that "the foundation of WNC CLIPPERS is based upon a model of change that has been instituted in the Early Colleges across North Carolina by the North Carolina New Schools." It is unclear if the applicant's vision is to replicate this model as their plan for reform.
- The applicant describes what appears to be a fictional scenario of a student named Bill. It is unclear if the applicant intended for this scenario to describe the classroom experience for students.
- The applicant names a goal within the narrative inside a text box however a clear, credible approach to the goals is not evident. Furthermore, the goal adds confusion if the applicant's intention was to replicate an already existing model; the goal does not align with the foundation principles listed for the model.

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

10

6

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Nine schools in Yancey County, six schools in Madison County and seven of the forty-two schools in Buncombe County were selected to participate in this application. The applicant states that these schools have participated together in other grants. The applicant further describes similarities between the counties in regards to financial need. It is unclear if this was the intended criteria for selecting the participating schools and what the process was to select the schools.
- The applicant describes choosing the participating schools as having met the following criteria: "their strong belief in the North Carolina New Schools model, close geographical locations, and their desire to improve graduation rates and career/college readiness for students." This selection criteria does not represent a high quality implementation reform proposal. Furthermore, strong beliefs and desires are ambiguous criteria for a reform plan therefore it is unclear if the schools meet the competitions' eligibility requirements.
- The applicant mentions 22 schools within the narrative; the 22 schools are listed on the table provided. The applicant also mentions the number of students within the narrative and also on the tables provided. It appears that the schools and number of students participating meet the criteria for this application. Based on the numbers provided, the schools meet the competition eligibility requirements.
- The applicant describes the total number of students participating as 11, 841 within the narrative and table provided. The number of students is also reflected by county, by school in the Demographic Data Charts. The figures provided meet eligibility requirements as defined in this notice. The figures show more than 40% of the participating in each school across the three counties are low-income families.

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

10

2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant describes using the NCNS model that has been implemented across the state. It appears that the applicant will replicate a reform plan already in place across the state. This model was mentioned in section A1 but is lacking a description of what it will look like for students. It is unclear how then the applicant plans to scale up the reform beyond the participating schools as it seems that schools have already implemented this reform plan across the state. It is unclear if the applicant has a high quality plan for reform that is different than what the state already has and therefore the applicant's outcome goals cannot be determined.
- The applicant describes this reform as a district-wide change beyond the participating schools. However it is confusing how the applicant intends to scale up and translate into meaningful reform if the NCNS model which is already utilized across the State as meaningful reform. It seems almost redundant as obviously this model is reaching outcome goals across the state.
- The one paragraph narrative addressing A3 as organized by the applicant's writer does not address reaching its outcome goals. As additional information of the NCNS model has not been provided a determination of meaningful reform cannot be obtained.
- The applicant does not provide a logic model or theory of change.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides several pages of description of information about the definitions of state specific test information. This information is helpful in gaining an understanding of the assessment process of the state however does not provide essential information in regards to State ESEA targets. As the targets were not provided, it cannot be determined if the 1.5% increase goal is sufficiently ambitious. • The applicant provides figures within columns of the table provided for decreasing the gap. The figures on this chart describe the difference between each subgroup as compared to the state. This information appears to be complete for the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup however no determination can be made for the following subgroups: black, Hispanic, LEP, and SWD. • The applicant describes the graduation rates and College enrollment rates as "align with state RttT goals. The RttT goals are not provided therefore a determination cannot be made whether the 5-12% increase in graduation across each county and school is ambitious and achievable or the 10% increase in college enrollment rates across each county and school is ambitious and achievable. 		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides tables that appear to provide graduation rates for Economically Disadvantaged and overall graduation. The figures listed demonstrate an increase over the past four years however a clear and concise description is not provided for the data. • The achievement gaps if any are not clearly described and therefore it cannot be determined if the gaps are being closed. • The applicant describes only one low-achieving school and describes offering a "zero" period for students. It is unclear what specific programs and reforms are provided in a "zero" period. • The applicant mentions Eblen Foundation for drop-out prevention however there is no description of this program to determine if it improves student outcomes. • The applicant fails to address how student performance data is made available to all appropriate parties. • Although the applicant has provided some data within tables in the application, the evidence is not sufficient to demonstrate a clear record of success. The applicant did not provide descriptions for all aspects of the criteria for this section of the application. The missing or lacking information make it difficult to determine a clear track record. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant states that Buncombe County has the entire system budget on the website. The narrative explains The Buncombe "received an "A" rating on transparency on the North Carolina Transparency website." The web address was provided. Furthermore, the narrative explains the specific information available such as individual line-item budgets, employee salary and benefits and overall categories of expenditures. The A rating of transparency is sufficient evidence of a high level of transparency for Buncombe County. Screen shots or print-outs of the website could have served as support in the appendix but were not provided. • The applicant states that Madison and Yancey Counties can produce salary and fiscal reports upon public information request. This method of transparency is limiting and therefore cannot be considered high level. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant describes several aspects that are already in place within the state. These are Homebase, a cloud- 		

based resource, adoption of CCSS and PowerSchool. As these are already conditions afforded by the State, the applicant's level of autonomy cannot be determined.

- The only support of the applicant exercising autonomy is the description of how each of the counties used their RttT funding such as Buncombe County increased technology infrastructure, Madison County is supporting Professional Development And Yancey County developed a technology infrastructure and device management plan. One example is insufficient evidence of autonomy.

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

15

11

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant does not provide supporting evidence from the following stakeholders: parents and student organizations. The narrative describes parent sharing sessions, parent surveys, student discussion groups, student surveys, PTA/PTO meetings however no supporting evidence is provided therefore it cannot be determined how these stakeholders were involved in the development of the proposal or offered the opportunity to provide feedback. The level of their engagement cannot be determined.
- The applicant provides numerous letters of support that include: County Manager of all three counties, Yancey County School Board Chair and Superintendent, Office of the Sheriff, State Senator, State Representative, as well as various other organizations. The level of engagement can be determined from the comments made on each of the perspective letters included in the appendix.
- Teacher support can be determined from the copies of sign-in sheets provided within the appendix. The number of signatures demonstrates over 70% support however there is no evidence to determine the amount of engagement in developing the proposal was offered to the teachers as the sign-in sheets for each school are for one day at each.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching. This section is lacking timelines, goals, deliverable and persons responsible.

The organization of this section by the applicant does not allow for the information provided to make a compelling case towards their plan to reform. It is difficult to determine which strategies, tools and/or resources address the selection criteria. It appears that the applicant indicates may have intended the following as their approach to some of the selection criteria however the vague description and lack of organization in the writing make it difficult to determine with certainty:

(C)(1)(a)(i):

- "Computerized interest inventories to guide students in determining their interest areas and discovering possible occupations associated with those interests."
- "School of Hard Knocks" Curriculum which allows students to make decisions regarding real life working and living experiences such as paying rent, insurance, child care and other monthly costs.

(C)(1)(a)(ii):

- CareerCrusing.com; hand-on program offering career interest surveys
- High school planner to assist in choosing courses
- Career and Technical Pathway already provided by the Stat; a college prep pathway or a combination of the two

(C)(1)(a)(iii):

- Students in Buncombe County would have an option of attending a Middle College; it is unclear if this was intended for involvement of deep learning
- It is unclear if the students will take EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT assessments to deep learning. If so, there is no description to support this.

(C)(1)(a)(iv):

- "Classes could even use partnering opportunities with students in other states or countries to collaborate on real world issues that affect people around the world." The applicant does not provide any further description of access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspective. This is not sufficient to support the criteria.

(C)(1)(a)(v):

- The applicant mentions a computerized interest inventories however it is unclear if these inventories are intended for goal-setting and problem solving.
- The applicant also mentions School of Hard Knocks and CareerCruising.com however it is unclear if the limited description of these programs are intended to address this sub-criteria.

(C)(1)(b)(i)(ii):

- an assigned guidance counselor, remediation through face-to-face instruction, virtual offerings, blended options and tutoring
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens as a resource
- The Leader in Me program; training for adults that focuses on their personal habits and leads into developing a plan to teach the students the concepts
- Differentiated instruction

(C)(1)(b)(i)(iii):

- The applicant mentions digital learning opportunities, virtual offerings and online opportunities for new classes however there is no description outside of the simple mention of what this will look like. A determination cannot be made if the applicant will provide high-quality content that includes digital learning content. Furthermore, the applicant describes that they are lacking adequate technology resources but does not address how this will be improved in detail.

(C)(1)(b)(i)(iv):

- The applicant mentions students will meet with teachers and guidance counselors to discuss their progress. No further information was provided. It is unclear if this limited description demonstrates sufficient support to demonstrate ongoing and regular feedback.

(C)(1)(b)(i)(v):

- The applicant does not address high-needs students. A determination cannot be made.

(C)(1)(c):

- The applicant describes teachers and an assigned guidance counselor as the mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students. There is no detailed description of what this will look like for students. This is insufficient to evidence to demonstrate this sub-criteria.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	3
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant's description of school principals in this section is sparse and it is unclear if it was the applicant's intent to emphasize the lack of capacity, training and knowledge of the principals. "Training principals in leadership practices...", "Principals have received training...but they still need support in understanding the change in instructional methods that need to be employed." The applicant describes a numbered list of professional development for principals.

Overall, the writing organization of this section makes it difficult to determine what information is intended to meet the selection criteria. The applicant does not provide activities, timeline, deliverable and parties responsible; a high-quality plan was not evident.

(C)(2)(a)(i) appears to have the following as support:

- practice of PLC's
- Professional Development on PLC

- Coaches
- training on instructional leadership
- Principal training
- "State and national experts would be contracted to deliver professional development for teachers on best research based instructional practices and on the new standards." This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.
- "Training from sources such as John Hattie and Robert Marzano focus on research-based effective strategies."

(C)(2)(a)(iii)

- Students will be assessed using EXPLORE, PLAN, ACT. This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.

(C)(2)(b)(ii):

- Yancey County Schools are involved in a pilot 1:1 implementation plan
- "Technology is integrated into every intervention class period." This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.
- "Technology is integrated into core curriculum weekly." This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.
- "Online formative assessments: assessments are done at least weekly." This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.
- "Virtual field trips with more frequent use" This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.
- "Search engines: students use daily" This is too vague to determine if it meets criteria.

(C)(2)(c)(i):

- The applicant mentions North Carolina Teachers' Evaluation Instrument and refers to Appendix G. Appendix G has resumes not the document intended.

Again, because of the organization of the writing other criteria of this section could not be determined.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant describes several groups within the governance structure such as Executive Council, Implementation Team, LEA Teams and School Improvement teams. The applicant provides a flow chart listing these groups however the applicant does not provide a description of the practices, policies and rules that exist within the groups and across the groups. AS there is no description provided within the narrative it is unclear if these groups are functioning independent of each other. The organization and effectiveness of this structure cannot be determined.
- The applicant provides resumes for the Executive Council in the appendix as evidence of an experienced a knowledgeable team. However the applicant does not provide the roles and responsibilities of each individual nor the protocols for each member should they leave the group.
- The school improvement team does not appear to have full flexibility and autonomy over school factors. The applicant describes that "the team will be asked to make suggestions" rather than the team implements the changes. Furthermore, the applicant states "the council will also be responsible for making all major decisions regarding personnel and hiring". This does not support the applicant's flexibility or autonomy.
- The applicant states that students will be given opportunities to progress and earn credit based on mastery however the applicant does not provide a clear description of what this will look like.
- The applicant adheres to the state's adoption of Response to Intervention (RTI). The applicant does not explain how this impacts students with disabilities. There is no description of programs available for these students. Furthermore, the applicant describes utilizing varied technological supports for students with physical disabilities and to provide accommodations supported by IEP. Again there is no clear description of learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students.
- The applicant mentions SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) method for classroom instruction of ELL students. However there is no description of this method. It is unclear if this method provided learning resources and instructional practices.
- The applicant does not address all elements of a high-quality plan. The applicant does not describe the goals, activities, timeline or deliverables. The narrative however provides great detail about various roles such as Executive Council, Implementation Team, LEA Teams however it is unclear if the these persons or groups of

persons were intended to satisfy the persons responsible for implementing the activities aspect of a high-quality plan.

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

10

5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant states that "all the participating schools have adequate high-speed broadband access" and however the applicant also describes a barrier to access for families living in the rural mountainous areas. Furthermore, the applicant "will develop alternatives for those without access." This is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that all students, parents, educators and stakeholders have access.
- The applicant describes the following as technical support avenues: peer tutors, community mentors, local support from the school technology coordinators and technicians, classroom teacher and online support. These methods of technical support provide a range of strategies yet given that the access is limited (see pervious comment) it is unclear if these strategies will be feasible.
- The applicant has described the use of Homebase and PowerSchools as provided by the state throughout the application as a means for export data. It is unclear however if the applicant has any additional supports within these programs or other programs to support personalized learning.
- The applicant does not describe if Homebase and PowerSchools provide other data such as human resources, budget data, etc.) It cannot be determined if Homebase and PowerSchools are inter operable data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant does not provide a high quality plan for continuous improvement. The plan is lacking in a clear timeline and deliverables. The applicant provides a bulleted listed of what appear to be activities as well as a table of intended outcomes measures which as both lacking clear timeline and deliverables.
- The applicant mentions use of various types of surveys from parents and students as well as California Healthy Kids Survey and North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The frequency and purpose for each of these instruments is not described. It is unclear how the surveys will be utilized for continuous improvement.
- The Project Director has the task of collecting data associated with the project however it is unclear what data is collect and what the Program Director must do with data towards continuous improvement of the plan.
- The LEA Director has the task of meeting monthly with the School Improvement Teams to get input however it is not clear what the LEA Director must do with the input collected towards continuous improvement of the plan.
- The applicant states that any constituents would have access to information by request. This does not substantiate public sharing information on the quality of its investment.
- The applicant mentions the guidelines by which the state measures student performance as well as the state's current reforms such as summer reading camps for third grade students. It is unclear how the applicants' plan is personalized and differs from that of the state.

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

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes communication via the "normal means that the schools and systems use such as text messages, websites, blogs, emails and phone alerts. The applicant did not mention any use of television or print media, community meetings, PTA/PTO or other public meetings. It is unclear if the application has sufficient ongoing communication and engagement with all stakeholders.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant does not provide a narrative to accompany the tables.
- It is unclear if the applicant intended to leave fields within the table incomplete. The incomplete fields do not

- provide sufficient evidence that the performance measures are achievable.
- The applicant does not address any subgroups in the tables. The applicant has mentioned subgroups that include SWD ELL and Economically Disadvantaged.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides a bulleted list of its evaluation plan however the plan is lacking in timelines, goals and responsible persons. This is not a high quality plan as timelines, goals, deliverables cannot be determined. The applicant provides a table with responsibilities of the Evaluator however the plan lacks timelines, goals and clear deliverables. The plan is not high quality as timelines, goals, deliverables cannot be determined. 		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant did not provide a narrative for this section. The applicant does not identify all of the funds that will support the project. State and Federal funds are not listed. It appears that the project will be funded by this award if granted and three other award monies already granted to the state. It cannot be determined if the plan is reasonable. The applicant does not differentiate whether the costs are one time or on-going. The budget can therefore not be determined as reasonable or sufficient to support the plan. 		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides the same narrative and bulleted list provided in the Vision section of the application. It is unclear if the applicant intended to do so or how this applies to the sustainability of the project goals. The applicant does not provide a high quality plan for sustainability. There are no timelines, goals, deliverable or person responsible described. There is no evidence of financial support provided within the narrative or the appendix; it is unclear how the applicant will continue the project after the term of the grant. The applicant does not provide estimates for the 3 years after the term of the grant. The sustainability of the project cannot be determined due to the lacking information. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of partnerships is not provided therefore the applicant's mention of "a long history of collaboration with mental health, public health, juvenile courts and child welfare agencies" cannot be determined. The applicant mentions high level of poverty of the families, it is unclear if this group is the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup which has been omitted in several parts of the application including performance measures. There is no data provided rather TBD therefore tracking of data cannot be determined. This does not support Absolute Priority 		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Throughout the application the applicant refers to numerous instances where the state has already implemented the programs, assessments and plans described within. The following are some of the many instances listed within the application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "North Carolina has a Career Readiness Certificate that is related to the Career Technical Education program. This certificate indicates a students' readiness to enter a career." • North Carolina is focusing sharply on third grade literacy by mandating summer reading camps for those students deemed not proficient in reading." • "North Carolina purchased PowerSchool as the student information management system." • "Homebase, a cloud set up by the state." • "North Carolina developed evaluation instruments for teachers, principals, and superintendents that focus on different levels of effectiveness." • "North Carolina has developed a comprehensive approach using needs assessment, instructional coaches and professional development for turning around lowest achieving schools." • "The state of North Carolina is focusing on career and college ready as evidenced by the inclusion of graduation rates, WorkKeys performance, math course rigor, and ACT performance in the school accountability model." • "North Carolina requires each school by state statute to have a school improvement team comprised of representatives for teachers, administrators, parents and students." • "North Carolina's recent adoption of MSL's summative assessments in traditionally non-tested content areas provides assessments incorporating a variety of student options." <p>Furthermore the applicant describes much reform which has already been implemented as a result of the state's current Race to the Top grant program. It is unclear how the application differs from what is already being implemented by the state. It is unclear how the applicant provides a personalized learning environment for students as most of the strategies and programs listed are already provided by the state.</p>		

Total	210	70
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0165NC-3 for Madison County Board of Education

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's vision is based upon a foundation of training, planning, and implementing strategies that have proven to be effective and is based upon a model of change that has been instituted in the Early Colleges across North Carolina by the North Carolina New Schools. The foundational principles are: Ready for College, Require Powerful Teaching and Learning, Personalization, Redefine Professionalism, and Purposeful Design.</p>		

In building on its work in the four core educational assurance areas, the applicant states that North Carolina has adopted the Common Core State Standards and has provided training for all K-12 teachers in implementation and support. Teachers and administrators received training the past two years including summer institutes and virtual and online modules. North Carolina changed all other standards. As a result, all subject areas are implementing new standards. Along with the new standards, North Carolina has developed and implemented new assessments that align with the standards. These new assessments were used to assist students with understanding their academic strengths and weaknesses, a first step in personalized learning. Support systems such as summer camps were designed to assist students who scored low on the tests. Teachers and counselors were trained in the interpretation of the results. Students and parents receive informational sessions regarding interpreting scores and possibilities for assistance in weak areas.

North Carolina purchased PowerSchool as the Student Information Management System with RttT state funds to collect data and give access not only to educators but also parents and students. PowerSchool serves as the teachers' grade book and database for all students' testing. Parents will be able to log onto the site and review their student's progress. EVAAS, a software program that projects students' test scores, is web-based and accessible to teachers and administrators. Teachers are currently receiving training on these new programs through the state RttT Grant Plan. Professional Learning Communities are used in the three school systems that make up this applicant to address student progress while analyzing data from classroom assessments, End of Grade State Tests, End of Course State Tests and EVAAS scores.

The applicant does not specifically address recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most other than to note that North Carolina developed evaluation instruments for teachers, principals, and superintendents that focus on different levels of effectiveness.

The applicant does not present a plan on turning around its low-achieving schools other than to say North Carolina developed a comprehensive approach using needs assessments, instructional coaches, and professional development for turning around lowest achieving schools and that growth has been demonstrated in all of the turnaround districts.

In this section, the applicant does not articulate a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests nor does it describe what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not present a plan that will support high quality LEA level and school level implementation. They state the schools were chosen based upon their strong belief in the North Carolina New Schools model, close geographical locations, and their desire to improve graduation rates and career/college readiness for students. They delineate the percentage of low income and free and reduced lunch. Other than to note that Buncombe County Schools selected seven of its highest need and highest poverty secondary schools, the applicant does not specify the process used to select participating schools or that they collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements.

The applicant provide a list of participating schools as well as the total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators.

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

The application does not include a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals

Regarding LEA wide reform and change, the applicant will be using the NCNS model that has been implemented across the state in grades 9-12 but has recently been applied in K-8 schools. The applicant makes the statement that the plan to replicate the model in other schools will be focused on elementary and middle school and additional high school; which is confusing since there are no other choices of types of schools and it must be presumed that they mean other schools in the consortium.

They note the goal is to deploy NCNS model into more schools in Buncombe County and in more districts in the surrounding 15 school systems. The applicant's alliance is a means to advance and deploy the NCNS model. Trained principals and instructional coaches involved in this initial effort will use their expertise to assist the new schools in the consortium with the implementation and could be prevailed upon for other interested schools. However, they do not define

how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change.

The applicant does not present a logic model or theory of change of how its plan will improve student learning outcomes for all students who would be served by them.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant begins this section by noting they will utilize an outside evaluator to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and review certain measures and goals; the evaluator is not further identified. The applicant then provides a definition of proficiency and tables of values for each of the areas noted in this criterion.

For the performance on summative assessments, the applicant states the percentage of students, grouped by gender, ethnicity, and other factors, who passed both the reading and mathematics end of grade tests third through eighth grade within the heading of the table.

For decreasing achievement gaps, the applicant denotes their achievement gap identified as their target is the proficiency level for each school's economically disadvantaged subgroup compared with the state proficiency level for all students on the identified assessment. New state tests were used for 2012- 2013 and results have not been released. Baselines will need to be re-calculated. The applicant does not discuss this further in the heading of the table.

The applicant presents a table of graduation rates but does not discuss a vision that is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

Regarding the optional postsecondary degree attainment, the applicant states this will be implemented in 2014-15.

For this criterion, the applicant fails to provide sufficient narrative or explanation of its vision for ambitious yet achievable annual goals in these categories.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states they have shown student achievement growth and sustained improvement over the last four years through innovative dropout prevention plans that include early colleges. Each of the school systems has addressed the graduation rate through early colleges that offer students options to pursue a five-year associate's degree on a college campus for high school and college classes. It is unclear whether the college campus offers both high school and college classes. They present NC State End of Course Tests proficiency results from the early colleges but do not state how many students are involved or what percentage of the student population they represent.

The applicant presents data that states as a group, schools that are partners with North Carolina New Schools (NCNS) are demonstrating success in helping students stay in school, achieve, and graduate well prepared for college, careers, and life. Performance on key indicators tracked by the N.C... Department of Public Instruction for all high schools show that NCNS partner schools are among the state's pacesetters. However, the applicant does not specifically denote how they perform on these key indicators. They do note that this success is the impetus behind their proposal to provide traditional schools training and support in developing an atmosphere that encourages a more personalized approach to education.

The applicant notes that the schools in the consortium have developed dropout prevention plans geared toward their population. One school has developed a community and schools partnership with the Eblen Foundation (a local non-profit) and area businesses to address dropout prevention. This same school has demonstrated a consistent increase in their graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students and for all students. A second school has instituted initiatives to improve their graduation rates as well and their graduation rates have risen overall for economically disadvantaged students and for all students. The third school has experienced some fluctuations but has also exhibited growth overall in the same categories.

The applicant states that two of their three county schools have remained steady or shown progress in students' college enrollment in North Carolina Institutions of Higher Education.

One of their persistently lowest schools has shown progress with their Community High School, an alternative school for students experiencing issues with discipline.

The applicant does not speak further to subgroup success, achievement gaps, or making student performance data available. They also do not speak to what efforts are being made to improve student achievement.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In addressing this criterion, the applicant notes the school systems prepare annual fiscal reports that have undergone extensive state auditing. One of the systems was highly rated on transparency by the state. The other two systems produce reports only upon public information request. Beyond that, the applicant does not make any statements to the availability of the information in the four categories in this criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant state that its County Schools, in partnership with the local regional service alliance and additional partners, have the authority to operate within and advocate for changes to the state's current legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to successfully implement the personalized learning environments described in their proposal, but presents no evidence of this such as a letter from their state department of education. They also state that all of their plans on how to spend state RTTT grant money were approved by the state and are periodically evaluated for progress and sharing of best practices across regions, but provide no evidence to support this statement.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes their proposal exists as the result of a collaborative planning process that engaged parents, students, educators, and community stakeholders in thoughtful and meaningful conversation about education reform.

After taking input based upon reform initiatives that were being researched and reviewed including discussion of the Early College model, the three school systems began discussing the idea of a model based upon the NC New Schools Project model that was used with Early Colleges. As a result of these discussions, superintendents and associate superintendents, along with curriculum directors, approached principals and then teachers and staff of potential participating schools about interest in and support for the program.

The North Carolina Teacher Working Condition Survey is completed to address concerns and offer suggestions for improvement and was used as part of the planning process. Parents and families also engaged in the planning process through informal parent sharing sessions connected with previously planned school events. Feedback from parent surveys was also reviewed. Participating school principals and local faculty engaged diverse student groups in informal discussions and formal student survey processes. None of the survey results are presented as evidence to support these statements.

The applicant states that community engagement was critical to the creation of their proposal. They note a primary source of data included Buncombe County School's "STEM High School Design Committee." However they do not note input from any other community organizations either in Buncombe or the other two county schools.

The applicant notes that North Carolina is a non-union state, but provides educator representation through the North Carolina Association of Educators and its local affiliates. They further note that the Buncombe County Association of Educators' president attended district principals' meetings during which the grant overview was explained and she engaged in one-on-one conversations with the grant planning team. She also contacted leaders at local participating schools to keep them abreast of grant plans and to encourage additional staff input. Although they present no evidence to support these statements or even a letter from the BCAE President, they do provide many letters of support for the project with teachers' signatures. It is unclear if 70% of the teachers have signed on to support the proposal.

The applicant provides many letters of support from key stakeholders from local government agencies to institutions of higher education.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. This plan does not include an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements and accelerate learning through support of students' needs.</p> <p>The applicant's stated goal in this section is to develop academically prepared students who can articulate their abilities, aptitudes, and interests and enter either the work force or pursue higher education without a need for remediation, with a strong idea of their future goals, and with the capability to advocate for their needs. Their plan requires enabling all students to reach their personal goals through strong academic and self-directed learning foundations. This plan would use computerized interest inventories to guide students in determining their interest areas and discovering possible occupations associated with those interests. This data would be available to students, teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. It is unclear how this data would be made available although the applicant does mention the state's Power School system.</p> <p>The applicant's proposed activities such as the "School of Hard Knocks" would be incorporated into the middle school curriculum. CareerCruising.com, an engaging, hands-on program that offers career interest surveys and activities for students of all ages, also provides information regarding educational requirements for the occupations. Teachers and students are provided with resources that are integrated into the curriculum highlight jobs and workplace scenarios. A high school planner that assists students with choosing courses that focus on preparing for careers is included. Along with education requirements, character traits are stressed in role-playing activities that are designed for all ages. All of the information is available to teachers, students, and parents. In North Carolina, pathways include a Career and Technical Education pathway, a college prep pathway, or a combination of the two. With these pathways, students in all three of the school systems will be offered an opportunity to attend an Early College in order to pursue either a four year option or a five year option that could include an associate's degree. While some of these activities appear to be new, others appear to currently exist and it is unclear how RTTT monies will be used to continue or implement these activities.</p> <p>The applicant addresses activity in Buncombe County but does not address the other two county schools that are part of this application. Additionally, they note each student will have a guidance counselor assigned along with a classroom teacher. Students will be offered support systems based upon their needs. These support systems will include increased guidance access, remediation through face-to-face instruction, virtual offerings, blended options, and tutoring. These options will be offered to students until they demonstrate that they no longer require the interventions. It is not clearly stated if these activities will be incorporated in each county school.</p> <p>In addressing poverty, the applicant states that teachers will lead classroom discussions on leadership qualities needed to get out of poverty using the same concepts highlighted in reading material used in the courses, while also developing classroom roles and responsibilities that require students to exhibit leadership qualities. They also note that differentiated instruction will be used, but present little else to support these activities other than the names of a couple of books.</p> <p>They state technology can be used to expand offerings without overly increasing the budget. Online opportunities for new classes that advance a student's interest can be offered during or after school hours. Remediation courses that address specific needs can be offered during or outside of school hours along with face-to-face interactions to check progress and offer assistance and tutoring. Group projects for classwork or deeper knowledge pursuits can make use of technology options through research and controlled communication possibilities. Classes could even use partnering opportunities with students in other states or countries to collaborate on real world issues that affect people around the world. Technology can expand options for students in the three school systems through a collaborative approach to higher level or remediation classes by allowing students across the systems to take classes offered in each school system. While the applicant makes all these statements, they provide no plan on how this will be accomplished.</p> <p>Regarding technology, the applicant continues to note that with the expansion of technology opportunities, the number of devices would need to be expanded. These would range from laptops or chrome books to iPads and iPods. Whichever device is chosen, the students and staff would receive quality training on using the devices, capabilities of the devices, and safety issues associated with the devices and web access if applicable. Sessions would be held for parents to inform them about the devices, expectations, and important safety factors. However, the applicant presents no information about how devices would be chosen, what training would be conducted, or how parent sessions would be implemented. The three school systems that form this consortium have increased their infrastructure because all three allocated portions of their RttT state funds to addressing infrastructure. It is unclear how RTTT-D monies would be used in this regard.</p> <p>The applicant's proposal addresses the rigor of the curriculum by implementing a strong curriculum which is the Common</p>		

Core State Standards for language arts and mathematics that NC has adopted. Teachers have received extensive training on the Common Core State Standards and will continue to receive training opportunities. In North Carolina, all of the state standards were changed, so trainings will also continue for the new state standards. The goal is to have students think, analyze, explore, experiment, develop hypotheses, and form conclusions based upon their own work. Along with new academic standards for every subject in North Carolina, the state has opted to participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Coalition. This means the assessments, if adopted, will be more interactive and include two and three part problems. Another aspect of the curriculum is an introduction to real world application of skills in the classroom.

The applicant states it addresses each of the Eight Great competencies through classroom activities and assignments, but they can also be addressed through extra-curricular activities such as career exploration and internships. Students, parents, and educators will have online access to the information gleaned from these activities through the statewide system, PowerSchool.

The applicant does not address deep learning experiences, or access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning in this section. They also do not speak to the support of parents and educators for student access to critical components of this criterion. Finally, they do not specify any mechanisms that are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

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

20

10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's process for addressing this criterion begins with an understanding of the NC New Schools (NCNS) approach that has been used with the Early College which targets personalized learning for students. The applicant desires to replicate in K- 12 schools across the districts involved in the proposal. They state this approach has proven successful in Buncombe, Madison, and Yancey Early Colleges and across the state in other Early Colleges and is currently being applied in districts in North Carolina, but provide no supporting documentation. While they present a table expressing the Percentage of students on-track for college, early college versus a control group, they do not indicate which data groups are represented, the applicants or all Early Colleges in NC.

They state the first step in addressing personalized learning is training principals in leadership practices that focus on culture change, instruction, and technology. Students will be evaluated with the EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT state adopted assessments which will give educators information regarding the students' level of preparation toward college and career goals. Supports will be in place to provide extra assistance and guidance for students who exhibit a need. Additional evaluation instruments will be introduced to gain information from students regarding their areas of interest, learning styles, career interests, and goals and will be readily available to teachers, students, and parents.

The practice of using Professional Learning Communities has proven effective in focusing on students' data and teacher reflection. With professional development from leading experts and a coach who will support and critique the efforts, the principal will be equipped with resources, knowledge, and support to accomplish this goal. Teachers and staff will also receive professional development, coaches to assist with the implementation, and support from administrators to create effective Professional Learning Communities as part of this plan.

Regarding instruction, principals have already received ample training on the new standards through RttT state trainings at the regional service alliance provided by the NC Department of Public Instruction, but they still need support in understanding the change in instructional methods that need to be employed. The applicant does not further amplify how this will be accomplished.

The applicant states technology needs to address some of the issues such as remediation and advancement along with special interest courses in order for personalized learning to be effective. Principals must address the infrastructure in their buildings to make sure that any of the planned devices can be used. Since the three school systems have reviewed their technology needs for the state RttT grant, this process should be in the advanced stage. Training would be targeted toward the digital devices that applied to their specific situation. Professional development would include research based effective uses of the devices and training specifically on methods to include technology into the classroom environment and home arena.

The applicant would provide training on instructional leadership, Professional Learning Communities, culture change, and effective technology usage and would increase support for principals by supplying a leadership coach for each principal. The areas focused on in this training are not only emphasized by the applicant but are also woven into the seven standards of the NC Principals' Evaluation Instrument. As part of the seven standards, Strategic Leadership focuses on developing a shared vision for the school and leading change, Instructional Leadership includes PLC development, Cultural Leadership highlights creating an accepting atmosphere for a diverse population, and Human Resources Leadership involves teacher retention.

In addressing personalized learning, the applicant notes assessments for students will include college/career ready assessments such as the EXPLORE and PLAN along with some aptitude and interest surveys. The teachers and guidance staff, in particular, need training on interpreting the assessment results to assist students with class choices and goal setting. Tests will also provide feedback for scheduling classes that provide extra support or that provide challenge for those students who warrant it. Additionally, teachers will need to learn to analyze data and interpret results from summative and formative classroom assessments. Training sessions delivered by state and national experts will provide insight into data analysis. The applicant does not further describe what the specific training will be, how it will be conducted, or the veracity of the expert they intend to use.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will provide opportunities for teachers to discuss results on assessments and make plans for next steps. Instructional coaches will be used to assist with the process of data analysis, next steps, and teacher reflection. Another key component in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses is the North Carolina Teachers' Evaluation Instrument. Principals are required to monitor teachers' performances and meet with them to discuss the observations and offer suggestions for improvement. The instrument focuses on leadership, establishing a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, knowing content, facilitating learning, and reflecting on practices. The teachers' evaluation system already exists and it is unclear if, when, or how instructional coaches will be incorporated.

The applicant states that state and national experts would be contracted to deliver professional development for teachers on best research based instructional practices and on the new standards. Extensive training has already been provided on both topics, but the applicant's proposal would target the needs of the teachers directly involved in the program. Professional development on instructional methods and topics would be provided for the teachers through instructional coaches and subject area experts. Coaches would also provide a support base to assist with the implementation. Teachers would be supplied with professional development on personal leadership practices and on teaching leadership practices to students. Professional development on group dynamics and differentiation would be offered by the applicant. However, the applicant does not prescribe how this training will occur.

Concerning technology training and usage, the progression from elementary devices to high school would be examined to ensure a seamless transition. With infrastructure already in place from the state RtT plans, the next step is to train teachers on best practices with devices. Technology staff and instructional coaches would be used to assist with implementing the professional development practices in the classrooms.

This application completely lacks any timelines or deliverables in addressing this criterion. Most of the information in this section is very general and lack specifics of how this criterion will be addressed.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets some of the criterion for a high quality plan and states its governance structure will include personnel from Buncombe County Schools, Madison County Schools, and Yancey County Schools. Their Executive Council will consist of the superintendents of each school system, the finance directors of each school system, a curriculum representative from each school system, the project director, the LEA grant directors, and the regional service alliance director. The council will also be responsible for making all major decisions regarding personnel and hiring such as with the project director, which is mentioned here for the first time. The particular LEA involved would hire the LEA director and the instructional coaches for their school system.

The implementation team, which is not further defined as to composition, will be responsible for coordinating with the professional development providers to secure locations, equipment needs, dates, times, and any other relevant needs. The implementation team will also work with the principal coaches and the outside evaluator. The project director will be the main point of contact for the outside evaluator.

The LEA teams will work directly with the schools to determine needs that should be addressed. This team will be responsible for hiring instructional coaches and the LEA grant director, which is mentioned here for the first time. The LEA team will be responsible for communicating all information to the instructional coaches, the principal coaches, the principals, parents and teachers involved. The role of the LEA grant director will be to work with each school in the district involved in the application and will be the point of contact for the school improvement teams.

The school improvement team at each of the applicant's participating schools will be responsible for providing feedback to

the LEA director regarding all aspects of the program. North Carolina requires each school by statute to have a school improvement team comprised of representatives for teachers, administrators, parents, and students. They are the group that designs and updates the school improvement plans that are also required for each school. The school improvement plan includes professional development needs, technology needs, focused student group interventions, etc.

Schools have flexibility within all three districts to pursue creative schedules and programs. They note that each district has a process for schools to follow if they desire to have changes. Most involve either central office approval or LEA school board approval.

The applicant's adoption of Homebase and PowerSchool will significantly expand instructional opportunities for students to show classroom-based competency, so no one will be limited to traditional paper/pencil tests. North Carolina's recent adoption of Measures of Student Learning summative assessments in traditionally non-tested content areas provides assessments incorporating a variety of student options. Beyond these programs, the applicant does not denote any other opportunities for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. They also do not address the subcategory of giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

Learning resources and instructional practices will be provided that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. All three school systems use the Responsiveness To Intervention (RTI) model to address individual student needs. The members of the consortium will support the RTI framework with varied technological supports, particularly with "Assistive Technological Devices" for students with physical disabilities and student readers that scaffold language for Limited English Proficient (LEP) youth. The individual school systems will be able to choose technology devices that best serve the students and situation. The applicant notes some funding may be used to set up community centers so students without home access will have resources in the community, but otherwise presents no specifics.

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

10

6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The current Race to the Top grant, which North Carolina received in 2010, has allowed the three LEAs to address infrastructure needs, allowing a bigger emphasis to be placed on software, curricular delivery systems, and devices. Together the resource center, Homebase, and the student information management system, PowerSchool, include a data collection center, a professional development repository, student resources, parent access to student progress reports, grading system, attendance system, and curriculum repository. The applicant will build on this system by providing to each participating school any additional tutorial software, training, and devices or tools necessary to effectively provide personalized learning for all students.

All the participating schools have adequate high-speed broadband access, but some families in the more rural mountainous areas do not have such access. This is being addressed currently through other grants that are providing Internet access to rural areas in Madison and Yancey County. Until all areas have access, the applicant will develop alternatives for those without such access, including addressing the use of community centers for such access, downloading any assignments or instruction so access at home is not necessary for access to content, and extended school hours for family access to technological equipment. Further information about community centers or extended school hours is not provided.

In addressing appropriate levels of technical support, the applicant states training and support will continue to be provided on PowerSchool for the teachers, while Homebase training for students and parents will begin this year. The principals and the Instructional Coaches will support the classroom teachers as they implement the blended learning approach to personalized learning. Blended learning is mentioned here for the first time and is not further explained as to how it will be implemented.

The applicant states it will expand on the three LEA's existing information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems. The program will also provide technical training, on-going support for devices, and necessary access to high-speed broadband to ensure effective implementation and use. They do not define their plan further.

North Carolina's adoption of PowerSchool mandates each LEA's use of an interoperable data system. Also, all three school systems are participating in Homebase which supplies access to resources for educators and students. Training will continue to focus on teachers' and students' mastery of the new system.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant meets some of the criterion for a high quality plan and states that in order to have continuous improvement, the Project Director will be assigned the task of coordinating with the LEA directors and the outside evaluator to collect the data associated with the project.</p> <p>The direct means of feedback will be meeting with the school improvement teams at each school, which are designed to focus on continuous improvement by devising school improvement plans annually. These teams are in place at each school and are mandated by state statute. These teams include parents and students and they meet and communicate regularly with the parents and community. These teams examine financial issues and work to address savings and more efficient ways to assist students in reaching their goals. This encompasses scheduling changes, technology uses and qualities, and staff allotments. It is unclear how RTTT funds will be used to support this endeavor.</p> <p>Principals will be the second phase of determining effectiveness of professional development through observations of classroom teachers and noting behavior and instructional changes they witness in the classrooms. The outside evaluator will be asked to observe some teachers prior to the professional development and then again after the training. What will be done with this information is not clearly stated.</p> <p>Culture changes will be evaluated through comparing parent and student surveys from the previous year to the surveys of the current year. The three school systems conduct random parent and student surveys annually as a means of gathering data for school improvement plans. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys will also be compared. How results from these surveys will be implemented is not further defined.</p> <p>Regarding technology, the school improvement committees will be asked to give verbal feedback on the whether the devices have adequate programs and applications. LEA directors will monitor each meeting. Students will also be surveyed through classes to determine their views on the device's programs and applications usefulness. It is unclear who will receive the school improvement committees' verbal feedback, what the directors will do with meeting results, and what will be done with student surveys.</p> <p>The applicant does not state how it will publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTTT.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's proposal is not a high quality approach to continuously improve its plans and provides a partially state mandated means of internal communication and engagement, but they provide no specifics on how they will communicate with or engage external stakeholders.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Regarding this criterion, the applicant does not provide a high-quality approach to continuously improve its plans and states that North Carolina has received a waiver from the US Department of Education to delay reporting teacher/administrator ratings until 2015- 2016. For the required forms on performance measures, the applicant provides no discernable information about performance measures nor does it state that information will be obtained through future evaluations.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not have a high-quality approach to continuously improve its plans and only states they will evaluate the effectiveness of the program by utilizing an outside evaluator who will review applicant specified performance measures on areas such as Professional Development, Technology, Students' College/Career Readiness, and measures for all school levels. It is unclear who the outside evaluator will be or what their level of effectiveness will be in conducting this evaluation.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides no narrative but does provide tables that identify all funds that will support the project including personnel such as the instructional coaches, project director, three LEA directors, substitute teachers to cover for those teachers in training, technology and supplies to be incorporated. In analyzing the tables and the short descriptions provided, it appears reasonable and sufficient. The applicant does not provide a coherent rationale for investments and priorities using deliverables and timelines.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not present a high quality plan but states it will take the foundational principles of the North Carolina New Schools and focus on using a three-part approach (instruction, planning, and implementation) to create changes in the schools involved in the project. The approach will concentrate on three focus groups: principals, students, and teachers.</p> <p>The project will be sustained based upon capacity, attrition, and allocation. Although some positions afforded by the grant will no longer be necessary (project director, LEA directors) some will be absorbed by the LEAs through attrition, State and local government leaders, and other financial support such as a future grant.</p> <p>The applicant does not include support from State and local government leaders, financial support from anyplace other than grants, and a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. They also do not address how they will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, and include an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not demonstrate the extent to which they propose to integrate 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, giving highest priority to students in participating schools with high-need students. While they mention a trauma focused program, there is no mention of any partnerships that will be formed other than in the most minor, general tone.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the 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. The body of the application contains only general statements of plans,</p>		

the tables contain minimum information and required information is missing, and they have no budget narrative other than what is contained in blocks in tables.

Total	210	79
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